Intimate Relations:

Reflections on history, power, and gender in Koriak women's lives in northern Kamchatka

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with issues of gender, power, and history in Koriak women's lives in northern Kamchatka. The Koriak represent one of the indigenous populations of Russia's north. They migrate with the reindeer over vast, rugged tundra territory, and live by the products the animals and the land yield. This cultural order has increasingly been threatened by encroachments of first the Soviet, and now the Russian, state. Today, the Koriak are marginalized within the powerful model of the nation state, and their lives are marked by dissolution and despair.

I conducted my research in two villages, Tymlat and Ossora, situated at the northeastern shore of the Kamchatka peninsula. In particular I worked with Koriak women whose various discourses of love, erotics, and desire I examine in this thesis. I adopt a wider framework of history, state power, and marginalization to analyze their practices of femininity and sexuality. In order to exemplify the Koriak experience of everyday life in northern Kamchatka I draw on women's narratives to elucidate various strategies of gender and cultural positionings in the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora. Moreover, I explore Koriak descriptions of Soviet history as a critical commentary on Soviet and Russian descriptions of historical processes in northern Kamchatka.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thése traite des relations de genre et des questions du pouvoir et d'histoire dans la vie des femmes koriak, l'une des populations indigènes habitant la péninsule de Kamchatka, au nord de la Russie. Les Koriak vivent de la ceuillette, de la chasse, et de leurs rennes, tout en traversant la vaste et rugueuse région de toundra avec leurs troupeaux. Cet ordre culturel et devenu de plus en plus ménacé: par l'intervention de l'État soviétique, en premier lieu; et maintenant, par l'État russe. À l'heure actuel, les Koriak se retrouvent marginalisés à l'interieur d'un puissant État-nation, leurs vies marquées par la dissolution sociale et morale et par le désespoir.

J'ai effectué mes recherches dans deux villages, Tymlat et Ossora, situés sur la côte nord-est de la péninsule de Kamchatka. J'ai surtout travaillé avec les femmes koriak: l'analyse de leurs dicours sur l'amour, l'érotique et le désir constitue l'objet de cette thése. En traitant les questions d'histoire, de pouvoir étatique, et de marginalité, j'analyse leurs pratiques féminines et sexuelles. J'évoque les narrations de ces femmes pour illustrer la vie koriak de tous le jours, et pour clarifier les stratégies sexuelles et culturelles qu'elles employent pour se situer dans le monde de Tymlat et d'Ossora. De plus, j'explore les déscriptions koriak de l'histoire soviétique, en tant que commentaire critique sur les déscriptions koriak de l'histoire soviétique, en tant que commentaire critique sur les déscriptions russes et soviétique des processus historiques dans cette région.

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One of my greatest debts is to the many Koriak women and men with whom I lived and worked. Although they knew all along that the results of this research would do little to aid their lives, they supported this project with generous hospitality. For reasons of privacy I decided not to list their names, yet I would like to thank them for their tolerance of my mistakes and the delight of their company.

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Before I left for the first time for Kamchatka I spent four months in Moscow to collect published material on the Koriak in various libraries. Officially affiliated with the Academy of Science in Moscow I was able to use their contacts for a one-month stay in St. Petersburg (at that time still Leningrad). There I lived at the home of the late Galina Gracheva with whom I talked extensively about her experience of doing research on Iamal peninsula in the Russian North. One day she presented me with a notebook, expressing in her dedication her best wishes for me and my research. Today this might be seen

as merely a sign of anthropological lineage-making; however, her personal dedication to me in this book means much to me and I cherish the friendship and spirit of assistance she expressed at that time. Tragically, Galina Gracheva died in a helicopter accident three years ago while sojourning on the Iamal peninsula.

During my second stay at Kamchatka peninsula I spent one week with the late Aleksandr Pika, discussing the complexities and predicaments of Koriak life. Several months later Aleksandr died in a boating accident while conducting research in Chukotka. This thesis reflects, in a sense, some of the content of the conversations we held.

These just cited, and many more, have been essential to my thinking, reading, and writing, and I thank them all for having provided the means for me to finish this dissertation.

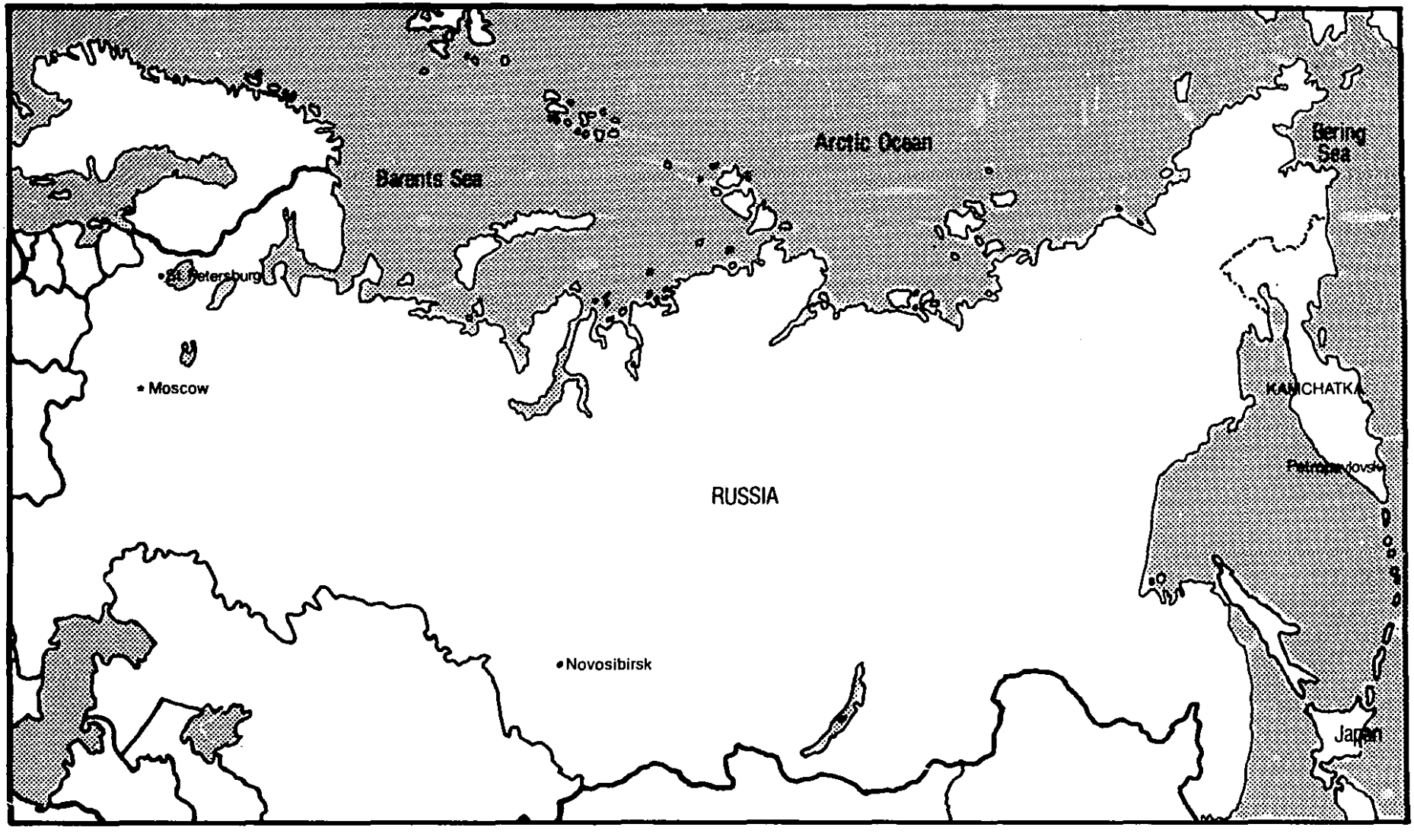
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Russian words are transliterated following the Library of Congress system. Soft signs from the Russian language are marked with one apostrophe, hard signs with two apostrophes.

GLOSSARY

Anapkinskie doma	designation of the two houses in Ossora which are inhabited by displaced Koriak from the village Anapka
bania	public bath-house
iaranga	word used to describe the traditional Koriak tent
iukola	dried dog-salmon or keta; one of Koriak staple foods
kamus	part of the lower reindeer leg
kolkhoz	collective farm
khololo	Koriak celebration in which the souls *(dusha)* of hunted and killed animals are accompanied into the 'other world'
kukhlianka:	reindeer fur coat
kulak	here, 'rich' reindeer-owners
lauteng	sacred weed employed by the Koriak in their celebrations, or as gifts for spirits
malakhai	hood-like reindeer fur cover to protect the head against the wind
masterskaia	part of the *sovkhoz* where women tan and sew reindeer fur
mukhamory	magic mushrooms
nart	sled pulled by either a dog-team or reindeer-team
samogon	self-distilled schnapps
sovkhoz	state-owned enterprise run by appointed and salaried employees
spirt	grain spirit
stoibishche	nomadic camp which usually consisted out of several Koriak families
tabun	reindeer herd; the word is often used by the Koriak to designate life in the tundra

torpaza	reindeer fur boots
tshumrabotniza	a woman who is employed by the *sovkhoz* to cook for reindeer herders in the tundra and to darn their clothes
ukrupnenie	amalgamation of several villages to bigger economic units
vlast'	Russian word for power; the word is used by the Koriak to designate the Soviet state and its policy



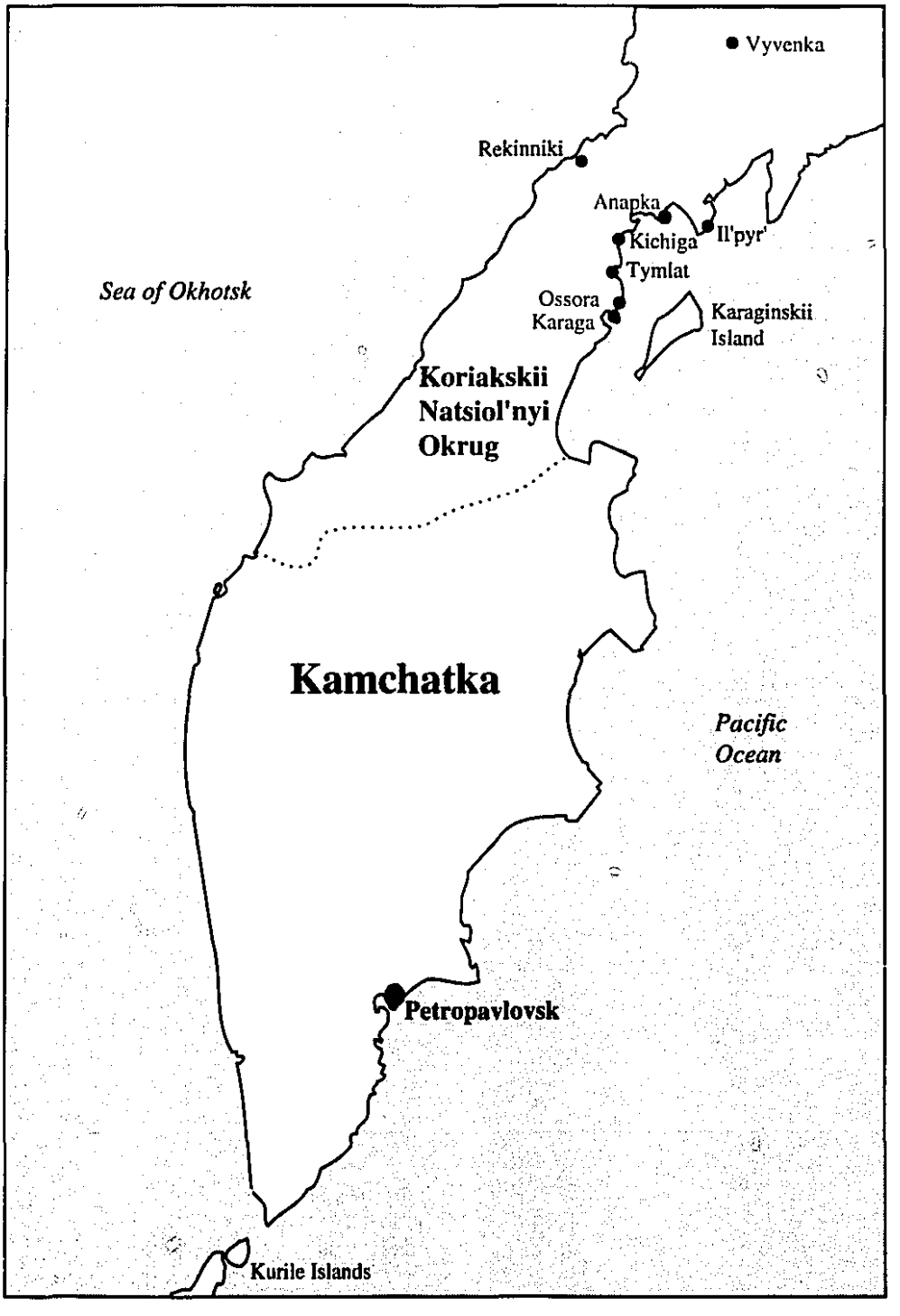
Map 1: Russia and The Former Soviet Union

PREFACE

The companionship and friendship of Koriak women during the times I spent with them in Kamchatka mold this thesis. From my first arrival until the first farewell, from a second arrival until another departure, women chaperoned my life in Tymlat and Ossora, demonstrating intimacy and friendship to me; as I spent more and more time with them, polite courtesies and gradual pleasantries were gradually transformed into intimacy, and soon I found myself enmeshed in a web of amiability, jealousy, and rivalry. With increased involvement, however, I became less and less the distant observer driven by ethnographic curiosity. Friendships demanded the desertion of impartiality and required loyalty and fidelity. Koriak women introduced me to worlds redolent with passion, affection, desire, and yearning. Likewise, women witnessed my experience, and expression, of sadness, depression, joy, and infatuation.

This work is significantly shaped by the different stories told to me by Koriak women. Women's voices represent a marked perspective and channel knowledge through which to understand and theorize various ways to live one's life. So far, anthropological projects in general and works on the Russian North in particular did not pay much attention to female representations. As such, this thesis provides a female perspective on the life-world of a culturally and politically marginalized group in northern Kamchatka.

I went twice to Kamchatka: my first sojourn covered a span of ten months, from January to October, 1992, my second a period of five months, from June to November, 1994. Between my two stays, as well as now, women friends and I have stayed in touch by writing letters and through several phone calls. The inhabitants of Tymlat and Ossora were made aware of my research:



Map 2: Kamchatka Region

Ossora's local newspaper covered the fact that I lived and worked with 'the Koriak', and my research, several times, and I attempted to answer every question pertaining to my sojourn, research, and person as freely and openly as I could. My friends, as well as their relatives and confidants, knew that their worries, struggles, and joys would be reflected in my dissertation in the form of descriptions, quotations, and analyses. We talked about my project, and they witnessed me scribbling down notes, taking pictures, and writing lengthy passages of analysis. Sometimes women expressed doubts or misgivings about my wish to relate parts of their personal story in this dissertation and I have respected their reservations. But the material I do present here has also been shaped by trust, confidence, and intimacy. The disclosure of individuals' feelings, activities, and philosophies poses a problem within anthropology that - inevitably - remains for the largest part unresolved. I do not claim to have settled such vital issues, and it is I who carries the ultimate responsibility for any effects the disclosure of Koriak women's biographies might have. Each of the names used in this thesis presents a pseudonym for a person whose 'real' identity I decided not to reveal - although I am aware that these identities are easily decipherable for villagers themselves. This is only one of the things I could do to ensure, though not guarantee, a protective layer of anonymity. In this prelude, I wish to introduce some of the women to whom I was closest to show how our relationships were shaped.

Liuba, one of the first women who befriended me, was more than supportive of my ideas and presence and provided the necessary connections. Throughout my stays, Liuba provided assurance and amenity when I felt vexed by the asperity of Koriak life in northern Kamchatka, yet, she also challenged me to understand and expose social and personal distress. Liuba shared a small

apartment in Ossora with her old mother and several siblings, and this family generously invited me to stay with them whenever I sojourned in Ossora. During both of my stays Liuba aided this project by introducing me to other people, translating into Russian Koriak speech I did not understand, providing general advice, and admonishing me when - in Koriak eyes - I behaved or understood poorly. Eventually I became so close to her and some of her siblings that they introduced me to others as a 'family member', a designation that contoured our closeness, but which entailed certain responsibilities and duties. Like every female member of the household, I cooked, took care of children, went for groceries, and cleaned - although never to the extent that Liuba did.

Zina and Aniuta, who also live in Ossora, allowed me to witness the complex quandaries of their lives by disclosing their pain, anxiety, and hope. In particular we debated gender relations in Germany or North America, and they contemplated the pros and cons of both sides. Sometimes they asked me for advice if crucial decisions were to be made - hoping that I knew the solution to gloom and despair - but many times, feeling helpless, I had to disappoint them. It was with them that I stayed up late in the night, learning about how Koriak women may experience men as a burden, why many commence to drink, and how their aspirations prompt them to live a life many Koriak - men and women - decry as debauched and immoral.

Liuba had relatives in Tymlat whom she had not visited for a long time, so she decided to accompany me on my first journey to Tymlat.[1] She contacted Irina who agreed without knowing me to let me stay at her home. A younger brother of Nina Nikolaevna, Liuba's mother, had been the second husband of Shura Kim, Irina's grandmother, and the two families had kept in active

[1]Please see the travel description in my introductory chapter.

contact.[2] Irina, who was twenty-eight when I first met her, lived in the last of the blue-painted and unkempt houses at the eastern end of Tymlat with her three children Valer (6), Kira (3), and Zhenia (9 months), her grandmother, Shura Kim, and her brother, Gavril, who was pursuing his studies in Palana at that time. Irina, her three children, and her grandmother shared one room of the dilapidated apartment. Gavril, however, used to live in a room of his own which Irina now generously offered to me. Knowing that most Koriak lived in incredibly cramped conditions, I felt fortunate and gratefully accepted Irina's suggestion. However, the windows of Gavril's room proved to be very drafty; furthermore, Irina was using the room as a provisional greenhouse to cultivate tomato and potato plants, so in the end I shared this room with snow and ground beetles.

Irina and I commiserated with each other. Raising her three children with the help of her grandmother, she nevertheless spent most of her time at home, breast-feeding her youngest son Zhenia. She was very patient and attempted to answer all of my questions, which must have sounded silly at times, explaining the life and behavior that I found hard to understand. I am not sure that Irina understood why I had come to such a ravaged place and all of my explanations sounded poor and insufficient to her. However, she understood that the activity of writing was important to what I sought to accomplish, and that it took quite a bit of my time. One evening, after a long day I had spent working in the *masterskaia* (building in Tymlat where women tan and sew reindeer fur), learning how to tan hides, she asked me if I had "already written something that

[2]After two months of living with Irina I also referred to Shura Kim as my grandmother. This was considered normal and soon I was identified as the sixth member of the household. I handed the biggest lot of my research grant to Irina who then bought food and clothes from the money for the entire household.

day." This question became a regular habit of hers, and when I shook my head in the negative she admonished me "to write." In the evenings she often told me stories about mythical personages; one evening when I was too tired to carry through my anthropological obligations and write them down, Irina was merciless. She ran to bring me some paper and a pen and in an imperious voice ordered me to record the tales immediately.

Frequently, she saw me writing in the dim lights of the candles I had brought with me. My behavior must have seemed illiberal, at times selfish to her. Shooing her children out of the kitchen she - at least temporarily - attempted to allow me my most precious muse. Her children and I had an easy relationship and in particular Valer became both a teacher and a friend. I often took Valer with me when I visited other people, while Irina took care of her son Zhenia and grandmother. Valer showed me the proper techniques of fishing, knowledge that was valuable when the decay of the *sovkhoz* (state-regulated farm) in Tymlat seemed inevitable and we had to turn to sources such as fishing, hunting, and collecting berries. In particular, in summer, 1994, Valer and I spent many days out in the tundra collecting mushrooms and berries or harvesting mussels at the shore so that Irina, her children, and grandmother would have something to eat.

Grandmother represented a stable focal point in our household; a small woman, the years had emaciated her body. Her right leg had been crippled in an accident that had happened when she was still a child. While she was herding reindeer with her father, she had fallen into a small glacier chasm and since then her leg had refused to grow. Grandmother, like most elderly people, was baptized, yet she followed the spiritual order of the Koriak world. Nobody really knew 'how old she was'; the birthdate in her passport, arbitrarily chosen when she was young, better reflected Soviet temporal imagination than grandmother's

age. Grandmother did not like to talk about the past. However, she mentioned that she came from 'the north' (probably from the area which is today the village of Vyvenka) and was taken further south into the area of the village Kichiga, by her first husband. She was the youngest of his four wives. She told us that the women got along fine with one other. Paltry conflicts were fast resolved and, when her husband was angry, his senior wives protected her from his irate eruptions. Eventually he died and, following Koriak precept, grandmother married his younger brother. But shortly after their marriage, her second husband drowned; again, grandmother remarried. Altogether in her life she gave birth to thirteen children, only two sons and one daughter, Tania, survived. Tania married at a very young age, and, after giving birth to her daughter Irina, decided to live in Kichiga. There she became seriously ill, and, knowing that she would die, she pleaded with her mother, who lived the nomadic life of a reindeer herder, to assume a more sedentary life-style and move into the village. Grandmother agreed. Her third husband had since died, and she wedded an elderly Korean man, Kim, after Tania died. He refused to return to his home country after the war and together they began to take care of Tania's only daughter and two sons. Kim died several years ago, and today grandmother raises her great-grandchildren, the children of her granddaughter Irina.

Grandmother was kind and benevolent; she was patient with the impatience I sometimes showed, and taught me the sensual and tactile qualities of 'culture'. Upon my second arrival in Tymlat she sacrificed a dog to ensure my emotional and corporeal well-being; she asked the spirits not to bring harm and to bestow me with health and prudence. At the very same time, while I sat on her bed and we were sharing little pieces of meat she cut off with her large knife, she expressed her worries about the abatement of fish and meat. There was, she

moaned and agonized, no food in the house, and she felt embarrassed and sad at what she thought to be a poor welcome. Gavril, who lived now in the village, had gone hunting and at least there was some hope that he would return with a good bag. When he returned with only one small duck, grandmother grew sadder and more desperate, fearing her inability to satisfy her three great-grandchildren and me.

Shura was a respected woman in Tymlat; people called upon her help in matters of spiritual significance and even to answer daily questions such as how to dry meat or cut seal fur. Whenever grandmother had to attend a funeral or be present at other events she thought of interest for me, she asked me to accompany her. People in Tymlat ascribed healing powers to her; her presence was soothing and her serenity seemed to create the curative strength attributed to her. In addition to taking me to places and events I otherwise would not have seen or experienced, grandmother 'taught culture' through carnal sustenance and other ingestible matter, transforming the body into a narration of culture.

Gusty winds swept through the village and damp hazes coated Tymlat's houses in dusk shadows. Irina had left in the early morning hours to attend to an ailing aunt and had taken the children with her. Grandmother, sitting on the edge of her decrepit bedstead, rubbed her eyes in pain. Behind her left glass eye a hideous hurt was hiding, creeping into her forehead so that she moaned and groaned when the suffering seemed unbearable. 'Davlenie', the wicked headache that had come to life in the village, fatigued the villagers; the air felt heavy and breathing seemed impossible. As the dampness moved through grandmother's limbs, compelling drowsy and listless movements in her body, she wept in silent agony

However, that morning Tet Kira decided to visit grandmother and to deliver the 'mukhamory', magic mushrooms (fly-agaric), she had collected in two huge nets while spending several months in the tundra. While Tet Kira spread the mushrooms on the kitchen table both women contemplated the pleasures of tundra life; grandmother clapped delightfully into her hands and seemed now alert and vivacious. She asked me to boil some water for tea and, pouring the tea into a saucer, she dipped the dried mushrooms into the liquid and contentedly nibbled on them. At her appeals to me to join her I explained hesitantly that days ago I had agreed to travel with Lera and Iura to the old village of Kichiga to bring back some of the dried fish stored in one of the demolished houses. I left, yet, when I reappeared after a few hours with the news that we would not leave today, grandmother proved herself both stubborn and insistent. Patiently she had waited for my return to teach me how to consume 'mukhamory' in the proper way. This time I had no excuse, and together we each ingested three mushrooms.

Grandmother's headache wore off; spiritedly she walked into the bedroom to take the drum he father had given her when she was still a child. Sitting on her bed she played all night, while I listened to the sound of her voice and the drum.

Even though I lived in Irina's house, I was regarded not so much an intruder as a stranger in the village, whose concerns were peripheral to those of the community. Often I felt desolate: life in the village was harsh and most people seemed reluctant to speak to a foreigner whose presence seemed confounding. Denizens were engaged in intricate and desperate attempts to rebuff the clinging meanness of poverty. A long history of various intruders

who had brought damage and abuse to the Koriak turned every outsider into a suspicious being, no matter if an administrator from Moscow or an ethnographer from Germany or Canada. Reminiscences from ethnographies and other somewhat more instructional writings wandered through my head. By reading 'subjective accounts' (Cesara 1982; Crapanzano 1980; Powdermaker 1966) on research in the 'field' I had sought to prepare myself to understand some of the difficulties and complexities I would encounter. I felt distraught by what threatened to become an ill-fated project of research and, consequently, an unfulfilled life. The second stream of uncertainty expressed itself in doubt, sheer doubt. Why, I wondered, should *they* even tell me about their lives, engage with me, as I had dreamt, in lively disputes about the plan and purpose of the world? No, I could see no reason for *them* to do so, and I must confess that I was never able to take the 'hard approach' to research by walking through someone's door, something also the Koriak would have found unacceptable.[3]

As my relationships with Koriak women grew more intense and amiable I was drawn into the complexities of their lives. Increasingly, I found harder to maintain a distant stance, and eventually I was forced to give up my impartiality and detachment. I began to ponder questions of how to incorporate our intimacy and my partiality into this thesis without altogether abandoning the project of ethnography. In the end I opted for a concoction of narrative, women's speech,

[3]I should add here an interesting note that I believe most North American anthropologists are unaware of. In Germany, where I had received my initial academic training as an anthropologist, a lively discussion on the purpose and merits of field research predominates in the discipline. In contrast to North America, where field research is considered to be essential to 'doing anthropology' by providing the nutrients for theoretical elaboration, in Germany the discussions is marked by reservations about 'forceful intrusions' in other people's lives. Strong ethical concerns guide the debate in Germany; many scholars conduct fieldwork with immense sruples or abandon field research altogether.

and description. This way, I believe, I can disclose Koriak cultural politics, express some of the feel of life in northern Kamchatka, and reveal some of the richness of Koriak women's thought. I use *italics* to elucidate women's speech, Koriak interpretations of the past, and descriptions which evoke the ethnographer's 'I'. However, I will take up questions of writing and ethnography in a more detailed way in my introduction.

Yet, although my relationships with women grew more intense, this did not mean that they were free of feelings of jealousy and rivalry. Research is often marked by various and shifting alliances between women that may be a hindrance to mutual understanding and acceptance. Just by means of my presence - and often unknowingly - I infringed on existing relationships between women, forging new associations.

Both Uliana and Moite worked in the local 'masterskaia' of Tymlat. The 'masterskaia' is a small shack, clinging with its back to the local pharmacy that carries mosquito repellents, pharmaceuticals against head- and stomach aches, ointments and cotton. In winter one has to walk over little mountains of snow to reach the entrance, and in summer banks of dirt and mud hide the door. The first of three rooms that form the 'masterskaia' is long, low and narrow; windows line the outer wall and wooden benches face this only source of light. Tea cups stand in undefined order on a small wooden table below the windows and a daily morning tea break is ensured by a samovar, purchased long ago in the local 'sovkhoz' shop. This perennially cold room accommodates all utensils necessary to tan, darn, and color the hides which are stored under the benches. Rusty buckets filled with reindeer feces and bowls of minced alder tree branches stirred into urine are placed beside the hides. Smeared onto the non-hairy side of the

skin feces keep the hides soft and smooth, while the urine soaked sprigs endow the fur with brightly reddish colorations. The ensuing two rooms, which accommodate hard wooden benches, provide working space to tan and sew the hides.

When I came to Tymlat I decided to learn the craft of tanning and sewing that occupied so much of women's talk and concerns. Liuba took me to the 'masterskaia' to introduce me, and a few days later I started working in the early morning hours, acquiring tactile knowledge of Koriak women's concerns. Easy tasks were assigned to me; women presented me with small fur pieces and carefully Moite showed me how to treat the skins. Grandmother gave me four 'kamus' (part of the lower leg of the reindeer) I needed to sew a 'malakhai' (hood-like cover for the head). Yet, Kira , Irina's daughter, had seized hold of them and lost one piece while playing with them, so, I began asking for another piece of 'kamus'.

The following morning I entered the 'masterskaia' to see if one of the women who worked there could save a small piece of their material. I knew how precious these fur pieces were to them; most of them stored up fur in their homes for future projects. While I inquired, Uliana, who was the brigade leader and controlled the production of the 'masterskaia' looked at me in disdain. Shaking her head and, without saying a word, she emphatically rejected my request. From the beginning of my arrival in Tymlat, she had been discourteous and discouraging and so far I had no explanation for her unusual behavior. I heard Moite's voice coming from the dark corner of her place, volunteering to give me the missing piece. She told me to follow her to her home in the evening: there we could drink tea and she would show me how to improve my technique. This offer marked the begin of a deep friendship, as Moite began to initiate me into

the secrets and artistic finesse of working with fur. Yet the more our friendship intensified, and the more women joked with me and taunted me with ease, the more aggravated my relationship with Uliana became. She was flaming with scorn, trying to decide whether to ignore me or pour sarcasm on me. Moite and Uliana - at least that is how it seemed to me - did not relate very well to each other. Moite began to ignore Uliana's orders as a brigade leader, and Uliana screamed at her with anger. Rapidly, the situation escalated and eventually Moite refused to work under Uliana's leadership. The situation in the 'masterskaia' grew unbearable and I felt hurt by Uliana's often acerbic remarks. However, around that time, I was due to leave for the tundra and I gladly escaped the tense situation.

When I returned from the tundra, I was surprised to meet Uliana at Moite's house. I greeted her, but she did not give any sign of knowing me. Pondering her obvious aggression I asked others, seeking an explanation. I learned that many women considered Uliana to be haughty and disgraceful, yet I also found clarification. What I had not known was that Moite and Uliana had been soulmates and confidantes from a very early age. Uliana, so I was told, had always been very possessive of Moite, and as soon as Moite developed other friendships had reacted in such a jealous way that most women did not even bother to be friendly with Moite. However, with me the situation had been different. I had come as a foreigner, as someone who was 'like a child' (as many used to say) and Koriak values of courtesy and generosity demanded that I be helped. Uliana, according to general, and in particular Irina's opinion, was resentful because Moite spent much time with me and she felt left out. In the end, the tensions between Uliana and me eased, yet reservation between us persisted.

Men's voices are also audible in this thesis, yet their stories do not match the intensity of women's narrations. The reason for this condition is simple and quite straightforward: during my sojourns in Tymlat and Ossora I spent most of my time with women, and not men. This is not to say that contacts with men were flat and insignificant; particularly in Tymlat, I was close to two men, but Koriak politics of courtship and romance impeded the disclosure of trust and intimacy that I shared with women. Men's voices are echoed in the third chapter on history and colonization, a chapter which in particular divulges male understandings and perceptions of the collision between Koriak life and Soviet history.

CHAPTER ONE

DEPARTURE

The night was sharp and cold. I knew that the biting frost would relentlessly travel through my reindeer skin gloves and transform my still warm hands into mute and numb fists. Liuba had taken all the necessary precautions for our journey from Ossora to Tymlat. Three dog sleds had been arranged because there were few snowmobiles and the way was long, demanding careful deliberations and preparations. The dogs were all well-fed and waiting for our departure. Liuba was still busy assembling miscellaneous items considered absolutely necessary. The obligatory tea pot was not to be forgotten at any cost and matches were stowed in two cans to protect them from the damp weather.

I had anxiously awaited this sojourn. Tymlat was the place I had chosen to carry out my field research and, for the last year, my thoughts had been concentrated on Kamchatka's north. I love open, empty, 'waste' space, and at least one anthropologist had assured me that feeling an affinity for the surroundings would make a big difference in conducting my research. In 1991, when I had been a *stazher* (intern) at the Ethnographic Institute of the Academy of Science in Moscow and in Leningrad (as it was then called), I tried to gain a grasp of Koriak ethnography. Working in the libraries and archives, I found the records unsatisfying and I longed to go there myself. I fantasized about the place, hid anxieties from parents and friends in Germany and Moscow, met statements about the 'infeasibility' of my project with impatience, and refuted every utterance casting Kamchatka as a place of unbearable wildness and savagery for 'cultivated' people like Moscovites and myself.

Finally we started off. The dogs labored hard to pull the load. The sleds sank deep into the soft snow and we walked beside them, snow to our hips. After a few miles we were exhausted and had to rest. In the distance we could hear the roaring of snowmobiles. Aggravating noise indicated their approach. We stopped, awaiting their arrival. It was Affanasiev Nestorev and a few other people from Tymlat. They stopped, greetings and news were exchanged and the respective merits of snowmobiles and dogteams were debated. While Liuba explained my presence and intentions, their eyes curiously turned towards me, an unknown face and name. As Affanasiev explained, they had business in Ossora and were now returning to Tymlat. It was already late in the night and they were in a hurry. After a brief discussion, it was decided that I would go with them and Liuba would continue her journey by dog-sled. I would arrive in Tymlat sooner, she explained to me, and, seeing how cold I was, she gave me another pair of gloves. The sleds were transferred and I continued the trip by 'buran' (snowmobile trademark in Russia), sitting with another man on the 'nart' (sled) pulled by the snowmobile. Indeed, the voyage went more quickly and we soon reached a placed called 'P"iannye ozero' - Lake of Drunkenness. Affanasiev halted and uncoupled our 'nart' from the vehicle. He set off into nowhere without a word, leaving us sitting on the hard trailer in the freezing night. My fellow traveler introduced himself as one of Tymlat's veterinarians. Noticing my disquiet, he advised me to have patience and his repose confirmed my hope that our driver would return. We sat and stared into the murky dark, while he meditated upon things of which I knew naught, and I contemplated the hazards of fieldwork. The situation evoked reminiscences of Beckett's 'Waiting

for Godot', and the irony of these circumstances made me feel somewhat ludicrous.

Finally Affanasiev returned. We continued our journey, and by the time we reached Tymlat, I felt like one of those ice-blocks covering the water surface of the north-Pacific. First Affanasiev dropped off the veterinarian and his things, then brought me to Irina's house, my future home in Tymlat. He yelled and she opened the door, pulling me into the apartment. She pushed my hands onto the hot stones lying on the iron stove in her kitchen and I felt searing pain shooting through my hands and arms. Valer and Kira, her six-year old son and three-year old daughter, stared at me in wonderment. Zhenia, her youngest at nine months old, was sleeping and her grandmother, who would become mine as well, was holding him. Wearied from the journey, I went to bed, glad to have reached Tymlat and Irina's house.

My sleep was not long; a hammering sound soon woke us. Drunken with sleep Irina opened the door to the police officer. He overlooked Irina and demanded to see my passport immediately, convinced that I did not have a visa for Tymlat. I handed him my passport and all the papers from the Ministry of Inner Affairs in Moscow which he looked at suspiciously. He found the papers in order and left without a good-bye. Zhenia was now awake and Irina nursed him while boiling water for tea. I returned to bed, wondering just what awaited me in this place.

Traveling entices. As writings by Malinowski (1922), Evans-Pritchard (1937), Firth (1936), Leiris (1968), and more recently Rabinow (1977), Abu-Lughod (1985), and Boddy (1989) show, anthropologists fancy introductions and narrations replete with adventure and temptation. Travel descriptions

introduce others to exotic surroundings and nurture mind and body with luscious knowledge. The sun burns hot and ruthless, winds blow cold and bitter, waves play soft and calm, rivers meander through exotic space, and the jungle smells pungent. Wistful retrospectives on journeys once experienced arouse emotions and excite the senses. Nostalgic impressions of breezes, flavors, lights, and seasons stimulate our imaginations and lure us into 'the dark heart of others'. While Raymond Firth sails over smooth Pacific waters to reach the place of his destiny, Leiris fights dusty desert sands metaphorical of both distance and intrigue, and Brody (1981) maneuvers his pick-up truck through aromatic and colorful forests, both reader and writer share sensuous experiences and carnal sensations. Immersed in tender recollections of time and space, reminiscences become tangible and memories spin a sensuous gauze of feel and touch.

My thesis hinges on motion and travel as organizing metaphors. This work is a journey through the various forms of Koriak positionings within history, webs of state rule, as well as regional and political frameworks of marginality. It is also a journey through discourses on sexuality and erotics Koriak women employ to situate themselves within a world that is now rapidly changing. Current political and social transformations in Russia culminate in the decay of formerly binding economic and political structures, and create distress, agony, and suffering for most Koriak women and men I knew. Consequently, this thesis explores wider social and political parameters which shape Koriak marginality and define their existence within newly emergent orders of gender, state rule, market economy, and various axes of regional asymmetry.

Koriak everyday life in northern Kamchatka is imbued with suffering, depression, and despair. Living conditions are severe and grim; ailments, poverty, and unemployment create a phlegmatic atmosphere, pressing down on

villages like the heavy, foggy clouds constantly hanging above the shore. Men, drunken with *samogon* (self-distilled schnapps) or *spirt* (grain spirit) - uncanny in a strange combination of misconduct and tranquillity - stagger along the sludgy roads. Frightened by others and themselves, they try toothless smiles to soothe their troubled souls and bodies. Children hide away from school, searching their parents' pockets for cigarette butts and change. Their games mimic adult predicaments: jesting imitations of drunkenness transform angst into play and boastful stories mirror adults' veilings of powerless selves. Salesladies rebuff any attempt by children to buy matches, thus acting in concordance with parental rules. Women hurry between home, boarding school, and work place, pulling crying and yelling children; they feel exhausted by their drunken husbands, frazzled by financial worries, bitter from callous marriages.

Marital and generational conflicts, violent altercations and death codify the existence of Tymlat's and Ossora's inhabitants. These two villages are situated at the north-eastern shore of Kamchatka peninsula in the *Karaginskii raion* (district). Although these two villages are located within a close vicinity (35 km) - given the usual distances in Kamchatka, - they differ strongly in their regional and ethnic configuration. Ossora, the administrative center of the *Karaginskii raion* represents the centripetal village of the district and accommodates its administration, hospital, police station, and transition airport. Out of a population of 3985 villagers only 7,5% are Koriak; 92,5% are Russians and Ukrainians. Ossora is a sad place; most Koriak live in poorly constructed houses without any insulation against the cold, no water, and little room. When I tarried in Ossora I always lived in the *Anapkinskie doma,* two attached houses at the western edge of the village, named because displaced Koriak from the

former village of Anapka inhabit these houses.[1] The apartments are small and several families live cramped in the narrowness of the houses. From the windows of my small room I overlooked the yard with its latrines. The lack of running water and any toilet facilities makes life hard; several times a day residents carry buckets heavy with water to their apartments, careful not to fall into one to the muddy road's manifold holes and drop the precious liquid on the ground. Frequently tenants cross the streets with stained buckets which serve as toilets; shamefacedly they empty those buckets into cavities adjacent to their houses. A water pump across the decrepit road provides water for drinking, cooking and washing. The *bania* (public bathhouse) provides the only option for Ossora's Koriak to clean themselves. Yet, this option is jeopardized by the constant increase in price.

In contrast to Ossora, Tymlat is a village of about five hundred inhabitants of whom 70,3 % are Koriak; the remainder Ukrainian, Russian, and Armenian. At the turn of the century this place was a small settlement in which Koriak who lived by hunting sea mammals dwelled; today the village houses a vast number of resettled Koriak from Kichiga, Rekinniki, and Anapka, as well as Koriak from Karaga who left for Tymlat when all of Karaga's reindeer were slaughtered in 1956. Buildings housing the village administration, a clubhouse, and the *sovkhoz* office are lined up along Tymlat's only street. Unemployed women and men besiege the buildings daily, hoping for news announcing social betterment, or at least change. Slogans on the facade of the *sovkhoz* office and the boarding school announce the victory of the Soviet *narod* (people). Children dressed in bluish school uniforms exercise in front of the building, proudly

[1]Ossora's Koriak population was resettled to the villages after their native settlements were forcefully destroyed in 1956 (Kichiga), 1974 (Anapka), and 1980 (Rekinniki).

wearing metal stickers displaying Lenin and promoting the party's vigor. The disparity in the populations of Ossora and Tymlat and their cultural idiosyncrasies generate hostilities and frictions, and a sense of *communitas* is impeded by people's discrete interpretations of tradition, morality, and the politics of 'being Koriak'.

Travelers can reach Tymlat from Ossora by either boat, helicopter, hiking, or dog sled in winter. Along the route parallel to the shore, cliffs descend precipitously into the ocean and provide Tymlat with some protection against the harsh winds that assault the village frequently and ravagingly. Travelers who reach Tymlat from Ossora by sled must descend the cliffs carefully, watching their steps and balancing their luggage. Voyagers using one of Aeroflot's bright orange helicopters which fly every Saturday from Ossora to Tymlat touch down at the northern end of the village, and set their feet onto the wooden boards that cover the muddy sands of the scanty landing field. The swirling sound of helicopter wings is audible from the distance and villagers run to meet passengers.

Frequent and intense traveling is a characteristic feature in the lives of most Koriak. Sisters and brothers, aunts and uncles, wives and husbands, parents and friends travel to see kin, confidantes, soul mates, and lovers. Voyagers exchange messages, news, and gossip as well as items of daily use. Most often, relatives and friends ask for goods which are not available in the local village shop, and often letters and documents accompany the solicited wares. These objects are handed to the one traversing the land with the request to attend to them and travelers are usually met by the petitioners at their destination. Parcels of sugar, flour, salt, tea, and china; packets of reindeer meat, fresh fish,

and *iukola* (dried fish, usually salmon); bundles of footware, clothes, and hides traveled with me on my voyages in northern Kamchatka.

This thesis is both a journey with Koriak women through their lives, and through the various ways Koriak remember the past and negotiate the present. Ethnographically, Koriak could be easily described as a nomadic people, migrating with the reindeer through rugged terrain. Their autonomy and mobility are salient cultural features ethnographers (cf. Jochelson 1908) and state administrators have found equally fascinating and menacing. According to them, Koriak life revolves around the animals that inhabit the tundra, rivers, and ocean. Koriak breed reindeer and hunt bears, birds, fish, and seal with spears. They conduct healing rituals and bring those who are ill to shamans. They believe in an animated, supernatural world and bring offerings to the spirits, asking for help, relief, and advice. This set of cultural practices invites a conventional catalogue of questions and assumptions about the 'primitive' and about different forms of knowledge and social organization. However, as powerful demands for resources, land, and military control have guided Russian and Soviet state expansion into the most remote areas of the land, the autonomy and mobility of the Koriak have been increasingly threatened. Koriak people are located within a politics of the periphery. Although they do not form a homogeneous entity, a common experience of all Koriak might be a sense of marginality (cf. Tsing 1993), nurtured by a history of administrative decentralization, cultural devaluation, and physical 'otherness'. Yet, dominant frameworks for understanding state encroachment, ignoring long histories of marginality, tend to posit conditions of pristine isolation on the one hand, and rapid cultural destruction or modernization, on the other. In such frameworks, marginal people become archaic survivors of a paradise lost. However, this

notion reflects a notion of nomadism as a tradition-bound and repetitive form of mobility that defines a cultural structure of simplicity, in contrast to more entropic, sedentary forms. But the Koriak defy such reductive schemes. Koriak travel goes beyond the nomadic. Koriak travel involves communication, the abrogation of micropolitical boundaries, and the extension of power arenas. Following Tsing (1993: 7), I contend that the Koriak "are not just a site of endogenous, localized knowledge," but enmeshed in a wider grid of power, history, and social change that transcends parochial boundaries of state rule, ethnographic imaginations, and limited knowledge. Caught in a web of structural eternity, pastoralists are thought to produce social and temporal configurations of monotony. Yet, in contrast to state, and sometimes ethnographic, visions, nomadism is not simply time-honored migration repeating abiding patterns of mobility. Koriak travel exceeds the boundaries of regional imaginations and images of the regional; Koriak travel to sustain wealth, power, and subsistence. They travel to visit friends, relatives, and lovers, hence extending spheres of influence and knowledge.

In the arrangement of Koriak life, everybody travels: animals, humans, souls, and spirits. Manifold paths traverse Koriak space in numerous ways. Walking, riding, and boating transgress boundaries that are never stable but constantly shifting. Yet, Koriak do not travel through an undifferentiated landscape; in contrast to state and local Russian visions to whom the tundra represents a frightening and disorienting place, Koriak read trees, rocks, and hills as signs of a 'natural' map that shapes knowledge and guides orientation. Trails are seasonal; thaws transform frozen water streets into impassable rivers, and the wind closes passages by blowing snow and debris into the orifices of clearings and thickets. Travelers are never alone. Wild animals, such as eagles,

swans, deer, moose, raccoons, foxes, and bears cross one's way searching for food and places to rest. Beings benevolent and evil inhabit mountains, rocks, rivers, and bays. They tell eventful stories of a mythoscape at the junction of the real and the imaginary. Traveling, says Deleuze (1985), is not necessarily a voyage through space but a trip in intensity. Nomads travel peripheries. They evade the codes of settled peoples and create a counter-discourse of critique and rebellion. Their movements and statements oppose hierarchical centers: oligarchies of power and knowledge. Centers not only contain administrative despotism, relegating nomadic migration to uncontrolled territories, but also exhibit theoretical and analytical authority. The Koriak and the anthropologist travel the land for different reasons, but only the fleeting glance misses the affinity of their motivations and intentions. Koriak travel to gain influence and knowledge translatable into power. Anthropologists, in their travels, collect information in order to establish themselves in positions of authority and influence. Only the well-traveled and well-informed anthropologist is considered worthy of membership in an 'expert-culture'. The conditions of admission are harsh.

The metaphor of travel brings me back to life in Tymlat and Ossora. In this thesis I am in particular concerned with the way Koriak women and men I knew commented upon, explained, and negotiated wider issues of history and social marginality. Moreover, I am especially interested in how Koriak women define various discourses on the body, sexuality, and erotics. At first glance, this may seem to be an unlikely combination and reflect an attempt to deal with two topics at once. However, I contend that history, the experience of power, and Koriak women's discourses on the body can be synthesized through the politics of everyday life. By concentrating on the everyday, I hope to reveal

some of the 'feel' of life in northern Kamchatka. Also, our understanding of the politics of the everyday, the common, habitual, and unspectacular, is central to our understanding of how people define and rework positions of identity, as well as their positions in relation to state power and various axes of regional asymmetry. Koriak women and men locate their comments on and practices of the everyday within broader issues of borderline existence, as fierce attempts by the state and newly emerging political orders encroach on their life. By paying attention to the ways they reckon with political meanings attributed to a life at the periphery of the state, and discourses on development and progress, I hope to disclose some of the broader meanings of history and power, while simultaneously attending to local specificities and people's stakes.

A recent stream of anthropological inquiry interested in broader issues of gender and the anthropology of the body seems to have abandoned the project to pursue the more mundane and ordinary traces of power and gender. Anthropologists often favor rituals and performances as providing materials for 'thick descriptions' of culturally significant life-worlds. The newly awakened interest in the body and emotions concentrates on dramatic and performative expressions: theater, poetry, song, and healing rituals. The lyric and rhapsodic character of such presentations bestows recitations with auras of frivolity and playful dramatizations carry emotions to the surface. Rituals and performances provide idioms of feeling and convey experience and meaning. The body is tactile and the soul is translucent; aesthetic enactments of the self coat sentiment and affection. For example both Bedouin women's poetry (Abu-Lughod 1985) and female death laments in Inner Mani (Seremetakis 1991) incarnate discourses of grief and loss, as well as sentiments of discontent and defiance. The phonetics and semantics of love and grief unfold usually covert emotions and feelings in

public discourses of the ordinary and prosaic. Textures of sounds and lyrics disclose a poetics of the self concomitant with the expression and celebration of the self. In Glendiot, the aesthetics of action, and not the actual act, create the poetics of manhood, emblematic of mastery and virtuosity (Herzfeld 1985). The actor's self is brilliantly expressed and victoriously established through the skillful performance of the Glendiot universe. Reifications of 'ideological positions' and 'historical antecedents' by extravagant and idiosyncratic effectuations of cultural routines are secured by the flamboyant performance of habitual positions. Trawick (1990) decodes emotions in intricate configurations of song, language, and feeling. Songs are vehicles for expressions of sadness and revolt against manifest social and cultural boundaries.

I admire and take delight in much of this work; however, to me these studies seem to suggest that performative expressions are charged with feelings and emotions which express unveiled selves. Performativity, fictionality, and representation leave little space for the senses and the body as organs of experience and action. In every sense, 'material culture' is a dull companion to supposedly more compelling and intriguing inquiries into the realms of ideas, psyche, and poetics. The term itself presupposes the division of the world into at least two spheres and assumes the existence of a different, volatile, kind of culture. I contend that the matrix of the body liquefies the cosmological metaphysics of individual : social, material : spiritual, and so on and renders them ineffective. The topography of everyday life maps the subliminal and unthinking as well as the material and regular because these elements unfold on tangible surfaces.

Recent projects (cf. Feldman 1991; Taussig 1993) taking up notions of the 'material' and the 'everyday' contend that meaning is not only embedded in

complex strata of cultural configurations, but is inscribed onto surfaces of habitual actions and common objects in the realm of the mundane. Feldman treats the body as a template on which history unfolds and power is enacted. The body is the surface on which power becomes tangible and personal convictions, political ideologies, and ideological positions palpable. Feldman's study is situated in a particular context, i.e. the framework of terror and violence in northern Ireland, but I take his comprehension of the body as an effective guide. History, colonialism, as well as the politics of objects, of demeanor, and of gestures mimicking both self and other capture Taussig's attention. From him I take the teaching that objects and imaginations are alive with feelings, power, and desire, and not just bare representations of cultural beliefs and functional utilization. What I find intriguing in Taussig's reading of Cuna figurines and his notion of memoir is his argument that history is made by objects and not only represented in them. Objects and things represent not only imageries of cultural imaginations or reflections of life-worlds, but also possess the power and agency to mold and shape the human world. Feldman's and Taussig's rare understanding of material culture inspires my understanding of Koriak everyday life. Both authors proceed far beyond the boundaries of functionalist comprehensions and interpretations, but invoke the vivacity of objects, discourses, and actions political and mundane.

The quotidian experience of artifacts such as clothes, cosmetics, leather, fur, drums, spirit guards, TV sets, food, alcoholic beverages and *mukhamory*, and of time and of space in the form of houses, tents, apartments, and discos, weave the sensuous tissue of the conversant body. Tactile knowledge is an effect of animated life indwelling things and objects (cf. Appadurai 1986; Kopytoff 1986; Seremetakis 1994) and it is tractable precisely because of the bodily

quality of form and appearance. Despite ceaseless efforts to deconstruct intricate binarisms dividing people, objects, and cultures into mutually exclusive halves, I think that anthropology is still today deeply ingrained in a dualistic economy of meaning. This is to say that meaning seems to be interior and deep but detectable, and surfaces are viewed as meaningless and deceptive. I am ruminating over problems of form and appearance. Is there not some validity to the discernible and tangible, so spurned by Plato, Descartes, and succeeding anthropologists?[2]

Do not get me wrong. I am not arguing against studies of the beautiful and precious which bring cultural performances of all kinds to our attention. Much less do I want to diminish their significance, since our life is seamed with artistic representations. What I want to argue is that the mundane and secular

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[2]Plato pictured images and representations as threadbare veils, as deceptive and false guides to sources of truth. Descartes agreed. Now blamed for dividing the universe into dichotomous spheres, body and mind, he then deemed the expressions of the body to be sentimental, arbitrary, and irrational. In this framework, only the mind is worthy of care and attention; the body represents an array of folly and illusion. The mind reigns over gullible comprehensions of certainty and truth, carnal knowledge is silenced; the age of empiricism banishes fantasy and imagination.

Ironically, this pivotal shift - a pre-Nietzschian proclamation of the 'death of God' and the fall of the kingdom of heaven - initiates a scientific age, petrified and desensualized. Why? Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* is the expression of a fundamental doubt in everything, except the certainty of doubt. The thinking subject, not God, represents the absolute and unquestionable root of knowledge and truth in a world of collapsing medieval scholasticism. Consonant with Descartes, Bacon declares the end of superstition and fallacy. But where Descartes imagines a subject gifted with cogitation, Bacon abolishes reflection and deliberation. Like Descartes, Bacon is preoccupied with the establishment of a scientific basis for knowledge. Humanity, asserts Bacon, is blinded by the belief in idols. They preempt the domination of pure knowledge and immaculate truth. According to Bacon, the four idols of the tribe, den, marketplace, and theater dim the purity of knowledge created in laboratories disinfected from empathy and passion. Bacon paraphrases Plato's allegory of the cave; in the interior and limiting space of the cave the play of shadows is falsely taken for what it represents. Appearance is invested with the idea of transcendental truth. Bacon nullifies appearance. Images are tricksters. They are never what they feign to represent. Only the mining and excavating of deep strata of signification shovels meaning onto the surface and into the light.

life-world shapes cultural biographies and philosophies in notably crucial ways, as do ritual and performance. Be it through atrocity, political change, economic predicament, or heinous wars, today many people live in imbroglios of social and political woe. Poor dwelling conditions, fear of unemployment, the stress and pressures of single-motherhood, domestic violence, continual fiscal worries, children's abuse of easily obtainable narcotics, romantic desires, childbirth, contraception, and the politics of romance shape Koriak women's sentiments towards life. Emotions, hopes, and anxieties dwell on the surface of their thinking, feeling, and acting, and affect sexual and moral discourses indicative of their struggles with a changing and agonizing world.

In various parts of this thesis I draw on feminist theory to examine Koriak women's practices in relation to the everyday realm of sexuality, romance, and desire. An ample stream of anthropological literature on the female body concentrates on aspects of health, reproduction, and empowerment (Boddy 1989; Martin 1988; Rapp 1991; Ginsburg 1989, 1990). My thesis takes a different approach to the subject of bodily relations and the construction of cultural realities. I am interested in both Koriak women's cultural philosophies of the body and the experience and negotiation of their life-world through the body. The central focus of this analyses will be the sphere of sexuality, romantic relationships, and desire in its innumerable forms. Yet, love and sexuality encompass more than the sphere of affective relations. They describe a being-with-the-world that filters through economics, politics, issues of identity, and colonization. In this thesis I elucidate distinctive female Koriak discourses on love, each of which is contingent upon women's location in and experience of day-to-day life.

So far, the politics of erotics and desire have not attracted much anthropological attention.[3] In a recent article Elliston (1995) investigates sexual identities and habits such as semen practices and 'ritual homosexuality' in works pertaining to Melanesian ethnography. Yet, by analyzing sexuality in relation to the usage and construction of female and male genitals she aligns the notion of erotics to a naturalized body. Allison (1994) takes up the notion of masculinity as constructed in a Japanese Tokyo Hostess Club by interrogating working and sexual relations. However, by concentrating on how visits to such establishments bond men in rituals of male affirmation she does not pay attention to the broader meaning of gender categories in Japan, and the interests invested in them. In contrast, I do not treat sexuality and erotics as isolated sphere. Rather, I link female discourses on the body with the political and social quandaries of Koriak life in Ossora, and as how Koriak women attempt to negotiate and position themselves within a broader political matrix of vested interests and social change.

Recently, some feminist thought has been informed by a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework which conceptualizes femininity as a marginal site of subjectivity in relation to phallocentric thought and dominance. Informed by structuralist and psychoanalytic theory, Lacan situates man as 'master signifier' and casts women as his relational extension. 'Desire' plays a main role in his theory of the subject, yet, it is men who 'own' desire whereas women are condemned to suffer the fate of those who can only desire the desire of the other (men). The ineffability of female desire and the inferiority of the female body poses a challenge to feminist theory and to this thesis. Taking up Freud's and

[3]However, in contrast, erotic experiences of anthropologists in the field trigger a welter of literature (cf. Kulick and Wilson 1995; Lewin and Leap 1995).

Lacan's gender philosophy, various theorists contend with the shortcomings of a body informed by psychoanalysis and structuralism.[4] Ironically, although these theories attend to the problematic construction of the female body as marginal and 'inferior', and while they attempt to restore the rightful position of women as desiring and autonomous subjects, at the same time they formulate a single and homogenous kind of Woman. Social hierarchies and asymmetries of race, class, nationality, or ethnicity are ignored or reproduced within a discourse that understands itself as being informed by polyvalence and deconstruction. These works are justly criticized for being eurocentric and originating in the milieu of a western middle class, invested with wealth and power.

In response, many feminists challenge constructions of the female body as marginal and unworthy of attention. Attending to historical and social conditions of femininity and marginality they investigate and specify the very conditions in which various forms of gender and subjectivity evolve (Mohanty 1991). Their works reject the notion that gender runs along parallel axes of race, class, or ethnicity, but suggest that these categories are already and continually constructed in gendered ways. Hence, gendered divisions of race, nationality, and ethnic identity need to be contextualized within the particularities of a historical and cultural matrix (cf. Lock 1990). Critical projects attending to sex and the body, I contend, must pay attention to power relations, norms, and ideologies that shape gender as a construction of a specific form of subjectivity.

The works that I find most exciting challenge the construction of bodies as fantastic and fictious, and argue for a notion of corporeal materiality by emphasizing the embodied and sexual structure of the speaking subject. Yet, at

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[4]Feminist works taking up the notion of the body, sexuality, and desire proliferate (cf. Butler 1990, 1993), Flax (1990), Fuss (1995), Irigaray (1985), Gallop (1988), Oliver (1995), and Grosz (1989, 1994).

the same time, they refute the notion of the body as a monolithic essence, but understand it as a site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory experience, which is defined by overlapping variables such as class, age, life-style, sexual preference, and others (cf. Braidotti 1994). It is in between this analytic space of psychoanalytic and feminist theory, as well as feminist theory and Koriak women's practices that this thesis is situated. One of the most exciting challenges to this stream of feminist theory is to break up the offensive borders of eurocentric thought, to facilitate the possibility of a cultural dialogue transcending the limits of theory and 'fleshless' thought. Koriak women's talk and actions confront axioms, laws, and conceptions found in debates which are rooted in psychoanalytic theory through the lived experience of day-to-day-life.

However, a caution may be in order: Instead of employing experience as a category that produces identities, I - following Joan Scott (1991) - challenge the very concept itself. Scott criticizes the notion of experience on the basis that this very notion provides "uncontestable evidence" and an "originary point of explanation" (ibid.: 24). Yet, by taking the identities of those whose experience has been documented as self-evident, social analysts and theorists fail to question the cultural assumptions and epistemological frameworks that establish 'experience' in the first place. Consequently, the experience of individual subjects is naturalized by ignoring the social and cultural conditions that inform and shape their interpretions of and actions in the world. I hold that experience is both interpretation and in need of interpretation. Rather than taking the existence of individuals for granted by treating it as a natural given (after all, what can be truer than accounts of lived experience?), I interrogate the social conditions and ideological constructions that create women's perceptions, interpretations, and positionings in the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora.

As mentioned in the preface, I left twice for Kamchatka. My first visit was inspired by my desire to examine the impact of sovietization on the Koriak, while the motivation for my second sojourn was to visit and see friends and to follow up on life in Tymlat and Ossora.[5] My initial project of examining the impact Soviet colonial history on the Koriak had changed because my relationships with some Koriak women grew very amiable, and my witness of their daily struggles against the predicaments of penury, malnutrition, heavy drinking, and abusive domestic relationships incorporated me into their lives. I realized that monolithic party power, forced development, administered language politics, and mandatory boarding school education, in short, the gloomy experience of colonial imperialism, affect the Koriak in various ways: these affairs not only spawn historical repercussions but resonate in the bodily reality of Koriak life. Listening to their stories and worries, and experiencing women's confrontations with bureaucracies, husbands, brothers, children and teachers, I realized that to them their bodies were simultaneously sites of struggle and weapons in the fight against the confinements of domesticity and grim social conditions. Yet, this insight did not lead me to abandon my initial project altogether. By putting gender at the core of my analysis I create a continuous dialogue with ethnographic genres which examine regional and global power relations by paying attention to cultural logic. Hence, instead of treating gender as an 'external' factor that can be studied in addition to history, colonization, sufferings as well as local and global interconnections, I integrate gender in my analysis as a lens through which to examine wider issues of political disempowerment, cultural negotiations, and intercommunity divisions. By

[5]My first stay in northern Kamchatka from January 1992 until October 1992 covers a period of ten months. The second time I stayed five months which covered the period from June 1994 until November 1994.

avoiding conventions of gender as a segregated field of inquiry, yet paying attention to wider political issues, I hope to establish creative a link between various forms of ethnography that deal with the experience of borderline, politically marginal, and culturally disempowered peoples. As an effect, this project makes use of various strands of theory that do not easily fit together. Koriak life in Tymlat and Ossora is marked by tension and contradictions that challenge the neat homogenity of an overarching theoretical frame. However, this does not mean that I use theory in an arbitrary or eccentric way without paying attention to local modalities. In contrast, I employ theory in a locally specific way to engage with such tensions and the potentially contradictory practices people use to situate themselves within a world shaken by change, uncertainty, and disorder.

In my project I join various scholars who, dissatisified with classical ways of representation, labor to find new ways to describe the life-world of cultural difference. Emergent discussions about power inherent in the production of knowledge have led anthropologists to call the parameters of their knowledge production into question. Feminist anthropology has become increasingly dissatisfied with prevalent gender arrangements that have helped to create a discourse of female subordination (Boddy 1989; Ong 1987; Martin 1987; di Leonardo 1991; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995).[6] Today, a paramount issue in

[6]In particular the work of Abu-Lughod (1993) and Marilyn Strathern (1988) attracted much attention within discussions on feminist anthropology and strategies of writing. In her work on the lives of Bedouin women in Egypt, Abu-Lughod dispels traditional anthropological and sociological notions of gender. In classical anthropological terms the Awlad 'Ali Bedouin community belongs to a segmentary type of society in which women occupy a subordinate status and are seen as having little or no power and authority. Nonetheless, bringing diverse segments of women's biographies to life, Abu-Lughod manages to avoid the traps of generalities. In contrast to most ethnographies of the region, Abu-Lughod does not portray the women of the Awlad 'Ali community as necessarily weak and subordinate beings without any possibility for undermining strategies,

critical ethnographies is the critique of western epistemologies which pretend to create objective impartialities and dispassionate truths (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Thornton 1988). The politics and poetics of reading and writing created an entire industry of 'new ethnographies'. The relationship between ethnographer and locality is one characterized by refined antagonisms and delicate tensions. Informed by literary criticism and philosophical inquiries, textual and literary arrangements seem crucial in the fabrication of reality and truth. However, although the compositional inventory of ethnography is critically reflected, questions of sex and gender are often ignored. The angry outcry by female anthropologists about Clifford's statement (1986:20) that feminism played only a minor role, if at all, in theoretizations on reflexivity and subjectivity in ethnographies, is evoked in the writings of Abu-Lughod (1990a), Mascia-Lees, Sharpe, and Ballerino Cohen (1989), Visweswaran (1994), and Wolf (1992). Contemporary feminist ethnographies are experiments to the extent that they criticize both dominant representations of culture and inflexible notions of sexuality and the body. Feminist anthropologists use 'local meanings' or the 'micropolitics of power' to expose and contest theories that naturalize male and

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as pictured in most ethnographies of the region. At the same time, Abu-Lughod presents a sophisticated critique of the anthropological imagery of women in non-western cultures. Addressing domains of classical anthropological inquiry such as lineage, family, reproduction, and the time-honored Mediterranean cultural complex of honor and shame, she describes, by evoking women's biographies, the tenuous nature of anthropology's assumptions about 'oriental' women. In *The Gender of the Gift,* Strathern cautions both anthropology and feminism. She calls for anthropology to desist from universalistic assumptions about women and, more importantly, she argues that women do not always speak from the 'gendered identity' of women. Strathern emphasizes the need for the investigation of power vested in a particular discourse of speech position and ideas of 'femaleness'. She draws the attention of feminism to a contextualized self. Rather than assuming a stable 'female identity', Strathern presents women as situated in particular contexts of cultural practices that inform women's knowledge and self-representation.

female positions. They stress the importance of situating men and women in the context of ideology and power. On the other hand, feminist anthropology is not content with the homogenizing perspective of cultural authority and employs experimental ways of writing, critically engaging in notions of cultural and sexual difference. The postcolonial discourse has opened a theoretical discussion about the political and cultural engagement of people in asymmetrical power relations. A number of critics have shown how marginal subjects are crafted as sites of exclusion within Western humanist and socialist discourse (Chow 1993; Mani 1992). Post-colonial critiques show how an intended benevolent discourse may divide and conquer the principality's subjects. As Trinh Minh-ha (1989) explains, humanist relativism engages notions of cultural difference which are not always to the benefit of the 'relativized' other. Difference may trap blacks, women, and natives in aggressive forms of colonial projection or exoticizing 'otherness'. Yet, Koriak women are quite aware of the politics of representation.

The ocean sparkled with sunbeams, and the wind blew soft and tender over the yellow grass. It was one of those moments when Kamchatka revealed its stark beauty, and everybody was out busy collecting berries, mushrooms, and pine-cones (orekhi). Moite and I were on our way to the lagoon, where Liuba and her mother spent the summer fishing and harvesting hedge-fruits and herbage which grow abundantly along the edges of bogs and the rocky fringes of cliffs and precipices. Liuba had already invited Moite several times to visit her and stay at the lagoon, but so far in vain. She was, explained Moite, incessantly busy with her children and she was already behind with needlework orders. No, so far it had been impossible for her to come and see Liuba, all the more because the way was long and the hike arduous. But now Moite had agreed to come and

visit Liuba and her mother and to stay for at least one day at the lagoon. Walking along the sand ridges of the street leading to Karaga, we collected pine-cones in the huge rucksack Moite carried over her shoulders, occasionally picking and eating the nutty-tasting seeds.

Moite's refusal to stay for a while was prompted by her anticipation of Liuba's offer to work together. Several women in Karaga, Tymlat, and Ossora who were reputed to be excellent seamstresses worked under the coordination of Liuba, who sold their works to Russians and Ukrainians living in Petropavlovsk. Moite not only objected to Liuba's position and power as intermediary, but disagreed with the latter's politics of 'being Koriak'. Liuba not only told me the proper and authentic ways of 'being Koriak', but taught her family, friends, and acquaintances as well. Moite's view was less ambitious. As she saw it, Koriak, and particularly Koriak women, shared some of the worries and joys of Russian women, and they were not unique. Yes, there was such a thing as 'Koriak culture', but other people also had their distinct cultures, and this was good, only infringement was bad. Moite avoided altercation with Liuba, but this seemed unavoidable, particularly in a prolonged stay.

When we reached the little hut, Moite immediately set out to gather raspberries, while Liuba worked the fishing net. Rain drove us into the shack, and Liuba boarded fish-soup and 'kiliki', a tasty, and as I was steadily assured, very healthy dish of cooked and cold fish liver, soft roe, and seal fat. Moite who had not tasted 'kiliki' for a long time, ate prodigiously. Unfortunately, seal fat was not at hand, apologized Liuba, but she took edible oil which worked just like greasy fat of the seal. The next morning when Moite left, she took me aside and advised me with a wink not to mention this sacrilege in my writing: "Don't you write that Liuba took cooking oil instead of seal fat. After all, they'll

doubtlessly say that we are such monstrous and unmannered (bezobraznnye) people" - and left with a laugh.

Anthropologists attempt to make sense of what for them is obscure and bizarre: culture. Likewise, others try to make sense out of the odd and eccentric: anthropologists. The first few months of my life in Tymlat and Ossora were a time in which the villagers and I became acquainted. Villagers felt the same alienation towards me that I felt toward them. Not only did I speak with an accent previously unheard, but I also came from a country (Germany) whose historical associations feed Russia's sense of national identity and pride. Russia's preeminence in the 'Great War of the Fatherland' is referred to and confirmed in the public spaces of television, newspapers, and celebrations. Currently, national identity and nationalism are hotly debated topics. But mostly it is the national identity of others that is most interesting to us, not our own. In this respect, I often wondered which role the nationality of the ethnographer plays in the process of creating vital ties and associations with people of different 'cultural heritages'. In the villages of Tymlat and Ossora, I not only occupied different speech positions, as a foreigner and ethnographer, but also as a women associated by means of her nationality with a particular period in Russian and German history.

Upon my arrival in Tymlat word spread very fast that an ethnographer from Germany had arrived. Villagers not only wonderedwhy I had come and what I wished to 'study', but they were also very much interested in my opinion on World War II and Nazism in Germany. Male elders had fought as soldiers in the Russian army, and some of the young men had been stationed with the

Russian army in the former GDR. Most villagers had watched TV films on World War II, emphasizing the glory of the Russian army and denigrating the German army for its brutality and inferiority. Nearly everyone had an image of Germans and Germany, and I was flooded with questions about my view of Nazism, economic growth, authority, and racism. After my first few days in Tymlat, Liuba decided that she wanted to travel to 'kliuchakh', a concentration of hot springs attributed with healing powers. Infertile women in particular sought help in these springs, and although this method is no longer in practice, stories of wonderful cures still circulate in the village. Today these springs are mainly visited for their power to cure cardiac problems and pulmonary diseases. The springs are a day-long ride by snow-mobile (buran) from Tymlat, but only a few people own snow mobiles and not everybody keeps a dog sled team any more. Gasoline is scarce and needed for transporting food and equipment to the herders in the tundra. But Liuba was determined to visit this curing place and she asked around. Soon she found that the village soviet and two local Russian 'sovkhoz' workers would consider it an honor to accompany us to the 'kliuchakh'. The journey was arduous. High snowdrifts impeded steady travel. We made frequent stops cutting the sleds out of ditches and holes in the ground. Finally, in the last stage of the journey, the machines broke down, refusing to pull the heavy load. We walked the last quarter of the way, snow to our hips. That evening we sat tired and exhausted around the wretched table in the tiny wooden cottage beside the springs. Eating 'koroshka' (here: dried fish meat) and drinking hot tea, Liuba and the village soviet contemplated the symbolics of 'Germanness', when one of the men directly asked me what I thought about Hitler. I remember the feeling of being tested. I knew that my answer was crucial for my reputation and further life in the village. Everybody stopped

chewing and looked at me in anticipation. The declaration of my view on Nazi Germany was received with visible relief, and yielded benevolence and charity.

Additionally, I found that the friendship I shared with women demanded the desertion of the highly ambiguous position of 'anthropologist'. In her discussion of witchcraft in the Bocage, Favret-Saada (1980) voices the thought that sorcery receives its meaning by the words that are spoken, and by whom they are spoken. Her research was only possible through the adoption of empathic speech positions allocated to her by villagers themselves. These speech-positions were not value-free, but demanded the impartial enactment of their cathexis in order for her to enter into the discourse of witchcraft. Similarly, I found myself forced to take a political stance in situations I felt Koriak belittled, or, worse, denigrated.

Iura brought the Russian to Irina's house. Nobody knew him but rumor spread that he was from the city, from Petropavlovsk, and he wanted to start a touristic business based in Tymlat. His idea, so he explained to me, was to provide hunting and fishing facilities in particular for North-American and German hunters. They were willing, so he said, to pay immense sums to shoot ram, moose, and bear. They wanted, Iura explained, to talk to me, so Irina invited them to sit down at the only place in the house where one could sit at a table. 'The Russian', as he was called by everybody in the village, explained harshly to Irina that he preferred to talk to me in private, an outrageous request. Irina invited him into the kitchen, where he sat down with unsavory demeanor on one of the rickety chairs. Callously, his eyes wandered to the children and

grandmother, who later called him the fish-eyed man, and his attempt at an amiable but insincere smile remained unanswered. Irina shooed Kira and Valer out of the kitchen and continued pottering, listening along with Iura and me to what the 'Russian' had to say. He painted in bright colors his idea of starting a business with 'inostrantsy' (foreigners); the village would experience an enormous economic upswing (one must not forget that this happened two months after the official break-up of the Soviet Union), nobody would have to fear unemployment, as work and money would be there in abundance; the times of financial worries would finally be over. His enterprise, so he explained, would employ at least half of the village population and with Iura's support, who was, after all, the head of one of Tymlat's cooperatives, his plans would be easy to realize. He needed my help to guarantee coverage of his touristic business in magazines abroad. Iura eagerly listened as pointed enquiries by Irina and me yielded more details. The 'Russian' intended, so he explained, to build a 'domik', a small house where the fourth 'tabun' (reindeer herd) grazed, and Koriak men would transport food and technical supplies to the house. The Koriak were not to be seen, he clarified, because they were just too dirty and smelly, and their sight would act as a deterrent for those foreign sport hunters. I was stunned and repelled by his open display of blatant racism, feeling Irina's and Iura's eyes resting on me in expectation of my answer. When I refused any assistance in supporting these plans, Iura scornfully glanced at me, expressing his hope that I would assent and 'help them'. Irina appeared relieved by my refutation of the fish-eyed man's plans, but he himself was infuriated. He would, so he announced, return within the next days and ask me again. It was true that he depended upon my help, but, he continued, I myself rested upon

Koriak help and he was none too sure that I would still receive their aid after this rebuff.

The word spread very fast, and women came with pleas for me to refuse any association with the 'Russian'. The next day he returned and after a repeated rejection he and Iura left enraged. That night, Lona came as usual to have tea, and Moite came by to learn the latest news about the fish-eyed's visit. I knew that the village was very divided on this issue, and a part of the villagers opined that my position worked against them.

During my second sojourn in Tymlat and Ossora I discussed my thesis with women friends. Particularly Uliana and Zina wondered loudly and often which of their sayings and actions would find their way into this thesis, and how I would portray their lives. Their major concern was: *"what other people, those where you live, think about us."* A long history of depreciation and humiliation make Koriak aware that they are perceived as pristine and wild savages. Sveta felt hurt and insulted: *"I stayed in the hospital of Petropavlovsk, you know, mostly there are people from the city. I walked with this woman through the garden and she asked me where I was from. From the north, I said, from Kamchatka. Oh, she said, that's where primitive (pervobytnye) people walk, just like bears."*

Talking with women about this thesis, seeking their input and opinion, I continually received the answer: *"Write it so that it is beautiful (chtoby budet krasivo)."* The decision is left with me and I ponder questions of Koriak moral aesthetics. I hope I will not disappoint them.

A last thought on writing and representation seems to be appropriate at this place. Athough anthropology and other disciplines accept challenges to revise the ethnographic canon - agitating against petrified structures and institutional demands - they tend to ignore a more somber aspect of doing fieldwork and writing ethnography. Anthropologists are well acquainted with discussion on ethics in the field - commitments are to be signed and conferences and departments facilitate space for seminars and discussions on such issues. Yet, as long as ethnographies do not deal explicitly with issues of social and political depression, people's experiences of violence, and suffering (cf. Farmer 1996; Malkki 1995; Scheper-Hughes 1992) are usually omitted. As one renowned anthropologist advised me: *"They distort one's research and they do not represent the focus of my study. I never mention such things in my writings. They misrepresent the community and make life look worse than it is."*

In contrast, I take up such issues to describe Koriak life within a larger framework of marginality, disempowerment, and suffering. With many other 'Fourth-World' people (North-American natives, Australian Aborigines) the Koriak share the fate of a minority status that simultaneously 'exoticizes' and disempowers them. Koriak marginality within the Russian nation cannot be separated from wider contexts of native peoples' marginality all over the globe. Although the particularities of disempowerment are always nationally and locally informed, the Koriak situation speaks to such pressing issues as racial intolerance, discrimination exerted by the nation-state, and more general political conditions of domination. As 'primitives' they are not only relegated to the exotic and mythical realm of timelessness, but they are stripped of their humanity through various forms of local homogenity, ideologies of supremacy, and political neglect. As such, their voices are rarely heard within a broader medley

of voices coming out of Russia, telling of hardship and describing the general torment of life in the country.

The experience of social and political misery, as well as various women's discourses on love, sexuality, and desire delineate the contours of my thesis. Socio-cultural nets of daily life and vernacular meanings mold the bodily matrix of subject positions created, negotiated, and reworked in the Koriak experience of everyday life. One of the most intractable, and probably insoluble, problems in anthropology remains the representation of life-worlds foreign to us. The philosophies of structure and action, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, exchange and the like are bred in hermetic containers of institutions and communities of 'experts'. The tools of disciplines striving to dismantle enigmatic others in culture and history are necessarily limited to and freed by confined horizons of imagination, knowledge, and experience; each perspective opens up to an understanding. The anthropological enterprise is caught within the hermeneutic circle of meaning and understanding. As such, anthropologists would act wisely to take their work with a dose of irony or humility: a critical gaze onto the anthropological self.

Travel Route

The relationships I enjoyed with Koriak women, and my witnessing of people's suffering as well as their struggles, hopes, and practices to position themselves in their rapidly changing world have led to the particular organization of this thesis and to the theoretical frames underlying it. The project consists of two parts, and, in some respects, speaks to two different bodies of knowledge.

On the one hand, I elucidate Koriak life in its present stage of bleakness and desolation by sifting through Koriak narrations as well as historical and ethnographic description of Koriak life; on the other hand I investigate women's discourses on sexuality, erotics, and the body in the context of socio-economic change, its meaning, and its effects.

Chapter two, "Village Life", evokes Koriak life as it is lived in the presence of economic and social decay in northern Kamchatka. The recent situation in the villages of Tymlat and Ossora is marked by gloom, despair, and decline. Economic structures are falling apart, alcohol consumption is prodigious, and people drift into agonizing states of hopelessness. Various discourses on tradition and identity run through the communities like an invisible line, and mirror local tensions and frictions that divide women and men, as well as parents and children into different, often hostile groups that pursue and respect dissimilar moral values, traditions, and politics of gender. Yet, this state of affairs presents the outcome of a long and violent history of political tutelage that placed the Koriak at the bottom of an evolutionary scale by framing them with concepts such as 'primitive' or 'underdeveloped'. In these configurations the Koriak exhibit embodiments of pristine others who serve as a foil for Soviet ideas of cultural development and modernization. "Village Life" portrays the everyday life in the villages of Tymlat and Ossora by sifting through cultural images and practices that create and haunt local knowledge.

In chapter three, "Positioning The Koriak", I examine the historical and cultural imagination of the Soviet state, as well as of ethnographic descriptions. The Koriak are located within a politics of the periphery. Although, as a cultural group, they do not form a homogeneous entity, a common experience of all Koriak might be a sense of marginality nurtured by a history of administrative

centralization, cultural devaluation, and physical 'otherness'. The Soviet Union, and now Russia, understood and understand Koriak space strictly in relation to Moscow, which remains the center of state power and political decision-making. From this perspective, the Koriak live at the other end of the empire, disordered and underdeveloped. Geographical and cultural images of the tundra as a remote and isolated space were and are reified in Moscow's policy towards the populations of East Siberia and the Far East. The version of progress clothed in Marxist ideology led to authoritative attempts on the part of the Soviet state to 'elevate' Koriak life to levels of 'culturedness' and civilization. Yet, one the greatest ironies in Soviet ideology is that those early 'communist' societies represented a communism that had to be both achieved and overcome at the same time.

The break-up of the former Soviet Union marks a historical break in a scheme of neat linearity. A time of scarcity and depression, the time I call 'the past in the present', it is not the time of post-colonial exultations of liberty and autonomy, but rather a time of apostasy and struggle. Yet, by evoking Koriak voices who speak to the politics of state authority and colonization, and describe more recent experiences such as displacement, I illustrate Koriak understanding of the Soviet power and their reactions to change and constraint.

In chapter four, entitled "Distant Voices, Still Lives", I relate the story of three Koriak women elders who evoke memories of Koriak life in former times. In their reminiscences of space and places - once inhabited, now deserted - they evoke sensual memories of light, taste, and smell. *The village stinks.* This statement, frequently heard in descriptions of life in the settlement, exemplifies much of the aversion that Koriak elders feel for the village. With contempt for the present, they recall former times as 'purer' and 'peaceful'. However, in their

narrations Koriak women elders do not argue for a return of the past, but illustrate the ambivalence and tension in their lives. The past is polyvalent, designating experiences of overlapping but different orders. Through their narrations Koriak women illustrate that practices of gender, tradition, and power have often been conflict-ridden and demanded constant negotiation between women's identities and social transformations of Koriak life.

The following chapters describe Koriak women's everyday life and the politics they employ to fashion and negotiate 'female' identity. The focus in these chapters is on conceptualizations of love, desire, and erotics in connection with Koriak social and cultural predicaments. Bodily aesthetics play a major role in Koriak women's politics, but, aesthetics are always contingent upon the historical, social, and cultural ambiance that gives rise to them. Koriak women employ various and incongruent strategies in the politics of love, sexuality, and romance. These strategies diverge for reasons generated in the gamut of day-to-day life in Tymlat and Ossora. Single-mothering, divorce, and the lack of alimony incite women to find industrious, unshakable, and 'clean' male partners. The conspicuous consumption of 'Western' consumer goods and their fetishization galvanizes relationships not of love but of sex and service. Extramarital affairs and brief liaisons are the result of unsatisfying marriages and the long absence of husbands working in the *tabun* . The craving for a 'better life' bring about the exchange of sex and alcohol. The succeeding chapters probe the sexual politics of Koriak women in all their diversity. Critiques by Black, Chicana, and Indian feminists assailed Woman as a concept of white, middle-class, European and North-American theoretizations of women. Universal Woman does not exist; rather, discrete experiences of women living in diverse cultural, economic, social, and historical contexts inform the politics of gender.

As Lorde (1982), Anzaldua (1987), and hooks (1981, 1990) make clear, race and class contexts set the concerns and sagacities of women apart and inform different types of feminism. The effects and politics of race and class certainly partition Koriak women from the majority of Russian women who live in Tymlat and Ossora. Moreover, Koriak women themselves are split by their pursuit of diverse cultural politics that expresses itself in their divergent relations to custom and tradition, creating different moral and sexual discourses informed by disparate understandings of being both Koriak and woman. Consequently, the ensuing chapters center on the discrete discourses of Koriak women on morality, body, erotics, and female-ness.

Chapter five, "Gendering The Subject", elucidates theoretical conceptions of sexual difference and the female body. Recent debates about whether bodies as essential or manufactured dispute address notions of female sexuality, as well as of female desire and the contours of female subjectivity. Theories produce a choreography of subjects and bodies, which presupposes skillful arrangements of order and effect. In "Gendering the Subject", I scrutinize both conceptualizations of female sexuality and subjectivity. I argue that the politics of sexual difference unfold on the female body in at least two respects. First, bodies - male and female - are never just bodies in the insulated spaces of metaphysics and nature, but are entrenched in a plexus of daily social and cultural practices that produce the carnal. This is not to say that bodies are mere constructs of forces whose effects come to be signified as sex and body, but on the contrary, that the nature of their bodies is too real to Koriak women for the sensual and material side of body politics to be denied. Frequently, discourses on gender are much removed from the historical, cultural, and social context that generates the bodies under investigation. For example, in her work

on gender and imperialism McClintock represents an image of a female and a male coal mine worker, captioned 'gender ambiguity' (1995: 118). To her, the photo represents 'gender ambiguity' because both man and woman are vested in garments almost identical, except for headpieces and the woman's apron emphasizing her hips. This image, so analyzes McClintock, expresses gender ambiguity. Cognate dress blurs the sexual differences between women and men and obstructs their identification by and placement into neatly segregated gender categories. The politics of class, here concomitant with the sphere of arduous labor, obscures ostracized spheres of sex and gender which are easily discernible within the upper classes. Although the photograph presents for McClintock a testimony of the uncertainties of sex and gender, and while she overcomes the limitations set by sexual difference by taking class into consideration, I believe that her analysis of gender ambiguity culture points to some of the pitfalls found in theories on sexual difference. I understand that her interpretation is not only informed by middle-class visions of labor and toil but also by an urban background in which dress plays such a significant role. Apparel is seen as crucial in the constitution and expression of gender; it is the indexical expression of sameness, vagueness, and difference. Successful works on gender and ambiguity, such as Garber (1992) and Lindemann (1994) on transvestism, cross-dressing, and queer bodies work with the notion of masquerade. The wrappings and adornments of the body destine them to be male, female, or queer. As I will elaborate in more detail in chapter four on Koriak women's politics of gender and sexuality, I do not think that such an analysis holds for their lifeworld in the villages of Tymlat and Ossora. To the Koriak, clothing, is not the decisive agent that constitutes and expresses female and male identities, rather the symbolics of body control and movement, the magic of love and love

tokens, and the colonial politics of domesticity inform Koriak sexed bodies. Koriak women are concerned with the careful control of body boundaries. Protective spells and love magic demarcate confines of body and self in conjunction with the politics of gender and identity. In recent theories on the body, the embodied realm of sexual difference and gender often seem curiously fleshless. Bodies are constructed and free-floating monads in the artistic sphere of disguise and performativity. They are easily transformable and interchangeable because their reality is not manifestly inscribed into the sweep of day-to-day life and their production is contingent upon the diverse stages they perform. Notwithstanding challenges to epistemic fields of fixed, unchangeable, and dichotomous gender identities, bodies still produce realities for their owners, and it is not only for the Koriak that sex and gender are manifest in quotidian constellations of meaning and value.

Chapter six, "Desire In The Gift", delineates the politics of erotics and sexuality as pursued by Koriak women from Rekinniki. I will argue that the erotic is not the property of alluring bodies but rather, is produced through the production and exchange of items, such as fur, that are charged with aesthetic and sensual meaning.

Chapter seven, "What's Love Got To Do With It?", focuses on a particular discourse of love as practiced by Koriak women who live in Ossora. Until recently, love has been a much neglected theme in anthropology; recent studies on the body and emotions focus on notions of suffering, violence, and terror, or situate themselves in the more traditional field of 'health and illness.' Love, desire, and erotics are problematic terms, since they are culturally and historically contingent, and convey diverse linguistic and experiential meanings. Love, erotics, and sexuality affect a way of being-in-the world that filters

through economics, politics, history, and all levels of personal relations. Current economic and social transformations in Russia strike the life-world of women particularly hard. Premature marriages and parentage, dissatisfactory unions, divorce, single motherhood, abortion, and financial predicaments create worry and anxiety. Frayed nerves and paralyzing fatigue affect relationships between mothers and children, wives and husbands, siblings, lovers, and generations in many ways. This chapter takes on the effects of the political demise of the former Soviet Union. Economic hardship for Tymlat's and Koriak's inhabitants results not only in marital and familial frictions, but generates the exchange of sex for money. "What's Love Got To Do With It?" illuminates the body politics of Koriak women with respect to the political and social transformations they experience in the everyday life of Ossora. I also examine the advent of media technologies, such as television and video and their impact on Koriak discourses of sexuality. Modernization brought about many transformations of Koriak discourses on morality and proper conduct. Modern and traditional discourses on body, sexuality, and love coexist in Tymlat and Ossora and their strained relationship sets both female/male and generational worlds apart.

Chapter eight, "A Love Affair", chronicles the commencement, course, and termination of a romance that involved more than emotion and attraction. The affair between Moite and Lona exemplifies the battle between magical power and the power of volition, as well as a woman's struggle for selfhood.

There will be no ordinary conclusion to this thesis, in the sense that 'important findings' are summarized. The syncopation of such research highlights assumes the closure of a research process, the description of which presumably tells everything there is to be told. Instead of a conclusion I choose to write a chapter entitled "Arrival?". My travel through Koriak history, present

situation, and women's practices of sexuality and the body does not end with an arrival at wisdom but represents just another point of departure leading travelers into novel fields.

CHAPTER TWO

VILLAGE LIFE

On one of the first days after I had arrived in northern Kamchatka a dog sled race excited the villages. I learned that such an event takes place in an annual circle of game and contest: zealous men compare their skills and physical strength in a strenuous race that leads animal and driver though undulating plains and dense brushwood, defining the route leading from Karaga via Tymlat to Ossora. Villagers venture a prognosis and intensely debate the possible outcome of the race: they place bets on a promising team, and the victorious contestant will be rewarded with money, schnapps, and fame. Preparations commence months before the actual race takes place; the dogs are trained and well-fed over the course of several weeks, the reins are constantly checked, and the sleds are carefully inspected for their suitability.

The chilly but sunny forenoon promised a beautiful day. The violent snow storm had abated, and the winds were tranquil; soft snowflakes covered the frozen ground. It was still dark when the ten drivers with their dogs assembled at the central locus of the village in Karaga. Each dog - no more than seven were allowed - was attached by a line to the dog diagonally opposite. The racers knew that the competition would be fatiguing; quietly they took the bags with food their wives or mothers had prepared, and with care they put on the warm fur boots, mittens, and coats which would shield their bodies from both cold and injury. The referee announced the beginning of the race; each team started in a short interval of ten minutes and we who had waited, freezing, for the starting signal abandoned the place and returned to the warm kitchen of Karaga's former party building.

During the long waiting time drivers, admirers, and spectators engaged in profuse and absorbing discussions on the difficulties of the terrain, the quality of the dogs, intricate problems of breeding, and the weatherliness of their clothes. In addition to the local villagers two Russian dog breeders from Palana, the capital village of the *Koriakskii avtonomnyi okrug,* were present. Fascinated by the race and the dogs they were, moreover, even more curious about my presence. Like everyone else they wanted to know where I came from, what brought me to Kamchatka, and why I had decided to come. Upon my explanation that my interest in the Far East of Russia, and Koriak ethnography in particular, had brought me from Germany to Ossora they sought to enlighten me. *"You won't find anything interesting here,"* so they opined. *"Here - look around you - the Koriak lost their culture. Nothing is maintained. You have to go further north, there you will still find Koriak rites, ceremonies, and traditions alive. Here they do not even burn the dead any more - up north they still practice cremation. You've come to the wrong place. Here you won't find anything"* - and with an amused smile at my naiveté they left.

I must confess that I felt both concerned and angry. I had come because I was interested in Soviet history and its impact on the indigenous populations in the Far East of Russia; in particular I wished to examine the impact of the sovietization on the Koriak through collecting archival, written, and oral material. Yet I was also interested in the Koriak perspective on this gigantic, colonial enterprise. Only a few investigations of Soviet history examine its impact on Russia's indigenous, northern populations (Humphrey 1983; Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1993); however, little is still known about the people's own experiences and perceptions. I was curious. I had surmounted obstacles of a political nature to come to Kamchatka and any derogatory remarks in relation to

my project corroborated my assumption that it was an urgent and important one.[1] In the beginning of my field research Kamchatka was still a 'closed' area in the Soviet Union, which meant that I had to obtain special permission from the Russian ministry of inner affairs to travel to the villages of Ossora and Tymlat: while I spent four months in Moscow to receive this permit I also desperately tried to buy an airplane ticket, an impossible endeavor with regard to the never-ending line-ups and without the necessary papers which authorized the legitimacy of my plans. However, finally I managed to obtain a ticket and four hours before the plane left I also received my visa. Hence, I felt nervous and excited when I entered the plane - contradictory and dream-like images floated through my mind. I had read the German, Russian, and Soviet sources on the *Koriakskii avtonomnyi okrug* and I anticipated finding either a place of savagery and wilderness or a site of severe but ostensibly successful development *(razvitie)*. Grant (1993, 1995) astutely describes the two master images that guide so much of our thinking on Siberia and the Far East of Russia. These icons create Siberia either as a place of wilderness and solitude, where natives migrate through untamed land still oblivious to the light the Soviet revolution will shed on them, or they describe Siberia as a laboratory of economic and political experimentation, that will elevate the bashful and timid minds of the natives to the glory and triumph of the victorious revolution. Thus, no matter if Koriak are busy breeding reindeer, hunting pelts, collecting berries and roots,

[1]While I was still entangled in the preparations of my project I encountered many derogatory, if not hostile comments - by German and Russian ethnographers alike. All of these remarks mocked either the project or the fact that I, as a woman, intended to work in Russia's north. Ranging from predictions "that it would never be possible to conduct research in Siberia" to " a girl (!) will never be able to live in 'savage' Kamchatka", these remarks seemed to deride the idea of a woman conducting research in 'uncultivated' (the word used by a Russian historian when he heard about the project) out-of-the-way-places.

fishing seal, engaging in spiritual practices, or toiling to modernize the land - they are always 'natives' incarcerated in the spatial confines of rivers and mountains. Appadurai (1988) delineates the metaphor of 'incarceration' as a cardinal trope in understanding and analyzing the categories of 'nativeness'. He argues that the rank of being-native is correlated to static representations of being-in-one-place; yet, it is not only the category of place that corresponds to categories of belonging but, even more importantly, particular notions of space seem to educe 'nativeness' as a common attribution of people who live in remote and not easily accessible parts of the world. The 'native's ' spatial fixation escorts "moral and intellectual dimension[s]" (ibid.: 39) in which knowledge is restricted by the way 'natives' feel, think, know, and believe. Yet, categories of culture and identity are not only created through the politics of space and thought but also by representations of time (cf. Fabian 1983). Freezing others in an eternal presence where the dynamics of temporality never change, 'natives' live and perform knowledge in the form of customs and traditions within an immutable matrix of time. Yet 'culture' is never static but subject to constant shifts and transformations caused by the contingency of time which influences, changes, and remodels knowledge and the existence of people who live in a dynamically changing world.

In northern Kamchatka the artfulness of culture and its dynamic potency is often not acknowledged. The word 'anthropologist', or its Russian equivalent *etnograf,* seemed to trigger - in Russians and Koriak alike - a distinct set of assumptions that channeled their answers and explanations, their comportment towards me. No matter how hard I tried to explain, it was obvious to everyone that I was interested in *etnografiia*, and everybody was eager to reproduce the catalogue of *obychie* (traditions) that had once been alive. I felt pressed into the

role of an archivist taking an inventory of the current state of Koriak culture. People were recommended to me: *"Go and talk to ..., he still knows a lot."* - or - *"You have to talk to ...she still knows how to do that."* Sometimes I went to pursue these well-meaning recommendations, sometimes I did not. It became increasingly clear that not only did I have an image of the Koriak, they likewise possessed an image of me, carved by their experience with the research interests of Soviet ethnographers which influenced their attitudes and answers to me. Visiting people, I sometimes found myself in odd situations. I was offered a cup of tea and a torrent of explanations and discussions on traditional elements in Koriak 'culture', complementing people's hospitality, followed. Yet, I believe that this style of representing history and memory was only partially inspired by what people deemed as 'important knowledge'; additionally, they strived to satisfy the anthropologist's ambition and nosiness by representing Koriak culture through careful and selective rhetoric. The tropes which they evoked represented Koriak culture, knowledge, and identity in a traditional and historic fashion, and protected them from answering odd questions which carried hints of intimacy and impropriety. Koriak enunciations and figures of speech determined the course and content of our conversations, and it was they who directed and molded my knowledge about who life in northern Kamchatka.

However, the comments made by the Russian dog breeder seemed to reflect what most people, Russians and Koriak alike, thought about culture. Culture, it seemed, was or is something that one owns like a property, that one has or has not, that can be expropriated and commodified. The Koriak, as they made increasingly clear to me, had lost their culture, and as such they were dispossessed of any authentic categories of belonging. Many moaned: *"Earlier we were strong - now we don't know who we are. Already we have forgotten*

so much and our children - who are they? what do they know? They are already like the Russians." Most of the Koriak I knew articulated their identity in categories of forgetting, of lack and absence. Culture, so it appeared and still appears, was and is a 'thinglike entity' (Keesing 1994: 302) whose characteristics can be itemized to create a systematic coherence. In an apparent state of cultural amnesia Koriak speech disengages customary practices and, consequently - and in their own self-representations - the Koriak cease to have genuine and veritable identities. Clifford (1988) assails this understanding of culture and identity in terms of properties or their lack as an untenable one. He identifies three assumptions guiding our common definitions of culture: (1) the ideas of cultural wholeness and structure; (2) the hierarchical distinction between oral and literate forms of knowledge; and (3) the narrative continuity of history and identity (ibid.: 337). Probing the epistemological grounds of orthodox theories on and in history, Clifford challenges the conventional understanding of culture as an undiluted entity, orderly encircled by unpolluted boundaries. According to him, history, and consequently each culture-bound concept such as tradition and custom, move in a constant flux of dissolution and recreation. Only culture's ostensibly solid and consistent qualities confer upon it the status of an unalloyed, consecutive narrative. In a similar effort to dismantle this inflexible and homogenous concept, Abu-Lughod (1991) argues for an ethnography 'of the particular'. She champions detailed biographical portraits of individuals, their contingencies, and people's historical and actual relationships to them. In *Writing Women's Lives* (1993) she puts her argument into practice. Contemplating such classical institutions as polygyny she builds pictures of them by examining the sentiments, feelings, and recollections of participants. Both the idea of transgression - implicitly evoked in Clifford's argumentation - and the

notion of the 'particular' represent important devices in my project. In contrast to static models of 'nativeness' that petrify indigenous or aboriginal groups (hunter-gatherers, nomads) in time and space I employ individual Koriak women's narrations on life, knowledge, sexuality, and gender; their stories tell about women's perceptions, experiences, and biographic idiosyncrasies in a rapidly changing world. By evoking the particularities of their lives Koriak women step over boundaries of enclosing disciplines and anthropological expectations.

Moreover, transgression and the 'particular' depict not disembodied devices that uncritically tell about women's personal lives by recounting their existence free of political and social conditions in the village and other, extra-local developments which shape various understandings of their marginality and cultural knowledge. This thesis illuminates how various discourses on love and sexuality are constructed in the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora; yet, the production of the sensual is not uninvolved and abstract but contingent on the political and economic situation in the villages, as well as women's active conversion of parochial conditions into broader meanings for their lives. Koriak women engage disparate models of sexuality and the body which are subject to the particularities of village life in Tymlat and Ossora. Although both municipalities are seized by harmful repercussions which represent the general effect of the demise of the former Soviet Union and are severely hit by economic predicaments, everyday life in Tymlat and Ossora varies a great deal due to their respective standings. The locale of Ossora accommodates not only all administration and government institutions of the *Karaginskii raion* but the fact of its convenient location turns it into an important business and traffic junction for villages of the district like Tymlat and Karaga. Meanwhile its close ties to the

city of Petropavlovsk endows Ossora with an urban-like flair. Ossorians look down on the village of Tymlat and its residents: in relation to Ossora the existence of Tymlat seems marked by backwardness and primitivity. In the eyes of even those Koriak who live in Ossora and who maintain close ties to kin in Tymlat this village is a dirty place, a rotten site that smells of decay and poverty. Tymlat's bad reputation runs ahead of the village: the lack of sanitary facilities, starvation, the indigence of people's clothes and the fetidness of their homes brand its inhabitants as slothful, ignorant, and contemptible. In the eyes of Ossora's population and the Russian inhabitants of Tymlat the poverty of Koriak who live in the latter village is translatable into meanness: villagers are vile because they are poor and they are poor because they are dull-witted and repulsive. The Koriak residents of Tymlat find it hard to invalidate the neat causality of this argument: many of them adopted a destructive self-image and retreat into quiet despair or aggressive defaming. Many Koriak who live in Tymlat feel intimidated by the cosmopolitan flair Ossora seems to radiate and they keep silently to themselves if one of their 'urban' relatives comes to visit them. Usually visits by kin are short; kinship ties are still valid and, consequently, Ossorians put up politely with the shabbiness of Tymlat, however, after a couple of days most strive to leave the village. Eagerly they walk to the village, inquiring for boats or other transportation possibilities. Their relatives in Tymlat observe this behavior with stoic expressions and take refuge in further silence: they know that their metropolitan relatives look at them with pitiful eyes and that they cannot match the prosperity the life in Ossora seems to offer.

Today, because of its direct connection to Kamchatka's main airport in Petropavlovsk, Ossora is swamped with foreign and 'novel' wares such as

woolen suits from Austria, lipsticks from France, food products from Korea and the USA, plastic toys from China and Taiwan. Privatized shops mushroom and flourish; the fact that the wares these stores offer for sale were produced in countries different from those that belonged to the 'communist bloc' turns their marketing into lucrative trade. The Koriak of Ossora take pride in the furnishings of their houses: colorful rugs cover the naked, wooden walls and many households own a TV set, and - most importantly - a refrigerator to keep delicate food cool. Yet, although most Koriak who reside in Ossora attempt to attach an aura of sophistication to themselves, they can barely afford these seductive wares. Ruinous scarcity of supplies and the general decay of financial value affect the Koriak in austere ways: the majority of inhabitants of Ossora and Tymlat are unemployed and live on meager monetary allocations paid by the state. Most Koriak attempt to cushion their economic hardship by harvesting natural resources such as herbs and berries. In particular, during the summer months from June to August, many of them leave the villages to benefit from what the tundra and the ocean yield in abundance; mainly they dwell at the estuaries of rivers where various fish spawn. They set up temporary living quarters along the coast or on small islands where they live in tiny shacks and build *iukolniki,* scaffolds to dry fish in the searing wind. All day women and men are busy setting out nets in which they hope to find fish in plenty. Women walk daily with coiled nettle-fiber baskets, made out of willow roots, or their modern equivalent, plastic buckets and bags, into the tundra to harvest the herbs and fruits of the earth.

"The earth gives everything, the earth is affluent...and then, the smell the tundra emanates...the aroma," Katia lovingly describes. Summer is the only time of the year that the children who attend the boarding school can be with

their parents. During the rest of the year villagers remain in jittery anticipation of this special period. Forgotten is the boredom and depression of village life in winter, a feeling inhabitants experience as both burdensome and agonizing.

As Katia points out: *"The life in the village is detestable...it deprives us from our connection to the earth. When you are out in the tundra...your spirit becomes light, your heart is carefree and you can feel it beating again. The life in the village is killing us. There we can't do anything. We are bored...oh, living in the village - how boring that is. That's why so many people drink. They don't have anything to do and then they start drinking. What else is there to do? The village is dirty...when you are in the village you feel dirty but in the tundra everything is clean, we feel wholesome....everything is so clean. Your body and your heart. Formerly we were blissful people. We joked and laughed. Now, look around - many of us became sad and silent. But in summer, when we are out - some of us feel happy again. Even the children are not a burden and they play and help. We take the elders and the children, everybody lives together in the tundra. Then our food is nourishing ...we eat fish and berries. We enjoy the sun - we forget about the pain of village life."*

However, many Koriak inhabitants of Ossora do not share Katia's assessment and opinion. They think of this way of living and economic mode of subsistence as outmoded and backwards. The dwellings in the tundra are poor: coarse strips of wood barely cover the muddy ground and hard lumber planks make for inconvenient beds. Furthermore, all day the huts are filled with the noisy hum of loathsome mosquitoes. In particular young Koriak are not willing to perform hard labor tasks such as pulling the nets, cleaning the fish, or collecting fire wood (one often walks for hours along the beach just to collect a few meager branches). Moreover, the Koriak from Ossora have not very many

places where they can establish their huts. Most of them reside in the lagoon which is a few hours walk from Ossora on the way to Karaga. They put much effort into building their dwellings, many of which are equipped with small iron stores and mosquito nets. Yet, in winter 'White' ruffians come out and delight in destroying what Koriak have constructed. The first year I spent in Kamchatka, I went with Liuba in March to inspect her family's dwelling at the lagoon. We hiked through high heaps of snow to reach the small peninsula: all of the seven houses the Koriak had erected last summer were demolished. The windows had been broken, planks were ripped out, and some of the walls smeared with mire. Emptied vodka bottles which lied around the huts gave a sad testimony of the ruinous visit by other people. *"They do this every year,"* Liuba explained. *"Some Russians come and destroy our houses. We don't know what we can do."*

Nearly every year the Koriak from Ossora start anew to build their small domiciles along the shallow waters of rivers and the coast. They catch salmon and catfish, yet they complain that the fish stock is in stark decline since the Russian government in Moscow now allows big corporations from the USA and Japan to fish in the northern waters of the Pacific ocean. Last year the Koriak intake of fish was only small; people attribute this fact to the huge fishing vessels that cruise off Kamchatka's eastern coast. Although the Koriak who live in Ossora still engage in fishing, they have abandoned the hunt for seal that is still actively pursued by the Koriak who live in Tymlat. These days people use guns instead of harpoons to catch seal: the lack of rifles in Ossora turns the pursuit of these animals into an unappealing idea for young Koriak men in Ossora. Yet seal fat represents a widely cherished delicacy and every year relatives from Tymlat send glasses full of the delectable, oily content to Ossora.

Also reindeer meat, once the main food of Koriak life, has become a rarity that the Koriak of Ossora treat themselves to only on special occasions. Up until five years ago all the reindeer herds of Tymlat's *sovkhoz* were driven in late autumn to Ossora where the fattest animals were slaughtered, together with the reindeer that were kept by Ossora's state-farm. However, since 1991, Tymlat has refused to amalgamate its herds with the Ossorian flocks and now conducts its own slaughter. Concurrently, the herds that 'belonged' to Ossora experienced a rapid decay and nearly all the animals died. Today, reindeer meat is transported by helicopter or ship from Tymlat to Ossora, entailing a sharp increase in prices. In summer 1994 in Tymlat a kilo of reindeer meat sold for 26 Rubles, whereas in Ossora it fetched a high price of 60 Rubles.

In particular, elder Koriak feel too hard hit by the intolerable growth of financial expenditures to afford what they know represents a cardinal symbol of Koriak identity. They bemoan the diminution of meat as the loss of a part of Koriak selfhood: not only is food 'good to think with' but it is also the manifestation of a life-world in which the Koriak remain in close connection to the land. The Koriak did not just live off the land but they lived in and with a vital universe in which supernatural beings communicated with the people and in which dreams played a productive role.

The reindeer always prowled through deep ravines, spongy muskeg, rocky schisms. Together with the Koriak they traveled through a lifetime - traveling the world into existence. The animals nurtured and sustained the people who on their part cherished their generosity and reverently thanked them. The Koriak and the reindeer were joined in a circle of give and take, of perpetual reciprocity, and the humans watched carefully over the maintenance of this

precious and productive relationship. 'Mekh' - supple and protecting fur - yielded all the shelter the Koriak needed, and both cultural and physical well-being were contingent upon the presence and vivacity of the products the animals bestowed so magnanimously. The tents which warranted protection against the moody temper of the weather, the clothes which shielded the body from the cold, and the meat which contented hungry guts were presented by the reindeer. The animals gave in plenty, yet, to maintain their munificence they had to be entertained and nurtured. Plays and games were arranged to enthrall them and special celebrations took place. Races, dances, and singing pleased the animals and they appreciated the care and offerings of the humans. All tundra embodied a site of sacrifice to soothe the mighty spirit of the reindeer and transmit the Koriak's gratitude and respect.

While I evoke this image I am not interested in conjuring up romantic images of ancestral Koriak life - and I wish to preclude allegations of unjustified romanticism - but, rather, how elders interpret and make sense of the past. Cultural narrations of elders position the Koriak in an animated world where mythical and spiritual beings stood in constant communication with the humans. The animals spoke to the people and provided them with advice. Although today this order is not acknowledged by everybody it still retains some validity in the tundra where life depends upon learned readings of 'natural' signs. For instance, in the summer months the Koriak who work as reindeer herders in the tundra migrate nearly every second day with the reindeer to find rich pastures and new grounds to collect berries. Dreams guide the Koriak in their decisions: in particular animal images hold great significance and experienced Koriak are sophisticated interpreters of apparitions that occur to the dreamer.

Everything was already packed for the next morning. The draught-reindeer were loaded with the heavy baggage of tent canvas, fur clothes, and the necessary items of daily use such as cups, spoons, pots, and - most importantly - the water kettle. Vanka had gone late to bed and woke up only when everybody was ready to depart. His uneasy look disclosed his inner commotion and Kolia asked him what was wrong. In a low voice Vanka reported that a small reindeer, a calf, had appeared to him in his dream - nothing had happened, the calf just lay on the ground and enjoyed the grass. Kolia looked perturbed. After a few minutes of discussion with others he ordered us to unload the reindeer - we, so he explained, would sojourn for at least another day in this area. Vanka's dream - he continued - did not augur well. Later he told me that reindeer calves which appear in dreams symbolize accidents or wicked events which are better to be avoided. The party was in mutual agreement not to challenge the dream-like calf but to heed its warning and rest for another day.[2]

Deep frictions and social tensions run like an invisible boundary through the villages of Tymlat and Ossora, even though for different reasons. As I pointed out in the introductory chapter of this thesis, the vast majority of Ossora's population consists of Russian and Ukrainian workers: only 7.5% of Ossora's population is Koriak. Most Koriak are pushed to the fringes of the villages where they live in dilapidated houses. The spatial arrangements of the

[2]Several images that occur in Koriak dreams signify events of the future. For instance, if someone sees in her/his dream teeth that fall out the dreamer knows that someone's children will die. Yet, more in 'Western' eyes more conventional interpretations do exist. For example, if a pregnant woman sees a rifle in her dreams she knows she will give birth to a son, whereas a dream-image of fur designates the birth of a girl.

village where Koriak live at the junction of the village and the tundra accentuates their marginal status in both the spatial and symbolic realm of the tamed and untamed. Koriak marginality is represented through the space they are allowed to inhabit: other, more bodily components play a role as well. Although Soviet state discourse denied that skin-color and physiognomy, in brief the physical indicators of race, were employed in social categorization of peoples, in a more subtle way these factors represent crucial elements to legitimate the peripheral status of non-Russian, northern populations. Often, the Koriak describe themselves as 'Black' *(chernye)* in contrast to the 'White' *(belye)* Russians and Ukrainians. They know that their body and skin is used to confine them to the lower ranks in a social pattern of 'equality'. However, many Koriak would say that the politics of race have nothing to do with their marginal status in northern Kamchatka, but challenging voices are becoming louder and are now heard more frequently: In autumn 1992, while the communal celebrations of *khololo* [3] were in their full swing, a young Koriak man who lives now in Tymlat, and who was obviously inebriated, started to rally against the 'Whites' who lived in the village. He ran through the village while shouting: *" Let's take our rifles, let's kick the Russians out. If they don't want to go we shoot them. Come on Russians, get out of our village."* This incident was unprecedented and anxiously the Russians villagers in Tymlat closed their doors. Most Koriak felt disgusted and repelled by the man's behavior and the next day they offered an official apology to the Russian and Ukrainian inhabitants of Tymlat. Yet, the incident is not forgotten and comments expressing anger and dismay circulate

[3] *Khololo* represents one of the most significant ceremonies in the circle of Koriak celebrations. *Khololo* is an extensive festivity celebrated by every Koriak family whose male members killed seals in the summer. In this celebration they accompany the souls of the slain animals to 'the other world'.

with frequency through the village. In addition to the factor of race, another, more internal axis of difference stands out in most villages of northern Kamchatka. Today five different populations from the villages of Karaga, Kichiga, Anapka, Rekinniki, and Tymlat live in the village: each of these communities identifies with a distinct and unique tradition of spiritual practices, dialect, and craft work. The villagers of Karaga are associated with ornate songs and masks they use during the celebration of *khololo;* the former inhabitants of Anapka are known for the care with which they provide their animals, and the aboriginal residents of Tymlat are reputed for their sophistication in hunting matters. Yet, the former inhabitants of Rekinniki, displaced in 1980 to Tymlat, are looked upon with overt suspicion and dismay by many members of the other groups. Since they started living in the village, so some people say, the village has changed and has become dirty. The *Rekinnikskie,* others remark, do not pay much attention to their gardens and never plant potatoes. In particular the *Tymlatskie* who lived in the village before the severe series of dislocations began, take pride in their agricultural and domestic skills, as well as in their craft of hunting techniques. They feel the *Rekinnikskie* are a troublesome people who disturb the peace in the village because of distinct economic and spiritual practices.

Natasha, a vigorous elderly woman from Rekinniki is angry: *"We couldn't harvest potatoes in Rekinniki, the soil was too bad, too much seaweed covered all of the ground. Where should we have put them? And then they forced us to leave the village, one part of the family had to go to Ossora, the other part to Tymlat. We lost everything. In Rekinniki we didn't use boats to catch fish, we used fishing rods and poles. When they expelled us - where could we go? In Rekinniki we caught fish during low tide, in Tymlat that is not*

possible. Where can we go? In Tymlat and Ossora we don't know where to go. Here people say that the Rekinnikskie are always hungry. They say that we are starving. But they are hungry themselves. Today, nobody has anything to eat. The Tymlatskie, they are stingy. They don't give. The people from Rekinniki give to everybody. Last year (1993), Daria Ilishkina .. she celebrated 'khololo'. People from Rekinniki came...many people came. The host - she only gave to her people, not to us. When somebody from Rekinniki catches seal or many fish, we distribute them. We give to everybody. We give the fur of the seal, and even the fat. But those from Tymlat and Anapka, they keep everything for themselves, they don't offer anything to their neighbors or relatives (tol'ko dlia sebia). They are already like the Russians. They are not Koriak any more."

In their discrete environments Koriak engaged eclectic cultural resources and practices as they traveled through various terrains. Yet, travel over a diversified landscape also fostered the appreciation of individually distinct modes to labor and comprehending the surrounding world; Koriak know and recognize infinitesimal personal distinctions of taste, craft, language, and aesthetic among themselves and between themselves and their non-Koriak neighbors. Today, these cultural and individual identifications have become converted into oral history: elders commemorate and recount tundra life in nostalgic narrations to their children and grandchildren. Yet, while elders' stories of mobility and microdifferentiation convert into charming memories of a more pleasant past, many of the themes that elders evoke in these stories are now external to life in the villages. In elder's minds, villages represent dense, metropolitan-like conglomerates where cultural difference blurs into a single narration of similarity. Harmful events affect everybody at the same time and cannot be

buffered by a practice in which various and multiple alliances protect those who are hurt by accidents or social misery.

The year of 1992 was an injurious one. In this year the municipality of Tymlat was shaken by several events that shattered people's lives and worsened their situation. In February of 1992 the *sovkhoz* was falling apart. For a long time, reindeer herders had been dismayed about the outrageous quotas of animals they had to kill and the state's failure to deliver food into the tundra where they worked and lived. For eight months, they had not received their salaries or supplies of goods, such as tea, flour, sugar, and technical devices. Annoyed, the workmen demanded the immediate delivery of their goods; otherwise, so they threatened, they would leave the *sovkhoz* and start a private reindeer industry. With the situation's increasing gravity the *sovkhoz* administration declared its inability to meet the demands of the workmen. Two elders who were knowledgeable and experienced reindeer-breeders, Aleksei Speredonovich and Affanasiev Nestorev, turned the Koriak words into deeds. Collectively they declared their animals now to be private property; the products yielded by the reindeer would now be solely traded by them and the benefits would be theirs alone. Other reindeer breeders felt frightened and expressed consternation about Aleksei Speredonovich's and Affanasiev Nestoref's self-assured behavior; however, they remained with them because there was simply nothing else to do. Eventually two new and private enterprises were founded: Aleksei Speredonovich called his 'Shamanka' after a torrent river that flows through the northern rifts of the mountains, and Affanasiev Nestorev's enterprise adopted the name of the destroyed village of Rekinniki. However, the promised supply of goods failed to materialize and the entrepreneurs encountered difficulties similar to those faced by the *sovkhoz* administration.

At the same time the only shop of Tymlat closed. The store had been part of Tymlat's *sovkhoz*; but because of the general economic plight in the country stocks were not replenished and the shelves were left empty. Sugar, flour, cigarettes, and matches were the only procurable goods and every morning women walked hastily to the village shop to see if deliveries of bread had come in. Often bread was available in the evening, but only if a boat had made its way from Ossora. The news spread like wildfire and soon the shop was bursting with people, attempting to snatch up two or three loaves of the porous bread. The lucky ones would go home and spread the table with dried fish, bread, and butter. Today they were able to procure something with which to feed the children but tomorrow it might be different. Both adults and children particularly cherished thickly buttered slices of bread spread with an abundant layer of sugar. In the village's situation marked by scarcity both fat and sweets represented social well-being and manifested illusions of plenty.

In March, 1992, Tymlat's only shop was closed. The transport of food, clothes, and technical equipment into the tundra had become increasingly difficult. Local Aeroflot stations suffered - like everywhere else in the country - from a shortage of fuel, and the price of transport had skyrocketed from 15 Rubles to 80, 000 Rubles. This situation and the refusal of several reindeer herders to continue working for such a small monetary reward (7000 Rubles) led to the demise *(razkhod)* of Tymlat's *sovkhoz* and to privatization of *sovkhoz* interests. In mid-March of the same year the *sovkhoz* shop was marked for closure and the village soviet advised all inhabitants to take their food ration cards and use them before they became worthless. The crush at the shop was enormous. Families collected all their food ration cards; dogs were harnessed to the *nart* (long sled used for transport) and every family traveled to buy out their

allocation of food ratios: sacks containing many kilos of flour or sugar were dragged onto the vehicle, tons of *krupa* (mostly buckwheat grouts), butter, oil, and even candy. Dogs, entangled in lines, barked and howled. Rumor spread that a well versed businessman had bought the shop. Yet, instead of providing the village with much needed food products, he sought to make profit by stocking color television sets costing 20,000 Rubles each. Contrary to many villagers' expectations, this did not lead to angry outbursts about the conduct of business in Tymlat; rather, people ruminated over the potential category of buyers.

"Probably only the Armenian can afford such a TV," Irina contemplated, *"he has so much money. You know, he sells 'samogon'."*

The sale of alcoholic beverages stretched with gasoline makes for big business in Tymlat and in Ossora. In particular *chuzhie* (literally to be translated as strangers) - as the Koriak call the Russians, Ukrainians, and Armenians living in their villages - profit from the Koriak's desperate and copious drinking: bartering Koriak artifacts for intoxicating beverages, they sell the objects to American and Russian traders who arrive now in abundance to capitalize on what is now commodified as tradition. So does Victor Romaniuk, an Ukrainian state-employed hunter. Living in a nice apartment in the north of the Ossorian bay with his Koriak wife and two teenage sons, who he wants to send to school in Alaska, he is happy not to live in *that* dirty, drunken, and dull village. Victor is busy. Four Alaskan hunters are expected and he wants 'to do business' with them. Everybody knows: he buys *kukhlianki* (fur coats) for one bottle of *samogon* (*"not even vodka,"* as I was indignantly told), and *torpaza* (fur

boots).[4] His motto - "time is money" - is cribbed from new TV commercials and he employs it with pleasure to show his knowledge of the 'real business world'. Yet, Victor is also worried; he wants me to teach him English to be able to communicate with the Alaskan hunters and offer them Koriak wares for sale. However, I was unwilling to support Victor's entrepreneurial spirit and sent him away but he often returned. One evening Valer and Kira were sitting at the table, drinking their evening tea and eating *ukha* (fish soup). I asked him if his children have friends. The question took him by surprise and he threw a disdainful look at the children. *"Kids like these - no. Such dumbbells! Look at them - smelly and stupid...One day I'll be rich. My children will attend American schools."* With a supercilious sweep of the hand he points to three drunken Koriak men passing by at the window. *"Look at them - they don't know how to do business. They don't know anything, these losers. They drink and drink, well - it's good for me."* Irina, who was aware of Victor's degrading attitude and despised his haughtiness and prejudice, retorted angrily by pointing out his bigotry :

"He is the one who makes people drunk. He himself is married to a Koriak woman, and he talks about her in such a way. He believes that he is so smart, much smarter than the rest of us, but he is just a fathead, a boastful, insolent, arrogant fathead."

In particular men who work as reindeer herders in the tundra drink prodigiously when staying in the village. Once or twice a year they visit their families and relatives for three weeks, seeing their wives and children. The collectivization of Koriak reindeer economy pulled families apart. In pre-

[4]In spring 1992 one could trade one *kukhlianka* against one bottle of *samogon*. In summer 1994 one *kukhlianka* was worth three bottles of *samogon*.

revolutionary times, lineages and families resided in single dwellings or compounds, women and men together. Ideally, the family would consist of several females and males, united under the leadership of the eldest male. The core of such a group would be several brothers and their families or a man and his sons and their family, in addition to single persons attached to the group. The size of the family averaged between twenty and thirty people. Within this group, there was continuous economic cooperation and sharing. Mutual aid was expected and frequently delivered. Every family group was fairly self-sufficient in terms of the skills it needed to survive in the tundra. The bonds of the family were tight, because they were welded in the foundry of economic interdependence and respect for each member's contribution to the family unit. However, with the division of the village into several brigades, this support system experienced a slow decay. The *sovkhoz* system, whose cornerstone was represented by various labor units, tore natal and affinal groups apart. Herders were allocated to specific flocks while their wives often remained in the village, attending to the children. Previously, husbands and wives were bound less strongly by emotional attachment than by a code of rights and duties that was eroded with sovietization; today, the bonds between partners are often weak and many of the mutual obligations became irrelevant. Currently, reindeer herders visit their families only once a year. Yet, during this period they dedicate most of their time not to their wives or children but, instead of apportioning their wages and attending to the needs of their families, they buy *samogon* or *spirt* with the money they earned within the year. They spend most of their time drinking at the edges of the village: near the cemetery, power station, or at the southeastern rocky shore of the village. Discarded bottles bear witness to profuse drinking and are a sad evidence of social misery and personal uncertainty.

Tamara Abocheva, a Chukchi teacher in the local boarding school of Tymlat, is both incensed and perturbed by the intensifying poverty and suffering in the village. Frequently, in the morning, she not only finds children smoking tobacco they had stolen out of their father's and mother's pockets clandestinely in the school's washrooms, but she also catches children drinking the liquid remains their fathers had left on the table the night before. She feels both concerned and helpless. More and more young children, she says, are abandoned by their parents. People do not have the money to nurture and educate children, parents are exhausted and disheartened; children are cursed and often beaten. Parents' desperation runs so deep that anger, frustration, and dread are often taken out on their children: little events can lead to severe punishments. For example, one morning one of they boys I knew was five minutes late for school. Fearing his strict teacher's punishment, he went back home. His mother inquired about why he was not at school; with a trembling voice he lied that for today school was canceled. His mother fumed. Taking a wet towel she beat her son so severely for his cheating and his mendacity that for days the boy had trouble sitting or lying down. Tamara Abecheva is aware of parents' and childrens' desperation. However, she herself feels unprotected and betrayed. The school house is not big enough and lacks the equipment and money to provide a peaceful sanctuary for children.

For various reasons many parents cannot take care of their children and attempt to find a place for them in the boarding school. Orphans and children with both parents working in the tundra are guaranteed a place in the boarding school. However, exceptions to the rule exist and in particular young mothers feel chastised by administrative decision-makers. For example, in the month of July, 1994, a single and unemployed mother filed an application for her child

which was rejected. The school board wondered why this woman was not working. If she worked, members reasoned, she would have money and be able to attend herself to the needs of her daughter. When the application was rejected, the mother was so desperate that she drank for several days, abandoning her child. Where would she find work in these days, when Tymlat - like the country in general - is shaken by waves of unemployment, poverty, and desperation. Many parents do not know how to bring up their children. Raised in boarding schools themselves, they feel insecure and prefer to lay the education of their children in the hands of teachers. Tamara Abocheva explains: *"Sometimes we suggest that parents take their children out of this place and keep them at home. They refuse. Parents who bring their children to us were themselves educated in this building... sometimes we also ask children to return back home. They don't want to. They are scared, and they know that we will feed and dress them. We do not scream at them."* Teachers, she says, do not even earn enough money to feed and dress their own children. She is angry, and wants to write a letter to the school administrative board in Ossora, putting forward her complaints about insufficient wage (*ca.* 4000 to 5000 Ruble). Yet, most villagers feel that instructors in particular are well supported by the government, and they direct aggressions and scorn towards the teachers of their children. Because both teachers and doctors are treated as 'specialists' by the government, they receive preferential treatment. For example, they are not forced to pay rent - a fact which enrages Koriak mothers whose daily financial worries drain and exhaust them.

The demise of the former Soviet Union convinces more and more Koriak that they are the losers in the game of high-politics and vilifying comments reinforce their beliefs in their own unworthiness and shabbiness: *"My nikomy ne nuzhen"* - nobody needs us, we are worthless - this monody is heard by

everybody who walks through the village. The Koriak are haunted by feelings of rage, frustration, and unbounded aggression. Open violence is on the increase and both mothers and fathers turn against their children. Abuse and mistreatment percolate through the villages, affecting the daily order. The Koriak sense hurt and pain in the face of rapid economic decay, political neglect, and sharpening poverty. They feel spurned by administrators and political decision-makers; indifference and dereliction represent perilous plights for others and the self. Unfavorable legislation and disrespectful bureaucracy stifles people's vivacity; most Koriak complain that they suffer now from agonizing *davlenie,* agonizing and energy- killing headache, a disease unknown to elders. However, *davlenie* is not the only disorder that came with a more sedentary lifestyle in the village. Jealousy, distrust, and suspicion are destructive companions of the coerced and sedentary life. The Koriak's conviction that they do not matter leads to self-neglect and outbursts of sudden pain, soothed only by radical bouts of drinking. Death comes suddenly: wives are robbed of their husbands and mothers of their children. For instance, the morning after a long night he spent drinking, Andrei, Zina's husband, dropped dead in the staircase of his home, leaving his dejected wife and children behind. However, she was angry. She had foreseen his certain death and reproached his negligence and carelessness for a long time. In the same month another relative of hers, Sasha, died at Ossora's airport. After joining a drinking binge, he, drunken with *spirt* , desperation, and joylessness, tottered out of the village and into the tundra. There, dropping onto the cold ground he had been lying there in a comatose-like state until his also- drunken brother Andrei found him. Andrei dragged Sasha back into the village, yet his legs were already frozen above the knees. Consequently, in an effort to save his life, Sasha's family attempted to transport him fast to Petropavlovsk, to the city,

where he could still be saved. Yet, in Kamchatka, planes do not follow regular schedules since weather conditions rule the timetable. Snow had been falling that entire day and sight was severely impeded by a heavy blizzard. If vision is less than 200 meters pilots refuse to fly. In consequence, Sasha died at Ossora's airport. Another result of the immense consumption of alcohol by Koriak is represented by the fact that an increasing number of children are now born mentally retarded.

Emotional affronts such as jokes and assaults on one's dignity, honor, and integrity represent the worst violations for the Koriak self. In endless accounts I was told how Koriak might formerly have abandoned their compound *(stoibishche),* when they felt emotionally hurt, to commit suicide. Today, Koriak explain misery and depression in terms of offense and insult: *"ona obidilas' '"* - *"on obidilsia"* (she - he feels hurt). These idioms demarcate people's understanding of anguish and distress, however, verbal affronts and physical aggression represent common means of attack among younger Koriak. Most elders still follow the imperatives of moral behavior and reprimand their daughters and sons severely for offending others. In particular after long sprees of drinking, emotions are let loose and minds become uncontrolled. Traditional rules of behavior and respect are disregarded, and elders complain that they feel threatened by their children. In order to procure money for the ongoing drinking gatherings, sons prowl their mother's homes to steal valuable items they can market for liquor. One morning, my grandmother and I awoke to energetic and insistent knocking at the door. Dawn was still to come and I was wondering who such an early caller might be. Somnolently I walked to open the door. Vasia, grandmother's son, walked drunkenly into the kitchen, bottle in hand. With an apologetic excuse he poured the liquid into a glass while grandmother

limped out of the bedroom. In silence and sorrow she sat with him. Later, Irina explained to me: *"Everybody in the village steals. Men steal from their wives and mothers everything they can find ...they steal fur stuff, things like pants, mittens, bags, kukhlanky ...everything. They steal everything they can find but they prefer old things like drums and clothes. You get more bottles for it. The drum grandmother gave you...Vasia sneaked into her bedroom while she was sleeping and stole it from the wall. He sold it for two bottles...then you found it ... but such incidents are rare. Sold is sold. Once things are sold one never sees them again."* [5]

Children in particular are punished with neglect and abuse if their felonies should surface in the community. Young boys threaten their sisters and other female playmates with violence, should they not carry out petty crimes for them. For example, Sasha had threatened to beat up Alessa if she refused to steal cigarettes out of her father's pocket for him. Hearing about this incident, his mother reacted with helpless fury, beating Sasha severely, yelling at him that she did not want him any more. Perpetuating the circle of hopelessness and desperation that leads to violence, abuse, and neglect, Sasha's mother felt desolate and helpless. She attempted to make up for her violence by cooking savory fish soup, however, Sasha had left the house and did not appear for another three days. Many young Koriak in Tymlat and Ossora feel that they have no models. They see their parents drinking and take in their neglect and scorn. Many young girls attempt to conceive at an early age to grant feelings of care and

[5]One day I sojourned in Ossora to run administrative errands. When an Ukrainian acquaintance invited me into his house, he showed me a drum he had just bought from 'a Koriak man' for several bottles of *samogon*. I recognized this drum as the one Vasia had taken from his mother, and offered to rebuy the drum: my acquaintance agreed to the deal. When I returned to Tymlat I showed the drum to grandmother who then returned it to me as a present.

tenderness they miss in their own lives to their children. However, responsibility is no longer an operative principle in Koriak lives and babies are often abandoned by giving them into the care of mothers or aunts who themselves feel overburdened, not knowing how they will feed the child. Many young girls do not care about the conditions of conception but wish to conceive in a 'fast' and uncomplicated way. They leave school to follow the fathers of their children who often desert their families to enjoy the freedom of 'bachelorship'. I had known Lena, a fifteen-year-old girl, for a long time when she decided to drop out of school to get married to Vladik, a seventeen-year-old Koriak man from Il'pyr'. Her mother was furious and, using harsh and invective language, she announced to her daughter that she never wished to see her again. Lena decided to follow Vladik to Il'pyr'; there she lived with his grandmother who spoke a Koriak vernacular Lena did not understand. Often, Vladik left their home to enjoy himself with friends, and when he sojourned at home he directed her conduct. Lena felt forlorn. When I saw her in Il'pyr' she seemed downhearted and showed signs of homesickness. However, keeping her mother's warning in mind, she did not dare return to her relatives and friends in Ossora. The baby was a burden, and she began to condemn both her wish for a baby and the child itself.

I believe that the majority of these portraits speaks for themselves. Tymlat and Ossora are communities torn by conflicts that run along various axes of gender, age, and ethnicity. Torment, distress, and agony characterize the situation of most Koriak I know. Women, men, and children are trapped in a coil of worry and distress that seems to furrow their lives without limits. The Koriak live at both the geographical and administrative borders of a state to

whose political discourse they represent a disturbance and unwelcome challenge. The center-periphery distinction that characterized the inner politics of the former USSR - and is now perpetuated by the political regime of the 'new' Russia - allotted marginality as a marker of cultural identity to the Koriak. With Moscow as the centripetal focus of all political, geographical, and cultural discourse, the Koriak hovered - and continue to hover - at the borderlines of power and influence.

However, center-periphery distinctions are always relative and contingent on what represents the center and what characterizes the periphery. By shifting attention to the border of the Russian state and thus converting the borderline into the 'center' of this project, I hope to elucidate the contingency and relativity of frameworks that allot politically and culturally insignificant space to 'marginal' groups.

Koriak articulate their views on misery, change, and marginality from the standpoint of difference. They are aware that the state's and other people 's attitudes towards them are informed by physical and cultural dissimilarity - an 'otherness' that sparks and motivates prejudice, intolerance, and discrimination. Also I, as the foreigner in the villages, was different; yet, my difference was a privileged one. The Russian and Ukrainian inhabitants of Tymlat and Ossora regarded me as an 'exoticum' whose presence was unexplainable - *"Why would a foreigner from the rich West (zapad) deliberately want to come to Tymlat where there is only agony, dirt, and filth ...and then even be concerned about wretched Koriak lives?"* - and this attitude informed much of their aloof, yet contradictory behavior towards me. My presence was as inexplicable to the Koriak as to the 'Whites', yet most of them worried less about my reasons than about my well-being. Generously friends called me 'Koriak' because I

consumed the same food as they did, attempted to learn the skills of tanning and sewing, and 'slept on fur'. Surely, this represents the ethnographer's job and is not a peculiar feature in the realm of anthropology, yet, in the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora such behavior seemed strange and exotic, particularly when exhibited by a foreigner.

Throughout this thesis I evoke various discourses informed by feminist and psychoanalytic thought. Increasingly, these theories act as guides in recent works on gender and the analysis of its constructing components. However, by engaging with these realms of inquiry I regard this thesis as both as a contribution and a challenge. This project examines issues of history and power, as well as notions of sexuality, love, erotics, and desire by engaging Koriak women's voices, views, and lives. In the rapidly changing world of Tymlat and Ossora, Koriak women rework and negotiate their identities to find a footing, even if an only temporary one. This chapter sought to evoke a quality of daily social experience, one that seems often relentlessly bitter and anguished. In this sense, the chapter works as a rhetorical frame to pursue this question: What would love be like for a people so destroyed and disheartened? Koriak women's understandings and construction of identity are contingent on their engagement with the acrimonious life-world of Tymlat and Ossora. Koriak women choose different paths to reckon with poverty, domineering men, and their own lusts and desires. Their positionings and outlooks diverge, and the disparity of women's practices generates contradictions as well as alternative possibilities for the fashioning of selfhood and identity. This thesis takes up issues of femininity, sexuality, and the body, as well as theoretical imaginations of the former. However, before I proceed with a description of distinct Koriak women's discourses on identity and love I consider the broader issues of history and

colonization in order to edify the state's and ethnography's imagery of Koriak life. By doing this, I evoke both Koriak masculinities and femininities; hence, I suspend a more detailed discussion of female positionings until the fourth chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

POSITIONING THE KORIAK

The nocturnal sun
sparkles over the tundra.
The native folks -
children of the north,
fisherman and hunter,
we are comrades, we are joyful
Every 'toiler'
is dear to us, is our brother.
We are Tungus, Ostiak and Iukaghir.
we are Kamchadaly, Giliak, and Koriak.
We are the small peoples in a vast family,
we are reindeer herders and children of the gun.

Stebnitskii (1931: 56)

Ocean and tundra,
winter and summer,
reindeer and motor vehicles -
this creates the everlasting poetry of Koriak life.

60 Let Koriakskomu
Avtonomnomy Okrugu
(1990: 33)

Reindeer and machines, fish and guns - these epithets reflect two cardinal images created in Soviet ethnographies of the Russian North. The tundra is a space of both tradition and modernization, of customary practices and advancement, of cultural routines and progress. Ancestral animal husbandry and industrial technology concur in a monolith of merriment and vivacity; the natives are joyful and poetic, industrious and toiling, enlightened and proficient. Such images may seem contradictory and conflicting, yet, as Grant (1995: 11) points

out, both images speak to the 'politics of exotica', either through their negligence or emphasis. The first version depicts the native as migrating through the wild tundra, still oblivious to the light the revolution will shed on them. The second image creates the native as enlightened citizen of the Soviet republics.

Describing, sketching, or even venturing into a reformulation of the Soviet version of Koriak development and progress raises larger issues of both representation and the post-colonial debate. Soviet ethnographies follow a canon of representative tropes and icons. This style represents the outcome of intense controversies that took place in Russia's intellectual and political circles during the twenties. Usurped by Stalinist state doctrine and dogmatic portraits of the Soviet state, ethnographies reflect their times' dominant intellectual and political paradigms. Ethnographic works from that time consist of two parts, commensurate with the vision the Soviet state attempted to enact in relation to the 'small peoples of the North'.[1] At first the reader enjoys an account of Koriak traditional life; the life of the past. These descriptions are followed by portraits of radical social and economic changes induced by the state and witnessed by the scholar. Soviet ethnographies narrate a fantastic tale of development, rapid progress, and the establishment of social and cultural well-being.[2] Native peoples surmount hurdles of cultural backwardness and feeble-mindedness to achieve the cultivated stage of enlightenment and 'civilization'. Ethnographic accounts sing the praise of the Soviet state in adulations of modernity and

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[1]'Small peoples of the North' is a collective term coined by the Soviets to designate the native populations of Siberia and the Far East and is now widely used in scholarly and popular publications. In numerically decreasing totals these populations are: Eveny, Nenzy, Chanty, Chukchy, Nanai, Mansy, Koriak, Dolgany, Sel'kupy, Nivhi, Ul'chi, Sami, Udegezy, Eskimo (this term is applied by both the state and the peoples themselves), Itel'meny, Kety, Orochy, Nganasany, Iukagiry, Aleuty, Negidalzy, Oroky, Tofalary, Enzy.

[2]cf. Antropova (1971); Gurvich and Kuzakov (1960); Sergeev (1934).

development *(razvitie)*. pre-Revolutionary texts subdivide the Koriak into the exclusive spheres of kinship, cosmology, family, and material culture; Soviet accounts tell of heroic and laudable achievements.

Consequently, issues of both representation and authenticity arise through a critical reading of Soviet ethnography. Correspondingly, in the West, the last ten years experienced a vigorous discussion embracing the broader issues of making culture and the construction of history. Writing strategies are perceived as fundamental in creating particular images of 'other' people and their life-worlds. Anthropology, so the argument goes, finds its early rootedness in a colonial discourse that captures the other in images and representations that purport to describe real and 'true' cultures. However, these images reveal more about western perception and epistemology than about those distant and exotic places where anthropologists - still today - prefer to go. In the seminal edition, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), the argument for an ethnography defined by an awareness of how we imagine and construct the 'Other' is cogently put forward. Informed by literary criticism and philosophical deliberations it argues that textual and topographical arrangements are crucial in the process of manufacturing images and facts. The compositional inventory of classic ethnographies is examined in terms of a catalogue of questions investigating the role of the ethnographer and power relations implicit in both the field and the text. Geertz (1988), examining the literary style of classic ethnographers such as Malinowski, Evans-Pritchard, Lévi-Strauss, and Benedict has shown how the deployment of specific tropes affects our perception, knowledge, and understanding of particular life-worlds. 'Persuasive fictions' (Strathern 1987) win over the reader, who adopts and affirms specific versions of knowledge and truth. Yet, there is also

dissatisfaction with the critical enquiry into the fabrication of truth and the 'Other'. Emissaries of the post-colonial debate probe 'Western' epistemological systems of certainty and verity. Ideas about centers and peripheries, as well as concepts of remoteness and exoticism, have their roots in unexplored notions of hegemony, colonialism, and resistance. Such concepts inspire the mechanisms of analyzing and writing the 'Other' as historians and ethnographers continue to explain their view of the world as centered on, and thus based in, political dominion and intellectual authority, they mute the voices of others. The politics of speaking are in particular crucial to the proponents of the post-colonial debate. Questions like who is speaking when and for whom? When is the subaltern speaking? In what kind of language does the subaltern speak?

In order to give Koriak voices a space - to let the subaltern/ colonized speak - I counterpose Soviet narrations of Koriak history with Koriak voices and the stories they have to tell. Now, the Scylla and Charybdis of such a project are evident. Even by evoking Koriak speech and voice as a means to undermine and sabotage Soviet hegemonic and monumental historiography, it is me, the ethnographer, who employs their speech strategically so that they can assault monolithic historiography. In relation to this problem, Spivak's argumentation seems of particular interest. In "Can the Subaltern speak?" Spivak (1988) expresses much sympathy for the project of giving a voice to the subaltern who has been written out of the records by conventional historical accounts. Yet, she also indicates serious doubts about the way such a project is usually accomplished. Noting the actuality of a heterogeneous colonial subject and giving approval to the project or the effort to speak a 'politics of the people', Spivak is nevertheless concerned to articulate what she sees as the difficulties and contradictions involved in envisioning a 'speaking position'. She criticizes

the unproblematic notion of the subaltern as solely an oppressed and homogenous being. The colonizer can not presume to be homogenous (cf. also Stoler 1993), and neither can the subaltern. Rather, the subaltern speaks in multiple voices. Bhabha's (1994) and Spivak's understandings and renditions correspond on this point. Like Spivak, Bhabha objects to a simplified and homogenous understanding of the subaltern but he relates this critique to problems of 'purity' and authenticity. For Bhabha, the colonial space is always ambiguous, ambivalent space; the colonizer may create and control the imaginations and desires of the colonized, but they are always mirrored back as manifest yet shifting identity positions to the colonizer. The effects are not pure and neat boundaries or identities but fuzziness and hybridity. Hence, Spivak and Bhabha challenge the well-intended project of 'giving voice' and marking identities, and disclose that its footing rests on a colonial base. However, despite the debate's vital and innovative potential, some critical points tackling issues of power and hegemony in the debate itself are ignored. McClintock (1995: 11) directs our attention to a binarism I believe to be of crucial importance in our practical engagement with post-colonialism. Condensing the globe into a single, binary opposition, colonial versus postcolonial, McClintock charges the debate with the attempt to blur another power relation. Theory, she says, is shifted from the binary axis of power (colonizer - colonized) to the binary axis of time, "an axis even less productive of political nuance because it does not distinguish between the beneficiaries of colonialism (the ex-colonizers) and the casualties of colonialism (the ex-colonized)." McClintock charges the post-colonial debate with the perpetuation of hierarchical relations between the center and the periphery, or the empowered (colonizers) and disempowered (colonized). She contends that the postcolonial debate occurs in the vacuum of suspended history,

as if the definitive historical events had preceded our time and are not now in the making. "If the theory promises a decentering of history in hybridity, multidimensional time and so forth, the singularity of the term effects a recentering of global history around the single rubric of European time. Colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance" (ibid.: 12). Accordingly, she argues, the term confers on colonialism the 'prestige of history proper'. Colonialism becomes the determining marker of history. Once again, the world's multitudinous cultures are marked by a subordinate, retrospective relation to linear, European time (cf. ibid.: 12).

Likewise, another stream of critique probes the politics of speaking and issues of representation. Third-World feminists, natives, and 'Others', rightly charge ethnographers with the pretension of 'speaking for the other' and thereby muting the latter' voices. Posing questions such as 'Who gets to speak and for whom?', the debate tackles the nerve of anthropology. Yet, what about people who cannot participate in such a project simply because the dominant language of the discourse - English - is not accessible to them? Are their voices heard? And if not, who will speak for them and launch their concerns into broader discussions on marginality and power? Is the postcolonial theory that has sought to challenge the grand march of Western historicism, and its imbedding in hegemony and binarism, not exhibiting power and perpetuating binarisms itself? Taussig's (1987) study of the massacre and enslavement of the Putumayo Indians in Columbia in the early years of this century shows how the Putumayo Indians became not only the object of oppression but how their voices were silenced. The narration of the oppressor functions to control and override resistance. Taussig shows that the oppressors were successful, not as the Putumayo believed, because of their greater mystic efficacy, but because of the

despot's narrative overriding the Indians' alternative discourse. However, notwithstanding Taussig's insight and wonderful depiction of different voices, I wonder if not yet another colonial burden is hidden in his exposition of the Indian discourse as insufficient and faulty. I wonder why Putumayo explanations of Spanish supremacy, as derivative from their greater mystic efficacy, are necessarily unsuitable and inaccurate. Is it not precisely their explanation of the world that the ethnographer should try to listen to? Some of the Koriak I know relate the Russian/Soviet supremacy to moral failure on their own part. Shura explains:

"The Russians are so powerful because god gave the fire to them. However, before he gave the fire to the Russians, we held it and were responsible for nurturing it. The time of the fire was also the time wild animals dwelt in the mountains, the canyons, and the ocean. These wild animals were like us; like humans, they talked. Some of the wild animals were good, but not all. Most of them were evil, like the humans at that time. They caused harm and pain; that's why their and our tongues are so long today. God decided to take the fire from the Koriak and give it to the Russians. That's why the Russians have so much more power, that's why they could come and establish the Soviet power here."

However, the problems of the post-colonial debate in relation to Soviet ethnography exceed the hitherto raised quandaries; not only are voices of the 'Other' - Koriak voices - muted but the voice of the ethnographer is silenced as well. In the discourse of Soviet ethnography it is not only the voice of the native that disappears, but also the voice of the ethnographer. Soviet ethnographers speak with a single voice: the lingua of state ideological paradigms. Before one could begin producing ethnography, one had to swear loyalty and allegiance to

the new Soviet state. The native disappears in the tale of the success of progress, the ethnographer vanishes in the mist of state-dictated tropes. The question of authenticity was not only a theoretically but a politically precarious one, given the strength of censorship.

The production of imagery represents a powerful set of actions; the project of ordering and appropriating what seems different, strange, and bizarre usurps the humanity of others and secures one's own design and understanding of the world. The Soviet ethnographers' imagination positions the Koriak within an 'evolutionary' discourse which then comes to inform attitudes towards that group and regulates the possible paths of a history.

In this chapter I seek to illustrate what physical, economic, and political means were used to monitor and regulate Koriak movement, using ethnographic descriptions as well as my own conversations with Koriak individuals. Thus, I examine the various ways Soviet understanding has affected Koriak life as it is lived in the present. Instead of remaining in a discourse that illuminates Koriak history from the perspective of progress and development, I turn to Koriak expressions and reflections through which historical and cultural assessments are made. In this sense, the Koriak speak to their historiographers.

In contrast to ethnographic descriptions that fix the Koriak in space and time, northern Kamchatka has always been subject to social and political transformations. The first detailed accounts mentioning the Koriak were written in the eighteenth century (cf. Lantzeff 1943; Steller 1753; Krasheninnikov 1755). Curiosity, the heightened craze of expansion, and 'new' scientific enthusiasm motivated travels to the 'terra incognita' followed by expansion and encroachment. Increasingly, the tsarist empire demanded fur, as did Europe in general. Tsarist tax collectors intruded the land to reap the *iasak,* a 'native' tax

the Koriak, like all other indigenous populations of Siberia and the Far East, were obliged to pay in pelts. Collaterally, the intrusion of missionaries and Christian zealots led to increasing conversion among Siberia's populations, often against their desire (cf. Vdovin 1979). However, the overwhelming distances somewhat abated the effects of colonial rule and power until the mid 1920's (ibid.: 1979; Gorbacheva 1985).

Indeed, with the success of the October Revolution in 1917, a new chapter of colonial history began for the Koriak. At the time of the October Revolution, approximately six thousand Koriak inhabited the northern range of the Kamchatka peninsula, living in small settlements at the eastern and western coastal shores of the Okhotsk sea and the Pacific ocean, or migrating with the reindeer over rugged and ample territory.[3] Ethnographers (Sergeev 1934; Krasheninnikov 1755; Jochelson 1908; Krushanova 1993) refer to these two groups as the sedentary maritime Koriak *(nymylany)* and the nomadic reindeer herding Koriak *(chavchuveny)*.[4] Intensive and complex trade relations bonded these two groups in a reciprocal system of exchange. Fish products such as *iukola* , seal and walrus fat, and fish skin impervious to water were bartered by the *nymylany* for dried meat, fur, and animal remedies provided by the *chavchuveny*.

[3]Gurvich and Sokolova (1991: 233). However, the population census of 1989 yielded as its result the number of 6572 (ibid.: 233).
[4]According to Antropova (1971: 16), the dialect of the *nymylany* which beliongs to the Paleoasiatic language group is subdivided into seven groups: 1) Kamenskii; 2)Apukinskii; 3) Parenskii; 4) Itkanskii; 5) Aliutorskii; 6) Karaginskii; 7) Palanskii.

Moite recalls:

"My father told me that earlier, before the Soviet power came, they lived in houses under the earth. They didn't have any reindeer but they exchanged with those Koriak who kept reindeer. They gave them fish and skin, and they received meat for it. They were our relatives and when somebody died we inherited some of their reindeer."

The term 'Koriak' did not represent a self-identification of the group, but, most likely, was called into existence in the end of the seventeenth century. Jochelson (1908: 406) assumes that the name Koriak is connected with the word *qora'ki* ('being with reindeeer'), given to the Koriak by adjacent groups such as the Chukchi. Furthermore, Cossack groups may have used the term to designate the inhabitants of Kamchatka's north-peninsula. Whatever the root of the term 'Koriak', today it is used by the inhabitants of Tymlat and Ossora as a marker of self-identification and cultural distinction.

Today, the classical segmentation of Koriak life into *nymylany* (maritime Koriak) and *chavchuveny* (reindeer-Koriak) has lost its ethnographic validity. However, the boundaries between these two groups have always been blurry, thus invalidating the neat segmentation of Koriak life into two distinct modes of subsistence. Vitalii remembers:

"Yes, we lived from catching fish and seal but we also kept reindeer. I always wondered where these reindeer came from, because my father, ...he only talked about catching fish, and so did my mother. So, one day I asked him, and he said: Nik'en, one day I walked with your grandfather through the tundra, when we heard a tiny sound. We looked and there was a reindeer calf, lying all alone by itself. We carried it home and exchanged dried fish for another calf. With those two calves we started a herd, and it grew and grew and grew."

With the establishment of Soviet power and the confinement of the Koriak to villages, cultural and linguistic designations such reindeer and maritime Koriak were conflated. In the present, Koriak deduce their distinctiveness and idiosyncrasies not from ecologically and economically discrete provinces but rather from those villages that became their homesteads under Soviet rule. Most Koriak were polyglot; trading with Russians, Japanese, Koreans, Chukchi, Itel'men and Eveny, Koriak proficiency in their partners respective languages facilitated both trade and exchange and brought extra-parochial concerns into local discussion and disputes.[5]

For these reasons my analysis has its foundation in the awareness that the Koriak were never just a site of localized knowledge but also enmeshed in a wider net of transnational discourses that exceeded the boundaries of the local (cf. Tsing 1993). Instead of presupposing a Koriak culture whose homogeneity became disrupted with the advent of Soviet influence and resolved into heterogeneity and difference, I follow Gupta and Ferguson (1992) in presuming difference as my starting point. Koriak defy the concept of culture as a seamless entity and of society as a coherent group manifesting inherent values. Discussing the manufacture of 'nativeness', Gupta and Ferguson point to the politics of space. Remote spaces such as tundra, desert, and rugged mountains contain specific groups, and the naturalness of their environment rub off on the people who inhabit them. Natives are immobilized by their belonging to a place, and, even more so, culturally specific philosophies and practices are attributed to such spaces.

[5]The Chukchi, Eveny, and Itel'men were adjacent groups with whom Koriak traded and intermarried (cf. Jochelson 1908; Antropova 1971).

After their initial difficulties in overcoming the White Guards in Petropavlovsk, the Bolshevik army reached what were perceived to be out-of-the-way-places.[6] The struggle was hard, but Soviet vanguard proceeded to impose the achievements of the Enlightenment onto timid and 'backward' Koriak minds. In concordance with the Marxist vision of several evolutionary stages of humankind, the Koriak were designed a *narodnost'* , a small, 'preindustrial', ethnic group.[7] As such, they had to be developed and elevated to the cultured and civilized stages of the evolutionary ladder. Leading a wretched existence in contemptible filth and dirt, suffering aching epidemics and diseases such as scorbut, ulcers, tuberculosis, syphilis, and trachoma (Antropova 1971; Krashennikov 1755), the Koriak lived in gloomy timelessness. Hence, the early agents announcing advent of new times and diffusing revolutionary edicts, morals, and values among the natives came with a philantrophic self-understanding of themselves and their mission to Kamchatka. On June 29, 1924, the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee announced the creation of the *komitet sodeistviia narodnostiam severnykh okrain pri Prezidiume VTsIk*, the Committee for the Assistance to the Peoples of the Northern Borderlands or - in short - the Committee of the North (cf. Slezkine 1993: 152). The tasks of this political and administrative board were manifold. However, one of its cardinal duties was the dissemination of information and

[6]Readers interested in the first five or six years of the Soviet republic are referred to the detailed investigations of Pipes (1990). For a concise portrayal of Soviet policy in relation to the indigenous populations in the north, see Weiser (1989).
[7]With the elaboration of Soviet theory of ethnic evolution, *narodnost'* came to denote a community, situated above the tribe (primitive communism) but below the nation (formed under capitalism). However, as Slezkine (1993: 152) contend, in the 1920s and 1930's, the term was a colloquial one and widely used.

improvement of living conditions.[8] The committee's work and policy was championed and advanced by enthusiastic visionaries eager to ameliorate the natives' social and cultural well-being. In January, 1925, the Kamchatka revolutionary committee turned to the native peoples with a contrived account of the revolution and its aims.[9]

> To you, the inhabitants of the Taiga and Tundra, turns the revolutionary committee of Kamchatka. There were bad people in Russia. They killed and robbed many other people, they wanted to become rich that way. We also had such people in Kamchatka. Then the poor people got together, took up weapons and started driving out the bad people. A terrible war began. The people suffered. There was a shortage of goods - tea, tobacco, flour, guns. The ships stopped bringing goods. Many people lost their lives at that time. But the poor people defeated the bad ones. The people ended the war. All workers gathered and created a strong Soviet republic.
>
> Goods appeared again - flour, tea, a lot of money, guns. The ships were running often. The Russian people now hold meetings and talk about their needs. They have begun to build schools and hospitals. Now they want to help you, so that you, the nomadic people who live in the mountains and the tundra, can come together often at clan gatherings and speak about what you need. The clan will apply Soviet laws to

[8]For a detailed portrait of the Committee's policy, work, and cultural position I recommend the work by Weiser (1989), Slezkine (1993), and Kuoljok (1985).
[9]see Antropova (1971: 15).

improve your situation. Elect into the clan Soviet the best people, people who will fight for you. The government of the Soviet republic now consists of the best people chosen by the whole nation. It will be to you like a father to a son, but you too must obey its laws and obligations.

If somebody hurts you - go to your clan soviet and tell him about it. The clan soviet then tells the district soviet, and this soviet will help you, and, if necessary, discuss your concern in the city.

If you do not know what you should do and what you should not do- go to the clan or district soviet, and they will tell you everything. You will find out when you may hunt fur animals and when you must not, so that the animals will multiply. If you need a school or a hospital - go to your soviets and tell them. One of the most extraordinary people, comrade Lenin, has said: let Lamut or Koriak or Chukchi gain knowledge, let them study. The person returns to his people and works with them. He tells them about everything in their language. He will find out what they need, and then tell us. Then we come and help you.

The Soviet Republic fights so that all people will have a good life; and you should understand that only the Republic can guarantee the protection of all workers, people like you, the inhabitants of the harsh North.

The decree may sound as if it was fashioned for half-witted and puerile natives, but it also reflects the communist world of antagonistic and irreconcilable dichotomies. The resolution left no doubt where the Koriak belonged in a bifocal universe of good and evil, virtuous and contemptible, sincere and corrupt. The Koriak had to understand the axioms of the 'new world'; they had to realize that they were not only poor but also exploited. For the Soviets demanding but rewarding times lay ahead, and they did not waste a minute to impress upon the natives the new course of Soviet history. The job was evident: illiteracy, filth, and primitiveness were to recede, to be replaced by education, literacy, hygiene, and 'civilization'. Consequently, the early stages of Bolshevik activity in the North are intricately tied to a political activism, that equipped the 'small peoples' with the achievements of the revolution, as well as food, guns, and ammunition. The confluence of newly constituted and complex 'relief-systems' for the poorest of the poor and Soviet theoretical paradigms of evolutionism and historical materialism culminated in a frantic enactment of compassion and benevolence. Like all other 'small peoples of the North' the Koriak ironically were turned into either proletarians or victims of exploitation.

The means developed to protect the Koriak from harmful and pernicious individuals and to elevate their minds, manners and erudition were multitudinous, but one of the most effective was the creation of *kul'tbazy* or 'cultural stations'. Taken under the tutelage of Soviet charity and magnanimity, the Koriak had to appreciate the values and benefits of education and professional medical treatment over shamanistic hoaxes, and to prize the merit of such conveniences as radio, newspapers, and libraries. The objective of the *kul'tbaza* was to attract the natives by providing modern comforts, leisure, and education. According to Slezkine (1993: 157), after a hard day's work reindeer

herders would relax in an easy chair, learn how to sip a cup of tea with impeccable manners, and a enjoy newspaper announcing the most recent successes of the North's sovietization. These 'communist missions' (ibid.) ideally consisted of a hospital, a school, and a *dom kul'tura* (house of culture), which in practice were often nothing more than small sheds which failed to accomplish their allotted tasks.

Despite an energetic acceleration of modernization early Bolshevik and representatives of the 'Committee of the North' had been lax and tolerant in their philosophies of progress and development in the North. Avoiding the grafting of alien concepts onto the natives, the committee members preferred a soft, cooperative approach. However, in 1928, Stalin drove the country into a transformation of another kind: all plans for soft and circumspect development were discarded, and new, harsher methods of streamlining, monitoring, and progression were implemented. In the peninsula, the political atmosphere changed to the native populations' disfavor. *Ukrupnenie,* the amalgamation of various smaller, migrating groups into villages and, simultaneously, their collectivization, represented the battle cry of the time. Settlements were erected or enlarged, and every Koriak was assigned a passport which she/he was required to carry constantly. The reprehensible past marked by oppression, exploitation, and injustice was to be effaced by transforming it into a new, glorious present where everybody would benefit from the state's munificence and compassion. Yet, the making of modernity and industrialization required the unmasking of sabotage, property ownership, and cultural indvidualism. Collectivization and *ukrupnenie* called for the liquidation of *kulaky* (rich property-owners) and national unity. Indigent reindeer-herding and fish-catching Koriak were now made aware that they had been kept in grim slavery and

bondage by wealthy Koriak who owned property in the form of animals and fishing grounds.

In 1928 the district Soviet of Tigil' expanded its spheres of power, control, and jurisdiction. Two other *raiony* (districts) were included under the Koriak administrative unit: the East-Koriak national *raion* and the West-Koriak national *raion.* In 1935 the *Koriakskii natsional'nyi okrug* was subdivided into the four districts which, still today, delineate the contours of its administrative structure: (1) the *Tigil'skii raion* with the capital of the *Koriakskii natsional'nyi okrug*, the village Palana, (2) the *Penzhenskii raion* with the village of Kamenskoe as its administrative center, (3) the *Karaginskii raion* and its administrative nucleus, the village of Ossora and, (4) the *Oliutorskii raion* with the village of Tilichiki as its focal point. In particular Ossora epitomized Soviet ambition and success: in 1934 it had still been a small dugout, whereas in the early fifties it had become the district center. However, in 1930 the borders of the *Koriakskii avtonomnyi okrug* (Koriak national province; until 1977 the province was designated as *Koriakskii natsional'nyi okrug*) were determined; this *okrug* became the homeland of the Koriak, fusing territory and cultural distinctions into a single identity. Identity is naturalized by allocating specific spaces to people and thereby creating their specific identity. The making of identity coincides with the making of space; place may not be intrinsically meaningful, but spatial meaning is established by contouring, defining, and fixing boundaries and frontiers (cf. Gupta and Ferguson 1992). Although class became the overriding identity in the former Soviet Union, the concept of the nation was not opposed to the idea of class. This may sound surprising, since, in principle, the notion of 'class' opposes the idea of nationalism. Frequently, nationalism strives to overcome class antagonism for the benefit of national

affiliatons and "to mobilize the different social strata to pursue a common national objective" (Simon 1991: 13). Yet, in the former Soviet Union, Lenin's and Stalin's insistence on nationalism or self-determination represented the result of a theoretical distinction they drew between 'great nation' nationalism and 'oppressed-nation' nationalism (cf. Slezkine 1993: 142). The former opposed the goals of the revolution and posed a threat to the principles of sovereignty, justice, and freedom from chauvinism, goals the Soviets sought to pursue. However, the latter represents a deplorable, albeit understandable, reaction to hegemony, cruelty, and oppression. Yet, 'oppressed-nation' nationalism can be mitigated through the display of compassion, tolerance, and sympathy. According to Slezkine (ibid.: 142), the "gift of self-determination" had to be read as a sign of guilt and remorse. By indicating regret and offering an apology for the crimes suffered by Russia's native populations, grief and hate would eventually overcome and, consequently, lead to end of national difference, thereby opening the way into the communist future.[10]

Education and medicine were thought to bring about the creation of the new state. The first Koriak schools were build in 1925/26, despite widespread resistance throughout the territory (Antropova 1956). The Koriak refused to send their children to school fearing their alienation and cultural breach with other Koriak; besides children participated like every other member in a compound in the herding of reindeer, driving them from pasture to pasture and

[10]"Having transformed capitalism into socialism, the proletariat will create an opportunity for the total elimination of national oppression. This opportunity will become a reality 'only' - 'only'! - after a total democratization of all spheres, including the establishment of state borders according to the 'sympathies' of the population, and including complete freedom of secession. This, in turn, will lead in practice to a total abolition of all national tensions and all national distrust, to an accelerated drawing together and merger of nations which will result in the withering away of the state." (Lenin, *Voprosy natsional'oi politiki i proletarskogo internatsionalizma,* cited in Slezkine 1993: 143).

looking after the animal's welfare. This type of austere child- labor seemed in particular loathsome and repellent to the Soviets; they championed the abolition of any form of child-labor. Aleksei Speredonovich, a Koriak reindeer herder , recalls:

"When I was small we all had to help. When we had lost a reindeer we had to find it before we would get something to eat. That's why we barely lost any reindeer, everybody paid attention, not like today. My father and my aunt did not want me to go to school. They told those people who came that I would stay with them and learn to become a good herder. They said at school I would not learn such things but that our lives were the reindeer. So I never went to school. But later I learned reading and writing."

At the same time, attempts to impose the gendered order of Russian life were invigorated. As he Koriak had been oppressed by Russian chauvinism and the tribute of tax, so were native women considered to be oppressed by their male partners. In Soviet eyes, in particular women's ceaseless and hard labor represented their inferior position (cf. Bilibin 1933a). With the arrival of female Soviet activists they were taught how to cook 'properly', clean their tent 'properly', eat 'properly', and raise their children 'properly'. Domesticity as a female task was invented for the Koriak woman, who previously had experienced division of labor by gender, but did not recognize men as imperious decision-makers, bestowed with unquestionable authority and privilege. As Katia said: *"From then on, we were like dogs on a leash."*

In 1930 the first *kolkhozy* (collective farms) were built, but often they existed only on paper. The Koriak followed their own migration routes, discussing which compound could use which pastures; they relied on the advice and expertise of elders built by life-long experiences in the tundra. As a result the

Soviets saw themselves facing problems which were inconceivable on the drawing boards of their urban theoretical headquarters. The Koriak - and this represented the most recalcitrant problem in Soviet eyes - lacked any form of government or class organization. Migrating in small groups, the composition of Koriak bands seemed erratic and constantly shifting; the Koriak rebuffed any participation in their own colonization. One of the most ambitious projects to introduce control and order to the Koriak was the election of *rodovye soviety,* clan soviets. However, although nobody admitted it, this undertaking was doomed to fail. At assemblies Koriak would either not respond or express their uneasiness (Stebnitskii 1931; Bilibin 1933c). Yet - leaving the question of the absence of the existence of clans aside - clan meetings were held to elect the *rodovyi soviet,* whose main function was to gather statistical material and maintain internal law and order. However, the Koriak refused to accept the Soviet division of families and groups into exploiter and exploited. Although they agreed that some of them were more prosperous than others, they spurned the simple equation of wealth with malignancy. Moite explains:

"We were rich, my father was rich. Poor relatives were living with us, they had lost all their reindeer, but my father gave them food and clothes. Everybody helped everybody. When you were hungry we would give you food. When we see that someone is hungry we immediately give what we have. My father fed our relatives. They lived with us for a while and then he gave them some reindeer so that they could start building their own herd again." Maria confirms: *"Earlier some people had more reindeer than others but when someone was in need they would give immediately. The elders, everybody gives."*

The early thirties became an all-decisive time. In 1930, the first district meeting took place in the village of Apukska where every year in autumn the nomadic Koriak migrated to barter goods and exchange information. A red tent had been erected in the center of the market, and slogans announcing the potency, efficacy, and vigor of the Communist party were hung everywhere.

"In a big *iaranga* (one of the Koriak words for tent) decked with slogans and flags the first meeting of the Koriak soviet was held. The slogans told the natives to create collectives, to create new forms of economy, to participate in cooperation and culture. But the slogans did not only hang from the walls of the tent. They were also attached to poles, to the sleds. The president of the district committee opened the meeting and an interpreter translated his words into the native dialect."[11]

However, the work of persuasion was an arduous and frustrating one. Bilibin (1933b), who worked as an agent in the *Penzhenskii raion,* felt both bewildered and annoyed by the obvious Koriak reluctance to appreciate the Soviet's work and collaborate with them. In November, 1930, he participated in a camp meeting close to the river *Tikhloe*. The minutes of the gathering reflect the predominant concerns of the times: cooperatives were to be formed, the organization of a collective to be discussed, and a new jurisdiction to be introduced. At the first meeting the Koriak who were present sat in silence, refusing to respond to questions. The second meeting - according to Bilibin - was somewhat more successful. The participants claimed that they did not understand 'Soviet talk' because they lived far away, and in addition they feared that animal populations they depended on for food and other material supplies would decline drastically if they were to follow Soviet rules. However,

[11] Litvinov, cited in Antropova (1971: 119).

according to Bilibin, the participating Koriak complained that they lived in grim slavery. The finger was pointed to Unyly, one of the 'most fierce and cruel exploiters' in the region. Forty seven groups migrated in the area between the rivers of *Tikhloe* and *Oklana*, herding altogether 24,000 reindeer. However, of these, 14,000 reindeer belonged to Unyly, and, of the rest, 7,000 to five other 'exploiters'. The rest of 3,000 belonged to the other 41 groups, and out of these, 33 possessed less than 1000 reindeer. However, the Koriak were terrified to contest Unyly's power: "When you tell us to fight with Unyly and with other exploiters we get scared. We hear such things for the first time. We feel so afraid as if you would send us to fight with the bear" (Bilibin 1933b: 6). Moreover, two poor and 'exploited' *(bednye)* Koriak herders present at the meeting, Liuliu and Um'e, refused to disavow their 'exploiter' fellowman Unyly for whom they work. According to Bilibin, both attended ceaselessly to Unyly's reindeer and their wives tanned and sewed for Unyly's household. Yet, thanks to the creation of lawful *soviets* it was now conceivable to accuse Unyly of tyrannical and preemptory abuse. However, to Bilibin's dismay, the Koriak were far from doing so. Um'e was elected into the *soviet* and, instead of denouncing Unyly's autocracy and despotism, he thanked him for the constant support he had granted to Um'e, his family, and other 'impoverished people'. Um'e desisted from punishing Unyly, but, to the contrary, affirmed that without Unyly, he and his family could never have survived, and that he, as the elected soviet, would take care of both poor and rich.

In 1932, the Soviets began to press for mass collectivization of the reindeer, but they encountered fierce resistance. The 'toilers' of the North refused to give their names and declined invitations to listen to propaganda disseminated in market places by Soviet agitators. The first attempts to

collectivize the reindeer culminated in the slaughter of the animals by the Koriak themselves, who would rather see their 'property' dead than collectivized. Class conflict was induced by the communists in order to weaken the existing social structure. As a result, the number of the reindeer in the *Koriak avtonomnyi okrug* fell from 264,000 in 1926 to 127, 000 in 1934 (cf. Forsyth 1992: 337). Conflict also arose in the long established Koriak coastal settlements, where native fishing cooperatives had been formed under the guidance of the Committee of the North. These large-scale fishing organizations disregarded native interests, and took over the fishing grounds on which *nymylany* livelihood depended.

Following the intense collectivization period of 1931-1932, the destruction of the native economy was well underway. Collectivization, however, was only one aspect of Stalin's social and economic transformation. A new 'cultural revolution' accompanied the massive collectivization process. The Koriak were forced to abandon spiritual philosophies and any religious beliefs. Spirits belonged to the realm of superstition, the wearing of fur clothes indicated Koriak backwardness, and eating raw fish and reindeer products, in particular head, stomach, and intestines were considered to be uncivilized.

Grandmother remembers:

"When the Soviet power was, well - they came and they took everything. They even went into the church (until the mid-thirties an orthodox church stood in the village of Kichiga) and they took the icons and threw them away. They threw everything away - even our drums. They went into every house, every tent, and searched them through. At that time I lived in the 'tabun' and when they came we dug holes in the earth to hide our clothes and spiritual devices. They came and they searched through our things. They plowed through

everything that lay on the sled, they looked into every bag, even the smallest, smallest ones. My father was asked if he was hiding something and he said no - they did not touch our things further. That's why the drums stayed with us. But Maria, who lived with us in the stoibishe - they pulled everything from her sled and searched through it. The power (vlast') wanted to take everything, also the rifles we had. We buried them under the earth, that's why there must still be so many rifles close to Kichiga."

In order to pursue the abrogation of chauvinism, 'exploitation', cruelty, and possession in an effective manner, the country plunged into a craze of betrayal, denunciation, and indictment. The class enemy assumed many masks, however, most frequently she or he appeared in the guise of creed, religious zealousness and persuasion. In Russia's north, shamanistic rituals and seances in particular struck the Soviets as exceptionally hideous practices of cheating. Crafty shamans seduced superstitious and credulous individuals to rob them off their meager possessions', as well as their confidence in the prospective betterment of their lives (cf. Slezkine ibid.: 227). Yet, estrangement or alienation of the populace from these despicable impostors was not easy. The shamans were firmly engrained in the life-world of the Koriak and represented knowledgeable individuals able to prevent harm, give advice, and sometimes heal inexplicable afflictions. The Koriak, like most other native populations of the north, were reluctant to give up their belief, and - as women's talk in the next chapter will show - continued to call upon the practices of individuals conversant with the spirit and supernatural world. Pupils, fearing an attack by evil forces,

demanded protection on their way home from their teachers (Stebnitskii 1931: 51).[12] However, Soviet indoctrination started to bear fruit. Pupils, condemning the superstitions of their parents, began to promote the spirit of science and rationality. Addressing the shaman, Tytynia, who lies drunk in the mud, they announce cheerfully:

> We do not need any further
> this trickery!
> We stop serving
> the priest and the shaman!
> Old beliefs -
> vanish like smoke!
> On a broad and shining path
> walks the youth!
> Stebnitzkii (1931: 58)

To manifest and solidify the new order, the Soviets decided to utilize a pool of potential allies: women and children. As Slezkine (1993: 236) remarks, in the mythology of the time 'youth' was the dominant theme; the country was young and so were its heroes. The coming into adulthood and the building of socialism were the same process, and both presupposed the rejection of previous generations as 'the enemy'.

Education was the way to defeat the old generation, for education was how 'new cadres' were formed and 'consciousness' was raised. In the case of the Koriak this meant taking children away from their parents and educating them in boarding schools to guarantee the 'correct' ideological supervision. This

[12]Stebnitskii was one of the first Russian teachers who lived and worked in the north of Kamchatka, in particular in the villages of the *Penzhenskii raion.*

policy was at first met with bitter hostility and resistance, but eventually parents had to let their children go. Today elders fatalistically shrug their shoulders:

"What could we do? They just came to take our children - they took them and put them into the boarding school. We did not like it - children learned Russian and then they could not talk to us any more. They could not learn how to tend the reindeer properly. Look, today - we lose so many reindeer because young people do not know what to do. They have tc learn everything, they have forgotten everything."

Aleksei Speredonovich explains:

"My father and aunt refused to let me attend a boarding school. I still remember, in spring we worked so much. The reindeer were calving and when we lost some they said - go and find them. We won't give you anything to eat before you have found them. That's why we always stayed with the flock, in summer and winter; everybody was careful and paid attention to the reindeer. The women were sewing, they had to prepare all the things for the winter. They cooked and sewed. In the night when everything was dark they sat close to the oil lamps. In August we looked at the reindeer and decided how many we would kill. We decided who would receive what kind of fur and who needed what kind of clothes. The person who did not have anything was the first in line. We said: This year you will receive the white fur, and next year another person. Every year we looked at who was in need and then determined how many reindeer we would kill."

Boarding-school education, leading to cultural and social alienation, is described by all sides as one of the most painful experiences in Soviet history.

Liuba recalls:

"Until grade four I went to the school in Anapka, then I went to Il'pyr'. I was in grade ten. The teachers came and all of the children were supposed to sign a paper acknowledging receipt of camel-hair blankets. But we had never seen any and I said: Why should I sign this paper? I had never seen such blankets. They were upset and I caused a scandal. The boarding school possessed a commission for the receipt of material things (Kommicciia po picanniu material'nyj tsennosti, committee for the regulation of material values) and they started to investigate the case. It turned out that the workers in the boarding school distributed many things among themselves. The housekeeper went to prison, all the others were let free. A bad time began for me in Il'pyr. I wanted to go back home. So I left the boarding school and went back to Anapka. My parents did not ask any questions. My father drove me by dog sled to Ossora and I finished grade ten there. My parents had always told me not to lie but now I learned not to trust other people."

Tamara remembers:

"In grade one, two, three, and four I went to the boarding school in Achaivaiam. It was good because in the afternoon we were allowed to go home. We could be with our mother and in the evening we went back. All children slept in the boarding school and not at home. Then they sent us to the boarding school in Tilichiki. We were fourteen girls from Achaivaiam; all of us lived in one room and in the evening we spoke in our language with each other. We were poor. They took all the reindeer away and then we became poor. I did not like it in Tilichiki. Everything went according to the bell. The bell rang for us to eat, the bell rang for us to get up, the bell always rang. We were not allowed to do things by ourselves. We had to do everything together - it was bad. But I have

one good memory. Our class went to a concert and that's when I heard the sound of a violin for the first time in my life. It was so beautiful. It was snowing when we left and returned to the school. But that was the only time we went out, otherwise we always stayed in the boarding school. Once my hands and feet nearly died of cold. They brought us to Korf, to the airport. We drove by tractor and they gave us rubber boots. The tractor broke on the way and we had to walk by foot. Nearly all children got their feet frostbitten. At home my mother immediately gave me 'chizhi ' (inner fur part of boots) and 'torpaza' (fur boots)."

Moite remembers the joy of her parents when the children returned for the summer to live with them:

"When Alfonia and I came home, my mother played on the drum the entire night, that's how happy she was. Moreover, she wanted to drive evil spirits away that might have come with us. In former times, the Koriak had special drums to chase such spirits, but today they are lost. Now we could need them again."

Yet, descriptions of this period conjure up very different images and representations. Portrayals announcing the Soviet's success and achievements evoke an atmosphere of mastery and triumph, while at the same time they depict dimness, loss, and barrenness. The generations, parents and children, seem to be divided by the latters affirmation of and loyalty to the values of the modern Soviet state. In particular the 'old' religious and superstitious beliefs seem now revealed as fraud and charlatanism. The chasm runs deep, dividing elders and 'the youth' into irreconcilable camps. Moreover, 'the youth' - with all the new knowledge and the authority of the state behind it - seems to ridicule and mock 'traditional' values. According to Stebnitskii, this is what enlightened and

blissful pupils announce while, in their leisure time, they hike with their teacher through the tundra:

> We do not bow
> to former exploiters!
> We do not need any vodka
> give us books!
>
> Knowledge in the North
> is like the falcon in summer!
> The sun of science
> shines over the tundra!
>
> Stebnitzkii (1931: 60)

The dreadful and agonizing Stalinist 'cleansings' in 1937 and 1938 that swept through the country like a gluttonous and voracious monster also affected the Koriak. All of the Koriak to whom I spoke in Tymlat and Ossora mourned grandfathers and fathers who had been incarcerated, accused of owning too many reindeer or of subverting state rule and dictum. And an elderly woman who lives in Karaga commemorates:

"During the war - they took many Koriak and relocated them to Kazakhstan. I don't know why, probably because of the NKDW and Stalin. How many Koriak died during the time of repression? How many Koriak did they take away, who never returned? They murdered them ... In former times we learned to know what alcohol is. Tatars - missionaries - so many came and they bought fur for schnapps. The first Russians who came with the power - they were good people but then they killed everybody."

Iura recalls:

"In former times, everybody had reindeer, but they kept them all together in one big herd. When the, how shall I say, when the Soviet time began, then, around 1925, they thought that all reindeer belong to one person. But already the little children and newborns had reindeer, the animals belonged to everybody. I was small, and I had ten reindeer. But the Russians wanted to imprison my grandfather...they said that he owned to many reindeer and that other people had to work for him. They said he was an exploiter.

But my father told the Russians that his father was already an old man, and that he was good. The Russians laughed. My father said that his father was already too old for such things, and that he, instead of this father, would go into prison. Then he left us and spent two or three years in prison, and afterwards the war came and he worked for the Japanese. In prison he had to catch and salt fish, and he did the same for the Japanese. In prison, he learned some Russian. He said that many Koriak men lived in prison because they all had too many reindeer. He said that in former times there had been wars between the Koriak and the Chukchi. The Chukchi stole reindeer from the Koriak. But it was never like what he had seen."

However, the war years also left their mark on women and children who did not leave Kamchatka. Tet Dasha recalls an incident from her childhood:

"My mother and I we were at the shore collecting mussels and firewood. Suddenly we saw soldiers, Russians. I had never seen such men before. They were calling but we did not understand them. My mother spoke no Russian. I was so afraid that I started to cry, I thought they wanted to shoot us. I clutched my mother, I was so afraid. The men were friendly they reached with their hands into their pockets and gave me sweets. They told me not to cry and then

they ran further and further. Again we collected mussels. Then another man came running along the shore, he was calling something to us. This time I was not so afraid anymore. He asked us if we had seen three men running along the shore. We shook our heads and said no. Just like the other men he gave me sweets. They were looking for the three men, and then they caught them all. My mother said that we should be careful....otherwise the Russians would also catch and imprison us."

Expropriation, collectivization, and *ukrupnenie* were deemed essential to the triumphant building of socialism. Most social activists and political visionaries equated the employment of these tools with the future of modernity, imagined and symbolized as progress and industrialization. The triumph of Stalin's 'paradise found' was asserted by the newly formulated canon of socialist realism, in which every story was a parable of revolutionary ascent from primeval chaos to the resolution of life's contradictions under communism. The master plot of socialist realism was thus the ultimate story of conquered backwardness. In the Far East the war brought an unprecedented build-up of Russian presence and activity. The war had interrupted the collectivization process, but after 1945 it was resumed. However, those communities which had undergone collectivization before the war were subjected to further crisis when the policy of amalgamation of collective farms into larger units was imposed in all parts of the USSR. This evoked the same resentful response as the first wave of collectivization, including the widespread slaughter of reindeer. A second wave of amalgamation began in the mid 1950's, reducing the number of collective farms *(kolkhozy)* and transforming them into larger units of state farms, *sovkhozy.* In Kamchatka this process was combined with a campaign promoting the discontinuation of nomadism.

Aleksei Speredonovich remembers:

" At first Tymlat had very few reindeer but then - every year they had more. The plan - the quotas ... they wanted to exceed the quotas, every year. We told them that the pastures were not rich enough for so many reindeer - we said that too many reindeer would spoil the pastures. But they did not listen. And today, so many pastures are ruined because the territory the 'sovkhoz' gave to the single flocks was too small. Today the reindeer do not find enough food, they grub under the snow and eat lichen...they die. The earth is spoiled.

In Karaga the village vice-soviet said that we should kill the reindeer we had kept in a special flock. We should kill them because we had the kolkhoz in Karaga. Now we had a 'kolkhoz' and we would have meat all year round, nobody would starve. The elders were angry and said that we should let the reindeer live. The village soviet did not know what he was talking about. I was against the reindeer being killed and so was Pantaly Stepanovich. But they killed the reindeer anyway. I left the kolkhoz when they killed the animals. Today, nobody has anything to eat and meat is very expensive. We left the 'sovkhoz' in Tymlat to attend to the pastures."

Karaga's private flock was killed in 1968. Many reindeer herders left the village in both protest and desperation. They felt deceived and disappointed. Kristofor expresses his vexation:

"In the 'kolkhoz' they said: 'We pay for the maintenance of our own reindeer and we go into the kolkhoz shop and buy meat. We spend so much money. Wouldn't it be better if we killed all the private reindeer?' The youth is not experienced, they believed what the Russians said. Some elders believed them as well and so they killed the reindeer. And look - two years later they established the sovkhoz in Tymlat and no reindeer in Karaga were left. The way

I understand it - they have always cheated us. Again this year (1992) they told me that Koriak do not know how to trade, and that they need to be ruled with a firm fist. But Koriak have always traded; we know how to do that. Earlier we traded with the Americans and Japanese - we made signs with our fingers but we understood each other. We had guns, the Russians traded guns for pelts. Today we have to buy everything, everything is so expensive and often we do not have enough money. It would be better if we still had the reindeer."

When Anapka was closed, its reindeer herds were transferred to Tymlat's *sovkhoz*. Interestingly, a kind of double-economy was prevalent in Anapka and Karaga. The *kolkhoz* had consisted of two different kinds of herds: state herds and private herds. Owners had to pay one Ruble per month to see that their animals were fed and cared for by reindeer herders in the tundra. Most Koriak refused to work for such a small wage, but private and state animals were kept together. After Anapka's *kolkhoz* had lost most of its reindeer, a new economic program was developed. Now the emphasis was on catching and processing fish for the mainland. However, the private herd remained in Anapka. Tymlat's *sovkhoz* started to lose many of its reindeer, and private animals were simply incorporated into the remaining Tymlatskie herds. The owners in Anapka never received any compensation, and, in December, 1990, and January, 1991, judicial proceedings took place in the village of Il'pyr', after which Anapka's population received 96 animals, taken out of Tymlat' *sovkhoz* herds. Now people in Ossora want to do the same.

In 1956, five *kolkhozy* existed in the Karaginskii raion: *'Tumgutum'* (Koriak word for comrade) in Anapka, 'New Life' in Kichiga, 'Turbine' in Tymlat, 'Hard worker' in Karaga, and 'Red Star' in Kaium (cf. Sokolova and Gurvich 1991). The policy of *ukrupnenie* caused much pain and suffering

	number of households	number of households owning reindeer	male reindeer older than 2 years	female reindeer older than 2 years	castrated reindeer older than 2 years	male reindeer between 1 and 2 years	female reindeer between 1 and 2 years	reindeer under 1 year
kolkhoz workers	35	15		23	5		12	23
service workers	37	23	1	65	9	6	17	58
other groups of the population								
Total	72	38	1	88	14	6	29	81

Fig. 1: Total of reindeer in Anpaka's private reindeer herd as recorded January 10th, 1974

These data are drawn from the archive of the *raionnyi ispol'nitel'nyi komitet* (district archive of the *Karaginskii raion)* in Ossora. During my first sojourn in Tymlat and Ossora, nobody except Ludmilla Aleksandrovna Ovchavora, who was employed as the local archivist, had access to this material. Generously she disclosed some archival materiai to me, expressing the hope*"that other people will learn what happened in Kamchatka."* However, this is the only table I decided to include in this thesis. Other archival material offers more detailed classifications; however, I feel uncomfortable about revealing more 'private' material and would like to confer with Ludmilla and other Koriak individuals before doing so.

among the Koriak. Smaller units were assembled into larger units, which meant that former villages were to be abandoned or destroyed. The Soviets adopted the euphemistic terms 'closing' for the destruction of settlements. In 1952 the old village of Anpaka was closed and the population relocated to the new Anapka right at the ocean. However, the water was shallow during the tide and ships had problems anchoring in Anapka's harbor. In 1974 the new Anapka was also closed and the population resettled to the three villages of Il'pyr', Tymlat, and Ossora. Kichiga had already been 'closed' in 1956 and its population resettled in Tymlat. Until 1956 Karaga was the central administrative village in the *Karaginskii raion.* 1956, however, Ossora became the administrative center, where a totally new village was built. In 1970, the population of the old Karaga was resettled in the new village of Karaga, located directly on the Pacific coast. The people from Rekinniki were displaced on three occasions. Until 1947 the village was located in the tundra near the river Pustoe. The population lived in *iarangas;* this, in Soviet eyes, inconvenient position was hindering the transport of goods and products to the village. In 1947, the villagers were dislocated to a newly erected Rekinniki, again close to the river Pustoe but this time 12 km from the ocean. Ten years later, in 1957 the villagers were moved to yet another Rekinniki, this time closer to the coast. Wooden houses had been built and were covered with thatched roofs. However, transportation difficulties continued and eventually this village was closed in 1980 and the population once again displaced, this time to the eastern coastal shores of Rekinniki, to Tymlat. Today, villagers constantly remark:

"How many did not die, how many did not become sad and joyless?"

Yet, although Koriak express in nostalgic and idealizing remarks their longing to return to the 'place where they come from', life in the villages from

which they were displaced was not as peaceful and harmonious as conjured in memories. Villagers struggled with the inequity of state power and the intolerance of the villages' 'White' inhabitants, as Vitalii recounts:

"We celebrated 'khololo' in Rekinniki. We played the drum, danced, and sang. The Russian population complained about the noise, so the policeman of the village came to establish order. But we were celebrating, we were playing the drum. The policeman came into the house and instructed us to be quiet. He said: Be quiet, don't play the drum. This is not allowed in the night, people want to sleep.

But people did not listen. My friend and I (Vitalii and his friend must have been around nine years old at that time) crawled up to him from behind and pulled his legs away. He fell down and his pistol flew across the room. Other Russians reported the incident to the administrative center in Ossora, but he refused to go. But his eye was black and then - he had lost his pistol. At the time they still would have locked him up for such a thing. He came to us and asked to have the pistol back but the elders refused to hand it over. They rebuked him. They told him that he should not disturb our celebrations - then he would live in peace in the village."

Today, conflicts among the various groups seam village life, expressed in disparaging and often acrimonious remarks, and hostilities poison the atmosphere in the settlements. In their narrations Koriak reveal discontent with state policy and the methods employed to bring about the economic and political transformation of the country. Koriak individuals pay critical attention to the state's decision making, and even though violent measures of political intimidation and coercion often prevented open display of conflict and friction. Today, feelings of disempowerment and helplessness pervade the life in Tymlat

and Ossora; yet the seemingly phlegmatic comportment of Koriak does not represent - as so many Russian villagers say today - an innate state of their apathy and uncaringness, rather, it reflects a relation to a world in which their concerns, sentiments, and desires do not matter. Today, just like seventy years ago when the Soviet state began its gigantic enterprise of modernization and development in Kamchatka's north, Koriak voices vanish in a pool of ideologies that claim the knowledge of how to correct and ameliorate the Koriak situation. However, in response most Koriak express resignation and withdraw from the world of political decision-making, drifting into the, at least temporarily, soothing realm of drinking. Koriak are aware that the state - and no matter if its name is Soviet or Russian - envisions them as marginal people who inhabit the periphery of a big realm, and whose number is so small that they can easily be overlooked and unheard. Today, many Russians and Ukrainians leave the villages and return to their 'homelands'.

They see northern Kamchatka as a wasteland, an abandoned and impoverished part of a country that, being in crisis, does not pay attention to the populations who dwell in at the periphery of a crumbling empire.

The stories told to me by the Koriak are narratives they would not relate to state officials and other 'White' inhabitants. Rather, these are stories they recount in the presence of people they trust or whom they endow with the power to carry their story further, beyond the borders of the state and into more global disputes. Koriak know that their way of describing history and their assessment of political actions might have contributed to governmental attempts to further restrict bodily and spiritual movement. Yet, through the work of memory they write their own history, endowing Soviet official historiography with local meaning and interpretation. They use their narrations - and conversations with

me - to symbolically frame political opposition in cultural idioms of speaking. Koriak themselves say that they are a silent, calm people. Koriak say they do not like to converse, and allocate speech to the Russians, who in eloquent talk, disseminate their opinions and feelings. Koriak see words as substantial things, able to wound and heal. They feel abused by invective speech, no matter if used by kin, mates, 'Whites', or politicians. Henceforth, expressing one's perception and uttering one's feelings represent powerful tools of indicating disagreement, scorn, and contempt. By telling stories, Koriak negotiate history and social identity, addressing larger issues of power and setting a historical and social frame to understand woman's talk in relation to history, state power, and broader issues of colonization.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISTANT VOICES, STILL LIVES

In the previous chapter I outlined the Soviet historical and cultural imagination which positioned Koriak life in tight frameworks of development or 'culturedness'. I examined what economic and political mechanisms were used to regulate and control Koriak movement, cosmology, artistry, and economic practices, as well as relations between individuals. Employing Koriak men's and women's narrations as well as my discussions with them, I illustrated Koriak perceptions of and reactions to Soviet history and the colonial past.

Koriak women have their own stories to tell. They represent their historical involvement in terms of cultural positionings by linking the past to the present. As such, the women whose stories I recount do not attempt to bridge the gaps of time, nor do they argue for a return to a more 'authentic' past. Rather, through remembering and telling their stories they employ a powerful tool to spell out the misery, violence, and depression their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren face in the present. Likewise, by recollecting their lives these women elucidate female positions within a wider network of gender relations. By relating their stories, women both select and negotiate what will demarcate the contours of a discourse on gender and women's lives that I portray in the ensuing chapters. Hence, their narrations provide a theoretical and narrative frame for affirming, shaping, and negotiating gender identities in the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora. The following narratives are marked by ambivalence and, sometimes, concession and strategic attempts to find and assert women's identity. As such, the stories represent various intersecting loci of power that run through axes of both Koriak and

Soviet imagery and representations of gender. Women affirm and contest both discourses by choosing narrative positions and strategies that illustrate either their corroboration or refutation of particular conceptions of gender in both - Koriak and Soviet - discourses.

Personal stories can be powerful tools in ethnographic texts. They disclose an individual's recollections of feelings, sentiments, and events; they engage in reflections on tradition, the present, and cultural philosophy. However, although personal stories challenge authorized historiography from an intimate perspective, they are not confined to the private and exclusive. Women direct their talk towards an audience; yet, the audience does not only include the direct listener, but also a wider net of children, friends, relatives, and even adversaries who are not necessarily present during the time the story is told (Povinelli 1993: 110). Hence, women claim authority and power by voicing their experiences, perspectives, and interpretations of past events and the present situation.

This rather dense prelude to the following narratives can be unraveled by recounting the stories themselves. However, I like to mention a few items pertinent to female Koriak elders have to say. The narrations I relate now were not told to me in the linear and undiluted string as they appear in this chapter. Their syllogistic coherence and plausible rationale are the result of my editing process, a process I entered upon to render these women's lives more comprehensible - as a story. In contrast to conventional and academically agreed-upon methodology the stories were never recorded on tape or in other media technology. They were jotted down by me at the time of telling, or afterwards, as I recollected them from scribbled notes or from my own memory. All Koriak women I knew were quite reluctant to have their accounts, narratives, opinions,

beliefs, and assumptions recorded on tape and I respected their reservations. In contrast to some men, women were distrustful of 'that machine'; a suspicious glance appeared in their eyes and often they refused to utter a word. Koriak women do not easily talk to strangers, worried about seeing themselves and their stories being misused. Skeptically, they wondered why I would want to know, alluding in tantalizing remarks to my 'remarkable curiosity'. By the end of my sojourn in northern Kamchatka I knew the first two tellers, Nina Uvarova and Ekaterina Chechulina, very well; in contrast I knew the teller of the third story represented in this chapter, the late Ekulina Chechulina, only slightly. Nina Uvarova as well as Ekaterina Chechulina told me their story over the course of my two stays in Kamchatka, whereas Ekulina Chechulina related her story to me at one forenoon in her home at Karaga during my first visit in Kamchatka. In contrast to all other appellations I use in this thesis their names are left unchanged. In various conversations they insisted upon my use of their authentic names. While I had traveled from Moscow to Tymlat and Ossora, I brought ethnographic descriptions of Koriak life with me. People started reading some of the books and told their mothers and fathers - who could not read or write - what and how things had been written about them. In particular elders resented people's anonymity in those texts, and told me to use both their names, Koriak as well as Russian designation, in my representation of their lives. I believe that these women told me their stories with the intention of making their lives heard in a more transnational context, and to rightfully reclaim control and authorship.

Koriak elders live with a strong oral tradition in which stories are told for various reasons of entertainment and teaching, as well as the safekeeping and handing down of knowledge. Narrations symbolize important tools with which to express one's identity and story in Koriak modes of representation; hence, I

decided not to insert comments throughout the text, but rather treat women's talk as conversations in their own right.

NINA IVANOVNA UVAROVA; TIM'ANOV

I met Nina Uvarova during my first sojourn in Kamchatka. She lives in one of the *Anapkinskie doma*, at the western edge of Ossora. When I sojourned in Ossora, I stayed at her and her daughter Liuba's place, and sometimes we shared one bed. Nina Uvarova is blind; like many elders who have spent their entire life in the tundra her eyes water in the glare of snow, and she is only able to distinguish ojects or people in close proximity to her eyes. She barely leaves her house. Usually, she spends her days sitting on her bed while making long strings out of wool and ellgrass, or she tans fur. She abhors life in the village, and suffers from *davlenie*. Even though her grandchildren live close, they only visit her rarely. Nina Uvarova speaks only a few words of Russian, and her grandchildren do not understand her language, making close communication impossible. While I recorded her story, Liuba acted as a translator to facilitate conversation and understanding.

I spent the summer of 1994 with Nina Uvarova in a small hut close to the Ossorian bay. Every summer she left the village to live close to the shore; she enjoyed the outside life collecting berries, firewoods, and mussels. That summer though I traveled back and forth between various places where friends lived, however, I sojourned often at the place where Nina stayed. Our relationship grew more amicable as I helped her to accompiish the daily tasks of living the life in the tundra, was then that she recounted lengthy parts of her story.

I was born on the 20th of August, 1914. The Soviets decided that this was my birthday. We did not have such dates, and my father told me that I was born in the year when there was much snow. I am the eldest and only surviving daughter of my parents. From an early age I performed some of the hardest tasks of herding. I was born at the river of Anapka. My father was a reindeer herder, we had many reindeer and we never starved. My mother died early. She had been an extrarodinary sewer, everybody knew that, but I am not as good as her. In the old days, many fairs were held. My mother sewed 'kukhlianki' and other things for the fairs in Ossora and the north. My father drove with these wares and exchanged them for pots, rifles, knives, and other things. He traded with Russians,but Americans also were there. One year my mother sewed a long coat out of seal fur and my father obtained two rifles and some money for it. Neither my mother nor I ever went with him. My mother died very early. My father married her younger sister, Anna, and this woman gave birth to a daughter, Maria. My mother had never shown me how to tan and sew, I was too young. Father's second wife taught only her daughter how to tan and sew. My mother had spent most of her time with my father tending the animals, she had spent all her time with men ... later she wanted to teach me how to tan and sew, but then she died and I had to teach myself. My mother married very late. When she married, her father gave her a big herd...today this would be three thousand reindeer. When I married, my father also gave me many reindeer.

My father took me and secured me to his back; together we would go out to hunt or to attend to the reindeer. He did this to stay strong. Formerly men used to do this, they were strong, not weak as today. Sometimes they tied us with our faces down to the sled and pulled us when we travelled. Soon I was

able to drive a reindeer sled myself, catch the animals with a lasso, and participate in sled races. In particular I enjoyed fast and reckless races, measuring my strength with the one of the boys. At the age of ten my husband-to-be was brought into the 'stoibishche' where he lived and worked three years for me. As the end of this time neared my father divided the reindeer and gave me my share. My husband and I moved westwards to the direction of the village Rekinniki. I was thirteen years old when I was married. We lived with the reindeer in the tundra. Later, when the Soviets gave us passports, they determined that my husband was two years older than me. He worked three years before the elders allowed him to marry me. We had already lived together for some time when I experienced my first menstruation. I did not know what was happening and I was afraid to die. Another woman showed me how to wind the fur like nappies. No men were allowed to see the menstruation blood. We secretly washed the fur out with water, so that men would not see us. But they knew that women menstruate.

I still had a bag full of toys; dolls which I dressed in 'kukhlianki' and fur boots. On our travels, I paid much more attention to this bag than to our clothes and food. My husband was angry and grumbled. He threw the bag into a ditch. I searched and I searched, but I never found the bag again. Since that time I have never played again.

We found a good pasture and let the herd grow. I despised the dialect people spoke in Rekinniki. I grew up with the dialect of Anapka and did not understand what people where saying or asking. I felt alone. In Rekinniki I saw for the first time in my life wooden houses with a roof and dog sleds. Unfamiliar with and frightened by the warmth of the house I ran out. I began to participate in reindeer sled races ... I was the only woman among the men of Rekinniki. I

always lost. But it was in Rekinniki that I learned how to drive a dog sled. However, the dogs did not pay attention to my exclamations and kept on running.

I was thirteen years old when I moved to Rekinniki. We lived there for six years in the tundra. Afterwards we moved to where then stood the villages of Anapka and Kichiga. While I lived in Rekinniki I gave birth to one child. It did not survive the winter but died soon after his birth. We decided to move back to Anapka where I knew more people and I then gave birth to three children. None of them endured the winter and the disease. There was this 'big disease' (bol'shaia bolezn') [1] *at that time in Anapka; no child survived and many adults died. Then, in 1942, my son Maksim was born. He was the first of my children who survived. I was very happy. But then, in 1972, he drowned. He had three children with his first wife Lena, and three children with his second wife Katia. I do not see my grandchildren very often, they do not come and visit me, it makes me sad. After Maksim, I gave birth to a girl and she died. In 1948 Luisa was born; I gave birth to three other children but they all died. Zina was born in 1958, Ivan in 1960, Aniuta in 1963, they all survived. After Aniuta I had one miscarriage. Ivan killed his first seal when he was ten years old and we were all so proud. In November we gave a big 'khololo', that's how proud my husband was. Sometimes I still went hunting with my husband but he said that I was too loud so he refused to take me.*

When they told us that they would close the village we did not believe them. We told them that we would not leave but they did not listen and just took

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[1]The term 'big disease' is evoked by many Koriak elders to describe the affliction that killed many - old and young - Koriak. So far I was unable to obtain access to archival material that might indicate what the 'big disease' was, how far it spread, and for how long it lingered in northern Kamchatka. Soviet ethnographies do not even mention the 'big disease'.

us. Those of us who did not want to go...they just took their clothes and threw them into the helicopter. I still remember the brother of Ivan. They took his baggage and brought it to the helicopter and he took it and carried it back. They took it again and once again he carried it back. This was repeated several times but eventually he had to give up.

I was working in the hennery of Anapka. They just came and ordered me. They said: "Go and pack everything up. From now on you will live in Tymlat. Two days later they came again and said: " You will live in Ossora." [2] *At first I was working in the 'masterskaia' and then in the hennery. We collected and then crushed mussels to feed the chickens. We had lived for a while in the 'tabun' in Anapka but my husband became ill and we had to move into the village.*

The relationships with the Russians were not bad but they thought that the life in the tundra was bad for the children. They thought we fought in the tundra and they did not understand how we could sleep on fur. Our nutrition was regarded as being bad, even harmful. They took our children away and locked them into boarding schools. It was very hard. Children are very capricious and need much attention. They took them away and we could not look after them.

There was a shop in Anapka. Koriak women collected blueberries and cranberries to bring to the shop. We received some money and bought needles and threads to sew. Sometimes in winter we even bought what we had collected in summer in 'Lyken mys'.[3] *This place was sacred and we brought beads,*

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[2]The inhabitants of Anapka arrived on August 24, 1974 in Ossora. Today many of them live in villages of Tymlat and Il'pyr'.

[3]*Lyken mys* is a very small, sacred island north-east of the village Anpaka. In summer approximately eight families dwelt on the island; their domicile and fire-places are still visible today.

needles, and beautiful dishes. The men gave ammunition and knives. During the war, a group of Russians came and they took everything from the island away. The took everything that lay on the ground or hung in the branches of small trees. Then they went to Tymlat and there they exchanged tobacco and tea for flour. Later all of them drowned. They were punished - our gifts were sacrifices to the earth and noone can take them away.

When we moved into the village, my husband started drinking. Not much, but nevertheless he drank. He often asked me to drink with him but I refused. I said: "If I drink, I will drink much and you will only find me in those families where people drink a lot." I was responsible; the children were small, and somebody had to take care of them.

Sometimes I see my relatives in a dream. I speak with them from a distance as they stand at the other side of the river. I am thirsty, I want to drink. I feel so thirsty, but I can't drink.

In 1939 my husband received a letter. He was told to bring this letter to Tilichiki. He should go there and give it to someone... He drove by dog-sled to Tilichiki, to deliver the letter ... we could not read and we did not know what was written in it. I was very disturbed and tense because my husband did not return. I waited two years, not knowing where he might be. He returned after these two years. He told us that they (the Soviets) also incarcerated women ... he saw how they worked in thei tradiional dresses.

Today it makes me sad that I cannot talk with some of my children and grandchildren. They don't understand our language any more and they tell me things I don't understand. They never ask me anything, they don't listen to what I have to say. Now people say it is the Soviet' s fault but I don't know. I

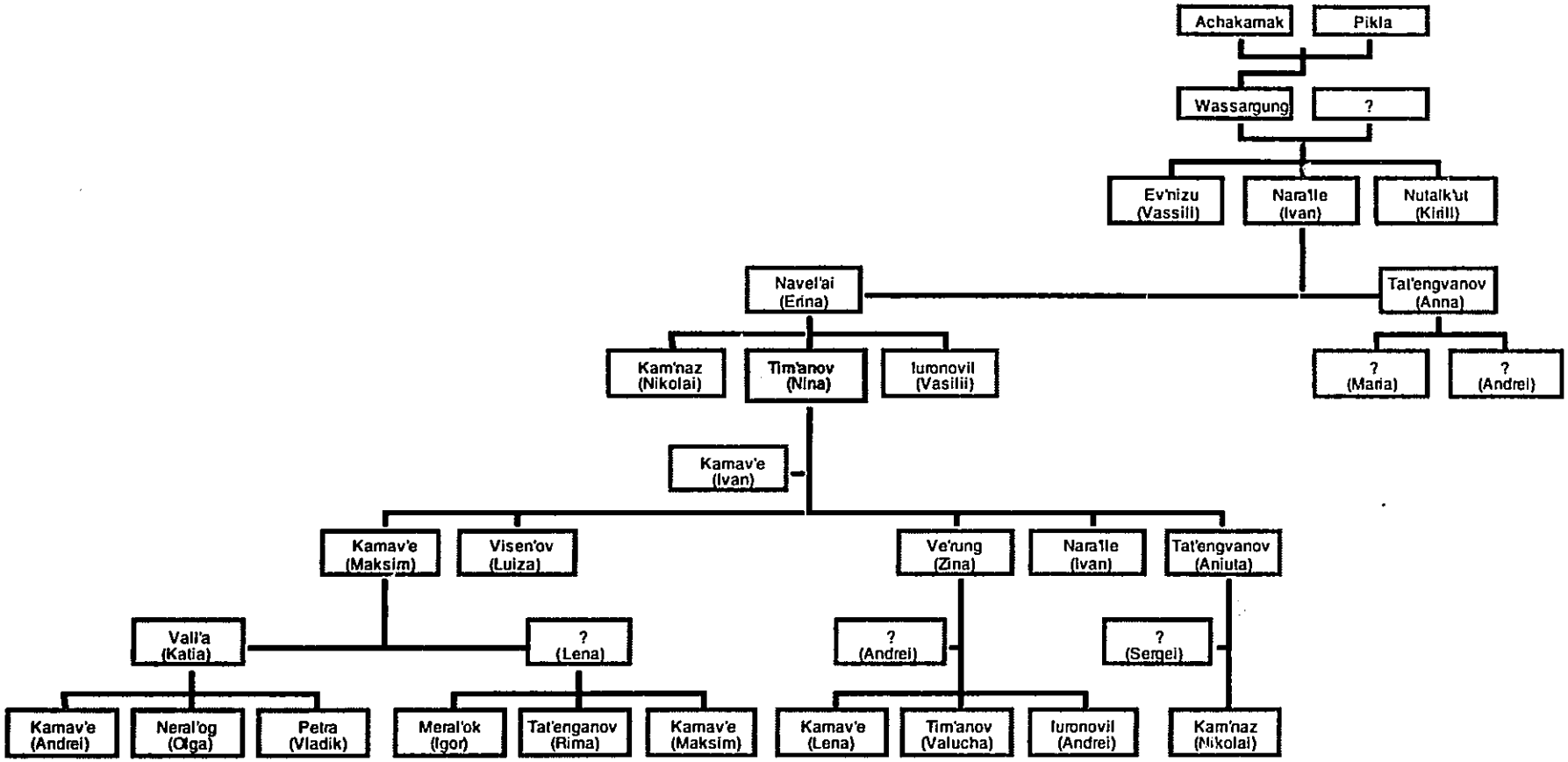

Fig.2: Nina Uvarova's family genealogy

believe it is up to the parents, my daughters, to tell their children about the Koriak way of life.

Nina Uvarova remembers her life through a serious of episodes that reflect significant events. Yet, by remembering her life through the lens of personal experience, she frames the past and considers certain memoirs as appropriate, whereas others are omitted or stored up for different occasions. Her conversation about the past describes a Koriak woman's life in its personal intricacies and as affected by social and political changes that came with increasing sovietization. By evoking a precolonial past in where both culture and people were still 'strong', Nina Uvarova formulates a criticism in regard to Koriak social and physical weakness today. Like many elders, she deplores the absence of vigor, responsibility, and shrewdness; however, she does not argue for the restoration of the past. She knows that her life belongs to another time, and the sadness she experiences because of her and her grandchildren's inability to talk and listen to each other enshrines the loss of coherence and meaningful relationships with kin.

In summer, 1994, an elderly Koriak man caught sight of a lizard in the proximity of the mountain range that crosses Tymlat in the North-east. Rapidly, this affair spread through the villages and reached Nina Uvarova soon. Disturbed, she commiserated with other elders and her children, deliberating the significance of this vision. Lizards are rare animals in northern Kamchatka, and their presence foreshadows damaging or pernicious events. Many elders felt alarmed, and saw their fears of social and cultural demise affirmed. The detrimental effects of Soviet political domination that Nina Uvarova evokes are irrevocable; moreover, the alcoholism of husbands, daughters, and sons, as well

as children's inability to understand the moral ethics of Koriak life may culminate in the dissolution of value and knowledge that guide Koriak elders in the world. With respect to the animal sighted, elders debated whether the appearance of the lizard denoted calamities for the man who noticed the reptile or for the state of Koriak life in general. People oscillated in their interpretations until Nina Uvarova - by pointing to some incidents she outlined in her narration - formulated the opinion that Koriak life is encumbered with distress, and people's ability and wisdom to protect themselves from misery is gone. The lizard, she resumed, just symbolized the decay everybody experiences anew everyday.

EKATERINA IVANOVNA CHECHULINA; VA'LAT (tender word for someone who is alive)

Katia taught me how to tan reindeer and dog fur in the proper way. Like Nina Uvarova, she lived in the *Anapkinskie doma* of Ossora, sharing an apartment with her two youngest children and two granddaughters. Katia has as reputation as an excellent sewer, as well as a wonderful singer and drum player. She attempts to supplement the poor monetary support she receives from the state by sewing and darning clothes for the Russian inhabitants of Ossora. Yet, often she has nothing to eat, and in summer I often brought fish or game animals to her.

Among the Koriak residents of Ossora, Tymlat, and Il'pyr', Katia is considered to be odd and eccentric. Her outspokenness causes her trouble, and her insistence on observing proper conduct in concordance with Koriak

conventions occasions conflicts in the small vicinity of the *Anapkinskie doma.* In particular many young Koriak are afraid of her, and avoid her when possible. Nevertheless, she is respected as an authority in matters of tradition, and people call for her help if someone has fallen ill, or died.

My friendship with Katia developed gradually. I met her in the yard and we talked; she liked the fact that I ate 'Koriak food' and offered me her help in matters of tanning and sewing. At the same time, she was curious about the stories I had to tell about the country I came from. Katia was proud to be literate, and obtained much of her authority from the fact that - as an elderly woman - she was able to converse with 'the Russians'. We talked with each other mostly in the evenings, and she related her story to me in different episodes, never interrupting the work she was accomplishing at that moment.

I was born in the year 1938. I grew up in the tundra with my grandmother and sisters. I did not have any brothers, only sisters. We were a big family and I learned tanning and sewing. My mother gave birth only to girls, not boys. My grandmother and my father did not like that. I don't know why but they said that something bad had happened, that's why my mother gave only birth to girls. When I grew up in the tundra we celebrated many ceremonies. Today the biggest celebration is the 'khololo'- but 'khololo' is a feast for the animals of the ocean - when I was little I did not know what 'khololo' was. I found out when I came to the village for the first time. Our celebrations were for the reindeer. One of the them was in December - 'mengirnang'. People who lived in other compounds came. Many people came, they drove reindeer sleds...and we celebrated together. We played the drum, we played games and people raced against each other with their reindeer. My mother and the other

women made 'asätirkeng'. You remember, you have eaten it yourself when you lived in the tundra. It is a blend of reindeer- and sealfat. We mix it so long until the fat is soft and foamy. The reindeer begin to speak with each other. They say: "This family holds a celebration for us. The next year our numbers will augment and we will yield much meat." Celebrating the reindeer helps them to grow, to stay healthy, to be fertile, and to be well-nourished. At the end of May we celebrated the young reindeer calves. Again my mother made 'asätirkeng' but this time we added berries. We played the drum and danced. We told the calves to become huge, strong animals and to be fertile.

My name honors the memory of my mother. She died and now she lives in the 'other world'. Also 'Anang ' (Koriak name for the Christian god) lives there. This god is the god for the entire world, there is no other god. At night god comes down to the earth and he walks from apartment to apartment . He sees every person, and he looks into every apartment. He sees when something is messy and you will suffer for this in the other world. If your apartment is neat and tidy you will be happy and joyful in the other world. I know this because my parents told me. The faith of my parents was strong but they never talked much with others about it. Humans are the children of god. God sends spirits to protect the people. The spirits are strong and good, they live with us. God created the plants and animals. But not clothes...clothes are already thought of and made by humans. God himself dresses simply; he wears fur and material just like us. He is up in the sky and he sees everything. There is still somebody else and God plays cards with him all the time. When god loses nothing grows; there won't be any berries in summer and the reindeer are ill. When god wins, everything grows: the fish, berries, and reindeer. The other is dressed in gold. He wears golden necklaces and around his arm hang golden bracelets. His breast

is golden and he and god sit there and play cards all the time. One day the dead will return.... but it will still take a long time. People who have sinned will be fastened to a hook with their tongue ... they will have to suffer.

When I lived in the tundra everybody was still praying. At sunrise we started working... we kneeled in the tundra, bowed our head to the earth. We crossed ourselves. Finishing our prayers we kissed the earth...the earth cares for our well-being. The earth gives health and joy. We prayed every day. Today things are different. Today the Koriak have lost their faith. Our children, they don't believe in God anymore. But belief and faith are important. I have a spirit, a bear. I received this spirit from my mother and she obtained it from her mother. The bear is with me. If I eat something .. so does the bear. You cannot see him but he is there. When I was still small I had a dream. A human came to me and asked me if I wanted to see the other world. I said yes and the spirit showed me a tiny hole. I looked through it and I saw the other world. How beautiful it was. Everything grew. Then the person said: "Later you can go there. Now you still have to live here, on the earth. At first you have to live your life here and then there."

When I was small we migrated with the herd to the coast to exchange meat and fur. I ate crabs and mussels and I smelled the ocean. I felt nauseous. I did not like the smell, I felt sick, and I was afraid of the crabs. I thought; what kind of beast is this ... I did not know, all I knew was reindeer. Then they said I had to attend school. I went for five years to school but I still don't read and write well. Sometimes my parents came and took me back with them into the tundra. Then we had to live in the village and we lived constantly on the shore. We had boats out of seal skin but in the fifties they did not allow such things any more. Everything disappeared. I still have beads from the time when the

Americans were here. We traded with the Americans and sometimes they gave us beads. Then a new life started. Today none of this exists any more.

I was already twenty-five years old when I married. That was late. I was not happy with my first husband. Maksim, my second husband, and I had always been friends... we had known each other for a long time. But then he went to the 'materik' (Russian mainland). So I married my first husband...he drank very much. For twenty-four years now, have I not been in the tundra. Until 1956 I traveled very much... I traveled to Ossora. We met in Ossora and had a plenary session with the communist party for three days, we decided on all problems and issues in the Karaginskii raion. At that time the roofs in Ossora were still thatched. Then, in 1957 I stopped traveling because I gave birth to my first child, a son. Now he has five children himself.

I left my first husband a year later. He started drinking and beating me. I kicked him out because he slapped me in the face. Nobody should do such things. Koriak men never beat their wives except when they are drunk...they might even kill them...like last years when Lesha stabbed his wife to death. My husband beat me because I drove to Ossora to visit the plenary session. He did not like it. Oi, I never wanted to marry. I did not like men. My parents wanted me to marry very early but I refused.. I am not a flower you can give as a gift to somebody else. I rejected them all. I loved to travel in the tundra and to other places. I liked other people, they were interesting. When a steamer came to Anapka I liked to watch people. Then, when I married, I was like a dog on a leash. They did not allow me to travel and I had to stay at home. Nowhere, like a dog on the leash.

Then I married Maksim. I was his second wife. He had already a daughter with Lena, his first wife. Maksim was a womanizer and I did not like

that. I had known him since my childhood but then they forced him into the army and I married my first husband. Maksim returned and he married Lena at first. Lena was drinking all the time and her daughter came to me ... I fed and dressed her. Maksim left Lena and then he and I began to live together. But then I became angry and he moved back to Lena. Maksim had three children with Lena and three children with me. In 1974 Maksim died. They found him frozen to death in the tundra. Now his family say says it is Lena's and my fault that he died. He could never make a decision between us ... but he was weak. He started drinking. He lost his footing in life.

My grandmother said that earlier the Koriak had small tents in their compound. Girls that were about to be married sat in a tent; it was very dark, you could not see them and their heads were covered with fur. The groom came with his parents, but he could not see the bride. The parents of the bride stipulated conditions: every groom had to work for his bride, that's how they tested his strength and patience. They gave him a bowl with a piece of meat in it , on which into which the girl or her parents had urinated. If he could not eat the meat ... it meant that he was a weak person and they would not give him their daughter. If he could eat the meat, everybody said that he was strong and he was allowed to marry the daughter. Our laws were strict. In the forties all these traditions disappeared. My grandmother said that the Koriak walk two paths. If we manage to live through these times everything will be good; if we can't live and we collapse, all of us will die. Today I don't know which path we are on.

I worked as a tutoress in the kindergarten of Anapka, afterwards I worked in the boarding school. My husband (Maksim) came and took me with him into the tundra to the herd. They pleaded with me to keep working in the boarding school but I said: Why should I stay here? I need fresh air. Here, in the

village, the air is bad, sometimes I cannot breathe. Why should I stay in the village?

From 1958 onwards, I worked for five years in the kindergarten and boarding school, then I went with my husband into the tundra. I worked in the fourteenth brigade; we were close to Palana. I did not like it there ...too many hills and mountains. The tundra in Anapka was plain and open. We could drive everywhere by reindeer sled, but where we lived with the herd we could not drive, we had to go by foot. When we were in a valley we had to climb up immediately. I did not like it there. We lived in tents and my soul (dusha) became light and joyful.

When I was seven months pregnant with Ol'ia. I had gone ice fishing and fell on the ice. My arm was broken. I lay there all night long, I could not move. The sun was already rising and they still had not found me. Somehow I managed to get up and crawl to the compound. Maksim saw me and brought me into the village. Also Lena lived in the village. When Maksim and I lived in the tundra, our lives were still good. Only later, when we moved into the village, did he start drinking.

The Russians did not allow our children to live in the tundra with the herd. All of my children went into the boarding school; only my eldest son did not go. When they found out in the village that I was pregnant they ordered me to give birth there. I refused but then Maksim brought me into the village because I had fallen. The doctors did not believe that we should give birth to children in the tundra. They didn't know anything. They said that mothers and babies could catch a cold. Ridiculous! We never had a cold. They brought me into the hospital of Anapka. They laid me on a chair and my legs were up in the air. It was terrible. We did not give birth like that. We knelt down and rested our

elbows on a heap of fur. Other women helped when the child came. Only women helped. No man was present or saw it. But, in Anapka, the doctor was a man and he assisted while I gave birth. I was so embarrassed. How horrible it was!

Then I started living in Anapka. We had to build houses because more and more Koriak came to live in the village. Our houses were not solid but they brought prefabricated buildings from the area of Vladivostok. Most of the houses collapsed and we started to build other ones.

In the village our lives became sad and we felt dispirited. But Anapka was still better than Ossora. The village, it means death (pocelok - eto pogibl'). Here in Ossora, everything is bad. The smell...the village stinks. Do you smell the radiators. My head aches. The life in the tundra is good. The smell is fresh and I never have any headaches. Living in a tent makes me feel healthy. In the tundra I feel alive - but since I have lived in the village I have felt sick.

Slowly we have become like the Russians. In former times we showed respect to other people, nobody was a thief. Since we have lived in the village many of us have started to steal and drink. They became like the Russians. Never show anything to a Russian, they destroy it immediately! My grandmother said we have to obey and be friendly to them, otherwise they will beat us to death ...I don't know.

In 1974 our village was closed and most of the Koriak were relocated to the village of Ossora. My great-grandmother was a shaman. She sang, day and night. At night I often lie awake and I sing as well, just like my great-grandmother. In Anapka I still had the drum and I sang more, but when we moved from Anapka to Ossora the elders told me not to bring my drum. They said that there are too many Russian people in Ossora and that they would sue

me at the court. Our singing disturbed the Russians and they were irate. I left the drum in Anapka. There is a sacred place, not far from the old village, and that's where I laid my drum. I never threw things away. I still sing at night but the drum is not with me anymore.

The young people also have forgotten to listen to their dreams. My eldest son who lives at the end of the village has been drinking heavily. I was very worried. In a dream I saw how two men attempted to tear down my house. The roof was already gone. The two men in my dream were Russians and they told me not to worry. They said that everything would be alright . One man was black and kindled a fire. My heart was light and blissful because fire means life. Two days later my son came to me and told me that he would go into the hospital. He wanted to stop drinking. You see, the dreams show you everything, you only have to learn and listen. I still pray in the morning. When we came to Ossora I used to do that outside but the Russians started laughing so now I go inside. I make a fire in our stove. The elders said that every apartment should have a stove and not hot plates. You can't make a real fire when all you have is a cooking plate. I light a fire and then I go into the other room and pray.

In their descriptions of the past, many elderly women concentrate on social practices that are now considered to be traditional: the presence of faith, trust, artistry, dance, and music, as well as the absence of corruption, deception, and desperation. Yet, all of these customs are tied to the tundra as a space that "discursivly and symbolically opposes the settlement" (Povinelli 1993: 117). Analogous to Nina Uvarova, Katia associates the decay of Koriak values and etiquette with the arrival of colonial power and authority, yet, in contrast to Nina's narrations, Katia exposes objections to some of the Koriak practices that

are now remembered as tradition. In particular she expresses discontent in relation to marriage practices and male representations of dominance. Katia senses that marriage, and ultimately the responsibility of proper wifehood and mothering will curtail her freedom to dream and travel. Men, she fathoms, like to exhibit strength and authority to show their precedence in sexual relations between men and women, and women need to succumb if they wish to keep marriage or relationships alive. In her story Katia emphasizes not the joys or satisfaction of motherhood - although she is a very attentive mother and grandmother - but the pleasure she takes in traveling and moving, hence amplifying power, influence, and knowledge. Yet, for Katia all social power and political knowledge is limited, insofar as it requires further explanation through revelatory dreams or philosophical deliberations. Her conversation about the past forms a critical commentary on precolonial as well as contemporary gender relations, and distinguishes her as a trenchant analyst of Koriak precolonial as well as modern practices. By evoking the limitations and inadequacies of Koriak women's lives through symbolic and physical expressions of male dominance, Katia exposes ambivalence that needed to be balanced in constant negotiation between her longings and male power.

Although Katia refused to have her story taped, she allowed me to record her songs and dances on videotape. First I wondered why she did not express reservation in regard to a medium that I thought to be more personal and exposing than a taperecorder, since it mediates both an audible and a visual image. Yet, by casting herself as a visible performer of Koriak song and dances, Katia launches herself as a woman of knowledge and erudition in the world. She knows that her imagery travels with me over cultural and national borders,

hence, her witnessable artistry evinces and enhances her identity and reputation as as a learned and influential woman.

EKULINA IVANOVNA CHECHULINA

I did not know Ekulina Chechulina very well. One morning, in summer 1992, Liuba told me about her intention that I travel with her to Karaga where Ekulina lived. She had known her for a very long time, but not very closely. Ekulina, she told me, had lived on the *Karaginskii island* for a very long time, as a teacher. She wanted me to talk to her and record her story. I hesitated. I had never met Ekulina before and did not feel comfortable with the idea. Just the same, together we traveled to Karaga. Liuba introduced us, and then left to run errands and visit friends. Ekulina was very amiable; she offered me tea and we sat down. I explained who I was and why I had come to Kamchatka; she explained that she did not know very much, but decided to relate her story to me in the hope that also 'some other people may hear it'.

I was born the 23rd of May, 1915 in the village of Voiampolka in the western district of Tigil'. In 1935, I came on the steamer "Lenin" from the city to Karaga. I had attended school in the city (Petropavlovsk) and they sent me to the 'Karaginskii island' to work in the school and teach them. The Koriak who kept reindeer, caught fish and seal lived on the island. They were poor; they were badly dressed. All they wore was fur and in summer when it was warm they scraped the hair off the skin and dressed in lighter fur clothes. A church stood on the island but later, in 1935, the church was transformed into a public bathhouse. The Soviet power came and transformed the church into a bathhouse. The church had been built before the revolution. All island dwellers were

baptized. We had a big kettle with water and the entire body was dipped into the water. Then, after the revolution, they shot at the icons in the church with bows and guns and they laughed. In 1934, they opened the school on the island and in 1935 they opened a boarding school. But there were not enough people on the island and in the sixties everybody had to leave.

I married my first husband on the island. He was Koriak and like me he worked as a teacher at the school. The people were dressed very poorly and we both tried to change that.

On the western shore of Kamchatka, where I am from, many 'kulaki' (here: rich reindeer owners) lived. They had shops and exploited other people. Life was bad in former times; people were poorly dressed and they were illiterate. Japanese fishermen lived in Voiampolka, they fished and lived with us. Some of them were like pirates, they were rich. We lived poorly; there was never enough bread, our clothes were dirty, and there were no rubber boots. We lived badly.

There was one Kulak, Fedorov, in Voiampolka. Sometimes he came to our tent and we gave him fish. Then he drove away, left the village. Between 1920 and 1925 the 'kolkhoz' was founded. The Koriak started to live better. Fedorov did pay us little for our services, but he kept us in poverty.

Now, Voiampolka had a harbor. Ships anchored and we bought material. People started to buy and our clothes became better. I did not want to go to the 'Karaginskii island' but they needed teachers. Only a few people lived on the island. We drove with 'baidary' (long wooden boats) to the island. All the reindeer there were private (chastnye); there was no 'kolkhoz' on the island. Aleksei Kolegov - he died a long time ago - watched the weather carefully before he drove us to the island. A man, his name was Egor, lived on the island. He

had two wives: Maia, she was already very old, and a young one, Evilki'i. Egor was the eldest; he had all the authority. He also had many reindeer but Katarina Lazareva had more reindeer than anybody else; she kept seventy animals. When I came to the island, all of them earned only a little. Americans had been on the island, as well as Cossacks. Also Tiazhelo and Innokenti lived on the island. When the war was over the Japanese came to us. Tiazhelo and Innokenti began to shoot. They wanted to prevent the Japanese from landing on the island. The Japanese leapt out of their boats into the water and hid behind them. But they managed to enter the island.

I lived for twenty-four years on the island; my first husband is buried there...

...there are stones who live; they talk and they give birth. The brother of my first husband, who wanted to be strong. Everyday he pulled and carried heavy stones. On the island lived one stone, 'Kigniceng'. This stone is like a god. He never touched the rock although this stone was very heavy.

In 1959 I came to Karaga. Semen Gutarova was the accountant of the kolkhoz. Also I started working in the kolkhoz, I processed fish. I gave an interview on the radio and told the country how we process fish in Kamchatka. The quota was...we had to process 3,000 fish per day. One day I processed 3,008 fish. It was easy. My second husband, also a Koriak, was the president of the 'kolkhoz' in Karaga. Then the party decided that he should become the president of the village soviet in Kaium (a now 'closed' village south of Ossora). In 1961 he drowned. He went out to hunt seal. Our boat was very small and the wind was strong and adverse...the boat capsized and he drowned. My third husband worked in the 'kolkhoz', he died in 1989.

Here in Karaga lived a shaman, Nikifor Nikiforov but we called him Lauk'u. He healed people and in the sixties he died. He could tell fortunes and heal people; he always carried a piece of hare fur with him. One day I went to see my neighbor, Ivan, who was Chinese. He sat downheartedly on a chair, holding his head between his hands. He said: I feel bad...I feel sick. His wife, Maria was friendly with another man. I said: 'Why don't you go to Lauk'u?' He went. Then Lauk'u came to his house and wrapped hare fur into a bundle of 'lauteng' (sacred grass). He stroked Ivan's head and his arms with the bundle and then he said something I did not understand. The next day Ivan began to laugh. He became happy again. Maria returned to him and they lived together until he died.

I knew Lauk'u well. He could become very angry. One day he sailed in a small boat on the river with his wife. She held a small child in her arms and that is why she could not hold the paddle. The boat floated backwards...she held a child in her arms. He was very angry. He screamed at her, he yelled. She should take the paddle, so he said, and help him. She had to lay the child on the floor. He was very strict but he also healed very many people. Like everybody else, he worked in the 'kolkhoz'.

A woman lived in Karaga - Fenia Iadonova. She was in pain. Many marks of eczema covered her breasts; often she was crying and we did not know how to help her. A medical project came to Karaga and they went to see her. Lauk'u was with her at that time and he hid under the bed when the three doctors entered the room. The children had warned him they were coming. It was forbidden to be a shaman and the 'power' would have killed or imprisoned him. Feta wore a 'kukhlianka' and the doctors told her to undress. She was very embarrassed. They gave her a bottle with medicine. The eczema disappeared and

she became healthy again. The doctors had given her the medicine but Lauk'u had helped her. He helped many people; he danced and played the drum.

Of all narrations, Ekulina Chechulina's reflects probably the most consent with and corroboration of the Soviet system. Yet, instead of charging her with opportunism or even 'false consciousness' I contend that Ekulina Chechulina - like Katia, even though in a dissimilar fashion - seeks a politically powerful and influential position for herself. If the Soviet system made possible the attainment of important and prestigious placements in the political life of the villages, Ekulina Chechulina attempted to participate in the shaping of the world by ensuring herself such a place through the influential position of teacher. As an instructor she was able to mold children's - and future adults' - knowledge and perception of the world, as well as to carve ethical and moral models which would guide people in their assessments, attitudes, and actions. Yet, in her endeavors to expand influence she does not refute handed down knowledge and practices. She recognizes Lauk'u's powers as precious and beneficial, and recommends them as curative remedy. Yet, her validation of traditional knowledge does not stand in contrast to her ostensible support of the Soviet system; rather, it buttresses her identity as a sharp, skilled, and sagacious woman. In spite of Soviet ideology, Ekulina Chechulina does not reject traditional practices because they represent superstitious and ineffective remains of a primitive past; but chooses strategies and elements that seem to aid and affirm her wish for local influence and distinguished identity.

As these conversations show that Koriak women remember a number of pasts. The meanings of the past are polyvalent and contingent on women's understandings and interpretations of history and their positionings in the

present. By narrating their stories these women chose or selected elements that seemed significant to tell in order to strengthen women's self-representations of identity. Koriak women's talk does not necessarily present a countervoice to Soviet historiography, but, nevertheless, elucidates the past from the critical perspective of the present. Through their stories they refute gendered representations of women as marginal to a discourse on history and power. Relating their knowledge and interpretations of political force and male authority, Koriak women position themselves as shrewd and influential personages in the political and cultural life in the villages.

By constructing their identities in relation to their understandings of the world, as well as negotiating their wishes and desires in various powerfields of gender, political authority, and local change, Koriak women elders represent themselves in discrete ways. They choose different positions from which to interpret their changing world, and adopt divergent strategies to situate themselves in the tension-ridden life of the villages. Hence, by employing idiosyncratic practices to act on Soviet dominance, change, and vexatious men they claim distinctive identities for themselves.

In the following chapter I elucidate Koriak women's lives in the present, and illustrate their struggles with men, misery, and violence. I take up the notions of experience, the body, and sexuality to unravel the various discourses on gender identity and female self-representations running through the villages of Tymlat and Ossora.

CHAPTER FIVE

GENDERING THE SUBJECT

In the previous chapters I elucidated Koriak women's and men's commentaries, interpretations, and feelings in relation to historical and political processes that create and haunt local knowledge. So far, I have suggested that Soviet cultural imagery and political management of the Koriak depended upon a set of insidiuous distinctions elaborated in the guise of scientific discourse. Moreover, and as a consequence, today Koriak villages represent ravaged sites of dissolution and despair. Drunkenness, larceny, poverty, starvation, and violent expressions of worthlessness press the communities. Villagers' feelings of identity are imbued with phlegmacy and indolence; however, most women I knew still strove to keep together what threatened to fall apart. As caring mothers and responsible participants in the life of the village they attempted to endow their children with a sense of worth, yet they could not prevent their children drifting into anger and aggression, as well as states of depression.

The following sections of this thesis take up the issue of how women negotiate and challenge the political and cultural modifications of the life-world in Tymlat and Ossora. Their engagement with various practices of state power, male dominance, and issues of ethnic differentiation shows how women strive to position and express selfhood and identity in the villages of Tymlat and Ossora. Many Koriak women I knew search for alternative possibilities in a world marked by male and governmental rigidity to realize their desires and aspirations, daring to challenge the boundaries of ethnic and gender differentiation. Yet Koriak women choose different, and potentially contradictory, ways and means to rework and contest limiting gender arrangements and configurations of

ethnicity to explore their selfhood. Partially, the dissimilarity of their practices is contingent upon the cultural and social specificities of the localities in which women work and live. Although anxiety and distress are binding experiences, Koriak women employ various philosophies and cultural positions of femininity commensurate with the particularities of life in the municipalities. Most Koriak women I knew who lived in Ossora claim a more cosmopolitan knowledge relative to their female relatives and friends who reside in Tymlat. At present, Ossora is being rapidly invaded by an encroaching market economy that lures people into the maelstrom of the tantalizing powers that western products and commodities seem to exude. In particular the cultural prestige associated with the possession of such products prompt Koriak women in Ossora to create and practice novel models of sexuality. Koriak women living in Tymlat challenge distributions of power along an ethnic and gendered axis of exclusion. However, they employ different practices to either affirm or transgress boundaries of sexual and racial demarcations. Yet Koriak women in both villages employ their bodies as sites for the affirmation, negotiation, or contestation of assumptions about gender, male power, and ethnic citizenship.[1]

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[1]The body has always played an important role in anthropology (cf. Mauss 1950; Douglas 1973; Turner 1980) even though a marginal one, hovering at the periphery of paradigmatic conceptualizations of symbolic, ideological, and functional approaches. Jackson (1989) perspicaciously delineates this critique in his work on Kurunku ceremonies and sensitivities. He argues that the body's thought-provoking potential has been unrealized, given recent emphasis on verbal praxis and dilemmas of representation. Dominant definitions of culture, Jackson states, tend to situate the fuzzy and delicate object of our interest in the semiotic and symbolic realm of knowledge. Furthermore, the commonly accepted rendition of culture as evasive and ethereal divorces the world of symbols from the world of materiality. The other problem - representation - is a corollary of the former. Insofar as the body is viewed as a medium of expression and communication, it is not only reduced to the status of a sign, it is also made into an object and treated as a matrix where social categories and cultural institutions symbolically unfold. Up to now, the body has been routinely treated as a property of the self, hence perpetuating the epistemological matrix of the

In particular new models of sexuality and femininity evolve as women interrogate the boundaries of the body within the intersecting realm of ethnicity and gender.

In contrast to more static models of gender and ethnicity (cf. Weiner 1976; Shostak 1981) I follow anthropological and feminist works that conceive of these notions as contingent and fluid concepts, taking shape in the context of different and various layers of power (cf. Ong and Peletz 1995; Butler 1990; Tsing 1993). Feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti (1994) puts forward a rare understanding of femininity and sexuality. Advocating an understanding of subjectivity situated in the body, she champions the notion of 'corporeal materiality' by emphasizing the embodied nature of the subject. Her ideas are useful for projects focusing on the embodied structure of gendered subject positions, their construction, and negotiation. In contrast to other feminist thinkers (cf. Irigaray 1985; Chodorow 1978) Braidotti does not commit to a view of corporeal materiality as a biological or social given but advocates a concept of the body as the site of overlapping, and potentially competing, discourses between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological. Classifications of the feminine corporeality as either 'maternal' (Kristeva 1982), 'absence' (Lacan 1977), or 'natural and good' (Daly 1978) are refuted by rejecting a notion of Woman as a monolithic essence. Rather, Braidotti envisions femininity and other sexual positionings of the subject as a "multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory set[s] of experience, defined by

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subject's bifurcation into an irrational, trivial body and an eloquent, truth-seeking mind. Consequently, Jackson recommends restoring the body to its rightful position as an experiencing agent. However, although his critique is valid and important, recent attempts to delineate the various contours of the body encompass and exceed Jackson's critique (cf. Lock 1993b).

overlapping variables such as class, race, life-style, sexual preference, and others " (ibid.: 4).

In this project Braidotti's concept seems useful in investigating various axes of difference (such as race, ethnicity, and gender), that seem crucial in understanding Koriak women's discourses on femininity, ethnic identity, and the politics of erotics. Like most other feminist thinkers (Rose 1986; Butler 1990; Flax 1990) Braidotti anchors her ideas within a broader discussion on gender, identity, and sexual difference to which I will refer in this thesis.[2]

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[2]It may be beneficial to afford a brief summary of the various streams of thought within feminist theory. This controversy has been aptly documented by Grosz (1994). She distinguishes three different types of feminism. Egalitarian feminism (cf. Barret 1980; de Beauvoir 1953; Chodorow 1978) relates the particularities of the female body, including such natural functions as menstruation and lactation to limitations on women's access to the privileges patriarchal culture accords to men. In addition, the female body is seen as a privileged site of nurturance and care but it receives forms of social, political, and cultural valorization that are diminished or disavowed. Here, the body is considered to be precultural, remaining attached to the realm of nature. The idea that female and male bodies are constructed and signified by arbitrary distinctions, a second type of feminism, is represented by theorists such as Butler (1990, 1993), Martin (1987), Haraway (1989, 1991), and de Lauretis (1984, 1987). Instead of being coded by a nature/culture opposition, the body is understood as being fabricated and designed by cultural and ideological inscriptions. This position rejects an understanding of the body as an obstacle that needs to be overcome, favoring a struggle that aims at greater political understanding of the body. The advocates of sexual difference, the third type of feminism (cf. Cixous 1980; Irigaray 1985), criticize the idea of the body's existence solely as a cultural construction. They are concerned with the lived body. Bodily differences, sexuality, and gender experience are not rejected because of the danger of male appropriation and exploitation but are seen as valuable keys to understand the representation and use of bodies in diverse social and cultural settings. Difference is taken up as a powerful tool to revisualize the autonomous position of women in philosophical, sociological, anthropological, and historical conceptualizations of the sexes.

This brief and by no means exhaustive characterization of feminist positions on the body exemplifies the enormous investment feminists display in defining the female body. Recently, challenges to the dichotomous sex/gender system have opened, within both anthropology and feminism, a new and increasingly heated, debate on gender, sexuality, and difference. The question is a crucial one for the elaboration of social and cultural constructions of corporeal subject positions such as femininity and masculinity. Today the debate goes beyond the question of whether the body is a pre-social, prediscursive substance or obtains its reality as a construct of cultural and social discourses (cf. Laqueur

Concepts of subjectivity and the body as developed in the frameworks of Michel Foucault and Jaques Lacan loom large particularly large in feminist enquiries into the construction and negotiation of the body. Despite their theoretical dissimilarities both thinkers facilitated new frameworks for feminist and anthropological theory in which knowledge, power, sexual identity, and everyday life can be understood.[3] In this thesis I evoke psychoanalytic

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1990). The discussion oscillates between the notions of gender and sexuality. Is sexual difference constructed and therefore to be overcome or is sexual difference genuine - though abused and lost by inferiority borne in sexism - and therefore to be legitimately incorporated into theory and practice?

[3]Foucault's conceptualization of power has influenced many feminist thinkers (Butler 1990; Braidotti 1994). According to him, the body is produced at the junction of various and overlapping fields of power. At the same time, our understanding of the body is informed by the various historical and social discourses that advocate and promote various representations and notions of the body.

I will outline Lacan's theory of the subject in more length, since it not as well known in anthropology as are Foucault's writings. The following summary owes much Gallas' (1991) delineation of Lacan's theory.

Lacan developed a highly influential theory of the process of identity formation. Dipping into both the structuralist and psychoanalytic bag, Lacan amalgamated Freud's early ideas on psyche with the linguistic of de Saussure. He revitalized established concepts in both fields in a creative effort to rethink subjectivity, dominance, and desire.

Lacan starts from the presupposition that newborns do not express desire on their own but are dependent upon desiring others. Like Freud, Lacan views mothers as the prime nurturing and caring figures whose presence guarantees the child love and affection. According to Lacan, newborns do not experience desire of their own, but desire is generated through absence, a lack of wholeness with the maternal body. Parturition separates the child from the motherly body; consequently, the child's experience is one of incompletion and unfulfillment. Accordingly, the child longs to become the object of motherly desire in order to experience completion. Yet, in order to be desired, the child has to be desirable, and this is only true if she/he can satiate a lack experienced by the mother.

At this point the child enters, to use Lacan's terminology, the imaginary order. This world is a fantastical world of possibility, potentiality, and completion. Now, the child aspires to become what in her/his fantasy symbolizes the mother's lack - namely the phallus - and strives to fulfill this lack. According to Lacan, the child wants to be phallus for the mother and is eager to emit maternal lack by substituting the missing phallus with her/his body. Thereby the child hopes to elicit love; the child's fantastic identification with the phallus inflames motherly desire and restores what is lacking for the child, namely unity with the motherly body. Consequently, the imaginary order characterizes a realm where one is everything for the other.

However, soon the father, playing the part of the killjoy, enters the stage of the oedipal drama that now unfolds between the tripartite group of mother, father, child. The oedipal phase witnesses the disruption of the imaginary order represented by the child-mother dyad through the father. The father of the Lacan's imagination is severe: he rebukes and issues prohibitions. In short, the father incorporates the law. Furthermore, he prohibits the illusion of complementarity; the reflection and indulgence of the one in the other, and of the other in the one. The demands of the father are terrible. He forbids identification between child and mother which is created in the reciprocal exchange of fulfilling mirages. The father executes symbolic castration by inducing a separation between child and mother; he corrects the child's primary identification with the female body by substituting the imaginary order with the law of the father.

Now a sad story begins. The child is forced to identify with the law (prohibitions) of the father and to renounce the object of her/his desire (namely to be the object of motherly desire). From now on, the child is forced to desire something or somebody else. This move represents what Lacan calls the symbolic order. Now the child enters the family triad of mother-father-child as a sexually autonomous being, yet, simultaneously, it enters the order of language which is determined by the incessant play of signifiers. Of crucial relevance here is the way of how Lacan defines the linguistic figure of metonomy. He aligns the trope of metonomy with the psychoanalytic concept of displacement. The concept of displacement characterizes a relationship between two terms, both of which remain present yet in an unequal relationship. One of the two terms is repressed and, consequently, represents what is not immediately accessible. Yet, both terms remain in contiguity, and it is the movement form one signifier to another, that, according to Lacan, is the very movement of desire, the endless substitution of one object of desire for another (displacement). Yet, no object is capable of filling the original lack, namely the loss of motherly love or the imaginary order.

Here Lacan arrives at what is of real interest to him, namely the formation of subjectivity. The dissolution of the binary child-mother alliance in the symbolic order is tightly interwoven with the production of subjectivity. In contrast to Freud, for Lacan the formation of the ego represents not the result of differentiation in the id through contact with external reality, but, to become a subject, the child needs the mediation of body images which mirror its own shape and body. Through identification with these body images (body image of the mother) the child attains certainty of bodily intactness, perfection, and unity; the narcissistic ego is produced.

But, Lacan says, the child's first narcissistic ego is an imaginary ego. Identification with external body images, such as the maternal body, conceal the child's dependency on desire expressed by the mother. Furthermore, the child cannot deny the presence and reality of the father and needs to submit to the law of the symbolic order. She/he now constantly needs to bridge the gulf between her/his first ego-certainty and the prohibition against feeling and living the wholeness (ego-certainty) experienced in the imaginary order. Now the child continually attempts to recreate the unity between her'his and the mother's body. Yet, if the child's subject formation was successful - and it is only successful if the child accepts and lives the symbolic order - this unity will be forever gone. This is why Lacan is able to define desire as metonymy. One-ness is unattainable; desire is limitless and because of its insatiability it is forced to

arguments to focus on configurations of sexuality, embodiedness, and the creation of the (speaking) subject. Psychoanalysis emphasizes the importance of corporeality in the construction of gender and identity, and investigates the mechanisms of subject-making. However, as Oliver (1995: 12) lucidly remarks, for Freud and Lacan (and to some extent French feminism), the formation of sexual identity revolves around the significance and presence of the male sexual organ. In Lacan's scheme of social order and desire it is the metaphor of the phallus, associated with paternal law, culture, and regulation, that condemns women to eternal incompleteness since this crucial element is missing in their bodies. Although much feminist theory employs the Lacanian framework to explore issues of sexuality, identity, and desire (Allison 1994; Butler 1990; Lorraine 1990) they remain rooted within the particularities of an exclusive discourse that is not unconditionally applicable to various cultural contexts. In Lacan's, as well as Irigaray's and Kristeva's framework, the maternal is conceptualized as the precultural domain of gender, to be surpassed by the paternal order of language and speaking. For the most part the abstract character and indefinite content of such debates do not take into account various formations of local knowledge, as well as culturally contingent constructions of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, lived forms of gendered subjectivity barely exist in such sweeping generalizations of theoretical ubiquity; rather, local modes of signification spark culturally, politically, and socially specific models and representations. Local milieus, economic conditions, and social interpretations endow transcendent ideas and theoretical designs with specific

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direct itself constantly from one object to the other.

In a nutshell, Lacan defines desire as the longing to fulfill one's lack or to strive for love. Desire is marked by an absence, the absence of unity or the maternal body, and the desirous subject is condemned to the eternal search of the beloved object.

meanings. In this sense, concepts figure as inspiring and provoking but never axiomatic models. Their excitement lies in the chance to question and rethink both conceptual and ideal models of the world; however, their vitality is produced in the vigorous and challenging dynamics of cultural worlds. Koriak formations of gendered subjectivity do not arise in solitary structures disjoined from local conditions of knowledge and the social, overlapping domains of ethnicity, gender, and political marginality. Rather, Koriak women's practices and constructions of gender call attention to local configurations of power at the junction of sexuality, ethnicity, and the politics of the periphery. As the following chapters will show, their understandings form a critical counterdiscourse to the Lacanian vision of the female as defined by lack and incompleteness. Their stories challenge the hermetic closure of psychoanalytic frameworks rooted in a universal notion of sexual difference. Here de Lauretis' (1987) notion of 'technologies of gender' is helpful in thinking through questions of subjectivity and the constitution of gender and ethnic marginality. Following Foucault she champions a framework in which formations of power contribute to various configurations of gender and subjectivity. She refutes the notion of sexual difference as too limiting and confining; sexual difference, she criticizes, pretends to provide a universal frame to conceptualize sex opposition, but differences among women are not conceivable in such a frame. Instead of inquiring into the differences between women and men, de Lauretis conceptualizes gender as a social relation. According to her, gender does not represent a property of the body but is both product and process within a wider frame of material, institutionalized, and symbolic practices. De Lauretis challenges frameworks of gender based on sexual difference, opening a creative

space to investigate differences among women as they engage in and promote different discourses to claim and express cultural and gender identity.

In this project I am interested in understanding differences between women, and not so much those between women and men. Hence, this thesis attempts to stimulate a discussion in feminist anthropology different from those who situate their enquiry within a framework of sexual difference. Although I contend that the female body and sexuality is constructed and negotiated within overlapping webs of cultural, ideological, and political forces, I do not reject the concept of essentialism or biology as a fixed and irreducible given. My critique is that essentialism is not *per se* bad or condemnable but is itself a historical construction. Yet, essentialism has often been taken as the truth, running the danger of inscribing immutable gender models into theory: women's secondary position in the social and cultural sphere is the result of female anatomy. Female sexuality and reproduction are characteristics demarcating women's position; furthermore, these characteristics render women vulnerable, construct their bodies as frail and unreliable, and as subject to various intrusions they cannot control. In an early essay, Ortner (1974) subscribes to this thesis as a universal fact. To her mind, women's secondary status is related to something that every culture devalues, and this is 'nature' in its most generalizing sense (ibid.: 72). Women's procreative functions keep them out of culture and confine them to the realm of nature. In contrast, men, lacking these 'natural' functions compensate for this lack by immersing themselves in culture, actively shaping and creating the world as culturally meaningful. This argument gained considerable currency in both anthropology and feminism, and the distinction between female as natured and male as cultured has been perpetuated in other feminist writings (cf. Rosaldo 1974; MacCormack 1980). However, although the nature/culture

distinction seen as representing discrete female/male spaces is now under severe criticism in feminist anthropology, the dichotomy turns out to be more recalcitrant than previously imagined. Even in such refined and penetrating studies as Boddy's (1989) analysis of Zar spirit possession in the Sudan or Ong's (1987) analysis of the connection of spirit possession and multinational corporations in Malaysia, the nature/culture dichotomy is not dismantled, but forms an underlying current in both works. Boddy links spirit possession in Sudan to women's sexuality; a strict moral code stressing the virtues of virginity and reproductive fertility creates an ominous reality for Hofriyati women. Both female bodies and sexuality are considered as worthy and faultless only when they perform the function of reproduction in a proper way. Women are likely to be seduced by spirits; women's bodies, and their sexuality, are weak and frail and their bodies are presumed polluted. Spirits enter and seize power over female bodies precisely because the fragility of women's bodies is symbolically linked to the unruliness of nature. Ong's analysis of Malaysian factory women who work in multinational cooperations for little money and under pitiless labor conditions follows a somewhat similar path of argumentation. Women's bodies are vulnerable to violent intrusion by spirits, precisely because of their specific alliance with nature. In the rural context women are prohibited from penetrating swamps, lakes, and river areas. It is men who obtain water, for these zones represent ideal dwelling areas for spirits who are likely to attack water-fetching women. Yet, factories' sanitary installations also offer ideal breeding places for spirits and it is here where they and women are most likely to meet. In association with women's exhaustion and enervation and their transgression of proper boundaries, spirits enter women's bodies. Ong's interpretation of this affliction aims at a liberal notion of resistance; here she finds herself in

concordance with Boddy who interprets the spirit possession of Sudanese Hofriyati women as a form of liberation, in which they can shake off emotionally agonizing and culturally repressive experiences. In a creative attempt to reconceptualize the female body Lock (1993a) does not follow the path of spirit possession and resistance; rather, she imagines the female body as a template that is shaped equally by material and cultural forces. Examining the cultural contingencies surrounding menopause Lock shows that biology and culture do not represent an antithesis in an epistemological matrix of oppositions. Rather, the way the body - in this case the female, aging one - is perceived, nurtured, and valued determines in crucial way how natural characteristics are molded and expressed. Lock's study poses an important challenge to reconceptualize the nature-culture dichotomy by negating neither cultural nor biological particularities of the body.

Although one could argue that Koriak women's bodies are symbolically connected to the realm of nature, the appreciation of their sexuality is different from those proposed in Ortner's and Boddy's framework. For instance, Koriak philosophy associates the warmth of fire with the nurturing qualities of life. Koriak say: So as your fire burns so you will live your life. A blazing fire suggests a vital, forceful life. In former times, and today, still it is mainly women who kindle and nurture the fireplace. When they poke a fire, they sit down and talk in tender words and a soothing tone to the flame. They nourish the fire by tossing small pieces of meat, fish bones, beads, and *lauteng* into the flames to keep them alive and searing. As keepers of the fire, - and guardian of life -, Koriak women gain pride from their ability to give and sustain life. In contrast to Ortner's or Boddy's description, their ability to reproduce and give birth does not associate them with inferiority or devalue them on the basis of an

association with nature and immodesty; rather, this productive competence underscores their value, dignity, and self-esteem. Another example that exemplifies the strength of women's power to produce and eventuate life is represented in the female task of sewing. The upper parts of the boots are usually embroidered with a broad row of beads. However, this line can never be closed, since this would mean that one's life is sewn together. This metaphor suggests that women's ties to nature are strong; however, as symbolic nourishers and keepers of life, these ties do not debase them in terms of their bodily functions.

Koriak women's understandings, experiences, and representations of gender anchor their discourses on sexuality and love in various domains of newly surfacing cultural and political orders. These discourses on gender, sexuality, and erotics are fueled both by women's identifications with still respected and valid traditions, and, in a more transnational fashion, by a distinct departure from those very traditions. 'Traditional' and 'transnational' cultural orders coexist in Tymlat and Ossora and both affect the cultural and political positions Koriak women choose to express their identity and individuality. In the following passages I briefly describe the more 'traditional' gendered order of Koriak life. The image is informed by narrations of both elderly Koriak women and men who draw images of a harmonious past in contrast to an unpleasant present.

In former times, women and men shared the chores of herding and child-rearing. Although the Koriak always practiced a division of labor along the boundaries of gender, tasks in and around the domicile were cooperatively apportioned. Many daily routines, such as the preparation of food, sewing, mending, cleaning and so forth, were dominantly carried out by women.

However, this demarcation did not represent immutable forms of labor allocation or solidified gender identities, as women also tended animals and men darned their own clothes. In a world where both female and male labor tasks were more or less of equal value, sexual relationships were marked by mutual sharing of social and emotional responsibilities, which found their expression in distinct enunciations of respect for each other's work. Wives, husbands, children, and affines shared in the herd; upon a woman's marriage or a child's departure her or his legal allotment was paid. The products of hunting contributed to the Koriak diet; however, the pursuit of small game seemed erratic, depending on physical need and social pressure.

The institution of brideservice represented one of the cornerstones of Koriak society. Koriak men were required to work over the course of approximately three years for the families of their future wives. As he offered his strength and labor for a considerable time to the family of his mate, the groom matured, as did the bride. Eventually wife and husband left the woman's paternal compound to establish their conjugal life in a neo-local residence of their choice. Most striking for ethnographers was the absence of any ornate marriage rituals; however, small wedding ceremonies took place as, for example, in Albina's case. When she and Alfonia married, a strong, fat reindeer was slaughtered, the blood of which was used to lubricate the foreheads of the two being married. The congealed liquid - assuming the shape of a Christian cross - legitimized the couple's sexual bonds. However, most matrimonial commitments were - and still are - simply enacted through the practice of living together and sharing each other's sexuality. Sexual intercourse symbolized the likelihood of marriage, affecting deeply political and emotional relationships between men and women; wives were rightful and mature partners of their husbands.

In the beginning of the thirties, while the Koriak were confined to villages, new institutional arrangements were implemented to monitor and regulate Koriak female sexuality and reproduction. In particular the construction of 'medical points' or hospitals in the villages contributed to the streamlining of reproductive capacities such as childbirth. The Koriak model of birthing was not a homogenous one in which a fixed standard of prescribed procedures defined Koriak techniques in a stereotypical manner of how deliveries should be managed, who should be present, and so forth.[4] Rather, Koriak women employed various practices to give birth; these techniques were contingent on the conditions in the groups, the environment, and the course of the pregnancy itself. Preferably men were not to be present at childbirth, but sometimes they participated in the delivery when no other women were present. In narrations elders stress that some women possessed an immense knowledge of medicine, herbs, and 'midwifery' techniques, but certainly every female elder was in possession of rudimentary knowledge of how to conduct a birth. Physical health and individual strength represented important qualities in the course of pregnancy; women usually birthed babies in an unceremonious way. A few hours after giving birth they often resumed work; women took up their regular activities or continued traveling. If the baby was stillborn or a miscarriage perturbed the pregnancy, explanations were sought in one's moral failure, negligence of spiritual duties, or other factors. Yet, with the creation of hospitals and the introduction of biomedical knowledge to the Koriak, explanatory models of childbirth began to change. The Soviets perceived of the tundra as an unsafe

[4]O'Neil and Kaufert (1990) describe the Inuit experience very similar to the one of the Koriak. Also the Inuit did not follow a hegemonic model of birth but engaged miscellaneous and individual practices dependent on their situation and other variable factors.

space in which diseases and other hazardous afflictions pestered and troubled people's lives and health. Koriak curative remedies were thought to be ineffective and, because they were related to the spiritual world of superstition, they polluted the mind of the already polluted (diseased) body. In particular illnesses caused by cold seemed to threaten the well-being of mother and child; consequently, the Soviet's designated the tundra to be an improper place for childbirth, and shifted the locus for deliveries into the medical stations that existed now in the villages. Most Koriak women considered this project as preposterous and refused to give birth in the small hospitals. There, women knew, they would be alone and isolated, detached from their affinal group or other supportive social units. While the physicians judged these projects as benevolent because they introduced 'trustworthy' medical science to the Koriak in order to lower infant mortality and other morbidity rates, the Koriak themselves thought the Soviet's endeavors to be interfering and annoying. By ignoring the social context and historical parameters of giving birth, the Soviet politicized Koriak sexuality and methods of childbirth as menacing and wrongful. Yet, with the acceleration of collectivization, the majority of Koriak live now in villages, and childbirth in hospitals is commonly accepted. However, increasing centralization of medical knowledge and practice in the *Karaginskii raion* increasingly aggravates the conditions for childbirth. Today, Koriak women who are pregnant and live in villages other than Ossora need to fly to the administrative center to give birth. The doctors in Tymlat refuse to deliver children because, as they explain, the hospital is ill-equipped. Yet, in Ossora's medical institutions women are sometimes forced to stay up to three months, without relatives or friends visiting them, before they are discharged.

Today, many young Koriak women strive to give birth in Tymlat's small hospital, where they can be closer to kin and friends.

Nowadays, many young Koriak women complain that this presumably complementary discourse on gender and sexuality is being disturbed. In these days, young women and wives are expected to be soft and submissive. Koriak men require their wives to comply with male demands, needs, and desires. They expect their wives to excuse their husband's misdeeds and adversities with warm smiles and gentle touches; yet, mostly they insist upon a tolerant and docile attitude towards violent male expressions of anguish or depression. Conflicts between the sexes are escalating; most of the women I know refused to concede to such demands, evincing anger, scorn and contempt in the form of castigating and wailing accusations directed at men.

Nowadays, Koriak women increasingly find themselves alone, abandoned, widowed, and desperately needy. A growing number of young women live in irregular arrangements, frequently changing partners and mothering children by two or more different men. Single-mothering is more and more prevalent; the majority of young women are unmarried but most strive to maintain permanent relations with men they love and to whom they expect to be married some day. However, female plans to establish the basis for solid relationships are often thwarted. Many young men spurn responsibility or loyalty to girl-friends or partners who carry their children, thus incurring the disdain and vexation of elders. For example, Irina had set her hopes on Iura, the father of Zhenia, her nine-month old son. Her previous amorous liaisons had not worked out but Iura seemed to be a faithful, industrious, and suitable man. He had already lived with her and the children for a year; the children liked him, he worked, and he drank only occasionally. Then Iura returned to his native village

of Rekinniki which had been destroyed by the Soviets in 1980. For five years since then, elders and other, younger former inhabitants had joined in a collective effort to rebuild their former homes. It was not unusual for young men like Iura to support such a significant and inspiring project by living and working for some time in the former village of Rekinniki. Irina wrote letters but she never received any answers. Then she learned the deplorable news, that Iura had moved in with another woman and did not intend to return to her or to Tymlat. Without showing any disappointment, Irina greeted this information with a stoic mask of indifference.

Even though male commitments to a relationship are desirable, the presence of men in women's lives is often ambiguous. Most women strive to stay close to the fathers of their children and try to keep men to their promises of raising and nurturing families. Yet, men often impose additional burdens on women's daily lives. Notorious drinking and authoritarian behavior by men, acting as imperious family heads, represent the main reasons for women to seek separation or divorce. However, in most cases, reasonable arguments are not effective and women often see no other choice than to resort to the insidious powers of love magic. Koriak women employ a particular form of this practice, one that I call 'negative love magic'. Instead of manipulating emotions and luring the body into the passionate, lustful, and lecherous realm of desire (cf. Taussig 1987), Koriak women employ magic to diminish the love of husbands, boyfriends, and other men. Incantations, charms, and spells are put into practice to separate them from the bodies of former lovers. The most effective form of magic involves pronouncing secret words, with the complementary use of animal products, white hare fur, and *lauteng*. In all the cases I know of, love magic was applied by women and not by men, although men - in particular

older ones - certainly know about the magic and its effects. The Koriak women I know never attempted to attract secret sweethearts to them through the use of magic. Magic is used to separate what does not belong together: distressed women and troublesome men.

Let me give you an example. Lera had been seeking a divorce from her husband, Tolik, for some time. What started as a sweet romance with mutual attraction culminated in ugly altercations and violent arguments. Lera moved back to her mother while Tolik stayed with their son. Tolik, determined to work things out, to use Lera's words, 'followed her'. He caught her while she was leaving the house, meeting her 'accidentally' on the street, and sounded out her brother, who lived with his sister in one apartment. Lera was desperate, seeking protection from Tolik's approaches and finding means of avoiding him forever. At last, her mother who wished to prevent her daughter's divorce, nevertheless took pity on her and gave her pieces of soft and white snow rabbit fur which makes for the strongest of all forms of Koriak magic. On the day of the divorce, Lera dropped small fur flakes on her way home, pronouncing mighty and vexing words whose power she trusted would prevent Tolik from tracing her. And indeed, Tolik stayed away. Lera, amazed at the effect, asked her mother once again for magical remedies, but her queries were rebuffed with a heedful caution. "These words," so her mother explained, "are very potent. To you, not knowing when, where, and how to employ them, they will only bring harm."

The powers of magic are also sought to prevent the pregnancies through which love affairs become personal problems. In particular, married women with young children are eager for any kind of contraceptive device, to avoid the abortions that have - up to now - represented the main means of contraception. After two or three successful pregnancies, the majority of Koriak women today

undergoes five or six abortions, concealing them from the condemnation of elders. But no matter how much women try to camouflage their failures, the bodily conduct of others - and not of themselves - betrays them. The danger of disclosure lies not in the threat of defaming slander but in the possible revelation of one's secret through another's body.

Lidia, a single-mother raising three children on her own, was pregnant from her most recent lover. Six months before her husband had died from acute heart failure caused by prodigious drinking. Lidia's attempts to cushion her hardships by working untiringly into the late hours bore little fruit. There was no question of her not aborting the child, so she asked her sisters to take care of Oleg, her youngest son, while she spent the morning in Ossora's clinique. The days before the appointed date of the abortion, Oleg - always a difficult child - was especially nagging and capricious. Grumbling and sulking all day long, he refused to move from Lidia's side, demanding her undivided attention. Lidia's mother, quietly and attentively watching Oleg's moods, dryly pointed to a possible pregnancy and then asked Lidia directly. With an embarrassed look she admitted it. Her mother carefully explained that Oleg's conduct betrayed the secret Lidia tried so hard to conceal. Lidia's mother's intimate reading of Oleg's corporeal disposition allowed her to detect Lidia's bodily situation. This is what Csordas (1993: 135) calls the 'somatic modes of attention'. Intimate cultural knowledge of the body is expressed through its embodiment elsewhere; the body is a gifted and sensual organ, an experiencing agent capable of understanding, reading, affecting, and modifying the bodily sensations, conduct, and comportment, both of others and one's self.

Koriak women continually employ intimate and tactile knowledge to advance their own ambitions by manipulating men's practices and actions. For

example, on a clear morning in May, Ol'ia's father, Vladik, intended to pursue a seal hunt that had been prevented by the raging storms of the last several weeks. Instructing his wife, Lera, neither to clean the house nor to bathe herself or the children, he left the house to meet his fellow hunters at the beach. The hunters remained for a long time on the sea; they and their boat were not visible from the shore and Ol'ia began to worry for her father's secure return. The sun had already set when the hunters returned, angry about the ardent but fruitless hunt. Vladik would be content to at least enjoy tenderly fried reindeer sirloins. On the way he told us how the seals had tricked them the entire day; resting on a massive rock, they dove into the scintillating sea when the hunters approached. Rubbing their freckled heads with their fins they appeared to the hunters like humans washing their hair. Tired, angry, and frustrated about the unavailing hunt, he entered his house. He opened the door only to see that his wife was just finishing her weekly hairwash. Wrathfully he yelled at her - had he not told her not to clean their home or herself - why, for heaven's sake, could she not listen for once. Lera seemed unimpressed. Calmly, she rinsed her hair and, wrapping a towel around her head, walked back to the kitchen to prepare the loins. To Vladik, the poor outcome of the hunt seemed obvious. Mimicking and mocking his wife's conduct, the seals divested the hunters of their power; mimicking another's bodily conduct, they managed to escape their pursuiants' deathly will.

I asked Lera if she had known that the seals would imitate her behavior to thwart her husband and his fellow hunters. With a confirming nod of her head she corroborated my suggestion. I wondered why she would intentionally want to harm her husband's pursuit? Did she not desire luck and success for his hunting endeavors? Surprisingly, she again confirmed with an energetic bow of her head, but then she explained: *"Today is not the only day. The men...they*

will go hunting the entire summer and kill many, many seals. What shall I do with them? What shall I do with the meat? Where shall I store it? Men will go often and bring meat - no, no, I have to pay attention so there is not too much." The astuteness of Lera's humor and the sagacity of her knowledge divulge the corporeal conversance of a world in which bodies are intricately linked through intimacy and attention.

Concepts and practices of the body, in particular the female body, represent pivotal points in the narrative that ensues. Questions of gender and identity are intricately linked to questions of the body. As I will show Koriak women's politics and practices of love and romance embrace specific and socially contingent images of the body. Various philosophies and cultural positions of femininity engender distinct needs and desires in women, corresponding to social changes in the villages. Although anxiety and distress are common and binding experiences for Koriak women, they occupy different positions and absorb various discourses in relation to romance, love, and related practices of the body. While discourses on love and erotics are produced in the matrix of social life in Tymlat and Ossora, they in turn affect positions and dealings with sexuality and the politics of gender. Consequently, in my portrayals of Koriak female discourses on sexuality, love, and erotic I favor the notion of evocation, as explained and championed by Wikan (1990). Interpreting Keesing's article "Anthropology as Interpretive Quest" (1987), she elucidates the notion of evocation. Confronting conventional representations of culture as both a coherent and consistent reality, Keesing challenges the 'deeply problematic notion' of 'culture as system of shared meanings' and significations (1987: 163). Rather, he argues for a reflexive approach in our understanding of 'culture'. He calls for critical investigations into the production, legitimation, and

distribution of knowledge. Each member of a given society, so goes Keesing's argument, constructs knowledge and meaning in profoundly different ways that may well be contradictory and disapproving of each other. Henceforth, evoking people's lives instead of describing their beliefs, perceptions, interpretations, and positions, as analogous or congruent endows their individual positions and idiosyncrasies with fair equity. In my project I consider the notion of evocation to be both an important and creative one, and I accept and accede to the politics of partiality adduced by notion of evocation. Applying the concept of evocation and partiality to feminist issues, Haraway (1991) pursues a similar project. Avoiding the essentialism of consolidating oneness and perpetuating a monolithic cultural unity, Haraway advocates the recognition of locations. Eluding the static fixity of women's lives immobilized through the constraints of language, congruence of body and gendered identity, and stable subjectivities in which women are hermetically sealed, Haraway accepts the consequences of speaking from an embodied standpoint, characterized by shifting loyalties. Instead of emphasizing generalities, I describe various women's discourses which address the politics of subjectivity, femininity, and erotics. Koriak women engage in active and creative disputes regarding the politics and practices of love as experienced by them.

Three Stories of Love and Anger

The following tales recite Koriak stories of love, sexuality, and conflict. As Tsing (1993: 231) remarks, "stories of individuals... [are] helpful in theoretical projects that point to sites of exclusion, struggle, and creativity beyond the scope of dominant discourses."[5] The succeeding accounts of Koriak women's lives exhibit female dilemmas and facilitate conversations about difference and agency. The ensuing portrayals unravel and displace conventional descriptions of gender, and its various models, by pointing to women's desires and ways to shape their world. Koriak women's sentiments and attitudes are informed by discourses about and of the body, molded by their experience and sexual position in the world.

I will begin with Varvara's story. Varvara is a divorced woman in her mid-forties, sharing a dilapidated two-room apartment in Ossora with her twenty-year-old son and eighteen-year-old daughter, as well as a female, maternal cousin. She is a successful business woman, trading reindeer meat, antlers, and bear fat with countries like Korea, and Japan.[6] To elucidate Varvara's achievements I will present her tangled story. Years ago, Varvara was introduced to one of the Ukrainian workers who worked in Ossora's fish factory. She fell in love, married and eventually followed him back to his home in Ukraine. Then began a time of intensive isolation from her family and

[5]Tsing exemplifies this position by employing the notion of the 'eccentric subject', as developed by de Lauretis (1990). According to Tsing, de Lauretis employs the film metaphor of 'space-off', the space caught outside the camera's frame. However, upon further enquiries into this notion and reading de Lauretis' article as cited by Tsing I was unable to find the notion of 'space-off' employed by de Lauretis in the named article.

[6]In summer 1994 Varvara was able to charge up to US $500 for one kilo of reindeer antlers. She sold ten grams of bear fat for US $250.

community; Varvara suffered. Despite incessant traveling and moving, Koriak women usually retain close ties to their natal family and, periodically, visit both parents and siblings. Yet, given the immense distance to the Ukraine, Varvara found it hard to maintain intimate contact with her mother and sisters; furthermore, her marriage was not solidified and supported by an ample web of extended kin on her husband's side. Marriage usually increases the density of a woman 's kinship network, yet, in Varvara's case, her conjugal commitment separated her by loosening the ties of a wider plexus of assistance and support. She herself describes her matrimonial life in the Ukraine in morose and melancholic, but also in ironic, terms. She had little to do at her husband's home. Her void was aggravated by his perpetual, corroding jealousy. Suspiciously, he monitored all her movements; she barely left the apartment, filling her days with daily, unrewarding routines of cooking, cleaning, and watching TV. Within three years she gave birth to a son and a daughter. Her husband's ostentatious display of pride in being a potent man appalled her, yet she continued to stay at home, receiving opulent presents, clothes, and jewelry. It was a time of both great luxury and of great limitation. Varvara was confined to the apartment without any activity that seemed to her a form of livelihood. Although she was in awe of the luxury she experienced, she had trouble reformulating her identity outside spheres of productive labor Fervently she longed to a return to northern Kamchatka but her husband refused to leave his homeland of Ukraine. Varvara was desperate and, feeling dependent and confused, she ordered a phone call to talk with her cousin Liuba in Ossora. Weeping, she explained to Liuba her wish to leave her husband, and asked Liuba to assist her. Varvara's relatives in Ossora pitied her; scraping together all their money. Liuba bought four plane tickets to fly her cousin and her two

children back to Kamchatka. Together they jammed Varvara's belongings into a few containers, while trying to pacify the crying children. Varvara's husband cried and begged her to stay, yet she remained firm, rejecting the life of idle domesticity.

On her return to Ossora, Varvara established contact with the newly founded Koriak enterprise, 'Shamanka'.[7] As a shrewd and perspicacious woman she was able to mediate between Koriak entrepreneurs and Russian business people in Petropavlovsk, as well as with Korean and Japanese merchants.[8] Varvara attended to the transport of delicate goods such as meat and fat, pressing and encouraging the heads of 'Shamanka' to become more creative in their supply of goods. Today, Varvara maintains a powerful and influential position in the village; the well-being and prosperity of the enterprise is dependent upon her contacts, which increase sales. Now she is able to pay for her son's university education and provide a dowry for her daughter, in the form of expensive and conspicuous goods such as clothes, furniture, and money.

The aspect of her marriage that most agonized Varvara was her husband's expectancy that she quietly and subordinately follow the rules of romance. She often mentioned her husband's demands for personal service, and the restrictions he placed on her mobility and sociality. She stressed her husband's incessant jealousy. Possessive love is often a topic of disparagement in Koriak arguments: jealousy, distrust, and envy threaten the ideals and values of social balance and harmony.[9] Both women and men are allowed to have

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[7]In summer 1992, when Tymlat's *sovkhoz* was falling apart, two Koriak enterprises were founded: 'Rekinniki', named after the destroyed village, and 'Schamanka' named after a river north-west of Tymlat.

[8]Since 1993, Japanese business people have travelled throughout Kamchatka, searching for economically profitable contracts and arrangements.

[9]I would like to elucidate this statement by relating an incident that happened in the village of Tymlat in 1992. Aleksei Speredonovich's elder brother died while

flirtations as they move through life, as long as these do not threaten the well-being of children.[10] Yet, in her narrations Varvara continuously stressed that she made the decision to leave her husband. She could return home with pride and not shame. In emphasizing her desire and determination, she turned the focus of the story from sadness and victimization to wisdom and success gained through traveling and daring. Her story challenges the image of culturally and racially borderless romance, and it associates her with autonomy and attractiveness. Varvara's critical commentary stand as a claim to both approval and respect.

Uliana's story is also one of conflict and unsatisfied love. Yet, in juxtaposition to Varvara's life, Uliana is not a successful business woman but rather an anguished person even though she appears to be strong-willed and self-reliant. Today, Uliana is thirty-eight years old and the mother of two children, a sixteen-year-old daughter and a thirteen-year-old son. She conceived her children with two different men; both men are now affiliated with other women and refuse to assume responsibility. She has been married for the last few years

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he was still very young, leaving his wife and five children behind. As his younger brother, Aleksei Speredonovich was obliged to take care of his brother's wife and the children by marrying the widow. So he did, and although local hearsay contended that Aleksei Speredonovich did not like her and refused to sleep with his wife, the couple had seven children. Yet, in the summer of 1992, when all the children were grown up, Aleksei Speredonovich decided to divorce his wife. He commenced to live with Tet Dasha, an elderly woman from Rekinniki who already had thirteen sons and daughters. Aleksei's Speredonovich's wife felt harmed and mistreated by his display of disrespect and she began to tarry around the couple's place, yelling spells, threats, and abuse at her husband. The villagers were dismayed and openly ridiculed her behaviour. In everybody's eyes Aleksei Speredonovich was perfectly justified in his comportment. He had accomplished his duties by being a good husband to her and an attentive father to their children; now he possessed the right to wed a woman of his own liking. Rather, it was his former wife who was to blame for ludicrous and unfitting behavior. She, so went the general opinion, had no reason to wail and even if she did feel hurt was supposed to hide her feelings, as required by the traditional Koriak moral code.

[10]I must confess that the records and my own research on this matter appear to be contradictory.

to Valer, a forty-year old Koriak man who works as an electrician in Tymlat's local power station. Together the family shares a small one-room apartment. Uliana despises the excruciating life in Tymlat; the cramped quarters dampen her spirits and she regrets the paucity of natural resources such as nourishing meat and beautiful, protecting hides. One of her most zealous dreams conjures up images of a modest but gratifying life in the tundra. There, so she contemplates, the resources to live with respect and virtue are all copiously available. There she might even realize her wish of a flourishing, emancipating business. Uliana is a respected seamstress whose creativity and imagination flows through the compositions in her work. Like Varvara, Uliana harbors firm intentions to enjoy her own business. Last spring she left the local *masterskaia,* where she had worked for eight years. However, the supply of fur ware flowing from the tundra to the village decreased precipitously, so she used rare stocks sent by her kin to sew items designed for commerce. In her fantasy she fancies having a productive partnership with another woman: her co-worker would assume the delicate role of tanning and dying the furs, while Uliana would piece together the skins in a skillful and alluring manner.

However, her husband Valer refuses to leave the village. He does not feel attracted to a rough, arduous existence among the untamable elements and animals; he appears intimidated and daunted by the prospect of toiling and sweating to procure his livelihood. Yet, financial worries wear Uliana down. Her husband's prodigious drinking consumes all her money and she feels humiliated by her children's bad, torn clothes, and their shabby flat. One night Valer returned from a drinking spree, brimming with schnapps, and he vented his ire on Uliana. Her swollen, black eyes and blazed lips gave eloquent testimony to the violence of Valer's frenzy. That night Uliana decided to leave,

saying that she does not care for him anymore. Also, disheartened by her sixteen-year-old daughter's announcement she was leaving school because she was pregnant, she paid a painful visit to Tymlat's boarding school to have her son registered with them for the coming year. Within a few weeks she will would leave the village to live with her relatives in the tundra, close to the place where the destroyed village of Rekinniki once breathed.

Like Varvara, Uliana is caught in the frailties of a sexual practice that - through legitimating and justifying destructive, male dominance - fosters virulent and violent expressions of male domination. Yet like other Koriak women, Uliana refuses to be a victim. To realize her aspirations she has to make grievous and painful decisions such as entrusting her son to the care of Tymlat's school. She realizes that this decision will affect both of their lives in crucial ways. At least her son will not suffer from the erratic aspects of his parent's life in Tymlat, as reflected in his father's compulsions. Uliana herself might not be able to realize her aspirations by creating a form of economic cooperation, yet, at this moment, all she longs for is a peaceful state of mind and the soothing and healing powers of tundra life.

The last short biography I relate diverges from the ones cited above. Unlike Varvara and Uliana, Katia is caught by economic and social vicissitudes that afflict her life like a disease. Unable to achieve social recognition and respect she descends into drinking and temporary trade in sex, an existence described by her as wretched and squalid.

Katia is a fifty-year-old woman who spent her life working as a *tshumrabotniza* in the tundra. Her husband, with whom she lived and worked in the same *tabun*, died several years ago; her children are grown up and, following in the footsteps of their parents, also work in the tundra. Once a year

Katia travels to Tymlat to receive her pay and, as she explains it, to relax. Yet, ironically, for most reindeer herders, *otpusk*, the time of leisure and relaxation, turns into a wicked period of stress and strain. Living and working all year in what tundra workers perceive as characteristic of being-Koriak within a schedule of nature, they feel lost, bored, and empty while sojourning in the village - desiring to depart as soon as possible. During this time, Katia, in an attempts to circumvent the nagging feeling of void, keeps herself busy with mending and sewing clothes. Yet, like most reindeer herders, she inevitably enters a vicious cycle of drinking. She bemoans: *"Here, there is nothing left to do but to drink ... that's why we are such drunkards. What else can you do?...There is nothing to do. You can visit people but after a while they do not want you any more. What else can you do but drink?"*

Once in the village, transport is difficult, and a two week holiday turns easily into three months. Killing the time by drinking, wages dwindle fast and new resources are needed. Yet, labor opportunities are scarce so Katia turns tricks to acquire money she needs. She resorts to 'prostitution' to guarantee procuring enchanting alcohols. In particular fellatio is well paid; Katia charges three bottles of *spirt* or *samogon* for her performance of this practice, whereas she can only demand two bottles for sexual intercourse.[11] After a long period of waiting, sleeping and drinking Katia eventually leaves the village to reassume her work in the tundra, only to reenter the same vicious cycle the next year.

The pattern of native drinking diverges from what is commonly considered to be the cycle of dependency. Koriak can live for months without alcohol, yet then they drink excessively, without limits. Unlike Varvara and Uliana, Katia cannot transform her anxieties into aspirations; her life epitomizes

[11]Prices as of summer 1994.

the lives of so many other Koriak women for whom social and personal wretchedness go hand in hand.

Each of these portrayals indicates how Koriak women struggle with unequal relations between men and women as well as the social decay in the village. These accounts echo quandaries and predicaments Koriak women experience in romantic and intimate relationships; furthermore, these narrations direct attention to women's social ambitions and aspirations. Varvara and Uliana articulate their desire to leave their husbands to realize their visions of a self-reliant life, unencumbered by the demands of personal service and querulous men, however, Katia finds it hard to transform her plight into a social situation marked by respect and dignity. Hence, while Varvara's and Uliana's stories imply women's efforts of imagining and creating alternative possibilities for their lives as they strive to realize an existence outside the confines of male precedence and the spatial borders of the village, Katia's biography represents a somber contrast to the trajectories of the former.

Both Uliana and Varvara scorn male pretensions as excessive and constraining, and seek to penetrate the boundaries of obedience and submission. Yet, in contrast to Varvara, Uliana cannot claim esteem and fame by means of extensive and intense journeys. Uliana feels more obliged to observe her husband's demands since Valer was willing to marry her despite the fact that she already had two children from two different men. Uliana never lived the life of convenience and luxury that Varvara so despised. Yet, she knows that she has to abandon the village to keep her strength, will, and vigor. More than Varvara, Uliana knows about the plight and harshness of life in the village and the helplessness that only aggravates the situation. Uliana resumes a 'traditional' life in the tundra because that is what she respects as a 'Koriak way of life'. Even

her professional aspirations are closely tied to habitual items and ancestral techniques such as tanning and sewing; in comparison to Varvara she dreams not of vast business but favors more humble, time-honored notions of success and dignity.

However, although women imagine and seek alternative possibilities to ameliorate their positions and those of their children, often their aspirations are stifled by the situation in the village itself and the opportunities it is able to offer. Varvara's and Uliana's stories form both a commentary on local and transnational gender relations, and as such they represent a critical elucidation of the malcontents of history and colonization. Yet, Katia's story stands out as one of angst and misery. Absorbed by the maelstrom of monotony, apathy, and drinking, Katia drifts into 'dependency' and 'prostitution'. Her story exemplifies some of the emptiness and dissolution Koriak experience in their lives.

I believe that each of these stories poses a challenge to conventional representations of gender relations in societies. All of these women have unusual stories to tell, and the intensity and extravagance of Koriak women's biographies defies illustrations of typical women's experiences in a given society. Koriak women speak not as a homogenous group about their lives and their assessment and dealings with haughty men or economic misery; rather, they choose divergent, sometimes contradictory strategies to act on hardship, indigence, and objects promising hope. They choose their strategies according to their wishes, ambitions, and desires.

As the following chapters will show, Koriak women employ various discourses of love and of the body to actualize what they fervently long for. The discourses I will now delineate appear contradictory, and often Koriak women disapprove of each other's dealings with life in Tymlat and Ossora. Gossip,

slander, and defamation revolve around female personalities and their practices; consequently, the women whose trajectories I will now describe are not friendly with each other and I found myself often in the precarious situation of negotiating my friendships and loyalties.

In the life-world of Tymlat and Ossora women steadily rework and negotiate their positions and identities, and they assume different identities in various situations. Gender is a negotiated activity, yet, as Ong and Peletz (1995: 3) remark, it is also constantly evolving in the tensions of everyday-life. Consequently, gender can be understood as a practice of situating the self in specific historic and political contexts, as well as structures of local or transnational meanings. As sexuality and romance occupy an immense place in the constant negotiation of female-male relations in the village, I evoke Koriak women's discourses on the former to discuss the particularities of love in Tymlat and Ossora.

CHAPTER SIX

DESIRE IN THE GIFT

In this chapter I want to draw attention to a distinct philosophy of erotics and ethnicity in the life-world of Tymlat. The discourse I will relate is parochial: it conceives desire as a sensually productive faculty of the self in which both femininity and cultural identity are generated in a bodily nexus of aesthetics and feelings. The circulation of gifts - the gifts of fur - through the hands and hearts of Koriak women represents an important element in this local design of desire and the fabric of ethnic identity. In particular women from the destroyed village of Rekinniki perform and promote traditional and local understandings of erotics and cultural individuality by exchanging products of fur and skin.

In anthropological literature, the circulation of gifts is usually tied to intricate models of social balance and reciprocity, fueled by a vibrant debate that employs preponderantly Melanesian data to penetrate the 'meaning of the gift' (cf. Battaglia 1992; Bercovitch 1994; Strathern 1988; Thomas 1991; Weiner 1992). However, following Strathern (1992: 176) I am less interested in the ideology of reciprocity which, as Strathern contends, dominates the analysis of gift exchange (cf. Parry 1986, as referred to by Strathern) than in the connection of female subjectivity and cultural identity on a more intimate level.[1] In the

[1]Recently, also Derrida has taken up the notion of the gift. In his analysis of gift exchange he remains entangled in the economy of reciprocity. However, in Given Time (1992) Derrida describes this circular economy of exchange as a paradox; the gift is impossible precisely because the reciprocity of exchange annuls the gift. According to Derrida, exchange does not create reciprocity because the recognition of the gift annuls the gift as a gift (ibid.: 14). According to Derrida, gifts are only possible as gifts when they are not acknowledged as such by either the donor or the recipient. Consequently, Derrida constitutes the gift as 'autoerotic'. Subjects circulate gifts to legitimize their claims to identities: in fact, they do not circulate gifts but their identity as property.

Koriak life-world of Rekinniki wearable and sumptuous objects, produced out of deer skin, drift through the sensual realm of aesthetics and erotics, engendering desire and affirming cultural idiosyncrasy. These gifts represent sensuous tissues of skill, knowledge, and desire; they embody designs of subjectivity and erotics. As Weiner (1992) points out, the vivacity of objects is instrumental for the creation and perseverance of social relationships; yet the ostensibly gender-less status of gifts ignores the politics of gender, erotics, and desire. Questions such as, "Who produces the gift?" and "What kind of gifts are exchanged by whom?" are important in understanding the exchange of fur objects as a cultural script of ethnicity and femininity. Weiner critiques the treatment of items of exchange as neutral and impartial entities which achieve meaning through the dynamics of circulation but not the politics of gender. However, in the life-world of Tymlat, the gendered status of the gift seems of crucial importance in understanding the production of erotics and identity. Koriak women, and not men, are involved in the prolific and aesthetic creation of fur objects: in particular women from the destroyed village of Rekinniki engage in the daily process of skinning, tanning, and sewing. The *Rekinnikskie* - the name given to the former inhabitants of the destroyed village - represent themselves as the traditionalists of the village of Tymlat which is now home to various, displaced Koriak groups.[2] The destruction of Rekinniki marks, for the moment, the end of a long and painful series of local displacements in northern

[2]In the wake of deconstruction and postmodernity, the notion of tradition is increasingly criticized as category to conjure up images of an 'invented' past (cf. Clifford 1988). Yet, although his ideas show creativity and innovation since they inquire time-honored notions of 'truth' and 'authenticity', the concept of tradition remains a precarious one. Koriak 'tradition' may be invented, yet, the challenge lies in the use of such notions by the Koriak themselves. Today many Koriak rely on images and manifestations of 'tradition' to express cultural distinctiveness and difference.

Kamchatka. Like many other villagers the *Rekinnikskie* complied with state order and regulations only reluctantly. In Tymlat, the government allocated to them leaky and debilitated apartments with no heating and firm layers of ice on the floor. The majority of villagers welcomed the newcomers only reluctantly. In contrast to other relocated Koriak groups who live now in Tymlat, the people from Rekinniki are the only group who dwelled formerly at the western shore, at the Okhotsk sea, in northern Kamchatka. Their spiritual and cultural practices differ from most other groups in the village, and through various cultural practices they reinvigorate their distinctiveness so as to emphasize and affirm ethnic difference and boundedness. The *Rekinnikskie* look down on other villagers whom they see as corrupted and culturally impaired through state-designed models of ethnic unity and citizenship. Like every other group in northern Kamchatka, the *Rekinnikskie* suffered from the Soviet government's commitment to development and progress. Their reindeer were expropriated, they were forced to settle into villages, and their children were sent to various boarding schools. Yet, in contrast to many other Koriak inhabitants of Tymlat they dissociate themselves from the state models of ethnicity by stressing their connection to tradition, the animals, and the land. The majority of men from Rekinniki still work in the tundra as reindeer breeders, and it is primarily women from Rekinniki who work in the local *masterskaia* where they skin, slice, and sew what their brothers, husbands, and fathers bring from the tundra. In former times, reindeer economy represented one of the cornerstones of Koriak society. These animals exemplified both a way of living and a way of making a living (cf. Barfield 1993: 4).The Koriak organized their life around mobile households; each member - women, men, and children - of a larger group was involved in the various aspects of production. Most of the food and shelter Koriak needed

was provided by the animals who then were thanked for their generosity. Their protecting and nurturing products of fur and meat satisfied most of Koriak needs. Moreover, the reindeer played a crucial role in a cosmological order defined by reciprocity and interaction with the animal world.

Although many inhabitants of Tymlat no longer recognize this order, it still pulsates through the idiosyncratic cultural world of the *Rekinnikskie*. By choosing positions of identity they strengthen their symbolic links to traditional values and meanings which - as they presume and explain - once codified everyday Koriak existence. Sewing fur and skin represents an important part of this ethnic agenda: Koriak women codify time-honored cultural philosophies in the texture of the skin, while, simultaneously, encoding a discourse of female selfhood through the boundaries of the skin. Thus, *Rekinnikskie* effectuate and uphold a discourse of desire tied to the cultural and economic significance of the reindeer: a world in which animal and human skin collapse into one body.

Rekinniki women craft leather and fur in an onerous process labor process that demands much patience, attention, and meticulousness. The startling transformation of raw and crude hides into pliable and palpable fur demands the skillful handling of knives, needles, and other sewing tools. Fashioning garments out of skin is the work of women, yet most men possess rudimentary sewing and mending skills. Usually, hides are tanned outdoors in the summer when the sun shines pleasantly and the constant wind blows away offensive odors which then easily evaporate. Tanning the hides and sewing the fur are the fruit of arduous and fatiguing labor. These tasks demand corporeal strength, patience, and practice. Immediately after the animal's death the fur is cleanded of flesh; the raw hide demands constant attention and is continually turned in the wind to keep vermin away. Fur is never stored in luminous or

warm places; the effects can be damaging and skins may turn hard as wood in the cold. The hides are usually hung from wooden poles to dry. Women never roll up the skins: later this may cause cracks in the leather and precious, warming hair may slip from the fold lines. Women employ both blunt and sharp instruments to clean off scabrous fibers, flesh, and fat; they apply rounded stones to remove the first, dense layer of fat and make use of razor-sharp, crescent-shaped copper blades to soften and relax the skin. The dried, fibrous parts are hewed until the hide is clean and white; every unintentional cut in the skin decreases the quality of the product. A pungent blend of reindeer feces and urine makes for an excellent solvent and is repeatedly smudged on the hide to the very edge in order to assist the tanning process. The soaked hide is then folded so that both fleshy sides touch each other, and the skin is stored in a dark and cool place overnight. If upon examination the following morning it is deemed proper, the scrapers will once more be used to remove all the stiff places on the hide. Depending on the quality of the fur this process may be repeated two or three times.

Once the skin feels malleable and soft, the tanning process is considered finished. Often women decide to dye the now supple hides; reddish coloration ranging from dazzling crimson to timid brown are applied to enrich the allure of the pliant fur. The dye is extracted from alder bark which is haggled into fine pieces to be mixed with water or human urine. The hides are impregnated with the dye until the admixture releases its blaze, changing pale hides into vivid pelts.

Since women are creatively engaged in the manufacture of clothes designed for exchange, it is they who lure secret sweethearts into romantic affiliations. The magnificence they create by sewing artifacts endowed with

luscious, resplendent, and idiosyncratic qualities of the self alludes to both the aesthetic and corporeal beauty of their makers. Korea women put much effort and care into their work, knowing well that their products represent more than functional or useful results of their labor, but also reflect their personal beauty and allure. A splendid creation reflects the sewer's aptitude and splendor, and is endowed with the potential powers of forging romantic alliances. However, for fur articles to achieve this tremendous meaning they are not, as one might assume, removed from the daily context of production. Rather, - via stylish idiosyncrasies and beautifying decorations - they stand as emblematic expressions of luscious bodies and enchanting selves. Moreover, the exchange of such items between women and men recognizes desire and erotics as productive and creative faculties of the self. In order to illuminate and legitimate this proposition, I would like to venture into the sensual life-world of Koriak aesthetics and erotics, a world represented in the work and beauty of the fur.

An intricate process of seduction and persuasion was enacted before Larissa and Volodia came together. They grew up in the same village and spent their childhood together playing in the shallow coastal waters of Rekinniki. Like all the other children, they attended the boarding school in Ii'pyr', and like most people from Rekinniki, they suffered a woeful history of involuntary and painful dislocations enforced by the Soviet regime. Larissa liked Volodia; she spoke in a gentle and tender voice of him. Volodia was not handsome but this trivial deficiency was outweighed by his other, more substantial, qualities. His patience, humor, and adroitness moved her and the immense dexterity he showed in his work impressed her. He neither drank nor smoked, which elevated him in Larissa's and other women's eyes to the position of a desirable man in the troubled and tormented life of Tymlat. Volodia liked domestic and

modest women who felt responsible for keeping the house clean, the children tidy, and took care of the daily preparation of food. Larissa was somewhat older than Volodia and a divorced woman. She worked in Tymlat's local *masterskaia* to provide her family with the money needed to buy food and pay burdensome bills. Larissa was looking for a trustworthy and hardworking man who would be a good husband to her and an attentive father to her children. Volodia seemed to fit these demands and Larissa began to attract Volodia's attention, transforming her wishes into reality.

Although both Larissa and Volodia lived in Tymlat, they did not meet each other very often. Volodia worked as a reindeer-herder in the tundra and visited the village only on rare and brief occasions. However, the delivery of meat and fur to the *masterizy* - women working in the *masterskaia* - represented one of Volodia's tasks and Larissa met him when he spent time in Tymlat.

One day Volodia came into the *masterskaia* with hands red and roughened from working barehanded in the bitter cold. He had lost his warm and protective fur mittens while repairing a sled and was now in dire need of a new pair. Larissa volunteered to sew the desired mittens. She put much effort into her work, tanning the reindeer leg hides *(kamus)* with particular attention, even attaching a strip of seal at the wrist, although these were only work gloves. Gratefully, Volodia accepted the beautiful results. After a while, Larissa started to sew a pair of *torpaza* , knee-high reindeer-fur and seal-skin boots, for Volodia. Again, she scraped and tanned the hide with painstaking care, making the leather wonderfully malleable. The uppers of the boots were beautifully adorned with multicolored strips of bead work, alternating between dark and light colors - an unusual combination for a pair of regular boots intended for a non-beloved. Then, after a short while, Larissa sewed a *malakhai* (hood-like

head covering of reindeer fur). This time Volodia had no obvious need for it, and Larissa put more deliberation and care in it than in any other piece. Instead of using regular dark-colored fur, she chose precious and rare white fleece, and sacrificed a piece of lavish raccoon fur to embellish the fringes of the cover. The beadwork was arranged in an extravagant way in the shape of reindeer antlers, with red-colored seal-hair tassels dangling frivolously from the top of the *malakhai.* All the components she chose indicated that the superbly shaped and orchestrated hat was intended to represent more than just an ordinary cover against the cold and wind. When Larissa presented this work of skill, beauty, and delight to Volodia, he appeared at once moved and embarrassed. The *malakhai,* he confessed, was beautiful, an extraordinary composition of aptitude and art. Volodia was flattered. He knew that Larissa had taken so much pain with this hat for a particular reason. Understanding that the labor, care, thought, and material of the cover stood as an expression of fondness for him, he felt touched by the beauty that she had created.

Volodia began to praise Larissa's qualities in public; proudly, he showed the hat to his co-workers and everybody admired the fine manufacture of the hat. Now Volodia paid regular visits to Larissa's house; they chatted, had tea, and sometimes Volodia would take Larissa's children with him to catch fish or to inspect the sleds and other vehicles. In the evening Volodia borrowed a motorcycle from one of his friends and together he and Larissa would ride to enjoy the mild and tranquil evenings in the tundra. Their romance developed slowly; Larissa continued to sew gifts for Volodia. However, after a while Volodia proposed to Larissa and gladly she accepted. Now they are married. Volodia became a caring father and Larissa enjoys the stability he provides in her life.

In some way it may be proper to say that Larissa speaks as a poet - sewing the poetry of the skin. By evoking the term 'poetics' I follow Herzfeld's (1985) work on the construction of masculinity in Glendiot, a mountainous Cretan village. In his imaginative study, Herzfeld distills the term from its application in literary criticism and carries it into the sphere of social relations. Drifting through everyday life in Glendiot, he interprets the poetics of such mundane acts as sheep theft, dancing, or card playing. Daily and regular actions, according to Herzfeld, can be described as poetic and performative when they evince 'the particular in the ordinary.' Instead of describing extraordinary deeds, feasts, or accomplishments, Herzfeld pays attention to habitual and common actions; however, he does not accentuate "what people do" but rather shows interest in "how the act is performed" (Herzfeld ibid.: 16). He pays attention to everyday performances, such as dancing and sheep theft, which manifest significations of Glendiot cultural identity. Yet, it is not the performance that counts but its embellishment that distinguishes conventional acts as spectacular and extraordinary. Using Herzfeld's notion of performance I contend that the beautifully sewn or 'performed' gift illuminates the sensual self and introduces the beautiful body. In this sense the gift works like a metaphor: the beauty women engender by sewing artifacts endowed with luscious, resplendent, and idiosyncratic qualities of the self alludes to the corporeal beauty of their makers. The sewing of the gift, the gift of fur, denotes the creation of a sign by converting one's body and sexual allure into a metaphorical emblem of beauty. However, the gift can only unfold its poetry and celebrate beauty when the violation of ordinariness is successfully expressed through significations of the extraordinary: adornment and decoration.

Through the creation of artistic and resplendent objects women present their bodies as seductive and desirable. These gifts of fur and skin both mediate Larissa's desire and inflame Volodia's attraction towards her. These gifts embody designs of subjectivity, sexuality, and erotics. Koriak do not imagine an eroticism that depends on the objectification of female body parts. The erotic is a product of beauty, of the aesthetic, artistic self. The beauty of the work itself signifies the charm, the delicacy, indeed, the allure of the woman. Larissa's choice, skill, deliberation, taste, and effort create a piece of work that reflects idiosyncrasies of character, personal predilections, and aesthetic feeling. In Koriak experience, beauty is not a property of the body; rather, beauty produces an opening for the other to witness the self. The object provides an arena in which a person's being for her-self is being for the other. Adornment and embellishment persuade the other by creating in the object the presence of a sensual and radiant self. The artistic arrangement of resplendent shades and colors, and the disclosure of exuberant and ornate beadwork lure sense and feeling into ardent passions and sexual intimacies. The intricate magnificence of apparel produced by hand and sense, concocted with fervor, reflects beauty as a quality of the aesthetic self. Tanned, sewed, and adorned hides and fur represent not just the artistic and skillful result of arduous labor, or the functional transformation of animal skin into wearable and protecting clothes, but they represent sensual media of sexual persuasion, encapsulating eroticism and desire. Crafted out of unspectacular and crude skins, *malakhai* and boots are vital agents within a life-world where erotics and sensuality are not inert, natural qualities of the body, but are rather created within a nexus of aesthetics, labor, and feeling. The gift of fur symbolizes desire, moreover, objects of fur and skin are endowed with the vital powers to mold and shape the human world. In

contrast to the common perception of material objects as inanimate, static, and dead, material objects are imbued with sense and sensuality, launching them as vital agents of self-expression into the world.[3] Their sensorial, hence seductive qualities, yield tactility. In this case, their sensorial apprehension by Volodia produces erotic feelings by evoking cultural knowledge.

The poetics of social interaction I advocate are anchored in a combination of semiotic theory and the meaning *Rekinnikskie* allot to tradition. Through the creation of beauty Larissa performs the self; to the extent that her performance is successful it corresponds to the poetic canon of Koriak life. In analogy to Herzfeld's (ibid.: 33) rendition one might say that women do not struggle to 'be a good sewer" but, "being good at a being a sewer" - a stance that stresses both aesthetic excellence and the ability to constitute oneself as a sensory, perceiving subject capable of initiating and proliferating desire.

The patterns and activities that occur and are performed in conventional ways are significant, however, it is the idiosyncrasy of their performance that creates poetry and so illuminates the sensual self and beautiful body. Everybody in Tymlat wears fur clothes: ordinary clothes are made out of animal skin that protect the body against the harsh and gusty winds and the biting cold. These objects circulate through people's hands and lives in a barely noticeable manner; clothes manufactured out of deer fur represent a familiar sight in Tymlat. People wear *torpaza, malakhai,* and fur mittens to run daily errands or to attend social events. But while fur clothes represent items of daily life in Tymlat, they seldom show signs of embellishment or decoration. For daily use, Koriak prefer banal

[3]Appadurai (1986) elucidates the 'vital' quality of objects by examining their trajectory through various 'life phases'. Objects, accordingly to Appadurai, move in and out of various stages that define their meaning and value. For instance, commodities are never only commodities but may be used for barter or personal trade in various historical and social stages.

and undistinguished deer fur colors which show insignificant variations of brownish and grayish shades. These unspecified, and, in Koriak eyes, spiritless colors demonstrate both the triviality and inconsequentiality of fur items employed in daily usage. Consequently, a successful performance of the self (Larissa) concentrates the audience's (Volodia) attention on the performance itself: Volodia accepts Larissa's implicit invocations because the particularity of her fur work reveals aspects of the self (cf. Herzfeld ibid.: 11). What counts is 'effective persuasion': a sense of shifting the ordinary and everyday into a context where the change of the context itself serves to invest it with sudden significance. Women employ their artistic skills and aesthetic sensitivities to eroticize the visceral perception of men. To accomplish a relationship of intimacy and attachment they use stylistic configurations of action which divulge the sewer's intentionality. In such a context, desire is not characterized as a sexual stimulus, but emanates from aesthetic actions or objects as an effect of precisely their intentionality.

Fur represents a cultural medium used by Koriak women from Rekinniki to initiate romantic passion. Hides and skin relate the women who work and skin this material to a wider field of sensual knowledge. Through the use of fur these women engage a particular discourse of femininity and create specific positions of identity for themselves. Yet, Larissa's story is not represenative of a single, unrelated incident: other women from Rekinniki employ the same discourse to lure secret sweethearts into intimate relationships.

Before I ever visited Tymlat, Tet Dasha was already known to me as an extraordinary and virtuous sewer of superb fur garments. People praised her because of the quality of her malleably tanned hides and her exquisite arrangements of beads, whose intricate patterning revealed a work replete with

artistry and aesthetic sense. I was anxious to meet her. Upon my arrival in Tymlat I was told to go and see her since she would be able to teach me much about the intricacies of tanning and sewing. We met regularly and in the spring, when Tet Dasha decided to leave the village, I went with her and some of her sons to live in the tundra.

Tet Dasha is an aged woman from the village of Rekinniki and the mother of thirteen children, of whom only five are still alive. Her husband died when the inhabitants of Rekinniki were displaced. His children believe it was grief that killed him; like many elders he died in the first years after the village's dislocation. By the time I met Tet Dasha, her husband had been dead for ten years and she longed for a new, affectionate relationship. She perceived Aleksei Speredonovich, an elder from the village of Karaga and the patriarch of a widely extended family, to be a trustworthy man and responsible partner. Also Aleksei Speredonovich's reputation as an arduous and skillful worker was impeccable; however, people thought of him as an obstinate, unapproachable, and tempestuous man. He was a widower; several times he had expressed his wish to remarry, but every time his children intervened. Like many elders he detested the life in the village and preferred the onerous existence in the tundra. Tet Dasha had known him for a long time, and in spring she decided to travel to the *tabun* where Aleksei Speredonovich worked. Upon her arrival she established herself in the grand tent where all the workers lived; immediately she began to process the many hides that were heaped beside the tent and used as mattresses during the night. She was very attentive to Aleksei Speredonovich's needs, and whenever she saw him wearing torn or shabby clothes she would darn the tears. If he lost his gloves or returned without his hat she would sew for him the necessary item. The garments she created for him were splendid in their

accuracy; she elaborated much on the details and other beautifying aspects. Aleksei Speredonovich cherished her products for several reasons: they were solidly sewn and protected his body from the scathing winds; moreover, their design was beautiful and the admiring looks of others followed him when he walked through the compound. Aleksei Speredonovich noticed Tet Dasha's attentiveness and yet, on his part, he never expressed signs of fondness. Soon it became clear that he was in dire need of a new pair of boots; often he returned with wet and cold feet because his timeworn boots were now pervious to snow and water. Thus, Tet Dasha commenced to sew a pair of water-impenetrable boots. She used mustard-colored and beautifully spotted seal fur *(lakhtak).* Tet Dasha had stored this material for a long time, waiting to use it for a special occasion. Seal fur is a rare and precious item; hunting these clever animals requires care and skill, and to tan the stout and tough material demands much patience and attention on the sewer's part. One has to drench the fur for several hours in lukewarm water to soften the fleece. Time plays a crucial role in this process: if the skin is soaked too long it will lose its fine pelt. Koriak women expend more effort, time, and energy to sew seal fur items than artifacts made of other mammal hides. Consequently, Aleksei Speredonovich's exquisite boots represented an object of both pride and esteem. He felt exalted and grateful; not only had Tet Dasha fabricated this marvelous and practical pair of boots, but, additionally, she had embroidered her product with a kaleidoscope of old beads which were bequeathed to her by her mother.[4] Shortly after Tet Dasha presented the boots to him, Aleksei Speredonovich erected a single tent for the two of

[4]Until the mid-thirties trade between the Koriak and the *Amerikanzy* (Americans) was common. 'American' beads represented cherished trade items and Koriak women attached them to fur clothes or manufactured coronets and necklaces.

them. Now they spend their days together and Tet Dasha continues to sew beautiful items of fur for him, thus amplifying both his distinction and fame.

Erotics, clothed into the sensual form of the gift, objectifies the longings of the desiring self who aspires to convert her yearnings into reality. Larissa and Tet Dasha endow artifacts with individual content and yet allow them to speak for themselves. The gift of fur speaks from "the perspective of both the interacting and perceiving subject and the perceptible, talking object" (Seremetakis 1994: 11). The tactile qualities of fur unfold at the skin and disclose passages into the body. Skin and hides provide tissues for the sensorial faculties of the body such as sight and touch, and communicate the yearnings of their makers.

Yet, desire - in order to be recognized as such - needs to assume culturally specific and codified forms. In the life-world of the *Rekinnikiskie* gifts relate, in local idioms, qualities of the self to the other; metaphorically, gifts embody sensual attributes of the person. Gifts manifest vehicles of desire; they incorporate qualities of the self and - due to this force - initiate and mediate relationships. Agency lies in the gift, and precisely because of this instrumentality the exchange of gifts forges and create relationships. The gift coordinates the different life trajectories of donor and recipient while creating new points of orientation from which to develop their relationships (cf. Battaglia 1992: 5). If, following Mauss (1967), gifts represent social relationships objectified through things, artifacts, and objects, then, consequently, it is the gift that objectifies the person, or, as Strathern (1988: 176) says "makes people appear." Yet, people always appear in specific ways and it is the particular design the gift assumes that 'creates' and shapes the person. Desire, mediated through the object that figures as an index of wont and passion, is decipherable

precisely because its assumes a culturally codified, hence recognizable form. The gift is triumphant when it persuades, and it persuades when it successfully mediates what it stands for, namely the alluring body. Yet, to persuade is to move and to be moved is to see, feel, and understand. The emotive character of the sign, of the fur gift that reads desire at the boundary of the skin, instigates and shapes intimate relationships. Consequently, Volodia and Aleksei Speredonovich engage cultural knowledge to decipher the meaning of the skin. Erotics and desire are only effective if the person for whom the gift is destined is in possession of the knowledge to perceive the gift as what it is meant. Both Volodia and Aleksei Speredonovich possess the cultural competence and sensorial faculties to read the message of the sign and to interpret its phatic force. The semiosis of fur engages its makers and receivers in a creative and imaginative process of signification.

In the cultural philosophy of the *Rekinnikiskie* beauty depicts not a criterion of aesthetic judgment but represents the effect of a creative and imaginative process. The *Rekinnikiskie* understand desire and erotics not as immaterial and intangible abstractions of the body; rather, desire is the product of the confluence or coalition of the sewer's skills and the recipient's knowledge. Koriak women from Rekinniki *extract* aspects of their selves by presenting the gift, yet, simultaneously they *extend* themselves through what they give away. This is what I call the 'coincidental movement of the gift': extraction and extension constitute not the ostensibly paradoxical character of the gift, but form an effective alliance to enrich both donor and receiver. The gift amalgamates both presence and absence into a single identity: the gift embodies the donor as presence by materializing sensual and aesthetic qualities of the self, yet, ignites desire by relating this presence as absent. Consequently, gifts embody cultural

emblems of desire. In the life-world of the *Rekinnikiskie* gifts not only forge relationships, but project their content as possible romance into the future.

I believe it is not too far-fetched to say that Koriak women from Rekinniki evoke desire as an emphatic and productive force that creates romance or other intimate alignments. By embodying desire as a productive faculty of the self, Rekinniki women form a critical commentary from the edges of cultural philosophy on theories of desire as deficit or lack.[5] In particular the Lacanian notion of desire as the absence of love or wholeness in the subject is used in recent feminist and anthropological works (cf. Allison 1993; Moore 1994) to understand sexuality and relations between women and men. However, never Allison nor Moore interrogate the assumptions of Lacanian discourse and its implications for women's positions in a wider field of power and knowledge. Larissa's and Tet Dasha's discourse of desire is not characterized by negativity or absence, rather, desire is a productive force that produces love, romance, and relations. The giving of gifts, the exchange of objects is firmly inscribed in the matrix of Koriak daily life, forging relationships and persevering a social order predicated upon the meaning of animals - reindeer - as both guarantees of livelihood and producers of cultural meaning. The discourse I have portrayed conceives of desire not as lack or absence but as productivity and creativity; desire is engendered in an intricate affiliation of aesthetics, desire, knowledge, and mediation. Analyzing Volodia's and Aleksei Speredonovich's seduction through women's gifts, I contend that what circulates through the gift is not only

[5]Within the realm of French thought, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) challenge the economy of lack that is essential to Lacan's vision of the subject. In contrast to Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari understand desire as an emphatic and productive force. Desire, they emphasize, represents not the abysmal lack of the Lacanian vision, but rather a productive force. Instead of reading desire as an unattainable fantasy and opposed to the real, desire is what creates the real.

liability and bondage but the corporeal world of erotics and desire: a world of significant pleasure.

Cultural practices as employed by Rekinniki women point to their ability to encapsulate femininity in the production of an artifact, while, at the same time, crafting ethnic selfhood through the creative act of performing erotics and the body. Moreover, as I suggested earlier, Rekinniki women point to different ways cultural identity can be staged commensurate with a cultural matrix of gender.

Whether or not these particular practices actually represents Koriak 'precolonial' practice is less important to my analysis than how fur as a cultural idiom constructs symbolic positions of identity in a cultural process of self-representation. It is the performance, the action itself that comes to bear so much meaning in a world increasingly divested of cultural meaning.

Similar to the Soviets, the Russian state today envisions tradition as the authentic display of dance, song, and material artifacts. Exhibitions in Moscow, Petropavlovsk, and other Russian cities are arranged to display Koriak tradition as symbolic expressions of ethnic diversity. Yet, by defining tradition as dead manifestations of cultural idiosyncrasy (remember the commentary of the two Russian dog breeders mentioned in the beginning of chapter two), the state exoticized tradition as a relic of an irretrievable past. From this vantage point one can see how Rekinniki women work to challenge the concept of tradition as promoted by the state. In contrast, they imagine tradition as the creative and vital engagement with cultural practices handed down through generations. In this sense - and as an allegory - by sewing fur and skin Rekinniki women perform and affirm a cultural script of femininity and ethnicity. They entertain gender-specific models of subjectivity while engaging local practices of Koriak identity.

Rekinniki women articulate ethnic identity through the creative display of cultural idiosyncrasy, codified in the sensual texture of the skin.

Today, many Koriak woman are no longer willing to perform the onerous work of tanning and sewing and they spurn tanning practices as outmoded and dirty. Yet, in a world where tradition has been shunned or eliminated under the sponsorship of the state, traditional elements establish powerful links to the past. As such, fur objects stand as idiomatic expressions of cultural difference in relation to other Koriak groups in Tymlat and the state's modeld of ethnic boundedness. Precisely because the state and many Koriak today scorn traditional values as outmoded, inappropriate, or unmodern, Koriak women from Rekinniki are able to express claims of ethnic difference in an agenda of cultural affirmation.

Larissa's and Tet Dasha's concepts of desire and erotics are local, emphasizing time-honored notions of value, knowledge, and aesthetics. However, in contrast Rekinniki women's local version of love, different, boundary-violating scripts of romance do emerge as a corollary to the intrusion of outlandish, capitalist goods in the life-world of northern Kamchatka and new media such as TV and videos. The following chapter examines another, more transnational discourse of love and desire in the parochial contingencies of Ossora's life-world.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

In this section, I shift my attention to the more urban context of Ossora to elucidate a different practice of desire significant in some women's lives. In contrast to the previous chapter where I investigated a local model of erotics in the life-world of Tymlat, this chapter takes up a discourse of love that transcends the boundaries of ethnic oneness. Instead of continuing with the analytic thread of ethnic boundary maintenance, I explore how Koriak women who engage in the trade of sex with Russian and Ukrainian men are caught in a dangerous cycle of fetishization and ambiguity.

Increasingly, Koriak women who live in Ossora partake in temporary, sexual relationships with Russian and Ukrainian men to obtain the wares through which they hope to realize dreams of social dignity and economic prosperity. With the demise of the former Soviet Union and the withering of its economic structure, villages in northern Kamchatka - as in the rest of the country - are exposed to the prolific intrusion of Western goods as a private market economy encroaches on the country. As the capital and largest village of the *Karaginskii raion* , Ossora represents an important traffic junction in northern Kamchatka. The village's infrastructural significance in relation to Tymlat, travel destinations further north, and the city Petropavlovsk in the south bestows on it a crucial role in introducing Western consumer commodities to various municipalities in northern Kamchatka. Ossora's inhabitants witness daily the arrival of foreign consumer goods; moreover, the powerful and pervasive presence of television (introduced in the mid-eighties to Kamchatka) and the geographical mobility of salesmen call villagers' attention to the material

comforts and physical conveniences which define a seemingly untroubled life-style. Although many residents of Ossora approve of this development and the sumptuous products that come with it, they also greet this new order with conflicting feelings. Western commodities embody important symbols of status and economic success, and their possession indicates individual reputation. Adults, adolescents, and even children experience their social world as rapidly falling apart: they are used to living the powerful, political order of Soviet state-dictated economy in which use-value, or at least its illusion and moral companion of constraint, seemed to determine the status and importance of goods and wares. The state's ideological promotion of social values, such as constraint and modesty, that stood in stark and deliberate contrast to capitalist extravagance and affectation, as well as the existent reality of economic scarcity in Ossora endows Western consumer goods with a powerful aura of opulence, prosperity, and seduction. The capitalist make-up of even daily and ordinary wares such as casual clothes and necessary staple foods mediate powerful images of wealth, affluence, and luxury. Villagers gaze in amazement at the extraordinariness of these wares, and become caught in a maelstrom of affluence and desire. Although the influence of a capitalist order may be on the increase in Ossora so too is the social menace of unemployment, and fear of poverty lingers in the village's streets. The rapid decay of formerly binding economic structures and the break down of the state in matters of guaranteed labor and housing, as well as other nets of social security, evoke agony and fear among Ossora's inhabitants. Every new wave of cutbacks threatens to put villagers out of work and throw them into an abyss of economic uncertainty and social misery. To counter their anxieties they organize weekly meetings, even though there is not much to decide, since the economic and psychic depression takes its own

course. Only a few can afford to buy in the new *kommerchiskie magaziny* (privatized shops) which burgeon on Ossora's two main streets. Shop owners favor the prestigious and lucrative trade of clothes, shoes, make-up, and perfumes from countries such as Austria, France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Korea, Japan, and North-America. These wares, often illicitly imported, prove alluring in providing an extravagant aura of western chic, quality, and brand-name desirability and prices. The glitter and glamour of wool cardigans of fine count, delicate silk scarves, opaque blouses, expensive perfumes, exotic tasting alcohol, extravagant pralines, and the like, creates an ambiance of opulence and comfort that stands in stark contrast to the Ossorian world of scarcity and austerity. These objects are endowed with powers of hope and prospect, promising success and prosperity. Foreign and eccentric objects mediate images of personal and economic health, moreover, they produce illusions of social respectability. However, most of these wares are hardly affordable for the village's residents. This recent development brings the issue of cultural marginality into the urban context of Ossora's life-world in Kamchatka. Marginalization at the fringes of the village, patronage by the state, and subjection to a huge welter of social criteria to keep them in political tutelage resulted in the weakening of Koriak life. Koriak find themselves excluded from participation in the 'new economy' and the powerful forms of social status that come with it. They feel barred from the possibility of acquiring such dazzling wares whose purchase seems to represent a privilege of Ossora's Russian and Ukrainian inhabitants. The experience of penury and social distress coupled with the inability to acquire necessary items for nourishing and clothing their children feeds into Koriak women's awareness of their disempowered status marked by economic impotence and marginality. Many Koriak mothers can barely afford

the daily loaf of bread or the ingredients to cook a broth for their children, let alone the shoes, apparel, or pencils and notebooks required by mentors and teachers. The majority of Koriak women in Ossora makes a sparse living by working in ill-paid positions as salesladies or cleaning women, and look with great apprehension into an uncertain future.

These women experience social and economic misery in unmitigated ways, and many of them invest consumer goods with illusions of a fantastic world free of social worry and struggle. Furthermore, the chimera of affluence mirrored in commodities seems to release a promise - the promise of social betterment - and many Koriak women feel their lives drawn into a cycle of ambition and desire by aspiring to obtain 'Western' goods and what seems to go with them. As such, I argue, these wares become fetishes: they embody a crisis in social value, while simultaneously promising a solution. By fetishism I denote the attribution of life, power, and autonomy to objects which represent sites of displaced social tension.[1]

Admittedly, this notion of the fetish is informed by Marxian and psychoanalytic thought; however, in seeking to understand gender and ethnic relations in Ossora I believe that both models contain useful elements in exploring the embodiedness of social tension and personal strain.[2] In a Marxian

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[1]This definition is inspired Taussig's (1980) work on commodity fetishism and his interpretation of peasant mine workers beliefs and practices in South America, as well as McClintock's (1995) study on the making of race, domesticity, and nationalism in a wider framework of gender.

[2]For Marx (1890), commodities, and not the human labor that created them, appear as the source of profit and value. Products come to represent relations between things, and it is precisely the character of this relationship that creates value through their exchange. Consequently, associations among and qualities of people engaged in the production of the commodity are camouflaged as relations between things, or, rather, commodity fetishism creates a split between the people and the things they produce. Admittedly, within theories of political economy fetishes are best known in their monetary form. However, anything can be reckoned as capital, or rather, as a fetish. Social products such as power

framework, social relations and qualities of people engaged in the production of goods and commodities are camouflaged as relations between things. This understanding is useful for this project, but instead of looking at how qualities of human beings and their products are being converted into things, I seek to

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and value appear as natural characteristics of the fetish, henceforth masking politically unequal relationships by harmonizing them as innate qualities of things. Yet, according to Marx, the appearance of value as an intrinsic property of things which are produced as commodities, deceives people precisely because human relations of labor are divorced from the world of things they create. Marx's insight that fetishes represent social relations is crucial in understanding relations between people.

Like Marx, Freud views the fetish as one of the ordering principles of modern life, yet, unlike Marx, he views fetishes as expressions of displacement generated in the psychic dilemma of unresolved conflicts. Freud evokes the question of fetishism in one of his earliest papers, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), where he distinguishes two major types of sexual aberration. First, working within the heterosexual matrix, there are those aberrations in which there is a deviation located in the sexual object; secondly, there are aberrations in which there is a deviation located in the sexual aim. Fetishism may be an element of both categories. Decisive for its emergence are issues of anxiety and fear of castration.

Like every man, the fetishist also experiences the Oedipus complex, but one major element distinguishes his position from the eventual homosexual or heterosexual one. In the latter's' case, the boy is threatened with castration fear, but he is able to overcome his anxiety. In the fetishist's case, the threat is not resolved. The boy witnesses the sight of a woman, in what he perceives as the female's castrated condition, and, concomitantly, he feels the threat of castration. Yet, the boy can not disavow his perception, nor can he accept the implications of the castration threat for him. Therefore, the fetish is the boys homage to the missing, maternal, phallus, by way of both preserving his belief in it and at the same time accepting her castration and the possibility of his own. So, therefore, Freud attaches value to the penis, and is now able to analyze fetishism as the displacement of value (the displacement of value from the penis to another part of the body or onto an inanimate object representing the missing phallus). This is why, in Freud's eyes, female fetishism is an oxymoron (ibid.: 1927). It is impossible because there is no reason for the girl to disavow her mother's castration. Unlike the boy, threatened by potential castration, the girl has already been castrated. Rather, the girl is tempted to disavow her castration and to indulge in the narcissistic investment in her own body. Freud suggests that what she does is to phallicize her body, treating it as if it were the phallus. He *has* the object of desire while she *is* the object of desire (cf. Grosz 1995: 150). In psychoanalytic theory, women can be the objects of fetishism, but never the subjects. Men are the sole heirs to the symbolic. women are tongueless and unsexed. Identified inevitably with the realm of the Other, women are the bearers and custodians of distance and difference but never the agents and inventors of social possibility.

understand the productive capacities of goods and their organization of gender relations in Ossora. In other words, I am concerned about human and gender relations generated by commodities rather than about the human relations that go into or create the commodity.[3] Here I find Freud's theory of the fetish as an ordering principle of the body and sexual identity interesting, though in need of critique. According to him (1927: 135), women are excluded from taking pleasure in the fetish. While Freud analyzes male, psychoanalytic case histories he explains the fetish as a substitute for the missing penis of the mother. The little boy who witnesses the penis as lack in women's bodies but cannot give up his belief in the maternal penis creates the fetish as a 'compromise object' (cf. McClintock 1995: 189) to reconcile wish and knowledge. In contrast to Marx, Freud evokes gender as a determinant category in his theory, yet, as McClintock (1995:183) remarks, his "denial of female fetishism (a fetishistic gesture itself) is less an accurate description than a theoretical necessity that serves to disavow the existence of female sexual agency except on terms prescribed by men." However, by attempting to shape their lives according to their desires, Koriak women express will and agency in forms which may be unconventional, but embody nevertheless effective actions to bring about the fulfillment of their aspirations. Yet, ironically, the attainment of fetish wares does not mean that desire is filled through the consummation of fetish value, rather, fetish value is elusive because - and here Marx's theory kicks in - fetishes are merely embodied by an assemblage of mirages that create the illusion of meaning as a thinglike,

[3]This is not to say that human relations can be easily conceptualized in input-output terms; rather, social relations produce things that then guide and manage people in their relation to the world, or, to say it in a nutshell, things produce people.

reified substance. Hence, it is the fetish's ambiguous nature that ensnares people in purposeful, yet ultimately fruitless actions to obtain what they desire.

However, instead of discussing critiques by feminist analysists of Freudian theory (cf. Fuss 1995; Rose 1986), I engage the voices of Koriak women who work and live in Ossora. These women speak from the locations of marginal, social experience to Freud's theory and cast a critical commentary on his decoding of the fetish as the phallic substitute for insatiable desire - a discourse basic to Lacan's theory of desire as lack.[4] Furthermore, the expression of their wants by Koriak women puts into question Freud's notion of female fetishism as an oxymoron, a social impossibility for women. Yet, by evoking in particular the discourse of two Koriak women who live in Ossora and engage in the exchange of sex I do not assert that these women's lives and interpretations represent a conscious effort of critiquing Freud and his imagination. Rather, they shed light on the flaws in Freud's conceptions through the cultural contingencies of their discourse. Moreover, as the following biographies of Koriak women show, fetishes are not as camouflaged as theorists would have it; on the contrary, Koriak women are quite aware of the objects of their worship.

In northern Kamchatka fetishes assume multiple forms as Koriak women in Ossora exchange their bodies to obtain a part of the powers the former seem to release. Race plays a formative role in the commoditized exchange of sexuality in this village of the *Karaginskii raion*, and the effects of historically and scientifically informed discourse of racial hierarchy become tractable in the practice of sexuality where the body becomes an exchangeable commodity. In Ossora, Koriak women sleep with 'White' men to procure articles of daily need or the money which allows them to buy things they desire. The term 'White'

[4]See footnote 3 in chapter five.

was generally employed by the Koriak I knew to designate their Russian and Ukrainian neighbors. Often Koriak describe themselves as 'Black' to point to both their cultural distinctiveness and social 'worthlessness' in the state's and their neighbors eyes. The physical particularities of the human body serve as markers of social boundaries and represent indicators of racial 'inferiority'. Koriak are well aware of such assessments attributed to the corporal specificities of their bodies. Some of them who still live in the tundra try to turn this discourse around by describing the beauty of their skin and pointing to Russian women's endeavors to dye their hair blond or get tanned. Yet, Koriak who live in Ossora, and find themselves confronted on a daily basis with prejudice and derogatory assessments, struggle against such tenets. Russian and Ukrainian villagers point to Koriak drinking, poverty, and social distress as direct outcomes of racial inferiority, hence naturalizing social misery by aligning it with the biological 'flaws' of the racial body. Consequently, the commerce of bodies in Ossora shows a particularity which neither Freud's nor Marx's theory takes into account. Koriak women, whose often impoverished and socially disempowered status make them easily vulnerable to the effects of penury and deprivation make use of the desires of 'White' men who want to escape the routine of their marriages and wish to prove themselves both physically and economically potent. In Ossora, these women are defined by others - Koriak, Russian, and Ukrainian men and women - in disparaging and contemptuous remarks as *prostitutka* (prostitute). In villager's imaginations, prostitution represents a lucrative source of comfortable income, and women who engage in this practice make easy assets by selling their bodies in emotionally non-committed ways. Furthermore, identified by villagers in daily speech as 'prostitutes', these women are portrayed as cunning and deceiving, and often I

was warned not be deluded by encounters between women and men which seemed neutral or trivial to me. Whether or not the use of the term 'prostitution' by villagers in the context is legitimate or not remains the object of further investigation; here I wish to stress that Ossora's residents *do* employ the term to describe a particular sexual practice of predominantly Koriak women.[5]

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[5]The notion and practice of prostitution is highly contested in feminist theory. Marxist feminism and the post-modern thought of Irigaray (1985), in particular, exemplify two of the more prominent streams in feminist concerns with prostitution.

By analogy with Marx's contract theory of wage labor, Marxist feminism conceptualizes a sexual contract in which women are dominated and exploited by male authority, which represents supposedly a prejudical law of sexual relations (cf. Pateman 1988; MacKinnon 1989). From this perspective, the sexual body is a locus of oppression, and sexual arrangements, such as marriage and prostitution, foster the subjugation and abuse of women. Like the labor contract, the sexual contract is characterized by inequality and exploitation. Female sexuality is constructed as an object of male desire; women experience their sexuality not as a quality of their self. In contrast to conceptualizations of feminists informed by Marxist theory, Irigaray - reading Hegel's master/slave relationship and the exchange theory of Lévi-Strauss into the prostitute body, conceptualizes the prostitute's body as ambiguous, as a body oscillating between the terms of dependence and independence.

Like much French feminism, Irigaray is indebted to Kojéve's (1969) reading of Hegel. In his rendition of the master/slave conception, Kojéve interprets the encounter of these two actors as an intricate one. Both the master and the slave are connected to each other through a process of subject formation. According to Kojéve, the master's subjectivity is produced by the slave, who confirms the master's self-identity and self-certainty. By contrast, the slave binds himself to the master and "completely to the things on which he depends" (Kojéve ibid.: 17), thus becoming like a thing himself. By analogy, Irigaray says, prostitutes act like the slave or bondsman; they are dependent on a master, whereas the master exists for himself.

Hence, prostitutes are not engaged in the contractual exchange of sex and money on equal terms, but are slaves to the master's (men's) demands and wishes. Yet, according to Irigaray (ibid.: 170-192) while prostitutes may be exploited, they also represent the most radical, female position within a framework of value and exchange. Here Irigaray employs an analogy with Marx's vision of exchange value and with the exchange theory of Lévi-Strauss. In this resemblance, the female position of virginity represents pure exchange value, the body of the mother use-value, but the prostitute's ambiguous body combines both use and exchange value. The position of the prostitute, according to Irigaray, is the position women should strive to occupy in order to launch themselves as speaking subjects into the world. The prostitute's body - because it combines the values of use and exchange - represents the most radical body position women can engage in. Simultaneously, this position represents and

However, the women I know who engage in the trade of sex do not regard 'prostitution' as a profession, but rather as a supplementary source of income to improve the social and economic condition of their lives and those of their children. Most of them pursue other occupations to make a living. Villagers understand paid sexual intercourse with men as 'easy money' or casual earning, but contrary to most villagers' perceptions, it is not necessarily remunerative but demands attention and work on the woman's part. Men expect women to create an aura of both charming flirtation and convivial companionship. Koriak women perform daily 'feminine' roles as submissive, adoring, and dedicated lovers to boost male egos and make men feel emotionally refurbished after long, often frustrating working days. In Ossora, Russian men often behave as imperious masters whose wishes and desires the family is expected to follow without protest. Yet, at the same time, like everybody else, they struggle with encroaching unemployment, decay of economic values, and loss of social meaning. As men they wish to be recognized, respected, and affirmed; however, such recognition is hard to achieve at work and at home. Seeking confirmation of their masculinity and virility elsewhere, men recompense Koriak women for their service of attending to their desires and demands, accepting and hence magnifying the male ego. Consequently, while men relax and release tension, women - forced to put up with male complaints and haughtiness - work to satisfy male needs and demands.

In the following I relate Zina's story. Zina is a thirty-eight year old Koriak woman who lives in Ossora in one the *Anapkinskie doma.* Together with her thirteen-year-old daughter Valia and her seven-year-old son Sasha, she

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produces value. Yet, in the end, the prostitute also negotiates sexuality only as a commercial exchange inside a male economy of trade: ultimately each position - mother, virgin, prostitute - is characterized by exploitation.

inhabits a small one-room apartment without any water and with insufficient isolation. An iron bucket serves as a toilet, bashfully placed in a dark corner, hidden by !ong cloaks. The single room must be multifunctional, serving as as bedroom, living room, eating place, and many other human purposes.

Like all Koriak children of her generation, she grew up in a boarding school. Separated from her siblings who attended the educational institution in Il'pyr', she lived in the residence of Tymlat's boarding school. But, unlike her siblings, she enjoyed a further education in Novosibirsk as a forest warden. There, Zina learned English, *"but at that time I did not even know why I should waste my time with it, anyway, it was of no use. Now I wish I would have spent more time learning it and taking my studies more seriously, but...what did it matter at that time. It did not matter at all ...Who could foresee what happened...But my children, I want my children to know."* Today Zina works as a saleslady in one of Ossora's grocery shops; her work is hard and her salary is low. She suffers from constant back pain, fatigue, frazzled nerves, and the anguish of possibly losing her job with every new wave of unemployment. Zina is constantly tired: *"...I am so tired all the time, so tired, I am done in, it never ends. I carry those heavy sacks all the time, sometimes I can't move anymore, those bags, tons of sugar, flour, wheat, they kill me."* She feels that life is passing her by, that she loses control and is unable to care for her children and to maintain her work. As time goes by, Zina spends more and more of her salary on alcohol. Often she cannot afford to buy bread or milk precisely because drinking consumes much of her money and energy. Her children watch her behavior with both consternation and indifference. Last summer, Lena, her eldest daughter, left the house because she could not bear her mother's erratic conduct any longer. At fifteen years of age, she ran away from home, following

a young Koriak man to Il'pir'. Now she is married and seven months pregnant. Zina was furious; there were acrimonious fights because Zina did not like Lena's lover. She says: *"He is handsome, yes, but ... He's fucking nuts ... I don't want her to throw her life away... she follows him, and look how she lives now. She does not go anywhere, sits all the time with 'babushka' (her husband' maternal grandmother), eats 'kiclye golovki'* (fermented fish heads) *and lives in dirt. This pig, he is ruining her life.* However, Lena ignored her mother's objections and now refuses to see her:*"...if she comes, I run away, further into another village or into the tundra. She is mean...I do not want to live with her, I do not want to take care of Sasha."*

Five years ago, Sasha, Zina's youngest son, was adopted by her and Andrei, her husband who was then still alive. Four years ago, after several days of prodigious drinking Andrei collapsed dead in the wooden staircase of the house where they lived. Zina believes that *"... it was his heart that did not want to live any more. He drank too much ...it was his heart ... the heart did not want."* His death was a big shock to Zina. They had just adopted Sasha, the son Andrei longed for after two daughters, and now she found herself alone with three children and huge debts. She then took up work in one of Ossora's grocery shops; poorly paid, she was nevertheless able to support her children and herself. Zina is very proud of this fact and represents herself as a tough, autonomous woman who does not depend on anybody and who is able to master life herself. Lena and Valia went to school, Sasha went to day care, and Zina's sisters, who live in the adjacent house, took care of the children in the late afternoon hours. But then, with the rapid decay of Soviet socio-political structures, Zina's salary could not cushion the inflationary effects of marketization and privatization. She moans: *"...oh, in what kind of times do we*

live in? Not long ago, I still had money, but now I can barely afford bread any more ...oh ,what kind of times are these, and it will even get worse." Feeling exhausted and overburdened, Zina started to drink heavily. In particular, Sasha was a very aggressive and angry child. Stealing money from other people, beating smaller children, and cursing his mother and aunt for their inability to buy him the things he wants, Zina felt she could not and did not want to take care of him anymore. She would punch Sasha for every minor offense, fulminating with abusive language: *"He is a devil ...why did we ever take him...he is a monster. I wonder if his mother would take him back? What am I going to do with him?*

In the village, Zina had a reputation as a frivolous and casual woman. People would whisper about her flirtations, and in particular Russian women would look with distrustful eyes at her conduct, not knowing how close their husbands were or had been to her. It was well known that Zina prefered the company of Russian men while drinking, yet, at the same time it was she who spent so much money to buy the precious liquid to entertain her guests.

However, no reputable husband was among Zina's recent lovers; rather, she had been seeing a young, handsome bachelor who made his money from illegal rackets. Dimitrii was fifteen years younger than Zina, attractive and stalwart. His virility and 'Russianness' made him even more alluring by making her feeling young, desirable, and seductive. Hence, Zina was willing to have him stay at her place for long periods of time. His mother expelled him from her house; unwilling to put up with his flaunting and the bragging of his friends she shoved him out of the house, not caring about his whereabouts. After this event, Dimitrii walked straight to Zina's place. By that time the news of what had happened had already reached her, and, informed about his arrival, she went out

to buy wine and extravagant tidbits to receive him with a richly spread table. Her daughter Valia had been sent to purchase several videos from an illicit source. Zina bought *samogon,* as well as rare and expensive treats such as cigarettes, chocolate, cookies, and even cheese, drifting further into debt as she bought all these wares on credit. However, Dimitrii himself arrived with empty hands - no wine, no vodka, not even any cigarettes - but Zina neverthelesss felt gratified that he had chosen her to live with. She said: *"He is so beautiful ...he comes to me, he does not go to other Russian women...I would not want to have another Koriak man...they are useless. I want to live and have fun."* When Dimitrii was around, Zina, who preferred to wear big shirts and comfortable pants, wore skirts and dresses. Sleeping in the only bed in the only room in Zina's apartment, he occupied valuable living space. When he began living at Zina's, Sasha and Valia had to leave the room to stay in a cubbyhole unseparated from the hallway, except for a ripped curtain. Zina did not want them to see *"the drunkenness and debauchery of our lives,"* but above all she did not want them to witness her inebriety. She became angry about her children's disparaging remarks concerning her lover, and chastised them when they mocked his haughtiness and boastfulness. Yet, Zina felt honored that Dimitrii decided to stay at her place and not with one of his Russian girlfriends, of whom he had - so she was convinced - in plenty.

Supplying Dimitrii with food, a place to stay, as well as amusement and entertainment, Zina flatterrd him in a feminine, individualized way. Whereas his mother was determined not to endure her son's egotism and ostentatiousnesss, Zina was willing to tolerate his conceited demeanor and vanity. Not only did she submit to the orders he voiced, hence underscoring and endorsing his masculinity by performing the role of adoring femininity, but her appearance (the

clothes she wears in Dimitrii's presence), and her demeanor were intended to impress and delight him. Showering him with her personal service, blocking frustration, misery, and agony from him, and charming him with flattering remarks about his youth and appearance, she affirmed and magnified his self-esteem, importance, and masculinity. By seeking and trying to maintain his presence, Zina endeavored to capture some of the power his company promised. Yet, in this case, it was not so much the riches and economic comfort that Dimitrii did not, and was not willing to, deliver. Rather, it was his body that contained significance and the powers of status and upward, social mobility. The racially and sexually marked, 'White' and male body of Dimitriis's 'Russian-ness' symbolizes personal worth and social value. In a world where the color and physiognomy of bodies positions people within an intricate hierarchy of rank and dignity, the category of race signifies the sexual and political value of bodies. Accordingly, in the social world of most Koriak women in Ossora, the 'White' and male body of Russian or Ukrainian men mediates illusions of personal value and pleasant self-imagery.

While Zina performs roles of racial and gendered submissions, she does not act as if she were sexually and romantically interested in the man; rather, she is interested, not necessarily in the male person but in the man as money-giver and holder of power. However, Koriak women's ostensible compliance with Russian men's wishes represents not the smooth or effortless acquisition of money and other material values but places them in a nexus of ambiguity that simultaneously empowers and weakens their selves: Koriak women are entrapped in a cycle of power and desire that contributes to both their marginality and success in the life-world of Ossora.

This is not to say that Zina interiorized social representations of and people's prejudice surrounding Koriak wishes, desires, and sentiments as insignificant and their bodies as inferior, but it means that she knows about the politics of representation and is aware of their power and force. However, although masculine and white bodies may signify a utopian world of social enchantment and economic abundance, they are, like all fetishes, ambiguous. Zina plunges herself into debt to procure both personal and social value, yet, as long as the social order manifests and maintains Koriak marginality, this value remains necessarily an illusion of disempowered and peripheral marginality.

After Dimitrii had lived for a while at Zina's place and she had attended to his daily needs with food and a place to rest, after she had nurtured his ego and masculinity with servility and complimenting remarks, Dimitrii decided to buy an apartment in Irkutsk (a city on lake Baikal in southern Siberia). At the same time he decided to ask one of his Russian girl friends whom he continued to see while staying at Zina's place if she was willing to move with him. His beloved agreed, and Dimitrii announced to Zina his attention to leave her. Yet, instead of taking his explanation with the temperance and docility he had expected, Zina furiously shouted at him. Having been betrayed and insulted, she knew that, once again, her illusions and fantasies were fated to dissolve into a bitter reality of abuse and abandonment. Dmitirii, who ostensibly held the key to realize her social dreams, is simultaneously equipped with the power to destroy her hopes and reveries. Once again, Zina felt relegated to the realm of social dirt and inadequacy, a realm that endows male and 'White' bodies with the fetish power of hope and social betterment.

In the life-world of Ossora the display of maleness in connection with 'White-ness' makes for a desirable, but elusive mixture of power and desire.

Intermarriage between Koriak women and Russian or Ukrainian men is not very common, not to mention the reverse - marriage between Russian or Ukrainian women and Koriak men.[6] The shapes and colors of the body motivate a social hierarchy in which people's corporeality gains political significance by means of elitist classifications. In a world where masculinity is exhil ed and evinced by boosting remarks, pretense, acerbity, and provocative language, it is men who assert claims to women's acquiescence and obedience. At the same time, it is precisely the reality of masculine conceit and impertinence that affirms a gendered order in which women are not only symbolically subordinated to men, but where the interplay of race and gender pushes Koriak women to the political and symbolic periphery of the social order in Ossora. Zina may elevate Dimitrii's body and what it epitomizes to the status of a fetish, but because Koriak embody marginal individuals whose disempowered status leaves them with little hope for improvement of their social and economic situation, masculine and 'White' - in short powerful bodies - represent 'naturalized' fetishes in nexus of economic power and social expectations.

Aniuta's story points to another form of fetish power in Ossora. Her story turns our attention from the body to Western commodities as mirrors of identity and epitomes of wealth. By immersing herself in sexual relations with Ukrainian men to realize her ambitions of social ascent, also Aniuta is caught in ambiguity.

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[6]I am not able to furnish proof of this assertion with quantifiable data. To my knowledge, such statistics do not exist, and I myself did not collect such data. Understandably, Koriak resist any attempt to assist researchers who are interested in statistical proof of any kind. They either refuse to answer, or respond deliberately in faulty ways. Given a colonial history in which such information has mostly been used to implement policies which were to their disadvantage, their reaction is understandable and seems justified.

Like Zina, Aniuta is a Koriak woman who lives as a single mother in one of the *Anapkinskie doma* in Ossora. Yet, unlike Zina, she is rewarded by her lovers in the form of material assets such as clothes, food, alcohol, and travels. Aniuta's story elucidates the powers of Western goods, which she actively attempts to transform into social value and economic prosperity for herself. I met Aniuta during my first stay in Kamchatka, and we continued our relationship over the course of my second stay. Frequently we gathered with friends to celebrate small, but memorable, events, and Aniuta brought contributitons in the form of vodka, and, sometimes sweetmeat, to these events. There was nothing special about this, although several people commented occasionally on her providing such costly and rare goods. All of us sat around the richly spread table, and we enjoyed ourselves joking and listening to each other's stories. However, one night was different. Aniuta came, dressed in a new, shiny, black leather costume. Her high-heeled shoes made a perfect fit with her suit, and silky stockings matched both shoes and costume. She wore bright, kamin-colored lipstick, her dark hair was heaped high in a wild way, red strands falling into her eyes. Confidently and not intimidated, she entered the room and announced in a loud voice that she had brought yet another bottle of vodka. Maksim, her brother, two years older than her, glanced only briefly at her and turned his head away in disgust, obviously deciding to ignore her and her shocking outfit. Aniuta, undaunted by her brother's look, vehemently demanded that the bottle be opened, and we chinked the glasses to celebrate our being together.

Despite all of Maksim's attempts, Aniuta was not to be ignored in her daring outfit. Everybody's mind was concerned with the obvious: the black and expensive leather costume. Where was it from? Who had given it to her? Who had paid for it? How had she come by the soft leather skirt and the fitting jacket?

It was evident that the costume had not been purchased in Ossora where such clothes were hardly available - even the *kommerchiskie magaziny* did not carry such things - and it was also evident that Aniuta's outfit exceeded by far her financial means. The costume must have been imported from Petropavlovsk, from the city. The downtown area in Petropavlovsk accommodated a huge market where all kinds of wares were sold. The Irish Cream and the Scotch whisky that Aniuta served to guests probably came from there also. The new bed clothes, the golden necklace, the woolen costume, and the cookies, chocolate, and other delicacies, had all found their way from the city to Ossora. These items, highly invested with the economic and symbolic value of wealth and prestige, are the realization of dreams unlimited by social boundaries. They signify desire for affluence, esteem, and respect. Their conspicuous display on walls, windowsills, dressers, and bookcases testifies to the desire to move beyond 'Soviet' time and to gain membership in the 'better classes'.

Also that night, as was customary, the television was running, but Lera wanted to show off her latest acquisition, the movie *Pretty Woman*, starring Julia Roberts and Richard Gere. Plunging herself into debt, she had purchased a Japanese video recorder, itself an object of prestige and wealth. Both she and Aniuta frequently watched movies filled with sex, love, and romance. This made them, as they said, forget the woes of their own lives and showed them a world more pleasurable and desirable than their own. And were those stories not true? Did Julia Roberts, pretty woman, not crawl out of the dirt and into a new and prosperous life? Was she not increasingly surrounded, on her way up, by the fetishes of her longing, of idleness and glamour, so that she became a fetish herself? Did she not gain love and riches, and even a proper husband, good manners, happiness, and the prospects of a decent education? If it could happen

to the character played by Julia Roberts, why not as well to them? One had just to make it happen.

Aniuta had barely finished her education in boarding school when she and Kolia decided to marry. They had attended the same school, and had known each other for several years. Indeed, her mother cautioned and pleaded with her to avoid a hasty marriage, but Aniuta explained that she was head over heels in love, so she tossed all her mother's warnings to the wind. Kolia resembled the man of her dreams, tall, strong, and handsome as he was, vigilant and protective. They married, and shortly afterward moved to Ossora, where they first lived in her mother's home and then in an apartment. After their son Iura was born, Aniuta started to work in one of Ossora's grocery shops because she was bored with cleaning and nursing the child all the time. She enjoyed contact and communication with other people, and although the work was arduous, she felt satisfied. Soon after, Aniuta was promoted to the position of manager. Sometimes, after a long workday, she and her colleagues would stay behind and celebrate *(vecelit')*. A few times she came home late, merry and inebriated. Kolia was infuriated and began to come and get her from work. Not only was he annoyed at her improper, indecent, and unvirtuous conduct, but, as Aniuta remembers, *"he was also jealous, very jealous, because I was young, beautiful, and vivacious."*

Kolia wanted her to leave her job and stay at home to take care of their son, and so she did. She cleaned the house, prepared dinners, and sewed pretty clothes for her son and her husband. *"I did not see much more than the kitchen...but...he was a good father ... we bought a stove and fridge...I gave him a motorcycle for his birthday...I spent almost all of my time sewing lovely clothes for Iura and Kolia. I still remember, my mother gave me this beautiful*

peace of leather and I made a jacket. She gave me white hare skins, oh so pliable, and I made a beautiful cap for Iura. When Nastassia went to the city (Petropavlovsk), she brought white linen and soft cotton which I used to sew shirts, and make myself 'khalaty' (house dresses) and skirts. Mother gave me chiffon and silk, and I made scarves and blouses. His clothes were never torn or dirty, Iura always looked so pretty, and he was always clean." Now Aniuta kept her family clean and proper, walking proudly with her son and husband through the village, exhibiting family harmony, motherly care, and the feminine virtues of cleanliness, devotion, and fidelity.

Although Soviet propaganda and ideology set forth representations of a genderless sphere of work, disavowing the existence of 'male and public' and 'female and private' space, discrete spheres of male and public labor and female and private work nevertheless existed (cf. Ries 1994; Lissutzkaja 1994). The study of gender in the former Soviet Union cannot be understood apart from Soviet ideological icing. Historical materialism, in the Soviet Marxist rendition, viewed the ownership of the means of production as the essential determinant of social relations. Gender was treated as a minor social accident to be eventually pushed aside, to vanish with the rise of a just, communist society. Class became the overriding identity, subsuming all other subject positions. Social relations between men and women were taken as reflections of material and social arrangements rather than products of class politics itself. As social historian Alexander (1994: 271) explains, the focus in historical materialism on the mode of production is illuminating and suggestive. But, although the categories of political economy can convincingly reveal the operations of social domination and coercion, the political traditions of Marxist trimmed Soviet ideology have little to say about gender or the needs and aspirations of women. In monolithic

fashion, there is only one subject of history - class - so women's theoretical and practical status is subservient to the study of the mode of production. The category of class represents the motor of history; Soviet historical materialism compresses time into a series of rigid laws, abandoning sexual and cultural differences at the risk of ignoring power relations between men and women, as well as various cultural traditions. Despite officially denying their existence, the Soviet concept of modernization maintained segregated spheres of domesticity as the female realm, and the professional world of toil as that of the male. Although women were encouraged to participate in the economic exchange of wage labor and money, the actual boundaries of gender and symbolic value relegated women to the domestic sphere. While the real economic value of woman's labor in the public space of factories and agriculture has been noted, women's economic contribution within the well-defined domestic realm was ignored. Not economic but symbolic value was attached to the domestic sphere. Consequently, symbolic boundaries continued to divide the world of work and value into female and male spaces of domesticity and exchange.

Eventually Aniuta became irked and unsatisfied by staying at home, and she decided to return to her previous work. She had enjoyed not only her friendship with her colleagues and workmates but also chaste and restrained flirtations with male customers across the counter. Kolia was raging. He prohibited her to leave the house without his permission, or to talk to other men. His control grew more firm. *"He was so jealous of me and everybody else,"* Aniuta recounts. *"In the beginning of our marriage I liked it, he seemed so sheltering and caring. I took it as a sign of love and devotion."* But then she became weary of her husband's possessiveness, which impeded her autonomy. Their continuous altercations grew into acrimonious fights, and, several times,

Aniuta says, Kolia attempted to beat her. She left and moved back into the house of her mother. Their son Iura was sent to Tymlat, where his paternal grandmother lived. She was happy to take care of him and he stayed with her and his father, who had moved back to his mother's house, for several years.

Aniuta now began vigorously to reclaim her life. She went out, went to parties, befriended other men, spent time with girl-friends, listened leisurely to music. But, contrary to her original plan, she never took up work again. Aniuta and Kolia were divorced, and, although Kolia paid permanent alimony, this money was not sufficient to realize her dreams of a comfortable life. Some of her devotees proposed to her but she rejected them all, saying that she still had to recuperate from her marriage as if from a weary and enduring illness and felt that she did not want to take the risk of yet another confining marriage. However, her alimony proved insufficient for her to realize her dreams of prosperity and upward mobility. Then, with the extra burden of her son's return to Ossora, she started to engage in 'prostitution', with the aim of acquiring her own property and working to guarantee Iura a proper education. She explains:" *I save money to buy an apartment in Petropavlovsk. I ask Iura what he wants to do and he says that he wants to become a chef. Well... I understand, it is his age, but ... what kind of a future is that? I myself went to school here, I know how bad education here is. You don't learn anything. In the city, yes, in the city children have a much better future, there they learn something ...English, ...and they know what to do with computers. Later, that will be useful. But here .. in the village, here I can't do anything. People who read are rare here. I know the company you get here. Drinking and smoking. ..I know that it is hard for Iura at school, he does not understand that one has to work to achieve something. I never understood that myself...Now I understand. I married and I worked. I*

earned good money. That's all I need...that's how I thought. But now, now I understand how important education is.

Look at all those young girls. They run away from home. They fall in love, and that is it ...They lie...They lie and say that they are pregnant...They think the good life comes from nothing...Look how we live...Four people in one room, no water, heat...I want a better life."

Aniuta took her first lover, an Ukrainian worker named Andrei who had been raised in Ossora and was married to an Ukrainian woman, fathering two young children. She had liked him for a long time, he was bold and entertaining, and, sure enough, there was no danger of him wanting to marry her. Aniuta recalls: *"I was not afraid of pregnancies...the doctor told me that only one ovary is working. I do not use any contraception, and then ... then there is still the hospital where you can have an abortion. But this is a small village, and they all know you .. I am young and beautiful, why should I not take advantage of it?"* She knew that he had cast an eye on her a long time ago, and she now seized the opportunity to love, to frolic, and be rewarded for the time they spent together. Not that he could give her much more than stockings here and there, chocolate for her son, and seafood after a good catch, but this contented her. But the country's political instability scared Andrei's wife, and she decided to leave and return to her home in the Ukraine. Initially Andrei refused, but as the political situation grew more scathing, the couple started to sell their possessions such as their apartment, refrigerator, and motorcycle.

Eventually Andrei left, and Aniuta took another, more promising and prosperous lover. Like Andrei, Nikolai is also married, but unlike his predecessor, he rewards Aniuta with more expensive and prestigious goods, and offers her money and other fiscal assets such as the opportunity to travel. Aniuta

established a long-term relationship with him which was also threatened by his wife's wish to return to her birth place in the Ukraine. Aniuta now employs her body and herself more strategically. Nikolai comes to her, so she says, to relax, not only from the tensions and strain of Russian life today, but also from his family which he feels besieges him with demands. Aniuta not only provides him with sex but eases his soul with warm company, delicious food, and the banishment of the woes entrenched in Russia's day-to-day life. In exchange, Aniuta receives from him clothes, jewelry, shoes, furniture, and money. The latter she saves to realize her aspirations regarding Iura's education and to procure real estate, the dreams that make her engage in the exchange of sex for money.

In contrast to Zina, Aniuta does not accept abuse or insults coming from men, rather, she appears to be in control of the situation and capable of making relationships work to her own advantage. Aniuta profits from Nikolai's money; she travels, saves funds for Iura's and her future, and is able to procure expensive and desirable wares for herself. She does not fetishize the male body, rather, it is those 'new' commodities which release promises of the social betterment that she desires. Purchasing wares attributed with wealth, beauty, and prestige; she hopes to obtain precisely these qualities which, engrained in a vicious cycle of illusion, prove to be elusive and irredeemable. Yet, to secure the fetish value of alluring commodities, Aniuta needs her male lovers' economic power which enables her to indulge in affluence, seemingly converting dreams into reality. However, lovers leave, and with them the assets she was able to procure through the exchange of emotional and sexual service for money. Aniuta is left with both the work of finding a new and moneyed lover who does not threaten her wish for autonomy, and with the slander and defamation that comes

along with her work. Yet, Aniuta is not only working to purchase things and prestige, but she is working to become an-other. By investing herself in the commodity by means of her hopes, dreams, and labor, Aniuta seeks to be relieved from indigence and social weakness, in short, to discard her marginality. The service that Aniuta provides then, signifies less the eroticization of the male and 'White' body (as in Zina's case), than the eroticization of the commodity through her projection of power (cf. Allison 1994: 22).

Social changes in Russia have not given birth to new fetishes, rather, they have involved the encorporation of already established, captitalist fetishes across the boundaries of nations debilitated by the collapse of the Soviet state. Such fetishes are both old and timeless, constantly rejuvenated within a circle of power and desire. 'White', male bodies and western consumer goods are what McClintock (1995: 184) calls 'impassionate objects'. Koriak women in Ossora experience everyday tensions and social conflicts at a bodily level, yet the tensions, because irresolvable, are displaced on various forms of objects. For women like Zina and Aniuta bodies and commodities represent enchanted things which signify simulatenously a crisis in social meaning and a promised way out.

Hence, far from being phallic substitutes, fetishes exemplify sites of displacements and enchantment. They create an illusion of identity by seemingly bestowing their powers on the fetishist, however, they also produce ambiguity. Zina and Aniuta may obtain some of the powers their fetishes release, however, these powers remain in the deceiving realm of imagination and illusion. Within the racial, sexual, and hierarchical order of Ossora's life-world Koriak women may try obtain social repute, a sense of self-worth, and recogniton by negotiating an identity in realm of sex, race, and power, yet, they remain bound by the impenetrability of social boundaries and 'White' people' s stakes in them.

However, not all Koriak women who live in Ossora yield to the powers of 'White' bodies and alluring commodities. This is not to say that these women do not admit a fascination with western consumer goods and the seductress of racially 'proper' bodies, yet, they choose a different form of struggle to affirm and construct their identity.

At the southern margins of the village where Aniuta and Zina live inhabit other displaced Koriak women from miscellanous places a dark, damp bunker-like edifice. The live in the few room fit for habitation with their children: most of them are divorced or their husbands are dead. Like Zina and Aniuta, they acknowledge the fetish power of western goods, yet, in contrast to them they do not employ their bodies to gain wealth or repute. Moreover, they look at Koriak women who do so with sceptical looks and judge their behavior as debauched and misplaced. Sometimes I went over to visit one friend, whose recent separation from her husband did leave no other possibility for her than to move in this building. Female relatives of hers stayed already at this place, and she cherished their company and help. Living in impecunious and distressing conditions they usually sat quietly and with sunken heads when I came to visit. They lack money to buy clothes and food, yet they strongly expressed their dislike of Aniuta's and Zina's behavior. In particular they disagreed with what they understood as Zina's and Aniuta's neglect of their children. In their eyes Zina's and Aniuta's behaviour is ambiguous. They understand why both women engage in sexual relationships with 'White' men, yet they disagree with it because they do not want to give up their dignity for a dubious reputation as *prostitutka,* hence weakening themselves even more. Koriak women in Ossora employ different strategies to claim selfhood and express identity but all exemplify women's struggles with a changing world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A LOVE AFFAIR

The foregoing chapters elucidated Koriak women's discourses of erotics and desire in relation to female projects of subject-making at the intersection of cultural and ethnic difference. Koriak women promote different designs of femininity and sexual identity in negotiating locally specific configurations of male, racial, and governmental power. In Tymlat, Rekinniki women encircle culturally parochial distinctions and understandings by placing aesthetic and sensual qualities of being female in the gift, while many Koriak women in Ossora struggle to debase vile demonstrations of racial dominance and male conceit. In this chapter, I reverse the route of my inquiry to concentrate on one Koriak woman's challenge to restrictive gender roles and male authority, as well as her claims to political power. I shift my attention to the rural and urban context of Tymlat and Ossora to call forth Moite's illustration of female creativity, knowledge, and authority at the intersection of gender and cultural difference. Her story evades some of the gendered features of Koriak women's practices I have so far described. Although Moite is from Rekinniki, she challenges Rekinniki women's discourse on ethnic boundedness while at the same time protesting male expressions of predominance.

Moite is no ordinary woman, nor can her story be read as a typical representation of Koriak women's dealings with issues of male leadership and dominance. Throughout this thesis I evoked examples in which Koriak women struggle, protest, or challenge men's wishes or authority. Male drinking and beating exacerbates the social violence of women's everyday life in northern Kamchatka. I described how men's deaths, divorces, or abandonment are not

unusual in the life-worlds of Tymlat and Ossora: many Koriak women feel deserted and encumbered by financial worries, social deprivation, and responsibility for their children's upbringing. Physical and emotional depletion consume much strength, although women like Varvara, Uliana, and Tet Dasha strive to endow their lives with meaning beyond the daily struggle of staying vigorous and healthy. This general condition of Koriak women's lives in Tymlat and Ossora explains Irina's and Alena's assessment of Lona's marriage to Vika in which Moite's role is of crucial significance. I begin by describing Irina's and Alena's reactions.

"Lona's wife is lucky", that is how Irina judged Vika's marriage to one of the most desired bachelors in the village. "Well, *it was about time that he married. Look, how old he already is. She was lucky that Lona married her... that she got a man who is still decent, who has some money... he is not whoring... such a young wife, and she is so jealous. If Lona is in the village and he is not at the fishing camp punctually in the evening, she sends someone out. Oh, she is so jealous (oh, takaia revnivaia)."* Also Alena shook her head in bewilderment: *"Why did Moite marry him to this other woman ... I don't know. Now she (his wife) has him - Moite could have married Lona, but she arranged this marriage, and Vika married him. Look how unhappy he is now. And his wife, - so young, and so envious of everything and everybody."*

Alena pronounced her assessment of Lona's marriage and Moite's hand in it with bewilderment and dissension. A while before (the story begins in the summer of 1993), Moite and Lona had become engaged in a romantic affair that had slowly evolved into a solemn and sound attachment. Lona's initial uncertainty and shyness ceased with his recognition of Moite's deep affection, and he expressed his feelings now more openly and freely. It became evident

that Moite's marriage had deteriorated, and her marital relation to Vasia became increasingly uncertain. Despite all this, Moite had repeatedly expressed her wish for divorce, and Lona felt it now an appropriate time to make their romantic alliance official. However, Moite, who sought to expand her spiritual skills, had different plans on her mind, and although she had fervently longed for a relationship with Lona, she rebuked all his marriage proposals in a decisive manner. Even more astounding, Moite was searching for a bride she thought suitable and fitting for Lona. She called his attention to several young and unmarried women in Tymlat, alluding to their congeniality, reverence, industriousness, propriety, and chastity. Lona, for his part, did not express much curiosity or any attraction, but Moite persisted in her endeavors. She suggested various young women of the village to him, in particular those who lived at the *starye zhilishie.* The *starye zhilishie* is a small, dilapidated dwelling on one of Tymlat's many rivers and is used in summer, the main fishing season, as a domicile by mostly aged Koriak who refuse to live in the village. That summer a family from Rekinniki had taken these houses as their domicile; Moite praised incessantly the merits of Maria, their seventeen-year old daughter. Maria's tender character and laborious attitude, gentle amiability, graceful style and other manifold credits made her a fitting wife for Lona. And indeed, it seemed that Lona, who was helping out her parents' fishing, now stayed longer into the evening hours at their small dwelling.

Previous to her search of a wife for Lona, Moite had decided to divorce her husband. She yearned to be alone; leaving Tymlat she moved with her children to Ossora, working to amplify and strengthen her spiritual powers. When Moite decided to leave Tymlat, Lona decided to marry Maria's younger sister Vika.

The events related by me in this condensed description of Moite's involvement in Lona's marriage direct attention, I believe, to women's creativity in interpreting tradition, and to their challenge of conventional gender models. As such, Moite's story reveals her capacity to create and affirm ethnic identity while at the same time sympathizing with Aniuta's and Zina's endeavor's to challenge restrictive designs of race and gender.

Hence, the challenge then lies in understanding the individual's multiple and often contradictory strategies of forging meaningful identities for herself. This task is taken up by feminist scholars who work within broader frameworks of power, agency, and resistance. Celebrated in much feminist work as the nascence and affirmation of the feminine subject, agency and resistance re-introduce to social analysts women as competent participants and effective performers in cultural productions (Ong 1987; Boddy 1989). Power and resistance constitute two of the most vital concepts in recent cultural theory. Nevertheless, the connotations of the terms have changed dramatically over the years. Today resistance increasingly denotes the subversive sabotage of dominant, repressive ideologies and oppressive socio-political and economic systems, showing that people are not weak and obedient marionettes of authoritative masters or stifling political systems (cf. James Scott 1985, 1990). These studies investigate the active participation of subjects in everyday strategies of resistance and show how people engage creatively in the fabrication of convivial, meaningful worlds. However, this project is contested by analysts who study the construction of that very agency through various forms of subject-making in a wider grid of discursive practices and power (Joan Scott 1988). Butler (1995: 45) calls for social analysts to pay attention not only how agency is articulated, but also to probe the process of its construction and

possibility. A related point has been made in an article by Abu-Lughod (1990b) in which she urges social scholars to pay attention to configurations of power which constitute particular forms of agency that are employed by subjects to resist that very same power.

These works are stimulating in their endeavours to understand the positions and strategies of individuals who struggle with issues of marginality, power, and exclusion. Their challenge lies in understanding individuals' strategies of protest and agency while at the same time trying to comprehend cultural conditions and social relations that make possible their very form of agency. This point is related to that made by Tsing (1993: 255) in her argumentation for a focus on power relations in a wider matrix of cultural difference and exclusion that simultaneously pays attention to people's strategic particularities in crafting strategies of agency and resistance.

The agency of Moite lies in her creative and innovative efforts to craft her identity by drawing from various discourses of power and identity the elements that seem most useful for her project of becoming a healer. She attends to traditional values and forms of spiritual expertise, yet simultaneously draws on extralocal models and understandings of knowledge to enhance her scholarship. To exemplify this claim I will relate her story in more detail.

I met Moite before Lona and she became a couple. In the course of my sojourn in Tymlat we became good friends, sharing both daily enjoyments and apprehensions. Moite, born in the former village of Rekinniki, is a woman at the end of her thirties, and the mother of two sons and one daughter. Slowly she notices her growing age; when she cleans herself in the morning she finds hair stuck in her comb, and the buckets she uses to carry to collect the riches of the autumn tundra, such as berries, roots, and herbage, seem heavier than before.

She is buoyant, witty, and kind-hearted. She likes to joke and imitate people's peculiarities, mocking their sometimes funny, sometimes strange idiosyncrasies.

Moite and I spent much time together: I helped her in cleaning fish and carrying the heavy buckets and bag-packs, while she summoned up stories from beyond the time of human memory, telling them in enticing and successive episodes. In the evenings we indulged in the savory liquid the berries released when cooked over the fire. Pouring the hot juice from our cups into the saucers, devotedly we sip the zany beverage; both its hotness and soureness drives sizzling sweat onto our foreheads.[1] In these tranquil evenings we often discussed the pleasures and problems of life in Tymlat, and debated the proper way of dealing with friends, spirits, children, and parents in her world and mine. Sometimes, in cool evenings, we would leave for the fishing camp of Moite's patrilineal relatives, located where the Ossorian bay stretches out into the ocean and precipitous cliffs provide a natural shelter. We would walk slowly, enjoying the scintillating ocean, wading barefooted through knee-high, ice-cold streams. She entertained me with her vivacious stories of various events, and sometimes it was hard to imagine that her life was troubled with much sorrow and sadness, the effect of a long history of intense and fervent events.

When Moite narrates her childhood she strongly emphasizes her father's love; she undertook long and intimate hikes with her father into the wide land, went on hunting adventures and shared the chores of herding with him. Today, Moite says, she understands why her father longed for those lengthy and isolated hikes in the tundra: *"Now I understand why he went so often out by himself. The tundra, you know, the tundra makes you calm and gives you*

[1]Most of the Koriak I knew do not use cups to drink tea and juice, but prefer to slurp the liquid out of saucers.

peace. If I feel irritated and concerned I always go into the tundra, I look here and there, and my heart is filled with tranquillity. The tundra smell soothes your mind, and a raven comes and carries your thoughts away." In contrast, her mother appears to be far more marginal in her memories; blind and hunch-backed, she nevertheless completed her local duties and fulfilled her familial responsibilities. Moite's mother was close to the spirits of the rocks and the sea, summoning them when somebody seemed ill, calling upon their powers to heal. She also invoked these powers when Moite was struck by a severe pneumonia as a child, and her sick body did not permit movement and motion. Her mother pleaded with the spirits, and, finally, they decided to release the child's body into physical well-being and spiritual wholeness. But after this long period of solitude Moite was already nine years old and had never attended school like her siblings and playmates. Then, things moved fast. Moite's older sister Masha married and moved with her husband to the village of Anapka, a two-day-long hike distant from the village of Il'pyr' where Moite now attended the boarding school. The parents, in particular their mother, desired to be close to the children; they followed Masha's and Moite's traces by transferring the family's household to Anapka. Her mother would send Moite and her younger brother Al'fonia *iukola,* and every so often their father brought fresh meat and seal fat for the siblings and other children from Rekinniki.

Vasia, who was then a boy, lived in Anapka. He and Moite attended the same boarding school; in summer when both lived with their parents, their acquaintance deepened. Eventually they married; yet, when Moite alludes to him, she speaks in derogatory terms of him, barely mentioning fondness or amity. Only reluctantly does she remember the time of their pre-matrimonial and conjugal relationship. Moite blames the powerful magic of Vasia's mother for

bringing them together as husband and wife. In the village, Vasia's mother, Tet Kira, is known as a powerful sorcerer and her magic is both respected and feared by the inhabitants of Tymlat. Villagers whisper in secretive tones about her charms and witchcraft, rumoring that she publicly displays effigies of the supernatural powers that inhabit the bays, rifts, and rocks. They say that when Tet Kira visits, a strange aura of conjuration invades the rooms, and traces of inexplicable menace drift through the air. Only she, Moite believes, could have induced this undesired marriage by invoking powers so hard to tame. She explains: *"Tet Kira and Nina put a spell on me, and that's how I married him. I never loved him and I would not have married him. They put a spell on me...you remember when Nina was dying, you were there.*[2] *A few days before she died she called me, and then she told me, that she and Tet Kira had made this spell. They thought I would be a good wife for Vasia, because I am an orderly woman, and I know how to sew. I can work in the tundra, I know about reindeer, and I will care for my husband...so they did this spell. You know, Tet Kira is very powerful, she knows very many things, she knows how to bewitch and charm people, and she knows very many injurious and malicious sayings. She bewitched me."*

Tet Kira liked Moite because she was sedulous in her laborious efforts, good-spirited, and used to the onerous and toilsome life in the tundra, already so foreign to many young women who had grown up only in the village. Moite was versed in tanning and sewing, preparing meat, and accepted the restricted way of life demanded by the land. For Vasia, the village incarnated everything that was egregious and untrustworthy, and he never considered a life in the settlement. At

[2]Nina, who had been ill for a very long time, died in March 1992 during my first stay in Tymlat. 'My' grandmother and Tet Dasha conducted the funeral ritual. Nina, born before Soviet time, had been very old. Nobody knew her age.

the time of her wedding Moite was eighteen. Immediately after the short celebration the couple left to work in the tundra. Vasia advanced fast to the position of brigade leader, and Moite worked as a *tshumrabotniza*. Soon she became pregnant. The birth of her first son, Tolik, caused some turbulence. Being determined to give birth in the tundra, Moite refused to return to the village to use its medical station. Doctors flew by helicopter in the tundra, castigating her for her irresponsibility and lack of precaution. They demanded that she return with them to the village and stay in the hospital for some time so that they could examine and watch her; obviously they disliked her reply that her mother had always given birth to her children in a tent in the tundra, only to stand up the second day and take up her work again. The doctors left her behind. However, her second child, daughter Lena, was born in the village. When she delivered, Moite suffered a uterine breach, which was only poorly sewn together in the small and ill-equipped hospital of Tymlat. After long deliberations, Moite and her children commenced a life in the village, while Vasia continued to work in the tundra.

After Lena's birth, Moite underwent four abortions. Emotionally agonized, she retreated into silence. The doctors, she explained, prohibited further pregnancies. The risk of serious damage was too high, and the physicians were afraid for her life. Yet, after one of those rare and brief visits that Vasia paid to his family, Moite found herself pregnant again. Once again the doctors warned her of dangers, but Moite paid no attention to them. She did not care about the opinions of the doctores who attempted to talk her out of the anticipated birth; she decided to carry her child through the pregnancy. Moite fulminated. She was flaming with scorn for the physicians incompetency. She accused them of having the breach so crudely sewn together, and then, not

knowing what to do, trying to talk her out of the pregnancy. All she desired was an uncomplicated birth, and then to leave the hospital.

Moite gave birth to a son, Maksim, and commenced to work in the local *masterskaia*, helping to support the family. Her two eldest children left the locale. Both the doctors and teachers judged Moite's children to be mentally disabled; they recommended a distant school in the village of Kliushakh in the heart of Kamchatka, three hours by plane from Ossora. Now Moite and her youngest son Maksim shared the apartment; Maksim felt lonely without his siblings and father, however, Moite appeared relieved at not having Vasia constantly around. When he sojourned in the village, Vasia demanded Moite's undivided attention; she refused to interrupt the daily course of her work and life. The marriage had gone sour from its beginning, and tensions between the partners flew high. As far as Moite was concerned, her mother-in-law's spells were to blame for the fact that the couple had never been contented. Yet, as I mentioned earlier, Moite's mother was reputed to be a wise and knowledgeable woman, versed in mighty and potent spells; she was a much sought after healer and her extraordinary powers continue to live in people's memories and narrations. Despite Moite's conviction that her mother had never felt love and tenderness for her, she nevertheless bequeathed the spirits she had intimately known to her daughter.[3] Now Moite attends to these spirits, nurturing and conversing with them.[4] Sitting close to the rusty oven in her kitchen, she

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[3]In the Koriak tundra people's familiarity with spirits represents nothing extraordinary. As Koriak travel through a landscape formed by the supernatural powers of the elements, spiritual knowledge is not the exclusive right of a few individuals but accessible to everybody. However, some Koriak are more conversant with the spirit world than others, and as such distinguish themselves as people of special authority and knowledge.

[4]Spirits in the Koriak life-world are sexed, divided into two genders: male and female.

stretches her head towards the opening where she can see a hot fire burning; she and the spirits exchange news and she receives their advice. Like her mother, also Moite is known for her extraordinary knowledge of medical remedies and command over some of the supernatural powers. Many people come and seek her help. However, she knows she will never compare with her mother and become a formidable and forceful healer as long as Vasia is alive and Tet Kira's spell still weighs on her. She explains: *"He has to be dead before my healing powers can fully unfold. His mother, she still knows a lot of those spells, sometimes I meet her on the street and she looks at me so strangely. Most people from Rekinniki fear her ...we know good things, how to heal people and make them feel well. She does strange things. She shows the stone spirits to strangers, and because she knows so much, nobody can do something against her. These spirits are powerful...so that my spirits can contest hers, Vasia has to be dead."*

While Moite worked in the *masterskaia* and Maksim searched for new friends, Lona also lived in the village. In contrast to most other men who abided in the tundra, he spent the winter in Tymlat to take care of his mother and younger siblings. Lona and I became good friends. He showed and explained to me the many things that were novel and often incomprehensible to me, elucidating the life in the tundra. Every evening he came to Irina's place; we enjoyed tea and I tried to answer his many questions about the world I came from. Lona was very patient and facetious; his jokes made me laugh and took away some of the agony that affected me like the other villagers. Sometimes I would take him to visit Moite; they had known each other since childhood. Together they had attended the boarding school in Il'pyr' and the fact that both had grown up in Rekinniki bound them together. Moite was obviously delighted

by Lona's company. Later she confessed that she had liked Lona since she was a little girl and had always wished to be married to him. However, while she lived with Vasia, Lona had been involved with another woman in Il'pyr'. A son was born, yet Lona decided to depart, leaving the young mother and his son behind.

The days went by; Moite, Lona and I explored the tundra; slowly it came time for me to leave. When the helicopter landed on the sandy grounds of Tymlat's airfield we waved good-bye and I took their wishes with me. Two years later, when I returned, Moite was divorced and Lona was married to Vika; however, traces of regret over the end of their affair still lingered in their hearts. Moite spelled out the unfolding of their relationship: *"Do you still remember when you came to Tymlat the first time and Lona came every evening to have tea with you... and then the three of us spent much time together...When you left, Lona kept coming, and finally he asked me if I wanted to be his lover. You know that I liked him ... but I was still married, and it did not seem right. And then I was afraid what the people in the village world say...I declined."* But Lona was persistent, and he continued coming: "He *returned and he asked me and then we became lovers...I am not made out of iron. He always came in the evening when it was dark. Maksim became used to him and called him 'uncle Lona'. You know how much Maksm likes playing and you know how entertaining Lona can be...Maksim started to like him better than his father."*

It was a troublesome time. The demise of the local *sovkhoz* in Tymlat caused much turbulence. Two elderly Koriak men founded their own enterprises, attempting to enliven and ameliorate a reindeer economy based on traditional values and knowledge. Lona became involved in one of these projects and was busy in negotiating with local administrations. Now he tarried in the tundra, working hard to transform his efforts into success. Every time he

reverted from the tundra into the village he went to see Moite, and he always brought gifts such as meat and hides. Upon his departures, Moite provided him with protective magic in the form of little parcels, containing a mixture of beads, seal fat, hare fur, and *lauteng* to ensure a safe travel into the rugged country, shielding him from wicked accidents and bad fortune. Yet, Lona lost the parcels on his way, and Moite was not sure if he believed in her powers.

Sleeping with Lona not only yielded pleasure, but also caused both stress and anxiety. They did not use any contraception, and Moite was disconcerted. She did not want to become pregnant, yet contraceptives were barely sustainable or affordable. Hence, after Lona had ejaculated, Moite hastened to purify her vagina with a permanganate solution, inducing the emulsion with a small tube. Emotionally she felt unscathed; Lona had assured her that in the case of pregnancy he would stand by her and not leave.

Vasia, who lived in the tundra, knew nothing of this. Then, as usual, he took a leave to visit his family in Tymlat. However, despite his original plans to resume work after his brief vacation, he stayed. The last two years had been vile and wretched; the number of animals was in sharp decline, and an increasing number of reindeer herders found themselves unemployed.[5] Also Vasia was out of work and he commenced to drink prodigiously. Moite objected, but there was nothing she could do to stop him. Maksim, and Lena (who sojourned at that time in Tymlat), were witnesses to their father's conduct and opposed to his behaviour. They and Moite suffered under Vasia's erratic moods and violent behavior: *"He began to beat the children, and when I tried to come between them, he beat me too...He drank every evening, he drank away everything we*

[5]Villagers mention several reasons for the decline of the animals, however, all agree that one of the most severe problems is overgrazing and the inexpertise of young men in matters of herding.

had. He stole my dead father's old clothes and sold them for bottles...I hid all those old things I inherited from my parents but he found them...He searched through the house and found the caches of my father's things...you know, things from when he was still alive. I know to whom he sold them, he exchanged the clothes for alcohol, but...I cannot demand those things back. - I also know that he had other women, there, in Ossora. I know these women. If he had only one, that would not have been so bad, but he had so many...then I decided to leave Vasia so that the children and I could be safe. I did not understand what was happening. For three months we had lived well together but then he started drinking. Before I left I repaired all his clothes. Vasia is an accurate man, he pays much attention to such things. The clothes will last him for a long time." Even in her situation of being distressed and hurt, Moite still attended to what a traditional Koriak discourse on gender and responsibility designates as the proper female tasks.

Yet, when Moite decided to leave her husband and the village, she also chose to terminate her relationship with Lona. He pleaded with her to stay, to marry him, or at least continue the relationship, but she adamantly she rejected his offers. Moite decided to develop her spiritual faculties and to realize her potential skills; knowing the chores of a married woman's life in northern Kamchatka she expected a repetition of her former relationship if she agreed to marry Lona. Abashedly, Lona persisted in his unswerving attempts to persuade Moite in both her mind and heart, yet she remained inexorably firm. Gathering their small belongings and embarking on a small schooner Moite left Tymlat with her children for Ossora on a quiet but foggy night. Here she and her children

wandered from place to place, looking for a place to stay. For a while they moved Karaga where an aunt of hers lay seriously ill, awaiting death.[6]

Finally her travels seemed to end. In Ossora she established herself in the flat of a distant relative who preferred to live with his mother and siblings. Yet, she had problems finding work. During the summer season she worked in Ossora's fish factory, ceaselessly searching for a solid, rewarding work. Often she and Maksim were not able to buy bread, one of the most basic foods in Russia. Her relatives contributed what they could spare but they were indigent themselves, so often Moite and her son went hungry. Ossora's local government refused to issue a fishing license for her. Officially Moite was still registered in Tymlat and the authorities told her that it was there where she could claim her legal share of fish.[7] In this period of uncertainty and destitution Moite befriended a Russian entrepreneur who claims like herself the powers of spiritual expertise and authority. She began to visit him regularly at his place, exchanging news and knowledge. His wife became weary of her visits and tried to intervene, yet Moite took no notice of these intrusions and continued her visits. Unlike Moite, her Russian friend possessed the means to travel and he made extensive use of his fortunate situation. He undertook long voyages to Petropavlovsk and even further to cities on the mainland like Khabarovsk and Novosibirsk. Although his travels were motivated by a desire to expand his business, he also made contact with other Russians who claimed spiritual knowledge. When he returned, Moite was eager to hear the stories he had to tell. She was fascinated by them and

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[6]This aunt was a younger half-sister of Moite's father. When Moite was born, her mother could not produce enough milk so this aunt nursed Moitje in her early years.

[7]The Koriak who live in the *Karaginskii raion* obtain a permission to catch fifty kilo of fish per person per year. However, this quantity does not suffice, as the Koriak dry fish as a staple for winter and feed their dogs with it.

believed that they could learn from each other, yet she was repelled by the fact that he demanded money for his services.

Every time she talked to him she ruminated over what he had told her and how it corresponded to what she knew. She visited the tundra in regular intervals, looking at plants and contacting the spirits to ask for greater knowledge. She was convinced that all her powers would vanish as soon as she based her economic livelihood on her sagacity and insight into other peoples lives. Increasingly Koriak came to visit her to obtain her advice and to seek her help in fighting injurious afflictions, whether physical or social. She explained to me: *"I cannot take money for what I do...I don't like what I see. There are now so many 'Whites' coming to Kamchatka who assert that they can heal afflictions such as drinking. I don't know how to heal such diseases...the Koriak did not know this kind of disease. Yet, I know when I demand money for my work my healing powers will vanish ... I don't understand how they stay with the Russians. My healing powers are only given to me so that I can help other people. But ...I want to talk to these Russians and see what they do...what I can learn from them."*

Moite created a spiritual identity that was transparent to other people as Koriak-like; however, she extended the boundaries of this identity by incorporating outlandish elements of knowledge.

Her story points to female constructions and expressions of cultural identity at the intersection of gender and social power. Yet, to claim an identity as a powerful healer and spiritual authority she must challenge conventional state models of gender and other Rekinniki women's imaginations of ethnic boundedness. Although in the Koriak world claims to power and a political voice were not necessarily associated with spiritual expertise and practice, in a

world marked by demise and predicament Moite's spiritual faculties gain political weight by serving to ameliorate people's emotional and physical well-being. Likewise, her talents and gifts, once amplified and brought to completion, will endow her with personal authority and social strength. Although as a child she experienced a deep emotional attachment to her father whose wisdom and sagacity she evoked in many narrations, she emulates her mother because it is she who enjoyed authority and fame as a powerful healer. By creating a spritual alliance with her mother who bequeathed her spirits to the child, Moite forges a symbolic tie with both female and male traditional expressions of knowledge and autonomy. Yet to establish herself in a positon of experience and reputation Moite must dare to disturb visions of ethnic boundedness and the reality of cultural borders. Her mother was a great healer, and although Moite inherited her spirits she did not receive the approriate teachings that belong with them. To enrich and advance her powers of healing and curing Moite turns to an extralocal discourse of of knowledge. She draws on foreign expertise in matters of healing and spirituality to create her identity as a powerful and knowledgeable woman. Exploring her Russian friend's understandings and interpretations of the world, she extends her own eruditions and enhances her scholarship in matters of spirituality and healing. I was aware that her Russian friend claimed a knowledge of how to heal 'modern diseases' such as desperate and excessive drinking, aching headache, and violent aggression. These were what Moite perceived to be some to the most dangerous diseases in Koriak life, yet Koriak traditonal healing did not offer concepts of overcoming and curing such ailments. Depression, drinking, and emotional abuse represent hideous symptoms of social wounds accompanying political and social marginalization as an effect of modernizing Koriak life. Increasing her knowledge of such

problems and eventually developing concepts of remedies and other forms of curative help, Moite's reputation will grow if she can mitigate the effects of colonial rule.

Moite values these desires over her sexual and romantic wishes to be with Lona. For Moite to marry Lona would mean the fulfillment of her long cultivated reveries of being with him. Yet, once again, she would be caught in a web of conjugal responsibilities and obligations that would not prevent her from taking the time and liberty necessary to become a potent healer. Now that Vasia had died a symbolic death by divorce, the possibility to create her own life and to unfold her talents are more likely than ever. A decision to live in a committed relationship with Lona inevitably denotes a life in which, despite all love and respect Lona still fosters for her, she will once again labor to present a man with a comfortable and peaceful house, incessantly attending to both her children and her husband. At the same time she feels that Lona questions her spiritual powers. He disregards the sacred packages she gives im for his way into the tundra, losing them on the way. How can she be with a man who neglects an important part of her self-identity, hence disrespecting the person she is and wants to become?

Yet, to forge a self-reliant, powerful self, Moite is confronted with a difficult decision. Does she actualize her long cultivated reveries of marriage, transforming her desire into reality, or does she use another, eventually more important, aspect of her-self? Apart from an affiliation with Lona, Moite has other more amicable and professional relationships at stake which promise more rewards and recognition of the person she wants to be. So, in order to preserve her position of respected esteem, she contemplates the illustrious reputation she hopes to achieve - what would be more shielding and beneficial for her-self than

to arrange a marriage for Lona, hence vouchsafing him into the hands of another woman.

Yet, the image of Moite as a callously calculating and gracelessly computing manipulator would not do justice to her, and I would like to forestall this peril. For Moite, to be a subject engrained in the Koriak moral universe is a woeful and dolorous process. The termination of her marriage, her refusal of Lona, and her endeavors to build a reputation and career as a proficient healer represent aching decisions in the process of being and becoming her-self. She endures the pain of her heart *(serdtse boleet)* and yearning feelings to effectuate a subdued, but nevertheless signifying identity. The paradoxical irony of her situation is blunt: in order to become her-self Moite has to decide against her-self.

Moite's resolution highlights both cultural codes of male domination and female powerlessness. As I remarked in chapter four, the impact of Soviet colonization affected gender relations in northern Kamchatka in severe ways. Often Koriak men understand that they possess the right to impose themselves as imperious masters on their wives' and sister's lives; nearly every rebuttal of a man's wishes or orders result in open display of aggression or even physical violence. Yet, if gender relations were fashioned in a different way, Moite might not have to face the quandary. However, while her construction and realization of the healing aspect of her personae might be interpreted as an act of defiance, repelling male wishes and dominance, at the same time it is also a telling example of how acts that are commonly interpreted as resistance only perpetuate cultural codes of domination, leaving actors even further politically and socially disempowered.

Moite does not assail a cultural order that imagines women as subservient and without any inspiration to pursue different aims than to be an alert attendant to their husbands; rather, she retreats into a verbal and emotional silence that nevertheless guarantees her the freedom to become the person she wants to be, claiming an identity for herself. Neither does Moite resist the demonstration of male supremacy in her life-world. Rather, Moite exhibits a subjectivity caught in the Koriak web of gender discourses that allocate to women fragile and debilitated positions. Her curative self is the product of the traditions, values, and knowledge Moite identifies with, and that in turn identify her as a healer; yet, her decision create her as a subject, being the effect of relations of power. As such a subject, Moite wields power, yet, her actions are not necessarily those of a sovereign or autonomous subject, but are impelled by the sensual cognizance of her-self and an identity created through particular discourses on self and knowledge.

CHAPTER NINE

ARRIVAL?

On their voyages Koriak travel through rugged terrain, shaped by manifold rivers, hilly tundra, and jagged rocks. Together with the animals they traverse the land in the search for food, and to maintain alliances with relatives and friends. The tundra releases meaning as a map imbued with signs that Koriak know how to read and interpret. Through traveling they extend their knowledge, gain insight, and forge new relations with other travelers. Not only do Koriak travel through a physical world formed by human needs for shelter and comestibles, their trips assume broader meaning in a world increasingly afflicted by poverty, dissolution, political misery, and global economic encroachment. Koriak use everyday tools to challenge and transgress the limiting borders of state rule, ethnic difference, as well as the inadequacies of a political centralizing vision. Displacement, expropriation, and cultural deprivation turned the Koriak into strangers in their own land, and they struggle hard to contest and improve their predicament, employing creativity and cultural knowledge. When grandmother consumes *mukhamory* to travel into other, more pleasant terrains, where she can meet up with companions and deceased friends, she transcends confining borders of the real. Moite uses the pipe of her stove as a channel for her voyages into the spirit world. As an expansion of her-self this conduit helps her to enhance her spiritual scholarship to facilitate contact and communication. By using cultural erudition and resourceful creativity, Koriak challenge the limitations of the state's vision and their status of regional marginality to forge new alliances and relations where, at first glance, they seem most unlikely. During my visits Koriak articulated their interest in activities people pursue in

Germany or North-America. They inquired in order to obtain a broader picture of what my world was like, but in particular they expressed curiosity about the pursuits of people I knew. They asked me to bring pictures of family and friends, and books which included images of the Canadian flora and fauna. They inquired into the techniques employed for the preparation of fish and meat. Simultaneously, they created and maintained global relationships by drawing me and friends they have never seen into a network of obligation and moral responsibility. During my first visit I was given a spiritual guardian and was instructed to keep her well and to take care of her needs. Furthermore I was told bring it with me on my second return so that they could inquire if I had followed the rules and values of care and attention. I did so, and, satisfied with the answers they received in their examination, they told me that from now on I would be her keeper, yet, I have to return so that my knowledge in relation to them and my guardian can grow. Yet, Koriak also use more profane means and their imaginations to create a wider net of allies to point to local-global interconnections. During both summers Koriak I knew prepared baskets of *iukola* , salted fish, and *ikra* (caviar) as presents for friends and my parents. Upon my protests that they would be too heavy for me to carry and I would never be able to convince the authorities in Moscow to let me pass the border with many kilos of fish and caviar Koriak gave me smart advice on how to persuade tough customs officers. Koriak counterpose the state's limiting central vision, cultural marginality, and political isolation with creativity and imagination. They extend networks and alliances beyond the limiting space of national borders, challenging frameworks of seclusion and cultural 'underdevelopment'.

As such, Koriak protest the Soviet and Russian state's restricted vision of national boundedness. In contrast they imagine a world of global interconnections, of multiple alliances, and of ample knowledge. Koriak use fantasy and imagination to rework and negotiate identity and regional power relations in an intricate matrix of gender and ethnicity. In this sense - despite all poverty, depression, and agony that lingers in the villages - Koriak point to cultural idiosyncrasies and individual agency. This interpretation does not reflect the attempt to advocate a naive cultural relativism, but to recognize the beauty of a people that have been increasingly stripped of their humanity. The Koriak situation corresponds to a wider plight that 'Third' and 'Fourth' World peoples all over the globe experience in their everyday lives. Demands for resources grow, and various regional conflicts threaten the well-being of communities and populations. People struggle to protest powerful administrations and the state's ambition for more wealth and influence. Yet, as I have shown, Koriak both acquiesce to and rework state power as they negotiate regional asymmetries and search for new opportunities to strengthen their cultural and political position in the life-world of northern Kamchatka. By living and performing the knowledge and place of their marginality in everyday life, they point to regional enactments of the racial and gendered dimensions of power. As Koriak struggle for recognition, empowerment, and cultural survival they also struggle with the state's imagination of an unifying ethnic identity. In contrast to dominant presentations in ethnographic writings, Koriak were no monolithic group. They had no single economy, no single language, no single belief system, and no unifying interpretation of the world. Koriak were a dispersed people, following various migration routes, speaking in local dialects, respecting various spirits, preferring different masks and dances, and appreciating various aesthetic values

and details. Hence, to facilitate ethnographic visions of evolutionary and structural properness, as well as to facilitate governmental administration, the Koriak as a monolith groups had to be invented. Ethnographic and Soviet image-making required the implementation of a single language, single economy, and a single ideology. But image-making remains seldom in the realm of imagination but, if powerfully enacted, induces changes and affirms effective claims to progress and state objectives of order. The entrenched poverty in Koriak life is closely affiliated with Soviet ideas of social progress and political nationhood; political and economic expansion decreased the value of traveling, the cultural meanings of herding dwindled, and gender relations changed immensely due to collectivization and the imposition of the nuclear family. Koriak say that today their lives are worthless and empty: not only has the traditional economy of animal husbandry receded, but even the maintenance of fishing is aggravated through the creation of 'zones' and borders that divide northern Kamchatka into micro-units of state influence and power. Today, every village represents such a zone and Koriak, like the foreigners that come to visit, need a visa for every village they wish to attend. It is a common joke among reindeer herders to show their passports to each other when they cross mountain ranges or ravines: the Soviet state required every reindeer herder to carry his official papers constantly, and administrators used to appear without any warning to enforce this law. Today Koriak cannot travel to some of the islands in front of the coast where they used to live in the short summer months, build *iukolniki* and catch seal. They need permission's issued by Ossora's administration to do so. Not only do they reject the despotism of the state but they need such permissions badly to buffer the impact of poverty and desperation. The social misery generated through the influence of domination and control is now aggravated through the

powerful intrusion of new economic and social models. In the former Soviet Union the forces of capitalism and consumerism are now well on their way, propelled by the rapid intrusion of international business. In particular Japanese commerce and US trading represent powerful economic techniques that threaten to usurp the life-world in Kamchatka. Capitalist brand-names become signifiers of value, worth, and esteem and seduce through charisma and allure.

I have tried to show how Koriak actively engage with such issues as they work to endow their lives with worth and meaning. I elucidated their positionings within wider frameworks of state rule, bureaucratic crumbling, and life in the socio-political periphery. The first three chapters have shown that the Soviet state's representation of national sameness and civil parity proves to be faulty and arguable: despite the early efforts of the 'Committee of the North' and further endeavors to elevate Koriak life into the ranks of Soviet 'brotherhood' racial and social prejudice hindered the transformation of ambitious theory into praxis. In the historical landscape of Marxism the Koriak were placed at the bottom of an evolutionary scale that sought to cluster the world's peoples into clean and unpolluted historical categories. Yet, contrary to all verbose eloquence made use of by administrators, nomenclature, and ethnographers the Koriak remained far from a state of political and cultural refinement; within a comparative scale of 'culturedness' they remained a tribal and marginal 'ethnicity'. As indicated in the previous chapters, one reason for this interpretation is that the Koriak and the Soviets held different epistemologies in relation to the land, economic production, beliefs, and moral values. Both groups assessed ritual practices and economic productivity in different ways: the Koriak lived within an annual circle of production in which significant events such as the catch of the first fish in the year, the birth of reindeer calves, the

killing of a bear, as well as the catch of the last fish and the birth of late calves in the year, were marked by special celebrations and feasts. In contrast, the Soviets measured economic productivity through the realization of unrealistic quotas that legitimated the productivity and success of the system.

The effects of regional asymmetry are reflected in Koriak women's practices in negotiating, reworking , and challenging the racial and gendered order of everyday life in northern Kamchatka. Faced with encroaching poverty, debasement, and, simultaneously, the intrusion of a capitalist order they experience change and marginality in unmitigated ways. Moreover, their daily struggles with male violence, death, and capriciousness encumbers their lives with distress and uncertainty. They fight to endow their children with some security, honesty, and ethics. But in a world where everybody struggles to survive, and where women are worn down by concerns for their children's lives and futures, many begin to pursue individual strategies to aid their own ambitions and secure their children's unfolding in life. Yet, at the same time many women feel exhausted by the concerns and burdens of their daily lives and retreat into aggressive expressions of anger and frustration. They feel torn in a world that offers little meaning for those who are situated at the sole of a social scale of well-being and economic security. Worlds fall apart, and with them fall the people. This is not to say that Koriak women watch the decay in the village and their devaluation as Koriak individuals and as women silently. Ambitious Koriak women work to endow their lives with meaning, transcend racial boundaries, and attempt to find ways of self-expression. In this thesis I tried to show some of their strategies, and various forms of self-representation they choose to articulate their aspirations and desires. Like most anthropological works, this one included elements of interpretation and construction. However,

some of the most exciting understandings of the world emerge when theory and practice engage in a create dialogue to elucidate people's grasp of various configuration of power and their investment in the various locations they choose.

This thesis dealt with the politics of love and sexuality on various levels. I used the notion of subjectivity as a sounding board to examine Koriak women's various understandings of erotics and desire while they grapple with various interpretations of sexual and cultural difference. I showed that various, and often contradictory discourses are employed, contingent upon the positions through which to express identity and claim recognition and that respect women choose. My journey, with them, through Koriak women's lives was intense, and I hope I have been able to convey something of their experience. Examining the links between gender and identity, as well as crucial political and economic transformation which have changed and are changing the face of the Russian Far East, I have explored some the forces that inform women's attitudes towards sexuality and the body. Local notions of femininity are constantly reworked as the everyday life in Tymlat and Ossora changes drastically within the dynamics of the post-Soviet context, and as the political forces of modernity and (neo-) colonization continue to trouble the country. While this thesis attempted to explain the politics of desire of rural and culturally marginalized women in northern Kamchatka, it paid attention as well to people's interpretations of a changing world into which their lives are daily drawn. Like every other journey, it has reached, for now, its destination, open to invitations to further travels and explorations.

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