

on an “institutional model of diffusion” (72), whether in the USSR or the USA. Andrei Bitov also approached the publication of his novel *Pushkinskii dom* [Pushkin House] strategically, attempting to guide some sections through censorship for publication in official journals. Crucially, this made plausible the claim that the work had escaped into samizdat without the author’s knowledge. The samizdat mode of circulation and the assemblage form of the novel undermine the sense of stability and wholeness of the literary text, underlining the inherent instability of the unofficial text, a fact that Bitov could exploit to play on the boundaries between official and unofficial culture. The instability of the text is particularly evident in the analysis of Erofeev’s *Moskva-Petushki* [Moscow Stations], where the author exploits the blend of written and oral language to draw the reader in and prompt creative responses. The oral character also reflects the instability and spontaneity of unofficial literature, Venichka’s addresses to the reader recalling the direct links between readers generated by samizdat. Of particular interest is the way in which these novels express resistance to official ideology and the “absurdity of life in the late Soviet era” (125), without necessarily acting as political statements. This comes to the fore in the conceptualization of samizdat as an “extra-Gutenberg” phenomenon, which made possible a dissidence that challenged the regime by exposing the artificiality of its centrally administered unity, creating a more “discontinuous field of cultural production and circulation” (131).

The theoretical adherence to the work of Pierre Bourdieu seeks “insights into the relations among an autonomous cultural field and the larger social field whose material exchanges and power relations it denies” (45). As a result, issues of cultural and symbolic capital, upon which samizdat texts frequently relied to achieve recognition, can be teased out, whereby the subtleties of the authors’ perceptions of their social position and potential for creativity and exchange come to the fore. Of particular interest in this regard is her discussion of the conversion of cultural capital between the Soviet and western spheres—samizdat novels relied on capital to achieve publication abroad, and the prestige of international publication validated these uncensored works and, by extension, their authors. This theoretical engagement prioritizes the dynamics among and between the official and autonomous fields, calling into question the strict separation of the official and unofficial and, consequently, between dissidence and orthodoxy. Indeed, Komaromi’s great achievement in this work is to show how the autonomous field of samizdat was governed by and relied upon the official field, as a location for strategic game playing.

More explication of the use of terminology would have been welcome; the ways in which the concepts of dissident, autonomous and uncensored literature might interact and differ might raise further interesting questions. These detailed case studies avoid romanticizing and mythologizing the subject, however, instead raising intriguing questions and prompting the reader to reconsider received ideas of dissidence, autonomy and cultural production in the Soviet era.

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***Women without Men: Single Mothers and Family Change in the New Russia.*** By Jennifer Utrata. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015. xvi, 269 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. \$79.95 hard bound, \$29.95 paper.

No doubt like others, I have often been struck not only by the frequency, but also by the sheer ordinariness of female-headed households among people I know during visits to Russia over the years. This richly textured study provides an in-depth

examination of the phenomenon and the impact on women's experience, drawing on a wealth of documentary and discursive sources, including the author's participant observation and interviews with women and men, primarily but not exclusively from the provincial city of Kaluga. It depicts a family order now verging on crisis, the result of profound inequities in Russia's gender policies. Throughout the book, the author uses the ordinariness and widespread acceptance of single motherhood in Russia to problematize contemporary approaches to and debates about it elsewhere, especially in the west, where single motherhood is often marginalized or stigmatized.

In Russia, single motherhood emerged as a legal category towards the end of World War II, with its horrific casualty rates and severe demographic imbalance. In 1944, the state first recognized single mothers as a legal category and provided them benefits. It also, however, tightened marital law and absolved men of responsibility for out of wedlock children, a policy revised only in 1968 when unwed mothers gained the right to claim support from their children's fathers and include their name on their child's birth certificate. Official and popular discourses further contributed to the marginalization of fathers, celebrating motherhood as essential to womanhood and regarding fatherhood as irrelevant for manhood. Masculine misconduct and a housing shortage that encouraged early marriage led to rising rates of divorce, despite its stigmatization. Lacking masculine support, Soviet mothers learned to be "superwomen."

Single motherhood increased after the collapse of the Soviet Union, while the material circumstances of mothers worsened. State support for working mothers has ceased, as has the state's willingness to discipline feckless men. Obtaining adequate child support is now almost impossible. At the same time, the new, quasi-capitalist market favors men over women for decent paying positions and openly discriminates against mothers with small children and women over forty. The new order's only benefit—one that single mothers appear to value even more than economic security—is enhanced control over the own lives and the possibility, albeit remote, of advancing themselves by their own efforts.

Mothers' difficulties are compounded by a gender discourse that continues to emphasize male weakness and childishness. Downplaying the importance of fatherhood, it also encourages fathers, present or absent, to play a peripheral role in the family. With rare exceptions, male partners of Utrata's female subjects are abusive, spend their money elsewhere, drink even more than they did in the Soviet period and are routinely unfaithful. Married women put up with unsatisfactory relationships for the sake of additional income or a man in the house, while contemplating divorce. In their lives, as in the lives of the single family, welfare usually rests on mothers' ability to provide for their children without much support from men or the state.

The system exacts a heavy price. Thanks to the new neo-liberal ideology of self-reliance, the absence of other options, and their own hopelessness about the likelihood of positive change, mothers work hard to make the best of their difficult situation. Making a virtue of necessity, they suppress their feelings and reduce their needs in order to fulfill society's expectations. Often, mothers' sole source of support is their own mothers, so babushki pay a price as well. Whether or not they are still working, babushki sacrifice leisure to care for their grandchildren, help around the house, even contribute materially when they can. Their efforts are crucial to family welfare but also personally taxing, and sadly, unappreciated and largely invisible to everyone except the mothers who lack such support.

As an historian, I do not feel competent to evaluate the author's challenges to the discourse on single motherhood in other than Russian settings. However, her depiction of the phenomenon in Russia, illustrated and enlivened as it is with the voices and experiences of her interviewees, rings sadly true. Even as I would have welcomed

more discussion of single motherhood's impact on children; of fathers' treatment of children as a factor in mothers' decisions to leave or stay; and (the historian in me) a longer temporal perspective, I very much appreciated what Utrata does accomplish. For its illuminating treatment not only of single motherhood but also of Russia's contemporary gender order and the policies and rhetoric that have shaped it, I recommend her book enthusiastically.

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***Wandering Workers: Mores, Behavior, Way of Life, and Political Status of Domestic Russian Labor Migrants.*** By Juri Plusnin, Yana Zausaeva, Natalia Zhidkevich, and Artemy Pozanenko. Ed. Andreas Umland. *Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*. Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2015. xii, 300 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$36.99, paper.

During a conference at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow in April 2013, a senior Russian government official confessed that she had “no idea” where 38 million of a total of 86 million people of working age were located or what they were engaged in. The majority of these people were “wandering workers,” as the book under review (an English-language translation of the original 2013 Russian version) refers to them in its title but otherwise labels as *otkhodniki*. Generally understood to mean people employed for part of the year away from their homes, *otkhodniki* have been around for centuries. They became a substantial social group in the late nineteenth century when the textile, mining, and other industries began employing large numbers of peasants whose wages were crucial to support their families back in the villages. Overwhelmingly male and hailing for the most part from the central industrial provinces, such peasants made annual treks to the major cities and industrial sites. Others engaged in logging, or sold goods they had crafted themselves. Still others, originating in the central black earth provinces, journeyed south to cultivate sugar beets and wheat.

Soviet authorities regarded the phenomenon of outwork (*otkhodnichestvo*) as indicative of the poor utilization of labor resources, but it nonetheless persisted throughout the 1920s. Although the authors of *Wandering Workers* claim that it did not survive collectivization and the system of organized recruitment introduced in the early 1930s, Gijs Kessler's analysis some years ago of the trade union census of 1932/33 shows that nearly three-quarters of peat-industry workers, and about 40 percent of transport, industrial, and civil construction workers, maintained an “involvement in agriculture,” which meant they earned wages on a seasonal basis, and this reviewer has found evidence of it surviving in forestry beyond the Great Patriotic War. The difference revolves around whether one should include *otkhodniki* among other mobile laborers (such as *sezonniki* and *shabashniki*), though no matter how one defines them, the revival of the practice since the end of the Soviet Union, as documented in this book, is quite astonishing.

What kind of a book is this? It is the most recent in the series of 141 scholarly works edited by Andreas Umland and published in Russian, English, and German as *Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* (SPPS). It could be classified as labor sociology except that “labor” usually implies collectivities of workers or their institutional representation, whereas this interview-based study is of groups of usually related individuals, each pursuing their own itinerary and line of work. It consists of ten chapters of uneven length covering the pursuits of *otkhodniki*, their family situations, conditions of work, attitudes toward politics and the state, status in their home