INTRODUCTION

“I never have run with the pack.
My path is a single track. Solitary, hair turning grey,
I follow my own lonely way.
My "crowd" is off to one side, A bog of personal pride,
My "crowd" no better than any, Lost among the many.”

Perhaps nothing can provide a better key to the understanding of Alexander Volodin as both a writer and human being than this short piece of poetry. It highlights his sense of independence, his unwillingness to blend with the crowd and resistance to be "like everybody else." For a modern person living in a civilized society with its civil liberties and legally protected individual freedoms, this attitude does not seem particularly unusual. However, for someone like Volodin, who grew up in the Stalinist Soviet Union of the 1930s, to develop such a social stance is probably rather unexpected. At the same time, it would be incorrect to consider Volodin's position a rare exception among Soviet artists, particularly those who began their careers after the death of Stalin in 1953. This may surprise some in the West who have an overly simplistic view of art and culture in the former Soviet Union as divided between a homogeneous majority of artists who slavishly obeyed the will of the Communist Party and a small group of brave dissidents who fought the oppressive regime. In reality, Soviet art and culture was much more :cmplex, a fact frequently overlooked by many Western scholars, including scholars of Soviet theater and drama.

For example, Harold Segel, in his voluminous book, Twentieth Century Russian Drama: From Gorky to the Present, does not differentiate between those playwrights who faithfully followed the Party line and those who, like Volodin, quietly but consistently avoided carrying out the ideological messages of the Communist Party.[2]

A common misconception among Western theater scholars about postwar Soviet drama stems from the fact that, unlike classic Russian plays which have traditionally occupied an important place in the repertoire of the American theater, works of contemporary Russian playwrights remain relatively unknown in this country.[3] Despite the assiduous efforts of American scholars such as Alma Law, William Kuhlke, and a few others, there has been only limited research done on modern Russian drama. Among the scholarly works which have appeared in the last 10 years are James Bernhardt's on Alexander Vampilov[4], Alan Smith's on Aleksei Arbuzov[5], and Maia Kipp's on Edvard Radzinsky.[6] This list does not include many other significant Russian playwrights of the modern period, particularly Alexander Volodin, who now ranks as both a leading playwright and screenwriter with his own unique place in the history of Russian theater and film.

Although some of Volodin's early plays have been translated into English,' and some of his films were shown in this country, the bulk of his work remains essentially unknown to mainstream theater scholars and teachers in the West.[8] Volodin's relative obscurity in this and other Western countries can be partly explained by the fact that only a few of his plays have been available in English; in addition, over the years critics in the former Soviet Union and in other countries have consistently underestimated the importance of his works.[9]

While in his own country Volodin's works were repeatedly denounced by Marxist- Leninist critics for their violations of the rules of Socialist Realism, they were equally misjudged in the West as sentimental and light-weight.[1°] Even in a recent monograph on Volodin, critic Tatiana Lanina failed to acknowledge his important dramatic discoveries, which for several decades have influenced Russian playwrights and screenwriters.

The overall goal of the present study is to eliminate the existing gap in our knowledge of this significant playwright and screenwriter and provide a better understanding of his dramatic works. Specifically, the study will:

a) Provide an in-depth look at Volodin's career and his major dramatic works;
b) Assign to his dramatic works their proper place in the history of modern Russian drama;
c) Make Volodin's works more accessible to the American public and thereby expand our understanding of modern Russian drama.

The body of this research contains five chapters, with each chapter devoted to the exploration of one major theme. Within the chapter the works under study are analyzed in chronological order to demonstrate the evolution of the theme from play t. play. Chapter I contains analyses of two plays The Factory Girl (Fabrichnaia devchonka, 1956) and Never Part From Your Loved Ones (S liubimymi ne rasstavaites°, 1972), which, despite the sixteen years between publication dates, share many themes and characters.

Chapter 11 is devoted to Five Evenings (Piat° vecherov, 1959), one of Volodin's most programmatic plays in terms of its themes and characters. It is also focused on the theme of alienation, its genesis and its appearance in other literary and dramatic works, particularly Fifteen Years In One's Life. Chapter III is devoted to the parable and allegorical plays, such as The Appointment (Naznachenie, 1961), Two Arrows (Dive strely, 1967),Kastruchcha (Kastruchcha, 1968), A Little Lizard (Yashcheritsa, 1969), The Mother of Jesus (Mat° Isusa, 1970), and Dulcinea From Toboso (Dultsineya tobosskaya, 1971). Chapter IV is focused on further development of the alienation theme in his later works: Mysterious Indian (Zagadochny indus, 1966), Mothers-Daughters (Dochki-materi, 1974), A Pulp-Writer (Grafoman, 1978), and The Blonde (Blondinka, 1979). Chapter V concludes the study with analysis of Volodin's work exclusively for cinema, focussing on Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell (Zvoniat, otkroite dyer', 1966) and Autumn Marathon (Osenny marafon, 1978).

Before we examine his work, some attention to Volodin's life and time is in order. As Volodin entered his adult life in the 1930s, the outburst of creativity in the theater of the previous decade was coming to a halt as the Communist Party began to exert stricter control over the arts. In April of 1932 a decree by the Central Committee of the Communist Party on The Reconstruction of Literary- artistic Organizations" marked the end of a period of rich diversity in art which had existed since the turn of the century.

This trend to limit heterogeneity in Soviet art was further strengthened in 1934 when at the First Writers[8] Congress, Party spokesman Andrei Zhdanov proclaimed Socialist Realism as "the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism,"" which remained the official doctrine of the Communist Party in matters of culture for the next fifty years.

The principles of Socialist Realism called for the "truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development and penetration into the spiritual world of Soviet man." They defined the responsibility of the artist as gV to provide the ideological transformation and education of the Soviet people in the spirit of Socialism." Socialist art was proclaimed to be the "lever in the hands of the proletariat which must be used to show the masses positive models of heroic labor." Adherence to the principles of Socialist Realism became the major criterion by which to judge all artistic output in the former Soviet Union.

In theater, the imposition of Socialist Realism as the only aesthetics led to a gradual suppression of everything that made the Soviet theater world famous during the 1920s. Charges of "formalism," a euphemism for non-realistic performing techniques widely used in the previous decade, intensified in the 1930s. The government increased pressure on the theaters to stage more Soviet plays. In 1934, "Glavrepertkom," the Maine Directorate for Matters of Repertoire, formed in 1923 and relatively inactive, was reorganized to combine the function of political censorship and artistic direction.

By the end of the 1930s the process of consolidation of government control over the arts, including theater and drama, was essentially complete. Art and culture were placed under the executive control of the Party, where it remained for the following fifty years. This process coincided with the purges that swept through Soviet society in the late 1930s when artists including Meyerhold, Erdman, Babel, Kirshon were arrested, exiled or even executed.For a Soviet playwright of that period, the doctrine of Socialist Realism meant that his dramatic work must be optimistic, patriotic and concrete, i.e, the main message of the play should be positive, hopeful, reassuring, and delivered in a simple, unambiguous form.

As such Soviet drama became, by and large, a tool to inspire and indoctrinate the masses by supplying idealized role models of working men and women struggling with class enemies in the battle for the new Socialist state. A typical plot in a Socialist Realist play of that period would center around a so-called "class struggle," usually between a simple worker or a farmer and a "reactionary," such as an engineer or an agronomist, who "impedes progress toward the "happy future." In the end, with the help of a Communist party official, the worker invariably wins the battle with the "reactionary" who admits his errors and repents.

Nikolai A. Gorchakov in his comprehensive book The Theater in Soviet Russia, cites among the others Platon Krechet (Platon Krechet, 1934) by Alexander Korneichuk and Land (Zemlia, 1937) by Nikolai Virta as typical examples of such highly tendentious plays of that period. Besides "agricultural" and "industrial" themes, other "desirable" subjects for Soviet plays included glorification of revolutionary heroes ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their cause, as well as glorification of Russia's past with larger-than-life historical characters which sought to legitimize Stalinist rule by showing it as a natural development of Russian history. Perhaps the most typical plays in this category are Lubov' Yarovaia (Lubov° Yarovaia, 1928) by Kostantin Trenev and Optimistic Tragedy (Optimisticheskaya tragedia, 1932) by Vsevolod Vishnevskii, which portray fanatically dedicated Communists who sacrifice their lives in the fight for the "bright future."

Among the most revealing historical plays of the period is Peter the Great (Piotr Pervyi, 1934) by Aleksei Tolstoi, which focuses on Peter's struggle to make Russia a more advanced country. The play obviously intended to draw historical parallels between Peter the Great and Stalin, who was to be perceived as the new savior of Russia. However, it would be an oversight to assume that during the period Soviet drama did not produce any plays of high artistic value. Oddly enough, in the 1930s Michael Bulgakov, one of the most significant Russian writers in this century, wrote his most important plays, such as The Days of the Turbins (Dni Turbinvkh, 1928), Moliere, A Cabal Of Hypocrites (Moliere ili cabala sviatosh, 1931), Flight (Beg, 1937).

The period was also marked by the arrival of the remarkable dramatic works of Evgenii Shvarts, whose talent, like Bulgakovus, remained largely unappreciated in his own country for many decades. Most of Shvarts' main plays, such as The Naked King (Golyi korol°, 1933), The Shadow (Ten°, 1940), and The Dragon (Drakon, 1944), written in the form of fairy tales, were produced on the Soviet stage only after the author's death in 1959. Shvarts, one of Volodin[8]s favorite playwrights, was among those who affected his playwriting career.[13] Besides such major names as Bulgakov and Shvarts--as well as Mayakovsky and Erdman, from the previous decade--there were other playwrights who also evaded the stereotypes of Socialist Realism.

Perhaps the most significant amfong them is Yurii Olesha, who is called by Gorchakov ". one of the most original "fellow travelers" in Soviet literature."[14] His plays, Conspiracy of Feelings (Zagovor chuvstv, 1929) and The List of Good Deeds (Soisok blagodgyanii, 1931), exemplify the type of drama which does not challenge or criticize Socialist Realism openly but for all practical purposes refuses to comply with its fundamental principles. Another frequently overlooked factor in the history of Soviet theater and drama is the Soviet audience, whose influence has been almost universally ignored.

Undoubtedly, Soviet s¯cectators had never had the degree of influence on the theater's repertoire or other artistic matters normally enjoyed by their Western counterparts. However, Soviet audiences at all times, including the most repressive 1930s, manifested their approval or disapproval of any particular dramatic work in basically the same way as the spectators in the West: by their attendance.

In the 1930s, for example, Soviet audiences, who were accustomed to the more sophisticated foreign and domestic plays of the previous decade, essentially balked at the primitivism of many new Soviet dramatic works and their usually unimaginative implementation on the Soviet stage. This explains, at least in part, why at the end of the 1930s, early 1940s, psychological dramas about love and family life began once again to make a tentative appearance on the Soviet stage. This type of play quickly became very popular, despite the hostility of the authorities and the critics, who attacked them as banal " and inappropriate".

Perhaps the most significant plays in this category are Aleksei Arbuzovils Tania (Tania, 1939), Leonid Leonov's The Orchards of Polovchansk (Polovchanskie sady, 1939), and Alexander Afinogenov's Mashen'ka (Mashen'ka, 1940). Tania became one of the most popular plays of the 1940s; it also marked the beginning of Arbuzov's successful career, which spanned almost fifty years and influenced future generations of Soviet playwrights, including Volodin. unlike other plays of the period dominated by social themes, Tania explores the personal life of a spoiled, narrow-minded young girl and her transition to a mature, professional woman and respected member of society.

Although the play deals with the lives of ordinary individuals, it does not markedly depart from Socialist Realism: the protagonist, Tania, having redeemed herself, is rewarded by finding love and happiness. This kind of Socialist Realism with a "human face" later became a trademark of Arbuzov's dramatic works.

The plays of Bulgakov, Olesha, Shvarts, and even Arbuzov demonstrate that despite the repressions, the liberal traditions of Russian culture continued to influence Soviet drama of the period. These and other playwrights and screenwriters who wrote similar plays and screenplays were not dissidents; and yet, they resisted the rigid indoctrination, lack of diversity, and the dictates of the Party bureaucrats in matters of culture. Their resistance took a variety of forms such as partial or complete noncompliance with the norms of Socialist Realism as well as apathy and refusal to participate in the life of the "collective."

Some, like Evgenii Shvarts, managed to circumvent the numerous conventions and prescriptions of censorship through the use of various allegorical devices such as allusion and Aesopian language, which they turned to when things could not be said directly. As Alma Law notes in her review, Soviet Drama: 1932-1980, " these types of plays carry far more weight with a Soviet audience than they would with an audience not schooled in looking for nuances and double meanings' [5] Although those playwrights who did not follow the stringent rules of Socialist Realism were in the minority, they made considerable contributions to their field and strongly affected the following generation of Russian playwrights, including Alexander Volodin.

Needless to say, the category of artists who refused to comply with the norms of Socialist Realism was not limited to drama or theater: noncompliant voices existed in every sphere of art. During World War II, the Soviet arts enjoyed a short period of relative freedom. However, in 1946 this period was abruptly ended when the Communist Party reimposed its strict ideological control. As the greater contact with other cultures and peoples that had prevailed under wartime conditions was cut off, Soviet artists, including playwrights and screenwriters, were required to guard Soviet society against the "poisonous miasmas of Western bourgeois art." Alexander Zhdanov, an infamous " expert" on culture who became Chief Ideologist of the Communist Party, issued a series of decrees designed to reaffirm Party control over the arts and purge them of all "foreign" influences.

In his decree of August 26, 1946, Zhdanov specifically denounced dramatic arts dominated, in his view, by "hostile ideology." In a direct response to his decree, some Soviet drama scholars began to promulgate a theory of "conflictlessness," which stipulated that since all economic, social, and other forms of conflict present in the capitalist world had been eliminated in the Soviet Union, there could be no room for conflict in a dramatic w.rk depicting Soviet life. As a result, Soviet plays of that time, focused on the artificial struggle between "the good and the better," became lifeless and empty. Real conflict was substituted with a rather mindless discussion on technical matters, such as, VG how to come up with a better cutter for a machine tool."

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the quality of dramatic works reached such a low level that people all but refused to go the theaters to see them. The death of Stalin in 1953 precipitated a general relaxation in social and cultural life and eased the rigid control of the Communist Party over the arts. It also marked the beginning of the period in Soviet history commonly known as the "Thaw."[19] The "Thaw" led to rather rapid changes in Soviet drama. As Alma Law notes in her overview, Soviet playwrights and screenwriters began to move more and more away from simplistic schematic characterizations of primitive Socialist Realism to a more accurate reflection of complex reality".

The construction of plays also underwent a welcome transformation: the typical "happy ending" required by Socialist Realism was replaced in most cases by an open-ended resolution that allowed a variety of interpretations. The theory of "conflictlessness" was quickly abandoned, and new types of plays began to appear. Among them were Leonid Zorin's The Guests (Gosti, 1954) and Alexander Shtein's A Personal Matter (Personal'noe delo, 1954) both of which address the previously untouchable issues of corruption and abuse among the bureaucratic elite. Other playwrights responded to the relaxation of Party control by turning their attention to issues concerning ordinary individuals such as the conflict between generations, the right of an individual to determine his own life without interference from the government, as well as matters of love, marriage and divorce.

Perhaps the most interesting dramatic work which appeared almost immediately after Stalin's death is Victor Rozov's The Young Graduates (V dobryi chas!, 1954), which marked the beginning of the successful career of this prominent playwright of the post-War generation. In the “Young Graduates” Rozov established himself as a spokesman for a new generation of Rssians whose views collided with those of their parents. In this play Rozov also introduced the theme which later dominated his future plays the right of an individual to remain true to himself and not to give way to either family or social pressure to conform.

Equally important changes took place in the Soviet theater, which began to stage previously banned plays by Bulgakov, Shvarts, Sukhovo-Kobylin, Mayakovskii and Erdman. A rediscovery of Meyerhold's works brought back to the Soviet stage a long needed theatricality with its extensive use of other art forms, such as song and dance. The "Thaw" period was also marked by the arrival of new talented directors such as Georgii Tovstonogov and Oleg Efremov, both of whom played a pivotal role in Volodin's playwrighting career, Tovstonogov as an Artistic Director of the Bolshoi Drama Theater (BDT) in Leningrad, and, a few years later, Efremov, as the head of the newly created Sovremennik Theater in Moscow. These two theaters later premiered most of Volodin's plays. Both directors became successful collaborators and personal friends of Volodin.

In general, Soviet theater and drama of the 1950s quickly regained much of its creative strength, despite two decades of stagnation under Stalin's dictatorship. Its speedy recovery indicates that the healthy forces, nurtured by the rich traditions of Russian and world theater and drama, were definitely alive in the former Soviet Union. They created favorable ground for a new generation of dramatists. In Volodin's case, however, besides the external factors, his own life and experience played an unusually important role in forming him as a writer as well as a man.

Alexander Moiseevich Lifshits (Volodin) was born in 1919 in Minsk. Orphaned at the age five, young Alexander was taken by his relatives in Moscow. He remembers that he never really felt himself a member of his new family because his relatives were very poor, and it was difficult for them feed another child. When Volodin was a teenager, he began writing poetry as a way to express feelings and emotions that he could not express otherwise. He soon discovered Pushkin, Lermontov, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Dostoevskii, Ostrovskii, as well as Shakespeare, Goethe, Dickens, Flaubert, and other great Russian and world masters who later influenced him as a playwright and screenwriter. Dostoevskii and Chekhov became his favorite writers.

At about this time his older cousin, a student of the famous Russian actor Aleksei Dikoi, introduced young Alexander to the theater by inviting him to see a play at their studio. This was the turning point in his life. From then on Volodin knew that his life would be forever connected to the theater. He recalls that he took every opportunity to go to his favorite place, the Malyi theater, where he was mesmerized by the intensity of Ostrovskii's plays. Volodin also says that he saw and loved the original production of Carlo Gozzi's Princess Turandot at the Vakhtangov Theatre. However, Meyerhold's production of Ostrovskii's The Forest did not appeal to him: the action on the stage looked too formal, unemotional.

Now Volodin thinks that he was simply too young to understand Meyerhold' work, and regrets that he did not see other Meyerhold productions. After graduation from high school in 1936, Volodin, eager to leave the inhospitable home of his relatives, applied to the Moscow Aviation Institute, which provided a dormitory for all students. However, Volodin stayed there for only one semester: he quickly realized that he would never be able to become an engineer. Instead, in the best traditions of young Russian intelligentsia influenced by the classics of Russian literature, Volodin decided to become a country school teacher. After a short training, he was sent to a small village in central Russia to teach Russian language and literature.

Only in that remote place, far away from all cultural centers, did Volodin realize how much he missed Moscow with its theaters, movie houses, and concert halls. He also missed his friends and their passionate, thought provoking disputes about the arts, politics and life, an environment which stimulated his mind and soul. He says that he had not realized before how much this intellectual environment had meant to him. However, his life in the country and his experience as a school teacher provided the future writer with a well of knowledge he later used in his dramatic and literary works. It also helped him to mature as a human being and clarified his priorities in life. It also added to his early determination to devote his life to the theater. In 1939 he returned to Moscow and applied to the Moscow Theatre Institute. Insecure about his acting abilities, Volodin chose the Theory Department.

However, after only two months of study, the future playwright was drafted into the military. At the time Volodin did not know that he would spend almost six years of his life in the army, including four years of frontline fighting. In 1944, Volodin was seriously wounded a piece of shrapnel penetrated his left lung, dangerously close to his heart. For a while his life was in serious danger. Later he described this traumatic experience in the short story, Fifteen Years in One's Life (Piatnadtsat° let zhizni, 1954). Just as the character in this story, Volodin miraculously survived, and, in 1946, after several life- threatening operations followed by a long recovery, returned to Moscow. Physically weak from his wounds and emotionally exhausted, Volodin struggled to find his own place in post-War society. He later said:

“I returned home in 1946 tormented by the War . . sick from my wounds and already tired emotionally from my life. The War was already in the past, but so was youth. And yet there was a feeling that I had not yet accomplished anything. This sense of personal misplacement, a feeling of alienation from society, later became a central theme in his literary and dramatic works.

As many young people who just returned from the War, Volodin had to face a fundamental question about his future. He decided not to continue his studies in the Theatre Institute.[22] There were several reasons for his decision. First, Soviet theater in 1946 was rather different from what it was before World War II. It had moved from one extreme of being completely without humor in the pre-War years, to the other extreme of being completely dominated by light-weight entertainment.[23] Volodin felt somewhat disappointed with this new theater, which he found rather unsophisticated.

However, there was another, perhaps more important reason for his decision not to return to the Theatre Institute: deep internal changes had occurred in him. Volodin in 1946 was no longer the romantic and naive young man of the pre-War period, but a mature adult who, having survived the pain and suffering of the War, was deeply scarred by that experience. Partly because of this, Volodin could not picture spending his life in a theater solely devoted to light-weight entertainment. Somewhat disappointed with the current state of the theater, unable to see his own place in it, Volodin was desperately looking for other alternatives.

After a period of hesitation and soul searching he applied to the Screenwriting Department of the Moscow Film Institute, VGIK. After his graduation from VGIK in 1950, Volodin had to face, once again, some tough choices. Although one of the best students in the Department, he was deeply unhappy about his future as a screenwriter. His unhappiness was primarily caused by the situation in the film industry at the time First of all, film making, as all arts in the Soviet Union at that time, was squashed under the enormous ideological pressure of the Communist dictatorship.

The 1947 comment by Stalin It is better to have fewer (films) but better H was interpreted literally by the cultural bureaucrats. As a result, the number of films produced in the country was sharply reduced. Needless to say, those few ideologically Hpure " movies which appeared during that period were artistically primitive. The dramatic quality of screenplays was also extremely poor. To avoid being forced to create such work Volodin refused to take a well paid job in the newly created Screenwriting Department at the prestigious Moscow Film Studio and asked instead to be assigned to any other job. As punishment, he was sent to work on military educational films at the Leningrad Documentary Film Studio, perhaps the least creative job in the whole film industry.

Life in Leningrad in 1950 continued to be extremely harsh. The city, recovering from the devastating War and three years of total blockade, was still experiencing a tremendous shortage of housing. Volodin, who was by then married and had a child, lived with his family in a small room in a communal apartment, sharing the kitchen and the bathroom with seven other families.

To escape the tedious and uninspiring job at the Documentary Film Studio as well as the hardships, Volodin began to write short stories about people he knew, mostly urban professionals: engineers, accountants, doctors, and civil servants, who struggled with similar hardships. Many of Volodin's characters were forced to make difficult moral choices, to maintain personal integrity in difficult situations. Most of the stories were published in 1953 and warmly received by readers. A year later they were published as a collection under the title Rasskazi. The bulk of these stories grew out of personal experiences, a feature of his writing which later became Volodin's trademark. It was now four years since his graduation from the Film Institute.

Although he spent his days slogging through the drudgery of making educational films for the military, in his leisure time he had produced some excellent short stories and was a published and modestly successful writer. And yet playwrighting had not even occurred to him. Indeed, when the suggestion came from a major theater that he write a play for their consideration—a remarkable opportunity for the young writer—Volodin very nearly did not accept. Fortunately for us all, he changed his mind.

Notes

For reference see: Alexander Volodin, "Izbrannie stikhi," Zvezda, October 1990: 32 (translated from Russian by William Kuhike).

Harold Segel, Twentieth Century Russian Drama: From Gorky to Present (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979) 422°486.

3 Even the best works on modern drama, such as an excellent three° volume

Modern Drama in Theory and Practice by J.L. Styan, lack any analysis of contemporary Russian plays.

4 James Edgar Bernhardt, "Alexander Vampilov: Five Plays," diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1980.

Alan Smith, The Dramatic Works of Alexei Arbuzov," diss., Indiana University, 1981.

Maia Kipp, The Dramaturgy of Edvard Radzinskii," diss., University of Kansas, 1985.

Alexander Volodin, Five Evenings, trans. Ariadne Nicolaeff (Minneapolis: Minnesota Drama Editions No.3, University of Minnesota, 1966).

Perhaps the only exception is Dr. Alma Law, who conducted an extensive interview with Volodin back in 1974.

9. See for example:

oigac Kasack, Dictionary of Russian literature Since 1917, Trans. Maria Carlson and Jana Hedaes (New Columbia University Press: ::-38) 452-453; or Segel: 360-61.

See for example:

Harold Clurman, "A Small Door To Soviet Dramaturgy," an introduction to: Alexander Volodin, Five Evenings, trans. Ariadne Nicolaeff (Minneapolis: Minnesota Drama Editions No 3, The University of Minnesota, 1966) 5.

Pravda, 11 July, 1934, 30

Nikolai A. Gorchakov, The Theater in Soviet Russia, Trans. Edgar Lehrman (New York: Columbia University Press: London: Oxford University Press: 1957) 286-304.

Shvarts, who until his death in 1959, lived in Leningrad had a friend, Joseph J. Zingerman, who worked in the 1950s as a Chief Dramatist of the Leningrad

Malyi Dramaticheskii Theater. Zingerman was also a friend of Volodin and urged him to write his first play, The Factory Girl (Fabrichnaya devchonka, 1956). This play was essentially written for Zingerman's theater. In one of his interviews Volodin notes that in 1957-58 he had net Shvarts several times. Shvarts, who was already seriously ill, encouraged him to continue his playwriting career.

Gorchakov 295.

Alma Law, "Soviet Drama: 1932-1980," unpublished essay, 1981, 29.

In literature, perhaps the most appropriate example of passive resistance to Socialist Realism are the works of the famous Russian writer Konstantin Paust.vskii wile continued the best traditions of Russian literature and focused his works on everyday lives of ordinary individuals. In music, a similar example is Dmitrii Shostakovich, one of the great composers of the 20th century, who for many years was denounced by the cultural authorities for his so-called "formalism."

Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 120

The situation in the Soviet theater reached a crisis. In a secret memorandun to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, wilioh has teen made tublic only recently, the Minister of Culture, Alexander Mikhaelov, warned that if the existing situation was allzwed to continue the Soviet theater would completely disi7.te:rate. The crisis associated with such a major cultural **ins=** an an :=Dortant part of the propaganda machine became

The "Thaw" period is commonly identified with the decade following the death of Stalin in 1953 and continued, with many interruptions and setbacks, until the fall of Khrushchev in 1964. The series of ups and downs in political and social conditions in the country during that period directly related

to shifts in the domestic and international situation.

Law 19.

Volodin, unpublished 9.

This is how Volodin explains his feelings about the theater at that time in one of his recent interviews: " .When I returned to Moscow from the military hospital in the South, I was afraid to go the theater: for me, it was associated with my previous, pre-War life, with a youthful happiness. . . And what if the magic is gone? Can I experience the same feelings? . . Finally I went to my favorite Mali Theatre to see Pigmalion by Bernard Shaw. The production was splendid, the actors gave terrific performances, but it had nothing to do with the theatre I remembered, with the theatre that existed in my memory all these years See Volodin, unpublished 17.

As all performing arts, theatre in the Soviet Union in 1944-46 was going through a rather peculiar period of its history. Instead of highly ideological, purely Socialist Realist productions which dominated theatre in the pre-War years, theater during that period was largely entertaining. This is what Critic Inna Vishnevskaya writes about it in The History of the Soviet Dramatic Theatre:

"A huge exhaustion accumulated in the Army and in the home front at the end of the War . . . required from the performing arts some kind of comic relief. Theater provided it in the form of various comedies, from the classical such as Ostrovskii and Goldoni, to the most modern, which enjoyed a huge success with audiences. Even the most primitive vaudeville were enthusiastically received by the spectators. However, this drift detrimentally affected the serious dramatic art because it promoted a thoughtless, purely entertaining type of theatre. . . . This phenomenon could be explained by the peculiarity of the War period. However, when the victory was achieved, the theatre had to face with a

new task. . . ." See: Istoria sovetskogo teatra (Moscow: Nauka, 1969) 12-13.

This analysis reflects the view of the Marxist-Leninist critics who considered indoctrination as a primary goal of dramatic arts in the former Soviet Union, felt uneasy about this new entertaining function of theatre. The relaxation of the stringent 1-a1¯7_7 control enjoyed by all performing arts during this short ¯period, was a grudging concession to the Soviet people who made an almost inhuman effort to achieve the victory in the War against Nazi Germany. The Party simply could not ignore the reality of this situation and allowed, indeed, instructed all performing arts, including theatre, to entertain audiences. The extent to which theatre undertook this mission could be easily demonstrated by examining the repertoire of Russian theaters in 1945-46 years: it was dominated by all sorts of comedies and entertainment shows. For the reference see: Teatral'nyi al°manakh, No.2, 1946, 224°234.

This phenomenon came to an abrupt end when in August ef 1946 the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued the Directive: "About the Repert.ire of Dramatic Theaters And the Measures To Improve It In this Directive, also called the "Zhdanov Directive, the Communist Party, once again, demanded that theatre serve exclusively the ideological needs of the state. For the reference see: al°manakh, No.3, 1946, 4°12.

A short flirtation with the lighter, more entertaining type of theatre has ended. The Soviet theatre once again entered the period of ideologically pure and yet artistically dull, stultifying productions.

24. VGIK is the acronym for all Russian Institute of Film Arts. Volodin's screenwrighting career will be discussed in details in Chapter V.

CHAPTER 1:

THE BEGINNING: DISCOVERY OF THE ART OF PLAYWRIGHTING

Despite the considerable success of his first book, Volodin still felt rather insecure about his literary talents. He said he was quite surprised when his friend, a Staff Dramatist at the Pushkin Drama Theater in St. Petersburg, asked him to write a play. His first reaction was negative: he believed he would fail miserably because he felt ignorant about writing plays: how to structure the play, how to build its plot, how to develop characters, etc. However, his friend kept insisting, and he finally yielded.' The subject of the play came from real life. Volodin remembers:

> Once I was invited for a discussion of my short stories to the dormitory of a textile factory occupied primarily by young women. There I was introduced to a girl ostracized by her colleagues for having been ejected from a dance hall for so called "amoral behavior." However, I liked the girl, I felt sorry for her because I believed that she was treated unfairly. I had an instant urge to write something about her story. I began to write a play."2

Shortly A Factory Girl (Fabrichnaia devchonka, 1956) was written. The play takes place in the dormitory for young women who work in the textile factory which owns the dormitory.3

The principal characters are Zhenia, Lelia, Nadiusha, and Irina, roommates in the factory dorm. Another important character is Bibichev, a young Communist Party official, who is young counselor at the factory. Most of these young women had come to the factory from the countryside to escape the extreme hardships of agricultural work and boredom in their home villages. Uprooted, without friends or relatives, they spend their uneventful lives either at work or in the dorm, with occasional visits to the dance halls where each of them hopes to find a husband and thus escape communal life in the dorm.

The story evolves around Zhenia, an attractive young woman who fights against any interference in her private life, something considered totally unacceptable in Soviet society. One night Zhenia is unfairly ejected from a dance hall because she openly stands up against the rude behavior of some young men. This incident becomes an issue which sharply divides the roommates. On the one hand, they are urged by Bibichev to denounce Zhenia for her "amoral behavior" and to write an ostracizing letter to the leading Young Communist League newspaper Konsomol8skava Pravda.' Bibichev perceives rebellious Zhenia as a threat to society because, in his view, she has violated the norms of Communist morality. He is joined, although somewhat reluctantly, by Lelia, who is a Young Communist League Leader.

On the other hand, the girls feel a certain compassion for Zhenia. Bibichev urges Zhenia to admit her guilt. When she refuses, he and other authorities begin a campaign of harassment that leads to the girl's dismissal from the factory and her expulsion from the dormitory, making her virtually a homeless person. This seemingly simple conflict becomes, in essence, a test of moral principles for each of the young women. Zhenia, the protagonist, represents a new type of character in Soviet drama of that period. Unlike the familiar female character from a typical Socialist Realist play with her romantic and naive view of life, Zhenia is a feisty and independent individual, who dares to challenge the system, although completely unconsciously.

Throughout the play she has numerous confrontations with her roommate Lelia, with the functionary Bibichev, and the manager of the dorm Anna Petrovna, all of whom represent the authorities. Zhenia rejects Lelia's notion of the subordination of the individual's personal needs to those of society. She also accuses her opponents of being hypocritical in handling the whole episode in the dance hall. Zhenia feels that she has been singled out for her outspokenness and independence. The following exchange dem nstrates the depth of Zhenia's discontent

> ZHENIA. What do you want from me? Get off my back! You've already done your part, you've destroyed my reputation around the whole country! Isn't it enough for you? Look at yourself first before teaching others!

> LELIA. And you don't need to brag about yourself, wait until other people praise you! You must prove yourself not with words, but with deeds.
>
> ZHENIA. Come on, you know how frequently we're judged by words, not by deeds!
>
> LELIA. You should be expelled from the Young Communist League for saying things like this!
>
> ZHENIA. Go ahead, expel me! I pity you and those so called "activists!" I think I am more capable of sacrificing myself for idea than any of you!
>
> LELIA. Don't be so sure.
>
> ZHENIA. I don't care what you think.5

As this dialogue indicates, Zhenia not only dares to confront the authorities but also mocks so called "activists" for their blind trust in the system. Another example of how A Factory Girl deviates from the established rules of Socialist Realism can be discerned in the exchange between Zhenia and Makarov, a Ministry official, who inspects their factory:

> ZHENIA. Can I ask you a question?
>
> MAKAROV. Sure…
>
> ZHENIA. Did you like what you saw at our working unit?
>
> MAKAROV. So far, so good, we'll see, what's next.
>
> ZHENIA. I'm sure you will like everything around here. It is because we have been cleaning all our machinery for a week, in preparation for your visit!
>
> MAKAROV. Well, maybe that is not so bad after all!

> ZHENIA. Well, we have been cleaning the machinery so hard that we actually stopped producing anything! And when you leave, we'll forget about the cleaning and start working like mad, trying to catch up with our plan!6

Those who are familiar with modern Soviet history may recall the social phenomenon called "pokazukha" (a show for management). "Pokazukha" means that something is presented in a favorable light, usually by means of deception. "Pokazukha" became so ingrained into the fabric of Soviet society that people simply stopped seeing it as a lie, a deception, and therefore morally reprehensible.' The episode with Makarov, although seemingly unrelated to the main story, demonstrates once again that A Factory Girl goes far beyond any Soviet play .f that period in its social criticism.

Zhenia's rebellion represents a spontaneous revolt against the hypocrisy of the Communist system. She does not consider herself a dissident, indeed, the word 'dissidentn is not yet a part of Russian political vocabulary. She considers herself a faithful member of Socialist society.

Nevertheless, her conflict with the authorities, although erratic and incoherent, cannot be dismissed easily. It casts serious doubts on the moral principles of the system and its right to interfere in the personal life of an individual. From the point of view of Marxist-Leninist critics these socially critical elements of the character represent a slander on Soviet youth.

In the struggle between Zhenia, a simple working girl, and the Communist authorities, Volodin does not hide his sympathy for his heroine. With a rather remarkable openness, disguised by a simple, unassuming style, Volodin creates a character strikingly bold for his time The role of Zhenia became a favorite part for many aspiring actresses of that time, u remembers another famous Russian playwright Edward Radzinskii, this character gave a new impetus to the new generation of young Soviet actresses. The passion, the hatred of any deception, everything they knew but could not say, could be expressed through the lines of Volodin's heroine.'" In 1956, scarcely three years after the end of Stalin's terror, it was a courageous act to write a play full of social criticism of the existing system.

Now, many years after the plaay was written, it has become clear that the protagonist in A Factory Girl presaged a new generation f highly critical characters, who appeared on the Russian stage in the late 1980s, during the time of Glasnost and. Perestroika. Traditionally all critical analysis of this play has been centered around the protagonist, Zhenia. And yet it would be an oversight to ignore other important characters, especially, Lelia, Nadiusha, and Bibichev. Lelia, Zhenia°s antagonist, is the leader of the local Young Communist League cell in the dormitory who, along with Bibichev, represents, especially in the first part of the play, an oppressive force.

However, Volodin deviates once again from the familiar cliche of Socialist Realist drama and creates a complex character with a rather unusual life story. Lelia's character represents, perhaps for the first time in modern Soviet drama, a conflict between rigid Communist morality instilled by the years of indoctrination, and natural human emotions which have to be suppressed. The play offers a rather unusual development of the relationship between Zhenia and Lelia. Rather than follow the dramatic cliche of Socialist Realism with its linear development of the conflict, Volodin introduces an unusual twist: Zhenia and Lelia, two nemeses, eventually become friends.

Lelia's character goes through a certain transformation in the play. At the beginning Lelia comes across as a self-righteous, highly indoctrinated individual whose official mission is to keep other girls in line with Communist morality. She crudely interferes in Zhenia's private life by organizing a media campaign to[33] ostracize her roommate for so called "amoral behavior In the second half of the play Lelia, touched by Zhenia°s kindness, dramatically changes her attitude. She begins to feel some compassion, even kinship for Zhenia and her plight. It turns out she has a secret of her own: a child out of wedlock, a very serious breach of "Communist morality." Both young women begin to show more sensitivity and tolerance toward each other. Lelia even feels somewhat embarrassed by her involvement in the campaign of Zhenia's harassment. The complexity of their relationship can be discerned from the following dialogue:

> ZHENIA. What happened, Lelia? A letter from home?

LELIA. (Lifts her head). My little sister,

Allochka is very sick. She has pneumonia on both sides!

ZHENIA. You're crazy to be worried like this Nowadays pneumonia is easily cured by antibiotics. When I was in the orphanage, this was not even considered a serious illness. You just take penicillin, and it's all gone.

LELIA. What are you talking about, Zhenia? They live so far away from everything, there's not even a doctor around, the hospital is miles and miles away. Perhaps I should send them some penicillin. Would you lend me fifty rubles?

ZHENIA. Of course. But how are you going to get it withouta prescription?

LELIA. I'm going to ask our factory doctor. I hope they will send a telegram how she is now, regular mail is so slow. (Unexpectedly). Zhenia, if she dies, I will die too.9

This episode marks a new beginning in the relationship between the two young women. Zhenia, for her part, realizes how tormented Lelia is because of the circumstances with her daughter. She feels compassion for her former adversary. She even offers to help buy medicine for the child. In turn, Lelia tries to help Zhenia to get her job back. This development of the relationship between two nemeses represents a new element in modern Russian drama. Never before in Soviet plays of that period had the adversaries become friends, particularly when one of them is considered morally unstable.

At the same time, by making Lelia more human and evoking some empathy for her, Volodin presents her as a victim of the morally corrupt system that encourages hypocrisy and cruelty toward other human beings. Lelia's deep internal conflict between her natural kindness and the rigid principles of "Communist morality" symbolizes the real drama of many Soviet citizens brought up during the 1930s and 1940s torn by a similar conflict. In dramatic terms, Lelia's character has become a harbinger of Tamara, in Volodin's next play, Five Evening, who is also tormented by the struggle between her personal feelings and the rigid norms of morality imposed by the hypocrisy of the system. However, Soviet critics once again chose to ignore this important development.

Another character which completely escaped the critics° attention is Nadiusha. Unlike Zhenia and Lelia, Nadiusha comes across as a rather unsophisticated individual, whose needs are limited to such basic things as having a family and taking care of her husband and children. From time to time Nadiusha argues with Lelia and even urges her to be more tolerant of Zhenia, but she is not a fighter like Zhenia. Nadiusha yields to pressure from the authorities and denounces Zhenia, but she does it reluctantly deep inside she would rather avoid this controversy.

Nadiusha, more than any other character in the play, exemplifies a typical product of Soviet society, a person without any principles, submissive to the authorities, ("obyvatel" in Russian), a "Homo Soveticus," as the Russian writer and philosopher Alexander Zinoviev ironically called them[1°] From the viewpoint of modern Soviet dramatic history Nadiusha represents a significant segment of the Soviet population who complied with the system and were prepared to sacrifice moral principles for the sake of material or other gain. It is not surprising that Soviet critics have thoroughly avoided any analysis of this character because it dispels the myth of moral superiority of the so called new Soviet person."

Another character considered by the critics as "unimportant" is Bibichev, a young Communist Party functionary. They dismiss him as a petty bureaucrat, insensitive and stupid, who does not represent the "healthy body of the Communist Party, caretaker of the welfare of the working people," an atypical phenomenon, a kind of aberration from the norm. However, those who are familiar with life in the Soviet Union at that time would certainly dispute this statement.

On the contrary, Bibichev represents, perhaps, the most typical Communist Party functionary with his dogmatism, ignorance, and intolerance of other people's views. In spite of his youth, Bibichev has already acquired all the attributes of a Stalinist party official. He does not ask, but orders and expects total obedience. He masterminds Zheniaus harassment and her eventual dismissal from the factory, just because she does nit want to conform to the stringent rules of social behavior imposed on her by the Communist authorities. Bibichev runs the dormitory for women like a military camp which thus becomes a microcosm of society run by the C.mmunist Party.

Even in the case of Bibichev, Volodin adds to the character some features which make him not just a symbol of oppression but a real person with his own feelings and dreams. By nature, he seems to be a rather harmless young man, happens to be in love with Lelia, and dreams of the uperfect,' ideologically pure marriage. To his disappointment Lelia's life is not so pure, thus he too has to face a moral choice. This situation allows Volodin to show Bibichev as something more than the rigid, ever righteous Party functionary.

As other characters in the play Bibichev is torn between conflicting loyalties: on the one hand he loves Lelia, one the other hand he cannot reconcile his feelings with the rigid principles of morality instilled in him, as in everyone else in his generation, by the years of indoctrination:

> BIBICHEV. I just can't understand. It's simply incomprehensible. How could you talk about morality, about a healthy Soviet family, and so on You're just a chameleon...
>
> LELIA. You see, I told you…
>
> BIBICHEV. All right, Lelia. Don't talk about it Okay? We'll discuss it later. Just be quite.
>
> LELIA. I've been quite for the last four years. I don't want to any more.
>
> BIBICHEV. Lelia, please keep it quite, don't embarrass yourself. Think about your Young Communist Cell which you're a leader of.
>
> LELIA. I didn't ask to be a leader.
>
> BIBICHEV. As far as our personal relationship is concerned, I can say one thing: this revelation deeply upsets me, and how to resolve this issue--I don't know.
>
> LELIA. Don't worry, Yurii, I know.
>
> BIBICHEV. You know, you know! And how about me? I've been waiting for two years! No, three years!

This dialogue underscores the ambiguity of Bibichev's moral stand. His feelings toward Lelia seem to be rather sincere. And yet, Bibichev is quick to sacrifice them when Lelia does not happen to be as "pure" as he thought. As soon as he finds out about Lelia's daughter he becomes primarily

concerned with how to keep the secret. The play subtly but clearly dramatizes how the Communist system morally corrodes basically normal human beings and converts them into moral monsters. From the dramatic point of view, Bibichev's character represents a new development in modern Soviet drama accustomed to dehumanized, faultless Communist Party officials.

Among the main characters Irina is, perhaps, least defined. Essentially all we know about her is that she is going to marry a Bulgarian man and leave the country. She became involved with a foreigner, which at that time was highly disapproved by the authorities. On the other hand, she comes across as an indoctrinated individual who sides against Zhenia. The way Irina behaves in the incident with Zhenia, it would be hard to expect from her such an unorthodox act as becoming involved with a foreigner. Unfortunately, the play does not resolve this contradiction and leaves Irina's character essentially undeveloped. As it stands now, she serves simply as yet another example of the hypocrisy of Soviet social morality.

Despite the relative weakness of this and a few other secondary characters, A Factory Girl is a significant dramatic piece which introduces many themes and characters previously unknown to Soviet drama. This play helped Volodin to develop his dramatic style and formulate his artistic credo, which he articulated in a presentation at the conference on Modern Drama in 1957:

> “If people interact on stage for three or four hours: argue, fight, cry, there must be a good reason for it… In theater…we all, from the playwrights to the actors, seem to have forgotten how to explore in depth the internal motivations of all characters, both "positive" and "negative." For a very long time, everyone in theater understood what was "right" and was "wrong," what was "correct," and what was "incorrect." Everything was clear. And the audience could quickly figure everything out However, in real life a "negative" character sincerely believes and fights passionately for his own views, he believes that he is a good person I am convinced that if we learn how to explore in depth the internal motivations of each and every character on stage then we will have a real conflict…

Besides being innovative in terms of its characters and themes, A Factory Girl has a rather unusual structure. It is built in the form of isolated, sometimes unconnected episodes more typical to the cinema than the theater. This is how the playwright himself answers questions about it:

> “I have always felt that the action in a play should be very intense, the audience should not wait until the end to see a resolution of every conflict. There are two kinds of plays. One is verbal, you say something, I reply, and so on people simply talk to each other…a dialogue form… Second is visual, when everything is aimed to create a visual image. That is how I write my plays. It helps me to get a better feeling for the internal life of the characters—who is internally divided, who against who, and so on…

Undoubtedly Volodin's training as a screenwriter played a key role in forming his dramatic style. It is probably not a coincidence that the play begins with the episode of shooting a film documentary about life in a factory dormitory where all four young women participate as "actors." This

episode also underscores one of the major themes in the play reality versus "pokazukha," the complexity of human life versus the oversimplification and cliches of Party propaganda.

In 1983-84 while preparing a new edition of his plays called Autumn Marathon (Osennii marafon),'[4] Volodin revised A Factory Girl,'[5] Although in the new version the major characters are basically the same, the changes in the final scene somewhat alter the mood in the play. Originally, Zhenia reunites with her old roommates. In the new version Volodin leaves this fact open to interpretation. Indeed, Volodin thoroughly avoids any direct indication whether or not she would return. In addition, new lines in the final scene make Zhenia°s character much more defiant:

> NINA. Zhenia, you should reapply to the factory. If you admit your guilt I'm sure they will reinstate you!
>
> ZHENIA. Ask them? Reapply? Humiliate myself in front of them? Never!'[6]

Volodin also changed the ending of the play. He added the following beat to the final scene:

> “The cameraman screens the footage. A sad melody accompanies the footage of an old documentary:"Where you run, my favorite path,here you call me, where you lead me, He for whom I waited, whom I loved will never come back. . ." The screen goes black. The cameraman is sitting silently. He can hear the voice of his assistant: "Dmitri' Sergeevich, is something wrong? The cameraman answers: "No, no everything is fine. o[n] Yet something is still bothering him. . .

The play ends as it began, with film making. In addition, the mood in the play is now different: more ambiguous, less optimistic. As the playwright repeatedly stressed, he could not stand "those 'happy endings' of Socialist Realist drama."[18] The new ending also reflects the sense of deep pessimism which Volodin felt for many years and which penetrated his other dramatic and literary works.

A Factory Girl became a milestone in the history of modern Soviet drama because it deviated from the rigid norms of Socialist Realism, although its main characters are still industrial workers. It also became one of the first plays to deal with the issues of personal freedom and the rights of an individual within Socialist society. To see how A Factory Girl diverges from the basic tenets of Socialist Realism, one may want to compare it with Irkutskaya istoria (It Happened in Irkutsk) by Aleksei Arbuzov, a popular play typically associated with the Soviet drama of that period.[19] Like A Factory Girl, Arbuzov's play deals with the personal relationships among working people. It involves a romantic triangle between two construction workers, Viktor and Sergei, and a frolicsome girl named Valia who works at a nearby shop. Circumstances are such that Valia marries Sergei although she truly loves Viktor. In a tragic accident Sergei looses his life while trying to rescue children from an overturned river raft. Valia, who already has two children by that time, is overcome with grief.

Viktor who still loves Valia, offers her a job on the excavator, previously held by her late husband, where she would become a part of the same team. Valia accepts the proposal and gradually finds happiness in life again. At the end of the play Arbuzov leads us to believe that she and Viktor will eventually marry.

The way Arbuzov depicts reality and provides a happy resolution of the conflict with a customary glorification of the system and happiness in collective work makes It Happened In Irkutsk a typical Socialist Realist play. A Factory Girl, on the other hand, gives a much more somber and realistic view of society and people. It presents the W *Irking class not as a monolith but rather as an amalgamation of diverse and frequently conflicting individuals, searching for their own happiness in life. Although not a dissident play, A Factory Girl essentially repudiates, however mutely, the main premise of the Soviet system as providing a happy place for all Furthermore, it presents Communist Party officials in a rather unattractive light in sharp contrast to the benevolent presentation of the Communist Party and the Government in Socialist Realist plays. In short, A Factory Girl violates practically all the major tenets of Socialist Realism g it is not optimistic; it does not follow the Party line; it does not instruct or indoctrinate.[2°]

Finally and most importantly, the play clearly expresses sympathy for the character who dares to challenge the authorities. After the play had been written, Volodin was convinced that nobody would want to stage it, because, in his view, the play was rather weak, amateurish, unworthy of professional production. To his surprise, the play was soon produced on the professional stage, first at the Drama Theater in the city of Kazan', and then in Moscow and Leningrad. All productions were enthusiastically received. Soon more than thirty other theaters throughout the country included A Factory Girl in their repertoire.[21]

Volodin himself was quite surprised that the play became so popular. He believes that the major factor contributing to its success was its timing. After so many years of the total dominance of Socialist Realist drama, the audience longed for more sophisticated plays. A Factory Girl clearly satisfied those needs. An interesting detail: Volodin said in one of his interviews that originally the play was titled The Lie, but later it had to be changed to its current title due to censorship considerations.

Despite its considerable success with audiences, A Factory Girl brought a barrage of criticism from theater critics all over the country. They approached the play from Marxist- Leninist positions and rejected the socially critical elements in it Volodin as well as his play became targets of pointed attacks in various theater and literary publications (all controlled by the government). This is how Volodin himself describes the atmosphere of that period:

> "It all began with the production of A Factor Girl in Moscow. Somehow the play was staged at the huge Red Army Theater having bypassed serious censorship. Because of its instant success, it became very difficult for the authorities to ban the play outright after so many people had seen and liked it so much. However, the authorities accused me of being anti government. I became a target for harassment by the cultural authorities. They charged me with attempting to "split the people and the government 23

Furthermore, the critics refused to admit the fact that, perhaps for the first time in recent history, the characters in Volodinils play represented real people in all their complexity, in whom the "good" and the "bad" were inseparably mixed. For Volodin this non-linear development of the characters became a matter of artistic principle. He called it a "dialectic of soul He explains:

> "This means that a character acts in one way, but later he does something completely opposite. And these two inseparable parts of him constantly struggle with each other. This is the most important thing for me! Before there were only clear cut characters on the Soviet stage "good" or "bad." My characters, however, are both "good" and "bad" at the same time 24

Soviet theater critics preferred to ignore this important development. Igor Vinetskii and Valentina Koroleva in their review on the opening of the play in Kazan' write that it is a "total falsification of Soviet reality . . an attempt by the author to spread seeds of doubt and nihilism into the minds of Soviet youth."[25] This accusation is echoed by Stanislav Kulemin in his review, "Vsia ii eta pravda? (Is This the Whole Truth?), published in the official newspaper of the Young Communist League, Komsomol'skaya Pravda.[26] In "Chto u nikh za dushoi? (Do They Really Have Any Values?), published in the main Soviet theater magazine, Teatr, critics Ludmila Barudina and Pavel Demin accuse Volodin of distorting the Socialist reality and "defiling Soviet youth," and label the play ideologically harmful to the Soviet people.[27] They overlook the depth of Zhenia's discontent and dismiss her as being "immature," "ignorant," "erratic." One finds similar statements in the review by Vera Smirnova published in Novyi Mir.[28]

Another vicious assault came from the editor of the weekly magazine Ogoniok Anatoly Sofronov, who attacked the author for making his protagonist a "fighter for justice . . a martyr. ." Sofronov essentially denounces Volodin as being an anti-socialist writer (a very dangerous accusation at that time): ". °Let's set the record straight: rather shrewdly (you cannot deny this to the author), the play slanders our society . ."3° Evgenii Surkov in his article "Zhenia Shulzenko, eyo druziya i vragi" (Zhenia Shul'zhenko, Her Friends and Enemies), published in the literary magazine Znamia, accused Volodin of "ideological shortsightedness" and "political blindness".

He also attacked Marina Stroeva, one of the few Soviet critics who dared to defend the play and the author. Surkov accuses her of being soft on the "ideological subversion" embodied, in his view, in A Factory Girl. To her credit Stroeva, in her extensive review "Kriticheskoe napravlenie uma" (The Critical Direction Of Mind), published in Teatr, makes an honest attempt, although a somewhat timid one, to approach the issues raised in the play as a reflection of problems in the society.[32]

Stroeva compares A Factory Girl with Farewell (V dobryi char by Viktor Rozov, which appeared on stage a year earlier. In her view, both plays are strongly influenced by Chekhovian drama, both contextually and stylistically. At the same time Stroeva believed that Volodin's play goes much further than Rozov's, A Factory Girl reaches beyond lyric psychological drama and touches social cords hardly touched by Rozov. o[n33] She also states that the conflict in Volodin's play is one of the typical conflicts of our time. The subject of the play, in her view, is larger than the problem with youth it speaks about rather broad social phenomena.

Even several years after its premiere A Factory Girl continued to stir controversy among theater critics.[35] Ironically, the negative press perhaps even helped its success with audiences.[36] The controversy surrounding A Factory Girl reflects complex and contradictory processes which were taking place in the Soviet Union at that time. On the one hand, some elements in the ruling Communist Party were trying to disassociate the Party from the heinous crimes committed by Stalin against the Soviet people. They were attempting to liberalize some aspects of the social and cultural life in the Soviet Union.

On the other hand, the conservative, Stalinist forces within the Communist Party mounted a stiff resistance to these changes. Their resistance was particularly strong in the area of culture. Like many other art and literary works which appeared during that period, A Factory Girl got caught in the cross fire between those forces. It is no coincidence that even now A Factory Girl continues to attract a new generation of theater directors. Its characters and themes remain just as important today as they were thirty years ago.

In 1985 a young Russian director Boris Schedrin successfully staged the play at the Mossovet Theater in Moscow. As the critic Aleksei Zverev writes, .Schedrin's production scrupulously follows the play nothing has been changed. The director has simply found that something in the play continues to make it relevant." He acknowledges that A Factory Girl deserves a special place in the history of Soviet drama because it provided for the first time a truthful presentation of the real life of ordinary people.

details but Another critic, Olga Vosiakova, writes in her 1988 review of this and other Volodin plays that the 1985 production of A Factory Girl looks like, "…an episode of an old film documentary, one example of early life… It seems that the most important goal for Schedrin was not to focus on color" of that timealthough we understand that what we see on stage is not only part of our past but our present as well…"

Although in the following years Volodin's works were mainly focused on the problems of the intelligentsia, issues related to the personal lives of working men and w. men continued fascinate to him. Then, fifteen years later after publication of A Factory Girl a seemingly unrelated episode unexpectedly returned Volodin to its themes and even its characters. In 1971 Volodin was elected to serve as a people's deputy on a family court in one of Leningrad's working class districts. In this capacity he had to assist a District Judge in various family disputes, primarily divorces.

This new and intense experience with young workers stimulated a new play, Never Part From Your Loved Ones (S liubimymi ne rasstavaites', 1971) which deals with problems similar to those in his first play. As in A Factory Girl, the main characters are factory workers, and one of its protagonists is a young working class woman, Katia, who shares certain characteristics with Zhenia from A Factory Girl. Furthermore, some parts in Never Part From Your Loved Ones, just as in A Factory Girl, take place in a dormitory for workers as well as in a factory recreation hall.

Never Part From Your Loved Ones is a drama about divorce, the failure of personal relationships, and the pain and destruction it brings along with it In even more pronounced fashion than his others, the play is built in the form of separate episodes, most of which take place in a court room during the divorce hearings. Never Part From Your Loved Ones develops on two, seemingly independent and yet related levels. On one level, the play closely follows the tumultuous relationship of a recently married and later divorced couple, Katia and Mitia, two young factory workers. On another level, it examines divorce in a more general sense, as a personal tragedy in numerous variations.

The story of Katia and Mitia begins when Katia spends a night at the house of a man she has met at a party which she has attended without her husband. Mitia feels hurt and betrayed. Katia strongly denies any intimate involvement with the man although she defends her behavior as a manifestation of her personal freedom:

> KATIA. You know, Mitia, all I need is freedom I can feel comfortable only when I'm free. I don't like to be dependent on anyone. Even on my friends.

In her feistiness and independence Katia reminds one of Zhenia from A Factory Girl. She demonstrates her combative spirit in the following episode with a Judge to whom, unable to resolve their conflict, Katia and Mitia come to seek a divorce:

> THE JUDGE. (to Katia). Why have you decided to get a divorce now?
> KATIA. Because he doesn't love me anymore.
>
> THE JUDGE. That's not a good reason to get divorce.
>
> KATIA. Why?
>
> THE JUDGE. In this courtroom I am the only one who has the right to ask questions. Anyway, I don't understand: yesterday you loved him, today you don't...
>
> KATIA. That's right. Yesterday I loved him, today I don't
>
> THE JUDGE. That's not an answer. And I warn you to be more respectful to the court.
>
> KATIA. What have I done wrong?
>
> THE JUDGE. Are you going to argue with me?
>
> KATIA. No, I just want to know what I've done wrong.

For a while, after the divorce has been granted, both Mitia and Katia behave as if they really do not care for each other. However, they soon realize that the divorce does not solve their problems. Forced to share the same one room apartment because of the acute housing shortage, Katia and Mitia are unable to communicate with each other and work out their differences because each of them is too proud to take the first step towards reconciliation. This uneasy stalemate continues until Katia eventually moves back to the factory dormitory when she finds out that Mitia has become involved with another woman, Irina. Mitia, for his part, still cannot forgive what he considers Katia's betrayal.

His involvement with Irina reflects more the frustration in his relationship with Katia than a true attraction to Irina. Katia, in the meantime, is courted by a young man, Valera, who in charge of the recreation hall. However, she is not interested in a new relationship: she still loves her husband. Eventually Katia becomes so distressed by her separation from Mitia that she ends up in a mental hospital with a nervous breakdown. Shaken by this event, both Mitia and Katia begin to realize that they need to communicate with each other and work out their differences.

The underlying feelings in the story is expressed by a minor character called simply "woman." She says:

> A WOMAN. . Well, what can you tell? This is a life. . . At the beginning there were simple meetings: first, with one person, then with another, every day a new person. Then partings, first with one person, then with another. . . But you don't need to part from them: they are not just acquaintances, they are friends! No, they are not just friends, they are loved ones! . . It seems one would ask: why do you need to part from

> your loved ones? To find other loved ones, to part from them just the same? What for? To part from everyone?

This simple speech, almost a stream of consciousness, embodies the main idea of the play. In a simple and yet very poetic form the playwright presents with compassion and wisdom his deep understanding of the most intricate aspects of human relations.

In addition to the story of Katia and Mitia, Never Part From Your Loved Ones contains a series of independent episodes which take place in the courtroom during divorce procedure. Each episode portrays a different couple petitioning the Judge to grant them a divorce. In one episode a middle-aged man asks to divorce his wife after twenty four years of marriage because he wants to reunite with a woman he was in love with as a young man. During World War II they lost contact with each other and ended up marrying other people. Many years later they meet again and discover that they feel strongly about one another. They decide to separate from their respective spouses and begin a new life together. In another episode, a woman asks for divorce from her alcoholic and abusive husband. Although this episode is written with a touch of humor, it nevertheless brings up the very serious problem of alcoholism and family abuse, both rampant in the former Soviet Union and even today. In another case, a young woman appears in court because her mother urges her to divorce her husband on the grounds that he refuses to buy a separate apartment for them.

After short mediation the Judge manages to convince the young people, who still love each other, to ignore the mother's interference and stay together. In a somewhat similar case, a man asks to dissolve his marriage because of what he describes as irreconcilable differences. When the Judge asks him to be more specific and explain what those differences are, the man cannot site anything in particular.

Once again the Judge serves as a mediator and recommends the couple establish better communications and work out their differences. In a very different case, a wife comes to the court and asks the judge to deny her husband's request for divorce despite the fact that_he openly admits having a relationship with another woman® She, as many other women, wants to preserve the family at any cost, even when in reality the family does not exist any more Unlike the previous cases, there is very little that the Judge can do.

Despite the uniqueness of each story, they all have something in common g failed relationships, unhappy family. In the case of Katia and Mitia, the failure of their relati.nship is caused by their inability to communicate and find a balance between personal freedom and responsibility as a spouse.

The importance of this issue, which crosses national and societal boundaries, becomes particularly evident as women in the twentieth century increasingly challenge their traditional role in the family. More than twenty years ago, Volodin, with remarkable foresight, brought this very modern issue to the fore. In a more general sense, this play demonstrates the playwright's profound understanding of the complexity of marital relationships.

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The publication of Never Part From Your Loved Ones in 1972 brought a mixed reaction from the critics. Dmitrii Zolotnitskii, who liked the play, wrote in Teatr that: “...We see in this play . . the best of what we call Volodin's style g an understanding and even respect for his characters, particularly female ones, like the numerous 'Factory Girls;' his appeal to remain true to one's values regardless of circumstances; his defense of decency and honesty. . "39 However, most Soviet critics took a rather different view. Yurii Andreev wrote in Sovremennaya literatura that despite the playwright's best intentions Never Part From Your Loved Ones was a failure because " ...the author . arbitrarily selected only negative aspects of Soviet family life...He posed a rhetorical question "Why are the young heroes of Volodin's play so underdeveloped emotionally? Why are they so negative? .

.

Clearly their attitudes do not represent our Socialist ideas they do not see the huge opportunities which our Soviet state offers to them."[41] His views were echoed by Yurii Zubkov who wrote, VII Let's take, for example, Alexander Volodin's Never Part From Your Loved Ones. His protagonists are emotionally and psychologically immature, particularly Katia. Her behavior lacks responsibility for the family, the importance of which was stressed by Vladimir Ilich Lenin in his famous letter to Inessa Armand... The behavior of other characters who came to ask for divorce .are just as illogical and immature as Katia's."

Shortly after its publication, Never Part From Your Loved Ones was staged in several theaters throughout the country. Although most attention was paid to the production at the Leningrad Theater For Young Audiences, in the author's view Never Part From Your Loved Ones was far more successfully staged in the Minsk theater in 1972. In Minsk Never Part From Your Loved Ones was staged by a young director, Nikolai Sheiko. I liked his production much more than those in Moscow and leningrad. . He is a very theatrical director, an admirer of Meyerhold. He staged the play in the style of Meyerholdz with the dance and pantomime. Do you remember the scenes in a dance hall where the characters play all kinds of games? The games there alternated with the episodes in the courtroom. Well, Sheiko melted those two parts together: the same characters who participated in the court scene then danced or played games or pantomimes._One of the games they played was one where

everyone had a cover on his eyes. Blinded they walked toward the edge of the stage as if they were ready to fall down. It was a bit scary. And at the end, when the protagonist, Katia, became a patient in a mental hospital, all the characters, including the Judge and Valera, an entertainer in the dance hall, also became patients in that hospital. . Sheiko used these various theatrical devices to symbolize, on one hand, the joy of life, and, on the other, the misery of the break up of relationships, separation, and divorce. . 43 Volodin says that the success of the production in Minsk could be attributed primarily to the imagination, energy and enthusiasm of everyone involved. He adds that despite the occasional sense of tragedy, the show left the audience with a sense of hope and optimism. Volodin notes that Sheiko's production of Never Part From Your Loved Ones has become one the most successful implementations of his works on stage.

Critic Tatiana Lanina, in her 1989 book on Volodin, correctly points out that Never Part From Your Loved Ones offers an unusually large slice of Soviet life in the sixties and seventies with its underlying hardship. She writes, "…Never before have the lives of Volodin's characters been so cruel, so senseless. The most intimate details are brought to light and publicly discussed… the variety and complexity of family life are condensed in the form of answers to standard questions from the Judge.""

On the surface, Never Part From Your Loved Ones is perhaps Volodin's most apolitical play; many of the problems treated in it such as drugs and physical abuse, educational discrepancy, psychological and emotional incompatibility between spouses exist in any modern society. However, there are some family problems which are clearly caused by the special social conditions in the USSR. Chief among them is the enormous overcrowding resulting from a chronic shortage of housing. This play demonstrates, once again, that even the most intimate aspects of personal lives are affected by social conditions.

To some extent this is true of any society, but it is particularly true of the totalitarian society which existed in the former Soviet Union. Although Never Part From Your Loved Ones has not been staged recently in Russia, there is no doubt that it will soon find a director who will bring it to life once again for contemporary audiences, because its themes and characters are as pertinent today as they were twenty years ago.

Notes

1. Volodin remembers that the only reason he agreed was because he felt obliged to repay for the complementary tickets he used to receive from his friend.

2. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 3.

3. It was very common at that time for the factories to provide dormitories for their single and even family workers because of a tremendous housing shortage after the World War II. As a matter of policy, individuals who lived in the

dorm did not have the right to choose their roommates; instead, the Communist party officials or their proxies made those decisions for them. As a result, very different sometimes even incompatible individuals had to live in the same room, sharing one bathroom and one kitchen with about sixty other people living on the same floor.

4. At that time public denunciation in such publication as Komsomol'skaya Pravda could easily have much more serious implications: a dismissal from the job, a loss of place to live, or even a loss of freedom. Ironically, this very newspaper launched on its pages one of sharpest attacks on Volodin and his play. See Reference 16.

5 Alexander Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka, Teatr, May 1956, 7-41.

6. Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka 23-24.

7. This phenomenon is by no means an invention of the Communists. Term "Pokazukha" goes back as far as 18th century, when Prince Potemkin, one of the favorite of Katherine the Great, built special villages to please his Empress with a view of a "happy life" of her peasants. Sine then the term "Potemkin's villages" have become a syniknym of "Pokazukha." Because Russia experienced various forms of totalitarian throughout its all history, deception of the superiors became an excepted norm of Russian social life.

8. Edward Radzinskii, "Aktrisa," Sovetskaya Kultura, 16 October, 1986, 6.

9. Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka 36.

10. Alexander Zinoviev, Homo Soveticus (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.) 1985.

11. Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka 37.

12. Alexander Volodin, unpublished presentation at the Conference on Modern Drama, Leningrad, March 28, 1957. (Personal archive of A. Volodin).

13. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews 17.

14. Alexander Volodin, Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisate1°) 1985.

15. Volodin only reluctantly agreed because he did not like to go back to his earlier works.

16. Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka 40.

17. Volodin, Fabrichnaya devchonka 41.

18. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews 4.

19. Harold Segel, Twentieth Century Russian Drama: From Gorky to Present (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 385-420.

20. Kenneth Clark, The Soviet Novel, History of Ritual (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 27.

21. Tatiana Lanina, Alexander Volodin (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1989) 63.

22. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews 19.

23. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews 20.

24. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews 22.

25. Igor Vinetskii and Valentina Koroleva, "0 pravde podlinnoi mnimoi," Sovetskaya Tataria, 12 February, 1957, 4.

26. Stanislav Kulemin, "Vsia li eta pravda?," Komsomolifskaya Pravda, 12 July, 1957, 4.

27. Ludmila Barudina and Pavel Demin, "Chto u nikh za dushoi?," Teatr, June 1957, 57,

28. Vera Smirnova, "Na fabrichnoi okraine," Novvi Mir, November 1957, 54-59,

29. Anatoly Sofronov, "Vo sne naiavu," Literaturnaya Gazeta, 7 December, 1957, 2.

30. Sofronov 3.

31. Evgenii Surkov, "Zhenia Shulizhenko, ee druzia i vragi," Znamia, March 1958, 170-187.

32. Marina Stroeva, "Kriticheskoe napravlenie uma," Teatr, June 1957, 63.

33. Stroeva 64.

34. Stroeva 66.

35. Michael Alekseev, "Poiski I nakhodki," Novyi Mir, November 1959, 257-260.

36. Those who are familiar with the life in the former Soviet Union may remember a strange paradox the more work of art was criticized in the official press, the more interest and sympathy this work evoked from the public. Another example of this unusual phenomenon is the birth of the Taganka Theater in Moscow in 1964. Its first production, The Good Woman of Sezuan, generated so much negative publicity that the authorities could not ignore it and eventually gave the director, Yurii Liubimov, a chance to organize his own theater, which later became one of the most renown theaters in the world. (See Samuel Marinov, The Birth Of Taganka Theater, unpublished).

37. Aleksei Zverev, "Ogoniok neizvestno otkuda," Novyi Mir, September 1987, 234.

38. Olga Vosiakova, "0 Tamare, Zhen'ke i blondinke," Literaturnoe obozrenie 12, 1988, 90.

39. Dmitrii Zolotnitskii, "S lubimymi ne rasstavatiesil: obozrenie odnogo spektaklia," Teatr, May 1972, 53.

40. Yurii Andreev, "Popytka istroiko-literaturnogo analiza odnoi sovremennoi piiesy," Sovremenna a literatura, November 1974, 168.

41. Andreev 169.

42. Yurii Zubkov, Geroi ikonflicty v sovremennoi drame, (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1975) 96-97.

43. Alma Law, unpublished interview with Alexander Volodin, 1974, 4-5.

44. Lanina 199-200.

Chapter II

FIVE EVENINGS: NEW THEMES, NEW CHARACTERS

In the late 1950s, at the beginning of the creative odyssey which would lead him to Never Depart From Your Loved Ones, Volodin was experiencing a significant degree of uncertainty about his abilities as a dramatist. Despite the considerable success of his first play, he felt unsatisfied with the artistic quality of the piece. In his view, A Factory Girl was dramatically weak, it delineated the conflict between the protagonist and the nemeses too straight-forwardly; the characters in general were rather simplistic and did not reflect the complexity of the world around him.

And yet, many of his friends, members of the so called "progressive intelligentsia,' urged him to write another play along the same lines because they believed that A Factory Girl had denounced the existing system. Volodin resisted that idea. As he emphatically notes in his interview,2 he wanted to write something entirely different, with no Party functionaries whatsoever.

He says he never intended to "denounce" anything or anybody in his play. His goal was to tell the story of a girl who was unjustly treated by her superiors. Besides, cultural authorities and critics continued to harass him for deviations from the "sacred" tenets of Socialist Realism. All these factors explain his reluctance to write another Factory Girl. They also explain why he took more than two years to write his second play, Five Evenings (Plat' Vecherov, 1959). As he himself says:

> I had a difficult time writing. I felt that everybody was expecting from me a play similar to A Factory Girl, but I simply could not do it Famous theatre director Nikolai Akimov once said: "Both friends and enemies expect you to be crucified." And this was true. I saw that the "progressive intelligentsia" wanted another rebellious play which would go against our system. However, I wanted to write something entirely different: something intimate and sad. As you know, in a typical Socialist Realist play Communist Party officials usually decide who will be rewarded and who will be punished, and at the end there is always a Party functionary who sets everything "straight". In A Factory Girl there is such a character, Bibichev. This time I wanted to write a play without any Communist Party or government officials: one does not need to curse them or to praise them, it is much better to simply ignore their existence. That is why Five Evenings does not have any officials."

Five Evenings was based on Volodin's short story, "Fifteen Years In One's Life, written in the early 1950s. "Fifteen Years In One's Life" is the story of a free spirited middle-aged man, Alexander Petrovich who chose to set himself free from any social obligations and t* become a wanderer.

The story is built on a series of flashbacks which come to him when, stricken by the flu, he lies in the apartment of his former girlfriend, Mara. He begins to recount the story of his life:

> It is really strange how everything turned out. When after high school I left my home town and went to college in Leningrad, I thought that my whole life was ahead for me. Then after quitting college, I went to work as a school teacher in a small village, and I still had a sense of future. Then there was the War, wounds, long months in hospitals, and even then it appeared that a full and interesting life was still ahead. But gradually, almost imperceptibly life began to slip away. And now there is nothing ahead, everything is behind. Where is that full and interesting life? Nobody knows. Lost somewhere, lost without a trace…

One day, working temporarily as a longshoreman in Leningrad, Il’in had decided on the spur of the moment to see Mara again. He finds her both physically and emotionally worn out. Mara did not finish college, she has been working as a secretary, a job she hates. Her marriage ended in divorce a long time ago, and she has been living alone in a communal apartment. Il'in and Mara make a lukewarm attempt to revive their relationship although they both realize that their feelings are already gone. It appears that in Il'in's view, they can now have nothing more than the temporary companionship of two lonely, middle-aged people who happened to have known one another since their.. youth Mara, on the other hand, seems to be interested in a more permanent arrangement.

Before going on vacation Mara invites Il'in, who lives in a dormitory for temporary workers to stay at her place. Il’in accepts her offer, but after a while he begins to feel very uncomfortable in Mara's apartment. Everything irritates him in her room: a small pink rug and a little African boy on it; a small menagerie; the room itself with its everlasting smell of perfume as if emitting from the walls. He feels unsettled, caged, as if his freedom is being threatened. It seems that he is one of those people who feel more comfortable in a crowd, where their freedom appears to be less threatened, than alone in some stranger's home, in someone else's life:

> Now Il'in feels that there, in the dormitory, he would feel more comfortable, more at peace.There would be no more of this stupid pink rug, these pictures on the wall, this smell of perfume. But most importantly there would be no more of this tormenting loneliness. . .6

Il'in wants to run away from Mara's place because he sincerely believes that he would feel better in his dormitory, which is no one's home. But one cannot help thinking that after a while Il'in would feel just as uncomfortable in the dormitory among those strangers who happen to be his roommates. It seems that there is a certain pattern in Il'in's behavior: he always wants to be some place else. And yet, as soon as he reaches that new place he becomes disappointed and wants to escape from it.

In the meantime, the monotony of his illness is interrupted by an unexpected visit from Nadia, his former student in the village school where he taught many years ago. When she was a teenager, Nadia was secretly in love with and although a married woman now, she seems to be still in love with him. This visit triggers an interesting metamorphosis in Il'in. Before he was seemingly unconcerned about his social status. But now, all of a sudden, he wants to be seen by Nadia as professionally successful, Il'in concocts a story about his thriving career as a chief engineer in a big factory.

This is another manifestation of the contradictions in his character. He wants to be perceived as a "success," and yet he instinctively refuses to conform to the rules of society in order to achieve it. On a more personal level, Il'in does not make any attempt to explore further his relationship with Nadia, although his desire to be liked and respected by her is obvious. Perhaps instinctively he understands that any involvement with her might complicate his life and become a threat to his freedom. It seems that Tlin feels rather uneasy about being in any way attached to her. Nadia detects this uneasiness and leaves. It is likely that this has been their last meeting.

After Nadia is gone, Il’in feels even more uncomfortable at Maras place. Although still weak from the flu, he leaves Mara°s apartment and goes back to his dormitory:

> He descends the stairs and walks out into the street. His eyes begin to hurt, he has difficulty breathing . "Fifteen years in my life. . . Senseless, stupid. .H thinks Il1in, leaning against a drainpipe attached to the wall of the house. . . He slowly walks down the street mumbling endlessly: "Senseless, stupid, isn't it? . °Fifteen years, fifteen years

The story is open-ended. Volodin poses many questions but offers no answers. One question may be asked: why this sudden urge to reexamine his life? Is it because Ililin begins to regret wasting his life wandering, and he feels so embarrassed by his weakness that he cannot stand his own judgement? If this is the case, as, for instance, Tatiana Lanina assumes in a brief review of this story in her book on Volodin,8 why then does he leave Mara instead of trying to rebuild his life with her and become a "useful" member of society? The answer may not be as simple as Lanina tends to believe.

On the one hand, Il'in feels regret and self- pity. He is growing older, and yet he is completely alone. His illness has brought this issue to the fore. Perhaps for the first time in his life, Il’in begins to realize that there is a price for his freedom: a life without any personal obligations means a lonely life. He may even want to change his life, to settle down, but he seems to be unable to do that The urge to move from place to place has become deeply ingrained in his nature. Il'in wants to be alone, and yet he cannot live that way as a human being he is a social animal, who though at times he rejects his fellow-men, nevertheless, paradoxically, cannot exist without them. His reaction to this situation is to escape, to get away from all existing influences and start afresh somewhere else.

However, in the end he realizes that there is no place to go. As the episode with Nadia illustrates, Il'in is torn between his rejection of society and its norms on the one hand, and his desire to be recognized by it on the other. His confusion is heightened by the illness. In this context the ambiguity of the story's ending becomes not only logical but in some respect necessary: there is no way to escape from one's self.

Il'in's restlessness is a manifestation of a more fundamental human problem encountered by many individuals in the modern world: the inability to find one's own identity, one's own place in life. In this regard Il'in's quest for identity is certainly not unique. Although alienation is not new, it seems peculiarly characteristic of the 20th century. Man in this era, affected by two World Wars, alienated from the society he lives in, has no foundation on which to prop up a failing optimism with regard to the human condition. To a considerable degree this condition can be explained by the rapid secularization of Western society in the last hundred years. Religion, as a force unifying individuals into a coherent group, waned but no new faith appeared to replace it. As the result of a universal loss of faith man in the modern world, regardless of ideology, has lost a considerable degree of attachment to that society.

Modern man, skeptical and even cynical about the moral values society can offer, has become preoccupied with the search for himself, his own identity, a "lost creature in a world of machines anddistrust whose sickness of the soul," in the words ofthe German writer Herman Hesse, is not the eccentricity of a single individual but the sickness of the times themselves."9

One of the strongest manifestations of alienation in Western drama of the period can be found in John Osborne's Look Back In Anger written a few years later than "Fifteen Years in One's Life." This is how John Osborne describes his protagonist Jimmy Porter in his remarks at the beginning of the play:

> "…He is a disconcerting mixture of sincerity and cheerful malice, of tenderness and freebooting cruelty; restless, importunate, full of pride, a combination which alienates the sensitive and insensitive alike. Blistering honesty, or apparent honesty, like his, makes few friends. To many he may seem sensitive to a point of vulgarity. To others he is simply a loudmouth. To be as vehement as he is to be almost non-committal…"

This description clearly indicates the intention of the author to create an alienated character. As the critic John Olsom says, Jimmy Porter has opened up a "much wider subject of . . social alienation, the feeling of being trapped in a world of meaningless codes and customs."il This view is echoed by Michael Anderson, who notes in his book, Anger And Detachment, that ".

Osborne's character mostly experiences emotions in isolation. His egocentricity cuts him off from others at the same time as he suffers an unbearable longing for some form of human contact."' I n spite of the apparent differences, Jimmy Porter and Il'in have something in common. They have a vastly different background (one was born and grew up in Communist Russia in the midst of the Stalinist terror, and the other lived all his life in Capitalist England), and age (Jimmy is in his late twenties, Il'in in his late thirties), and yet, their personalities share many common traits. As naturally sensitive individuals, they are both tormented by the War experience. Both Jimmy Porter and Il'in reject conformity as a way to achieve financial stability and social status although they both are naturally gifted and intelligent individuals. As individuals striving for their independence, both Jimmy Porter and Il'in choose, in essence, to be outcasts rather than to comply with the rules and regulations of society.

There has been a considerable misconception on the part of scholars in the West that Soviet writers in the late 1940s, and the early 1950s, produced only works of rigid Socialist Realism. Most of these scholars rightly argue that the Soviet writers of that period, including Volodin, worked in total isolation and therefore were completely unaware of any trends in Western literary thought. Soviet critics, on the other hand, for obvious reasons avoided, until very recently, any discussion of alienation in Soviet literature and drama. Yet the fact is, of course, that Russian people, like the rest of the world, have lived through loss of religion, totalitarianism, and two World Wars.13

t is this experience which has become a primary source of alienation in the 20th century. And despite attempts on the part of the Soviet regime to cut its people off from the rest of the world, this common experience could not be erased. The reflection of this experience can be found, for example, in the works of Konstantin Paustovskii, whose works have not yet received due recognition in the West. In his story A Telegram (Telegramma, 1946) the protagonist, an old lonely woman of noble origin, who miraculously survived Stalin's purges and suffering during the War, dies alone in complete misery hoping in vain to see her only daughter for the last time The kindness of the old woman is contrasted in the story to the callousness of her daughter who has already become a new Soviet person."14

It is significant that Paustovskii paints a sympathetic picture of a woman from the nobility, which at that time was considered the class enemy of the working people. This puts him in direct opposition to the mainstream of Soviet literature of the period. Paustovskiiis story demonstrates that despite the vicious terror unleashed by Stalin, some Russian writers did dare to deviate from the rigid norms of Socialist Realism. The same conclusion can be made about Volodin, whose short stories were written only a few years later.

"Fifteen Years In One's Life" and other short stories were published in 1954, shortly after the death of Stalin, and warmly received by the reading audience. The reaction of the critics was mostly negative. "Fifteen Years In One's Life" was especially hard hit. What seemed particularly to irritate the critics was the fact that the author did not want to become the judge of his characters. Aleksei Musatov asks in his review:"…Is it not clear from the story where the author stands with regard to his protagonist: does he defend him or does he condemn him? We think Il'in deserves condemnation."15

On a somewhat softer note critic Viktor Voevodin writes in his review in Literaturnava Gazeta that, although Volodin's stories are not perfect, they nevertheless mark the successful beginning of a new writer with his own unique voice.16 Unfortunately, Voevodin did not provide any substantial analysis of what makes Volodin's stories so unique in contemporary Soviet literature. Only thirty years later, at the time of Glasnost and Perestroika, Soviet critics began to see the importance of Volodin's earlier works. T. Lanina in her book on Volodin published in 1989 calls "Fifteen Years" one the most important Volodin's works in gallery of characters entirely new to the Soviet Literature and drama of that period. This character totally contradicts the familiar cliche of a protagonist in Socialist Realist literature.

Il'in is not a psychopath or a dissident. And yet his whole life represents an implicit challenge to the authorities, because he attempts to assert his basic human rights and become the master of his own destiny. From the literary point of view, the variety of existing interpretations of Il'in's character is a sign of the strength of the story and of the talent of the author, particularly in contrast to the mainstream literature of that period. Volodin goes much further than his peers, the writers of the so called "War" generation in his attempt to explore the complexity of modern man.

In this story Volodin presents a non-linear development of the character where the standard cause-effect plot-line does not explain the internal logic of such a complex figure as il'in. For example, a seemingly trivial episode with the flu triggers Il'in's dramatic re-examination of his whole life. As we shall see, Volodin would use this technique frequently in his dramatic works.

As was already mentioned, Volodin has always heavily relied upon personal experience for his literary and dramatic works. Thus when he set out to write "something intimate and sad" for his second play, he turned to the terms of its importance to the future dramatic and literary works of Volodin."

Il'in1s story, in her view, is a drama of a person who could not fit the stereotype of his time. It is not a coincidence that perhaps more than any other Soviet writer of his generation Volodin has been influenced by Chekhov.18 "I have not introduced a single villain nor an angel I accuse nobody or justify nobody ."19 Just as Chekhov, Volodin thoroughly avoids judging his characters, a principle to which he has adhered throughout his professional life as a writer, a playwright, and a screenwriter.

Il'in of "Fifteen Years In One's Life" opened a autobiographical materials of "Fifteen Years In One's Life." And yet the play, written almost ten years after the short story, during the "Thaw" period, substantially departs from the original°

First, it considerably expands the scope of the characters: from essentially one character, in Fifteen Years In One's Life" to a multitude of characters in Five Evenings. Second, unlike the original story, the play has two protagonists: Il°in and Tamara, Mara's counterpart in the original story, who becomes as important as Il'in and quite different from Mara.

An interesting detail: Volodin has changed the name Mara in the play to the similar sounding Tamara, perhaps to stress the attachment of these two very different women to essentially the same man. However, there have been some changes in Il[1]in, as well as in the other characters.

Similarly to the original story, the play is structurally built as separate episodes or "evenings," which are rather loosely connected with each other. Volodin has already used this structural composition in A Factory Girl, which is more typical for a screenplay than for a traditional play and reflects his training as a screenwriter°

This is how the author explains his approach to the structure of his dramatic pieces: “I believe each episode should have its own beginning, climax, and resolution° I do not think that it is a good idea to keep the audience waiting until the very end to have everything resolved. There is one episode, and it should be complete, life goes on, a new episode, new climax, new resolution, and so on And yet in the whole spectrum of those episodes there always is something that unites them, the core of the action, if you will I can make an analogy with the numerical row: 1,2,7,8,10,7,14,21,45,7,6,7. In this row 7 is a dominant number. Something similar happens in my plays. I do not do it intentionally, only later I realize that it turns out that way. The influence of Volodin's background as a screenwriter is clearly seen in the way Five Evenings begins, with a small narrative introduction to every new scene. As Volodin explains in one of his interviews, many of his dramatic works begin with some kind of author's introduction, what he calls a "dramatic foreword."I feel it is important to create a certain atmosphere. I suppose It is also a "cinematic" method of writing.

For instance, in Five Evenings every night begins with the remarks which Artistic Director of BDT Georgii Tovstonogov called the "author's voice." He liked them so much that in his production he himself read them over the microphone. Each introduction is aimed at creating a particular mood in the audience by evoking specific visual images and yet appealing to common human memories. For example, this is how the first episode in Five Evenings begins: This story took place in Leningrad on one of its streets, in one of its houses. It began way before these five evenings and it will not end soon.It is winter, the snow is falling. It reminds us of our school years, first dates, first love. . .

Like the original story, Five Evenings concentrates on the life of a free spirited middle-aged man by the name of Alexander Petrovich Il'in, who now lives and works as a truck driver in the Siberian city of Vorkuta. Il'in spends his vacation in the city of his youth, Leningrad. Those who are familiar with the modern history of the Soviet Union may recall that Vorkuta, located above the Polar Circle and the center of Soviet gold mining, was also a center of the infamous Gulag. It was built primarily by political prisoners who were sent there during Stalin's purges.

When in 1956 the Twentieth Communist Party Congress under Nikita Krustchev began the first wave of de-Stalinization, many political prisoners were released and left the area To replace this loss in manpower the Soviet government was forced to pay high salaries and introduce many perquisites to attract qualified people and to keep important industries going. In addition, because Vorkuta is so far away from the tightly controlled central cities, it has become a Mecca for all kinds of odd n people and "free spirits who, like Il'in, found there relatively more freedom than almost anywhere else in the country. Nothing puts it, "I was given a 'pink slip,' a letter of termination.[223] One may speculate, based primarily on the original story, that Tamara broke up with Il'in because he did not want to make a commitment to her. He has always been afraid of anything which would restrict his freedom. He says:

> What was interesting was that when the War was over, everything that had happened before became a matter of a very remote past. Everything, including Tamara. It seemed like there was a new life ahead, a new happiness.

Clearly Il'in wanted to remain free from any obligations. He did not take their relationship nearly as seriously as Tamara, for whom it became the one and only relationship of her life. As Il'in grows older he begins to think about Tamara, and yet he has made no attempt to communicate with her. This time, however, on the spur of the moment, he decides to look her up.

Il'in literally storms himself back into Tamara's life, finding her living with her nephew, Slava, in two small rooms in a typical Soviet communal apartment.[25] Tamara has been taking care of Slava after the death of her sister during World War II. Tamara is clearly astonished to see Il'in again after all these years. His unexpected visit brings a lot of confusion. She is not sure whether to rejoice because he has finally returned, or to throw him out because it is too late to catch the past.

Il'in, on the other hand, feels embarrassed for his sudden intrusion and the pain which he might have caused Tamara all these years. He also senses that Tamara still loves him, and that adds to his chagrin. Perhaps to spare her from complete disappointment, l'in, just as in the original story, invents his "successful" career as a chief engineer of a big factory. This lie makes him feel even more embarrassed. To cover it up Il'in begins to act rather aggressively, which only brings a defensive reaction from Tamara and adds more tension. His attempt to organize a little celebration ends in fiasco, although his effort is appreciated by Tamara and eventually helps to ease the tension between them. She invites him to stay.

Gradually Il'in and Tamara begin to warm up toward each other. They spend a lot of time together, and it seems that there is nothing in the way of their happiness. However, it becomes increasingly clear that they have quite different views of life. Tamara wants a secure and stable family. In that respect social status is important to her.

With his free-spirite nature, Il’in does not seem to be willing to settle down. He likes adventure, the excitement of the gamble in his life. At one point he says: no :You should not be afraid to gamble with your life on a big scale: either you win big, or you loose everything." When Tamara asks him about his career, he suddenly becomes defensive. Tamara, who is completely unaware that Il'in had lied to her, cannot understand his reaction. She attempts to reassure him by saying, "No! You're much better than you think! You have always been afraid of difficulties, could not believe in yourself, that is true.

It seems that Tamara has been aware of Il'in's lack of confidence from the time of their youth. This remark provides an important clue to Il'in's character. It helps to explain his indecisiveness in making a commitment to Tamara and his inability to finish college. This seemingly innocent comment touches a raw nerve in Il'in. He probably realizes that she is right, but he does not have the courage to admit it openly. He reacts to this situation a in familiar way: he decides to run away from Tamara again. This incident in the play is similar to the original story, where in the end Il'in also runs away from women who love him. However, unlike the original story, the play does not end at this moment. Indeed, it just begins to unravel.

After leaving Tamara il'in goes to hide at the apartment of his old friend Timofeev, a former classmate from his days in college. Il'in attempts to explain to Timofeev why he left Tamara. In the course of their conversation Tl'in makes important revelations about his philosophy of life, which shed light on some of his actions in the past. For example, he says, "I have a right to live the way I like and not to be enthralled by anyone."[27] Given the general attitude toward the social "crime" of "individualism" it is remarkable that Il°in has been able to retain this degree of internal freedom.

But this freedom has of course come at a rather heavy price g a ruined professional career, an unsettled personal life, a drinking problem—even alcoholism. And yet Il'in seems to be determined to continue to live his life the way he wants. He defiantly states:" A human being should always remain true to himself. I believe this is the most defensible position. . . You know, sometimes things don't work out. Well, maybe that's how it's supposed to be. But remember g no matter what I'm a free and happy man now, and I'm going to be happy whatever the circumstances."

Il'in's views invariably put him in a collision ith the society around him, and, as in the original story, leads to his alienation. However, this time his alienation takes a somewhat different form. For example, in the original story where Il'in leaves college voluntarily, he chooses to be free from any obligations. There his rejection of society is manifested by what may be called a "passive disobedience," an act of defiance by becoming a drifter, an outcast. In the play Il'in was expelled because he openly criticized an autocratic dean. This change reflects a fundamentally new feature in Il'in's character: his capacity to fight for his own views.

Il'in's alienation in the play is more aggressive than the passive withdrawal of the story. Conceivably this change represents a response to the pressure on Volodin from the "progressive intelligentsia," which wanted another feisty play, to make his protagonist more actively opposed to the authorities. At the same time Volodin probably did not feel that Il'in is a true dissident. Most likely the playwright saw Il'in's conflict with the dean as a spontaneous act which did not really challenge the system. The spontaneity of his action, however, does not diminish in any way its significance because this incident took place when even the slightest discontent was harshly punished. The 1930s and the 1940s were marked by unprecedented terror in the Soviet Union. Any revolt against the authorities was considered an act of treason. Many people were executed or put into labor camps for far smaller "transgressions" than Il'in's open challenge of his superiors. The only possible reason why il'in escaped a harsh punishment or even death was the outbreak of World War II. Il'in's action demonstrates that although he belongs to the same generation as

Tamara and Timofeev and was undoubtedly subjected to the same indoctrination, his free spirit stubbornly resisted the subjugation.

His more active stand against the authorities puts Il'in's rebellion into the same category as Jimmy Porter in Look Back In Anger, who does not hesitate to express his opposition to and even contempt for the society around him. It is worth noting that even a small disobedience in the "workers paradise" of the time could have led to far more serious consequences for Il'in than a revolt in the "bloodsucking" world of capitalism for Jimmy.

Volodin's interest here is not social protest but the study of characters and consequences, and the price for Il'in's fierce independence is exacted in purely personal terms. As he grows older, he becomes more and more aware of his loneliness. His effort to re-establish the relationship with Tamara represents another attempt to turn the clock back to his youth and thus reaffirm the possibility of happiness. Although at the end he returns to Tamara, and there may be an impression that they would eventually be together, it is hard to imagine that they really have a common future. On the contrary, already the introduction to the play sets up a tone of melancholy, even sadness, hardly compatible with any kind of happy ending. It clearly states that the story does not end after these five evenings, which probably indicates that Tamara and Il'in will not develop a stable relationship. It is no coincidence that in the final scene, when Tamara comes to Zhoya to look for Il"in, Zhoya says to her:

> ZHOYA. . I don't think you would
> be able to live with him. In a month's time he would begin to cheat on you, and your life would become unbearable. All you two have is the memory of your youth 29

Tamara's life took a distinctly different path from that of iluin's. She grew up during the 1930s when, along with an unprecedented campaign of terror aimed at eradicating any dissent, the Stalinist regime made an extraordinary effort to instill a rigid Communist ideology into the minds of all Soviet people, particularly the young ones. As a result the majority of young Soviets, like Tamara, became indoctrinated with a blind, almost mystical belief in Stalin and the Communist system and never questioned any of the government's actions.

The revelations of Stalin's crimes in 1956 was a profound shock to Tamara's generation. Some refused to believe, others became cynical and disillusioned. The end of Stalin's myth was the tragedy of this "lost" generation: the old beliefs had been destroyed and there were no new ones to take their place. As many other people of her age, Tamara is engaged in the painful process of re-examining her values. One can feel that she is emotionally and psychologically worn out as if she has lost her ground. She says at one point, "I do not believe blindly anymore,"[3°] obviously referring to her previously rigid Communist views. Even her half-hearted and mostly unsuccessful attempts to instill Communist values in Slava cannot hide the sense of a deep disillusionment inside of her.

The crisis in the society coincides with Tamara's personal crisis. Tamara is approaching forty, and yet, in essence, she does not have any family. Slava has grown up and will leave soon to start life on his own. Tamara has been unsuccessfully trying to convince herself that she has found happiness in her work as a foreman at a textile factory, but deep inside she feels lonely and desperate:

> TAMARA. In essence, I live alone. The week days are basically bearable I have an interesting and responsible job, I feel that people need me. But during holidays it becomes pretty miserable. I do not want to go anywhere. Couples, couples everywhere, only I am alone. Once I was ridinga trolley and thinking z "It would be nice to go somewhere and never come back. . oH And at home it's even worse. Everything is so clean but what for? Then I just throw things around and then begin picking things up again. . . .[31]

And yet, Tamara has never made a real attempt to arrange her personal life with anybody else. She belongs to the category of people who remain faithful to their first love.

Although Il'in's sudden new departure leaves Tamara almost in a state of shock, this time she is determined to find him and fight for their happiness. Obviously this represents a new development in Tamara's character. Most likely it occurred because during those few days she and Il°in spent together she began to believe, after many, many years, that she could still be happy. That is why, stepping over her pride, Tamara contacts Il[8]in°s old classmate, Timofeev.

In this scene a different side of Tamara is seen: a vulnerable, sensitive human being who has experienced a lot of suffering in her life. Unlike the earlier scenes where she is more of a rigid, indoctrinated Communist, in this scene she is a lonely woman who desperately wants to find a little happiness. Even after Timofeev reveals to her that Il'in had lied about his "successful" career, that he is not a chief engineer but a simple truck driver in Siberia, Tamara continues to defend him. She acts as a loving woman, who is ready to forgive almost anything to bring back the man she loves:

> TAMARA. He wasn't bragging about it, he just mentioned it. . .[32]

In the final scene where Il'in returns again, Tamara can hardly hide her happiness. It is easy to see how much she wants to be with him, to have a family. This time she takes the initiative by offering to marry him and go with him to Vorkuta. Tamara believes, perhaps prematurely, that the moment for which she has been waiting all her life has finally arrived.

Looking at Tamara's character from a dramatic point of view one can find a certain similarity between her and Lelia in A Factory Girl. Although the two have distinctly different personalities and different life stories, they nevertheless have some important things in common. Both Lelia and Tamara were highly indoctrinated and sincerely believed in the infallibility of the system, both went through the disillusionment with the system in 1956. Ultimately they both managed to overcome the rigidity of their Communist upbringing and assert their basic right to pursue their own happiness. Both women eventually take controversial positions in personal matters and fight for them, regardless of how society judges them. In dramatic terms, both characters go through the same dynamic evolution: from rigid and dogmatic members of the collective to sensitive and even vulnerable human beings.

The evolution of these two characters confirms once again the fundamental principle of Volodin's writing which he describes as the "dialectics of the soul," and his belief in the inherent complexity of every human being.

Another illustration of how this principle is reaffirmed in Five Evenings is Timofeev. As many other characters, Timofeev has also come from the original story. However, in the play his role has been expanded and enriched. On the surface Timofeev should be a happy man. He is married, has three children, his professional career now as a chief engineer of a big chemical factory has been very successful. As far as his relationship with Il'in is

concerned their friendship has been long complicated by the fact that back in their youth Timofeev, in essence, betrayed Il'in. This is how he describes this incident to Tamara:

> TIMOFEEV. Tamara Vasilievna, I came to tell you something. Well, more exactly to ask for your forgiveness. I probably have slandered Il'in. It is about his expulsion from college. In essence, that is how it all started."

You see there were twenty students in our group, and only Il'in behaved like a man with the dean. He alone stood up. And I, his friend, was next to him and did not say a word. In fact, in some strange way I was glad that it was he, not I, who was speaking his mind and was going to be punished.

Timofeev has always resented Il'in for his care-free life style, and his lack of personal responsibility. And yet, strangely enough, it seems that he almost envies his less fortunate, less "successful" friend who remains true to himself in all circumstances. Timofeev knows that despite his achievements he has never had the courage to fight for his moral principles. This comparison has probably made him resentful of il'in. As a result of it he reveals to Tamara, who came to look for that Il'in had lied to her about his achievements. He does it despite the fact that Il'in had explained to him early on that he had lied to Tamara only because he wanted to spare her from another disappointment. Perhaps Timofeev had expected that

Tamara, full of indignation, would cast Il'in out. However, to his surprise, Tamara demonstrates unwavering support for the man she loves. Furthermore, she clearly indicates that his action essentially represents another betrayal of his friend. Although there is no explanation in the play of what had prompted Timofeev to come forward and openly talk to Tamara about his guilt, one assume that it was Tamara's strong feelings for Tamara's love for Il'in may have become a trigger which compelled Timofeev to admit his transgression.

Undoubtedly, Timofeev is a quite decent man in his own way. He has probably been feeling guilty toward Il'in for a long time Perhaps he even felt responsible for what he perceived as Il'inifs misfortunes, because, as he says, they began with Il°in°s expulsion from college. This sense of guilt has also compelled Timofeev to help Il'in on numerous occasions. It is also interesting to note the parallel between Timofeev and Nadiusha, from A Factory Girl.

Similarly to Timofeev and Il'in, Nadiusha considers herself a friend of Zhenia, and yet she betrays her friend, as Timofeev betrays Il[1]in. And yet, it is difficult to blame them totally for their transgressions. Both cases represent a sad ramification of how the Communist system had forced many people like Nadiusha and Timofeev to make unethical personal choices out of "loyalty to the collective." Unlike the other characters in the play Slava, Tamara's nephew, and his girlfriend, Katia, did not come from the original story. Their purpose is to act as foils to Tamara and Il'in.

First, there are some similarities between Slava and Slava has been studying chemistry at the same Technological Institute where Il'in used to be a student almost twenty years earlier. From their first meeting he and [118] in quickly establish good rapport with each other, even a sense of kinship. They both have a good sense of humor, and their self-deprecating style is also quite similar. As Il'in before him, Slava does not seem to be terribly interested in his studies. He is still in search of himself, of his destiny in life.

Second, as in the case of Il'in and Tamara, there is an educational disparity between Slava and Katia: he is a student in college, while she works as a receptionist at the post office.In another parallel, Katia appears to take their relationship more seriously than Slava, just as Tamara did in her relationship with Il'in. Furthermore, one gets the feeling that her happiness with Slava might be just as elusive as Tamara's with Il'in e It is no coincidence that Tamara and Katia eventually begin to like each other.

However, there are important differences between these two relationships. First of all, Slava and Katia represent a new generation who entered their adult life after Stalin's death, when the political and social climate in the country was relatively more relaxed. They refuse to be indoctrinated, particularly Slava, who resembles Il'in in that regard. In fact, at times Slava sounds cynical and even ridicules Tamara when she attempts to indoctrinate him. He says, "I'm fed up with your Marxist theory."[34] This kind of statement would have been unthinkable for anyone of Tamara's generation. It indicates how much the situation in the country had changed. His cynicism also indicates that Slava might also become alienated from the society around him, although his alienation might take a different form.

As far as Katia is concerned, she seems to be more sensitive, flexible and understanding than Tamara. She does not make quick judgements even when Slava clearly fails his finals. Her tolerance and good nature create a better ground for the future of her relationship with Slava.

There is an interesting story about the ending of the play. In its first version written in 1959, Il'in returns to Tamara. At that time the playwright was forced to have some kind of a "happy ending, otherwise the play would have been a definite "no-go" because of the censorship. However, Volodin was unhappy about such an ending because it contradicts the internal logic of his character. In 1979, while working on the screenplay, Volodin left the ending open-ended, as in the original story. It is unclear at the end of the movie what will happen to these two characters. This change was later incorporated into the second edition of the play. However, Volodin is not completely satisfied even with this version, because, as he says, he always hated those "happy endings." He wants an even clearer indication that Il'in and Tamara will never be together.

For many years critics and theatre people inside and outside the Soviet Union have considered this play a "little melodrama" which has no social value and no interesting and unusual characters. For example, Nikolai Okhlopkov, a renowned Soviet director, wrote that,"… although Five Eveninga is an interesting play, it lacks a Socialist Realist protagonist:strong, determined, adventurous."[36] in her book The World of Contemporary Drama the Soviet critic Tatiana Ratobilskaya essentially defines Five Evenings as a melodramatic play which might have been interesting in the 1960s, but has nothing to do with the Soviet reality of the 1980s.[37]

Tatiana Lanina calls the play a social drama, and yet she argues that its dominant theme is what she calls, "return and reunion of a man and a woman after many years of separation."" She also implies that Il'in and Tamara were separated after World War II because Il'in was imprisoned in one of Stalin's labor camps. She bases her conclusion on the fact that "seems to be a broken man."[39] However, there is no basis in the play to support this conclusion. In fact, there are some clues which indicate that their separation has been entirely voluntary.

Il'in himself says that after the end of the War he wanted some freedom to explore his life without any inhibition, including his relationship with Tamara. Later on his lack of confidence, which Tamara directly mentions in the play, and the fear that she would not accept him because he has not achieved anything significant in his life is reason enough to continue their long separation. Lanina's view reflects a common belief among some people in the Soviet Union, particularly of Tamara's generation, that all the ills of modern Soviet society are caused by Stalin and have nothing to do with the system itself. Lanina, as many critics before, has overlooked the fact that il'in's life has been the quest of a man in search for himself, his own identity, his place in life--in a society which considers such a quest to be anti-social. Furthermore, the quest is a never ending process. He is locked up in it, he cannot stop it, no matter how much he wants to As a result he suffers, continually, as do the people who love him.

These important factors have been overlooked by even such an astute observer of the theatre as Harold Clurman. In his introduction to the 1966 English translation of Five Evenings by Ariadne Nicolaeff, he calls the play "charming primitive . . °playable' While correctly pointing to a spiritual connection between this play and Chekhov's plays, Clurman nevertheless sees it as a little melodrama, and proclaims that, H. there is no politics in this comedy.'" However, it is hard to understand how the issues brought up in this play could be taken out of their political and social context° Anyone who lived in the Soviet Union knows that the political and social climate of the country always affected even the most personal events in one's life. Thus it is a mistake to deny that the lives of these characters have been strongly affected by the political and social events in the country. Indeed, these, as many other of Volodin's characters are mirrors of the political and social processes in the society around them. The play's casual and unpretentious form, it seems, has caused some critics to overlook its social significance.

However, not everyone even in the Soviet Union considered the this play a little melodrama. Some clearly saw tragic elements in it. For example, the renowned poet Boris Slutskii once said about the main characters of the play: The man is pushed out by life, the woman is bent by life."

Another Russian writer, Vera Panova wrote about Five Evenings that, ". . it is a very talented play, which provides the audience with the whole spectrum of emotions: sadness, humor, joy.

However, back in 1959, when the play was just finished, Volodin was afraid that Five Evenings would be a failure. To his surprise, after reading the play the famous director Georgii Tovstonogov immediately expressed the desire to stage it. This is how Volodin himself remembers the atmosphere of those days:

> When Georgii Tovstonogov, Artistic Director of BDT said that he wanted to stage this play in his theatre immediately, I was very surprised because I thought that the play was too weak, that I failed miserably... I remember I received some complimentary tickets for my friends to attend a preview of Five Evenings at the BDT in 1959. However I did not want to invite anyone because I felt embarrassed for my play: an unimportant subject, a weak plot, nothing really happens . . 0 I remember that day I was pacing in front of the theatre and begging people: "Please, do not go, this is a very weak play!" I felt terribly embarrassed.

The audience received the BDT production of Five Evenings very well In fact, Five Evenings became one of the most popular productions in the theater's history. It also helped to establish BDT as the vanguard of contemporary Soviet theatre. This is how Tovstonogov describes the importance of Volodin's dramaturgy for his theater and Soviet theater in general:

> Volodin's plays are very important now People talk about them, argue, even fight, and this is very good. His plays have become, in a way, a symbol of an important movement in modern Soviet drama. His failure would be a failure not only for my theatre but for the whole movement in Soviet theatre and drama.

Despite all drawbacks Volodin is perhaps the most innovative Soviet playwright today.He always has something new to say about modern man." Another famous Soviet director, Anatolii Efros, who saw the production of Five Evening q at the BDT wrote about it in his book, Rehearsal, My Love :

> “I've never thought that one could go to another city just to see a theatre production. And yet everyone who saw Five Evenings at Tovstonogov's theatre was so excited about this play that it was impossible not to go and see it It turned out to be a really wonderful production. I observed with admiration how the high emotional effect was achieved by a very simple theatrical means. This was a true psychological theatre. . . At the same time, it was a very contemporary theatre because it reflected the thoughts and feelings of many people at that time.[45]

On the other hand, as one might have expected, the official reaction was negative again. A number of negative reviews appeared in the press. Volodin and Tovstonogov were accused of "pessimism," "negativism," "nihilism" and an "attempt to slander Soviet society." This is what Volodin says about it in one of his interviews:

> Back in the 1950s and the 1960s the Soviet stage was flooded by naive girls. At the end of the play they customarily gave their love to a young worker-innovator who managed to find a new way of sharpening a machine tool. Nothing of that kind was present in Five Evenings. In it one of the protagonists is a middle-aged woman, unmarried and visibly unhappy. That was completely inconceivable for the cultural bureaucrats and the Communist Party officials responsible for ideology. Tovstonogov and I were called up to the regional Communist Party headquarters and asked in a very accusatory tone: "Why is she alone? Why do they both have such an unsettled life? " We replied: "Well, really she is not alone, they are just about to join in a happy marriage (?!)" But when? Why is it not shown?" It was very hard to fight these stupid charges.[46]

Theater goers had a decisively different opinion about the play. At long last they could see on the Soviet stage real people and their real problems. Even more than A Factory Girl, Five Evenings moved away from the rigid primitivism of Socialist Realism with its endless discussions of production quotas, industrial records, self- sacrifice for the sake of the collective, and other attributes of uideologically pure" plays. Five Evenings paved the way for those plays of the 1960s, 1970s and even 1980s which ventured, however timidly, into an honest presentation of the many social problems in Soviet society.

Five Evenings has successfully passed the test of time. For many years, the play has been occupying a solid place in the repertoire of many national and foreign theaters and has been translated into many foreign languages. Volodin's dramaturgy found many imitators. He ironically notes that all of a sudden the Soviet stage was flooded with lonely women, just as earlier it had been saturated with Communist Party functionaries.

The themes and the characters from this and other Volodin plays became fashionable, although with typical modesty the playwright claims that Five Evenings is hopelessly outdated now.

In 1979, twenty years after its opening in the theatre, Volodin received an offer to write a screen version of Five Evenings. The offer came from Nikita Mikhalkov, a young film maker, who saw and liked Five Evenings at the BDT and said that he was so fascinated with the play that he wanted to make it into a movie. Volodin was astounded and dubious:

> When in 1958 I wrote Five Evenings, I could not possibly imagine that twenty years later somebody would become interested in making it into a movie. When Nikita Mikhalkov, a young but already famous film actor and director, told me he wanted to make a film Five Evenings, I replied: "Oh, for God's sake, Nikita, do not embarrass yourself!" I felt the play was terribly outdated. However, he was very persistent, and one day I finally agreed to write a screenplay. I wrote a screen version of Five Evenings in nine days, which was unusually fast. And Mikhalkov shot the film in only twenty five days, which also set a record![47]

Volodin says that he enjoyed working with Mikhalkov on the movie and that they had hardly any disputes. Such harmony is rather rare in the film industry where the director usually demands many changes in the original play. The film version of Five Evenings has received wide recognition among audiences.

To a large extent the success of the film as well as the BDT production must be attributed to the strength of the original script. Over the years people of different generations have continued to be fascinated with Il'in, Tamara, and the other characters. Their seemingly unsophisticated and yet complex lives, their sadness and joy, happiness and disappointment, echo familiar themes in the hearts and minds of many people.

Although for the most part the film script follows the original play, there are some differences. Besides the obvious differences which can be attributed to the different media, there are also differences in interpretation of the major characters by two directors, Tovstonogov and Mikhalkov. The playwright himself believes there are some strengths and weaknesses in both cases. For example, Volodin personally preferred the way Zinaida Shark played Tamara on the stage of BDT.

She was softer, more feminine than rough, almost man-like Liudmila Gurchenko in the film. On the other hand, her partner, Efim Kopelian, played Il'in as an intelligent and self-confident person even a bit of a macho-man, at least on the surface, condescending to everyone around him. He and Tovstonogov did not interpret Il'in as being sensitive and insecure. Volodin admits that their interpretation of Il'in is different from his own. In fact, the playwright remembers that back in 1959 Tovstonogov asked him to write a different final scene showing how happy Il'in was working as a truck driver in Siberia.

Volodin says that he resisted that idea because he believed that this "happy ending" would violate the internal logic of his character. In the film, on the other hand, the Il'in of Stanislav Liubshin is almost the exact opposite of Kopelian's: very insecure, even bashful, a little drunk all the time, in an oversized fedora covering his forehead. Because Volodin's writing is so intensely personal, many of his dramatic and literary characters, such as Il'in, came to resemble the playwright himself.

This explains why Volodin feels that Kopelian°s interpretation is much closer to his own: his Il'in better reflects Volodin's own personality. In general, Volodin believes that the screenplay came out stronger than the original play. In his view it more accurately reflects his original intent.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of Five Evenings for the development of contemporary Soviet drama. The themes and characters which came from these works eventually became dominant elements in the work of many emerging Soviet playwrights. Alexander Vampilov and Mikhail Roshchin both admitted the strong influence of Volodin's dramaturgy. Alexander Vampilov, one of the most talented Soviet playwrights of the post-War era acknowledged on several occasions that creating his famous characters, Kolesov, Shamanov, and Zilov he was inspired by Il'in from Five Evenings.

Notes

1. The Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party in 1956 opened a new page in Soviet history commonly known as the "Thaw." It reveled, for the first time, some facts about Stalin's purges in the 1930s and 1940s and denounced many of his policies, including the cultural policy, which led to a

total stagnation of culture in the Soviet Union. As a result of the general relaxation brought about by the "Thaw" a group of intelligentsia emerged which came to be called the "progressive intelligentsia." This group, comprised of many leading writers, dramatists, visual artists, actors and directors, composers, etc., advocated more freedom of artistic expression in every art form: literature, drama, cinema, music, visual arts, etc.

2. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 23.

3. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 24.

4, Alexander Volodin, Rasskazy (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1954) 137.

5. See endnote 27 Chapter I. 6

Volodin, Rasskazy 146.

7. Volodin, Rasskazy 146,

8. Tatiana Lanina, Alexander Volodin (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1989) 57.

9, Herman Hesse, atgppenwolf (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968) 21.

As a modern phenomenon, alienation found its philosophical foundation in the contemporary philosophical movement called "existentialism." Existentialism, which takes its roots in the works of Nietzsche, Dostoevskii and Kierkegaard as well as Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre has made a substantial impact on modern thought. Existentialism has influenced consciousness theories of Henry Bergson whose theories strongly affected literature and drama in this century and led to the birth of an important literary movement called New Wave." "New Wave" literature and drama is primarily associated with such writers as Natalie Sarraute and Alain Robbe-Grillet in France, and John Osborne in England. In her book Alienation In the New Novel of France And Quebec, Virginia Harger-Grinling outlines basic principles of the "New Wave" literature which defines alienation as a human phenomenon which does not have temporal or societal boundaries, the fact, repeatedly denied by Marxist-Leninist philosophers and critics. The most distinct feature of this new type of literature and drama, she says, is a theme of alienation of modern man in society which is either hostile or indifferent towards him. Harger-Grinling writes that existentialism also played a large part in forming the philosophical background .f the "nouveau roman," as well as much of Western twentieth century thought. She points out that the existential philosophy of Sartre…" exists and knows himself."For reference see: Virginia Harger-Grinling, Alienation in the New Novel of France and Quebec (Fredericton,

Canada: York Press, 1985) 6-8, and Existentialism: From Dostoevski To Sartre, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York, London, Ontario: Meridian Book, 1975) 12-51. As Volodin says in one of his interview, Dostoevskii has been his a favorite writer who, along with Chekhov, has made a significant impact on him both professionally and personally.
For reference see: Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 25.John Osborne, Look Back In Anger (New York: S. G. Phillips, 1968) 9-10.

10. John Olson, Post-War British Theatre, p. 77.

11. Martin Anderson, Anger And Detachment A Study of Arden, Osborne and Pinter (London: Pitman LTD., 1976) 23.

12. It is an undeniable fact now that Communist ideology tried but miserably failed to create a new religion where worshiping of God was replaced with worshiping of the Communist Party.

14. Konstantin Paustovskii, Selected Stories (Oxford: Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1967) 48-61.

15. Aleksei Musatov, "0 prostom I obychnom, Komsomolgska a Pravda, March 31, 1955, 3,

16. Viktor Voevodin, "Khoroshee nachalo," Literaturnaya Gazeta, 17 February, 1955, 3,

17. Lanina, 55.

18. Ironically Chekhov's plays, so popular abroad, were not particularly welcome in the Soviet Union at that time. Their oblique style, a "lack" of clear distinction between "good and bad" characters made them too "decadent" for the taste of the Soviet rulers. Thus it is not surprising that in 1937 the famous Moscow Art Theatre was officially named after Maxim Gorky, a Communist writer and playwright whose contribution to this theatre is utterly minuscule comparing with that of Chekhov. This injustice was corrected only in 1989 when the Moscow Art Theater was renamed after Anton Pavlovich Chekhov.

19. Anton P. Chekhov, Collection Of Works and Letters, (Moscow: Nauka, 1982) Vol. 26, 496.

20. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 27.

21. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 27.

22. Alexander Volodin, Piat' vecherov, in: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1985) 45.

23. Volodin, Plat° vecherov, 53.

24. See comments in Chapter I.

25. Volodin, Plat’ vecherov 62.

26. Volodin, Piat' vecherov 63.

27. Volodin, Piat’ vecherov 81.

28. Volodin, Plat' vecherov 73.

29. Volodin, Piat1 vecherov 65.

30. Volodin, Piat' vecherov 68.

31. Volodin, Piat' vecherov 79.

32. Volodin, Piat' echerov 80.

33. Volodin, Piat' echerov 81.

34. Volodin, Piat° vecherov 82.

35. As Volodin mentions in one of his interviews, during his work on the screenplay he wrote a version of the ending where il'in and Tamara somehow miss each other. This would symbolize, in the words of Volodin, that they will never be together. See : Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991 23.

36. Nikolai Okhlopkov, "Geroi i ego vremia," Literaturnava Gazeta, 20 June, 1959, 3.

37, Tatiana Ratobylskaya, "Dramaturgiia Alexandra Volodina," in: Mir sovremennoi dramy (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1985) 116.

38. Lanina 93.

39. Lanina 93,

40. Harold Clurman, "A Small Door To Soviet Dramaturgy," an introduction to: Alexander Volodin, Five Evenings trans. Ariadne Nicolaeff (Minneapolis: Minnesota Drama Editions No, 3, The University of Minnesota, 1996) 5.

41. Clurman, 5.

42. Vera Panova, Zhizng Vremia, Rabota (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1980) 13.

43, Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 27.

44, Georgii Tovstonogov, "Vystuplenie na rezhisserskom seminare," Nikolai Okhlopkov's Studio, Moscow, June 19, 1962.

45. Anatolii Efros, Repetitsiia lubov° moia (Moscow: Isskusstvo, 1975) 135-136.

46. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 28. 47, Volodin,

unpublished series of personal interviews, 29.

CHAPTER 3
REALISM OF IMAGINATION: VOLODIN'S STYLE

Despite the considerable success of his first two plays in the early 1960s, Volodin still felt relatively insecure as a playwright. His biggest fear was that he would exhaust his creativity and begin repeating himself. It would be totally inconceivable for him to cash in on his early success by writing another play similar to either A Factory Girl or Five Evenincis. As the playwright notes in one of his recent interviews, he strongly believes that a real artist should always be searching for new forms of artistic expression. In his case, Volodin says, it meant that after two "serious" plays his next play should be something entirely different, perhaps a comedy. Volodin describes his views on this subject in For Theater and Cinema (Dlia teatra i kino, 1967):

> "…in drama the combination of the real and the fantastic becomes commonplace, just as the combination of the dramatic and the comedic …There has been scientific fantasy (Jules Verne) and social fantasy (Wells). Now the fantastic is becoming emotional, moral, spiritual, whatever you like--that is one of the contemporary ways of artistic conceptualization.

Volodinis next play, The Appointment (Naznachenie, 1961) became the first step towards implementing these different artistic ideas into a specific dramatic form. The Appointment is a social comedy which ridicules bureaucracy and defends the intelligentsia, both highly sensitive and controversial subjects in 1961.

One must bear in mind that despite the relative relaxation of the censorship during the so called uthaw " period (1956-1963), an open discussion of controversial social or political issues was still practically impossible. Thus the political reality in the country was an additional reason for Volodin to use an allegorical form to address these issues.

On the surface, The Appointment is a mildly humorous comedy about the life of a 30-year-old economist by the name of Aleksei Yurievich Liamin, who is promoted to head a department in an unnamed Soviet organization. The only reason Liamin is appointed to his new position is that his current boss and former classmate, Kuropeev, is promoted to a higher position. Kuropeev, a quintessential Soviet bureaucrat of modest abilities and questionable moral principles, has made his career by taking advantage of Liamin's hard work and stealing his innovative ideas. Seeing it as a reward, Kuropeev appoints his former classmate to be the head of the department although Liamin is reluctant to become a "boss." Generally a mild and soft spoken individual, Liamin grew up in the late 1940s, early 1950s, an only child of two professionals, members of the intelligentsia. Although he was an artistically gifted child and was encouraged by his parents to pursue a career in art, Liamin nevertheless defied his parents and chose the prosaic profession of economist. Predictably, his decision deeply upset the parents who wanted him to explore fully his talents. Liamin's father is particularly bitter about his son's choice:

> FATHER. He was so diverselygifted when he was a child. Believe me, I'm saying it not because he is my own son. He was in mathematics, he was good in visual art and poetry…Well, he said he didn't want to become an artistic mediocrity," he didn't want to search all his life for the way out of "impossible situations." And now what is he? A bureaucrat, an economist. Well, I don't have anything against economists, they are very important, but…

Liamin's father clearly considers his son's job a waste of his natural talents. Although the father never mentions the external circumstances which affected Liamin's choice, the connection is easily discernible. Those who are familiar with the history of the Soviet Union may recall that perhaps with the exception of the 1920s, members of the intelligentsia were treated at best with suspicion and more often as second class citizens unworthy of public trust. Their children were ostracized by their peers, and they were frequently denied free access to a higher education. This kind of environment led to a strained relationship between the members of the intelligentsia and their children, as was the case with Liamin's family. In these circumstances many young people who were considered to have belonged to the intelligentsia forfeited their talents and chose "useful" professions, just to prove their "worth" to society, as again was the case with Liamin.

Liamin's personal life has not been happy either. For a long time he has been involved with a married woman who can not give up her marriage. A sensitive and affectionate individual, Liamin becomes easily attached to anyone who gives him even a little attention.[3] After spending a night with his secretary, Niuta, a woman he hardly knew intimately before, Liamin, an honest and decent man, immediately asks her to marry him. In this small episode Volodin actually brings up an issue which was highly

controversial for Soviet society of the early 1960s: an unmarried woman who openly admits having sexual relations with different men. This kind of a lifestyle was considered totally incompatible with the norms of "Socialist morality." And yet, Volodin defiantly refuses to castigate Niuta; on the contrary, he presents her in a sympathetic, compassionate way.

Liamin is unhappy with his promotion. He realizes that in his new position he would have to make tough decisions which might hurt other people, something he truly hates. Soon after Liamin has assumed his new position, his colleagues notice a marked change in him: he is visibly unhappy and behaves with uncharacteristic rudeness. Liamin himself becomes aware of this change: he has begun to realize that if he stays in his new job he will eventually lose his own identity. Finally he decides to resign from the new position:

> LIAMIN. You know what, Kuropeev: let's make a deal--youlll go your way, and I'll go mine, and everybody will be happy. . . I don't like to be a boss, I can't do it! I'm used to obeying orders! I'm just an ordinary unambitious person.

Liamin also begins to realize that he has become a tool in the hands of Kuropeev. Although normally a soft spoken and mild individual, Liamin grows increasingly angry. After removing himself from his new position, he feels so liberated that he does not hesitate to express his true feelings about Kuropeev:

> LIAMIN. Do you know what your problem is, Kuropeev? Nature gave you ambition but didn't give you talent. That's why it takes you so much effort to climb up the ladder. . . I don't want to do your job anymore, and I don't want any favors from you either.[5]

Kuropeev, a seasoned bureaucrat, understands that he needs Liamin's talent and knowledge. Without showing any anger he satisfies Liamin's request and returns him to his old place, but in exchange for one more favor: Liamin has to write for Kuropeev another article to be published in a major national newspaper. Liamin reluctantly agrees.

At this point a new character is introduced: Muroveev, who is sent to replace Liamin as manager of the department. Muroveev looks like and behaves like Kuropeev and is played indeed, by the same actor. From the stylistic point of view, the introduction of these twin characters brings into this otherwise realistic play a certain grotesque dimension which helps to emphasize a very real message faceless bureaucracy and unlimited state power tend to destroy the individuality of people. By using the grotesque Volodin follows the best traditions of Gogol, Sokhovo-Kobylin, Erdman and particularly Shvarts, one of his favorite playwrights.

As his early plays, The Appointment is called a comedy but to is full of people who are deeply unhappy both personally and professionally. A woman named Liuba attempts to kill herself because she has a problem with her husband. An old man named Egorov, a War veteran, lonely and bitter, constantly squabbles with the management which threatens to fire him. Another character, a young man named Sanya, is presented as insensitive and hostile because of an unhappy childhood. Liamin°s own parents, bitter and depressed, are engaged in a self-destructing war with each other. Nobody-- perhaps with the exception of Liamin--cares about his or her job. Their morale is low, their attitude towards the authorities is contemptuous, even hostile, although it is mostly disguised in the form of jokes.

For example, in a comment on Liamins promotion, Sanya notes that ". . in my view, I would give all the bosses a considerable pension so that they could retire and leave us alone.'" Obviously intended as a joke, this and other similar comments actually reflect an underlying contempt for all kinds of "bosses" and what they represent. In general, the characters in the play are hardly funny, despite the comedic form.

Clearly, in The Appointment the playwright is caught in a seemingly hopeless dichotomy. On one hand, as he stated in his interview,' *he* wanted to be entertaining on the other, as an honest, socially conscious artist, Volodin could not ignore the cruelty, insensitivity and injustice of the society around him. Symbolically, the play ends exactly as it begins: Muroveev, just as Kuropeev, wants Liamin to write a newspaper article for him. By showing this vicious circle of deception, Volodin makes a very strong social statement: it is the system itself which breeds the Kuropeevs-Muroveevs.°

The Appointment is particularly significant because the confrontation between Liamin and Kuropeev-Muroveev represents the quintessential conflict between the intelligentsia and the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. While Liamin, a talented and honest individual, seems to be unable to find his place in this system, the KuropeevsMuroveevs, obedient, mediocre, without any scruples, continue to prosper, ready to adapt themselves to any system. In fact, they are usually the stalwarts of it At the same time, Liamin's story reflects an inherently complex and ambiguous relationship between the intelligentsia and the state itself.

On the one hand, the Soviet authorities grudgingly accepted that they needed the intelligentsia as a vehicle of progress, just as Kuropeev-Muroveev needed Liamin; they realized that the society could not survive without its most creative members, even though Marxist doctrine belittled their role. One the other hand, the Soviet government was always suspicious and mistrustful of the intelligentsia, having seen it as a source of discontent. The history of the former Soviet Union clearly demonstrates that the system never resolved this inherent contradiction. In fact, discontent among the intelligentsia became an important contributor to its eventual demise.

The Appointment is one of the best of those remarkable plays of the period in which playwrights used various non-realistic devices to discuss controversial social issues and thus avoid direct confrontation with the authorities. One such device is the dual character of Kuropeev-Muroveev, used to depict Soviet bureaucracy as a social group. Humorous, even grotesque stage directions remind the reader that the world in which the play takes place is theatrical fantasy, however socially pertinent its themes may be

In his recent interview, Volodin points out that he had never intended to make The Appointment a political or even a social satire on the Soviet system. He says that in the 1960s he still had illusions that the Soviet system could be reformed from within to become more gentle, more humane. By ridiculing the bureaucrats, Volodin says, he had hoped to help the society to achieve these goals. However, Soviet authorities considered The Appointment a frontal attack on the very foundations of the system because it ridicules bureaucracy as an institution and allows an "egghead intellectual" to score a moral victory over an "honest civil servant.

When in 1961 Volodin brought The Appointment to the Sovremennik Theater in Moscow, its Artistic Director, Oleg Efremov, immediately decided to stage it However, he was confronted by strong resistance from the Communist authorities. This is how Volodin describes the situation at that time:

> "...the difficulties with the authorities that the Sovremennik Theatre in Moscow had to overcome in order to get this play staged for the first time were huge! I think it happened because The Appointment contained a direct confrontation of a talented individual with a typical pinheaded Soviet bureaucrat. At that time it was totally unthinkable. The authorities demanded an answer z Who is more suitable to manage things your "egg headed" intellectual or a reliable functionary? They were always afraid that people who would see the play would make an analogy with the situation in the country. Furthermore, one of the characters, a woman by the name of Niuta, caused an uproar. The then Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva was furious because I dared to present in the play a woman of such "deplorable" behavior. This was the first female character in a Soviet play who openly admitted that she has had a lot of men. . .

A year later, in 1962, as a result of confusion and internal fighting between different branches of the government, Efremov finally managed to open The Appointment playing the role of Liamin himself. However, shortly after the premiere, the play was banned. It took two more years for the authorities to allow The Appointment to be included in the theater's repertoire. (It still could not be produced anywhere else in the country). Under heavy pressure, Volodin had to make some changes in the play.

The main purpose of these changes was to reassure the suspicious authorities that the conflict in the play represented only a local aberration and did not ridicule the wh le system. For example, in the original version, at the end Liamin simply resigns he does not have any hope to reform the system. Under the pressure from above" Volodin made the ending somewhat more "optimistic:" Liamin decides to stay on and fight not the system but these particular bureaucrats. However, the playwright was unsatisfied with this outcome. He felt that the body of the play could not support such an ending. In the latest version, published in 1985, the play ends on an ambiguous note: Liamin attempts to take his resignation back, but it is not clear whether he stays on or leaves. Volodin sees this version as a compromise between the demands of the authorities and the artistic truth.

Critical response at the time was largely negative. Establishment critics, reflecting the official view, viciously attacked the play. Their views were probably best represented by Inna Vishnevskaya. Writing in Teatr she accused the playwright of ridiculing the Soviet system by ridiculing and distorting Soviet reality. She also charged that most of the characters in the play were, in her words, "pessimistic, helpless, and miserable individuals surrounded by a hostile world.” Vishnevskaya saw the lack of optimism and absence of any positive message as a major flaw in the play and a serious deviation from the established norms of Socialist Realism.

However, not every Soviet critic held this view. As Volodin notes in his recent interview, even back in 1962, another Moscow critic, Natalia Krymova, wrote a positive review on the play, which for obvious reasons was not published until 1987." In the early 1980s, when "rediscovery" of Volodin began, The Appointment was revived for television. This time the play was received far more favorably. A well known Soviet director, Mark Zakharov, hailed The Appointment as an important piece of contemporary Russian drama. In his article, "A New Appointment," Zakharov writes that the television production helped new audiences to "... re-discover the talent of Volodin."

In general, with the passage of time and, even more importantly, with a change of political climate, critics have begun to look differently at many of Volodin's early works, including The Appointment. Aleksei Zverev, in his extensive review of Volodin's dramatic works published in 1987, writes, that "despite the unevenness of the play Appointment the message and the way this message was delivered were both courageous and unusual for the time."[14] He acknowledges that The Appointment represents an important milestone in the dramaturgy of Alexander Volodin. Tatiana Lanina expresses a similar view.

She writes: “…(in The Appointment) Volodin tackles one of the most painful problems of the 1960s: the conflict between an individual and a society which was designed to strip a person of any individuality and convert him into a faceless little screw in a huge bureaucratic machine." Lanina admits that the struggle between Liamin and the Kuropeevs-Muroveevs reflects a broad conflict within Soviet society of that time. However, as many other critics in the Soviet Union, she fails to recognize the fact that this conflict is inherent in the oppressive nature of the Soviet system. In the mid 1960s the thaw" gave way to a sudden and sever "frost."

In 1964, Nikita Khrushchev, who attempted to de-Stalinize political and social life in the former Soviet Union, was ousted from power by a far more conservative group of politicians headed by Leonid Brezhnev. The winds of intolerance began to blow again all over the country. In art, once more any deviation from the rigid norms of Socialist Realism was considered unacceptable. The intelligentsia became a favorite target of attacks in the press which accused it of spreading disloyalty to the Communist state. Volodin, who wrote about the positive role of the intelligentsia in society, was singled out in these attacks.

The Appointment and his other plays were severely criticized for their "false compassion and amorphous humanism." Volodin's works disappeared from the repertoires of the theaters. His screenplays were uniformly rejected by the studios. And yet, despite this hostile environment, Volodin was still interested in the issues of the intelligentsia and its role in society. He continued to explore the inherently complex relationship between the intelligentsia and the ruling power. Obviously, the political climate in the country at that time made an open discussion of this issue practically impossible. As earlier artists in similar circumstances, Volodin turned to dramatic forms which he had not previously explored, namely allegory and parable.

During 1966-67 Volodin wrote his first parable play, Two Arrows (Dye strely, 1967), as the first piece in the two-part series that the playwright called "cave" plays. The action in this and the second play in this series, Little Lizard (Iashcheritsa, 1969), takes place during the Stone Age, at the dawn of human society, when people still lived in caves. Volodin says that he was inspired by the words of Heinriech Heine The unity of time is eternity. The unity of place is the planet Earth.

The story in Two Arrows begins as a mystery of murder in a primitive tribe. A man named "Ushastyi" (Big Ears) is accused of murdering his fellow clansman on the ground that the man was killed by two arrows which belong to "Ushastyi." "Ushastyi" categorically denies any involvement in this crime although he admits having a grudge against the victim. He also admits that he lost his arrows in a battle. The clan begins an investigation. People of the tribe have different views of what actually happened. Since this episode takes place in the midst of a bloody war with a rival clan, some believe that a warrior from that clan found the arrows and killed the man. The others accuse "Ushastyi" of committing the crime. The majority of people remain confused and undecided.

Gradually it becomes evident that the accusers have a hidden agenda. Most warriors headed by a leader called "Man of the Fight," want to continue the war until its bitter end, regardless of losses and human suffering. They also challenge "Head of the Clan" who, in their view, does not give them their fair share of the hunting and fishing catch. They believe that the laws of the clan are not tough enough and have to be changed. For them, people like "Ushastyi" are useless. The tribe is deeply divided. This division greatly concerns "Head of the Clan." An old and wise man, he understands how important it is to preserve unity and harmony within the tribe.

On the one hand, he can clearly see that the "Man of the Fight" and his allies want to use this trial as an opportunity to change the way the clan is governed. He also suspects that "Man of the Fight" and his group had masterminded the killing because the victim stood in their way, just as "Ushastyi" stands in their way now And yet, to avoid any further division, "Head of the Clan" asks “Ushastyi” to flee the tribe and thus avoid an execution and any further turmoil among his people. However, "Ushastyi," who at first seems to be a rather simple-minded young man, unexpectedly refuses this offer: he wants to stay and prove his innocence. "Ushastyi" also confesses that during the battle he spared the life of a young boy from the enemy clan, a violation of the fighting code. "Head of the Clan" warns "Ushastyi" that his decision to stay could cost him his life.

As the play progresses, the character of "Ushastyi" becomes more and more sophisticated. He manages to figure out that "Man of the Fight" and his group want to get rid of him because he cannot be as brutal as they are Though at the beginning he seems to be embarrassed by his own humanity, he now finds the strength to confront his enemy directly:

> USHASTYI. (To the Man of the Fight). So, do you think that some people should have food, while others would go hungry? Is that what you think?
>
> MAN OF THE FIGHT. What I think is that you're a smart aleck, "Ushastyi."
>
> USHASTYI. So, do you think that cruelty is the most important quality of man?

> THE MAN OF THE FIGHT. Yes, I, the Man of the Fight, do think so.
>
> USHASTYI. So, do you believe that those who are not cruel do not deserve to live and have to be eliminated?
> THE MAN OF THE FIGHT. Yes, boy,
> you've got it right. I believe
> that the "useless" should be eliminated.

"Ushastyi" continues to challenge his fellow clansmen on such issues as innocence and guilt and the right to judge other people. Furthermore, his outspokenness encourages other people to express their dissenting views more openly. People become engaged in the heated debate which ends in a nasty fight among the members of the clan. During the fight somebody kills "Ushastyi," again by two arrows. His death shocks his friend "Dolgonosik" (Long Nose), who finally finds the courage to stand up against the brutes. His stand also costs him his life. Dismayed by this mindless bloodshed, "Head of the Clan" refuses to lead the tribe and condemns the killers. The clansmen begin to realize that they will not survive individually unless they become more gentle and tolerant with each other, that they cannot resolve their differences by using force. In the end even "Man of the Fight" begins to understand that once the violence is unleashed, it is very difficult to control. Two Arrows ends on an ambiguous note. It is certainly not a "happy ending." On the contrary, the atmosphere at the end is gloomy; it seems that the days of this tribe are numbered: the people have lost their leader and their humanity. Will they ever become human beings again? The play leaves this question unanswered.

At the same time, Two Arrows delivers one very clear message: if people lose their compassion, their humanity, tolerance, and respect for other human beings, if they behave like beasts, they are doomed, they simply cannot survive. This strong, universal message was a warning to Volodin's contemporaries about the rising level of intolerance in Soviet society. By advocating humanity and tolerance among his own people, Volodin defended those who were most vulnerable, those who were attacked most viciously: members of the intelligentsia. As he said in his recent interview, he considers "Ushastyi" a "forefather of the intelligentsia.'" In Volodin's view, what makes "Ushastyi" different from his fellow clansmen is his ability to analyze, to think. This makes him, in a way, the "first philosopher" and a conscious critic of the system. And a philosopher always has some followers (in this case, "Dolgonosik"): ideas have power over people's minds and can create or destroy political and social structures. His real power is his mind. "Ushastyi" is dangerous, as any intellectual in an oppressive society, primarily because he uses his intellectual power to question authority rather than blindly follow orders.

As a "forefather" of the intelligentsia, "Ushastyi" also plants the first seeds of ethics: he feels compassion for his enemy and has respect for human life. By fighting, even sacrificing his life for his beliefs, "Ushastyi" demonstrates his moral leadership. For Volodin, this has always been associated with the intelligentsia, which, in his view, should provide moral leadership for society at large.

When the social system attempts to subordinate the intelligentsia to its ideological needs--as in the case of the Soviet Union—the society will inevitably suffer. In the long run, the play warns, the oppression of the intelligentsia will inevitably lead to the economic, political, and social decay of the society. The demise of the Soviet Union represents the most convincing testimony to this fact.

Although the action in the play takes place during the Stone Age, Two Arrows is essentially a modern, realistic play. The characters behave like modern human beings and face the same political, social, and moral problems as people in the twentieth century. From the point of view of Volodin's dramatic writing, Two Arrows hardly adds any new themes or characters. In fact, it seems that the play is unable to resolve the inherent contradiction between the primitivism of the society where the action takes place and the complexity of the problems the society has to face. As a result, the form and content in Two Arrows seem to be inconsistent with each other. Furthermore, numerous attempts to allude to the primitivism of the society become not only irrelevant but also confusing. This leads to inconsistencies in the characters and weakens the play. For example, in the beginning, the protagonist, "Ushastyi," is presented as a rather simple-minded, perhaps even slow witted fellow. Then, rather suddenly, he becomes much more sophisticated and outspoken. The play does not provide a sufficient logical explanation for this sudden change. As a result, the character seems to be rather disjointed. Other characters, such as "Dolgonosik" and, to a lesser extent, "Man of the Fight" and "Head of the Clan," suffer from the same problem.

Although Two Arrows lacks fundamentally new themes and characters, it nevertheless has one important new element: it uses Volodin's own ballad-type poetry. By now an experienced playwright, Volodin obviously realizes that the use of poetry can enhance the emotional impact on an audience. Beginning with Two Arrows poetry became an integral part of many of Volodin's plays.

As one may expect, Two Arrows was not officially published for many years. The piece was circulated semi officially from the early 1970s, but only in 1985, when the country began to liberate itself from the tight ideological control of the Communist Party, both Two Arrows and a companion piece, A Little Lizard, appeared in Volodin's volume Autumn Marathon. In 1987 Aleksei Zverev observed that, "…as a result of the conflict, the characters in Two Arrows transform from a nice, neighborly group of people to a herd of animals who are concerned only with how to save their own hide."[18] Zverev, however, does not attempt to find any correlation between the ideas in the play and Soviet reality.

Another Soviet critic, Boris Zingerman, in his favorable review of several of Volodinils plays including Two Arrows notes, that ". poetic characters (from Two Arrows) have to fight tyranny in the atmosphere of suspicion, fear, and demagogy."[19] He points out that," . it is only on the surface that Volodin's "cave" plays are set in pre-historic society. Our contemporary reality penetrates them like water penetrates a reservoir with a huge crack."[2°] Tatiana Lanina writes, "…in Two Arrows the conflict between an individual and the society destroys the sense of brotherhood between the people.

A military dictatorship establishes a "new order" for the strong, brave men. Others have to perish." Lanina correctly sees this play as a warning against the threat of Fascism. However, she fails to make a more immediate connection with Soviet society, particularly that of the Stalin era.

Practically every critic who reviewed Two Arrows specifically pointed to the theatrical opportunities it offers, although it was originally written as a screenplay.[22] Lanina notes, that ". his 'cave' plays give a director an excellent chance to use improvisation, pantomime, dance and other theatrical methods to create an exciting show."[23] According to Mikhail L'vovskii, a long time friend and a fellow screenwriter, one of the most imaginative productions of Two Arrows took place in 1975 at a student theater in Cheliabinsk, a city about 700 miles east of Moscow.[24] L'vovskii notes that the student actors played with such energy and enthusiasm that even the insufficient depth of their interpretation was rather forgivable.

Primarily because of the potential problems with censorship, major Russian theaters avoided this play. Only in 1985 was it staged in the Sovremennik Theater in Moscow by Oleg Tabakov. According to Zverev, it was a moderately successful production. While Volodin was still writing Two Arrows, an important event took place in his own family. The playwright's older son, Vladimir, a mathematics student at Leningrad University, declared his intention to emigrate. This announcement deeply shocked Volodin and his family. One must bear in mind that before the late 1980s emigration from the former Soviet Union was considered tantamount to treason.

People who applied for an exit visa were most likely to lose their jobs, and sometimes even their apartments. The KG and other government organizations continually harassed such people as well as their families and friends, often for many years. The authorities made every effort to separate them from the rest of society and discourage others from ever applying for an exit visa. The fear of the KGB was so overwhelming that people were afraid to discuss emigration even with their close friends. In this kind of environment, it is hard to overestimate the severity of the problems which the playwright and his family had to face.

For Volodin personally, his son's desire to emigrate posed a painful moral dilemma. People of his generation were so indoctrinated that they could not believe that anyone might find a happy life outside of his homeland. It was simply considered a patriotic duty for every Soviet citizen to stay in the country and sacrifice himself for the "bright future of mankind However, in the middle of the 1960s, the first waves of the "Information Age" began to reach Soviet shores. Shortwave radio became easily available in the country. Since the official media was deeply mistrusted, short wave foreign broadcasts in Russian became the major source of information. As a result, more and more Soviet men and women, particularly the younger generations, became aware of life outside of the Soviet Union. Young people began to question many fundamental policies of the system including emigration. Having faced this issue within his own family, the playwright felt an urgent need to write about it.

A tragic, nightmarish comedy, Kastrutcha (Kastruchcha, 1968), became his dramatic response to this crisis. The action in Kastrutcha takes place in a fictional country called “Kastrutcha" Despite its infinitesimal size (less than a hundred people), Kastrutcha has all the attributes of a dictatorship with its well developed repressive apparatus. Intellectual life has ceased to exist because it is considered a source of dissent. The protagonist of the play, a middle-aged man named Didel, is a former sailor who many years ago jumped ship to escape the hardship in his own country and asked for asylum in a foreign country.

Over time Didel has become homesick and decides to go back to his own country despite the threat of severe punishment. When Didel returns, he finds conditions in Kastrutcha worse than ever before. His family, friends and the whole country are in a state of a total degradation. All intellectual activity is banned. Didelifs former friend, Louis, the last intellectual in the country, is slowly drinking himself to death. Martha, Didel's former girlfriend, unable to cope with the reality of dictatorship, has been driven to insanity. Didel's own parents have been living in an atmosphere of fear for such a long time that they hardly express any joy at seeing their son again. Fearful to share what they really think, Didel's parents, as everyone in Kastrutcha, use a doublespeak, a form of communication which people living under dictatorships develop in order to disguise the truth.

The country is ruled by a triumvirate which includes Pontus, a "Sleepy Head," and a "Reactionary." As any dictators, the rulers of Kastrutcha are afraid that people will find out the truth about their own country, its past and present. They, particularly Pontus, are concerned that Didel, who knows much more about the true situation in Kastrutcha than the rest of population, could easily become a source of dissent.

Pontus attempts to buy Didels silence by marrying him off to his daughter, Dagni, who is attracted to Didel. Their personal relationship becomes inevitably affected by the political and social conditions in the country. The play ends on a tragic note: as her mother before, Dagni commits suicide, unable to cope with the dark reality of her life. Her death becomes a tragic symbol of the inability to be happy in a totalitarian society.

Although Volodin called Kastrutcha a tragic comedy, there is very little comedy in it It is, rather, a tragic farce, a grotesque, in the best traditions of Gogol. As in The Inspector General, there is a contrast between the superficially realistic texture of the play and the underlying absurdity which sporadically disrupts and undermines it. Although emigration is one of the major themes, the playwright looks at it only as part of a broader picture of totalitarian society. Indeed, there are so many allusions to everyday life that on one level the play could easily be seen as a realistic depiction of Soviet life. And yet, on a more general level, the play is so absurd, so grotesque, that it can only be perceived as the product of a nightmarish dream.

Perhaps because of its brevity, Kastrutcha looks more like a prelude to a fully developed dramatic piece on the complex subject of dictatorship. As a result, the characters are sketchy and incomplete. Even the main character, Didel, needs to be more fully developed. For example, it is not clear how Dagni's death affected him. Does he regret coming back? Will he lead a revolt against the dictatorship, or has he already become a part of the system? These and other questions remained unanswered.

Although Kastrutcha was written in 1966, it was not published until 1988, when the former Soviet Union was already on the decline and the yoke of censorship had eased its grip on the country's culture. Since its publication in Teatr[27], there have been only a few productions and little critical evaluation in the press. A notable exception is critic Tatiana Lanina, who correctly points out that the nightmarish themes in Kastrutcha echo similar subjects in Evgenii Zamiatin's We, George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty Four and Andrei Amalrik's Will the Soviet Union Survive After Nineteen Eighty Four?.[28] She also points out parallels between Kastrutcha and The Dragon by Evgenii Schvarts.[29]

In the meantime, back in the late 1960s, the issue of emigration had remained a matter of considerable pain for the playwright and his family. Vladimir refused to abandon his idea to leave the country despite the risk involved. The political climate in the Soviet Union grew increasingly intolerant. In 1968 the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. The Soviet dissidents, primarily members of the intelligentsia who protested the occupation, were publicly tried and sent to jail. This action served as a chilling reminder to everyone of the dangers of an open dissent. Some people, particularly the intelligentsia, felt alarmed by the rising wave of orthodox Communism, nationalism and anti-semitism. They began to lose hope of ever having a meaningful life in the Soviet Union and contemplated leaving the country. At the same time, any open discussion of emigration remained taboo for Soviet citizens. Unable to come to any definite conclusion, the playwright continued to feel a strong need for further dramatic exploration of this painful subject. Little Lizard Yascheritsa, 1969) became the next step in this direction.

Once again, in order to avoid direct confrontation with the authorities, the playwright turned to a parable. Like his early play, Five Evenings, Little Lizard begins with a narrative introduction. The narrative parts in Five Evenings helped to set the tone for the whole play and later were successfully incorporated into the theatrical production at the BDT. In Little Lizard, the opening narration also sets the tone and stresses the timelessness of the plays° issues:

> “The events in this story happened many thousands of years ago. People already existed. However, even the smartest among them could not grasp all the complexity of life. The stars were looking down at them. The night time spirits were dangerous, the day time spirits were unreliable, and the thunderstorms were primal.”

Little Lizard uses many of the characters from Two Arrows, although chronologically the action in Little Lizard takes place earlier. Unlike Two Arrows, the events in Little Lizard take place in two rival tribes: the "Buffaloes" and the "Scorpions." The story in A Little lizard begins with the disappearance of three members of the "Buffalo tribe, a husband and wife and their newborn child. A catch from the tribe's hunt has also disappeared. Embarrassed by this incident their older children, "Ushastyi," (a character familiar from Two Arrows), and his sister, "Little Lizard, attempt to convince the clan that their parents were kidnapped by the "Scorpions." It turns out that "Ushastyi" knows that his parents simply fled their home because his father stole the catch of the hunt. He feels very uncomfortable because he has to lie to his fellow clansmen.

Finally, despite the danger of the consequences, "Ushastyi" finds the courage to reveal the truth:

> USHASTYI. . Mother was hungry. To sustain her, while she was nursing the new born child, father stole the catch of the hunt and brought it to her. But she could not eat it She said: "I don't want to eat it, I am embarrassed! Take it back!" Father was so angry that he ate the catch himself 31

This revelation turns the whole incident into a debate on broad moral issues. "Head of the Clan" warns against the danger of deception and appeals to his people to follow certain moral rules. However, unable to cope with the complexity of these problems, the "Buffaloes" become angry and turn to violence. First, they fight among themselves, and then attack the "Scorpions." In the following battle the "Scorpions" crush the "Buffaloes" and force them to hide in a swamp where they would eventually die of starvation. In order to escape from the swamp, the "Buffaloes" must find the military secret of the "Scorpions." The "Buffaloes" decide to send a spy. The choice falls on "Little Lizard."

When "Little Lizard" reaches the "Scorpion" camp, she finds, to her astonishment, her parents and their newborn child living peacefully among the enemy. She is stunned that the "Scorpions" had given them refuge despite the fact that they came from a rival tribe. "Little Lizard" also finds a strikingly different social atmosphere. The "Scorpions" have much more respect and tolerance for each other than the "Buffaloes." They are a peaceful and decent people who adhere to certain moral principles. For example, the "Scorpions" know that they could pursue and eliminate their enemies in the swamp. And yet, they do not want to continue mindless bloodshed. They fight only when they are attacked.

While among the "Scorpions," "Little Lizard" becomes a part of the family of "Kidnapper," a young "Scorpion" who found and brought her to his tribe. Like her brother, "Ushastyi," "Kidnapper" is a gentle young man. He does not want to take "Little Lizard" by brute force; he wants her to love him and become his wife voluntarily. Although "Little Lizard" sees his kindness and begins to like him, she feels obligated to return to her own tribe. When she returns, "Little Lizard" is shocked to see the barbarity of her own people, a stark contrast to the social environment in the "Scorpion" society. Unable to live among the "Buffaloes", "Little Lizard" attempts to return to the "Scorpions."

However, her life ends tragically when two young "Scorpions" accidentally kill her near their camp, unaware of her peaceful intentions. Her death becomes a turning point for the "Buffaloes." They begin to realize that they will survive only if they obey certain moral rules and learn how to live in peace with other tribes.

As with Two Arrows, the parable form has been used to discuss a wide range of contemporary issues. On the social level, the conflict between the "Buffaloes" and the "Scorpions" clearly mirrors the confrontation between Soviet society and the West. "Scorpions," which obviously represent some Western country, are shown as far more humane and socially advanced than the "Buffalo" tribe. Coming to this conclusion was an important milestone for Volodin. One must bear in mind that in the 1960s the former Soviet Union was in the midst of the "Cold" War with the West. Soviet propaganda was geared to discredit every aspect of Western societies, which were called "cruel," "inhumane," "exploitative," etc. To contradict this official message required substantial courage and, in essence, represented an act of civil disobedience.

Equally important, Little Lizard indicates a subtle but substantive shift in the playwright's attitude towards emigration. If in Kastrutcha Volodin makes his protagonist return because he cannot survive outside of his homeland, in Little Lizard emigration is presented as a far more acceptable alternative. In fact, several characters speak about emigration as a positive element in the exchange of ideas between people. On the personal level, the play signaled Volodin's acceptance in principle of his son's decision to emigrate.

Besides emigration, the play addresses other moral and social issues. In particular, the playwright continues to explore the genesis of the intelligentsia and its place in society. From this point of view, it is not a coincidence that both plays, Two Arrows and Little Lizard, have the same character, "Ushastyi," whom Volodin describes as the "first member of the intelligentsia." What separates him and a similar character, "Kidnapper," from other people is an intuitive sense of morality and the courage to stand up for his principles. Volodin sees these as indispensable traits of the intelligentsia, traits allowing "Ushastyi" and "Kidnapper" to provide moral leadership in their societies.

Structurally, Little Lizard contains many narrative parts, perhaps more than any of Volodin's previous plays. Narration is used here to create a certain atmosphere and certain visual imagery. The play is uniquely adaptable to both theater and cinema because of the clarity of the visual images created by this narration. It is not a coincidence that Michael Romm, one of the best Russian film makers of the older generation and the teacher of the world famous Andrei Tarkovskii, became interested in both Two Arrows and Little lizard. In 1971 Romm wrote to Volodin

> Your "cave" plays, or more precisely, your social "cave" plays, are striking in the simplicity and precision of their imagery. They trigger my imagination as a director.I would like to begin to work on them as soon as I possibly can.[32]

Volodin remembers that in the same year Romm and his students at the Moscow Film Institute began to work on this project. Unfortunately, a year later Romm became ill and died before the film had been completed. It was not until twenty years later that his student, Alla Surikova, had a chance to complete her teacher's project and made a successful movie based upon these two plays.[33]

Although the inclusion of the narrative parts makes Little Lizard ideal for the cinema, it also offers many appealing theatrical opportunities. In recent years it has become fully accessible to theater directors who have incorporated dance, pantomime, and improvisations into their productions. Its simple but powerful imagery, poetic language, and the inherent plasticity of the "primal" characters makes Little Lizard one of the favorite plays among theater directors of the new generation. Recently the playwright has been asked to write a libretto for a ballet based on the play. The fact that Little Lizard shared certain characters with Two Arrows led many Soviet critics to believe that the second play was merely a sequel to the first one. They correctly note that some themes and characters do overlap. Aleksei Zverev writes that,"…as far as the themes (in Two Arrows and Little Lizard) are concerned, Volodin remains consistent: they are about moral choices and the devastating consequences when morality is ignored; about the courage to stand for one's beliefs even when it means to sacrifice one's life."[34] Boris Zingerman writes: "… the distorted social relationships which were clearly demonstrated in the first play and are shown even deeper in the second...[35]

However, Soviet critics, especially of the early period, chose to ignore the problem of emigration in this play. Since Kastrutcha, written between Two Arrows and Little Lizard, was published only in 1988, they also could not see that in many respects Little Lizard is closer to Kastrutcha than to Two Arrows because they both focus heavily on the issues of emigration.[36] Even Tatiana Lanina mentions this issue only in passing: ".

Two Arrows and Little Lizard is about:"… the first of everything: the first time somebody said: 'I love you'. . . the first member of the intelligentsia…the first people who were forced to leave their homeland and become emigrants..."[37] Today, after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, no one can deny that Volodin's plays were among the first to address this important social issue.

At the end of the 1960s Volodin found himself in a deep professional and personal crisis. The playwright felt that he was living in an emotional and spiritual vacuum caused, he believed, by his own inability to interact with the outside world. On the philosophical level, he felt deeply disillusioned with Marxism, or more exactly, with the way it was implemented in the Soviet Union. And yet, as a deeply moral person, Volodin could not survive in a spiritual void. He needed some kind of faith which could help him to cope with his own pain, doubts, mistakes, and guide him in the search for a primary purpose in life. As many other Russian artists, he turned to religion. Although Jewish by birth, Volodin followed the path of many other members of the Russian intelligentsia and became infatuated with the Russian Orthodox religion. As an artist, Volodin was fascinated with the personality of Jesus Christ and his family:

> "…for me Jesus has always been a historical figure who preached Goodness, Compassion, Love, and Brotherhood among people. . In Mother of Jesus I wanted to show 0 . how His Mother, despite the initial hesitation, became the strongest champion of her son's teaching.[38]

Mother of Jesus (Mat° isusa, 1970) became Volodin's reflection of a painful search for spirituality and higher meaning in life. As the title indicates the play is focused on the Mother of Jesus who, despite her initial hesitation, shares her sons mission of finding a new spirituality and helping people to overcome their natural weaknesses:

> MOTHER. . . Vanity, arrogance, intolerance. Nowadays people drink wine not to improve their spirit but just to get drunk. There is less and less gaiety, more and more jealousy. Many are ready to sacrifice everything, even their own life to achieve success. . . People become hostile to each other. And what did He say? He used very simple words, I"ve heard them many times: Love, Compassion, Tolerance, Brotherhood, Patience."

Her words, however, fall on deaf ears even within her own family, who represent a microcosm of society at large. There is a sharp division between the Sister, who strongly, almost fanatically believes that her brother was the Messiah, and the Older Brother who is a typical opportunist preoccupied only with the material aspects of life. The playwright seems to be more sympathetic to the Sister, although he seems to be concerned with her fanaticism. At the same time, the author rejects the blatant materialism of the Older Brother and his contempt for any manifestation of spirituality. It seems that Volodin wants to find a balance between spirituality without religious fanaticism and the physical reality of the outside world. This dilemma is underscored by the character called "Nervous," who comes to the Mother of Jesus for help in his painful search for internal peace:

> NERVOUS. I need to talk . but perhaps there is no sense .. I'm unhappy, my life does not give any pleasure. Why? That's the problem. It seems there is no clear reason for it with the exception of probably my own stupidity. I must say it is a special kind of stupidity, the stupidity of an educated, even intelligent man.

> 0 0 0 The problem is that first I make all kinds of silly, preventable mistakes and then suffer from them. When I wake up in the morning and remember what I have done the night before, I can't believe myself. No, no, I say, it didn't happen. Now could I have done it? But it's too late. . . And yet, you know, I don't do anything mean or selfish! On the contrary! I ceaselessly think about the welfare of the others I'm ready to give everything I have to other people. But soon I begin to hate my sacrifice and I run away .. I mostly hurt the people who are very close to me: my family, my friends .. Why does thishappen? What do I torture myself for?

The torment and suffering of "Nervous' reflects much more than the experience of one neurotic individual who, like Volodin himself, is desperately trying to reach out to an unfriendly and even hostile world. Those who are familiar with life in the Soviet Union at that time can recall that many members of the Soviet intelligentsia experienced a similar spiritual void. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968-69 further exposed the immoral nature of the Soviet regime. For many people, especially for those who, like Volodin, still retained seeds of hope for a peaceful transformation of the system, the events in Czechoslovakia were a final blow.

The fact that this play is focused on the Mother of Jesus rather on Jesus himself or any other religious figure is far from coincidence. Unlike other branches of Christianity, the Russian Orthodox religion assigns a supreme role to the Mother of Jesus as the holiest symbol of faith. As the Russian orthodox creed postulates, the Mother of Jesus was the first to recognize the dual nature of Jesus as both the son of God and the son of Man.

Her primary goal, according to the teaching of this church, was to continue His mission in providing spiritual and moral guidance to the people and helping them to heal their physical and emotional wounds. Obviously, Volodin was well aware of this special role of the Mother of Jesus in the Russian Orthodox religion when he wrote the play.

Despite its brevity and the sketchiness of some of its characters, Mother of Jesus represents an important milestone in Volodin's dramaturgy. For the first time, the playwright makes an attempt to deal with deeply philosophical questions of human spirituality. In addition, he continues to explore various aspects of morality and the role of the intelligentsia in society, issues which he addressed in his early plays. It is not surprising that the universality of the themes in this play attracted many theater directors. In 1988, almost 20 years after it was written, Mother of Jesus finally was published and instantly became one of the most popular plays on the Russian stage. During the 1988-89 season it was produced in three different theaters in Moscow alone. The Russian theater and drama journal, Sovremennaya dramaturgia, asked the directors who staged Mother of Jesus in the different Moscow theaters the same question: why did they want to stage this particular play? Vladimir Portnoy from the Malaya Bronnaya Theater answered that he was attracted u. by the air of improvisation, creativity and fantasy and by the fascinating subject of the dawn of our spirituality."41

Valerii Sarkisov from the Creative Studios says that he always liked Volodin's plays because their deep wisdom is expressed in such a simple form. He compares the complexity of content and the simplicity of form in Mother of Jesus with the paintings of Mark Schaga11.42 A Bulgarian director, Mladen Kiselov, who staged Mother of Jesus at the Mossovet Theater, says that he was attracted by the humanism of the characters and universality of the themes.43 Georgii Tovstonogov observed that plays like Mother of Jesus help to elevate the ethical standards of society, to cleanse it from the years of moral filth and return it to basic human values.

Volodin's next play, Dulcinea From Toboso (Dultsineia tobosskaya, 1971), just as Mother of Jesus, is focused on a woman who decides to devote her life to the memory and spirit of a man, Don Quixote, she considers far above ordinary human beings. The play begins after Don Quixote's death when Sancho Panza is asked by Dulcinea's parents and her fiancee to dispel the rumors that she was involved with his master. However, to their great surprise, Dulcinea herself insists that she was involved with Don Quixote. Her father, eager to see her married, becomes very angry and expels her from the house. Dulcinea, accompanied by Sancho Panza, who abandons his family to serve her, leaves her village and moves to a nearby town. There Sancho Panza spreads the word about Dulcinea's connection with the famous hidalgo, who now has become an idol for the aristocratic youth.

Madame Teresa, the proprietor of an establishment with a questionable reputation, takes Dulcinea in and uses her to lure and then defraud rich men infatuated with the idea of marrying the famous Dulcinea. Madame Teresa literally arranges an auction for the opportunity to marry the woman "adored by the famous Don Quixote However, Dulcinea, instead of marrying one of her rich suitors, falls in love with Louis, a poor young man who reminds her of the late hidalgo. To her disappointment, Louis does not have any interest in her; he believes that he should withdraw from secular life and become a priest. This angers Dulcinea, who accuses him of being a coward, unable to live up to his destiny and become a true heir to Don Quixote.

When Madame Teresa discovers that Dulcinea has turned all the rich suitors away and is determined to pursue the penniless Louis, she throws the young woman out of her house. Accompanied by Sancho Panza and a few suitors who continue to be dedicated to her, Dulcinea finds refuge in the mountains. She is still in love with Louis. When they finally meet again, Louis confesses to her that his self- confidence has been severely undermined by the failure of his previous romantic relationship. To Louis' surprise, his confession does not turn Dulcinea away. On the contrary, Dulcinea helps him to restore his self-confidence. When the frustrated former suitors attack Dulcinea because they believe that by falling in love with Louis she betrayed Don Quixote and his image of a virgin lady, Louis courageously fights his enemies. And although he is severely beaten up, Louis feels stronger primarily because he has scored a moral victory over himself, over his own weakness. For the first time Louis feels worthy of Dulcineaffs love. Finally he begins to believe that he can be a true heir to Don Quixote.

In Dulcinea From Toboso Volodin continues to explore the theme of a woman who dedicates herself to a higher goal and in the process elevates herself to new spiritual ground. In the beginning, Dulcinea is a simple peasant girl, who like the Mother of Jesus, is completely unaware of her high mission. When she finds out that she is loved by such a noble man as Don Quixote, her life is changed forever. Almost miraculously Dulcinea transforms herself from a peasant girl to a proud lady, noble in spirit, ready to carry out the legacy of the late hidalgo. Furthermore, just as the Mother of Jesus, she urges and inspires others to adhere to high moral and ethical grounds, to have faith in his or her own internal strength. The victory of her love for Louis demonstrates the power of the individual to overcome external and internal obstacles in order to live up to her dreams and expectations.

Although penniless, Dulcinea and Louis are nonetheless happy because they are free; they are physically defenseless, but their enemies cannot defeat them because their spirits are strong. Dramatically, Dulcinea From Toboso also represents a new step for Volodin as a playwright. Although his early plays had some comic elements and The Appointment was technically a comedy, it is only in this play that his talent for comedy becomes plainly evident, primarily due to such characters as Sancho Panza, who is a comic servant in the best traditions of Moliere; Conchita, Sancho Panza's relentless, mature-for-her-age adolescent daughter, who repeatedly attempts to make her father more responsible to the family; Madame Teresa, a greedy, conniving woman without any scruples.

Despite the seriousness of its content, the play is filled with humor and optimism. Sovietcritics of the 1970s were unhappy with the play. Pavel Markov wrote, that n Dulcinea From Toboso is somewhatconvoluted and difficult to grasp . . particularly the idea of the "eternal nature" of Don Quixote which is hidden behind an intentional paradoxicality of structure"[45] In the 1980s, however, the play was judged more fairly. Tatiana Lanina correctly points out that in Dulcinea From Toboso ".

Volodin talks about contemporary society which frequently prefers to idolize the image of Don Quixote but to ignore the spirit of his noble mission."[46] One may add that Volodin wrote this play on a subject familiar to all readers since the 17th century to point out the persistent and timeless nature of the problems which are its subject. Despite the cool reception by the critics, Dulcinea From Toboso was enthusiastically received by the audience when it was first staged at the famous Moscow Art Theater in 1972. The play was also produced in many professional and amateur theaters throughout the country and later made into a movie and a musical. Dulcinea From Toboso firmly established Volodin's reputation as a leading Soviet playwright.

Despite the diversity of styles and genres: from the tragic, nightmarish Kastrutcha to the light, comical Dulcinea From Toboso--all Volodin's plays written between the mid 1960s and early 1970s have something in common the use of allegory and grotesque usually combined with time displacement. To enhance emotional impact, he also incorporated his own poetry into the the body of the dramatic text. Volodin used these and other dramatic devices to explore new forms of artistic expression as he was searching for answers to the fundamental philosophical and moral questions which he and the rest of Soviet society were facing. In addition, the use of allegory was necessitated by the fact that any open discussion of the issues would have led inevitably to serious conflicts with the Soviet authorities. Furthermore, the allegorical form seemed to inspire unusually interesting productions because it all wed directors to contrast the historically different external form with the universal, timeless context. This is where philosophical generalization and artistic "ostranenien[47] (distancing) permits the spectators to liberate themselves from immediate reality to understand that the moral dilemmas brought up in these plays are omnipresent and everlasting.

Notes

1. Alexander Volodin, Dlia teatra I kino (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967) 7.

2. Alexander Volodin, Naznachenie, in: Osennii Marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel", 1985) 101.

3. Those who know the playwright personally could easily see that many of Liamin's features actually belong to Volodin himself. This play marked a continued incorporation of the playwright's own life and character into his dramatic works, a process started in Five Evenings.

4. Volodin Naznachenie 101. 5,

Volodin Naznachenie 102. 6.

Volodin, Naznachenie 88.

7 Alexander Volodin, Unpublished Series of Interviews, May-June 1991.

8. As Volodin notes in one his recent interviews, he intentionally chose the last names of these two characters to be almost identical: Kuropeev and Muroveev.

9. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 4.

4

10. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 5.

11. Inna Vishnevskaiia, (Teatr), November 1964, 65.

12. Natalia Krymova, Liubite li v. teatr? (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisate1[8], 1987) 75.

13. Mark Zakharov, "Novoe naznachenie," Sovetskaya kul'tura 6 April, 1982, 3,

14. Aleksei Zverev, "Ogoniok nezvestno otkuda," Ngyyi Mir, September 1987, 236.

15. Tatiana Lanina, Alexander Volodin (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1989) 162.

16. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 32. 17.

Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 33.

18. Zverev 237.

19. Boris Zingerman, "Romantik teatra," Teatr, November 1988, 41.

20. Zingerman 41.

21. Lanina 209.

22. There was an attempt in 1971 by the famous Russian film director Michael Romm to make a movie based upon Two Arrows. Unable to get a permission to launch a full scale production, Romm began to work on this piece as a student project at the Moscow Film Institute where he taught at that time The untimely death of Romm left this project incomplete.

23. Lanina 209.

24. Unpublished interview with Mikhail L'vovskii Moscow, June 1991.

25. Zverev 226.

26. Undoubtedly, there is a clear allusion to the triumvirate of Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgornii who ruled the former Soviet Union at that time

The name of Pontus is reminiscent of Pontius Pilatus, the Roman governor of ancient Judea responsible for the execution of Jesus.

27. Alexander Volodin, Kastrutcha, Teatr, May 1988, 4°20.

28. Lanina notes at the time Kastrutcha was written Volodin was unaware about Zamiatin's, Orwell's or Amalrik's works because they were strictly banned in the former Soviet Union. See Lanina, Alexander Volodin, 302.

29. Lanina 303.

30. Alexander Volodin, Yascheritsa in: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1985) 133.

31. Volodin, Iashcheritsa 157.

32. Personal archives Alexander Volodin.

33. More about the cinematic aspect of Volodin's works will be discussed in the following chapter.

34. Zverev 237.

35. Zingerman 41.

36. Back in the 1960s, practically nobody except a very close circle of family and friends knew about Vladimir's desire to emigrate. Only recently the playwright himself has become comfortable to share with the public his feelings on this issue and its effect on his writing. See: Alexander Volodin, Ondomestnyi tramvai (Moscow: Pravda, 1989) 17.

37. Lanina 207.

38. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 35.

39. Alexander Volodin, Mat' Isusa, Sovremennaya dramaturgia, January 1989, 66.

40. Volodin, Mat' Isusa 71.

41. Vladimir Portnoy, Sovremennaya dramaturgia, January 1989, 60.

42. Valerii Sarkisov, Sovremennaya dramaturgia, January 1989, 61.

43. Mladen Kiselov, Sovremennaya dramaturgia, January 1989, 62.

44. Georgii Tovstonogov, "Nerozhdennyi shedevr iii komu i kak rukovodit' kul'turoi," Literaturnaya crazeta, 22 June, 1988, 14.

45. Pavel Markov, 0 teatre (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel', 1977) vol. 4, 505.

46. Lanina 205.

47. The term was introduced in the 1920s by the Soviet critic and scholar, Victor Shklovskii. For reference see: Victor Shklovskii, Za 60 let raboti v kino (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985) 28.

CHAPTER 4
THE THEME OF ALIENATION

By the mid 1960s Alexander Volodin had established himself as one of the most popular Soviet playwrights. His plays occupied a solid place in the repertoire of theaters throughout the country. In addition, Volodin continued to write screenplays, short stories, essays, poetry. Almost 10 years after the premiere of A Factory Girl, a collection of his dramatic and literary works titled For Theater and Cinema (Dlia teatra i kino, 1967) was published. One of the most interesting and revealing pieces in this collection is an autobiographical essay, Optimistic Notes (Optimisticheskie zametki, 1966). In a soft, slightly humorous and self-deprecating manner Volodin talks in this essay about his life and his art, his work in theater and cinema. Among other things he reveals the importance of his personal experience to his dramatic and literary work.

He writes: "... Earlier in my career I was convinced that as a writer, I could use in my literary and dramatic works only the events and facts which happened in the lives of other people. I believed that the circumstances of my own life weren't important or interesting to anyone. In my first play, A Factory Girl, there was nothing from my own life. But then I came to the conclusion that there is nothing wrong if I use my personal experience in my literary and dramatic works. I began to believe that the more open a writer is, the more he is willing to share with his audience, the deeper cord inside other human beings he can strike. I realized how similar as human beings we are; after all we share the same planet: Earth.

> Why do people love Evtushenko and Voznesenskii so much? Because they write about themselves, they are not afraid to share their most intimate thoughts. That is why in my next play, Five Evenings, I used rather extensively facts from my own life.'

This statement represents, in essence, Volodinfs artistic manifesto. At a time when writers in the former Soviet Union were pressed by the Communist Party to speak on behalf of workers, farmers, military people, etc., Volodin urged his colleagues to speak on behalf of themselves as human beings, to speak with the voice of their own souls. For Volodin himself it meant to speak about human loneliness, nonconformity, and alienation. From that point on[157] these themes became most prominent in his writing.

This fact should not come as a surprise. As was discussed above, Volodinis writing has been profoundly influenced by personal experience. This accounts for both his success with audiences and his problems with Soviet authorities. From time to time his works have been either officially or unofficially banned. He has been harshly criticized by many critics in the press as well as by cultural bureaucrats at various conferences of Soviet writers and playwrights. In one of his interviews Volodin points out that it looked like a well orchestrated campaign to discredit him. He admits that this criticism caused him a lot of pain and anguish.[2] He says that he felt alienated, and it affected his writing. Hence, the themes of isolation, depression and alienation continued, explicitly or implicitly, to be a part of his literary and dramatic works. One of the early pieces in this category is the 1966 screenplay Mysterious Indian (ZAgadochnyi indus, 1966) which reflects these themes and their connection with Volodin's own personality.'

Mysterious Indian tells the story of a middle-aged widower, Viktor Vasilievich Kukushkin, a circus magician by profession, who refuses to compromise his moral principles for material gain. Although his stand appears rather radical for the Soviet society of the 1960s, Kukushkin is not a fighter, or even a dissident. On the contrary, he is a modest, rather shy person, a romantic by nature who, like Volodin himself, has gone through the traumatic experience of World War II which left him deeply scarred.

Painfully shy, Kukushkin frequently hides his true feelings behind eccentric behavior, which even people close to him find, at times, difficult to accept. He lost his wife many years ago, when their daughter was still very young, and this adds to the sense of his isolation even alienation from the society around him. It is hardly surprising that Kukushkin is not very successful in his professional career, primarily because he refuses to flatter his boss, Rossomakhin. As a circus magician he depends solely upon contracts from the regional circus authority which is in the hands of Rossomakhin. Because of his uncompromising position, Kukushkin suffers not only financially but also psychologically: lack of a full time job undermines his self-confidence, lowers his morale, makes him feel isolated and unwanted by society.

However, Kukushkin cannot exist in this kind of vacuum. He finds a rather unusual outlet for his professional skills°®a student dormitory, where he entertains the students with his magic tricks for free. There, among young people, Kukushkin becomes a different person: animated, outgoing, even boisterous. Even when most students, preoccupied with their own things, do not pay much attention to his show, he still feels happy among them. At the beginning Kukushkin also feels a bit embarrassed by this adventure because he is afraid to look silly in the eyes of

his own daughter. Finally Kukushkin admits to her how important for him are his dormitory performances:

> KUKUSHKIN. Lelia, I'm going some place, and I would like you to go with me. When you see it, you'll understand everything. I will introduce you to the people who feel that your father is worth something. You may be surprised, but there are some people who still believe it, . . They are friends. I know it sounds rather silly, and I am not really sure whether or not they need me, Perhaps I need them more than they need me, I don't care. . .[4]

Since his performances at the dormitory have not been officially authorized, Kukushkin does not receive any props for his tricks and has to steal them from a state store. He escapes jail only because a young police investigator who finally tracks him down shows a lot of leniency towards him.

One day Kukushkin meets a beautiful woman by the name of Elena and falls in love with her.[5] Elena is a middle- aged widow whose husband died of a heart condition. She teaches English at the local university and in contrast to him is fully engaged in the life around her. Kukushkin and Elena become instantly attracted to each other, and it seems that these two lonely people can find happiness together. However, they soon discover that they have somewhat different views on life. Their differences become particularly evident in an episode with Kukushkin's boss, Rossomakhin.

When they accidentally meet Rossomakhin, Kukushkin suddenly begins to behave eccentrically and embarrasses Elena. Kukushkin attempts to explain to the infuriated Elena that he does not have anything personal against Rossomakhin. On the contrary, he says, Rossomakhin is a relatively harmless man, but he refuses to behave as everyone else and flatter him just to be employed. However, Elena cannot understand Kukushkin's reasons. She leaves feeling rather frustrated with him. Even Kukushkin's daughter, who knows him better than anybody else, has difficulty supporting him in this situation:

> KUKUSHKIN. He (Rossomakhin) wants me to smile at him nicely, and then he will give me a job. But I hate it, I want to behave according to my mood.
>
> DAUGHTER. And what if you're in a mood to snap at everyone, does everyone have to suffer?
>
> KUKUSHKIN. It's not my fault, they make me behave like this
>
> DAUGHTER. Who, they?
>
> KUKUSHKIN. Everybody.

Although Kukushkin sounds a bit childish, his words nevertheless indicate that it is the outside world, society which makes him behave erratically. Kukushkin feels that, as a human being, he has a right to remain true to himself. In this context his revolt becomes an issue of basic human rights. For this modest, shy and sometimes eccentric person this issue becomes so important that he is

willing to fight for it regardless of price. He refuses to compromise even for the sake of the woman he loves:

> KUKUSHKIN. You see, Elena, there have been some things which I've been always rather leery about. One of them is, for instance, that I have never tried to conform to anything or anyone for the sake of material gain. And I don't think I will ever change...I am the way I am, and I cannot be different.[6]

In the end Elena makes an honest attempt to accept him the way he is. They reconcile and decide to get married. However, the same conflict erupts when during the wedding reception at Elena's apartment, Rossomakhin, invited by Elena, offers Kukushkin a deal: to be like everybody else or continue his miserable existence as an outcast:

> ROSSOMAKHIN. Listen, Victor, now I'm not your boss, and you're not my employee. We're just friends. And as a friend I want to tell you something: if you ask me as everyone else does, I'll do anything for you. .
>
> KUKUSHKIN. I don't need anything from you . . You see, I don't like to depend on anybody. If I see someone attempting to usurp my independence, I immediately run away.
>
> ROSSOMAKHIN. An individual depends upon the society he lives in, and there is nothing you can do about it.'

At this moment the conversation takes a dangerous, almost explosive turn. It would have been too dangerous for Volodin to accuse Communist society of creating an environment conducive to flattery and belittlement of the individual.[8] To avoid an open confrontation with the authorities Volodin "localizes H the conflict by making this little boss, Rossomakhin, the culprit in all Kukushkin's misfortunes. In

this context it becomes clear why the author makes his protagonist say the following:

> KUKUSHKIN. To depend upon society is a different matter. Society gives me an opportunity to work and provides me with a monetary compensation for my work. Unfortunately society entrusted you with responsibility to decide who gets a job. And you take advantage of it But not with me.
>
> ROSSOMAKHIN. (Staring at Kukushkin very intensely and hardly hiding his anger). You will come and beg me on your knees, my dear.
>
> KUKUSHKIN. Oh, I wouldn't bet on it And you know what: I'm not going to smile at you just to get something out of you. Never. And I will always be a free and independent person.[9]

In the repressive atmosphere of the former Soviet Union Volodin is dangerously close here to the boundary of the permissible. One more step, and his characters would touch more fundamental social issues, a step Volodin obviously could not take.[1°] The conversation is abruptly ended by Elena. She angrily demands that Kukushkin apologize to Rossomakhin. Kukushkin refuses, and instead leaves the reception and goes home. Next morning Elena retreats. She realizes that Kukushkin cannot change his nature and, if she wants to stay with him, she needs to accept him the way he is. Kukushkin also reveals to her his secret visits to the dormitory and warns her that he will continue to entertain his student friends. Elena reluctantly agrees.

The themes and characters in Mysterious Indian are not new for Volodin. Their roots can be traced to his early works such as "Fifteen Years In One's Life" and Five Evenings. The protagonist of this story, just as his predecessor, Il'in, is deeply alienated from the society around him. Similarly to Il'in and, in essence, to Volodin himself, Kukushkin's estrangement has been triggered by his experience during World War II and the discrepancy between his expectations for a more humane and just society and Soviet reality. His alienation takes the form of a direct confrontation with his boss, Rossomakhin, who personifies authority. Unlike Il'in from "Fifteen Years In One's Life," who prefers to stay "above the fight by becoming a drifter, and Il'in from Five Evenings, whose revolt against the dean in his college may be perceived as an act of rebellious youth, Kukushkin's ch llenge to the system is more explicit. His fight is not an isolated incident, as in the case of Il'in in Five Evenings, but a systematic effort to assert his human rights. It becomes the centerpiece of Volodin^{2}s play.

For obvious reasons the playwright was forced to disguise the real explosiveness of this character by making him a magician, a circus man, a clown, an eccentric who should not be taken seriously. Any other "dressing" for this type of protagonist would have been totally impossible and even dangerous for the author. Volodin's own life, his pain, his alienation from society is once again unveiled in this piece. As before, his protagonist becomes an extension of his own personality. Mvsterious

Indian has been largely misunderstood by Soviet critics, as was the case with Volodin's previous works.

For example, Konstantin Scherbakov completely misses the point in his analysis by stating that, the protagonist does not oppose the world around him, he is a part of it This world is human and kind (?!) but, of course, imperfect."[11] For a Soviet critic to admit that Kukushkin is an outcast, a man alienated from society because he dares to defend his human rights, a man who represents a certain social phenomenon, is to admit the existence of fundamental social problems, an admission totally impossible in the former Soviet Union. Another critic, Alexander Demidov, attempts to make a totally inappropriate contrast between the characters of Volodin and those of another famous Soviet playwright, Alexander Vampilov.

By accusing Volodin of "sentimentality" and invoking feelings of pity for his characters for their inability to fit themselves into society,'" Demidov only demonstrates that he does not understand either Volodinus or Vampilov's works." To be fair, one must note that not every Soviet critic has held the views of Scherbakov or Demidov. For example, Viktor Gaevskii in his review of Volodin's works published in the journal Teatr in 1967 makes an attempt to connect Volodin's characters with the social environment they live in He acknowledges that Volodin diverges from the society around him. He says: "Volodin argues with his time, he wants to overcome its callousness, its heartlessness. VD [14] Gaevskii implies that life in Communist society can be rather uncomfortable for the individual.

Understandably, this is the most a Soviet critic could safely say at that time Twenty years later Tatiana Lanina writes in her book on Volodin that, Mysterious Indian is a story of an individual who is determined to defend his right to remain true to himself in his relationship with his boss, with the woman he loves, with everyone who attempts to threaten his independence.'"' However, even her assessment of this piece fails to establish a clear connection between the struggle of its protagonist and the social conditions around him, reducing Kukushkin's dilemma to personal conflicts with individuals. Mysterious Indian is written in narrative form, which is more appropriate for the screen than for the theater. This perhaps explains why this piece was first made into a movie and then, only several years later, staged in the theater..

Several years later, the Moscow Theater For Young Audiences staged Mysterious Indian as part of a production called Attractions (Atraktsionv) which also included Volodin's other piece, The Adventures Of a Dentist. The director, Felix Berman, decided to stage the plays as a circus show with acrobats, mimes, magicians, and other circus artists. Volodin remembers that at first he was quite surprised by this approach.'[6] He admits that he never thought these pieces could be presented in such a way. But after he This perhaps explains why this piece was first made into a movie and then, only several years later, staged in the theater..

The film has a different title, The Adventures Of a Magician, and features a popular Soviet theater and film actor, Zinovii Gerdt, who plays Kukushkin. It is hard to imagine anyone more suitable for this role than this actor. A former soldier, who had lost his leg fighting in World War II, Gerdt, like Volodin, returned from the war deeply scarred, both emotionally and physically. A man of Volodin's generation, and, even more importantly, a person emotionally and psychologically akin to Volodin, Gerdt captures the most important traits of Kukushkin: his vulnerability, his integrity and determination to defend it at any cost. Many critics, while praising Gerdt's work as an actor, nonetheless refused to see the social significance of the character he created. Several years later the Moscow Theater For Young Audiences staged Mysterious Indian as part of a production called Attractions (Atraktsionv) which also included Volodin's other piece,

The Adventures Of a Dentist. The director, Felix Berman, decided to stage the plays as a circus show with acrobats, mimes, magicians, and other circus artists. Volodin remembers that at first he was quite surprised by this approach.'[6] He admits that he never thought these pieces could be presented in such a way. But after he Alekseevna, her husband, Vadim Antonovich, and their two teenage daughters, Anna and Galina, live in Moscow. Elena Alekseevna is a choreographer, and Vadim Antonovich is an engineer.

The story revolves around Olga°s unexpected intrusion upon the life of Elena Alekseevna and her family. Unlike the stereotypical sentimental stories about a poor orphan who finds happiness in a lost family, Daughters-Mothers offers a distinctly different picture. Here the orphan, Olga, is presented as an intruder, a crude and insensitive person, who seriously disrupts the normal life of this basically solid family. From the very beginning Olga manages to antagonize practically everyone in Elena Alekseevna's family, but most of all, Vadim Antonovich. They immediately dislike each other. This is how Vadim Antonovich reacts to Olga's appearance in his house:

> ELENA ALEKSEEVNA. She (Olga) is a good girl.
>
> VADIM ANTONOVICH. I think, she is too strong headed.
>
> ELENA ALEKSEEVNA. Well, this may not be too bad.
>
> VADIM ANTONOVICH. She is too active for my taste. You know, girls like her frequently become the most mean spirited women. Give her time, and she will begin to teach you how to choreograph or she'll accuse you of "formalistic experimentation ."[18]

As the play progresses, the mutual distaste between Pavel Antonovich and Olga becomes more and more evident. Indeed, Vadim Antonovich epitomizes everything which is antithetical to annoyingly confident, self-righteous, crass

Olga. He is what is usually labeled as a nfailure." However, in the eyes of his stronger and professionally more successful wife, Vadim Antonovich is the victim of unfortunate circumstances. As Elena Alekseevna explains to Olga:

> ELENA ALEKSEEVNA. Vadim Antonovich is a very gifted man. When we just met, he was already a graduate student in physics, very talented, many people expected him to achieve a big success in his area . . You know, he also has a wonderful voice! I mean he had, because he does not sing anymore. . A long time ago he used to write poetry, and very good ones! Well, there were many things. . . You see, the trouble is that Vadim Antonovich does not have willpower. When our girls were born, I was in the midst of choreographing a show at the theater and he had to take care of the babies. Somehow he lost interest in his work and never finished his dissertation.

However, it would be an oversight to interpret the conflict between Vadim Antonovich and Olga simply as a clash of two distinctly different personalities. Their mutual antagonism must be viewed in the context of the complex social conditions of the time In the Soviet Union orphans, perhaps more than anyone else, were subjected to the most rigorous indoctrination and thus became symbols of already mentioned "Homo Soveticus."[2°]

The conflict between Vadim Antonovich and Olga represents, in essence, a clash of two sharply different life philosophies. Olga's points of view represent the official Communist philosophy which glorifies strength, work in a collective, competition and disdains weakness as a "bourgeois trait." Vadim Antonovich, on the other hand, treasures individualism and personal freedom. He hates competition, especially if it means achieving success

at any price:

> VADIM ANTONOVICH. . I think I've finally figured out what is the biggest issue for humanity today: the life-long competition. It begins in childhood: who jumps higher or who runs faster. Later in life the competition moves to the area of professional achievements: who gets the higher position, who makes more money. . . No, I refuse to participate in this game. If anybody wants to climb up the ladder, let them do it. But not me, I quit.[21]

Vadim Antonovich admits that he has consciously decided to stay out of active life, which is, in his view, associated with mindless competition and dehumanization.[2-] He chooses to become an outsider rather than a part of the society of "happy Communist builders." It is not a coincidence that throughout the play Vadim Antonovich finds himself in the state of constant depression.

Once again Volodin depicts a type by now familiar: a gifted person who, for certain reasons, refuses to utilize his potential. Like Vadim Antonovich is alienated from the society around him. His alienation is expressed in a rather passive way, by a simple withdrawal from active life. Vadim Antonovich does not want to fight with anybody, as opposed to Kukushkin from Mysterious Indian. Nevertheless his character, too, runs contrary to the familiar cliche of Socialist Realism with its typically energetic, self-righteous, one-dimensional heroes.

Vadim Antonovich is typical Volodin anti-hero he belongs to the category of men who struggle with themselves, their conflict being internalized, and because they lack confidence and are frequently depressed. The playwright could certainly empathize with this condition because he frequently experienced it himself® Volodin also admits that he has always strongly disliked crude, highhanded, self-righteous individuals like Olga.[23] He says that they make him extremely uncomfortable.

As strongly as Volodin felt about people like Olga, he could not fully express his true feelings because of the severe censorship and the very real possibility of reprisals from the authorities should he overstep the bounds. For that reason Volodin could not address the fundamental issue of society's responsibility for creating such moral monsters as Olga. He knew that the Olgas represented the backbone of the Communist regime, and the regime could not allow anyone to attack them. This explains why, for the most part, the confrontation between these two characters is relatively muted.

There is another, potentially even more explosive element in this play: a conflict between two social groups- -the workers and the intelligentsia. The supremacy of the working class over the intelligentsia has been one of the most "sacred cows" of Socialist Realism. For generations, Soviet writers presented in their works a victorious worker or farmer who successfully overcomes resistance from a member of the "decaying intelligentsia."

Here Volodin essentially reverses the situation: Olga, a working class girl, is an unattractive character, while Vadim Antonovich, a member of the intelligentsia, is a more sympathetic individual.

This deviation from one of the canons of Socialist Realism provoked a heated debate in the press as well as in theater and film circles. As in the case of his previous works, Volodin was accused by some critics of blackening the "proletariat, the avant-guard of Socialist society," while glorifying the "whining intelligentsia." The screenplay of Daughters-Mothers has a rather peculiar story. After the screenplay had been written, Volodin could not find a director who wanted to film it.

Then came a most unexpected offer. Sergei Gerasimov, a highly decorated film director and one of the stalwarts of the Socialist Realist cinema, offered to make a film based on Daughters-Mothers. Volodin admits that he had a lot of reservations about working with Gerasimov, an orthodox Communist and infamous master of intrigues. He explains that the reason he finally agreed had more to do with his own overall situation than with the desire to work with a famous director.' At that time Volodin was close to being blacklisted. His plays were hardly staged, his other literary works were rarely published. In addition, he was going through a personal crisis. His friends urged him to accept Gerasimov's offer and to break that wall of silence which the authorities had created around him. Volodin speculates that Gerasimov, for his part, chose to work with him because he wanted to shake off his highly conservative image among the Soviet intelligentsia.

Many years later Volodin said that the work with Gerasimov on this film was one of the worst experiences of his life.[26] The disputes between him and Gerasimov surfaced from the very beginning. Gerasimov demanded rather drastic changes in the screenplay to accommodate his interpretation of the conflict between Vadim Antonovich and Olga in a venue of Socialist Realism. Volodin strongly resisted these changes because he believed they would lead to another bashing of the intelligentsia, a familiar scene in many Socialist Realist movies and plays. Volodin felt that he could not be part of the anti-intelligentsia campaign.

Gerasimov, an experienced professional, quickly realized that Volodin would not yield in this point, and changed his tactics. He asked the playwright to make some "small" changes in the screenplay such as a change of profession for Vadim Antonovich, who, instead of being an average engineer living in a modest Leningrad apartment, would become a prominent scientist living in a luxurious Moscow apartment." Gerasimov assured Volodin that these alterations would not affect the story or the characters. Volodin naively believed these assurances and agreed. Only after the film was completed did he realize that he was "framed" by the experienced and crafty Gerasimov.

These and a few other, seemingly "insignificant alterations in the screenplay, made at Gerasimov's request, in reality changed the whole atmosphere of

the story. Contrary to the playwright's intentions, the tone of the movie became decisively anti-intellectual. This happened despite the fact that the actor who played the role of Vadim Antonovich, an outstanding Russian actor Evgenii Smoktunovskii, made every effort to soften this impression.

Smoktunovskii, himself an intelligent and sensitive individual, had always supported Volodin in his arguments with Gerasimov. He, like Volodin, felt embarrassed by the movie. In general, Volodin says, he deeply regrets his involvement in this project.

The following several years were rather difficult for Volodin. A sense of artistic and personal crisis continued to dominate his life despite the fact that by now he was already a renowned author, whose dramatic and literary works were recognized in the country and abroad. The overall atmosphere in the country was marked by increasing conservatism in social and political life. More than ever before, Volodin felt isolated and depressed. The urge to express himself through his writings, to incorporate his personal experience in his dramatic and literary works became even stronger. Universally hailed as a spokesman for the middle-aged, Volodin approached sixty, an age he considered "old." Old age has always been associated by him with decay and death. In his words, he did not have any desire to write about uold people.

The fear of growing old and a deep pessimism found their way into his works. And yet, ironically, during this period Volodin created perhaps his finest pieces: A Pulp-Writer (Grafoman, 1978), The Blonde (Blondinka, 1979), and Autumn Marathon (Osennii marafon, 1979). A Pulp-Writer is a story of an aging man by the name Makin who faces the unhappy perspective of

growing old without ever having realized his dream: to become a poet. A deeply seated sense of personal unfulfillment affects his whole life. In his mid fifties, he leads a rather unhappy existence. He is married to Galina Petrovna, a successful medical doctor, and has a grown daughter who is going through her own personal crisis.

Mokin works as a safety engineer in a small company, a useless job he hates. Perhaps unjustly, he feels belittled by his more successful wife. He envies her success and the fact that she ostensibly enjoys her job and her life in general. Mokin also suffers from rejection and a lack of respect from his daughter. His attempts to help her to deal with her personal crisis have been rebuffed. In addition, Mokin is growing deaf, the effect of a wound he received during World War II. As a result he begins to avoid other people more and more. He feels increasingly isolated and alienated. Poetry becomes his only refuge and avenue for self-expression. Mokin has been writing it for many years but with little success nobody wants to publish his works.

Suddenly, a small magazine accepts a piece of his poetry. To his surprise this publication brings a response from a reader, a woman from a small town in central Russia who writes to him a letter of appreciation. Mokin writes back to her, and their letter exchange begins. This seemingly small incident brings about a vital change in him. Now Mokin feels that his life has meaning: there is someone who likes and appreciates his poetry. Because he believes that he and his wife do not understand each other any more, he feels somewhat uncomfortable about telling her of the letters. They become his little secret, which adds mystery to his rather boring, uneventful existence. Hokin begins to fantasize about this woman. He sees her as a person of roughly his age, probably single, and most likely as lonely and alienated as he

is. The woman, for her part, prefers to remain mysterious and not to reveal a lot of personal information. Her letters are warm, they seem to indicate an intelligent and sensitive person, but at the same time they clearly indicate that she wants to maintain a certain distance between them.

Over a period of time their letters become a bit more intimate. Mokin°s curiosity grows, and he begins to insist on a personal meeting. He offers to come to her home town. The woman categorically refuses. Instead, she says that the relationship has gone too far and suggests that they should stop writing to each other. She explains that she is rather old, has grown children and even grandchildren and does not want to be involved with anyone. However, for Mokin her letters have become much more than just a way to maintain a personal contact. They have become the tool of reaffirmation of his self-worth. That is why despite her refusal, Mokin decides to go and meet her personally.

As the audience has now begun to suspect, Galina Petrovna herself is the "mysterious woman" who has been writing these letters all along. Knowing how desperate her husband was even for a small recognition of his poetry, she has organized the letter deception. She has asked her relative, who lives in a central Russian town, to rewrite her letters and readdress them back to her husband. It is interesting to note that in this play, as in Daughters Mothers, there is a successful wife who feels compassion for her less fortunate husband. Furthermore, in both cases the women act as sensitive, understanding human beings whose professional success does not make them callous. In Daughters-Mothers Elena Alekseevna, a successful choreographer and, in essence, the "man" in the family, makes every effort to restore her husband's confidence. She can do it more

openly because their relationship seems to be quite strong, at least, there is no evidence that the communication between them is broken.

In A Pulp Writer Galina Petrovna is also professionally much more successful than her husband, and yet she deeply cares about him. However, her task is more complicated because the line of communication between her and Mokin is broken, he feels estranged from her as well as the world around him. That is why Galina Petrovna has to resort to a "covert operation" to restore her husband's confidence. That is also why at the end of the story Mokin, still unaware of who his correspondent really is, decides to go and meet the one human being who, he believes, is interested in him. Galina Petrovna, is devastated by the unexpected results of her sincere desire to help her husband:

> GALINA PETROVNA. I know where he (Mokin) is going to go. It's so terrible, so senseless. I don't know what I've done.He is going to find out about my letters, and it will become another horrible humiliation for him. And I don't how to explain my actions. What should I do? What should I do?[28]

The story ends rather ambiguously. It is not clear what will happen to Mokin when he finds out about the deception. Will he understand why his wife has done it and will he appreciate her action or, on the contrary, will he become even more bitter and isolated? And yet, the ambiguity of the ending does not diminish high qualities of this story; perhaps on the contrary, it enhances it by forcing the readers to think and confront the issues facing the characters in this story. Here, as in his earlier works, Volodin does not offer any definite solutions to his characters' problems. In broader terms, the play

addresses fundamental issues of modern human existence such as man's fear of growing old and increasing alienation from society.

As in Five Eveninas, Volodin introduces a plot line parallel to that of the protagonist: the relationship between Mokin's daughter and her lover, an unrecognized painter. Mokin's daughter has fallen in love with the painter, a married man twice her age, primarily out of compassion for his "unappreciated" talent. Mokin, in his attempt to understand their relationship, meets with the man and his wife, who, strangely enough, seems to be aware of her husband's extramarital affair.

To his own surprise, the initial hostility toward her daughter's lover somehow disappears. He even begins to sense some professional kinship between them. Mokin can see that the man, like he, is struggling for recognition of his art. In addition, rather unexpectedly, their conversation turns into a quite interesting discussion about the arts and artists in modern society, which of course gives Volodin a chance to express his own views on the subject. Unfortunately, the relationship eventually fails even though the painter divorces his wife and marries Mokin's daughter. The daughter's failure serves to underscore Mokin's own failures in life, both personally and professionally.

As in his early play Two Arrows, Volodin's own poetry is included in A Pulp-Writer, ostensibly written by the protagonist, Mokin. Written mostly in blank

verse, the poems frequently turn into the protagonist's stream of consciousness. Mokin realizes that his poetry is rather amateurish, and yet he wants to be recognized as a professional.

This contradiction between the reality and the dream reflects Volodin's ambiguous feelings about his own poetic talent: he has been writing poetry all his life, and yet he has never thought of himself as a serious poet. Mikhail L'vovskii, a well known Soviet screenwriter and a close friend of Volodin, comments that A Pulp-Writer, perhaps more than any other piece to date, represents Volodin's own voice, both as a poet and as an individual."

He points out that some passages look like they came from Volodin's personal diaries: "…Many of my friends from the days of my youth are already gone. All these years after the War made them only younger. They suffered on the battlefields, And I suffer from my own misfortunes. . . My sleep at night is getting worse. I drink more, become less courteous with women. I no longer stay up with my friends till the dawn. What is wrong with me? What is wrong? I don't know. I am as I have always been! I am!"

A Pulp-Writer has been essentially ignored by Soviet critics. They could not decide how to deal with it On the one hand, this play appears to contain nothing "seditious." The story seems to be completely apolitical, focused on the life of one unhappy individual, his fear of growing old, his inability to reach out to other people[182] and his increasing isolation from the outside world.

And yet, any observant reader or spectator can easily see that the pessimistic, even gloomy tone of A Pulo-Writer contradicts the myths of Socialist Realism. There is no "class struggle," no optimistic workers or farmers who overcome all obstacles on their march toward the "bright future." On the contrary, the story is focused on a "moaning and groaning" intellectual who lacks any "social responsibility" and is totally preoccupied with his own "petty" problems. He epitomizes everything that Marxist- Leninist critics call the "decaying intelligentsia."

Naturally, these critics could not admit that many people in a Socialist society--as in any society-could feel lonely and deeply unhappy for various reasons, as, for example, growing older. For Soviet critics to admit that pe.ple like Mokin exist in Socialist society would be to dispel another myth about the Soviet Union as a happy place for all.

Obviously the critics were not in a position to do that. Tatiana Lanina, for example, considers A Pul -Writer to be "a sad and bitter play," and sees Mokin simply as an eccentric who cannot find his own place in the society around him. What Lanina and other critics fail to recognize is that MokilYs alienation is part of a common condition of modern man who—regardless of ideology or national identity—frequently finds himself in an emotional and spiritual vacuum, unable to discover true meaning in his life.

Another graphic illustration of the alienation theme in Volodin's work comes in The Blonde A Story For Film With One Intermission (Blondinka: kinopovest' s odnim antraktom, 1979), written at approximately the same time as A Pulp Writer. The Blonde tells the story of an intelligent and sophisticated young woman, Irina, who is bored with her seemingly dull life. At the age of twenty six Irina still lives at home with her mother, who had divorced her father many years ago. Irina never attended college because she could not find anything which really interested her. She never held a steady job either. While still in high school, she became involved with one of her classmates, Misha, who has remained faithful to her all these years.

And yet, their relationship is rather unstable, primarily because Irina has been unable to make a commitment to Misha who is, in her view, too plain and unsophisticated. When Irina meets Leo, a man she perceives as talented and unusual, she breaks up with Misha. Emotionally hungry for a "sophisticated n relationship, Irina begins to idealize Leo, seeing in him a sort of unrecognized genius. She sees herself as Leo's dedicated follower, helping him to realize what she believes to be his full potential as an artist. To improve conditions for Leo's creativity, Irina even rents an apartment for him, an extremely difficult task, which requires a lot of energy and savvy because of the tremendous housing shortages in the former Soviet Union.

Preoccupied with her own ideas of arranging their life together, Irina does not see that Leo is going through his own crisis of identity. He does not appreciate her efforts and refuses to play the role of a poor, struggling artist. Uncertain of his artistic talents, Leo does not want to sacrifice his life pursuing a successful career in art, a shaky and, in his view, unattainable goal. He also grows increasingly tired of Irina and her idealistic expectations of their common future. He quits the performing art studio he has been running and escapes to a different city to resume his career as an engineer. his flight devastates Irina.

All of a sudden she realizes how shaky her relationship with Leo has been; Misha may not be such a bad choice after all She attempts to return to Misha and even offers to marry him, something Misha has always wanted. Misha still loves, and after some hesitation ready to marry her. However, the situation turns around again when Irina receives a letter from Leo asking her to visit him at his new place. Although still angry at him, she forsakes her plans to marry Misha and dashes off to see Leo. She finds him living alone in a small trailer on the outskirts of the city. Sick with the flu, he has been staying home and painting strange pictures which strike her as quite unusual.

One picture, painted on the wall, makes a particularly strong impression on her a vacant lot strewn with broken bricks and rusted wire, and in front of all this a woman-painter who paints not what she sees, but a bright green meadow with huge, oversized yellow flowers. Irina is stunned, she sees a strange symbolism in this painting, although at this moment she cannot clearly verbalize it Leo does not seem to share her excitement. Irina is overwhelmed with conflicting emotions.

Although she is still quite angry with Leo she nonetheless decides to stay. She wants to believe that with her help he can fulfill his talent. Leo is not so thrilled. Halfheartedly he accepts her decision. A lack of enthusiasm makes Irina feel rather uncomfortable. She decides to confront him and suggests that she will go back home hoping that he would ask her to stay. To her disappointment Leo does not make any attempt to stop her, and Irina begins to realize that he does not need her.

She departs heartbroken but still hoping that some day he will miss her. Back home mother presses Irina to reconcile with Misha and conceal the fact that she has gone to see Leo. Irina refuses to lie and admits that she has visited Leo. She asks Misha to forgive her erratic behavior which causes him so much pain and anger. Misha is visibly exasperated and indicates that he cannot continue the relationship any longer. Irina accepts their

breakup with a sense of liberation: she does not need to lie anymore.

Deep in her heart, she still hopes that her relationship with Leo will be resumed some day and begins to seek another opportunity to see him. Eventually she finds a way and again lands in his life, as Volodin says, on all fours." For a time their relationship seems to go more smoothly as Irina attempts to make Leo's life more comfortable.

Leo, on the other hand, is unwilling to make any commitment to Irina. When Irina suggests that she might go back home, he makes no attempt to stop her. Irina is stunned. On the verge of a nervous breakdown, she leaves knowing that this time their breakup is final.

Two years pass. On the surface, Irina's life seems to have stabilized, although it still clearly lacks any direction. She has been working as a draftsperson, a mundane job she hates. Her life is rather dull and uneventful, she feels isolated, detached from the outside world; she is frequently depressed; even the memory of Leo has somehow faded away. However, one strange event throws her life back into turmoil.

One day, by chance, Irina comes near a grey vacant lot full of broken bricks and rusted wire with a woman-painter painting a bright green meadow with huge, oversize yellow flowers. Irina is thunder-struck: this is the exact scene depicted in Leo's painting, which she has seen on his wall almost two

years ago. Now the significance of the picture acquires almost mystical proportions. Irina is so overwhelmed by this incident that she decides—to her mother's dismay--to quit her job and to see Leo's painting again.

To her surprise, Irina finds Leo's life changed rather drastically. He is married, has a year old son and resumed his engineering career. He has become a family man, a husband and a father, an average citizen and, in her view, an epitome of mediocrity, the exact opposite of the man she used to know. The painting on the wall, which holds such a profound significance for her, has been covered with wallpaper. And the Leo she perceived to be a talented and unusual individual turns out to be a mirage, a creature of her own imagination.

This bitter realization forces her to re-examine her whole life. For many years Irina has been unsuccessfully searching for her own identity, unwilling or unable to find a way to apply her talents. Now she seems to be completely desperate and lost. This deep despair is expressed in her final monologue at the end of the play:

> IRINA. Everything is on sale. The painting on the wall is covered with wallpaper. . . I understand, it is my own fault. But the mood is rotten, and there's nothing I can do. Bad mood. For the rest of my life. How to fight it? I don't know. ..” Misha is fine, so is Leo. Only I'm not fine. I spoil the happy picture. Everything has collapsed. On me. And the vacant lot has opened up. Rusted steel wire, broken bricks… For the first time in my life I don't understand how to live, what to do? What for? Maybe it's time to become wiser? To understand how to live, what to do and what for? But that’s exactly what I can't understand. How to move on? How? To be wise, practical? Climbing up the ladder? No! Never! I just can't! I just can[8]t![33]

The roots of Irina's tragedy lie in the profound discrepancy between the world of her dreams and the intractable realities of her life, in her inability to become an independent individual, to find meaning in life outside of her dreams. From this point of view, Irinails alienation represents a universal human phenomenon which spreads across different societies and national boundaries. The misery of her condition is further exacerbated by the fact that she has to live, as other Volodin protagonists, in a society which is deeply hostile to the very idea of individualism.

In The Blonde, Irina's life is symbolized by Leo’s painting: the grey vacant lot with broken bricks and rusted wire represent her everyday life, and the bright, larger than life yellow flowers her unfulfilled dreams. In the end her dream is shattered, just as Leo's painting on the wall is covered with wallpaper, and the only thing left is the grey reality of every day life. Perhaps for thefirst time, Irina really has to face this hard reality and to learn how to live her life without relying on somebody else.

The play does not give any indication what Irina's life might look like in the future. Will she find the strength to become independent or will she remain forever incapable of relying upon herself? Will she find any meaning in her life?

The Blonde is full of colorful individuals. Perhaps the most interesting among them is Leo. Although his role is clearly subordinate to that of Irina, his life story nevertheless represents a rather typical phenomenon among young Soviets and thus deserves a closer consideration. Leo grew up in a large working class family which was preoccupied by purely materialistic concerns and strongly disapproved of Leo's interest in the arts. Under pressure from the family to acquire a "practical" profession--a rather common situation—Leo became an engineer.

However, his artistic side remained unfulfilled. Unable to resist the urge to fulfill himself artistically, Leo abandoned his engineering career and became an instructor at a performing art studio, where he began to search for his own ways of artistic expression. Irina met Leo at the studio and became infatuated with him. At the beginning of their relationship Leo was probably flattered by the attention of such a sophisticated young woman. However, over time, he began to feel uneasy about their relationship because she expected him to live his life according to her prescriptions.

Irina, preoccupied with her dreams about a happy life with Leo, completely overlooked the fact that Leo himself was going through a deep identity crisis. His work at the studio did not provide the kind of lasting satisfaction he had hoped. Under pressure from his family and friends from college he decides to leave town and return to his engineering career. When Irina come to see him

for the third and last time, she finds Leo an entirely new man not a free= spirited artist but a family man with a wife and child leading a rather quiet and uneventful life. It seems that Leo's artistic aspirations either died or he managed to hide them very deeply.

On the surface, it seems that Leo is happy and content, but for how long? It is hard to imagine that his artistic side has suddenly disappeared. As in the case of Irina, Leo's story was important because many young Soviets can relate to it, and yet stories like Leo's received little exposure on the Soviet stage.

To underscore the archetypal nature of some of his characters Volodin frequently identifies them by nameless designations such as "Mother," "Sister, "Father," etc. In The Blonde there are several such characters. Among them is Irina's Mother. Divorced from her husband many years ago, she has been struggling to raise her daughter and, at the same time, to advance her career. Mother has succeeded professionally, she has apparently failed to establish a good, trustful relationship with her daughter.

As a result, she and Irina constantly fight. Mother wants Irina to be more practical, more "reasonable." She is disappointed with Irina's lack of direction and disapproves of her lifestyle. She is particularly unhappy about her affair with Leo, whom she considers unreliable. She is very upset about Irina's break up with Misha, whom she sees as a reliable and stable potential husband, something she has not had in her own life.

The confrontation between Irina and her mother reflects a complex process influenced by many factors, both personal and social. Their conflict is, to a large extent, the typical clash of generations, a common phenomenon in any society, although steadfastly denied by Soviet sociologists.

Mother, who has lived through the extreme hardships of World War II, the death of her parents and break up of her own marriage, puts a lot of emphasis on stability, material success, family, children, etc., while her daughter's primary concern is emotional and spiritual satisfaction. Mother's attempts to control her daughter's life meet fierce resistance from Irina. Obviously Mother wishes only happiness for her daughter, but the lack of any real communication makes their relationship rather stormy. Another part of their conflict can be attributed to social and economic conditions in the former Soviet Union.

Due to a severe shortage of housing many Soviet families, including Irina's, had to share an apartment with their parents and even grandparents. Such conditions became a source of irritation within the family. Furthermore, the fact that young people could have their own place no matter what they did, detrimentally affected their self-image and caused emotional and psychological damage. Many of them, like Irina, grew up lacking confidence and self-esteem, heavily relying on their parents economically and, at the same time, resisting interference in their private lives.

To underscore the difficulties Irina and her mother have with each other, Volodin introduces another character, Evgenii Evgenievich, first a suitor, and later Mother's second husband. It seems that his main role in this family is to mediate between the mother and the daughter. Perhaps because he is an

outsider, both apparently trust him, both seek his support. And indeed, Evgenii Evgenievich plays this role quite well He has a soothing effect on Mother, who is visibly happier when he is around.

A soft spoken, gentle person, Evgenii Evgenievich is more tolerant with Irina than her own mother. Paradoxically, in the end Evgenii Evgenievich is the only person left who understands Irina and her problems. There is another character in the play who, like Evgenii Evgenievich, accepts and supports Irina. She is identified only as "Old Woman." Old Woman, who does not have any relatives and lives alone, hires Irina to type her memoirs. According to her own account she has had a rather unusual life. A free-spirited person, strong and independent, she has lived most of her life isolated from the world around her and accepted the sacrifices and losses associated with this life-style.

From the very beginning there is a clear sense of kinship between these two despite the difference in age. It is not surprising, then, that when Irina needs a substantial amount of money to pay a year in advance for an apartment for Leo, it is Old Woman who helps her out, although she knows that Irina most likely will not be able to pay her back. Her death interrupts their relationship.

Old Woman is presented in sharp contrast to Mother and demonstrates that even among the older generation there are those for whom the emotional and spiritual aspects of life are more important than financial stability or the security of a family. It is also possible that we see in Old Woman Irina's future.

Other minor characters are also colorful and interesting. Among them are Misha with his inability to make decisions and face up to the inevitable break with Irina; Natasha, Misha°s new girlfriend, who is determined to protect Misha from Irina; Nina, Irina's friend, who cares about Irina but is unable to understand or help her; Lelia, Irinaffs acquaintance, a typical uobyvatel°,n a conformist, whose primary concern lies with material things.

Each of these characters contains something unique, and yet they are all recognizable types. Together, they represent a colorful slice of contemporary Russian society. The Blonde is perhaps the most complex and pessimistic piece Volodin has written. In the end, not only is the protagonist left at the crossroads in her life, with small chance to find happiness, but many other characters also experience serious problems.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when it was first published in 1979, Soviet critics, as in the case of A Pulp Writer, did not know what to make of this play. It must be noted that in the late 1970s it became almost "unfashionable H to attack an art work from the point of view of crude Socialist Realism. Marxist-Leninist critics either had to disguise their attacks or--as in the case of The Blonde--ignore such work. Only in 1987, as critics gradually adjusted to the new freedom of "Glasnost" did the theater critic Aleksei Zverev provide a brief evaluation of The Blonde.

Without attempting an in-depth analysis of the play he wrote that, she (Irina) believes that by freeing herself from the material concerns of everyday life she would be able to uplift herself spiritually."[34] Zverev apparently believes that the crux of this play is in the inherent conflict between the material and the spiritual aspects of human life. Unfortunately it is almost impossible to discern his views on the dramatic aspects of the play from his rather brief

remarks. Tatiana Lanina makes essentially the same argument about an inherent conflict between the material and spiritual needs of man. She writes that, ".

"…In The Blonde, monotony of everyday life becomes an obstacle to the spiritual freedom of an individual."[35] She correctly points out that from the basic philosophical point of view Irina's dichotomy could be best described by the following line from the play in the scene between Irina and the Old Woman: ""Man wants to be great but he sees how small he is. He wants to be perfect but he is full of imperfections."[36] Lanina properly assumes that the character of Old Woman is not coincidental because it provides, a "thread (between Irina and Old Woman) which begins in the past and continues through the present into the future At At the same time She largely remains a captive of the views of earlier Soviet critics who denied that an individual in Socialist society could feel estranged. Lanina writes with some sense of indignation that in The Blonde ". . restlessness of people like Irina is presented as inherent to the [Socialist, sic] system itself, and nobody seems to argue about it."[38] Lanina refuses to see the a tragic dissonance between If and the rest of the world as a common problem of modern man.

As with many of Volodin's dramatic pieces, The Blonde was originally written as a screenplay but so far has been staged only in the theater. Although there have been productions of this play in many professional and non-professional theaters throughout the country, two of them seemed to have attracted the most attention of the critics: one is at BDT in Leningrad by Georgii Tovstonogov, and the other at the Mayakovskii Theater in Moscow by Kama Guinkas, both produced in 1984. Aleksei Zverev unquestionably prefers the BDT production.

In his view, Guinkas puts too much stress on the visual, purely theatrical components of the production, at the expense of depth. On the contrary, he considers Tovstonogov's interpretation a more successful attempt to explore the deep psychological aspects of the play. Another critic, Inna Soloviieva is clearly fascinated by the theatricality of the Moscow production. In her review, The Hand Which Gives (Ruka daiushchego), she writes H. The secret of Guinkas' production success is in its effervescence. Everything which takes place on the stage seems to be so effortless, so weightless."

The archetypes are stylized, and this seems to add to the perception of their fullness and filigree" And yet, Solov'ieva does not discuss any other important elements of either the play or the production. It seems that, in her view, since Guinkasf production is staged with students, it does not need to have psychological depth. Comparing Irina with the protagonists in Volodinfs other plays such Il'in from Five Evenings, or Pavel Antonovich from Mothers-Daughters, or Kukushkin from The Adventures Of a Magician, or even Mokin from A Pulp-Writer—one clearly sees that her alienation runs much deeper than that of any of these characters. All of them: Pavel Antonovich, Kukushkin, Makin, even have somebody—a wife, a daughter, a girlfriend--who supports and cares about them. Irina, on the other hand, seems to be completely alone.

Her estrangement, so vividly expressed in her last monologue, rises to the power of a symbol of the alienation experienced by many people in the former Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, the authorities had always considered alienation a dangerous form of protest against the system because they realized that it could quickly spread among the most able

members of society and thus undermine it from within. As a symbol of challenge to the existing societal norms Irina's character has few parallels in modern Soviet drama.

Very rarely--with the exception of the dissident literature, published by Samizdat—has the protagonist in a Soviet play been shown so openly estranged from society and so explicitly negative and pessimistic about his future. In this regard Irina's character represents the culmination of the alienation theme in Volodin°s dramatic works, which started a quarter century earlier with his short stories and continued throughout his career as a playwright and screenwriter.

Notes

1. Alexander Volodin, Dlia teatra I kino (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967)304. Evgenii Evtushenko and Andrei Voznesenskii were the most popular Soviet poets of the 1960s.

2. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 31.

3. Several years later this story was made into the movie, Prikliuchenia fokusnika.

4. Volodin, Dlia teatra i kino 255.

5. It is probably not a coincidence that Volodin named this character Elena. Those who are familiar with the Russian folklore may recall Elena Prekrasnaia (Elena the Beautiful) from a number of fairy tales, which for many Russians has become a symbol of purity and beauty.

6. Alexander Volodin, Prikluchenia fokusnika, in the book: Dlia teatra I kino (Moscow: iskusstvo, 1967) 280.

7. Volodin, Prikluchenia fokusnika 270.

8. This is a typical example of so called "self-censorship." Self - censorship meant that a Soviet artist knew the boundaries in which he or she could safely operate without catching the eye of the sensor or worse, KGB.

9. Volodin, Prikluchenia fokusnika 282.

10. Anyone who is familiar with life in the former Soviet Union may recall that despite of a relative relaxation of the political climate in the country at that time even slightest dissent was severely punished. 1964-1966 were marked by the beginning of a new wave of political repression which continued for another twenty years. Not surprisingly that Soviet people, who still remembered the horror of the massive executions during the Stalin era, continued to live in a state of fear.

11. Konstantin Scherbakov, Obretenie muzhestva (Moscow: Mir, 1978) 51.

12. Alexander Demidov, "Zametki a dramaturgii Vampilova," Teatr), March 1974, 63.

13. As Vampilov repeatedly stated, his writing was significantly influenced by the works of Volodin, particularly by Five Eveninas. He had seen it in the early 1960s when BDT had brought it to his native Irkutsk.

14. Victor Gaevskii, "V poiskakh radosti," Teatr, April 1967, 37.

15. Tatiana Lanina, Alexander Volodin (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1989) 185.

16. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, - May-June 1991, 30.

17. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 30.

18. Alexander Volodin, Dochki-materi, in the book: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1985) 240.

19. Volodin, Dochki=materi 246.

20. Alexander Zinoviev, Homo Soveticus (London: Victor Ltd.

21. Volodin, Dochki-materi 250.

22. In one of his interviews Volodin said that he has been long fascinated with the theme of life long competition on every level of a social ladder. He even sketched up a draft for a play about it. Set in the Middle Ages, it tells the story of a nobleman who grew tired of the competition for privileges at court. This man decides to withdraw from the court, to abandon his estate and become a beggar in the vain hope that at this level there would be no competition. However, to his great disappointment, he finds just as fierce competition between the beggars as between the aristocrats.

23. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 31.

24. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 32.

25. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 32.

26. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 32.

27. Gerasimov wanted to film this movie in his own, seven bedroom apartment. Alexander Volodin, Grafoman, in the book: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisate1[1], 1985) 358.

28. Unpublished interview with Mikhail L'vovskii, Moscow, June 1991.

29. Volodin, Grafoman 339.

30. Lanina 279.

31. In this regard Irina's case is typical of the former Soviet Union and other countries of former Eastern block. Because of the acute shortage of housing, children were frequently forced to live with their parents. It was quite common that grandparents, parents, their grown up children, and even children's children lived in the same apartment. In addition to that, parents who themselves had to go through the suffering of the War and the depravation of the years of Stalin's rule, tended to shield their children from any hardship. As a result, children grew up to be spoiled, overprotected, lacking self-confidence and motivation. From the social point of view it became a tragedy for a considerable part of the younger generation.

32. Alexander Volodin, Blondinka: kinopovest" s odnim antraktom, in the book: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1985) 336.

33. Aleksei Zverev, "Ogoniok neizvestno otkuda," Novyi Mir, September 1987, 240.

34. Lanina 257.

35. Volodin, Blondinka 303**.**

36. Lanina 263.

38. Lanina 271.

37. Inna Solovfieva, "Ruka daiushchego," Teatr, February 1984, 66.

Chapter 5

THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC WORLD OF ALEXANDER VOLODIN

One of the most successful Russian film writers in the post-War period, Volodin became a professional screenwriter in 1950 not because he was particularly attracted to the cinema, but primarily because he did not believe that he could make a meaningful contribution to the theater. Volodinis early skepticism about the cinema can be easily understood. As he explains in one of his recent interviews, despite the fact that Soviet film makers such as Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Alexander Dovzhenko in the late 1920s and 1930s revolutionized film making in terms of its emotional impact on the audience, the cinema remained in the eyes of most artistic intelligentsia in Russia an inferior art form. Rightly proud of their ancient art, most Russian theater professionals--just as their colleagues in the West—for a long time refused to recognize artistic potential of the cinema and considered it as

merely a technical invention which had little to do with true art. Similarly, professional writers and playwrights did not regard a screenplay as serious literature with its own life outside the film.

As Volodin further elaborates, these common misconceptions about cinema were prevalent among the young people of his generation. These misconceptions were further reinforced by the actions of the Soviet government in the 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s, which made cinema--perhaps more than any other art form—subservient to the ideological needs of the Communist Party, at the expense of its artistic qualities. The process of government control actually began when Lenin recognized the importance of film as an ideological weapon which could reach millions of people.

On Lenin's instructions, as early as 1922 the Soviet government took complete financial and ideological control over the film industry, years before similar measures were applied to the Soviet theater. However, only during the Stalin era, as a part of the overall campaign to tighten its grip on the arts, did the Communist Party begin to exert really strict control over the cinema. A series of decrees by the Central Committee in 1932 and 1934 marked the

end of a period of rich diversity in art which had existed in Russia since the turn of the century. These decrees codified Socialist Realism as the official doctrine of the Communist Party and the only criterion to measure the artistic output of Soviet artists.

In 1946, when Volodin became a student of the Moscow Film Institute, the Communist Party, after a short relaxation during the War years, reimposed even stricter control over the arts, including the film industry and film education. This is how he describes his college years:

> I received my education at the Film Institute probably during the worst period in recent history: during the late forties, when Stalin's dictatorship imposed the most stringent control over culture. Only those art works that conformed to the norms of the most orthodox Socialist Realism were allowed to be produced. Even the slightest non-conformity was severely punished. . . .[1]

Undoubtedly, Volodin had many reasons to be dissatisfied with his education at the Film Institute: strict ideological control led to a considerable deterioration of the quality of film training. However, it would be an oversimplification to ignore the positive aspects of his studies, which clearly helped the future playwright and screenwriter to form his writing style and shape his talent.

The Moscow Film Institute, founded by the famous Russian film maker,

Lev Kuleshov in 1919, was the first film school in the world and the place where many famous film masters, including Sergei Eisenstein, taught for many years.

American film scholar Jay Leyda, who spent three years in the mid 1930s in Russia studying Russian and Soviet cinema, writes that Eisenstein's passionate interest in the education of future film makers profoundly influenced every program at the Film Institute, including screenwriting, which Eisenstein considered a highly creative field.[2] Another American film scholar, Inga Karetnikova, writes that Eisenstein insisted there should be dynamic connections between the word in the script and the image on the screen.[3]

The ideal script, according to Eisenstein, should always be a source of inspiration for the director and should stimulate his creativity. Eisenstein even went as far as to insist that a script should resemble a work of poetry,[4] idea which found particular resonance in Volodin. In his interview with Alma Law he points out that poetry, in various forms, has always been present in all of his dramatic works.[5]

One may add that it is practically impossible to fully appreciate Volodin's dramatic works without connecting them to his poetry. The use of poetry

in his numerous plays and screenplays ranges from creating a certain mood in the play, as for example, in The Blonde, to making it an indispensable part of the dramatic text, as in Two Arrows. The issue of poetry and poets is so important for Volodin that he devoted a whole play, The Pulp-Writer, to it.

Another famous Russian film maker of the early era, Vsevolod Pudovkin, who also taught at the Film Institute, gave equally supreme importance to the script. Inga Karetnikova writes that for Pudovkin the most important element of the screenplay is its dramatic organization and imagery.[6] The screenwriter, in his view, must know how to select those objects and events that best express a particular idea visually. Like Eisenstein, Pudovkin too believed that every sentence in the script should have a precise visual equivalent, an idea which left a profound influence on the style of Volodin.

When Volodin began his studies at the Film Institute in 1946, its screenwriting program was headed by a prominent Soviet screenwriter Evgenii Gabrilovich. As head of the program, Gabrilovich was responsible for the development of overall educational strategy and shaping the professional attitudes of future screenwriters. His views on the screenwriting profession undoubtedly affected the educational policies of the program he headed. Working in the highly adverse conditions of a totalitarian

state which imposed strict ideological control over the whole process of film education, in the atmosphere of contempt from so called "pure" writers, Gabrilovich made every effort to instill in his students a sense of professionalism and respect for their profession. He writes in his memoirs:

> I have always strongly believed that someone who writes screenplays is just as much of a writer as somebody who writes a novel or a play. . . As any other writer, a screenwriter has to build the plot, the conflict and the internal world of his characters .
> 7

There is another aspect of his screenwriting training which profoundly affected Volodin: the strong influence of the rich and diverse Russian theater over Russian and Soviet cinema.[8] As a natural result of this influence, the Moscow Film Institute, probably more that any other film school in the world, has successfully incorporated theatrical techniques into its film training. For example, Eisenstein, a student of the great Russian theater innovator, Vsevolod Meyerhold, firmly believed that the principles of all creative work in cinema should be based upon theater experience. In his essay,

Through Theater to Cinema, he cites his 1923 theater production of Ostrovski”s Enouoh Simpleman in Every Sage as an important step toward his film making career.[9] Gabrilovich, like his friend and

colleague Eisenstein, was also influenced by Meyerhold. Many years later Gabrilovich wrote in his memoirs about Meyerhold's influence on him

> Only now can I see what a learning experience it was for me .to study under Meyerhold . He divided the plays . into separate episodes, each of them with its own dramatic form, with its own place of action on stage and its own rhythm Now I can see how ncinematicu his theatrical discoveries were.[10]

Clearly, Gabrilovich brought this experience to the program he headed at the Moscow Film Institute. Despite the fact that in the 1940s Meyerhold was banned in the former Soviet Union, his legacy at the Moscow Film Institute continued to live, although unofficially and even surreptitiously. Eisenstein and Gabrilovich continued to use Meyerhold's methods for the training of future Soviet film makers. These and other theatrical techniques later became a part of film education all over the world.[11]

Thus, despite the adverse conditions caused by government interference, Gabrilovich and his colleagues managed to provide a solid professional training in screenwriting. Volodin remembers spending countless hours working first on basic story ideas, then on a narrative synopsis outline and scene breakdown, and finally, on writing dialogue. Volodin admits that although he never liked these tedious exercises because, in his view, they paralyzed creative impulses, he can see now that they actually helped him to polish his writing style. This is how he describes his approach to screenwriting:

> I believe each episode should have a clearly defined conflict with its own beginning, climax, and resolution. As I already said, it is not a good idea to keep the audience waiting until the very end to have everything resolved. There is one episode, and it should be complete, life goes on; a new episode, new climax, new resolution, and so on .I don't do it intentionally, only later I realize that it turns out that way . . Many writers do not "see," they "hear," and, it becomes a "verbal" play. My plays are always "visual." . . I suppose it is a "cinematic" way of writing . .12

In his memoirs, Gabrilovich traces the evolution of the screenplay as a literary piece from the dawn of cinema to the present. In the early period, screenplay was never considered independently of its final product: a motion picture. Today, he writes, the screenplay has become a literary genre in its own right, with a life independent of the film." This observation is particularly true in Volodin's case: many of his screenplays were first produced on stage, and only later were made into films. His film training, combined with a natural aptitude for the theater, helped to develop a rather unique writing style easily adaptable to both media.

For example, his highly successful first play, The Factory Girl, although intended for the theater, nevertheless has all the features of a screenplay: it is built in the form of rather short, unconnected episodes; it contains narrative parts more typical to film than theater; it is full of strong visual images. Not surprisingly, later on The Factory Girl was made into a successful movie. This experience marked the beginning of successful adaptations of Volodin's screenplays for stage, as well as the successful conversion of his plays into movies.

However, back in the 1950s, Volodin's professional career in film had an uneasy start. Upon graduation, although he was considered one of the most talented students in his class, Volodin was sent to the Leningrad Film Studio to work on educational films for basic military training, the most mundane and uninspiring job at the Studio. He received that assignment as punishment for his refusal to work on a highly propagandistic film project. His first real chance to work in film came only in the middle of the 1960s, after he had already become a successful playwright.

Although at that time some of his plays continued to be produced in theaters throughout the country, the attitude of the cultural authorities remained rather hostile. It was said that his works, particularly Five Evenings, "foments a split between the government and the people The atmosphere around his theatrical productions was so tense that Volodin decided to leave the theater and return to the cinema. This time he was determined to avoid any confrontation with the authorities and write a piece for a young audience.

The screenplay Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell (Zvoniat, otkroite dyer', 1966) was meant to be on the non-controversial, "safe" subject of adolescence, the first love, the first disappointment, and growing up in general. Indeed, Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell tells the storyof a twelve year--old girl, Tania, who enters adolescence and finds herself longing for a romantic relationship. Tania is a lonely, introverted child who does not normally participate in the "social life of her collective

When she becomes interested in Petia, the seventeen year-old scout leader, her attitude suddenly changes. To attract his attention, Tania takes up a mission to find the first Soviet scouts, a task which Petia's unit has been assigned to. This search takes her to a man named Kolpakov, a trumpeter from a local theater and his 12 year- old stepson, Gena. Tania quickly becomes friends with Gena and his modest, unpretentious and slightly eccentric stepfather.

Spending time with the Kolpakovs helps Tania to ease her loneliness (her parents, field geologists, left on a geological expedition). Kolpakov is eager to help Tania to find the first scouts, but his rather clumsy attempts only cause embarrassment to Tania and Gena. However, gradually Tania begins to realize that behind Kolpakov's awkwardness lies a gentle and kind nature. What is really important is that Kolpakov treats Gena and Tania with respect, as equals. In a simple, unobtrusive way Kolpakov talks to his young friends about the complexity of life and the intricacies of human relations. He urges Tania and Gena to be open-minded and not to make quick

judgements:

> KOLPAKOV. You see, my friends, there are many things in life which look differently on the surface. . You're already adults, aren't you? Then you should be able to look beyond the surface. Do you see what I mean?[14]

Kolpakov does not try to hide the complex relationship between Gena°s mother and her former, husband, Genaus father. Both Tania and Gena can see how gentle Kolpakov is with his wife, who is still tormented by the break up with her former husband:

> KOLPAKOV. I've begged you: donut go to see him. I know how difficult it is for you Every time after your visit you come back home feeling sick.
>
> GENA°S MOTHER. You know, I want to help him, he is in such a terrible shape. I know he acts this way just to make me feel miserable. If you could only see how low he sank. He began to drink heavily again® I wanted to calm him down, to tidy up his room but he refused, even became angry with me. Well, I lost control of myself and allowed myself to be engaged in a totally useless shouting match…

This and other scenes with the Kolpakovs, perhaps the most successful in the screenplay, reveal how this family deals with very complicated problems. And yet, there is no impression that the Kolpakovs are going to fall apart. On the

contrary, it seems that their difficulties bring them even closer together.

As for Tania, her interaction with the family becomes a truly exhilarating experience. In fact, after Tania meets the Kolpakovs she practically loses all interest in Petia. A sensitive girl, she quickly realizes that her friendship with the Kolpakovs offers her much more than a relationship with Petia.

Unlike his early dramatic pieces, Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell does not directly address any political or social issues, although the warm, caring atmosphere in Kolpakov's family is clearly designed to contrast with the cold and impersonal environment in Tania's school. This sharp contrast between the family and school environments reflects profound and yet frequently overlooked differences between these two social institutions. While an average Soviet family, as any average family, has always been primarily concerned with the physical and emotional well being of their children, the primary goal of the Soviet school at the time was to provide the ideological indoctrination of the young generation. Soviet schools taught youngsters to sacrifice their personal feelings and ambitions to the interests of the collective. Individualism was thoroughly discouraged as a manifestation of "bourgeois ideology."

The important problems of the physiological and psychological changes facing adolescents such as growing interest in the opposite sex were completely banned and ignored. Even the most innocent romantic relationships between boys and girls were considered totally unacceptable.[16] In general, the atmosphere in Soviet schools was marked by pedagogical conservatism, formalism, and "pokazukha" (showing off for the authorities). Once again (this time perhaps unintentionally,) Volodin presents a realistic view of social life in the Soviet Union with its inherent difficulties and contradictions. As far as the young protagonists are concerned, the screenplay carries a message of hope that young Tania and Gena--along with the audience--will learn from the Kolpakovs of the world the lesson in humanity, tolerance and respect for other individuals.

Looking at Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell as part of Volodin's dramatic work one can see that Kolpakov--one of the most important characters in the story--represents another example of a person, a member of the intelligentsia, who is although eccentric in his actions but kind and gentle by nature. This continuity reaffirms Volodin's reputation as a champion of the intelligentsia.

Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell also demonstrates Volodin's remarkable ability to create interesting and colorful characters. Among them is the already mentioned Gena, who also has to cope with his growing sexuality. His romantic interest in Tania and his somewhat backward attempts to court her are presented with charm and sensitivity. Another interesting character is a musician, Korkin, a colleague of Kolpakov. On the surface, Korkin is an accessible and democratically minded individual, but in reality he is an insensitive and callous person who has no qualms about breaking promises and deceiving a child. A well-known violinist, who was indeed among the first scouts, Korkin is part of an "adult" world where moral values are easily bent to fit "practical" needs.

Somewhat similar traits can be found in another character, Petia, who despite his youth has already become a typical product of the system, a little functionary, cold and indifferent in his treatment of other people. The other episodic but colorfully written characters include a nasty old woman who tries to take advantage of Tania; her schoolmates, a diverse group of adolescents which mirrors the "adult" world: from honest and reliable young individuals to deceitful and selfish brats. In all, practically every character in the screenplay, big or small, has enough individual traits to make him or her clearly distinguishable and memorable.

For reasons not entirely clear, Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell has never been published. As a result, until recently critical analysis of this work has

focused almost entirely on the film. Only in 1989 Tatiana Lanina, who in the process of working on in her book on Volodin had a chance to read the screenplay, provided some sort of evaluation of its dramatic text.

She correctly points out that ". . although the screenplay is focused on the first romantic experience of a 12 year-old girl, it also addresses more general issues of "incompatibility" between boys and girls, their friendships and quarrels, their boredom in school . .as well as the issues of formalism and pomposity in the scout movement."[17] Lanina also notes that the character of Kolpakov extends the definition of the positive hero, traditionally handsome and physically strong, to one who is perhaps clumsy and unassuming, but kind and gentle by nature.[18] Although Volodin was already an established playwright when he finished his first full-length screenplay, film studios did not rush to produce it He offered it to every film maker at the Leningrad Studio but everyone refused. Finally, he says, the screenplay was offered to a young director, Alexander Mitta, a recent graduate of the Moscow Film Institute. Mitta, who liked the screenplay but had some reservations about its feasibility, asked his teacher, Michael Romm, for advice. After Romm read Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell he said to Mitta: "Alexander, it is a beautiful piece, but it is too subtle, even for literature. Try to find something more concrete. Romm°s comments discouraged the young film maker, and he turned down Volodin's offer. However, the images of the story continued to fascinate Mitta, and several

years later he decided to film it He remembers his work on the film fondly:

> First, I could not find a familiar structure in the screenplay I could not see its very elaborate structure because it is hidden behind the intricacy of the complex human relationships.

Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell is a brilliant piece of literature written by a true master who is capable of converting seemingly free flowing dialogues into a continuous action, continuous interchange of dramatic situations, in the best traditions of Chekhovian dramaturgy . Volodin works as a great master who achieves maximum results with minimum means. If you read and interpret him correctly, Volodin's cinematography is magical.[2°]

The fact that according to Nitta he did not change a single word in the screenplay--something almost unheard of in the movie making where the screenplay is usually considered only a rough blueprint for the final product--further testifies to the high quality of Volodin's work.[21] The film, like the screenplay, had to overcome

bureaucratic barriers in its search for acceptance. After it was completed, film distribution organizations classified it as a "movie for teenagers As a result, it was cut off from the main movie houses throughout the country and shown only in schools and those few movie theaters which specialized in young audiences. In the mid 1970s the film was shown on television and generated a great deal of interest in the general public. It was re-released, and within a short time was seen by millions of people. It became one of the most popular films of the seventies. Volodin considers Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell among his most successful dramatic works.

Though Volodin continued to be involved in film making, working primarily as a screenwriter for his early plays, it was more than a decade before he wrote another highly successful screenplay, Autumn Marathon (Osennii marafon, 1978). Autumn Marathon, universally acknowledged as the most accomplished dramatic work by Volodin, represents perhaps the final step in his evolution as a dramatist. As Volodin has explained, for many years he attempted to incorporate his own personal experience into his literary and dramatic works.

Earlier in his career it was considered highly inappropriate: according to the rules of Socialist Realism a writer was supposed to reflect reality around him, not his internal world. However, over time, Volodin's desire to write about his own life grew stronger and stronger:

> “When I was writing my first play, Factory Girl, I believed that I should not write about myself or my life. It was rather unacceptable at that time, and I agreed: Who would be interested in the life of a physically and emotionally worn out War veteran?" In my next play, Five Evenings, the protagonist already has some of my traits . . In the following plays began to rely more on my own experience, to the extent that I even gave to some characters a few traits of my own personality . . For example, in The Appointment the protagonist, Liamin, is rather impulsive and very conscientious, a lot like me . 0 Although I realize that I always relied on my own experience in the earlier plays-- perhaps even more than I previously thought--it is only in Autumn Marathon that I consciously wrote about myself..”

Indeed, events in his personal life left an indelible mark on Volodin's work in the 1970s. A decade earlier, he had become involved in an extramarital affair. It was a particularly difficult relationship for both sides. Facing the imminent departure of his son, Vladimir, from Russia and the declining health of his wife, Volodin made very clear to his mistress that he would not be able to

break up his marriage and form a new family with her. In 1971, against Volodin's will, the woman, who was herself in poor health, gave birth to their son. The woman's health continued to deteriorate, and five years later she died, leaving her young son an orphan. Recognizing the child's welfare as more important than their marital difficulties, Volodin and his wife adopted the boy and raised him to adulthood.'

The events of that turbulent decade were so overwhelming that they inevitably affected Volodin's literary and dramatic works, and most poignantly, in the autobiographical Autumn Marathon. However, it would be atypical of Volodin to write about his own adversities seriously. That is why Autumn Marathon is written in a self-depricating manner and full of irony and humor. It tells the story about the misfortunes of a middle-aged man named Andrei Petrovich Buzykin, whose main problem in life has been his inability to make tough choices, both personal and professional, and to face their consequences. Buzykin, a married man with a grown daughter, is involved with a younger woman, Alla, who desperately wants him to divorce his wife, Nina, and marry her.

A conscientious man, Buzykin is clearly tormented by this situation: he cannot dissolve his marriage because it would hurt his wife and his daughter, nor can he break up with Alla, who has essentially sacrificed her own marriage hoping that she and Buzykin would eventually have a family. Alla also desperately wants to have a child with him, something Buzykin cannot do: it would be utterly unconscionable for him to allow Alla to carry the burden of parenthood alone.

This ongoing dispute creates a lot of tension between Buzykin and Alla. Unable to resolve this situation, Buzykin continues to lead this self-destructive double life, continually forced to lie to both his wife and his mistress. What makes this situation even more difficult is that both his wife and his mistress accept and tolerate his lies, primarily because they both see him as a nice but weak man who just happens to be trapped in a difficult situation.

Buzykin's inability to make tough decisions affects his professional and social life as well A talented translator and amateur poet, he frequently finds himself unable to defend his professional interests simply because his actions might hurt somebody's feelings. For example, one of his colleagues, a woman named Varvara, a mediocre translator, takes advantage of Buzykin's lack of firmness and forces him to revamp her inadequate work.

Later Varvara shamelessly takes all the credit for the success of what was in fact Busykin's work. At the university where he teaches, Buzykin despises one of his colleagues, Shershavnikov, and yet he cannot find the courage to say it to his face. Even his student, Lifanov, attempts to take advantage of Buzykin by pressing him to change his grade. In his everyday life Buzykin also has to suffer the consequences of his inability to say "no" as, for example, in the case of his colleague from England, Bill, who wants them to jog together early in the morning. Buzykin hates to get up early but he does not want to disappoint his foreign guest and accompanies Bill in his morning routine. In other cases people simply take advantage of his

lack of character as does his neighb•r, Kharitonov, who, in a search for a drinking buddy, unceremoniously invites himself in and interrupts Buzykin's work.

The soft, gentle Buzykin is unable to withstand the pressure from highhanded Kharitonov although afterwards he feels miserable for wasting a lot of time and doing things which he never wanted to do.

Structurally, the screenplay is built as a sequence of episodes from a seemingly typical day in Buzykin's life. The story begins early in the morning when sleepy Buzykin has to jog with his English guest. The following tense breakfast with his wife, Nina, is interrupted by a disguised telephone call from Alla, This leads to a confrontation with Nina, who is visibly upset about Alla's call.

Predictably, Buzykin feels guilty: he blames himself for causing all this pain and anguish to both Alla and Nina. This guilt comes on the top of frustration resulting from his inability to fulfill his numerous professional commitments. As a result, he spends the rest of the day on the run in an attempt to juggle too many responsibilities: toward his mistress, his wife, his foreign guest, his publisher, his professionally inadequate colleague, his students. It seems that his whole life is a never ending run, a marathon without a final destination.

As the story progresses, the tension in Buzykin's personal life reaches a new peak when Nina, unable to cope with his lies, finally decides to separate from him. Nina's estrangement comes at the time when Alla also decides to break up with Buzykin. All of a sudden, he finds himself alone, feeling isolated and unneeded. His first reaction is to do something, to radically change his behavior, to become confident in himself and capable of making tough choices and telling people the truth regardless of price.

The first opportunity to show his new determination comes at the University when he finally expresses his contempt for Shershavnikov by publicly refusing to shake his hand. He also angrily reacts to Lifanov's demand to give him a passing grade. And Buzykin nearly explodes when Varvara shamelessly asks him for more help with a translation. It must be noted that all these scenes, despite their serious content, are written with a considerable measure of humor. Buzykin's determination seems to wane when he returns to his empty apartment. His wife has moved out, his

daughter and her husband are gone, and his mistress has abandoned him. He feels estranged from the whole world:

“The bed is bare, only a pillow is left. He looks around and to his surprise finds that his small apartment appears more spacious now than ever before. Buzykin turns the TV on He listens to the music and, all of a sudden, begins to dance. In this empty world anyone can dance anything, and nobody will see it . . He looks at himself in the mirror, and, strangely enough, he wants to be even weaker, even clumsier than he really is So what? "You, the rest of the world, are smart, strong, and confident! You're lucky! And what about me? I'm different, whether you like or not. And I'm dancing. Alone. And nobody is going to judge me."[24] This is the climactic point of the story. It seems that all the protagonist can expect in his life is loneliness and isolation. The mood is sad. However, at this moment Volodin adds a rather unusual twist:

(The phone rings. He picks it up. It is Alla. Her voice sounds a bit hesitant and even apologetic. A voice from a previous life. To answer it would mean to become reconnected again. He does not say a word. The silence becomes awkward.)

BUZYKIN. Yes.

ALLA. Did you call me?

BUZYKIN. Yes.

ALLA. Really?

BUZYKIN. Yes.

(Alla feels that everything unhealthy in their relationship is gone, gone forever. Buzykin puts the phone on his lap. He feels exhausted. Suddenly he hears a noise at the door. Somebody has come in. It is Nina.)

NINA. Andrei, is it true that your affair is over?

BUZYKIN. Yes.

(Nina puts her suitcase on the floor. She feels very, very tired. All those lies and humiliations are hopefully gone. . . 0 Ana's voice can be heard in the phone: "Hey, Andrei, where are you?") BUZYKIN. Okay, I'm writing it down. A meeting of the department is scheduled for tomorrow at 7 p.m.

(Nina gives him a long, sad look as if he is incurably ill.)(Alla is sitting silently. Her face reflects weariness and signs of unfulfilled dreams.)

(Bill appears in front of Buzykin.)

BILL. Are you ready?

BUZYKIN. Ready.

(They run on a dark and deserted street. Buzykin is behind Bill. Their figures slowly disappear from sight.)

This is the end of the story. The moral of it, it seems, is that freedom is not for Buzykin, nor apparently for use He--and we--are captives of our habits. The characters here prefer--as we all do--"the evil we know to the evil of the unknown." The "victims" return to their "torturer." However, this is not simply a case of one bad person taking advantage of other people. The

situation with Buzykin is complicated by the fact that both his wife and his mistress seem to be strongly attached to him. They know that, despite all of his transgressions, Buzykin is not a bad person. In fact, he is fundamentally a good human being, kind and conscientious, who is unwilling to hurt their feelings, even if it inflicts pain on himself. Buzykin acts out of the best intentions but frequently achieves the opposite results which bring suffering to him and the others. In the end both Nina and Alla realize that Buzykin's fatal indecisiveness is a sort of disease which makes him more a victim of circumstances than a master of his own destiny. In fact there is the distinct impression that they both feel sorry for him.

Once again Volodin demonstrates his remarkable ability to mix successfully very different and sometimes opposite emotions, in this case sadness and humor. This results in a highly convincing and honest picture of the life of one unhappy individual.

In the eyes of most people, Buzykin, Nina, and Alla are weak individuals incapable of making tough decisions and taking charge of their lives. While deeply unhappy about their situation, they are unable to change it; the status quo, painful as it is, seems safer than change. It is no

coincidence that the story begins and ends with jogging: hard, unpleasant, exhausting, but offering a certain degree of order and regularity, as Englishman Bill puts it, ". two steps in, four steps out, two steps in, four steps out!"

And yet, there is no the author's indignation at these characters for their weaknesses and self-inflicted misfortunes so typical for dramatic and literary works by other Soviet writers. On the contrary, Volodin clearly urges his audience not to jump to any quick conclusions but to have compassion and understanding for these people who, in striving for stability at any price-- however illusive it may be--become victims of the these unfortunate circumstances. He demonstrates that human bondage--between Buzykin and his wife, Nina, created by many years family life, between Buzykin and his mistress created by their mutual attraction--cannot be easily broken. Once again he underscores here the complexity of human relations which cannot be fit into any universal pattern. In an interview concerning the play Volodin said:

> .When I wrote Autumn Marathon I did not have any intention to reinforce negative stereotypes of the intellectual. My goal was to write a story about an intelligent man who does not want to do any harm to anybody but unwillingly hurts many people around him; about his hesitations, his unintentional cruelty Many similar things happened in my own life . . In

> general, because I hate to judge people, I always try to find something admirable in a person . . I feel a lot of compassion for my characters regardless of how "good" or "bad" they are 25

The high dramatic and literary quality of Autumn Marathon attracted Georgii Danelia, one of the most able Soviet film makers and a master of comedy. While liking the story in general, Danelia requested some changes in the screenplay, both in substance and in style. Volodin, who had learned his lesson during his work with Sergei Gerasimov, was determined this time to preserve the integrity of his scenario. When Danelia asked him to make Buzykin simpler, more comical and even clownish. Volodin refused. He was convinced that any simplification of Buzykin or any other character would damage the story and alter the tone of the piece.

It was a different story as far as the style of some scenes is concerned. Volodin found some validity in Danelia's arguments who pointed out that some parts in the screenplay were perhaps a bit too sad. Volodin is quick to note that the changes he eventually made did not damage the artistic quality of the piece. In general, he believes that his collaboration with Danelia was, by and large, a positive process, and the director's suggestions actually improved the script.

In 1979 the film was previewed for a group of professional film makers at the Moscow Movie Center. The reception was overwhelming. As the film critic Vladimir Demin, who was in the audience, writes, 23 there was applause on almost every line, response to every joke, attention to every detail . . there was an air of feast which no one wanted to leave.'"

In the early 1980s, Autumn Marathon received major prizes at the International Film Festivals in Saint-Sebastian and Berlin as well as numerous awards within the Soviet Union. In 1986 it was shown on the main channel of Soviet television and, according to some surveys, was seen by one of the largest audiences ever, which meant that literally tens of millions of people saw it on that night. The movie has been acquired for distribution by more than thirty countries around the world.

Despite its instant success with audiences, critics were far from unanimous in their appraisal of the movie, especially in the late 1970s, early 1980s. The division among critics reflected the rapidly intensifying process of

polarization in every sphere of social and cultural life in the Soviet Union which preceded its eventual collapse.

Although at the time when Autumn Marathon was written, the grip of Socialist Realism had begun to ease, most Soviet critics continued--without actually referring to it--to apply its principles in their evaluation of art works. In this case, in their view the main deficiency of the script and the film was that its protagonist, Buzykin, a member of intelligentsia, is weak and indecisive; in addition, there is no denunciation of his immoral behavior: on the contrary, the audience is urged to feel compassion for him.

Furthermore, the critics accused the Volodin that his work did not have any "positive" message, nor did it offer any "positive" alternative to the "immoral" protagonist. For example, Andrei Krotov wrote in Komsomol'skaya Pravda: “..perhaps everyone can find something of Buzykin in himself but he needs to get rid of it, and the sooner, the better. Buzykin is soaked in petty lies and deception, he cannot act decisively and allows his life to drift at the mercy of chance."[27] Other critics were equally irritated by the fact that despite the "flaws" in Buzykin/s character many people expressed sympathy for him.[28] Even normally less conservative Maia Turovskaya

criticized Autumn Marathon for what she defined as ". lack of sophistication caused by the tension between a "positive" content and a "negative" form . ."29

However, there were other voices, both among critics and the intelligentsia in general, who praised the high quality of Autumn Marathon. A well known theater and film critic, Konstantin Rudnitskii pointed out that the most trite and over-used plot in literature, the "love" triangle here is given a fresh look [3°] Aleksei Zverev stressed that it is not a coincidence that the screenplay is called a "sad comedy." He notes that although on the surface this could be seen as a contradiction in terms, in reality there is a deep connection between laughter and tears. He quotes Mark Twain, who said that, " every area of human activity has sad overtones. . The most inexhaustible source of humor is not joy but misery."[31] Zverev echoes Twain's view by saying, ". in essence, Buzykin belongs to an intrinsically sad world where losses, misfortunes, lost opportunities, unfulfilled dreams, and the need to make painful choices are an indispensable part of human existence."[32] He commends Volodin for declining to pass judgment on his character.

In another response to this work, the renowned Soviet poet Bulat

Okudjava wrote to Volodin: "...I feel that I follow your characters, participate in their life, laugh and cry with them, and occasionally I catch myself with a thought that I laugh and cry not only about their misfortunes but about my own as well."[33] Tatiana Lanina correctly points out that Buzykin's problems with the outside world are caused not only by his own shortcomings but also by the inability of other people to take time and try to understand his motives. She writes: "...True, part of Buzykin's problems lie in his inability or unwillingness to explain to others the reasons for his behavior; but another part lies in other people's inability to understand him ."34 Lanina draws parallels between Buzykin and Andrei Bolkonskii from Tolstoi's War and Peace as well as with Prince Myshkin from Dostoevski's The Idiot, who also suffered from their inability to make crucial decisions for fear of hurting other people. A kinship between Buzykin and Prince Myshkin becomes particularly evident in light of the fact that Dostoevski has been Volodin's favorite writer for many years.

While critics argued about the merits of Autumn Marathon, large audiences in Russia and other countries continued to enjoy it People appreciated how honestly, without any condescension to the audience, the film addressed many difficult problems. Autumn Marathon represents the culminating point in Volodin's ability to reflect his own experience, his pain and suffering. It demonstrates one of the unique features of his talent as a writer: his ability to speak about his

misfortunes in such a way that people from all walks of life can immediately relate to them. As Volodin notes in one of his recent interviews, in Autumn Marathon he finally felt free to speak about himself without any fear and inhibition.' Undoubtedly an equally important ingredient which has contributed to the success of this screenplay is its style: humorous, self-deprecating and ironic. Volodin has never attempted to simplify the problems his characters have to face. Their complexity and frequently "illogical" behavior demonstrate his deep understanding of human psychology and his talent to see the most subtle changes in human behavior.

Although Someone Is Ringing Your Doorbell and Autumn Marathon are the major Volodin works for cinema, they are not the only ones which have found their way to the screen. In fact, in the last twenty five years, many of Volodin's dramatic pieces have been made into movies. As in the case of Someone Is Ringing Your Doorbell and Autumn Marathon, his other plays have been marked by high literary quality and remarkable adaptability to the film medium, regardless of whether they have originally been written for theater or film. Some of the films based on Volodin's plays, such as The Adventures of a Magician, Five Evenings, Little Lizard and Two Arrows have become noticeable events in the history of modern Soviet cinema. Their success has to be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that in these cases the film directors closely followed the playwright's scripts."

Volodin's significant achievements as a screenwriter have been noticed

by many experts in the field. They point out that Volodin broke with the Soviet tradition of so called "objectivity" in dramatic writing with its reflection of "real" life and dared to use his own internal world as a basis for the emotional experience of his characters.[37] Many, including his old teacher from the Moscow Film Institute, Evgenii Gabrilovich, considered Volodin's approach a new, "author-centered" form of screenwriting. He remarks in his memoirs,

> There are some new screenplays where the main characters have many traits of the author himself. For instance, the lyric films of Alexander Volodin and Andrei Tarkovskii. This is a kind of film art that looks most promising to me...

Gabrilovich8s favorable opinion of the writing by his former student and the fact that he puts Volodin on the same level of the giant of the Russian cinema, Andrei Tarkovskii, further underscores the high quality of Volodin's work. His writing records the surface of life with an opacity and objectivity uniquely suited for the capacities of the camera; it easily converts verbal images into visual ones and successfully distills his ideas into essence and form. Volodin's aptitude for stating theme in a visual form as well as his economy of expression has been a consistent feature of his writing style. His ability to mask the complexity of human relations behind a seemingly simple, unassuming, and self-deprecating form gives Volodinifs works a distinctly Chekhovian flavor, something which has been observed by his more attentive critics.'

Although Volodin°s experience as a playwright and screenwriter is unique, especially for post-War Russia, it is not without precedent elsewhere. Approximately at the same time when Volodin published his first short stories in Russia, a young man named Harold Pinter began his writing career in England. Despite the vastly different political, social and cultural conditions in their home countries, Volodin and Pinter have developed remarkably similar writing styles, uniquely adaptable to either theater or film. Mutual influence or knowledge of each other's works has to be ruled out: Pinter's works became available in Russia only in the late 1980s; Volodin is still largely unknown outside his native country. Thus the question may arise: what is the source for this uncommon similarity between these two seemingly different authors? In order to answer this question one needs to look at the political, social and personal conditions which existed at the time when they were formed as writers and individuals. From the numerous interviews given by both Volodin and Pinter, one may see that comparable traits in their artistic personalities most likely come from a similar ethnic background and the overwhelming experience of World War II.[4°] They were both born into poor Jewish families (Volodin in 1919, Pinter in 1930), in countries with a strong anti-Jewish sentiment, and both experienced, from an early age, various forms of anti-Semitism. As almost every member of their generation all over the world, Volodin and Pinter had to live through the horrifying experience of World War Volodin, as a young soldier, directly participated in the battle against Nazis and witnessed the

unspeakable atrocities of the War; Pinter, who grew up during the War years in the ethnic neighborhood of London's East End, was well aware of the Holocaust, the danger of the German occupation of England, and threat from the British Fascists. The experience of the War as well as the overall trend of modern society to alienate its individual members, especially creative ones, left a profound effect on each of them. This sense of non-belonging was further exacerbated by their struggle for acceptance and recognition in the largely hostile or indifferent societies which forced them--perhaps subconsciously--to constantly prove their worth in the eyes of their Gentile peers. This may explain a lack of confidence in their own writing abilities to which both Volodin and Pinter readily admit." Furthermore, as young men, both became infatuated with theater and dreamed of becoming actors, although Pinter's dream came true and Volodin's did not Each of them began writing poetry and short stories a long time before they wrote their first play.42 And in both cases, poetry has continued to play an important role in their dramatic works. In case of Pinter, this fact has been underscored by Martin Esslin and other Pinter scholars;43 the important role of poetry in Volodin's dramatic works has been also observed by some of his critics.44 Interestingly enough, Volodin, like Pinter, has been eager to read his poetry publicly and to engage in open discussion of it with the

audience.45 In addition, it seems that Volodin and Pinter have acquired similar literary tastes z both cite Dostoyevsky as the writer who affected them in the most profound way,46; they also acknowledge the strong influence of Chekhov on the development of their playwriting skill.'- Similarities in the artistic personalities of Volodin and Pinter have apparently led to remarkable similarity in their creative processes. Martin Esslin in Creative Process and Meaning, analyzes various aspects of Pinter°s creative process, noting that in general there are wide differences in the mentality and working processes of playwrights." Some of them, Esslin says, approach their writing as an intellectual process, planned and subordinated by strict reasoning. Others, like Pinter (and Volodin) rely on the subconscious way of "inspiration." Esslin points out that Pinter's creative process begins with a basic image which then grows to a level where the author becomes so obsessed with it that he is completely taken over by it For Pinter, the lack of definition of that image gives it its generality, its universality and represents a mood, an atmosphere, a generalized attitude to a universally present experience, and its infinite openness of meaning. All of this, in Esslin[2]s view, constitutes the essence of poetic imagery in Pinter°s plays. As an example of Pinter°s creative process, Esslin cites Pinter°s own description of his work on The Birthday Party:

> The thing germinated and bred itself. It proceeded to its own logic. What Did I do? I followed the indications, I kept a sharp eye on the clues I found myself dropping. The writing arranged itself with no trouble into dramatic terms. . . My task was not to damage the consistency of the characters at any time—through any external notion of my own.'

Volodin has made surprisingly similar comments on his own creative process: "…When I begin to write a play or a screenplay I have only a basic idea of what I will be writing about. I must say, my best pieces were conceived on the spur of the moment. If I feel that something needs to be changed or added, I have to do it right away, because I fear that later I would forget what I wanted to do, I sail through the play with my characters, they lead me, and it happens totally subconsciously, I cannot rationalize it I compare my work on the plays with the work of a shoemaker who uses a wooden frame to stretch leather. When he puts a piece of leather on the frame and leaves it for a while he does not know exactly what shape this shoe will take. And the same happens with my writing, I never know where it is going to take me.5°

Just as Pinter, Volodin also relies on a basic image as a starting point in his creative process. He further elaborates on this subject:

> "…Of course, at the beginning I should have a thought, an idea, and then, as I said before, I begin to visualize it Many playwrights do not "see," they "hear," and their work becomes a "verbal" play. My plays are always "visual."51

This element in Volodin's (and Pinter's) dramatic writing explains the

remarkable adaptability of their works to both theater and film.

Although Volodin and Pinter came to dramatic writing from different directions--Volodin began his career as a professional screenwriter, while Pinter became a playwright and screenwriter after spending many years as a theater actor--their playwriting skills were formed under similar influence of the rich theatrical traditions in their respective countries.

Esslin notes that after many years of experience as an actor, Pinter°s dramatic technique has been undeniably influenced by the well-made play still popular on the English stage—with one set, few characters, a realistic milieu, and a simple, efficient dialogue, all of which incidently are also the ingredients of a successful screenplay. In his interview with Mel Gussow of The New York Times, Pinter admits that his dramatic writing is highly structured.' Betrayal can serve as a classic example of this type of writing. In the case of Volodin, he is eager to admit that rich traditions of the Russian theater and drama of the late 19th and early 20th

centuries, particularly Chekhov and indirectly Meyerhold, have affected his basically cinematic writing technique formed during the years at the Moscow Film Institute.

Furthermore, both Pinter and Volodin strongly believe that once the creative process has produced the text, the work exists by and for itself, apart from the author. In a letter to Peter Wood, who asked him for guidance in staging The Birthday Party, Pinter says ". . the play now exists apart from me, you or anybody."" In other words, the author, in Pinter°s view, no longer possesses any greater right to interpret the text than anyone else. Volodin has expressed a similar sentiment. He has always welcomed various, sometimes even contradictory interpretations of his plays."

In addition, both writers like to exploit the apparent disparities between the text and subtext aimed to reveal to the audience the most intimate thoughts and emotions of their characters. Joanne Klein, in her book Making Pictures: The Pinter Screenplays, makes an interesting observation on this subject. She points out that Pinter likes using game and game-like operations in his plays, which is also true of Volodin.

Klein notes that games become a tool for the characters in Pinter's plays to obfuscate and, at the same time, reveal their true motives, much in the same way games function for the characters in Volodin's plays and screenplays (Never Part From Your Loved Ones, The Adventures of a Magician, The Adventures of A Dentist, to name a few, with their ubiquitous games and game-like manifestations immediately come to mind).

Klein considers obfuscation of reality as a trend pertinent to every aspect in the life of any modern society: political, social, economic." She points out that most modern theories of psychology view patterns of human behavior as a manifestation of acts hidden behind various surface patterns. Klein feels that the reflection of an opaque and inscrutable reality has become prominent in the contemporary experience of many art disciplines. She also believes that the most important movements in modern literature, painting, and film have followed a scientific theory--originated in nuclear physics--which treats the observable

with minimum prejudice, interpretation and insight. She maintains that Pinter has intuitively adapted this approach in his dramatic works. The same could be said about Volodin, who has fought all his professional life against Socialist Realism with its complete predictability and has defended the right of the artist to remain as ambiguous as he wishes to be.

A comparison between Volodin and Pinter undoubtedly deserves a special study. The preceding observations have no claim to being either comprehensive or exhaustive, nor do they fully address the differences between these two authors, and of course, differences there are But the remarkable similarities of their artistic profiles reaffirm the fact that a truly honest representation of universal human problems does not know national boundaries.

Analysis of Volodin's works for cinema clearly demonstrates that his screenplays, just as his theater pieces, are capable of penetrating deep into the hearts of large audiences both in Russia and elsewhere in the world. His dramatic works for the screen, just as those for the theater, have always been focused on the most fundamental issues of human existence such as personal freedom, pursuit of happiness, and the place of the individual in society. Characters in his screenplays always strive for integrity, decency and tolerance. Volodinils success as both a playwright and screenwriter, so remarkably similar to that of Harold Pinter, one of the most outstanding dramatists in the century, was surely a harbinger of the now popular trend among modern dramatists to combine outstanding careers in both

theater and film. In this country, dramatic works of Neil Simon, David Mamet, and Sam Sheppard provide a strong confirmation of this fact.

Notes

1. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 36.

2. Leyda 268.

3. Sergei Eisenstein, Film Essays And a Lecture, Ed. Jay Leyda (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982) 78.

4. Victor Shklovskii, a screenwriter, theoretician, and critic of cinema, wrote in his 1927 article, Poesia rosa v kinemato.rafii,

no . many film makers believe that among the literary genres . poetry is the closest to cinema. . . Undoubtedly, Dziga Vertov's film, Odna shestaia sveta is built according to a certain poetic principle with its clearly expressed parallelism and repeated appearance of the same images at the end of the movie, although, every time, reinterpreted and remotely reminded a form of a poetic triplet on See: Victor Shklovskii, Za 60 let rabotv v kino (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1985) 37,

5. Alma Law, unpublished interview with Alexander Volodin, 1974.

6. Inga Karetnikova, How Scripts Are Made (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1990) 6.

7, Evgenii Gabrilovich, Izbrann e sochinenia (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1982) vol.1, 7.

8. This view on the connection between theater and film has been universally shared by the film practitioners all over the world. A well known Canadian film scholar, Roger Manvell, writes in his book, Theater and Film, that despite the apparent differences between these two media, there are many features which they have in common. Chief among them is a need for a strong dramatic piece full of diverse characters and intense confrontations. Manvell cites a number of successful film adaptations of theater plays, among them is the 1964 film production of Chekhov's Three Sisters by the Soviet director, Samson Samsonov. For the reference see:
Roger Manvell, Theater and Cinema: A Comparative Study of the Two Art Form of Dramatic Art, and the .roblems of Ada tation of Stage Plays into Films (London: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1978) 93,Eisenstein's

emphasis on theatrical experience should not come as surprise to anyone: in the early 1920s he spent several years as an assistant to Vsev.lod Meyerhold, who had a profound influence on Eisenstein and his "montage" technique. Jay Leyda writes that the famous Russian film-maker even invited one of the Kabuki actors, Chijuro Kawarazaki, to give a supplementary course in movement to film actors. This was undoubtedly done under influence of Meyerhold who had been fascinated with the Japanese theater for many years. Another teacher at the Moscow Film Institute, Abram Room, had also worked with Meyerhold in the 1920s, For the reference see:

Sergei Eisenstein, Through Theater to Cinema, in the volume: Film Focus, ed. James Hurt (Clifs: Prentice-Hall, Englewood , 1974) 119. and

Leyda 214 and 268.

10. Gabrilovich 292.

11. Eisensteinis outstanding contribution to the cinema in general as well as his approach to screenwriting is widely acknowledged. His methods and ideas on film making have become indispensable part of film education all over the world. For the reference see, for example:

Douglas Garett Winston, The Screenplay As Literature (London: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1973), or

William Miller, Screenwriting For Narrative Film and Television (New York, Hastings House Publishers, 1980).

12. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 38.

13. Gabrilovich, vol. 1, 6.

14. Alexander Volodin, Zvoniat, otkroite dyer°, unpublished screenplay, from the personal archives of A. Volodin, 24.

15. Volodin, Zvoniat otkroite dyer' 25.

16. The coed schools did not even exist till 1955.

17. Tatiana Lanina, Alexander Volodin (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1989) 169.

18. Today, no one sees anything unusual in this kind of positive hero. However, at the time this film came out, it was quite novel for the Soviet screen. This fact has not escaped the attention of a renowned Soviet screenwriter, Aleksei Kapler, who in his presentation on the First Conference of the Soviet Film Makers specifically praised Volodin's screenplay.

For reference see: Alexander Kichin, "Tol°ko pomoch' zit'," Kino, Riga, January 1982, 24.

19. Unpublished letter from Alexander Mitta to Alexander Volodin, 1976° From personal archives of A. Volodin.

20. Unpublished letter from Alexander Mitta to Alexander Volodin, 1976. From personal archives of A. Volodin.

21. Volodin remembers that Alexander Mitta specifically asked him to participate in the shooting of Somebody Is Ringing Your Doorbell. When at the early stages of shooting Mitta began to experience difficulties he, as any other film director, tried to overcome them by making changes in the screenplay. Then Rolan Bykov, an actor of remarkable intuition and insight who played Kolpakov, said to Mitta: "Alexander, don't make any changes, follow the screenplay as it's written." Although at first Mitta resisted, he soon realized that following the script was the only way to succeed with this script.

22. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 41.

23. Twelve years later, in 1989, when the boy was 18, he joined his older half brother in America.

24. Alexander Volodin, Osennii marafon, in the book: Osennii marafon (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1985) 293.

25. Answering his numerous critics about weaknesses of his protagonist, Buzykin, Volodin said: "I'm surprised that in critical - analysis and commentaries about Osennii marafon almost everybody has focused on the deficiencies in the character of Buzykin. Look, he had to endure a rude and professionally incapable colleague, Varvara, who wanted to take advantage of him; an alcoholic neighbor looking for a buddy to drink with; a rather thoughtless foreign guest who never asked how convenient for others his life style.

How do you expect anyone could react with this kind people? Undoubtedly, Buzykin is a weak man with many drawbacks, but he is precious to me, his intelligence, talent, kindness, his readiness to sacrifice his own convenience to make other people happy. True, he is a mess in his personal life, but who isn't? I think his positive qualities far out weigh his weaknesses. And after all, he ends up more miserable than anyone else." See: Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 42.

26. Vladimir Demin, "Malenifkaia ironicheskaia komedia," in the book: Georgii Danelia (Moscow: Sovetskii

Pisatel°, 1982) 168.

27. Andrei Krotov, "Po zamknutomu krugu," Komsomolfskaya Pravda, 16 January, 1980, 3.

28. Yurii Nagibin, "Samoe glavnoe--pravda i strast°," Sovetifskava kulitura, 22 Dec., 1984, 7.

29. Maia Turovskaya, Pam'ati tekushchego mgonoveniia) (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel°, 1987) 125.

30. Konstantin Rudnitskii, "Chastitsa bitiya," Isskustvo kino, March 1979, 34.

31. Aleksei Zverev, "Ogoniok neizvestno otkuda," Novyi Mir, September 1987, 238,

32. Zverev 239.

33. Bula t Okudjava, "Pis'mo vmesto retsenzii," in the. book: Osennii marafon (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatell, 1980) 66.

34, Lanina 248,

35. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 44.

36. The film adaptation of Five Evenings is another good example of how the film director, in this case, Nikita Mikhalkov, like his colleagues Mitta and Danelia, closely followed Volodin's screenplay and made a very successful movie.

37. See, for example: Natalia Zorkaya and Alexander Zorkii, Zametki o rezheissere (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1984) 25,

38. Gabrilovich, vol. 1, 295.

39. Stanislav Rassadin, "Stydno byt° neschastlivym: portret Alexandra Volodina," Teatral'naia Zhizni No, 2, January 1989, 9.

40. For the references see, for example:

Lawrence M. Bensky. "Harold Pinter: An Interview," in the book: Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays (Engelwood Clifs: Prentice-Hall, 1972) 19-34, and Unpublished interviews with Alexander Volodin, May-June 1991, 24.

41. For references see, for example: Mel Gussow, "Conversation with Harold Pinter," New York Times Magazine, 5 December, 1971, 127.

Unpublished interviews with Alexander Volodin, May-June 1991, 3.

42. For the references, see:

Alexander Volodin. Rasskazv (Leningrad: Sovetskii Pisate1[8], 1954), and

Harold Pinter, Collected Poems and Prose (London: Methuen, 1986).

43. For reference see, for example:

Martin Esslin, Pinter, The Playwright, Fifth edition (London: Methuen, 1992),

James Hollis. Harold Pinter: The Poetics of Silence (Carbondale, Illinois: South Illinois University Press, 1970),

44. For reference see, for example: Boris Zingerman, "Romantic teatra," Teatr, November 1986, 40-

41. Vitalii Potemkin, "Poeticheskaya drama Alexandra Volodina," Sovetskaia Kulftura, 30 August, 1990, 14.

45. For the reference see, for example: Lanina 312.

46. For the references see, for example: Gussow, 128, and

Unpublished interviews, 41.

47. For references see, for example:

Rassadin, 11. and John Lahr, "Pinter and Chekhov: Bond of Naturalism," in the book: Pinter: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Arthur Ganz (Inglewood Clifs: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 60°72.

48. Martin Esslin, Creative Process and Meaning, in the book: Harold Pinter: A Casebook, Ed. Lois Gordon (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1990) 3-11. 49, Esslin 5,

50. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 46.

51. Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 47.

52. Gussow, 134.

53. Esslin 9,

54, Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, 48.

55, Joanne Klein, Making Pictures: The Pinter Screenplay5_ (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985) 192.

CONCLUSION

Despite the wide spread popularity of his plays and films, Volodin was only grudgingly recognized by Soviet cultural authorities and critics. The reason, of course, was that his work simply did not adhere to the norms of Socialist Realism. Although none of his work could be considered openly dissident, it consistently raised questions among the cultural establishment about the writer's loyalty to Communist ideology. His son's emigration to the United States in 1972 further deepened this mistrust. Following his departure, essentially until Glasnost and Perestroika became political realities, Volodin was denied permission to go abroad, either to visit his son or to attend a professional event outside of his •wn country.'

In the 1980s, however, the situation slowly began to change. As the

Communist Party, preoccupied by the deepening economic, political and social crisis in the country, had to ease its tight ideological control over the arts, Volodin's dramatic and literary works began to enjoy a new wave of popularity. His old plays and screenplays were staged and re-staged by a new generation of Sovie directors and film makers.[2] In 1985, for the first time in almost 20 years, a collection of his most significant CONCLUSION

Despite the wide spread popularity of his plays and films, Volodin was only grudgingly recognized by Soviet cultural authorities and critics. The reason, of course, was that his work simply did not adhere to the norms of Socialist Realism. Although none of his work could be considered openly dissident, it consistently raised questions among the cultural establishment about the writer's loyalty to Communist ideology. His son's emigration to the United States in 1972 further deepened this mistrust. Following his departure, essentially until Glasnost and Perestroika became political realities, Volodin was denied permission to go abroad, either to visit his son or to attend a professional event outside of his •own country.'

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and social crisis in the country, had to ease its tight ideological control over the arts, Volodin's dramatic and literary works began to enjoy a new wave of popularity. His old plays and screenplays were staged and re-staged by a new generation of Soviet directors and film makers.[2] In 1985, for the first time in almost 20 years, a collection of his most significant exercised a profound influence on his own as well as the younger generation of playwrights and screenwriters in the former Soviet Union. The foregoing analysis of his work identifies his major contributions to post-War Russian literature and drama as the following:

a) introduction of the alienation theme and alienated characters into modern Russian literature and drama;

b) sharp focus on the personal lives of ordinary individuals;

c) direct use of the author's own personal experience as a basis for the emotional experience of his characters;

d) use of cinematographic structural technique in playwrighting;

e) use of poetry in his dramatic and literary works.

Although in recent years Soviet critics have acknowledged some of these achievements, they have nevertheless failed to recognize that Volodin's works represent an important milestone in the history of modern Soviet literature and drama. They have particularly overlooked one of his most important contributions: an extensive exploration of alienation as a social phenomenon in post-War Soviet society. As early as 1953, when it was

not only unfashionable but even dangerous, Volodin began to explore this theme. In his 1953 short story, Fifteen Years in One's Life, as well as in later works such as Five Evenings, The Blonde, A Pulp-Writer, and Autumn Marathon, he examined in depth and detail a variety of forms of alienation: alienation caused by painful experience of the War, alienation caused by fear of old age and disease, alienation caused by inability to communicate with the members of a society whose values are so different from one's own.

He also demonstrated that alienation is a universal process which takes place regardless of one's will. Volodin's exploration of this theme is especially interesting because it took place in parallel with a similar process in Western literature and drama in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, reflected in the works of such writers as Natalie Sarraute and Allen Robbe-Grillet in France, or John Osborne in England. Written in ignorance of their Western counterparts, Volodin's works convincingly demonstrate that alienation is a universal phenomenon, a fundamental human problem, whatever local colors it may take as a result of political and social environments.

Volodin's works have not only proved the existence of this phenomenon in Soviet society but also helped to dispel the myth, long maintained by Marxist-Leninist sociologists and critics, that Soviet society is immune from it. Volodin's dramatic and literary works have also demonstrated that Soviet literature

and drama in the post-War period were closer to their Western counterparts than previously thought in their exploration of the universal problems of human existence.Although Soviet critics preferred to ignore the theme of alienation in post-War Russian drama and Volodin's crucial role in its development, the following generation of Russian playwrights found it very inspiring.

This theme eventually became prominent in the works of such important playwrights as Alexander Vampilov and Mikhail Roshchin. Vampilov, perhaps the most talented and important Soviet playwright of the post-War era, openly admitted that the roots of his major characters such as Kolesov, Shamanov, and Zilov could be found in Volodin's plays and screenplays.[3] The current generation of Russian playwrights such as Petrushevskaya, Sokolova, Plotnikov, and others continue to feel the influence of Volodin's works and acknowledge his significant contributions.'

His well deserved respect from other Russian playwrights also stems from the fact that throughout his career Volodin--unlike most of his Soviet peers—quietly but persistently refused to write ideologically ucorrect' pieces and instead focused his dramatic writing on issues concerning ordinary individuals. His characters: workers, engineers, accountants, doctors, and civil

servants were forced to make difficult moral choices, maintain personal integrity in difficult situations and struggle with the hardships of their everyday lives. Needless to say, these characters and situations were far from the optimistic cliches of Socialist Realism.

As a result, his plays and screenplays were routinely criticized for their "lack of patriotism" and "melkotemfie," (superficial, unworthy subject matter)."[5] However, history has proved Volodin[8]s critics wrong. While the "agricultural," "industrial," and other works of Socialist Realism have rapidly disappeared from memory, the "insignificant" works of Alexander Volodin continue to fascinate Russian readers and theater goers. This is particularly true today when after the collapse of Communism, there is a great need for the arts, including dramatic arts, to reflect the painful and complex process of every-day people struggling to adapt to a radically changing society.

From his first short stories to his latest screenplays, Volodin's ability to incorporate his personal experience and share his innermost feelings in his work has been one the most appealing features of his writing. In breaking with the Socialist Realist tradition of so called "objectivity" in dramatic writing and its reflection of "real" life and "real characters, Volodin pioneered

use of events from the his own life as an integral part of his literary and dramatic works. Equally appealing was the way his characters talked about their lives: humorously and self-deprecatingly. The following comment indicates the evolution of his views on the matter of personal experience:

> When I began writing, I believed that I should not write about myself, about my life, because when I returned from World War II worn out physically and emotionally, I thought: Who would be interested in the life of a person like myself? . . However, gradually I began to inject into my plays a bit about myself, and already in my second play, Five Evenings, there is an episode where il'in mentions how Tamara came to see him off when he was sent to War. This was a scene from my own life. . . As I continued to write more plays I felt more confident to use my own experience, even to give some of my characters the traits of my own personality. . . In my last dramatic work, Autumn Marathon, there are already many facts from my own life. . . I must add that when I write about myself I always do it with humor.'

Volodin's sincerity and openness, his courage to reveal himself in his works, has become a key to his success among Russian audiences of several generations.

Although Volodin considers himself primarily a playwright, his

biggest success has come from his screenplays. In fact, he--perhaps more than other Russian writer in recent history--can be called a quintessential dramatic writer, whose works can be easily adapted to either screen or stage. At a time when the screenplay has been striving to become an autonomous dramatic form which can exist independently of its film implementation, he, along with such writers as Harold Pinter, has expanded the earlier definition of dramatic writing as something applicable exclusively for stage, and helped to elevate screenwriting to the respectable literary status it deserves.

Perhaps more than anything else, Volodin[8]s professional training as a screenwriter has shaped his writing style. Whether he writes for stage or screen, he uses typical screenwriting format a series of unconnected autonomous episodes. This episodic structure combined with a simple external setting and straightforward, unambiguous dialogue makes Volodin's dramatic works easily adaptable to either theater or film. It is no coincidence that practically all of his plays and screenplays have been produced in both media, an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of modern Russian drama.

The list of Volodinis achievements would not be complete without mentioning his poetry, which has been an indispensable part of his dramatic works and heavily influenced his writing style. Volodin has repeatedly pointed out that his poetry lies at the heart of his dramatic works and provides a key to their successful implementation.' Although he has never considered himself a professional poet, Volodin has always felt a need to express his most intimate feelings and thoughts in poetic form. Poetry has

become a tool to elevate himself--and the audience--above the triviality of everyday life and reach the innermost parts of the human soul. For Volodin, poetry is the ideal instrument of communion with fellow human beings in the endless struggle to find meaning in life. This is how he reflects on it in his recently published memoirs, Odnomestnyi tramvai:

The greatness and uniqueness of human life is frequently masked by the everyday routine. However, through that mask the artist should see the uniqueness and greatness of each human being. . . Art is, in essence, a human challenge to the inevitability of death, an answer to the fear of the boundless universe.

These philosophical observations may surprise those who perceive Volodin as a "light-weight" and "sentimental" writer preoccupied with the "small" subjects of everyday life. Such critics overlook the fact that beneath the unpretentious surface of his simple plots and characters lies a great deal of philosophical wisdom, acuteness of observation and profound knowledge of human nature. In his each and every work, whether it is a play, screenplay, or piece of poetry, Volodin has been trying to find answers to the most fundamental questions of human existence. All his life he has been fighting, through his works, for human dignity, respect of individual freedom and pursuit of happiness®° the goals finally embraced by his beloved country, Russia.

Notes

1. As any Soviet citizen, Volodin was subject to strict

government control over travel abroad, either as a tourist or as a member of some professional delegation. For example, in 1962 he met in Leningrad John

Steinbeck and Edward Albee who invited him to come the United States as guest of the American Writers Association. Despite numerous requests from the American writers, Volodin was denied an opportunity to visit his colleagues in the United States. A similar incident took place in 1979, when Volodin was invited to attend an international opening of the movie based on his play, Five Evenings, in Brussels, Belgium. He could not attend even a single international screening of his most successful movie, Autumn Marathon, which had received numerous prizes on international film festivals. Only in 1988, when the political situation in the former Soviet Union had drastically changed, was he able to visit his son and his family in the United States,

2. A typical example of the resurgence of Volodin's works is the 1982 television film, The Appointment, based on his 1961 play. This film, shown on the main channel of Soviet TV and seen by tens of millions of people, became one of the most successful televisions films ever made. See: Mark Zakharov, "Novoe naznachenie," Sovetskaia kuliltura, 6 April, 1982, 3.

3. In one of his recent interviews Volodin said: "Alexander Vampilov told me once that he considered me his artistic mentor. He literally said: "Roshchin and I consider you our artistic "chief!" He admitted that he began writing his plays after he saw Five Evenings which the BDT brought to Irkutsk in the early sixties, where Vampilov lived at that time, See: Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 43.

4, Stanislav Rassadin, "Stidno bit° neschastlivim," Teatralffnaia Zizn°, January 1989, 9-12.

5. In one of his recent interviews Volodin notes: "Beginning with my first play I have been a special target for harassment by the cultural authorities. They have accused me of an attempt to "split the people and the government Cultural authorities accused me of "peeking through the key hole," and my plays of being"lightweight," "insignificant." . .I was accused of violating rules of Socialist Realism . ." Soviet stage was full at that time of female characters, mostly innocent girls, always in white dress, loved by two men. The heroine usually cannot make her choice between those two but finally selects a factory innovator who has developed a new way to sharpen cutters, See: Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991,

6. Alexander Volodin, unpublished series of personal interviews, May-June 1991, 47.

7. On numerous occasions Volodin specifically mentioned how important to approach his dramatic works as poetic pieces. Perhaps one the reasons why his screenplays have been so successful is because cinematography, as a genre, is highly capable of expressing the mood of the characters, similarly to that of poetry. Many film makers, beginning with Eisenstein, pointed out to this particular ability of film medium. Volodin also stressed that he had urged theater directors to find the way to express a poetic element in his plays.

8. Alexander Volodin, Odnomestnyi tramvai (Moscow: Pravda, 1990) 31.

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