

Title: Rebel or Domestic Angel? Nina Iskrenko's Female Lyrical Subject
Author: Olga Livshin, University of Alaska, Anchorage

Nina Iskrenko (1951-1995) was a central figure in Moscow's Club Poetry, which met during perestroika and included approximately a hundred poets from the Metarealist and Conceptualist movements and other groups. One of the very few women in the club, she made gender a central theme of her writing. Dunja Popovic interprets Iskrenko as a "postmodernist of resistance" who critiques accepted ideologies of gender and Soviet state ideology by deploying explicit descriptions of sexual acts, disease and death. Popovic's conclusion resonates with Helena Goscilo's statement that women's prose in the 1980s and 1990s "spotlights the grotesque body, the uncensored, disruptive body of apertures and appetites" (Goscilo 89).

However, Iskrenko's view of gender contains a set of contradictions that productively complicate our view of the theme in perestroika women's writing. In the space of this presentation, I will focus on the female lyrical subject. Iskrenko uses grotesque physiological description to parody or subvert the roles of the decadent *poetessa* and the idealized love object. However, she valorizes the roles of a spouse, lover, and friend in search of solace at a time when most accepted systems of signification had failed. Iskrenko represents the late Soviet/post-Soviet everyday life as tragicomical, given the harsh demands that it made on cultural figures who saw themselves as lofty creatures. Yet she also pictures the home as a haven maintained by a woman amidst a collapsed society. Neither traditionalism nor the rejection of traditional gender roles are absolute values in her work: Iskrenko engages them in dialogue. In addition to enacting resistance to traditionalist views of gender, Iskrenko's writing mirrors the complexity of social change.