“Healers of Wounded Souls”: The Crisis of Private Life in Soviet Literature, 1944–1946*

Anna Krylova
University of South Carolina

What a man needs is a home. (Leonid Leonov, *Golden Carriage*)[1]

Introduction

A clean white tablecloth covers a big square table. A loaf of cut bread, a vase with flowers, a milk jug, a sugar bowl, decanters with vodka and cognac, empty plates and plates with huge pieces of cake, white cups and saucers decorated with golden bands, little glasses for vodka—all clutter the table, over which a tall shiny samovar towers. A large chandelier throws light on the wall, hung with photographs. The people depicted in the photo are sitting in a semicircle around the table. The photographer from the Soviet illustrated magazine *Ogonek (Vim)* captured the Korchagin family just as they clinked their glasses to welcome Nikolai Sergeevich Korchagin home from the front. He has taken his customary place at the center of the table, in the chair with the tall, carved back—a chair in which no one has been allowed to sit for three long years, according to the caption under the picture. The empty chair at the family table was an ever-present reminder of absence in the Korchagin family. Nikolai Sergeevich's wife, Raisa Dmitrievna, and his mother, Elizaveta Nikolaevna, are sitting to his right and left. Their pining for and thinking about Nikolai Sergeevich are materialized in the orderly, clean apartment, in clean civilian clothes, in the white tablecloth, in the flowers on the table, in the loaf of bread cut by the hands of caring women. His niece Klavdiia stands to reach out to the others' glasses. Sergei Semenovich, Nikolai's father, is toasting his son: “You will live well, son, you have the right to it because you have fulfilled your duty to the motherland.” Everyone is smiling and gazing admiringly at Nikolai Sergeevich. They are about to clink their glasses to join the father's

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[1] Leonid Leonov, *Zolotaia kareta* [Golden carriage], in *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1961), 7:518; the play was first published in 1946.

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toast and to mark the reunification of the family. Family life, interrupted by the war, is reenacted.[2]

* * *

This image of the family reunited did not appear suddenly in 1945. As a dream about postwar normality and an expression of nostalgia for prewar private happiness, it occupied one of the central positions in the Party press, in army newspapers, in literature, and in soldiers' diaries and letters from the first days of hostilities.[3] During the final, victorious period of the war, however, the meaning of this image underwent a gradual change. While it still dominated the pages of newspapers, journals, and books in the immediate postwar years, it no longer represented a wish but, as in the August 1945 issue of *Ogonek,* aspired to capture the "real" itself. This suggested "reality" was, for most Soviet families, on the order of fantasy: after four years of war, victory was celebrated along with mourning for millions of the dead, wounded, mutilated, traumatized, and malnourished.

More than 9 million Soviet soldiers died on the battlefield, in hospitals, and in concentration camps or were classified as "missing," never to rejoin their families. Their surviving 12 million companions-in-arms began a mass return home, to the east, in 1945.[4] The liberated Soviet territories welcomed them with the horrors of starvation, deportation, and scorched-earth or "desert" policies that German and Axis troops carried out in Ukraine, Belorussia, the Crimea, the Northern Caucasus, and European Russia. Of the 73 million Soviet citizens under the occupation regime, 7 million were intentionally exterminated and 4 million died from hunger, disease, and lack of medical care. An-

[2] B. Repina and L. Rusanova, "Reportazh: Snova Doma," *Ogonek,* no. 31 (August 5, 1945), pp. 8–9; see also *Ogonek,* no. 9–10 (1945), cover, pp. 31, 44; "Ofitser Artillerii," *Ogonek,* no. 4 (1946), pp. 46–47; "Sem'ya Prusova," *Ogonek,* no. 8 (1946), p. 8; "Sem'ya Kamenshchika Orlova," *Ogonek,* nos. 10–11 (1946), pp. 18–19; "Zolotaya Svad'ba," *Ogonek,* no. 18 (1946), pp. 28–30; "Moya Sem'ya," *Sovetskaia Zhenshchina,* no. 1 (1946), p. 27; "Vozvrashchenie," *Pravda* (September 25, 1945).

[3] For example, see Il'ia Ehrenburg, "O Nenavisti," *Krasnaia Zvezda* (May 5, 1942); "Svet v Blindazhe," *Krasnaia Zvezda* (November 10, 1942); Konstantin Simonov, "Dni I Nochi," *Krasnaia Zvezda* (October 9, 1942); Leonid Sobolev, "Nevesta," in his *Zelenyi Luch: Rasskasy, Ocherki, Povesti* (Simferopl', 1942); *Poka Stuchit Serdtse: Dnevniki I Pis'ma Geroya Sovetskogo Soyusa Evgenii Rudnevoi* (Izd, 1995), pp. 162, 188; David Samoilov, *Pamyatnye Zapiski* (Moscow, 1995), p. 270.

[4] Over the course of the war, more than 34 million people served in the Soviet land, navy, and air forces; every second Soviet citizen who had been engaged in industrial or agricultural work before 1941 went to the front between 1941 and 1945. In 1945, the armed forces had close to 13 million people. See G. F. Krivosheev, "Ob itogakh statisticheskikh issledovanii poter' Vooruzhennykh sil SSSR," in *Liudskie Poteri SSSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine* [Human losses of the USSR during World War II], ed. R. B. Evdokimov (St. Petersburg, 1995), p. 74.

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other 5 million were deported to Germany as forced labor.[5] The human tragedy was reflected in land and stone. According to Soviet sources, the enemy destroyed fully or partially 31,850 factories and plants, 1,710 towns, more than 70 thousand villages, and 6 million buildings, leaving 25 million people homeless. The list was literally endless.[6]

The toll on the civilian area away from the fighting was less severe, but it was deeply marked by the wartime nevertheless. The death rate in 1942 was 50 percent higher than in 1941. In urban centers, the average working week rose to fifty-four to fifty-five hours without holidays. In several rural areas, officials reported "instances" of famine.[7] As a result, the number of premature deaths in the city and village caused by avitaminosis, emaciation, dystrophy, and overexertion reached 1.5 million.[8]

With 26 million dead, 25 million homeless, and 37 million away from their families and homes due to conscription, evacuation, and deportation, virtually every family in the Soviet Union had been directly affected by what became known as the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45. Virtually every individual had been involved in the war effort and was traumatized by the war experience. The likelihood that *Ogonek*'s Nikolai Korchagin would have returned to Moscow in 1945 alive and whole, and that his family would have been intact to reunite around the dinner table, was slim. Of 4.5 million prewar Muscovites, 1.5 million were evacuated, and 1.1 million went to the front, where every third person died.[9] Given that 18 million were wounded and mutilated at the front over the course of the war, men like Korchagin, if not dead, were very likely to be among these in 1945.[10]

[5] The 73 million people in the occupied territory constituted 37 percent of the prewar Soviet population estimated presently at 196.7 million. The number of civilian casualties estimated in recent works on the Great Patriotic War varies between 13 and 15 million. See M. V. Filimoshin, "Ob itogakh ischisleniia poter' sredi mirnogo naseleniia na okkupirovannoi territorii SSSR I RSFSR," in Evdokimov, ed., p. 126; A. K. Sokolov, "Metodologicheskie osnovy ischisleniia poter' naseleniia SSSR," in ibid., p. 19.

[6] G. Sorokin, "Novii pyatiletnii plan," *Oktiabr'*, nos. 7–8 (1946), p. 158; cf. Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Postwar Soviet Society: The 'Return to Normalcy,' 1945–1953," in *The Impact of World War II on the Soviet Union,* ed. Susan J. Linz (Totowa, N.J., 1985), pp. 135, 130; Alexander Werth, *Russia at War* (New York, 1964), p. 728.

[7] For a discussion of the historiography on wartime famine, see M. A. Vyltsan, "Zhertvy golodnogo vremeni," in Evdokimov, ed.

[8] O. M. Verbittskaia, "O nekotorykh osobennostiakh demograficheskogo razvitiia gorodskogo I sel'skogo naseleniia," in Evdokimov, ed., p. 150; V. F. Zima, "O smertnosti sel'skogo naseleniia v sovetskom tylu," in ibid., p. 163; John Barber and Mark Harrison, *The Soviet Home Front, 1941–1945: A Social and Economic History of the USSR in World War II* (London, 1991), p. 163. The 1.5 million do not include 1 million who died during the 900-day Leningrad blockade. See Barber and Harrison, p. 87.

[9] N. M. Aleshchenko, "O poteriakh naseleniia Moskvy," in Evdokimov, ed., p. 114; G. A. Kumanev, "Evakuatsiia naseleniia SSSR," in ibid., p. 143.

[10] Krivosheev, p. 77.

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The sharp disjunction between the revered image of the family reunited and the actual lives of millions of Soviet people came to focus in wartime and postwar literature, as well as in professional literary debates. In 1943, writers, literary critics, playwrights, and poets began to argue publicly that the image represented deep social anxieties about the postwar future. In their work, they approached the problem primarily from the perspective of the returning male veteran. The new hero of Socialist Realist literature was physically and psychologically mutilated. With limbs missing and faces mutilated, minds depressed or hysterical, men in the new Soviet novel cried in their hospital beds from helplessness, self-disgust, and the seeming impossibility of even imagining themselves part of normal family life.[11] The literature of the period is also characterized by silence about female trauma: it balanced troubled male personalities with physically whole and psychologically integrated women, eager to mother and share their vital energies.

Soviet writers elevated the traumatized soldier to a central position in wartime and postwar novels as part of their self-ascribed and publicly pronounced mission to heal the injuries to veterans' "souls." Addressing urgent social issues, Soviet literati articulated war trauma and attempted to reconcile mutilated bodies and minds with the image of family happiness depicted in the *Ogonek* photo.[12] This article examines the writers' healing mission as an intrinsically gendered undertaking, of different value to men and women—an undertaking that constituted a crucial moment in shaping the public history of the Soviet experience in World War II.[13]

[11] See Boris Polevoi, *Povest' o Nastoyashchem Cheloveke* (Moscow, 1947), p. 95; Vera Panova, *Sputniki* (Moscow, 1946), pp. 85–86, 174; Wanda Wasilewskaia, *Prosto lyubov'*, in her *Izbrannoe*, trans. Elena Usievich (Moscow, 1947), p. 200.

[12] For treatment of the memory of World War II in the postwar period, see Amir Weiner, "The Making of a Dominant Myth: The Second World War and the Construction of Political Identities within the Soviet Polity," *Russian Review* 55, no. 4 (October 1996): 638–60; Nina Tumarkin, *The Living and the Dead: The Rise and Fall of the Cult of World War II in Russia* (New York, 1994). Richard Stites, ed., *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1995) is one of the few works that deals with culture in wartime Russia. See also Werth; Vera S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (Durham, N.C., 1990), chap. 2; E. Yu Zubkova, *Obshchestvo I Reformy, 1945–1964* (Moscow, 1993), chap. 1; Vera S. Dunham, "Images of the Disabled, Especially the War Wounded, in Soviet Literature," in *The Disabled in the Soviet Union: Past and Present, Theory and Practice*, ed. William O. McCagg and Lewis H. Siegelbaum (Pittsburgh, Pa., 1989).

[13] The interrelationships among war, identity, and gender, in general, and cultural realities and their gendered aspects in the Second World War, in particular, have long been at the center of scholarly attention of historians of Germany and the United States. Compare Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," *American Historical Review* (April 1996), pp. 354–95; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the*

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Tseliteli Dush—"Soul-Healers"

At the Ninth Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers in February 1944, Olga Bergolts offered her new interpretation—enlightened by the war—of the Socialist Realist definition of a writer: "In these days of war I understand more and more the deep meaning of Stalin's definition of writers: engineers of people's souls. . . . Our effective work for peace as engineers of people's souls will also include the reconstruction of many people's souls." She called upon writers to help people find their places in peaceful life and to "doctor," to heal, the numerous injuries of the soul.[14]

Bergolts did not invent the notion of the writer as an expert and a caretaker of people's souls and minds. Rather, she drew on a venerable prerevolutionary Russian tradition of entrusting writers with a civic and spiritual duty. In times of personal or national turmoil, the educated classes of Russian society habitually turned to an admired and respected writer or poet for moral guidance and spiritual support.[15] Between the revolution and the Second World War, the Soviet state attempted to incorporate this tradition into its official ideology. Much effort was put into promoting the cult of literature to the emerging "reading masses" and into the creation of a narrative about the new Soviet Socialist Realist writer as educator, agitator, and "engineer" of people's souls.[16] Tens of thousands of letters written in the 1920s and 1930s by readers to popular Soviet writers—presently stored in the State Archive of Literature and Art—are testimony to the continuation and growth of this Russian tradition in the Soviet period.[17] Regardless of their age, gender, or attitudes toward Soviet power, readers and literati alike shared a belief in the writer's respon-

Cold War Era (New York, 1988); Margaret Randolph Higonnet, ed., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, Conn., 1987); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst, Mass., 1984); Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939–1945* (Princeton, N.J., 1978).

[14] Olga Bergolts, "Velikie Temy Sovremennosti," *Literatura I Iskusstvo,* no. 7 (1944).

[15] Compare David Joravsky, *Russian Psychology: A Critical History* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 119–23, 182, 245. Nor is the notion specific to Russia; on the reconceptualization of the mission of the writer in post–World War I England, see Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," in her *Common Reader* (New York, 1925); Seth Koven, "Remembering and Dismemberment: Crippled Children, Wounded Soldiers, and the Great War in Great Britain," *AHR* (October 1994), pp. 1167–1202.

[16] Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader: Social and Aesthetic Contexts of the Reception of Soviet Literature* (Stanford, Calif., 1997), pp. 22–32; cf. Joravsky; Regine Robin, *Socialist Realism: An Impossible Aesthetic* (Stanford, Calif., 1992).

[17] See Dobrenko.

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sibility to society and in his or her necessarily personal involvement with its life.[18] This ideal manifested itself most powerfully during World War II.

Since at least the early 1930s, Soviet society had been intensely and self-consciously preparing itself for the war that started at 4 A.M. on June 22, 1941, when the German troops crossed the Soviet border.[19] Along with speeded-up industrial and military development, there was a national discussion preparing the population for a heroic struggle and, "if necessary," to use a euphemism of the time, for a heroic death.[20] The actual commencement of hostilities was nevertheless shocking and humiliating. The first months of the conflict extirpated all prewar images of the upcoming struggle. Psychologically prepared to "crush the enemy on its territory" or to see it crushed, Soviet society and the army faced a moral and conceptual crisis when German troops advanced on Moscow by the beginning of October.[21] The urgent task was to overcome the crisis and make soldiers capable of fighting, dying, and beating the enemy under formerly inconceivable conditions. From the very onset of the great catastrophe, Soviet writers perceived their participation in the war effort as their personal duty to society. Aleksei Tolstoi, an accomplished writer long before the revolution and fifty-eight years old in 1941, started writing for the central army newspaper *Krasnaia zvezda* (Red star) from the first days of the war.[22] Il'ia Ehrenburg, eight years Tolstoi's junior and nicknamed "Westerner" by his literary colleagues for his long prewar visits to the West, also worked as a war correspondent for *Krasnaia zvezda* and wrote two to three articles daily during the first two years of the war.[23] Their contemporary, the poet Vera Inber, refused to leave Leningrad during the 900-day German blockade, which

[18] The two best works on Soviet writers during the war are I. I. Anisimov, ed., *Sovetskie pisateli na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: Kniga pervaia* [Soviet writers on the fronts of the Great Patriotic War] (Moscow, 1966); and Jeffrey Brooks, "Many Wars, One Victory," in his *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton, N.J., 2000).

[19] In his 1931 speech at the First All-Union Conference of the Managers of the Socialist Industry, Stalin predicted that the future war would occur within ten years. I. V. Stalin, "O zadachakh khoziaistvennikov," *Pravda* (February 5, 1931).

[20] See, e.g., an article on the All-Union Military Occupation Movement, "Esli zavtra v pokhod . . . ," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda* (July 5, 1938).

[21] For typical prewar images of the future conflict, see the movie review in *Pravda*, A. Rabinovich and B. Ivanov, "'Tankisty'; Fil'm o geroizme I muzhestve," *Pravda* (February 12, 1939).

[22] Aleksei Tolstoi's first article appeared in *Red Star*, July 9, 1941, and was written on a day's notice, according to newspaper editor David Ortenberg in Ortenberg's *Iiun'-dekabr' sorok pervogo: Rasskaz-khronika* (Moscow, 1986), p. 31.

[23] See Ehrenburg's report on his work to the War Committee of the Union of Writers and the discussion afterward in "Tvorcheskii otchet Il'i Ehrenburga," January 11, 1943, Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI), fond 631, opis' 16, edinitsa khraneniia (ed. khr.) 129, list 20, 20/30.

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left 1 million people dead—40 percent of the city's prewar population—from starvation and cold. Inber and other female literati—including younger writers Vera Ketlinskaia, Olga Bergolts, and Margarita Aliger—made daily radio broadcasts to the starving city, wrote for the Leningrad press, and continued work on novels and poetry, despite having children and grandchildren in evacuation and husbands dying from hunger.[24]

Hundreds of younger writers who came of age during the Soviet period headed for the front. Every fourth writer fought; 140 died, 300 were decorated. During the first year of the war, many, such as writer and journalist Boris Polevoi, were recalled from the regular army and reassigned to newspapers and army political divisions as war correspondents, political workers, and commissars. Out of more than 300 writers engaged with the central and army press, 143 worked for army and division newspapers with short periods of leave in the rear.[25] Wanda Wassilewskaia, who left her native Poland to become a Soviet citizen in 1939, was a correspondent for *Pravda* and was elevated to the rank of commissar, slogging through the war "in tarpaulin soldiers' boots." During a thirty-day leave in 1942 she wrote *Rainbow,* the first novel devoted specifically to fascist atrocities committed against the Soviet civilian population.[26] The most famous among young war correspondents was the writer, poet, and playwright Konstantin Simonov. During four years spent on the front lines, he wrote hundreds of articles and reports for *Krasnaia zvezda* and *Pravda,* three plays, a novel, and two collections of poetry.[27]

The newspaper was the primary literary medium of wartime. Not only articles and essays but also whole novels, plays, and poems were published in *Pravda, Krasnaia zvezda,* and *Izvestiia,* superceding professional literary journals and publishing houses. The literary word colonized the Soviet press, min-

[24] During the blockade, Bergolts lost her husband; Aliger came to Leningrad as a war correspondent for *Stalin's Falkon,* leaving two children behind in Moscow. See Olga Bergolts, "Popytka Avtobiografii," in *Sovetskie pisateli: Avtobiografii* (Moscow, 1972), 4:81; Margarita Aliger, "Avtobiografiia," in ibid., 4:24. On Inber's days in the blockade, see Anna Krylova, "In Their Own Words? Autobiographies of Women Writers, 1930–1946," in *Russian Women Writers,* ed. Adele Barker and Jehanne Gheith (Cambridge, 2001).

[25] Stenographic Report of the Presidium Meeting of the Union of Writers, January 25, 1942, RGALI, fond 631, opis' 15, ed. khr., 576, 1. 4; Stenographic Report of the Presidium Meeting of the Union of Writers, January 29, 1943, RGALI, fond 631, opis' 15, ed. khr., 611, 1. 4; *Sovetskie pisateli na frontakh Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny: Kniga pervaia,* pp. 276, 331–43; Boris Polevoi, "Ogliadyvaias' na prozhitoe," in *Sovetskie pisateli: Autobiografii* (Moscow, 1959), 2:238.

[26] Wanda Wassilewskaia, "O moikh knigakh," in *Sovetskie pisateli: Autobiografii* (Moscow, 1966), 3:119–20.

[27] See *V odnoi gazete. Reportazhi I stat'I, 1941–45. Konstantin Simonov. Il'ia Erenburg* (Moscow, 1978), p. 14.

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imizing the apparent distance between writers and readers. During the first two years of the war, Soviet literati wrote about heroism and sacrifice, hatred and love. They took credit both for "arming people's souls with hatred" toward the enemy and for talking to fighters about the "most intimate" matters of life and death. They eagerly embraced the role that Russian tradition and Soviet training bestowed upon them as fighter-agitators in unity with the people at a moment of national catastrophe.[28] By 1944, the Party recognized their role in the mobilization effort, and many of them became legendary figures. Stories began to circulate in the front and the rear about soldiers carrying Simonov's *Wait for Me*—a poem about the uncertainty of separation—in their breast pockets, about partisans refusing to use Ehrenburg's hatred-inspiring articles for rolling cigarettes, and about Leningraders exchanging bread for Inber's heroic poem *Pulkovskii Meridian.*[29]

The discussion of "injured souls" at the official meeting of Soviet writers in 1944 marked a new stage in the writers' war effort but did not initiate a completely new trend in the Soviet literature. Even before Bergolts's speech at the Ninth Plenum, both male and female writers had begun to conceptualize the psychological price Soviet society would have to pay for years of war. By 1944, Tolstoi had already written his short story "Russian Character" about a returning tanker burnt beyond recognition. In that same year, Simonov's new play, *So It Will Be,* about a depressed and indifferent colonel Saveliev, was being staged in Moscow theaters, and Wassilewskaia was finishing her novel *Simply Love,* which was devoted to the inner turmoil of a mutilated soldier. The 1944 discussion was, nevertheless, an event of unprecedented cultural and political importance. Responding to new war realities and anticipating the pain of postwar return to peaceful life, Soviet writers took the initiative to expand Stalin's definition of the purpose of literature and the mission of writers. They publicly articulated their new role in the postwar society as healers and doctors, and, as a result, deemphasized their civic duties as agitators whose role was to inspire the masses for heroic deeds. The new emphasis was on engineering as rebuilding—reconstructing, healing, and doctoring. By adjusting the writer's civic role to the needs of society, Bergolts acknowledged and drew public attention to the fate of the wounded and traumatized. The timeliness of the problem was proven by the response it received in the literary community,

[28] Several discussions held at the Union of Writers in 1943 summarize the public perception of the writers' role in the war as well as the literati's evaluation of their war effort; see "Soveshchanie pisatelei: 'Khudozhestvennaia literatura v dni Otechestvennoi voiny,'" March 24, 1943, RGALI, fond 631, opis' 15, ed. khr. 615, list 34; "Tvorcheskii otchet Il'i Ehrenburga," RGALI, fond 631, opis' 16, ed. khr. 129, lists 35, 40.

[29] See literary critic A. M. Leites's speech at the meeting devoted to the role of Soviet literature in days of war, in "Soveshchanie pisatelie," lists 41–42.

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which made the theme of healing a central topic of discussion at the subsequent Tenth Plenum in 1945.

In a speech entitled "About a Present-Day Play," playwright Nikolai Pogodin expressed his firm conviction that no one could disagree about the timeliness of the theme "doctoring the wounds of the soul" for postwar Soviet literature. Pogodin was dismayed, however, by many playwrights' overuse of simplistic plots that failed to enter their characters' troubled psychological worlds.[30] Pogodin implied that the turn toward the psychological dimensions of war would involve a serious reconceptualization of the Soviet man's character and his depiction in literature.

Vera Inber and Vera Ketlinskaia challenged the one-dimensional positive hero of prewar Socialist realism.[31] "The personality that created itself during the war will not have a unified character," declared Inber. Along with Ketlinskaia she suggested that the Soviet people, traumatized physically and psychologically, would not easily free themselves from the horrors of the war inscribed upon their bodies and minds. The complexity of the postwar Soviet literary hero was virtually guaranteed by the traumatic formation of his identity. The war experience demanded readjustment of the overall representation of Soviet man in society and, in the view of the writers, necessitated the treatment of such allegedly inappropriate themes in Soviet literature as mourning and grief.[32]

In their discussions of the psychological impact of the war on Soviet society, writers, poets, literary critics, and artistic workers were not joined directly by Party officials or medical specialists. Party organs such as *Pravda* interpreted the traumas afflicting the Soviet land and people through a materialist-physiological lens—material in relation to the land and property, and physiological in relation to people and war invalids. In his order of May 1, 1945, Stalin called on Soviet workers to "quickly heal the wounds inflicted on the country by the war!" *Pravda*'s editors explicated Stalin's notion of "wounds": destroyed cities and villages, mines and electric power stations, factories and oil works, railroads and bridges across rivers.[33]

The enemy, according to *Pravda,* had also inflicted many wounds on the Soviet people, mutilating the body yet ostensibly sparing the mind. Stressing the physiological nature of war injuries, *Pravda* editorials and articles ordered

[30] Nikolai Pogodin, "O Sovremennoi P'ese," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (May 22, 1945).

[31] On the Socialist Realist positive hero, cf. Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 136–55.

[32] Vera Inber, "Vospitanie Molodykh Poetov," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (May 22, 1945).

[33] "Editorial: Bystro Zalechim Rany, Nanesennye Strane Voinoi!" *Pravda* (May 18, 1945); see also "Editorial: Edinstvo i Organizovannost Sovetskogo Naroda," *Pravda* (May 14, 1945).

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the construction of hospitals of restorative surgery in each regional center and criticized the "comrades from the Institute of Prosthetic Appliances" for keeping enthusiastic war invalids from "active participation in life" due to poor-quality prostheses.[34] Circumscribed within the limits of a physiological paradigm, the Party press presented the war legacy as readily remedied by means of reconstructive surgery and high-quality false limbs.

Although the central Party press did not articulate the psychological impact of the war directly, it did reveal its implicit awareness of the problem. *Pravda*'s journalists engaged in the healing project by providing many positive images of war veterans and invalids "burning with desire" to rebuild the country, along with portraits of heroic and absolute triumph over physical disability. The forceful revival after 1944 of the prewar cult of Pavel Korchagin, the protagonist of Nikolai Ostrovskii's *How the Steel Was Tempered,* can be understood as symptomatic of the Soviet leadership's deep anxiety over the psychological state of postwar Soviet society. The protagonist of this semiautobiographical 1932 novel ends his life in bed, blind and paralyzed. His severe and quickly progressing illness is a result of his heroic struggle during the civil war. Though driven close to suicide by his disability, Korchagin nevertheless finds strength "to live even then, when life becomes unbearable."[35] Having invoked Korchagin's life as a model of "overcoming" at the end of the war, *Pravda*'s journalists did offer an example of "how to live" that, perhaps, had some therapeutic effect on the population. At the same time, they also discursively excommunicated from postwar reality those among the psychologically devastated who failed to "burn with desire" to overcome and rebuild. The privileging of narratives of overcoming such as Korchagin's and others consigned by default other psychological invalids unable to overcome their traumas to the realm of the unrepresentable and, thus, to symbolic death.

Though the central Party press ignored millions of Soviet people with lasting "spiritual" injuries, this policy was hardly the "Party line." In bestowing its most prestigious literary award, Stalin's Prize for Literature, upon Wasilewskaia's novel *Simply Love*—a work centered around war-induced psychological

[34] "Editorial: Vsenarodnaia Zabota o Zashchitnikakh Rodiny i Ikh Sem'yakh," *Pravda* (May 23, 1945); "O Protezakh," *Pravda* (July 30, 1945), p. 3.

[35] "Editorial: Zakon o Demobilizatsii Starshikh Vosrastov v Deistvii," *Pravda,* July 14, 1945; Nikolai Ostrovskii, *Kak zakalyalas' stal'* (Moskva, 1977), p. 333; cf. V. Kozhevnikov, "Moral'nyi oblik pisatelya" [Moral composition of a writer], *Pravda,* September 29, 1944; Anna Karavaeva, "Vtoraia zhizn'" [Second life], *Literatura i iskusstvo* (September 23, 1944); S. Tregub, "Knigi na fronte" [Books of the front], *Literatura i iskusstvo* (February 23, 1944); "Pamyati Nikolaya Ostrovskogo" [In memory of Nikolai Ostrovskii], *Literatura i iskusstvo* (September 30, 1944); V. Pertsov, "Podvig i geroi" [Heroic deed and a hero], *Znamia,* no. 9 (1945), pp. 118–19; on *Kak Zakalyalas' Stal'* in the 1930s, cf. Clark, pp. 131–33.

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trauma—the Party both acknowledged its awareness of the psychological dimension of postwar injuries and indicated implicit support for solving the "spiritual" problem within the literary realm. The 1945 award simultaneously assigned responsibility for the psychological health of the population to the writers and eliminated it from the list of the Party's political and social obligations. Anointed as healers, writers received no explicit Party directives on how to approach and resolve the mental traumas of postwar society; thus, they seemed to be on their own.

The peculiar status of Soviet psychiatry further accentuated the writers' isolation in their task of "soul healing." The discussion of mental trauma was largely confined to a professional exchange of ideas and observations in the psychiatric discipline's single contemporary journal, the *Journal of Neuropathology and Psychiatry.* Toward the end of the war, Soviet psychiatrists found themselves both overwhelmed by war-related traumas and unequipped to deal with them. Circumscribed within a physiological paradigm, they looked for the physical origins of each mental disorder and ascribed to bodily factors a primary, determinative role. Only those mental disorders that were injury related fell within the psychiatrists' purview and were documented. Mental traumas not apparently caused by physical disability escaped the psychiatric eye.[36] Cases of depression, paranoia, and suicidal tendencies among soldiers after successful or unsuccessful amputations, or with well-healed or festering wounds, drew psychiatric attention during the early phase of the war and by 1945 had received a category name: "post-injury" or "injury-related psychosis."[37] In cases of psychosis "caused" by amputation, the nerves of the "peripheral nervous system" were believed to have been "disturbed" by the surgery and, in their turn, caused "disturbances" in the central nervous system—disturbances that, ultimately, resulted in psychosis.[38] The etiology of mental disorders in cases with festering wounds was interpreted within a similar conceptual framework: long-term festering wounds effected a toxic brain inflammation by means of the infected vascular system.[39] Nightmares, depressive

[36] There is only one article published in the entire period that describes non-injury-related psychological reactions to war situations at the level of pure observation; see A. A. Mindadze, "Ob Imotsional'nykh Reaktsiyakh v Usloviyakh Boevoi Obstanovki," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 2 (1947), pp. 37–41.

[37] For a summary of work on injury-related and postinjury psychosis, see P. F. Malkin, "Psikhicheskie Zabolevaniya v Svyazi s Ikstratserebral'nymi Raneniyami: Ranevye Psikhozy," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 4 (1945), pp. 14–17; B. D. Friedman, "O Posleranevykh Psikhozakh," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 6 (1946), pp. 43–46.

[38] A. I. Zlatoverov, "O Mestnom i Otdalennom Deistvii Travmy Nervnoi Sistemy," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 3 (1945): 51.

[39] V. A. Gorovoi-Shaltan, "O Psikhozakh pri Ranevykh Infektsiyakh," *Nevropato-*

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moods, or "grief without any apparent reason" were noted in case descriptions but without an inquiry into possible meanings of the symptoms.[40]

Disregard for psychological factors in the diagnosis of mental disorders naturally resulted in their exclusion from the process of treatment. Psychological disorders were, paradoxically, treated by Soviet psychiatrists without consideration of psychological dimensions. Body-centered diagnoses of mental troubles manifested their incompleteness and bankruptcy at the treatment stage. Sleep and injections of novocaine and glucose demonstrated very low efficacy. Failures were usually explained by the scale of physiological injury or the power of heredity, or they were ignored altogether. The hegemony of the physiological paradigm disarmed Soviet psychiatrists by preventing them from considering other avenues of inquiry. The official anti-Freudian sentiment of the 1920s and the full-fledged campaign of the 1930s had forced psychiatrists to switch to medical and neurological research; the language of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy had been suppressed. The cohort of Soviet psychiatrists who came to dominate the profession in the 1940s was unfamiliar with psychological explanatory frameworks.[41]

Given their fixation on the body, Soviet psychiatrists had no claim to the role of "soul-healers" of society, nor did the public expect soul healing from them. The figure of the psychiatrist is completely absent in wartime healing literature—a symptom of the public disassociation of psychiatry from mental disorder. In wartime novels, for example, responsibility for the healing process is usually shared by a doctor who is accountable for the body and a nurse or a friend who takes care of the spiritual realm. These healing characters inevitably recognize an injured soul behind the "expressionless eyes staring at the same dot on the wall" and treat the distressed soldier by talking to him about his fears and anxieties or by giving him a book.[42] In the logic of the healing

logiya i Psikhiatriya, no. 4 (1945), p. 13; for the same type of thinking about psychological disorders, see A. M. Svyadoshch, "K Voprosu o Sushchnosti Istericheskikh Reaktsii u Kontuzhennykh," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 5 (1946); M. O. Gurevich, "Klassifikatsiya i Nomenklatura Psikhicheskikh Rasstroistvo," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 2 (1947), pp. 13–15; three exceptions to the rule of neglect of the psychological dimension over the period 1944–48 are I. M. Vish and A. M. Pisarnitskaia, "Opyt Konsul'tativnoi Raboty Psikhiatora v Evakogospitalyakh," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 3 (1946), pp. 67–68; L. Ya. Shvartsman, "Psikhoterapiya Fantomnykh Oshchushchenii," *Nevropatologia i Psikhiatriya,* no. 6 (1946), pp. 70–71.

[40] A. Z. Rosenberg, "O Psikhicheskikh Izmeneniyakh pri Raneniyakh Grudnoi Kletki," *Nevropatologiya i Psikhiatriya,* no. 4 (1946), pp. 56–57.

[41] Compare Joravsky (n. 15 above), pp. 234–37, 246–51, on A. R. Luria as an example of a shift from psychology to medicine; Martin A. Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 1998).

[42] Wasilewskaia (n. 11 above), pp. 200–201; see also Panova (n. 11 above), pp. 86, 95–96; Polevoi, *Povest' o Nastoyashchem* (n. 11 above), pp. 128, 132, 137–38.

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novel, neither doctors nor psychiatrists can be reproached for ignoring mental distress. Healing is relegated either to the realm of interpersonal relations or to literature, which provides examples of "unconquerable personalit[ies]" and a "life-affirming life-style."[43]

The absence of a psychological paradigm meant that the self-proclaimed mission of Soviet writers as healers and caretakers of people's souls and minds was not challenged or questioned by competing professionals.[44] The same anti-Freudianism campaign that had prevented the penetration of a psychoanalytic vocabulary into professional and popular cultures and severely impaired the development of Soviet psychiatry also inadvertently benefited Soviet writers. Their traditional role as civil servants and caretakers of people's inner lives remained unchallenged, and it became of increasing importance to Soviet society. Soviet writers not only publicly recognized and articulated the psychological impact of war on Soviet society; they also developed a "treatment" for the injuries of the soul—what could be called "word-therapy." The healing power of the book, of the spoken and printed word, was what Soviet writers knew best, and this was their instrument. Soviet literature attempted to fill the void produced by the psychiatric profession's epistemological blinders and official silence.

Word-Therapy

Not every literary critic, writer, playwright, or poet who embarked on the healing mission could claim success. Words were not therapeutic in themselves. Only when they penetrated people's traumatized psyches and found ways of representing, interpreting, and narrating their contents could they perform word-therapy. But not even those who stressed the intrinsic interdependence between successful healing, on the one hand, and detailed articulation and analysis of psychological traumas, on the other, could always become "therapists." Pogodin, for example, who criticized contemporary playwrights

[43] N. Pogodin, *Sotvorenie Mira* [The creation of the world], in his *Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1973), 4:18; see also Kozhevnikov; Pertsov; "Geroi zhisni i literatury," *Literaturnaia Gazeta* (July 7, 1945); A. Volozhenin, "Pisatel' geroicheskoi temy," *Oktiabr'*, nos. 3–4 (1946).

[44] The Soviet experience thus differs markedly from that of other belligerents in World War II. In the United States, for example, the psychiatric establishment achieved new levels of prestige and influence as healers during and immediately after World War II. The most comprehensive study of American psychiatry in World War II is Rebecca Schwartz Greene, "The Role of the Psychiatrist in World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1977). See also Gerald Grob, *From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in Modern America* (Princeton, N.J., 1991), chap. 1; Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of the Experts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), chap. 4.

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in 1944 for concealing complex psychological processes behind schematic plots, failed to transcend schematism himself when, less than a year later, he turned to the theme of healing in his own work. His play *Creation of the World,* first staged by the Malyi Theater in November 1945, tells the story of the successful and complete recovery of Grigorii Glagolin. The protagonist, a man "burned by the war," unable to remember or concentrate, and tortured by epileptic attacks, is transformed into an organizer of the reconstruction of his hometown, into a healer of other people's lives.[45] The transformation occurs suddenly between the first and the second scenes of the second act and takes place completely offstage. Both the nature of Glagolin's trauma and the process of his recovery remain unarticulated. Reviewers who enthusiastically welcomed the play faced a difficult question: How did a man without an "inner speck of accumulated energy" metamorphose into a familiar positive Socialist Realist hero-organizer-educator-motivator? Reviewers either ignored the miraculous recovery or ascribed it to the healing qualities of socialist labor or to the contagious optimism of the "unwithering" Soviet people. These suggestions did not fill the gaps in the psychological lives of Pogodin's characters.[46]

Critics often rebuked writers who attempted to heal the traumatized society in the immediate postwar years for failing "to find a soul." According to one literary critic, writers tended to switch their narratives from the analysis of inner psychological transformations to descriptions of nature and to displace psychological life and the traumas of characters with worn-out epics.[47] They were criticized for restricting their descriptions of the hero's transition from depression to active life to one or two phrases, such as, "Yes, one has to live!" Throughout the period, critics expressed doubts regarding the therapeutic value of short stories that hid the process of recovery of "cold soul[s]" devastated by the loss of wife, children, and friends behind unrealistic plots that supplied male protagonists with new families.[48]

Such repeated failures demonstrate the complexity of the task writers set for themselves. Injuries of the soul, instead of being articulated and healed, tended to disappear. They hid behind descriptions, facts, plots, and clichés,

[45] Pogodin, *Sotvorenie Mira,* pp. 24–34.

[46] K. Zubov, "*Sotvorenie Mira* v Malom Teatre," *Ogonek,* no. 4 (November 20, 1945), p. 26; Vera Smirnova, "Zhisn' Prodolzhaetsya," *Znamia,* no. 1 (January 1946), p. 176.

[47] I. Grinberg, "Pravo na Schastlivyi Konets," *Literaturnaia Gazeta,* no. 42 (October 6, 1945), p. 3.

[48] Vasilii Nekrasov, "Zemlya Zovet," *Ogonek,* no. 23 (1945), pp. 3–4; V. Avdeenko, "Vera, Nadezhda, Lyubov'," *Ogonek,* no. 18 (1946), pp. 23–24; Evg. Bosniatskii and I. Pakhtanov, "Zhena starstini" [Lieutenant's wife], *Ogonek,* no. 34 (1945), p. 3; see also K. Paustovskii, "Pozdnyaya vesna," *Ogonek,* no. 17 (1945); Vl. Kozin, "Konskie sady," *Ogonek,* no. 31 (1945); Vas. Ardamatskii, "Leitenant zagrustil," *Ogonek,* no. 31 (1945).

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and with them a whole stratum of Soviet postwar reality was insinuated but not confronted. Those who pursued the healing project had, in the first place, to solve the mystery of the injured soul—its trauma. What was traumatic about trauma?[49]

In relation to this question, Wassilewskaia's 1945 novel *Simply Love* occupied a special place in the Soviet healing literature. On the one hand, it reflected the full range of postwar fears and anxieties that Soviet writers aspired to deliver to the public in therapeutic form. On the other hand, in its detailed treatment of psychological injuries, the book surpassed works by Tolstoi, Simonov, Polevoi, Pogodin, and the new young writer Vera Panova. Joining the late-war discourse on "wounded souls," Wassilewskaia devoted her entire book to analyzing and articulating the psychological lives of her characters from within and offered her understanding of postwar Soviet trauma. The leading newspaper of the Soviet creative intelligentsia, *Literaturnaia gazeta* (Literary newspaper), published by the Union of Writers, immediately recognized the depth of the writer's engagement with her protagonists, as well as the therapeutic value of the book. Literary critic Zlatova praised Wassilewskaia for providing "soul strength" for those who needed it to deal with the traumatic experiences of the war. Stressing the timeliness of *Simply Love,* Zlatova expressed the conviction that "many, many people . . . will measure" *Simply Love*'s characters' "destinies against their own."[50]

As an exemplar of postwar goals and the strategies of her profession, and as an original articulation of war-induced traumas, Wassilewskaia's novel provides an effective avenue into the postwar years. She starts the novel by introducing the main protagonist at the moment he confronts his injuries and ponders their meaning. Lying in a hospital bed, engineer Grigorii Chernov examines his face in the mirror: "one repulsive, mutilated eye happened to be,

[49] Although there is no universally accepted definition of trauma in Western psychiatry, one characteristic that brings seemingly different mental disorders under the rubric of trauma is the "possession" of an individual by a deeply disturbing past event. The paradox of the past event is that it is not registered as such—i.e., as having been in the past—by the traumatized person. Since the event is outside of the usual range of experience, the traumatized person fails to incorporate it into available conceptual frameworks, into life narratives, into memories. It is a past event that cannot be remembered but only experienced over and over again as happening at the present moment. The role of the therapist in such cases is to help the patient conceptualize and accept the event and, as a result, to return it to where it belongs—to the past. See Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," *American Imago* 48, no. 1 (1991): 4, and "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History," in *Literature and the Ethical Question,* ed. Claire Nouvet (New Haven, Conn., 1991); Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York, 1990).

[50] Elena Zlatova, "Poteryannyi i vozvrashchennyi rai," *Literaturnaia gazeta* (January 1, 1945).

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as it were, in the wrong place." This eye looks at him "with some ferocious and unfamiliar expression." The "ugly mask" that has replaced his face is not his only misfortune. Chernov "saw himself as if from outside. With horrifying clarity he saw the stump of his amputated arm, the clumsy block of thickly bandaged leg." The author mercilessly inscribes the destructive power of the war on Grigorii's body and follows her protagonist in his torturous contemplation of his identity. During his long and delirious days at the hospital, Grigorii's mind is preoccupied with interpreting the mutilation. Did Captain Chernov die on the battlefield, or have some remnants of his old, prewar self survived?

Attacked by prewar memories about his family life, his "radiant strength and unrestrained happiness," Grigorii simultaneously faces his inability to inscribe his new mutilated body into his old self-representation. Relentlessly, his mind tries to transplant personal scenes from the past into the future. His identity splits as a result of his failure to visualize his own future through available prewar images of family happiness, and this is where Wasilewskaia locates Grigori's trauma. There are now two Grigoriis: Grigorii before the mutilation, who "died on the battlefield" and exists only in memories, and someone who does not deserve the name of the engineer Grigorii Chernov. Grigorii mercilessly repeats his symbolic death sentence to himself: "You are not engineer Chernov. You are a fragment of a person, helplessly lying in a hospital bed." Wasilewskaia traces Grigorii's gradual disengagement with his former self, which culminates in his refusal to face his family or his wife Mariia and his determination to get lost in the huge expanses of the country, "to merge with the crowds of millions of people."[51]

Presenting the reader with a complex, contradictory, and self-denying inner world of a mutilated soldier, Wasilewskaia enriches the postwar image provided by other writers of a passive, silent invalid lying in a hospital bed. Grigorii's self-analysis serves as an illuminating counterpoint to Panova's legless sailor whose identity crisis is revealed in one sentence, symptomatically put in the past tense: "I was a sailor." Many parallels also can be drawn between Wasilewskaia's study of invalids and Polevoi's approach to the problem. Like Grigorii, Polevoi's protagonist Alexei Meresev, an invalid who has lost both legs, fails to reinscribe himself into his prewar memories and loses interest in life. His reminiscences about a day spent on the river with his beloved Olga culminate in the painful realization that he will never walk to the river with his love again, will never play with her in the sand or stand next to her on the riverbank dreaming about the future: "None of that will ever happen again . . . !"[52] A symbol of the time, the figure of the mutilated soldier in deep

[51] Ibid., pp. 251, 254, 248.
[52] Polevoi, *Povest' o Nastoyashchem Cheloveke* (n. 11 above), pp. 150, 114.

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depression permeated Soviet literature both as a main narrative theme and as an inevitable part of the overall picture of Soviet postwar society.[53]

Writers did not confine their analyses of traumatized souls to the irreversible death sentence imposed on veterans' prewar identities. They also demonstrated how internally contradictory the work of the psyche could be. Wasilewskaia's Grigorii Chernov, for example, is torn between his insistence on his nonexistence and his desire to reconstruct the link between his past identity and that of the present or future. He accepts his death and, simultaneously, resists it. "And what if there is still something left in him of the former Chernov?" he asks himself. What if the former Chernov is not dead? What if he still is alive behind the horrible mask? The author explores this tension through Grigorii's interaction with Sonechka Kozlova, a nurse who knew him before the war.[54]

Grigorii's desire to "merge with the crowd" and to disassociate himself completely from his past self is threatened by Sonechka. One day she appears in his ward, and he sees her walking down the aisle between the beds, approaching him. Wasilewskaia tells the reader that Grigorii's first reaction is to escape, to run "where there will be no people left who could recognize him." This overwhelming impulse is subdued by the realization that the woman could hardy recognize his burned, disfigured, one-eyed face. Sonechka approaches his bed, asks a question about his health, and moves on to the next patient. "He gave a sigh of relief . . . and, at the same time, an unknown sadness overcame him as if he had lost something, as if something had disappeared forever." With Sonechka gone, Grigorii struggles to understand his ambivalent reaction to her failure to recognize him. Wasilewskaia traces Grigorii's chain of thought to its conclusion: that there is nothing left in him from his former self. At the same time, the writer interprets Grigorii's sadness as his unconscious hope to be recognized, to reunite with his previous self, to become Grigorii Chernov again: "Though I am very afraid of being recognized, I am, at the same time, not fully honest with myself; I, at the same time, desperately want to make sure that I am still the same person I used to be."[55]

Within Wasilewskaia's narrative, Grigorii's desire to run away from Sonechka, his friends, and his family acquires a second meaning: it is not an escape from recognition but an escape from nonrecognition. The act of nonrecognition irreversibly confirms Grigorii's "death," the loss of his identity, which he both accepts and resists. It leaves him with no hope of reunion with

[53] Another very common image in Soviet literature was the invalid who, having developed intense hatred and disgust for his crippled and unfamiliar self, adamantly refuses food or treatment in order to kill the cripple. Panova (n. 11 above), pp. 85, 86–87, 98–99; Polevoi, *Povest' o Nastoyashchemo,* pp. 101, 103, 108, 111.

[54] Wasilewskaia (n. 11 above), p. 255.

[55] Ibid., pp. 255, 257.

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his past or of becoming Grigorii Chernov again and reduces him to an invalid "staring gloomily at one spot on the wall." The writer locates the ability and duty to save Grigorii from "disappearing"—via recognition—in people the soldier used to know; but these same people also can certify his death via nonrecognition. In this regard, strangers offer no threat: they can neither recognize him nor possess the power to reinstate his identity through recognition.[56]

The theme of recognition predominated in texts aspiring to heal. Two years before Wasilewskaia's *Simply Love,* Tolstoi made one of the first attempts to articulate the problem in his short story "Russkii Kharakter." Tolstoi's Igor Dremov suffers severe facial mutilations. Granted a furlough after his discharge from the hospital, he sets out to visit his home. Both his parents and his prospective fiancée Katya fail to recognize him, and he does not have enough courage to identify himself. Afterwards, "he was deeply depressed . . . [he] slapped his face and kept repeating in a hoarse voice: 'What am I to do now?'" Tolstoi poses the failure of recognition as a symbolic erasure of Igor's existence. If the people who knew him best don't recognize him *(priznaiut)* who will? Another prolific wartime writer and playwright, Leonid Leonov, considers the same theme from a different angle. In his 1946 play *Golden Carriage,* his character Colonel Berezkin is cut off from his prewar identity by the war and, due to the death of his wife and daughter, is unable to reimagine himself in postwar life. The loss of the family in Leonov's play is interpreted as a loss of part of Berezkin's self. With no one left to welcome Berezkin home—with no home—Berezkin is portrayed as a man unable to dissociate himself from the war, remaining entrapped in his "former military" past.[57]

This relational conception of identity—the impossibility of the Self without the Other—demanded the introduction of the Other for the resolution of war-induced identity crises. In these healing narratives there is almost by necessity an Other who will recognize the traumatized, mutilated soldier. Soviet writers most frequently assigned the role of soul-healer to the Soviet woman, within the realm of the family.

Images of wives welcoming mutilated and traumatized husbands and fiancés home functioned as a promise and hope for men and as a suggestion and instruction to women. Women were to recognize in deformed, mutilated men their former masculine selves, to see in them their former strength and beauty, and to provide of their own healthy body parts substitutes for those missing or dysfunctional. The creation of a private family life in which mutilated men

[56] Ibid., pp. 282, 284.

[57] Aleksei Tolstoi, "Russkii Kharakter," in *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* (Moscow, 1950), 4:48; Leonov (n. 1 above), pp. 517, 519; see also Fedor Knorre, "Shest' Protsentov," *Ogonek,* no. 20 (May 1946), p. 11.

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would be able to take their "familiar place at the head of the table" became a central narrative theme in Soviet literature, and this explains why the home was a main locus of literary action. Thus, Wasilewskaia interrupts Grigorii Chernov's despairing stare at "one spot on the wall" with his wife's ability to see "his [prewar] smile, his [prewar] look" in place of a face "mutilated by the hand of war." She erases his ugliness by looking at him "with such admiration that no one would think that his scars made him ugly." Her young, healthy hand substitutes for his missing hand, restoring the integrity of his masculine body. Her invitation to dinner at the family table with an embroidered white tablecloth connects the present moment with the past moments of their family life and makes that which appeared unimaginable and beyond representation on the hospital bed imaginable and real. At the end of *Simply Love* Grigorii is reintegrated into the realm of private life. He has found a place at the family table and reentered the *Ogonek* picture.[58]

Soviet Woman/Wife/Mother

The demarcation of the private sphere as the healing place, and the representation of women as social therapists of traumatized male souls, initiated in the literature of the immediate postwar years an erasure of women's role on the Soviet front. During the war Soviet women crossed gender boundaries in ways that were exceptional among the belligerent nations. They not only comprised a movement to learn "male" occupations, which itself had a decade-long prewar history, but also joined the army as combat pilots, snipers, tank drivers, machine gunners, and artillery women.[59] Women "defended the country with weapons in their hands," avenged their husbands, killed and bombed, received medals, and became Heroes of the Soviet Union. Most were volunteers; leaving children behind with friends and relatives was not uncommon.[60]

[58] Wasilewskaia, pp. 307–8, 305, 314.

[59] On the Soviet emancipatory project, see Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State, and Revolution: Soviet Family and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge, 1993), chap. 1; also Gail Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley, 1978). On changes in the representation of women in literature during the 1920s and 1930s, see Louise E. Luke, "Marxian Woman: Soviet Variant," in *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature,* ed. Ernest J. Simmons (New York, 1953), pp. 27–109; see also Susan E. Reid, "All Stalin's Women: Gender and Power in Soviet Art of the 1930s," *Slavic Review* (Spring 1998). For a gender analysis of early Soviet identity, cf. Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, N.J., 1997); Elizabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington, Ind., 1997).

[60] By 1945, 570,000 women had fought in the Red Army; 80,000 were officers. See Evdokimov, ed. (n. 4 above), p. 79; M. A. Kazarinova, ed., *V nebe frontovom: Sbornik vospominanii letchist-uchastnist Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny* (Moscow, 1971), p. 3;

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The exclusion of the experience of more than half a million women at the front from literary and historical narratives, as well as the reduction of women's role in the rear to domesticity, first occurred in the postwar healing literature. Images of women who had not been to the front proliferated after 1944. Of various ages and social backgrounds, they possessed two crucial features in common—psychological strength and bodily integrity. Their heroic wartime deeds consisted in the preservation of the private hearth for their men. "Forest Song," a short story by the young writer Sergei Yurin, exemplified the developing literary trend. It depicts the wartime life of Asya, the young wife of a musician, as consisting largely of keeping her husband's piano in working order, the way he liked it, "without a speck of dust."[61] Stories about working-class families were often accompanied by illustrations portraying a middle-aged woman wearing an apron and a kerchief bending over a washtub washing clothes. Writers rarely chose to represent Soviet women at work outside the home. In post-1944 literature, women's wartime work outside the home was mentioned in passing, as a mere adjunct to their domestic responsibilities.[62]

In those cases in which "front women" appeared in the healing literature, they were presented as unable to heal male war-induced psychological wounds. In his 1944 play *So It Will Be,* Simonov entrusts the healing of his protagonist, Colonel Savel'ev, a man "who lost everything he loved," to two women. The first, Anna Grigor'evna Grech, is a major in the medical corps, middle-aged, unmarried, and aware of her unattractive appearance. The second, Olga, is a student of architecture, young, beautiful, and not yet married.[63] As both a woman and a doctor Anna Grigor'evna initially seems qualified to treat Savel'ev's body and his mind. But having saved and healed Savel'ev's wounded body at the front, she fails to doctor his emotional breakdown. Anna's inability to heal the colonel marks her war experience as defeminizing and incompatible with treating spiritual wounds. Through Anna's image, Simonov identifies war, female ugliness, and inability to heal, and constructs a female character whose defining feature is the absence of family happiness.[64] Female veterans are denied private self-realization and happiness. It is the young Olga, relatively untouched by the war and full of life energy, who manages to break

cf. A. Magid, *Gvardeiskii Tamanskii Aviatsionnyi Polk* (Moscow, 1960); S. A. Aleksievich, *U voiny ne zhenskoe litso* (Minsk, 1985).

[61] Sergei Yurin, "Lesnaya Pesnya," *Ogonek,* no. 36 (September 1945), p. 5; cf. Aleksandra Kollontai, "Sovetskaia Zhenshchina-Polnopravnaia Grazhdanka Svoei Strany," *Sovetskaia Zhenshchina,* no. 5 (September–October 1946), p. 3.

[62] V. Kaverin, "Prostaya Istoriya," *Ogonek,* no. 11 (March 1945), p. 7.

[63] Konstantin Simonov, *Tak i Budet,* in his *P'esy* (Moscow, 1950), p. 179.

[64] Also see Panova's character Yuliya Dmitrievna in *Sputniki* (n. 11 above), pp. 179–81.

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through to Savel'ev's soul, to awaken his feelings, and to charge him with desire, dreams, and hope.[65] Dissociated from the war and presented as loving and determined to save, the image of Olga, on the one hand, reveals the playwright's nostalgic ideal of family happiness, and, on the other hand, provides a cultural script for Soviet women to imitate.

Such idealization of women's strength and abilities resulted in the psychological poverty of the female characters in the healing literature. The renowned Soviet actress Vera Maretskaia compared women in Soviet plays to "pale masks without flesh and blood created for one purpose: to perform this or that deed in accordance with the will of the author."[66] Focusing on male psychological stress, writers such as Tolstoi and Polevoi developed male protagonists at the expense of female heroines, whom they used as abstract symbols of Russian feminine virtue. They assumed and attributed Soviet women's unconditional dedication, support, and healing nature to the specificity of the feminine "Russian character" or explained them through the inborn qualities of a "good" young Soviet woman.[67] The plot-induced poverty of female protagonists reduced the representation of their psychological lives to unproblematic one-dimensionality and made the portrayal of female inner turmoil, conflict, or trauma impossible.

In the second part of *Simply Love,* however, Wasilewskaia disrupts this literary tendency to focus exclusively on the injuries to male souls and explores women's psychological stress in their new roles as healers. Her novel suggests a possible tension between the Soviet social imperative to heal and women's ability or willingness to undertake such an obligation. Mariia's acceptance of the mutilated Grigorii is thus presented not as an automatic, natural deed but as the result of a long inner struggle, a conflict that fundamentally changes the young woman's personality. In the beginning of *Simply Love,* Mariia is a nurse working at the hospital. Her days and nights are filled with memories and thoughts of her husband, Grigorii, away at the front. Remembering her husband, she feels "his firm handshake," hears his strong voice singing her favorite song, sees his "joyful smile" and beautiful eyes. The reader is confronted with an emotional and body-fixated woman whose sensuality Wasilewskaia connects to her overall sensual interaction with nature. Mariia's "wild instincts" allow her to indulge in ecstatic enjoyment of rain and wind that "call her, lure

[65] Simonov, *P'esy,* pp. 197, 245; see also Tolstoi, p. 49; Bosniatskii and Pakhtanov (n. 48 above), no. 34; Tat'yana Oks, "Vysokii bereg," *Ogonek,* no. 35 (1945); Asker Evtykh, "Ismail i Shcharafet," *Ogonek,* no. 6 (1946).

[66] Vera Maretskaia, "Obraz Moei Sovremennitsy," *Literaturnaia Gazeta,* no. 14 (March 31, 1945).

[67] Tolstoi (n. 57 above), p. 49; Polevoi, *Povest' o Nastoyashchemo* (n. 11 above), p. 152; see also ibid., pp. 186–87; Leonov (n. 1 above), pp. 587–88.

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her to go wild, to run outside and scream, to face the cold whip of rain in ecstasy."[68]

Grigorii's mutilations—a deformed face with a misplaced eye, a missing arm, a damaged leg—target the very essence of Mariia's image of her husband and her being. In the first moment of their reunion at the hospital, she recoils in horror: "This is a mistake." Wasilewskaia narrates this scene from two perspectives. The first, sensual Mariia "feels [to her] horror that only one arm is hugging her," looks at Grigorii's face and "sees nothing." A second Mariia stands next to the sensual one, observes the scene from outside, and controls the actions of the sensual Mariia. The gap between the former image of Grigorii and the present one is unbridgeable for the first Mariia. She fails to recognize her husband in the mutilated body. The person whom everyone calls Grigorii Chernov is not Grigorii but merely an unfamiliar "cripple sitting in the armchair." Wasilewskaia allows her heroine to rebel against the "other Mariia," the internalized social imperative. In Mariia's interpretation, the social norm imposed upon "thousands and thousands of women," to devote their lives to mutilated cripples, negates her life, her happiness, and her self, and society does not even acknowledge this feminine loss, this trauma.[69]

Like Grigorii, Mariia also undergoes a representational and conceptual crisis. She cannot imagine her future under the new circumstances. She dreads the thought of bringing "the stump of a person" into her room, of spending nights and days with a crippled stranger. She wonders what the word "husband" means: "Before it meant Grigorii. And now?" Like Grigorii, Mariia suffers from the traumatic splitting of her self. Her failure to recognize Grigorii confirms his fears about his nonexistence and simultaneously results in Mariia's trauma over the loss of her former self. Using a familiar interpretive framework, Wasilewskaia demonstrates the representational interdependency of Grigorii and Mariia, where the symbolic death of the one brings devastating changes to the self-conception of the other. The loss of Grigorii starts a whole associative chain of losses: Mariia loses her former character, her interest in the life of her country, her former "little, private life," her right to happiness. Without Grigorii in her life, Mariia's world collapses: "Mariia is dead," announces Wasilewskaia.[70]

Like the other writers discussed, Wasilewskaia employs a relational conception of identity. Grigorii and Mariia are so interconnected that each fails to sustain his or her identity without the other. But if Grigorii's trauma can be cured through Mariia's recognition, Mariia has to deal with her trauma in solitude. Here Wasilewskaia encounters problems in attempting to specify

[68] Wasilewskaia (n. 11 above), pp. 199, 206, 208, 220, 199.
[69] Ibid., pp. 271, 272, 274.
[70] Ibid., pp. 274, 275, 277.

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Mariia's cure. Her initial portrait of Mariia as a sensual being and her detailed analysis of Mariia's trauma make Mariia's desired recognition of Grigorii impossible within the conceptual framework of the book. How then can Mariia recognize Grigorii in his new guise?

To answer this question, Wasilewskaia must interrupt the logic of her original narrative and recast the whole structure of Maria's personality. Mariia's rediscovery of the former Grigorii under his "helpless body," under "the unfamiliar eye," is contingent upon her discovery of her maternal instincts, which allows the recasting of her love for Grigorii within a new paradigm. "Now she saw a new image of her love. [Grigorii] was not only a husband, a lover, a comrade—he was her only, beloved child [who] needed her protection, help and gentle care."[71] However, Wasilewskaia presents Grigorii not as a child ruled by his mother, but as a child devouring his life giver. In the new symbolic framework, Mariia becomes the missing parts of Grigorii's body, the smiling mirror that deflects Grigorii's ugliness. Her private life is now dedicated to him and is lived through him. Wasilewskaia uses the suddenly invoked maternal instincts to explain Mariia's new ability to see Grigorii's former smile and his former eyes and to undertake the reconstruction of his former masculine self.[72]

Having worked through Grigorii's and Mariia's traumas, Wasilewskaia restores Grigorii to his past identity and reinserts him into the family scene. Mariia's destiny in this healing project is different. The price of her readmission to the happiness of private life is the fundamental restructuring—the total effacement—of her self. In fact, the healing process deprives Mariia of her individual character—"wild" instincts and sensitive sensuality—and turns her into a generic mother and wife.

Wasilewskaia's detailed explication of men's and women's postwar anxieties enabled her to proffer a novel solution. As the only female writer who engaged seriously with the problematic of female trauma beyond speeches and articles, she probably could not overlook the ways social demands came into conflict with women's lives and, as a consequence, produced psychological disorders. Within the existing literary landscape of the masculine front and the feminine rear, she explored the tension and provided her female readers with ways to conceptualize and justify their new roles in postwar Soviet society. But, like most of her male colleagues, Wasilewskaia reserved the prerogative of traumas of the front for male veterans.

[71] Ibid., pp. 269, 292, 304.
[72] Ibid., p. 307.

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CONCLUSION

For Soviet literati, the Great Patriotic War was a moment closest to the Russian and Soviet ideal of "spiritual unity" between a writer and society. Hundreds of writers went through the war as soldiers, officers, commissars, political agitators, and war correspondents. Their voices from the trenches on various fronts and from the besieged city of Leningrad reached out to the fighting nation from Party newspapers and were a central element of radio broadcasting. During the war, the Russian "civic minded" poet and the Soviet "engineer of human souls" became a "fighter" on the actual as well as the literary front, mobilizing people's hatred and "soul strength."

After 1943, Soviet literati, both men and women, committed their energies to a new civic project. They were the first to recognize the "spiritual wounds" inflicted on Soviet society by the war and the pain of the adaptation of mutilated and psychologically traumatized veterans to postwar life. Defining "engineering" as "healing of wounded souls," writers made a self-conscious effort to doctor veterans returning from the front. Their mission involved the reinscription of mental and physical cripples back into prewar images of family happiness. These "soul-healing" writers evinced respect for the disabled, analyzed complex and conflicted personal realities, and articulated and resolved "spiritual" traumas. At the same time, they drew a sharp line between the front and the rear, delineating the former as exclusively masculine and traumatized and the latter as feminine, healthy, and healing. The healing mission of Soviet literature, as a gendered project, marked trauma as a male prerogative and failed to recognize and articulate women's experience at the front. As a result, hundreds of thousands of female veterans were excluded from the postwar discourse on wartime suffering; their traumatic experiences at the front and their mutilations, along with their fears of return, were erased from the memory of the war.

Left for further exploration is the effect of the "healing" literary discourse on the lives of Soviet women in the immediate postwar period, as well as in subsequent years. In her 1985 collection of interviews with female veterans, Belorussian journalist Svetlana Alekseevich began the exploration of the generation of women who went to the front.[73] The pain of discursive erasure from public historical memory and the literary record coexisted in their reminiscences with fears of revealing their front identities in a postwar Soviet society marked by the popular disassociation of family life and female front experience. Another aspect of the postwar healing discourse, the promise of the innocent woman in the private sphere, confronted Soviet women with an unrealistic social imperative. Given the massively skewed male to female ratio

[73] Aleksievich (n. 60 above).

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in the postwar years, the role of wife and mother was unattainable for millions of women. Failure to live up to the idealized image could turn easily into the social stigmatization of single women and mothers, feeding women's personal traumas.[74] At the present state of our knowledge of postwar Russia, it is only possible to make the preliminary suggestion that, while preoccupied with doctoring the traumatized souls of men, Soviet writers not only ignored the female side of the war story but also created new traumatic possibilities for women in postwar Soviet society.

[74] For the USSR the Great Patriotic War was a demographic catastrophe: 20 to 20.5 million men and 7 to 7.5 million women died, leaving a massively imbalanced postwar male to female ratio: in 1959, only two-thirds of women in the twenty to forty-nine age group were married. See Barber and Harrison (n. 8 above), pp. 40–43, 208–10.

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