A Hopeless Life? The Story of a Koriak Woman in the Russian Far East

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Abstract: In Koriak villages on the northeastern shore of Kamchatka peninsula, the idea that Koriak women are morally debauched and domestically inept is frequently met. On the one hand, this idea draws on the bias that Koriak women as members of one "primitive," indigenous group in the Russian Far East are "slothful" and do not exhibit a "civilized" propriety; on the other hand, it rests on Russian-centred notions of femininity. Furthermore, interactions between Russian and Koriak men have given rise to an authoritative rhetoric which debases women who are said to keep unclean houses, to neglect their children and to drink. How do women respond to these ideas of cultural difference and male power? In this essay, I explore this question by means of a story. Lidiia's story shows how Koriak women actively engage the circumstances of social possibility, while simultaneously struggling with broader configurations of gender and political asymmetry.

Résumé: Dans les villages Koriak, sur les côtes Nord-Est de la Péninsule Kamchatka, on trouve souvent la perception que les femmes koriak sont débauchées et incapables d'accomplir les travaux domestiques. D'un côté, cette idée vient de la conception qu'en tant que membre d'un groupe indigène «primitif» de l'extrême Est de la Russie, les femmes koriak sont paresseuses et ne se conforment pas aux convenances de la civilisation; d'un autre côté, elle provient de notions de féminité dérivées du monde russe. De plus, les hommes russes et koriak ont imposé une rhétorique qui dénigre les femmes dont on dit qu'elles ne maintiennent pas leur maison propre, qu'elles négligent leurs enfants et qu'elles boivent. Comment les femmes répondent-elles à ces idées sur les différences culturelles et le pouvoir masculin? Dans cet article, j'explore cette question au moyen d'une histoire individuelle. L'histoire de Lidiia montre comment les femmes koriak tirent parti des conditions sociales tout en affrontant la situation plus globale des asymétries sexuelles et politiques.

In Koriak villages on the northeastern shore of Kamchatka peninsula in the Russian Far East, the idea that Koriak women are morally debauched and domestically inept is frequently met.[1] On the one hand, this idea draws on the bias that Koriak women as members of one "primitive," indigenous group in this region are slothful and do not exhibit a "civilized" propriety; on the other hand, it rests on Russian-centred notions of femininity. Within this context of social and gender power, Koriak men, like Russian men, use claims of a male-oriented, authoritative discourse which deprecates Koriak women who are said to keep unclean houses, to neglect their children and to drink. As a site of male commentary, women sometimes find it hard to respond to issues of regional and gender inequality; their position does not easily allow them to tap into both local and transcultural conversations to challenge sexual conventions and assume oppositional positionings not just in relation to their alleged domestic inability but on a variety of related issues. In order to lend substance to this claim, it seems best to describe a scene that conveys some of the dynamics in which claims of cultural and male authority are set.

In the summer of 1994, I met a Russian writer who was traveling across the northern Kamchatka peninsula to collect material for a book on the contemporary lives of Koriak women and men. When he arrived in the village of Ossora on the northeastern shore he stopped by the home of Lidiia, a woman whom he had known for several years, and whom I, by comparison, had then known for approximately one year. Their encounter was neither casual nor accidental; in fact, he had stopped by to ask her how she, an impoverished, middle-aged widow with three children, managed to get by. While he sat on the only chair in the only room of her apartment and she was in the midst of preparing a meal, he began to comment on the domestic disarray he discerned. The cooking pots were not cleaned, the window shutters were askew, and the floor was soiled with pebbles and small

chunks of mud. Silence ensued. While the conversation among us dragged, her lover, a young Russian man, unexpectedly appeared. Not yet ready with the preparation of the meal, she sent her youngest daughter Lena—who was eleven years at that time—to buy several bottles of samogon (self-distilled schnapps). Slipping her daughter some ruble notes, she also reminded her not to forget to pick up some videos.[2] Once Lena was on her way, the rest of us continued our awkward conversation. When Lena reappeared with the alcohol and videos, the writer and I decided to leave. We had barely stepped out of the house when he turned to me and explained, "She is a hopeless (*beznadezhnaia*) case. She is already far gone."

Lidiia had a brother, not much younger than she, who too had known the writer for a long time. Indeed, he liked the man so much that he had arranged several meetings to help facilitate his project. By nature accommodating and helpful, he also took us along to meet his male Russian and Koriak colleagues at the power station where he worked. It was on our way to this station that the Russian writer shared his thoughts about Lidiia with her brother. Initially I was surprised to hear that her brother did not raise his voice in protest but *de facto* agreed. Yes, he also thought that his sister was really going to the dogs and, worse, had no decent bone left in her. Why, he wondered, did she not take better care of herself and the children? It was a mystery to him. In the end she might end up with nothing left, on the street. But, shrugging his shoulders, he asked, "What can someone like me do?"

The way in which I have chosen to tell this story centres on the perspective of these two men. It shows Lidiia as a scruffy and vulgar woman who cannot keep her house clean, neglects her children and embarks on sexual relations with Russian men. Indeed, their commentary frames my ability to ask about the structure of Russian-Koriak relations, issues of regional domination, and male-centred stereotypes about Koriak women. Why can the Russian writer "afford" to describe Lidiia in a disparaging way? What kind of cultural perspectives and political relations shape how Koriak women are portrayed in regional (and national) discourses on cultural difference and sexuality? What is more, why does Lidiia's brother not feel the need to defend his sister but rather supports the writer's comments? His agreement suggests that both men use transcultural, common understandings of sexual and domestic propriety that confirm themselves as privileged users of sexual authority. How do these shared understandings come about? Why do Koriak men use bold and aggressive claims to establish sexual authority and power? Even more importantly, how does Lidiia respond to these ideas of cultural difference and claims to men's authority? How do Koriak women engage the conditions that endow men with the power to pass on moral judgments and "sentence" female faults? In this essay I tell a long story, one that draws from insights of how national frameworks of gender are enacted and play out in locally specific ways, and how regional structures of social inequality create sites of gendered vulnerability and exclusion. In many places I visited on the northeastern shore, stories similar to Lidiia's surfaced in various yet equally troubling ways.

A story such as Lidiia's is difficult to tell for several reasons. First, it finds little precedence in social science writings on issues of gender in the post-Soviet context. Analysis of gender in contemporary Russia, embracing the transition period from state socialism to a market economy, tends to pay special attention to common economic tendencies and, generally, offers locally unspecific explanations.[3] In examining the economic and social forces that give rise to the current problems in Russia, scholars usually examine these processes from the perspective of collective-oriented analysis; they rarely ask how individuals experience and live out the historic changes that ravage Russia today. Recently, however, cultural critics have shown that stories are one important means of drawing attention to the ways in which individuals experience and engage broader regional and local configurations of power and domination.[4] Stories disrupt the possibility of reading for generalizations and repetition; they show social process from the perspective of idiosyncratic alignments and personal stakes. They draw readers into the experience of individuals, while simultaneously showing how political categories and social standards give shape to experience in the first place (Scott, 1992). In telling Lidiia's story here the challenge is to construct an account of her response to change and yet to attend to the social formations of her practice.

Second, stories such as Lidiia's are uncommon in the anthropological record of the Russian North. The ways in which Soviet ethnography has produced highly self-conscious texts that bespeak a buoyant utopianism and an unswerving belief in the master narrative of progress has recently received much scrutiny,[5] and has stimulated a number of important responses.[6] In North American and European scholarship, one frequent reaction has been to study issues of nationality and identity most commonly in relation to Soviet narratives of progress—with a heightened emphasis on political structures and state policies but little emphasis on local struggles over power and meaning.[7] Apart from the fact that gender has not been an important category in northern Russia research, so far

analysts have rarely asked their readers to immerse themselves in the fate of particular individuals. But stories of individuals give shape to politics and are, in turn, shaped by the political contours of regional inequality and identity. They open up a space in which analysts can ask about an individual's relation to government programs and state agendas; they focus attention not on the structure but on the effects of such agendas.

And third, the story I am about to tell might not be the kind of story Koriak subjects might want to be told about them.[8] The critique of anthropology as a form of Western colonial discourse is by now well known, and has opened a discussion about the political assumptions and cultural representations in which such a colonialism is bred.[9] This is a discourse that anthropologists, as well as anyone interested in cultural dialogue and interaction, can no longer afford to neglect. Yet at the same time it seems important to note that any form of cultural engagement depends upon an engagement with the questions and political challenges that emerge out of particular social and cultural formations. Also I cannot avoid such issues; I can only manoeuvre within them. Some anthropologists (for example Aretxaga, 1997: 17) fear that if anthropologists shy away from engaging potentially contentious issues they will give up their voice in matters of public debates. To emphasize the possibility for dialogue and communication across cultural and political borders, then, West (1990: 34), for example, writes of "the importance of creating a culture of critical sensibility and personal accountability." In cross-cultural debates, West's argument for accountability requires the willingness of a self-critical engagement with the conditions of one's own thinking and effects of one's writing. I do not exclude my own responsibilities and practices.

Conditions of Living

I first met Lidiia in 1992 and, again, in 1994. When I knew her, she lived in the village of Ossora, a central administrative unit linking several clusters of settlements in the northern Kamchatka peninsula. The Ossora of the mid-1990s very much resembled other villages I visited in the region. Nestling in one of the manifold bays that skirt the northeastern shore, it opened itself up to the northern Pacific Ocean and the harsh winds that blew in from across the sea. Wooden, plank-supported homes clustered along two pebbly and pot-holed streets; the brick-walled sidings of its administrative, public buildings still featured slogans reminiscent of bygone days ("War/Victory/Communism"; "Lenin is the Father of all Soviet Children"). But although the slogans—once proclaiming the promise of economic well-being and social equality—still touched up Ossora's buildings and walls, they had faded away from the minds of many residents. As in numerous other places in the "new" Russia, feelings of hopelessness and a fair amount of cynicism prevailed.

Lidiia lived in one of the decrepit houses that skirt the edges of the village. Here she inhabited, with her two teenage daughters and a six-year-old son, a rickety, one-room apartment. While she slept on the creaky bed with thin, musty-smelling pillows that was set against one wall, her youngest daughter and son were bedded down in a cubbyhole built into the narrow hallway. Her eldest daughter continually complained that during the night she could feel cold drafts of air spinning around the air mattress on which she slept; the apartment offered no insulation against the cold. Crumbling cement flakes chipped off the wall and divulged an ugly skeleton of morose, prefab architecture. Shamefully hidden in the entrance corner of their place was a stained bucket that served as toilet. A water pump across the muddy road provided water for drinking and cooking; and, in a limited way, allowed them to wash away the "daily grime."

But although in its "feel" Ossora was very much like the other villages on the northeastern shore, it was also different. Built in the 1920s and 1930s to become the administrative centre of the Karaginskii district (one of the four administrative districts in the northern peninsula), its residents (approximately 4 000) were a conglomerate of Russian and Ukrainian newcomers (92.0%), resettled Koriaks (8.0%) and a small minority of Itelmen, Chukchi and Armenians. In the mid-1950s Ossora had been part of an extensive government labour program. To incite and augment the planned production of fish in the Russian Far East, in particular dog salmon and red caviar, regional authorities had pushed for the increased presence of Ukrainian and Russian workers on the northeastern shore. The incentives were attractive: the wages were three times higher than on the mainland, the family of every worker received a well-equipped apartment,[10] and many were even able to afford a car.[11] The Koriak women and men I knew referred to their Russian and Ukrainian newcomers in the region as Whites (*belye*) who thought of Ossora as a place of "passing through" and good cash. In contrast, most Koriak women and men thought of Ossora as a place of resettlement and state-inflicted absence from their homes.

Since the 1920s, the government has operated a program for the settlement of migratory, reindeer-herding "minority" populations such as the Koriak.[12] In an effort to impose order and stability on Koriak reindeer herders, one government priority had been the creation of nucle-

ated settlements that would make for ordered places of living. Although there were already a few scattered settlements on the northeastern shore, state agendas demanded that these be expanded and new ones built. At the same time, other settlements were closed, and the Koriak families who had lived in them were forcefully removed to reside in government-prescribed locations.[13] But even though in the government-sponsored rhetoric of development, centralization and expansion of settlement were understood as a necessary step towards progress, better houses, hygiene and education, many Koriak women and men I met did not share the opinion that settlement had offered them improved standards of living. In contrast, they argued that life in resettlement villages had helped to create poverty and weaken Koriak traditional cultural understandings. That is why, many explained, a general sense of fatigue and dejection prevailed.

Decisions

Lidiia, too, felt caught in poverty and generally felt dejected. But one important difference was that Lidiia had once had, as she said, "the opportunity to live a different life." When she was still a young girl, one of her teachers in the *internat*[14] recognized Lidiia's fine talents as a student, and suggested that she attend a special school in the city of Novosibirsk (a major urban centre in Central Siberia; approximately 1 400 000 residents) to become a forest warden. The teacher was so convinced that Lidiia would do well that she went to discuss the matter with her parents. They did not want to let Lidiia go, but they also knew that they did not have enough authority over the process. Lidiia left.

Lidiia was approximately 17 when she moved to Novosibirsk. It was not the first time that she had been separated from her siblings, parents and friends. When she was a student in the *internat*, her brother and two sisters had, for reasons unknown to her, attended a different school. Lidiia remembers the long nights she lay awake, thinking especially about her younger brother with whom she was very close, and the two short months she was allowed to spend with her family in the summer. She also remembers the isolation she had felt, and her deep wish to be with her parents and siblings.

In the institute in Novosibirsk she had not felt so alone; she liked to learn and found friends quickly. She also liked the city and the excitement, but in the end she decided to discontinue her education. Four years of training meant a long time away from her family. Even more importantly, in the long run she could not imagine living her life as a forest warden for this would have meant a life away from her home. There is no forest in northern Kamchatka; above all, there are tundra, muskeg and bog, and sheets of water that layer the soil. In northern Kamchatka there would have been no work for her. Thus she opted to give up a career as a forest warden and return to her home.

Today, Lidiia often regrets her decision. She believes that she (and her family) would be much better off if she had finished her education. She would have more chances of well-paid work if she had stayed in Novosibirsk, she explains. Why would this be? One important factor, she explained, was that all students were forced to take English lessons in the institute. Today in Russia—where a consumer-oriented market economy, entrepreneurship, and privatization of collective property regimes call attention to the unstable conditions of transition—speaking English is a much-sought skill. But as Lidiia says, "At that time [in the mid-1970s] I did not know why I should waste my time with it, anyway. Then it was of no use. Now I wish I had spent more time learning English and taken my studies more seriously. But what did it matter at that time? Who could then foresee the future? Who could know what would happen to Russia and to us?"

How did state-endorsed constructions of gender make it possible for Lidiia to move to Novosibirsk in the first place? This is not only a question of ethnographic importance; it also involves attention to the irrevocable power of decisions made. Every decision lays the ground for further ones. Every decision entails the future.

To some extent, the possibility of education Lidiia was offered needs to be seen in the light of Soviet state models of gender and government programs. In the mid-1970s when Lidiia lived in Novosibirsk, Soviet programs encouraged the active participation of women in industry and labour. Indeed, the state-endorsed ideal of the "Soviet Woman"—the idea that women were not separated from men but should be their equals in economic and social relations—was deeply integrated in the gendered fabric of Soviet everyday life. Born in the revolution and the civil war, the Soviet Woman became the leading, pan-national ideal for all women workers (Clements, 1985: 220). Spending her days toiling in factories, plowing fields of gigantic proportions or fighting bravely in wars, the Soviet Woman was deeply imbricated in, and shaped, the gendered fabric of Soviet life. Indeed, her history has been written as one of conspicuous achievement, in which prestige was won through the heroic performance of work ("Heroines of the Soviet Union," "Heroines of Socialist Labour" and all the other heroines of the five-year plans),[15] together with the display of modesty, courage, boldness and dedication (see Bridger,

Kay and Pinnick, 1996; Clements, 1985: 220). Thus linked in its political origins to a revolutionary ethos and ideal of economic emancipation and work, labour was the key category of femininity. Ethnographic records, too, imply that Koriak women had professional expertise and were engaged in wage-labour, just like men (Antropova, 1971: 192). It was in this context of state encouragement and programs that Lidiia was offered the opportunity to prosper and learn. But then she decided that this was not the kind of education she wanted.

Marriage

Back in Ossora, she met again one of her former schoolmates, Oleg. It was not long before they decided to marry. Their families agreed. The marriage, Lidiia explained, was a joyous occasion. Out of white reindeer furs, one aunt sewed her a dress, and after the wedding registration her mother drew a Greek cross with reindeer blood on the couple's foreheads. Many of their relatives attended the wedding. There were crisp cakes, cold dishes of chopped fruit, vegetables and fish, seal fat, fish soup and even some frozen reindeer brain and marrow. Lidiia said that she thought that she and Oleg were off to a good start.

And so it seemed. They had no difficulty in finding an apartment in Ossora. One of Lidiia's maternal uncles, who had worked all his life as a herder in one of Ossora's state-run reindeer brigades, had obtained occupancy of an apartment nearby the house in which Lidiia's mother lived. Preferring a life in the tundra to, as he said, the "dull" life in the village, he did not find it hard to offer the newlywed couple his one-room suite. In light of the notorious housing shortages in the Soviet Union, and the local conditions that privileged Russian and Ukrainian families in obtaining adequate housing, the couple felt lucky indeed. Unlike other young Koriak (and sometimes Russian) couples who were forced to spend the first years of their marriage in their parent's home, they had in no time at all a place of their own.

In the beginning their marriage went well. Lidiia worked as a clerk behind the counter in one of Ossora's collectively owned food stores, while Oleg earned his living as a machinist. In Ossora these were standard work activities for many Koriak women and men I met. Because Koriaks are considered to be bumbling know-nothings who are inept at technical skills, they are frequently denied work or get poorly paid jobs. Many Koriak women and men I knew find it hard to challenge the insidious indications of this argument and retreat either into quiet despair or silence. But Lidiia and Oleg were content making their living with what they knew best. They earned the money they needed, and they could even afford to buy a refrigerator. Two years into their marriage Lidiia gave birth to a daughter, and three years later their second daughter was born. Lidiia felt that her life was going well.

He was, she thought, also satisfied. Since the beginning of their lives Oleg had doted on his daughters; he played with them and took them out to fish and camp. They also adored him. But slowly fissures appeared. He appeared discontented, tense, worked-up. His answers grew short, and he ceased spending much time with his family. Lidiia remembered how he began to talk about wanting a son. He loved his daughters, he said, but only with a son could he go hunting and explain machinery and other technical devices. He also complained about the narrow space in the apartment. There was not enough room for everybody in the family, he said. He began to stay away from home; he also began to drink.

To allay her husband's yearning for a son, Lidiia decided to give in to her husband's desire and complaints. The couple adopted a six-month-old boy.[16] Lidiia also hoped that she could persuade Oleg again to take care of his daughters and spend more time at home. Although she had never been entirely sure if adopting one more child was truly a good idea, she remained hopeful that in the end everything would work out. She expressed some of her doubts about the rightness of their decision in explaining, "I gave in to Oleg because I wanted to do him a favour. I hoped he would come back to the family."

Hanging On

But although Oleg very much cared for his infant son, he continued to drink. He also continued to stay out all night long. Sometimes, bingeing with his friends from the village, he would not come home for days. Lidiia grew weary and flew quickly into a rage. The children either withdrew into silence, or threw fits like the ones they had seen. In the end, after several years of alcohol and hard drinking, Oleg collapsed dead on the wooden staircase of the house. Although Lidiia, Oleg's neighbours and close kin explained that his death had been imminent ("the way he was drinking he was bound to die"), it still came as a shock. Not allowing anyone to lay blame on her husband or his friends, Lidiia explained, "He was tired. He was fed up." And she continued to explain that he simply had not wanted to live in this world anymore, "Look at us! Look at how we live! Do you call that a life? Even the dogs here live better than we do." And the worst thing, she added, is that only a few believed in the possibility of betterment or could muster even a bit of hope.

Among Lidiia's family and friends, Oleg's death sparked different and contradictory responses. Members of Lidiia's family each helped in their own way. Her mother and eldest sister, who lived together in a neighbouring house, cooked for Lidiia's children. Lidiia's brother, who spent much time—often weeks on end—at their mother's place, helped the children with their homework and school assignments; he also took them fishing and took Lidiia's son on hikes in the tundra. Lidiia's youngest sister showed her nieces how to use make-up, how to alter skirts so that they looked like new and talked with them about contraception and various means of birth control.[17] Lidiia gratefully appreciated the loyalty and efforts of her kin, but she also began to express some anger and dissatisfaction about the pressure she experienced from them. For all the help they were able to give and willing to provide, they also began to express opinions that Lidiia was losing her footing in life, that she was becoming irresponsible with her children and unresponsive to criticism, that her behaviour was erratic and her changes in mood hard to bear. Lidiia's neighbours agreed. In the house they could hear her scream and yell, they complained. And often they would hear strange sounds, as if something was falling with a thud. Maybe Lidiia was drunk? To this question Lidiia only sharply replied that her neighbours were drinking as well, she had known that for a long time, and they should keep their noses in their own affairs. And other friends could go to hell if they really thought that she had turned into a slovenly and bedraggled woman.

This was not the kind of answer her family and neighbours expected, and they grew increasingly impatient with her. But Lidiia's snappishness and fits of anger were not exclusively fueled by her husband's death and her feelings of dependence on her kin. They also need to be seen in the larger context of economic and social changes that have exacerbated life in Koriak communities to such an extent that I heard many Koriak women and men frequently lamenting the weariness and gloom of village life. Increasing poverty, food shortages, and the daily strains of uncertainty press down on communities. Alcoholism and high blood pressure kills women and men before they reach their mid-40s; and one of the biggest problems with which communities struggle is how to avoid the violent deaths of many young men who die on, or because of, drinking sprees.[18] But while it is certainly true that alcoholism is a problem in Koriak communities, it is equally true that it is also a problem in the wider Russian society.[19] The problem is that Koriaks are part of a prejudiced discourse in which Whites view drinking as a serious sign of the loss of traditional Koriak "culture," and of the inability of indigenous peoples to adopt to social change (for comparison see Povinelli, 1993: 94).

Frustration

Together with other Koriak women and men, Lidiia also experienced the sharpening of poverty and financial worries in the mid-1990s when many workers in Ossora did not receive salaries for three or four months at a time, and others, including Lidiia, went unpaid for as much as eight or nine months. But she also felt fortunate that she had been able to keep her job. In Russia, one serious consequence of market reforms, a renewed emphasis on economic initiative, and private entrepreneurship has been chronic unemployment, the consequences of which, in Ossora, are directly experienced by those who worked in former state-run economic structures and institutions. At the same time, runaway inflation and the failure of government to agree on charges for even such essential products as bread and tea had spiraled prices to previously unimaginable heights and left many in dire poverty and without any economic possibility. In this context, women are generally acknowledged as one group that are seriously disadvantaged by this process of economic restructuring. Women have been hit much harder than men by unemployment, and are expected to suffer severely as mass layoffs in the industrial sector become an inevitable step in the privatization of state enterprises. For Lidiia this fear was doubled by structures of regional inequality that disadvantaged Koriak women and men. Her daily work—heaving countless kilo-heavy sacks of sugar, flour, barley, rice and grains into the storeroom behind the counter, lifting parcels of sugar, coffee, tea and cans of bottled fruit and greens onto high racks and shelves, and arranging glasses of conserves such as tomatoes and hot peppers into artful pyramids—still gave her an income, albeit one that was rarely paid. The work also exhausted her. She was frustrated. In the evening hours she began to stay behind with her colleagues, spending increasing portions of her salary on drink.

Thus, Lidiia's drinking increased. She also worried that, maybe, she lacked the strength to keep her family together. This concern was particularly stirred by the fact that her eldest daughter, Zina, had turned into a difficult and self-willed teen. When Zina was approximately 15 years old she decided to leave home and move in with her boyfriend, a young Koriak man from a neighbouring village. Thus she moved to his settlement; the couple had no money, and lived in a small, tin-roofed debilitated shack close to the shore. Rumours flew to Ossora that Zina's husband did not allow his wife to leave the hut;

that she had to stay all day long with his grandmother who did not speak Russian (and Zina spoke no Koriak); that Zina looked disheveled and starved; and that she was pregnant. Lidiia became angry; communication between mother and daughter ceased. In public Lidiia voiced her vexation in strong words: "He is handsome, but he is also fucking nuts. I cannot see how she throws her life away. She doesn't go anywhere. All day she sits at home. Waiting for him. She lives in dirt. He ruins her life."

But in spite of her public display of rage and lack of forbearance, Lidiia was not the tough-minded parent she seemed. She began to blame herself for allowing the situation to erode the way it had. She troubled herself with questions of why she could not take care of her children well enough and why their father had to die. She also thought about the ways in which she could improve her situation. Should she leave Ossora and move to another place? Or become a street-trader, open her own kiosk where she would sell clothing, cosmetics and other articles?[20] In the end, however, she dismissed these options as foolish and absurd. They were unrealistic because she did not have the money to carry them out. And this fact was part of the problem, she said. Indeed, it had created the problems between her and Zina in the first place. How would she have been able to provide some space for the couple? She did not have the money to buy a new place. And, of course, she could understand that Zina wanted to leave home because she had no room of her own, that she was fed up with taking care of her younger brother all the time only because her mother could not afford to keep her son in daycare, that she wanted to go out with boys. Which teen in Ossora didn't? But she also thought about the fact that Zina was young. She wanted Zina to make her decisions carefully and without haste. She didn't want her to miss any opportunities, didn't want her to live in poverty, to end up without money or an education. It was enough that it had happened to her, why should Zina be affected by it? But now, look what she did? Fifteen years old, a drop-out from school, pregnant and without any visibly worthwhile future. Lidiia was both worried and enraged. But in the end Lidiia's concerns could not affect Zina's decision. Zina had moved out.

For what it is worth, Lidiia's open condemnations of Zina's actions did not mean that she refused to assist her daughter when she asked for help. When Zina was seven months pregnant, she left her husband and decided to return home. Lidiia offered to clear out one corner of the apartment so Zina and the newborn could stay. And that is what she did.

Love

As Lidiia found it increasingly difficult to hold her life together, she also incurred the anger of her kin. In 1994 a Russian racketeer, Dimitrii, was Lidiia's lover. Dimitrii was handsome and young; he was also aggressive and bold. Unwilling to put up with his illegal business practices and the bragging of his friends, his mother had thrown him out of her house, not caring about his whereabouts. Dimitrii had walked straight to Lidiia's place. This situation was quite disturbing to her family, who expected her to be more temperate and reliable. Her children complained that they were often not allowed into the apartment's only room but were forced to stay in the kitchen or hallway. They sought solace in slighting remarks and sneered in rage and scorn at both adults. Lidiia's sisters expressed their contempt for her lovers, and said if she would continue to act like a promiscuous woman she would soon be on her own. Her brother slowly turned his back on her, and explained that he could not understand what had gotten into her. Lidiia's mother remained silent.

Lidiia's romance with Dimitrii was a romance of ambiguity. Initially, Lidiia said, she took him as a lover because, truly, she was fed up with the depressing conditions of her life, that what she needed was a change and a lover was good for just that. But then, Dimitrii continued to stay at Lidiia's place for weeks on end. She prepared him meals and bought vodka, cigarettes and hard-to-come-by luxury foods such as butter and cheese. But although she lived with him she refused to take care of his laundry, invite his friends or keep her house clean for him in a special way. She was no maid, she said. She had no master.

But her argument did not bode well with some of the Koriak women who lived in Lidiia's immediate neighbourhood. Many of them, like Lidiia, were forced to raise their children without the help of husbands or former lovers; yet in contrast to her they lived in even more distressing conditions. There is a dark, damp, bunker-like place at the edge of the village; women without any form of support from kin or friends move here with their children. Because I knew some of these women well, I often visited them. They doubted Lidiia's concern for her children, saying that as a mother she should take better care of them. What, they challenged, had her lover to offer? That bit of fun he could provide was surely not enough to take him in. And on top of that, Lidiia even fed him. Why would she do that? To these questions Lidiia only piercingly replied that she had heard this all before, thank you very much, she was the one to make decisions in her

own life and anyway her children were not worse off than theirs. Sure Dimitrii stayed at her place, and although he was commanding and arrogant, she did not give in to all of his demands.

The different opinions swirling around Lidiia's affair draw attention to a regional pattern of power and meaning: as the sweethearts of non-Koriak men, Koriak women are often viewed as women of sexual docility and lewd passion. This is a kind of meaning that, in the Russian context, organizes much of its alleged insight around conventional ideas of economically marginalized women and, more internationally, helps to create a world in which Westerners (or other privileged groups and individuals) are not surprised, or even expect, that socially disfranchised women, including Koriak women in northern Russia, may become personal sexual slaves. It is in this context of such widely accepted truisms about "these kinds of women" in which the Russian writer's comment is set (I will return to the issue of dismissive Koriak women's interpretations of Lidiia's affair later). Yet to discuss the culturally specific and power-differentiated contours by which conventional knowledge about Koriak women is shaped, I turn to the interrelated discourses of "primitive nature" and femininity on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. In the following section the tone of my analysis must shift as I describe the political and ethnic contours of regional dominance and gender differentiation.

Difference

On Kamchatka's northeastern shore, common formulations about cultural difference and social hierarchy are framed in Koriak-Russian dialogue by drawing distinctions between the civilized and the wild *(dikii)*. Although most Koriak women and men who live in Ossora rarely spend time in the tundra (except in summer and in the fall when everybody—Russians and Koriaks alike—harvests berries or mushrooms) in the Russian imagination they are nevertheless linked to the ignorant and untamed. The Russian women and men I knew often warned me not to travel through the tundra, saying that wild animals would attack me. My reply that there were no particularly aggressive animals in the area[21] was frequently greeted with disbelief or mild smiles at my naïveté. The kind of advice I received was usually accompanied by explanations that Koriak women and men "still sleep on fur" (that is, reindeer hides), and "eat raw flesh" and "rotten fish heads" (*kislye golovki*). It was at this point that I began to think about the comments and explanations that should prevent me from traveling through the tundra in the context of cultural differentiation and boundary-making. Fur, flesh and rottenness—from a vantage point outside the tundra the imagery of raw nature truly infests White-Koriak relations along the northeastern shore.

Although Koriak women and men do not easily shrug off the negative characterizations of their Russian and Ukrainian neighbours, the terms of these interpretations do not go unchallenged. In being associated with the wild, Koriak women and men are not at a loss for words. They often choose to turn these accusations around; their strategy is one that involves transforming the rhetoric of primitivity into the rhetoric of knowledge. The Koriak women and men I knew made fun of Russian women and men who "do not know how to dress in the tundra" and thus constantly complain about the cold; about Russian women "who walk with high heels in the tundra" whereupon they then cannot walk but instead dangerously stumble along, and who shriek when they hear stories about "wild animals" such as bears. They emphasize, too, that tundra places as spaces of living require forms of knowledge that can be claimed as expert knowledge in the context of White-Koriak social relations. Consider reindeer herding, for example. In a world in which the physical and spiritual proximity between reindeer and Koriak women and men is of fundamental significance for the existence of humans, reindeer are at the centre of this world. Self-reliant as to harsh weather conditions and human-made disaster, they are largely self-producing. Yet to sustain the capacity of reindeer herds, animals have to be cared for. Reindeer herders check on their animals every day. They know where animals graze, how many animals are ill, which animals feel weak, how many heifers will calf in the spring, what the chances are for calves to survive and so forth. If necessary, a herder will look for hours on end to find one lost animal. Herders also know which reindeer are well suited to carry baggage and pull sleds. And they debate the number and tentative strength of animals before they decide on a kill. These are forms of knowledge, Koriak women and men explain, that also their Russian and Ukrainian neighbours depend on to live well in the northern peninsula. Yet in contrast to the latter, for Koriak women and men these forms of knowledge do not invoke a threatening nature but involve familiarity with animals and the land.

The cultural bias expressed in White regional conversations about Koriak women and men as simple, primitive and wild is only one component in the discourse of cultural relations at Kamchatka's northeastern shore. A second dimension emerges when the alleged lack of propriety and cultivation of Koriaks and the deval-

uation of women comes together in images of Koriak women as racially deformed or as submissive women who need not be convinced to spend amorous and sexually defined time with men. This recognition was powerfully impressed on me when I met a Russian biologist who had hiked the peninsula up and down to produce a book on its bird life. Literally within the first minutes of our acquaintance, and without further ado, he asked me if I also took the view that Koriak women are "physically bad-looking." "Their necks sink in their shoulders," he explained, and "their protruding lips are clearly markers of another race." But the most memorable incident that pointed to the entrapment of Koriak women as willing sexual servants in the double-crossed discourses of cultural difference and gender was when another ethnographer and I were invited by two local newspaper reporters to give an interview on our work in northern Kamchatka. While we were finishing up the interview one reporter decided to feature a picture of us ("as a joint venture, so to speak") on the front page. For the picture, however, he asked me to sit on my colleague's lap; I refused. The man began to press for me to sit on his lap. I refused again. After some quarreling back and forth the reporter ended the argument by saying, "You are just not like a Koriak woman." I tensed at this, but no one seemed to think much of it. After all, this comment only reflected what nearly everybody thought.

Here, however, let me hasten to clarify one important issue before I move on to explore how Russian-centred notions of femininity are extended into Koriak women's lives. I am not arguing here that Koriak women and men consider all White women and men in Ossora with the same insolence and disdain, as if the latter were a homogenous group. Some of the Koriak women and men I knew were good friends with their Russian neighbours, and they helped one another by sharing food and, if they were younger women, cosmetics and clothes. They also (albeit not very often) visited each other to party, dance or play cards. But in the broader picture of Koriak-Russian relations, Koriaks and Russians stuck to themselves and associated rarely with each other. In this sense, I have shown how categories of cultural difference are a site of critical engagement with social hierarchy.

The intertwining of cultural difference and naturalized hierarchy is only one set of meanings in which to explain Lidiia's story. Recalling her words that she does not consider her White lover as her master makes it a little less possible to assume that she fully accepts the terms in which the power of Whites is set. Lidiia does not see herself as the docile lover and sexual servant of a Russian racketeer. Although she cooks meals for the man she lives with, allows him to sleep in the only bed and takes care of his comfort, she is not overwhelmed by his power. Yet while her insistence on her own (albeit limited) autonomy offers a context that allows us to see why Lidiia is not (entirely) part of the sexual docility with which White men frame Koriak women, it does not entirely explain the domestic dimensions of the writer's comment. To explore these dimensions, I must, once more, return to the politicized context of gender in Soviet Russia and its concomitants in Russia today.

One much-commented on feature of the order of gender in contemporary Russian life is the bias that women are expected to carry the burden of domestic labour.[22] Indeed, in contemporary analyses one key concern is to examine how and why women are expected to perform the myriad chores of housekeeping: cooking, cleaning, mending and caring for children. These studies are not satisfied with exposing the "terrible weight of the double burden," of the combination of domestic and familial obligations that have been ascribed (with the support of the state) to women; they are also interested in how these assignments are involved in the creation of feminine subject formations. To some extent, feminist scholars (Clements, 1985; Kay, 1997) suggest, the return of the feminine can be read as one reaction against the idea of the Soviet Woman; that is, the public endorsement and appreciation of feminine values.

As one response to the notion of the Soviet Woman, then, hackneyed stereotypes of women as fragile, home keeping, and family minded make headway in newspaper columns and public behaviour and talk. Along with a renewed emphasis on the "essentially feminine" (Kay, 1997: 81) has come a public endorsement and affirmation of traditionally restrained notions of femininity. But while the labours of the house and the conspicuous display of beauty, freshness and the prestige granted through fashion are imperative in the ceremonial display of femininity, they are also an important element in gender boundary maintenance: that is, in setting female and male worlds apart.

Yet why does Lidiia's brother agree with the Russian writer?

In contemporary life, young and middle-aged Koriak men—like many White men—use claims of a bold and aggressive sexuality to establish male power and reputations. Yet at the same time, marked as black and as part of the "wild," they also enter into racialized discourses and are often humiliated in front of Russian men. These experiences are painful and can be destructive, yet they also encourage the idea that male strength is linked to expressions of sexual assertion. This common under-

standing makes it possible for many younger Koriak men to transform their "discursive" impotence in interethnic relations to sexual prowess at home. Because such notions are supported by White men, they also accrue additional political meaning.

But this strategy of transforming humiliation into strength is not one of Koriak men's own making; it is also one that has been, perhaps unwittingly, endorsed by the state. Let us return, for a moment, to the experience of the *internat*, of Soviet residential-school type education. As in the 1930s and 1940s, this education was imposed on all Koriak children, the majority of women and men around and below 50 years of age lived for 10 months a year in the *internat*. Although these government programs and interventions were not intended to create distinctions defined by gender, they created gendered distinctions to the extent that Koriak men were encouraged to assume authoritative roles in their families and vis-à-vis female kin. This is not the kind of gender segregation Koriak women and men elders describe. Although they explain that they knew divisions of gender in connection with household tasks and raising children, they also point to the fact that both women and men were quite capable of performing each other's tasks. In particular, Koriak women elders reprimand young Koriak men for behaving in boisterous and assuming ways. Theirs, they say, should be a behaviour of respect and consideration, not of joining acts of female humiliation and male self-admiration.

And Dignity

Many Koriak women like Lidiia have no choice but to deal with the issues of difference and the conventions of gender in relation to both regional inequalities and local male authority. They are not demure; even the most shy offered criticisms and ironic remarks. Their comments make it less possible to assume that such assumptions are stable.

In the summer of 1994, what had only been rumoured in Ossora for several months, came true: a bar was soon to open its doors. Much anticipated, this was a noteworthy event in Ossora. Although cheap stand-up *pivnoj*s (beer-halls) had sprawled across Russia, Ossora had never housed such a place. Neither had it a *dom kultury* (literally "house of culture"),[23] a gussied-up counter at which alcoholic drinks were served. But for the young Russian man who opened the bar, and the customers who frequented it, the bar was not a marker of decadence but one of new middle-class aspirations, a sign to map the new Russia of money and enjoyment onto Ossorian space. It was part of the desire to participate in the "new Russia" and to capitalize on a peculiar moment in its history.

Asked to work as daily help in the bar, Lidiia was hesitant to take the job. To be sure, most of all it would have meant more money. Maybe she would be able to buy a larger apartment? Maybe she could afford to buy some clothes for her children, and something for Zina's baby? But maybe she would fall even deeper into drink and despair? Would people begin to think that she was low-minded and risqué? Would she, in the end, prove them right by becoming unkempt and promiscuous? On the one hand, the offer was seductive enough for her to give it some serious thought. On the other hand it would associate her, even more so than before, with uncouth behaviour and the stigma of drinking.

Her fears were plausible and quite judicious. Apart from being a marker of middle-class aspiration in Ossora, the bar is also a threshold space, lying seductively, yet within easy reach, in the zone between pleasure and degeneration. Lidiia was quite aware of these meanings. I remember one particular evening in which she struggled hard to find some answers to her questions. Wavering back and forth between making the decision whether or not to take the job, she asked everybody she met what she should do. Yet she felt unable to make the decision.

In the end Lidiia decided not to take the job. She explained it would not be good for her reputation, and her family would probably take it quite badly too. More importantly, in the long run it might harm her children. Although her life might be filled with poverty and not much to go by, she also worked to craft a personal agency involving dignity and pride. For that was what it meant to be a person.

A Hopeless Case?

Here, of course, I have been describing only one Koriak woman's story in one area at one moment of time. Yet Lidiia's story is not a solitary example of a Koriak woman's social predicaments; nor is it a particularly exceptional illustration of the interconnections between gender, ethnic difference and social disadvantage on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. I could invoke at least a half-dozen examples of women who lived in structurally comparable situations and have made choices, including romances with White men as lovers, similar to Lidiia. But instead of centring on the economic issues and social disadvantages that engaged all Koriak women I knew, I have tried to show social processes from the perspective of one woman's idiosyncratic positioning within wider regional webs of inequality and power. In this way, I have diverged from most other accounts on the Russian Far East in my approach to cultural analysis. By examining one woman's

difficult relationship with dominant, Russian-centred models of femininity and primitivity, government policies and social change, I hope to open up an alternative view to post-Soviet analyses that focus on frameworks of nationality and cultural identity. Such analyses can easily isolate the people represented from the world of readers in a dichotomy that presumes a false homogeneity on both sides. In contrast, Lidiia's story makes room for the recognition of one person's individual desires. Attention to individual stories can bring local issues into the centre of wider affairs.

The title of this article has taken its cue from the writer's comment. As regional (and national) configurations of gender and cultural inequality support the position of men as authoritative judges of morally commanding sexual and domestic standards, women find it hard to challenge the conventions in which such standards are set. In telling Lidiia's story I have invoked a common world, full of cultural stereotypes, social hierarchies and political disadvantage. Because Koriak men frequently support such norms, these kinds of assertions gain additional political meaning. As long as Koriak men agree with commentaries such as the writer's, "impotence" in interethnic relations is transformed into sexual prowess at home. This is a world which inspires a variety of personal and political agendas. Instead of condemning Lidiia as "hopeless" or morally inept, it might be more helpful to show her own positioning and stakes in this matter. To argue for recognition and respect for a welter of divergent agendas, as Tsing (1993: 17) so perceptively remarks, is not the same as a naïve endorsement of cultural (and political) diversity. The point is to specify the political challenges at hand.

In this context of struggle, however, a different kind of gender differentiation is created as well. As Koriak women share the perspective of unruly women as morally debauched and domestically inept, they join men in the project to tame women into female propriety and domesticity. I think specifically of the way Lidiia criticizes her daughter in similar terms in which she was criticized. This is unusual terrain for an anthropology of marginalized minorities and anti-colonial struggle.[24] A great deal of research on indigenous minorities is content to show the struggle of and social disadvantage experienced by women from the perspective of community. Ethnographic studies of gender have rarely asked questions about the social dynamics in which internal gender differentiations among women can emerge. Yet a central challenge for feminist anthropology is to position the social statements of cultural subjects politically. Raising the issue of gender differentiation calls attention to community formation and hierarchy, along with attention to gender as both an imaginative construct and a point of diverging positionings. It also involves attention to the social and political possibilities as well as constraints inherent in existent gender configurations.

Part of the problem for Koriak women on Kamchatka's northeastern shore is that—until now—they had few social possibilities to deal with issues of poverty in a way that they consider promising and fair. As long as Russia's contemporary struggle for democracy, economic growth and an international identity uses familiar colonial logics to refuse political recognition to indigenous minorities; as long as cultural communities find that Russia presents laws for legal and cultural equality but equality is restrained by the continuation of regional structures of power; and as long as political standards privilege national assumptions of gender and cultural difference, women may find it hard to offer challenges to formations of political and gender inequality. In this context, women's own agendas find no clearly articulated political voice. Their opposing strategies exist, instead, in unspoken protest and fleeting refusals of men's desires. As women are differentially positioned in relation to both regional and gendered authority, throwing out irreverent remarks can become a form of back talk against these various forms of authority. Thus, Lidiia did not dare to publicly challenge the writer. But, later, when I asked her what she thought about him she unambiguously answered that she thought him "stupid" and "arrogant."

In giving Lidiia the last word, I wish to stress that although women see few possibilities to respond to commentaries that describe them in derogatory terms, the terms of such remarks do not go unchallenged. Lidiia's own comment, I hope, gives the reader a sense that women try to carve out dignity and self-respect. Here I can only begin to break up the moral monolith created by the discourse of Russian-centred femininity by showing one woman's story. Holding on to Lidiia's words, I believe it would be misleading and wrong to see her as "hopeless" and "already gone." In this article I have offered little evidence to support an analysis of Lidiia as defying or even "resisting." But neither is her story rooted in passive acceptance.

Notes

1 Between 1992 and 1994, I conducted field work in northern Kamchatka for 14 months. Here I am especially indebted to Lidiia who allowed me so generously to enter her life. Research in northern Kamchatka was funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and a research grant from the Centre for Development, Technol-

ogy, and Society at McGill University. I would also like to thank Pauline Aucoin for her gracious invitation to present parts of Lidiia's story in a session entitled "Gender and the Politics of Culture" at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society in Toronto in 1998. The story of another Koriak woman, structurally somewhat similar to Lidiia's, was presented in the anthropology departmental speaker series at York University. I would like to express my thanks to Ken Little for his invitation, and to faculty and students for their insightful questions and support.

2 Videotapes, especially pirated videotapes, arrived in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s. Hollywood-style romances are particularly successful; Ossora's market is flooded with horror films and pornography.

3 Important volumes on issues of gender in the post-Soviet context include Buckley (1992); Marsh (1996); and Buckley (1997).

4 Thus, for example, anthropologists have used positioned storytelling as one kind of discursive practice to disrupt the power of homogenizing analytical styles (see, for example, Abu-Lughod, 1993; Tsing, 1993). Ridington (1990), Cruikshank (1998) and Goulet (1998) have shown the relevance of this discussion for northern anthropology. In a somewhat different vein, Cruikshank (1990) has also shown how storytelling is one important means of calling attention to the linked formation of identity and community organization. Other scholars have used storytelling as one means to describe individuals' creativity and struggle (see, for example, Behar, 1993; Cole, 1991; Ries, 1997).

5 For an in-depth critique of Soviet social science narratives of economic advancement and progress see Slezkine (1994: 323-335) and Grant (1995).

6 For a critique of Soviet anthropology see, for example, Vakhtin, 1994. For critical analysis of ethnographic representations see Batia'nova and Kalabanov, 1998.

7 My generalizations here, however, miss important exceptions. These are dealt with in Balzer, 1993; Anderson, 1996; and Kerttula, 1997.

8 I have to thank Alona Yerofima for reminding me of the importance of this point.

9 See, for example, Trinh, 1989; Spivak, 1993; hooks, 1989; and Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991.

Indigenous scholars and scholars of minority groups have long argued against the use of any form of biographical and personal information that may lead to an exposure of private life (for example, Bentz, 1997; Allen, 1998). They call into question the conventions and practices of anthropologists that often use individual's lives and stories to demonstrate the idiosyncrasies and limits of dominant cultural categories and cultural formations of power. They rightfully argue, too, that anthropologists feature private lives in great detail without paying attention to the negative repercussions such descriptions might have for the person described. From this criticism, then, detailed descriptions of individuals are one form of cultural analysis that is potentially hurtful and offensive.

Other indigenous scholars, however, have suggested that life histories and individuals' stories are a good place for cultural analysis. For example, writer Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (1998) takes issue with the idea that one actually needs to be native to understand some of the issues and complexities that involve native life. She argues that stories of individuals may further communication and understanding because they touch readers on a more personal level than distant academic descriptions.

10 In the Soviet Union apartments were not privately rented by property owners but distributed and run under the auspices of the state. Usually a person had to apply to the local authorities to be eligible for an apartment. The waiting lists were long and one could wait for several years.

11 Ossora was the only settlement on the northeastern shore where there were cars. Two roads in Ossora offered the only possibility for driving, with one street leading to the settlement Karaga, approximately six kilometres to the south.

12 The term "minority," here, is my own awkward positioning of Koriak women and men in broader ethnographic discourses but also government practices and regional administrative divisions. A history of political inequality has labeled indigenous peoples in Russia, such as the Koriaks, as the "Small Peoples of the North" (*malye narody severa*). Koriaks were called a *narodnost'*; politically too insignificant to be offered constitutional influence and weight; numerically too small to be called a nation.

13 The Koriak population of Ossora consists of resettled Koriaks from four different villages. The village Kichiga was one of the first settlements to be closed on Kamchatka's northeastern shore. Closed in 1956, residents were resettled to either Tymlat (a village north of Ossora) or Ossora. In 1974, it was decided that the village of Anapka (north of Ossora and Tymlat) should be closed. The water, it was said, was too shallow during the tide; freighters and other cargo ships could not anchor in Anapka's harbour. Its population had lived there for approximately 20 years when they were relocated to the respective villages of Il'pyr' (north of Anapka), Tymlat or Ossora. Their first dislocation had taken place in 1952 when the old village of Anapka was looked at as economically non-viable because it was too far away from the shore. The people of Rekinniki were relocated more often than anybody else in the region, namely, on three occasions. Until 1947 their village was located in the northwestern tundra near the river Pustoe. The population still lived in tents; transport was difficult and goods needed to be carried to and from the shore across the land. In that year villagers were resettled to a newly built Rekinniki, once again close to the river Pustoe but this time only 12 kilometres from the ocean. Ten years later, in 1957, the villagers were moved again, this time to a location directly on the coast. This village was closed in 1980; everybody was moved to either Tymlat or Ossora.

14 Usually translated as "boarding school," the term *internat* describes a type of residential school system for indigenous peoples in Russia. In northern Kamchatka—again, as elsewhere in the Russian North—children were forcefully removed from their parents and families to grow up in educational environments of state-endorsed models of ideology. Housing, clothing and education were free for northern indigenous peoples, yet so was—as many argue—their alienation from prior generations and their ways of life. I refer readers interested in these issues to the analyses of Vakhtin (1994) and Bloch (1996).

15 The idea of the "Heroine Mother" was also part of this rhetoric, but it was never allowed to take precedence over toughness and bravery as female values.

16 Lidiia and Oleg adopted their son from a young Koriak woman who had had an affair with a Russian man.

17 Issues of birth control are important community concerns at the northeastern shore. In particular young women and teenage girls suffer from and express themselves about the problems unwanted pregnancies can bring.

18 See also Pika's (1993) research on suicide among northern indigenous peoples in Russia. I refer readers interested in the social conditions of living in the Russian North to the work of Pika, Dahl and Larsen (1995).

19 See, for example, White (1996), and Rethmann (1999).

20 As new economic institutions and business practices develop in Russia, entrepreneurship has become an attractive economic means for women who find it difficult to find wage labour or set up their own companies. If they succeed in becoming entrepreneurs, they are usually limited to the service sector, or textile and fashion businesses. On this issue, see Bruno (1997) and Humphrey (1995).

21 Except—maybe and only sometimes—for bears. But that is a very, very different story.

22 There is a rich literature on this issue. For issues of domesticity and the "double burden" in Russia, see, for example, Attwood (1996); Goscilo (1993); Koval (1995); Kay (1997); and Waters (1992). For historical analyses see Clements (1994) and Dunham (1976). For an analysis of the tensions between traditional female roles of docility and recent economic desires see Ries (1997).

23 A *dom kultury* is a place in which people would conduct political meetings and engage in social activities. The house of culture was a widespread institution in Soviet Russia; indeed, every village I visited on the northeastern shore had one.

24 The way in which I have represented this issue should not divert attention from the fact that cultural homogeneity, non-differentiation and so forth, can be powerful political and strategic tools to force the issue of minority status into government debates and public recognition.

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