HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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# RUSSIAN LITERATURE

**Contents**



**POST CLASSICAL PERIOD** (Poetry – Fiction – Autobiography)

POETRY

**Byliny (Epic Songs):** Russia's earliest poetic form was *bylina*. Between the 10th and 14th centuries a type of epic called *byliny* (pl.) emerged. *Byliny* were a type of short story, often in the form of a poem that was sung and accompanied, at times, by a type of string instrument called a *gusli*. Their topics varied from events in the Kievan state, nomadic groups, the deeds of Novgorod, and mythology. Three different groups played a role in the dissemination of *byliny*: travelling performers, *skomorokhi*; peasant performers, *skaziteli*; and itinerant pilgrims*, kaliki perekhozhie*. Although *byliny* were initially recited by professional bards in the courts of the nobility, over time they came to be sung or recited by peasant storytellers in rural areas. The theme of many Russian *byliny* is some variant of the hero's quest; for some reason the hero, *bogatyr*, leaves his home, is given a task or tasks to accomplish, accomplishes his task or tasks in spite of numerous obstacles, and, in the end, becomes wealthy or gains the hand of a beautiful maiden. Popular heroes in many *byliny* are *Ilya Muromets, Alyosha Popovich, Sadko*, and *Dobrynya Nikitich*. Frequently encountered villains include *Vasilisa the Beautiful*, *Ivan the Fool*, *Grandfather Frost, Baba Yaga, the Firebird, the Immortal Kashchey*, etc.

**Dukhovnye stikhi (spiritual poems):** These are oral poems with religious content composed between the 15th and the 17th centuries. Their themes were taken from the Bible, hagiographic and apocryphal texts. These spiritual verses also described events from the lives of saints and their miracles, heroes, punishment, torture of the people, religious holidays etc. For example, the spiritual poem *The Saturday of St. Dimitry* (*Dmitrievskaya subbota*) explains the origin of a church holiday. These spiritual poems are still recited today.

**Epic Poetry:** The distinguishing characteristic of epic poetry is heroic content. The heroes of epic poetry strive for their people, not for petty, personal interests. These heroes must use all of their abilities to overcome the difficulties in their path and be willing to even sacrifice themselves to attain their goals, but in epic poetry this is their path to success. *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*) is Russia's first written anonymous work, written in Old Russian, is set in the context of the feudal conflicts 12th century Russia, and describes the unsuccessful campaign led by Prince Igor against the Cumans (Polovtsy) in 1185. The poem describes Igor's defeat, escape from captivity and eventual return to his people and serves as a warning to other Rus' princes on the need for unity in the face of continuing threats from Turkic tribes. The other epic poetry *Zadonshchina* (*Beyond the River*) is about the Russian victory over the Mongols at Kulikovo battle in 1380, and it follows the style of the Tale of Igor's Campaign.

**Verbal poetry (skazovy stikh):** Examples of verbal poetry from old Russia are limited; most are found in the riddles, proverbs and incantations recited by the *skomorokhi*, hymns composed in Church Slavonic, and in Daniel's *Supplication*.

FICTION

From the 14th to the 16th centuries there were translated fiction works that reached Russia through Serbia, like the *Alexandriad,* a Hellenistic romance attributed falsely to the historian Callisthenes. This work not only presented an inaccurate account of Alexander the Great's life and deeds, but was viewed with a great deal of suspicion by the church.

Another work that came to Russia from Serbia was the *History of Troy*, which covers not only the siege of Troy, but also other stories like the story of the Argonauts.

In the 15th century the first examples of literature of entertainment were produced. *The Tale of Dracula* written by Fyodor Kuritsyn depicts a person who was supposed to visit the lands where the action takes place. However, the facts in this work were all distorted.

This century also produced *The Tale of Three Kings: Arcadius, King Nemesyan the Proud, and King Borzomysl Dmitrievich* which was a version of a well-known anecdote. The story, however, depicts an appalling ignorance of Catholicism.

The late 15th century had more modern pieces of fiction such as *The Tale of Luke of Koloch* which describes a poor peasant who travels all over the country with a miraculous icon that brings cures.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The 12th century work the *Instruction* written by the Grand prince of Kiev, Vladimir Monomakh is considered the first autobiographical work. It was mostly written for his children as the future rulers of Rus land, and but it also included his short autobiography. The *Instruction* is divided into three parts: an introduction including extracts from a prayer, a letter to his children and another to Prince Oleg of Chernigov, and his activities such as travels, expeditions, battles and hunting experiences. The sole copy of the text of the *Instruction* is preserved in the 14th century *Laurentian Chronicle.*

**EARLY MODERN PERIOD**

POETRY

In the 17th century Russia, apart from oral songs, there was no real tradition of poetry; it existed in the context of *virshi*, *byliny*, and *lyric songs*. The scale of the production of Russian verse is difficult to estimate due to the limited availability of texts, and existing texts have survived only in manuscript copies whose handwriting was hard to read and reproduce. Between the 1650s and the early years of Peter I's reign, poetic composition was increasingly centered at the royal court. Although the number of courtiers, poets and theologian involved in this writing was relatively small, their production was prodigious, totaling tens of thousands of lines of verse.

It was during Peter the Great's struggle to secularize Russian culture, that talented, well-educated poets who had spent their time abroad adapted European models and began to create Russian poetry.

During Peter the Great's reign, printing was put under the supervision of a new Printing Office, and the departments that were responsible for the publication of state and liturgical decrees, and liturgical books, came under the authority of the Head Chancery (*Bolshoy dvorets*). Russian poets became part of a patronage system within this office. Promotions were entirely dependent on service in the Head Chancery and to the Patriarch (since a clerk's duties included both the correction and publication of religious and liturgical texts), as well as reciprocal patronage. Publication required support from institutions such as the Academy of Sciences which was subject to the tsar's authority, and the court. Poets confined themselves to writing odes commemorating some specific occasion, or praised of the heroism of the sovereign and the military.

Several features distinguished poetry in the 18th century from that of the 17th century. First, the corpus of poets' works was compiled in anthologies, rather than remaining a collection of scattered works. Another

was the motivation for poetic composition. Previously poets claimed that writing for the sake of art and future generations was their primary motivation, while in the 18th century self-expression became the motivation. Finally, novel patterns of behavior and new literary customs were introduced via the translation and imitation of French, German and English literature.

**Syllabic Verse:** When Russian writers began the process of creating secular literature, a number of different traditions were available to them as models. However, this new literature was expected to have certain distinctive characteristics, such as being "European", urbane, and as different from the entertainment of common, uneducated Russians as it could be. As a result, Russian poets turned to foreign poetic traditions.

The Ukraine, Belorussia and Poland were the sources for the development of Russian syllabic poetry. In the early 17th century Ukrainian and Belorussian poems were the models for the first *virshi* (secular poems based on spiritual verse). *Virshi* took the form of either isosyllabic couplets or couplets whose lines contained a varying number of syllables (relative isosyllabism).

In 1678, Russia's first and only full-time court poet Simeon Polotsky introduced a syllabic verse system in Church Slavic and in Polish that dominated Russian poetry for a century. Prince Antioch Kantemir, who was widely known as the first Russian writer to blend life and poetry in his works, also supported this type of verse. During the period of Peter I, pastoral and amatory poetry composed in Russian syllabic verse and modelled on French and German poetic forms was fashionable among his courtiers. Feofan Prokopovich was a well-known poet who wrote syllabic verse during Peter I's reign, but following Peter's death in 1725 Feofan's style began to change, becoming increasingly varied and experimental, and showing the influence of the Italian *ottava rima* style of stanza composition.

**Syllabo-tonic System:** A truly Russian poetic tradition was established within a few decades, in part due to the efforts of poets such as Vasily Tediakovsky and Mikhail Lomonosov who not only composed poetry, but also wrote treatises on the composition of verse.

Russian syllabic verse rapidly fell out of favor following the appearance of Trediakovsky's syllabo-tonics, verse composed in equal disyllabic metrical feet, a form frequently utilized in Russian popular ballads.

By the mid-18th century new genres such as satire and didactic poetry made their appearance. Both were standardized by Lomonosov, while poets such as Aleksandr Radishchev and Gavrila Derzhavin took more experimental approaches to these genres.

In addition to establishing standards for satire and didactic poetry, Lomonosov established three stylistic levels – high, middle and low - for poetry in his *Letter Concerning the Rules of Russian Prosody* (*Pismo o pravilakh rossiyskogo stikhotvorstva*). The "High Style", characterized by the use of elements from Old Church Slavonic, was considered appropriate for the composition of tragedy and heroic poetry. The "Middle Style" could be used for writing ordinary dramas, while the more colloquial "Low Style" was restricted to farce, correspondence and daily speech.

**Lyric Poetry:** Towards the end of the 18th century lyric love poetry challenged the prevailing religious, philosophical and political themes, and the masters of this genre were Aleksandr Petrovich Sumarokov and Gavrila Derzhavin.

**Ode:** 18th century Russian odes were characterized by their political subject matter, nationalist tone, extreme deference to the monarch, and archaic language. Odes were generally presented to the monarch in the name of the Academy of Science and composed in honor of some official event (coronations, birthdays, etc.) However, the writers of odes in this period were also attempting through their art to help Russia catch up with the West, culturally and scientifically, and adapt contemporary western culture to Russia's particular needs. Lomonosov was the first eminent poet writing classical odes, while Gavrila Derzhavin, with his panegyric ode *Felitsa*, marks a turning point in the history of Russian poetry with its semi-humorous style. Derzhavin presaged the style that would be developed by early 19th century poets

through his combination of awareness of the natural world and emotional subjectivity with a clearly classical style.

**Karamzinian movement:** The literary movement created by Nikolay Karamzin dominated the last decade of the 18th century and the first two of the 19th. Inspired by the French elegant style, Karamzin wrote in a novel literary language modeled on the language of the educated gentry, composing poetry that was clearly classical, but that also had a new sensibility. This language, later elaborated by Pushkin, became the standard language of 19th century literature.

DRAMA

**17th century:** It was not until the 17th century, with the introduction of literary culture, that the concept of a dramatic repertoire became known in Russia. Symeon Polotsky became the first dramatist in the history of Muscovy with his comedy on the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* printed in Moscow in 1685. The text of Symeon's comedy was in Russo-Slavonic and reprinted four times. In the Kievan school, on the other hand, the main dialogue in drama was in Latin or Slavonic.

Dimitry Tuptalo, who established the first Orthodox seminary in Muscovy, also opened the school of drama where his first drama *The Repentant Sinner* was performed in the 18th century. At this century the school drama was also given at other institutions, like the Slavonic-Greco-Latin Academy in Moscow.

In the 17th century a large number of works were translated from western languages. The degree of Western influence grew dramatically with the reforms of Peter I. One result of this increased contact with Western Europe was the attempt to adapt the literary models of Western Europe to Russian writing. German pastor Johann Gottfried Gregory, who later became a playwright in Moscow, wrote his play *The Action of Artaxerxes* in German, and it was then translated into Russian. After his death, Georg Hübner staged his *Bayazed and Tamerlane*, and then Stefan Chizhinsky wrote his *David and Goliath* and *Bacchus and Venus;* both of these works were subsequently lost.

**18th century**: In 1702 a public theater was established in Red Square by order of Peter the Great. When completed, a German theater troupe came to put on performances. Initially the performances were in German, but by 1705 plays were being translated into Russian and performed. Most of these plays were translations of German and Dutch comedies, or poor adaptations of plays such as Molière's *Amphitryon* and *Le Médicin malgré lui*. Later, both the Moscow Academy and the Moscow Medical School would stage dramas. More surprising, perhaps, was the establishment of a theater in Rostov by its bishop, Dimitrii, which he then used for performances of plays he wrote.

In 1707 Natalya Alekseevna, daughter Tsar Alexis I, had her own court theater and wrote plays herself which were dramatized versions of saints' lives and a play titled *The Tale of Otto, Roman Emperor*.

It was Alexander Sumarokov who was considered the founder of Russian drama, blending Russian themes with European dramatic forms in his works. Sumarokov was appointed as the first director of the Russian theater in 1756 by Elizabeth, and directed Russia's first professional public theater between 1756 – 1761; his works would become the basis of the theater's repertoire. His later works included comedies such as *The Troublesome Girl*, *The Imaginary Cuckold*, and *The Mother as Rival of Her Daughte*r; and such tragedies as *Mstislav* and *Dimitry the Pretender*. This last work was ostensibly a tale about a despotic ruler, and has often been interpreted as a criticism of papal power. However, its real significance was as an indirect criticism of Catherine the Great's arbitrary use of power, while at the same time defending legitimate monarchy. *Dimitry the Pretender* was thus the beginning of a long tradition of theater as political criticism. In addition, Sumarokov's plays *The Guardian* and *Khorev* were regarded as the first political comedy and tragedy in Russia.

Later, other prominent dramatists copied the classicist tradition. Lomonosov, on the order of Elizabeth, wrote two plays for her theater: *Tamira and Selim* and *Demophon*. Mikhail Kheraskov with his three-act tragedy *The Nun of Venice* followed the classicist canon with a greater national awareness. Yakov

Knyazhnin adapted several plays by Metastasio, Racine, and Voltaire for the Russian stage and wrote the tragedies *Rosslav* and *Vadim of Novgorod*. Vladislav Ozerov was the last major tragic dramatist in the classicist tradition. His first play *Yaropolk and Oleg* was modelled on the style of Knyazhnin, and he scored his greatest success with his patriotic tragedy *Dimitry Donskoy.*

The major playwright of Catherine the Great's era was Denis Fonvizin. Two of his most famous plays were the neo-classical *The Minor* and *The Brigadier*. Both were satires of the values of the age and attempted to encourage more moral conduct, however *The Brigadier* takes particular aim at the ignorance and moral laxity of the upper classes. Despite the fact that the monarchy often took issue with Fonvizin's works, Catherine the Great was an admirer of them.

FICTION

There were a number of secular fictional stories such as the *Tale of Queen Dinara*, a fictionalized biography of Queen Tamara of Georgia and the queen of Dinara composed in the 16th century. Another secular fiction work was the *Homily on Hops by Cyril, a Slavonic Philosopher*.

The 17th century marks the beginning of prose fiction that was translated from Polish. There were other works translated from South Slavic and also Czech. Manuscripts of these works of fiction were collections of stories that had been translated from Western sources, and were circulated among the Russian elite. Tales such as *Melissa,* and *Stephanites and Inchnelates* were among the best-known examples circulated in manuscripts. Another example was a collection of moral stories called *Speculum magnum exemplorum* translated from Polish. Also worthy of mention is a work called the *Gesta romanorum* translated from Polish in 1681, a collection of religious allegoric fiction used for Sunday sermons.

Original Russian secular prose fictional works began to be composed towards the end of the 17th century. One outstanding work was the *Tale of Savva Grudtsyn* that ran 15 printed pages, and written in Russo-Slavonic. It included several fantastic stories set in real life, such as the satirical story of the *Tale of Frol Skobeev* that implicitly depicted the moral decline of Russian society in the new Petrine period. It was a cautionary tale about the moral laxity that inevitably accompanies the abandonment of Christian virtues.

Prose fiction in manuscripts from the 18th century was under some influence from Western literature as well as traditional religion and oral literature. However, the trend in 18th century Russian fiction was to return to the older, traditional forms of storytelling in place of Western narrative styles. Among the most popular examples was the anonymous *Story of the Russian Sailor Vasily Koriotsky and the Beautiful Princess Irakliya of the Land of Florence.* This work combined elements of chivalric romances, adventure stories, didactic allegories and folktales.

The first Russian fiction work intended for a small, elite and secular readership was *The Journey to the Isle of Love*, written by Trediakovsky. The purpose of this work was perhaps to create a new etiquette and new forms of romantic expression for post-Petrine Russian society. A related innovation was the emergence erotic fiction that depicted romantic liaisons among the upper class a game.

By the end of the 18th century, native prose fiction began to appear with Mikhail Chulkov's *The Comely Cook* whose plot and setting were modelled on a European picaresque novel, and it was a remarkable example of the Russian rogue novel. His *The Mocker, or Slavonic Tales* was another fictional work which draws the attention of the modern reader with its protagonist who happily gravitates between the conflicting moral standards of moralistic literature and the value system of the subculture.

Another picaresque novel, *Adventures of Ivan, a Merchant's Son*, a romantic brigandage by Ivan Novikov, was an import from Western literature and introduced more specifics of Russian life, graphically depicted the uncertainty of social mobility and the vagaries of fortune.

Fyodor Emin's prose fiction *Fickle Fortune, or the Adventures of Miramond* was a vehicle to convey his political and moral ideas. His *The Letter of Ernest and Doravra* was the first attempt at a Russian epistolary novel with sentimentalist traits, and was a clear imitation of Rousseau's *La nouvelle Hèloïse*.

Another prose fiction writer of this period - Mikhail Kheraskov published his *Numa, or Flourishing Rome* depicting a utopian dream of an enlightened monarchy, a mythical king of Rome, which was an imitation of the enlightenment ideas portrayed in Catherine II's own manifesto.

Influenced by Richardson, Goethe and Sterne, Aleksandr Radishchev wrote his *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow*. In it he used the situations and people that he encountered on his journey to launch a scathing critique of numerous issues in Russian society, from the excess and luxury of court life in the capital to prostitution and the institution of serfdom. As a result, the *Journey*, which is stylistically closer to European fiction works than to Russian fiction, was published anonymously.

In the last third of the 18th century, inspired from European sentimentalism, Russian prose fiction was having difficulties making progress against substantial foreign translations of the Western writers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Samuel Richardson, Jonathan Swift and Laurence Sterne.

In the last decade of the century, it was Nikolay Karamzin with his first novella *Eugene and Julya* published in Russia's first magazine for children, challenged his European contemporaries. Also, with his first Russian sentimental story, *Poor Liza* and his historical novella *Martha the Governor*, Karamzin started a new stage in Russian literature. Karamzin's later works, *The Sensitive Alan and the Cold Man*, and *A Knight of Our Times*, exhibit keen psychological observation combined with a deep sentimental analysis.

ESSAY

Russian authors did not directly copy the western style of writing, but they tried to adapt their writings to this new genre as Mikhail Lomonosov did in his essay *On the Usefulness of Church Books in the Russian Language* (1757). He distinguished three styles of Russian: higher, middle and lower, linking them with appropriate themes and genres.

During the reign of Catherine the Great, satirical journals began to publish writings that resembled essays. In 1769, Catherine's satirical journal *All Sorts and Sundries* came out, and she encouraged other writers to follow her lead.

Nikolay Novikov published his essayistic work on leading Russian writers under the title *An Essay on the Historical Dictionary of Russian Writers* (1772). It contained bibliographical information on pre-Petrine Russian writers. Novikov published his first satirical journal *The Drone,* which appeared as a weekly in 1769-1770. His journal contained his writings criticizing the social conditions of the serfs, and targeting Catherine's policies, as well as her government's inefficiency and corruption. In his essay, *The ancient Russian library* (1773–1775), Novikov criticized the French critics and Russian aristocrats' French perspective that saw Russia as a backward and uncivilized country.

Russian writer Aleksandr Sumarokov wrote his own essay *On Versification* in 1781, and examined all five syllabotonic meters and the changes in Russian verse and in their use since 1735.

Toward the final quarter of the 18th century, Russian writers began to show a growing interest in political issues. There were writers, like Denis Fonvizin, Aleksandr Radishchev and Mikhail Shcherbatov, who wrote articles that described how to govern the state. For example, in his essay *On the Corruption of Morals in Russia* (1786–89), Shcherbatov talked about the decline of the morals at the court and criticized Catherine's policies.

Denis Fonvizin, on the other hand, in his *Discourse on the Indispensable Laws of the State* (1784), gave suggestions to tsar Paul to end his favoritism and oppressive rule and to create laws to bring harmony and stability to the country.

Aleksandr Radishchev, in his *A Journey From St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790), delivered his stinging criticism of serfdom, the political system and the unlimited political power of landowners.

Sentimentalism, inspired by Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* (1782– 89) and the translation of Montaigne's essays written in 1803, gradually displaced Classicism as the predominant literary genre and new genres like confessional narratives soon followed.

In 1792, Peter Plavilshchikov published an essay *Theater* in one of the journals he edited with Ivan Krylov, *The Mirror*. In his essay, he criticized the imitation of French plays and advocated the creation of a truly national drama which could be drawn from real Russian life.

A proponent of Sentimentalism, Nikolay Karamzin, in his didactic essay *A Bit about the Sciences, Arts, and Enlightenment* (1793), criticized Rousseau's claim that the science ruined morals; but at the same time, he emphasized that science, arts and the Enlightenment had brought modernization to the West. His political essays, published in Vestnik Evropy, included his remarks on the political and social atmosphere in Europe before the French Revolution.

Mikhail Muravyov was one of the most refined of essayists in this period. In his essay *The Amusements of the Imagination* published in 1797, he used a discussion of Sumarokov's tragedies to praise invention as an honor.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In the 17th century, *The First Letter to Andrey Kurbsky* written by the Grand Prince of Muscovy, Ivan IV (the Terrible), was a message addressed to Prince Andrey Kurbsky, who defected to Lithuania during the Livonian War. The letter talks about Ivan's early years, his mistreatment and his abuse by Russian nobles.

*The Story of My Life* written by the monk Martiry Zelenetsky appeared in the same century. depicts his life in a monastery for few years, his journey to a place called 'Green Island' to establish a new monastery, the miracles he witnessed in Green Island, and his instructions addressed to the local monks.

*The Tales of Anzersky Cloister* (1636-1656) was written by Eleazar Anzersky, who founded the Trinity Monastery on Anzersky Island in the White Sea. The *Tales* includes stories about events that occurred in the course of founding the monastery and the miracles witnessed by Eleazar.

*The Life Stories* (1672–1675) written by Archpriest Avvakum was a self-testimony about his imprisonment in Pustozersk, his dramatic struggle for his religious convictions, and his inner struggles and emotions.

Following his close associate Avvakum, the monk Epiphany wrote his own life-story. In his autobiographical stories *The Life Stories* (1667–1671), Epiphany focused on his pain, his bad experiences and the miracles that he had witnessed in his lifetime.

Alexander Radishchev's work *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790) is considered an autobiographical narrative that contains a harsh criticism of Russia's social and political system under Catherine the Great, and his violent reaction to the abuses of Russian serfdom. As a result of this work he was immediately arrested, tried for treason, and condemned to death, but his sentence was later commuted to exile in Siberia.

Nikolay Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (1789-90) described the author's experiences during his travels through Germany, England, France and Switzerland. Karamzin also portrayed numerous sketches of literary figures he met.

*Open Hearted Confession about My Deeds and Thoughts*, written by Denis Fonvizin during the last years of his life was another autobiographical work that was left unfinished at his death in 1792. Fonvizin's *Confession* was an expression of his joy in all the diverse aspects of human and a response to the

previously published pseudo-confession of Rousseau. Unlike Rousseau, he admitted to his sins and all the lawless deeds he had committed in his lifetime that was filled only with regret and repentance.

Fedor Glinka's eight volume *Letters from a Russian Officer* (1815-16) which described military events witnessed by the author and his experiences fighting in the campaigns of the Napoleonic Wars was considered on a par with Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveler*.

**Women Writers:** The first published autobiographies by women writers date from the last decade of the 18th century; public figures like Catherine the Great's and her friend Ekaterina Dashkova's autobiographical sketches were published only decades after their death. Catherine the Great, being a proponent of the Enlightenment, wanted to imprint the role of a woman's leadership on Europe.

## 19TH CENTURY

### POETRY

Russian poetry underwent a profound transformation in the early decades of the 19th century that affected almost every aspect of it, from who wrote poetry to themes and language. Poets were no longer exclusively members of the aristocracy, and while many were civil servants, none were state-sponsored poets, since state-sponsored poetry had come to an end. Poetry was now primarily written for peers and friends in the salon, rather than for rulers and nobles in the court. Love, longing, and friendship replaced official themes, while the language of poetry grew closer to the spoken language than it ever had in the 18th century.

**Golden Age:** The period between 1813 and 1845 is often regarded as the Golden Age of Russian poetry. It begins with the surge of creativity that followed Napoleon's defeat, reaches its apex in 1825 at the end of Alexander I's reign, and concludes around 1845 due to a combination of increased censorship under Nicholas I, and the growing popularity of prose genres with expansion of Russia's readership. Poetry in the 18th century had primarily served the needs of noble patrons, and was written by professional poets. In contrast, poetry of the Golden Age was written for a small, but expanding, number of educated readers, often the poets' own peers, by writers who made their living by other means.

Two of the most important poets in the early years of the Golden Age came from the ranks of the young officers returning from service in the Napoleonic wars, Konstantin Batyushkov and Vasiliy Zhukovsky. Among their contributions to the poetry of this period were elements of Romanticism and the idea of the independent poet.

Vasily Zhukovsky, who followed Karamzin's reforms, expanded the poetic vocabulary that became the standard idiom for the whole 19th century. The contributions of other poets such as Yevgeny Baratynsky, Konstantin Batyushkov, Denis Davydov, Pyotr Vyazemsky, and Anton Delvig were also very important. Later Zhukovsky's and Batyushkov's style influenced the early poetry of Aleksandr Pushkin.

Pushkin's style was a synthesis of his own innovations and those of earlier writers, and was masterfully employed in a number of literary genres – love poems, epigrammatic insults, fairy tales, religious verse, comedy and tragedy. His works, clear and profound, became literary models not only for the writers of his time, but also for the writers who came after him.

Russian poetry reached its peak with Aleksandr Pushkin's poem *Ruslan and Lyudmila*. His "novel in verse", *Eugene Onegin* depicted contemporary Russian life, and the *The Bronze Horseman* foresaw Russia's later descent into totalitarianism.

The last great poet of the Golden Age was Mikhail Lermontov, an uncompromising and powerful Romantic reminiscent of Byron. Due to his solitary nature, much of his work was only published after his death. Since it was believed that Pushkin's style could not be improved upon, Lermontov chose to write in his own style, characterized by its energy, emotional tension and unique forms of expression.

Whether Russian poetry suffered a qualitative decline following Lermontov's death is a subject of debate, but the rapid decline in poetry's popularity among the Russian intelligentsia is undeniable. Social issues and struggle began to attract the attention of this class and as early as the late 1810s-1820s poets such as Fyodor Tiutchev, Afanasiy Fet, and Nikolay Nekrasov found themselves ignored or mocked by radical critics such as Pisarev who criticized their aestheticism. Mediocre poets known as "civic poets" became popular with the public for a time, but poetry's popularity began to decline in the mid-1840s. When the view that the value of literature was directly linked to its concern with social issues became dominant in the 1860s radical critics subjected poetry as an art form to serious criticism.

**Ballads:** This genre of poetry only appeared in the early 19th century, inspired by German romantic poetry. Generally composed on the themes of family and romantic relationships, their subject matter is less diverse than the *bylina*. Vasily Zhukovskiy is generally regarded as the first composer of Russian ballads, with his first, "Lyudmila", written in 1808. Ballads were eventually displaced by shorter songs called *chatushki*.

DRAMA

**Golden Age:** The first half of the 19th century witnessed the appearance of Russian drama's first masterpieces. Among these works was Alexander Griboyedov's *Woe from Wit,* an old-fashioned classicist comedy which was first staged in 1831 and published in 1833 depicting Moscow society of about 1820.

Nikolay Gogol's first attempt at drama was *Order of Vladimir, Third Class.* His next work, *Government Inspector*, was a satirical comedy that subtly criticized the state of the Russian Empire through its depiction of the inefficiency and corruption of government officials in a minor provincial town.

The tradition of Russian historical drama developed from Russian romantic drama, despite the fact that Russian romantic drama's Western roots are even more obvious than those of romantic fiction. Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, a poetic, yet somewhat realistic depiction of this period of Russian history. Among the most prominent playwrights of Russian historical drama in the first half of the 19th century were Nikolay Polevoy and Nestor Kukolnik. Aleksy Khomyakov, known for his Slavophile sentiments, wrote two historical dramas which were staged for only a short time, *The False Dmitry* and *Ermak*.

In 1842 the romantic writer Mikhail Lermontov made his mark on the history of Russian drama when his play *A Masked Ball* was staged. There was a strong reaction by officials to its uncompromising depiction of the moral corruption of the Russian upper classes which resulted in the play being censored. It was not until 1862 that Lermontov's work was presented in its entirety.

However, Russian theater continued to thrive in the 19th century although much of what was performed was still of foreign origin. The plays by Alexandr Ostrovsky which appeared around the middle of the century would inspire a new generation of performers. His series of plays on merchant life highlighted the negative qualities of merchants as cheats, tyrannical bosses and fathers, and narrow-minded philistines. Among his well-known plays are *The Bankrupt* (or with its later title *It's a Family Affair-We'll Settle It Ourselves*), *A Poor Bride, A Lucrative Position* and *Lumber*.

Historical drama was also written by Count Aleksey Tolstoy. His main importance came from his dramatic trilogy, *The Death of Ivan the Terrible, Tsar Fyodor Ivanovich* and *Tsar Boris.*

**Silver Age:** Although many plays staged at many theaters were still foreign, the domestic repertoire was also growing as a result of the end of the imperial theaters' monopoly. Lev Tolstoy was an important figure in the drama of later part of the 19th century whose reputation as a major playwright comes primarily from three works. The first two, *The First Distiller* and *The Power of Darkness* were short, realistic morality plays which premiered in Saint Petersburg in 1886. The third, *The Fruits of Enlightenment*, a satirical comedy that targeted the educated elite, was performed in Moscow in 1892.

Russian drama began to take new directions and gain international recognition with the plays of the short story writer Anton Chekhov. In his plays Chekhov deliberately broke with and ridiculed the dramatic

conventions of the classic theater that had been in use since the 18th century and which were thought to be essential for a well written play. His four best-known dramas were all written after a period of intense short story writing. The first, *The Seagull*, employed both modernist and symbolist elements, while the other three – *Uncle Vanya, Three Sisters* and *The Cherry Orchard* - met with negative criticism for being plotless and actionless, and were perceived as unorthodox.

Maxim Gorky used the social, political and historical issues of his time as the subject matter for his dramas. His first works, *The Petty Bourgeois* and *The Philistines* are generally regarded as promising, but unpolished efforts. *The Lower Depths* is widely viewed as the finest of Gorky's plays. Gorky wrote a total of fifteen plays, yet none of them achieved any commercial success.

FICTION

**Golden Age:**

It was not until the third and fourth decade of the 19th century Russian literature saw excellent examples of prose fiction from the writers Narezhny, Bestuzhev, Pushkin, Lermontov and Gogol.

Vasily Narezhny wrote *A Russian Gil Blas*, *or Adventures of Count Chistyakov* which was modelled on Alain-René Lesage's picaresque novel *Gil Blas*. Although the Minister of Education banned the publication of this novel because of its satirical content, Narezhny continued to write prose fiction and published his *A Black Year or Mountaineer Dukes*, a story about the installation of a colonial bureaucracy in the Caucasus.

Another writer of prose fiction of this period, Aleksandr Bestuzhev, was in exile in the Caucasus for his participation in the Decembrist uprising, and there he was able to publish his Caucasus tales such as *The Red Veil*, *Ammalat-bek*, and *Mulla-Nur* and his society tales *A Test* and *The Clock and the Mirror*.

Alexander Pushkin's historical fictions *The Captain's Daughter* and *A History of the Pugachev Rebellion* were both dedicated to the events of *Pugachev's Rebellion*. His burlesque anthology of early 19th century fiction, *The Tales of Belkin* is a complex work that satirizes contemporary trends in Russian fiction through the narrators of each of the the work's five tales. The influence of the Western European Romantic fiction can be seen in his famous narration *The Queen of Spades* which was a moral story about guilt and punishment. Pushkin's novels had a deep impact on the development of Russian prose fiction, and influenced writers such as Lermontov, Gogol, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy.

Mikhail Lermontov wrote a work of historical fiction, *A Hero of Our Time* set in the Russian Caucasus which portrays an individual who reflects this generation. Like Pushkin, Lermontov's style of economical prose fiction and simplicity of language was utilized by subsequent prose fiction writers.

Realistic writers of fiction began to examine major social issues such as society, etiquette, the individual, trade and the empire in their writings. One of the Realistic writers, Gogol, with his comic grotesque *The Nose,* depicted the absurd nature of daily life in everyday settings. Another of his works, *Revizor*, sometimes regarded as a social satire targeting systematic despotism and corruption in the bureaucracy, was actually a moral satire of corrupt officials. Gogol's Dead Souls and *The Overcoat* were considered the foundation of 19th century Russian realism. *The Dead Souls* is a satire that exposes the corrupt image of Russian society. Gogol in his work *Overcoat* depicted the extreme limits of the dehumanization of the individual.

In *Rudin,* a work of political fiction, Ivan Turgenev created a character endowed with great potential and a deep intellect, but who finds no way to use either of them. In *Fathers and Sons*, Turgenev created a controversial contrast of the nihilistic, materialistic youth of the 1860s with their idealistic fathers of the 1840s. Later he described the oppression of the Russian peasants and the unjust system that kept them in their places in *The Hunting Sketches,* a work based on what he had witnessed on his mother's estate at Spasskoye while hunting there.

Goncharov, in his psychological and ideological novel *Oblomov*, portrays a lazy, inactive, young aristocrat who is unable to make any decision. This condition, found in Russian social and spiritual life in the second half of the 19th century, came to be called *Oblomovism*.

Aleksandr Griboedov wrote his novel *Woe from Wit* under strict tsarist censorship. The work depicted the high society of post-Napoleonic Moscow. It is an old fashion classicist comedy, a burlesque on Moscow whose full text was only allowed to be printed forty years later.

Sergey Aksakov's essayistic prose fiction *Family Chronicle* is a fictional work based on life in his family and early experiences that on one hand criticized some aspects of the old order, such as serfdom, and on the other praised the virtues of the old, patriarchal Russian society.

Alexander Herzen, who was regarded as a leading man of letters due to his fiction, wrote his masterpiece *From the Other Shore*, a work that consists of a series of critical essays and dialogues in response to the Revolution of 1848 in France.

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin assumed the perspective of a bemused outside observer in his satirical depiction of rural life, *Provincial Sketches*. However, in *The History of a City* provides an unvarnished portrayal of urban life's pointless cruelty, bitter struggles for power, irrational and unattainable projects, and social disorder.

**Silver Age:**

Fyodor Dostoevsky's philosophical anthropological fiction *The Notes from Underground* earned praise with its distinctive Dostoevskian polyphonic style. His psychological, anthropological and ideological novel *Crime and Punishment* takes the genre of the realistic social novel and adds to it anti-nihilist philosophy. Dostoevsky's other masterpieces of prose fiction were composed in a number of different styles. Two were written as parodies of popular fiction genres; *Poor Folk* satirizes the sentimental epistolary novel, while *The Double* is a parody of romantic novels. *The Brothers Karamazov* has a decidedly metaphysical approach to its subject matter, but *The Possessed* is a tragedy.

Leo Tolstoy's most controversial and philosophical novel *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* reflects Tolstoy's theories about moral living. *The Kreutzer Sonata* was another controversial work because it talks about problems never before discussed in public. Heroic fiction *Haji Murat* and his historical fiction *War and Peace* where he blends successfully the historical and the fictional into a single monolithic whole, mark the beginning of the realistic school of fiction.

Aleksandr Ostrovksy's comedies *The Insolvent Debtor*, *The Bankrupt* (or with its new title *It's a Family Affair-We'll Settle It Ourselves*), *A Poor Bride, A Lucrative Position and Lumber* are all descriptions of the life that the author knew from personal experience. In his comedies merchants are shown in a negative light, as dictatorial fathers, oppressive bosses, uncultured and dishonest.

Vladimir Korolenko in his *A Paradox, The Blind Musician, Yashka* and *A Strange One* takes a critical view of Russian society, peopling his novel with criminals, social outcasts, convicts, underdogs and political exiles.

Late in the 19th century Anton Chekhov emerged as a master of short fiction. He was an objective writer in that his stories always portray aesthetic values, never moral ones, and provide a rich reflection of real life in Russian society at all levels, either in the city or the countryside. For example, in his *Peasants*, he deals with rural poverty and the hopeless picture of the Russian people in rural areas. In his *In the Ravine* he introduces the real life of the lower middle class in a small town and describes human suffering similar to that in the countryside.

The founder of Socialist Realism, Maksim Gorky's first fictional stories began to appear in a two-volume collection in the late 19th century. His realistic stories earned him high praise because of his interest in

milieu. His characters were on the margins of society: homeless bums, petty criminals etc. He reflected his own experiences of the hardships of the working class in his *Chelkash*, which was about the life of a professional thief; in his *Twenty-six and One* he presented the hardships of twenty-six overworked bakers, and with his first novel *Foma Gordeev*, he introduced a young man who breaks with social contacts and rebels against societal norms.

Early in the 20th century, Maxim Gorky published his stories in a collection titled *Through Russia.* He also continued to write novels. One of his novels, *Mother,* described a wide range of revolutionary factory workers lives based on his own experiences among the working class for decades.

ESSAY

One of the most famous proponents of Classicism, Gavrila Derzhavin, wrote his essay *A Discourse on Lyric Poetry or on the Ode* in 1811–1815. In this essay, he talked about the gift of a poet, his imagination, his knowledge and experience that he contributed to the history of the Ode.

Vasily Zhukovsky who was one of the leading writers of the 19th century, wrote critical essays that were considered manifestoes of Romanticism. In his essay *Raphael's Madonna* (1824), he presented his views on painting and Romantic artists, and discussed the importance of creativity in an artist's life. Zhukovsky also translated the philosophical essays of David Hume, such as *On Simplicity and Refinement in Writing*, *On Tragedy*, and *On Eloquence*.

The Russian essayist Konstantin Batyushkov collected his philosophical essays in his *Essays in Verse and Prose* (1817). In his essay *A walk to the Academy of Arts* (1814), Batyushkov introduced his aesthetic viewpoint, narrating his story in the person of a painter and gave a broad panoramic depiction of Petersburg. He wrote his essay *A bit about the poet and Poetry* in 1816, in which he depicted a sentimental poet, and claimed that art should be in agreement with real life.

Peter Vyazemsky wrote a number of essays such as *On Derzhavin* (1816*), Mickievich's sonnets* (1829), and *On the Spirit of Parties; on Literary Aristocracy* (1830) that mostly included his critical views on some literary events of his time.

The prolific writer Aleksandr Pushkin wrote many essays that included his remarks on philosophy, education, literature, and poetry. Pushkin, in his first essay *My Observations on the Russian Theater* (1820), talked about professionalism in the administrative committee. In his essay *On the Factors That Delayed the Progress of Our Literature* (1824) he criticized the overwhelming use of French by Russian writers and the aristocrats. In his essay *Objection to A. Bestuzhev's Article 'A View on Russian Literature During 1824 and the Beginning of 1825*'(1834), Pushkin expressed his views on poetic inspiration and the role of literature in a society. He also gave his thoughts on history and historiography in his famous letter (1836) to Peter Chaadaev.

Peter Chaadaev, on the other hand, wrote philosophical essays, only one of which was published in the journal *Teleskop* in 1836. In this essay, Chaadaev directed his criticism at his homeland, comparing Russia with Western civilization, and claimed that Russia had never experienced the Renaissance and Reformation like Western countries.

Nikolay Gogol also wrote many essays. His first essays were included in the volume *Arabeski* (1835). His essays *On the Architecture of Our Time* and *Sculpture, Painting, Music* contained his aesthetic remarks on various arts. In his *The Last Day of Pompei,* he praised Karl Bruillov for the plastic effects on his canvas and complete harmony in it. In *On the Middle Ages,* he criticized the Enlightenment philosophers who saw the Middle Ages as a primitive period, and the Romantic writers who greatly admired it. In *A View on the Formation of Little Russia* and *On Little Russian Songs,* Gogol expressed his views on Ukrainian national culture and folklore.

In his article *Literary Reveries* written on Pushkin, the literary critic Vissarion Belinsky acknowledged Pushkin as a national poet and called Pushkin's Evgeny Onegin an encyclopedia of Russian life. In his article *On the Russian story and Gogol's stories* (1835), he praised Gogol as the leader of the Natural School. His essays *Letter to N.V. Gogol* (1847) included his criticism of serfdom, ineffective government policies, and also Gogol's religious conservatism.

Herzen became a leading writer of the political essay, and in his journal, Kolokol, he published his essays such as *Moscow and Petersburg* (1857), *Western Books* (1857), *Very Dangerous* (1859), and *Superfluous Men and Revolutionaries* (1860). He discussed the government policies on serfdom, the illusions of Slavophilism, and the liberals' struggle against tsarism. Herzen included his essays in two books, *Letters from France and Italy,* 1547–1851 and *From the Other Shore* (1855). In *From the Other Shore* (1855), he discussed the ideals and views of the European elites and his remarks on the revolution of 1848. His first major works, *Dilettantism in Science* (1842–1843) and *Letters on the Study of Nature* (1845–1846) were published in Russia in the journal *Otechestvennye Zapiski*.

Ivan Turgenev was another essayist who wrote *Hamlet and Don Quixote* (1860), in which he describes two basic human types. Hamlet represented a socially useless person, while Don Quixote, on the other hand, was a man who completely devoted himself to his ideal and was ready to sacrifice everything for it.

Ivan Kireevskiy published his essays in his own journal *Evropeets*. He published his essay *The Nineteenth Century* criticizing 18th and 19th century Western philosophy and values. Together with Aleksey Khomyakov, Ivan Kireevsky was considered as the theoretician of the Slavophile movement.

Aleksey Khomyakov wrote an essay *On the Necessity and Possibility of New Principles in Philosophy* (1856) in which he criticized the differences between Russia and the West, and claimed that Western countries were individualistic and mostly agnostic, and that Russian civilization was superior than the West because it was more unified and more religious. In his two essays of 1845 and 1846, *Foreign Opinions of Russia*, he depicted post-Petrine Russia, criticizing the Russians for being admirers of European culture and their feeling of inferiority.

Ivan Kireevsky wrote his essay *The Nineteenth Century* and published it in his journal *The European.* He criticized Peter's reforms for being against Russia's organic development and the French Revolution for being an age of destruction. His journal *The European* was closed in 1832 after this essay was published.

After the abolition of serfdom in 1861, the gap between the followers of the Slavophiles and the Westernizers increased, because of the Nihilists' extremist political program and their demand to overthrow the tsar. These people had profound influence on the thought and behavior of subsequent generations of writers.

One of the major Russian literary critics, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, wrote essays which appeared in *Otechestvennye Zapiski* and in *Sovremennik*. He published in *Sovremennik* his essay *Essays in the Gogolian Periof of Russian Literature* (1856) claiming that Gogol was the first Russian writer who was concerned about real Russian life and was the father of Russian realism.

Apollon Grigoryev was a leading critic influenced by both the Westernizers and the Slavophiles. He called his aesthetic "organic" and his criticism "organic criticism" which meant an awareness of the organic unity and continuity of national culture. In his essay *On Truth and Honesty in Art* (1856), he reflected his views on Russian poets as being sharp observers of reality who opened the mysteries of life, and the belief of the poet as a prophet and national leader.

In the second half of the 19th century, one of the outstanding Russian writers, Fedor Dostoevsky penned many essays on the social, political, and psychological character of his country and published them in his journals *Vremya* (1861–1863) and *Epokha* (1864–1865), and as editor of *Grazhdanin* (1873–1878). In his essays Dostoevsky criticized the Westernizers' sympathy towards Western civilization. He was against the legalism, positivism and scientism of the Russian elite as a harmful import from the West, and believed that

Western civilization had begun to decline, but that it might be revitalized by the spirituality of the simple Russian people.

In the 1860s, Lev Tolstoy began to write his contradictory remarks on art and literature first in his pedagogical journal *Yasnaya Polyana*. He began to live in Yasnaya Polyana, and it was there that he published twelve issues of *Yasnaya Polyana* between 1862 and 1863. Tolstoy wrote his essay *Who Ought to Teach Whom How to Write: We Our Peasant Children, or Our Peasant Children Us?* (1862) and criticized himself and his associates for delivering little to their people and doing severe damage to their pure souls. Tolstoy spent the rest of his lifetime expressing his new religious views in his didactic treatises. In his essay *What Then Shall We Do?* (1882-1886), he stated that people should quit praising modern civilization, that every aspect of modern society should be abolished, and the people should return to their communal farming. In his treatise *What Is Art?* (1893–1894), Tolstoy believed that art should be universal in all aspects and intelligible to people on all levels and all nations, and most contemporary art was unintelligible to the masses.

A religious philosopher Vladimir Solovyev, under the influence of Slavophile thought, wrote his philosophical essays *The Spiritual Foundations of Life* (1884) and *The History and Future of Theocracy* (1887) including his remarks on the introduction of religion into public life. In *The Russian Idea* (1888), Solovyev questioned what type of role on Earth was assigned to Russia by God to be become a part of humanity and the Mystical Body of Christ, and what role Russia should have in introducing Godmanhood in the religiously divided world.

Nikolay Mikhailovsky, in his essay *What is Progress?* (1869), advocated a society that gave the human personality a chance to develop comprehensively. For him, progress meant stages and types of social organization, and the peasant commune was the highest type at a very low stage of development. In his article *Heroes and Crowd* (1882), Mikhailovsky claimed that an ordinary individual under certain circumstances could lead or give strength to a crowd, and the whole event could gain a special power. The role of an individual, here, was reinforced by mass perception.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

One of the 19th century Russian writers, Denis Davydov, wrote an *Essay towards a Theory of Guerrilla Welfare* (1821), included an autobiography prefixed to the 1832 edition of his poems, and authored a series of recollections of military life. His autobiography is peppered with puns and jokes, many unsuitable in polite company, and his highly readable military writings are regarded as some of the best in Russian.

Alexandr Pushkin, in his autobiographical work *Journey to Arzrum* (1836) and based on his travel to the Caucasus, depicted the places and people he encountered in the Caucasus.

Another writer who experimented with autobiographical fiction was Ivan Turgenev. His collection of short stories *Notes of a Hunter* (1852), based on his observations of peasant life and nature, and his novella *First Love* (1860) were famous for their *autobiographical* overtones.

Apollon Grigoriev's autobiographical work, *My Literary and Moral Wanderings* (1862-64) was about his experience of the cultural life that created him and the Russian nation during his early years.

Alexander Herzen's autobiography *My Past and Thoughts* (1852) covers the period from Herzen's birth in 1812 to 1868 and depicts his early privileged childhood among the Russian aristocracy, his interaction of people and events, his correspondence with friends and his ideological debates. He began writing his *My Past and Thoughts* in London, printed many of its chapters in *Polyarnaya zvezda* and *Kolokol,* and published the first and second volumes as a separate edition in London in 1861. The fourth and last volume came out in Geneva in 1867.

Sergey Aksakov's trilogy *The Family Chronicle* (1856)*, Childhood Years of Bagrov Grandson* (1858) and *A Russian Schoolboy* (1856) influenced autobiographical works of the mid-century with its focus on the history of the childhood and the family of the protagonist.

Lev Tolstoy published his autobiographical work entitled *Childhood* (1852) under the initials L.N. Although initially it was planned as the first part of a tetralogy, only *Childhood, Boyhood* and *Youth* were completed. The trilogy describes the transition from adolescence to adulthood and examines the emotional world of a young gentry boy. He published another autobiographical work *My Life* or *First Memories* (1878) based on his personal recollections.

**Émigré Writers:** Émigré writer Prince Peter Kropotkin wrote his autobiography *The Memoirs of a Revolutionary* (1899) in exile. His *Memoirs* covers his early life, cadet corps schooling, life in the royal court, his military service in Siberia, his political activities, his imprisonment, his escape from jail, his exile and activities in Western Europe.

**Women Writers:** Among women writers of autobiographical accounts, Nadezhda Durova's autobiographical texts written from 1836 to 1841 recounted her childhood experiences in *Autobiography*. In her *The Cavalry Maiden* she described her service in the military dressed as a man, and her participation in the defense of her country.

Another women writer, Varvara Bakunina's *The Persian Campaign of 1796* (1887) was another account of military operations and her experiences during her husband's expedition against the Persian invasion of the Caucasus in 1795.

Mariya Kamenskaya's *Reminiscences*, written in the late 19th century, was a family chronicle including the history of her father's family, the Tolstoy family and her own happy life as a daughter of the regiment of artists.

## 20TH CENTURY

### POETRY

**Silver Age:** The early 20th century in Russia was a tumultuous period of political crises and calls for profound change, and this atmosphere was reflected in the literature of this period. Dissatisfaction with the realism of 19th century writing combined with exposure to new ways of expression and artistic forms resulted in new literary movements that attempted to express poets' innovative ideas. The first of these literary movements was Symbolism, which continued until 1910, and is regarded as the first phase of the Silver Age. The second phase, known as 'post-Symbolism' or 'avant-garde', saw the emergence of two major, rival movements, the 'Acmeists' and the 'Futurists' which took the tenets of Symbolism and developed them in their own distinctive ways.

**Symbolism:** According to the theory of symbolism, the use of symbolic images can assist an artist in creating new art that expresses his/her emotions, thoughts and experiences more accurately and more subtly. Symbolist art is distinctive for its urbane, cosmopolitan character that encourages the artist to strive to reach the most distant places and beyond. In addition, Symbolism encourages artists to challenge frontiers, even cultural and linguistic frontiers.

Symbolism in Russia originated as a reaction to the predominant "civic poetry", and despite being a foreign artistic movement, it soon developed a distinctive Russian form. The European origins of this artistic movement lie in France and this outside influence is reflected in the stylistic similarities between Russian Symbolist poetry and Western European poetry written between 1890 and 1910.

The pioneers of poetic Symbolism in Russia were Merezhkovsky, Bryusov and Balmont, who all defended Symbolism and its tenet of 'art for art's sake' in the face of its populist critics, the doctrine of utilitarianism, and even conventional morality. Russian Symbolist poetry displayed great thematic diversity; while Bryusov

produced poems in the manner of European Decadence, the poetry of Zinaida Gippius was dominated by religious themes. Other Symbolist poets, Aleksandr Blok, Andrei Bely and Vyacheslav Ivanov in particular, attempted to go beyond the physical world in their mystical poetry. Taking the philosophy and mystical poetry of Vladimir Soloviev as their starting point, Blok, Bely and Ivanov merged myth and religion with their aesthetics to produce poetry that would provide knowledge of a mysterious dimension beyond this mundane life.

**Acmeism:** The Symbolist lasted until 1910 when two new schools appeared: Acmeism and Futurism. A direct development from Symbolism, Acmeism emerged in 1912 and continued until 1917. It was a neo-classical form of modernism which replaced the vagueness, shadowiness, and uncertainty of Symbolism, with clarity and the visible world. Returning to the classical tradition, Acmeists argued that poetry should deal with culture, human existence and the world rather than mystical themes.

In the history of Russian poetry Acmeism was known more through three prominent poets - Nikolay Gumilev, Anna Akhmatova and Osip Mandelshtam – rather than as a coherent, organized artistic movement. For these poets Acmeism was a movement with an independent voice, and its advocates would soon pay a heavy price for daring to criticize the Soviet regime headed by Stalin who had no tolerance for any art form that did not serve to further his political aims. Akhmatova was charged with treason, deported, and her works were banned. Her husband, fellow poet and the founder of Acmeism, Gumiliev, was executed. Her second husband was sentenced to the Gulag where he would die of exhaustion. Mandelstam, after writing a poem critical of Stalin in 1934 was denounced, arrested and sentenced to three years' exile in the Urals. However, he was later deported to Kolyma and in late 1938 died in a field there.

After Stalin's death, Evgeny Evtushenko was influential in the development of a more unofficial style of poetry. Beginning in the 1970s numerous avant-garde poets emerged, with Joseph Brodsky being the most familiar to readers in the west.

**Futurism:** The second offshoot from the Symbolism in the 20$^{th}$ century was a Russian avant-garde movement known as Futurism. Futurism not only rejected Symbolism's lyricism, but also strongly rejected conventional society, culture and accepted ways of life. Such strong anti-establishment attitudes generated strong opposition to Futurism who referred to Futurist tenets as 'animalistic Nietzscheanism' and its followers as 'savages'.

Futurists claimed that their movement was a radical break with the past, and turned their energies to bringing innovations to art, technology, and politics, often in the form of primitivism. The visual arts were a favorite media with Futurists to challenge and provoke conventional society.

**Zaum:** Russian Futurists even applied their artistic philosophy to language. Taking their cue from abstraction in the visual arts, they attempted to develop a new form of verbal expression they called *zaum*, a language that transcended reason by directly evoking an emotional response despite not referring to anything clear and specific.

**Cubo-Futurism and Ego-Futurism:** Just as Symbolism had earlier split into two main branches, Russian Futurism also fractured into two sub-schools, namely Cubo-Futurism and Ego-Futurism. Cubo-Futurists attempted to enrich the Russian language through a new vocabulary of derived and arbitrarily created words. Among the more important Cubo-Futurist poets were Aleksey Krucenyx, Viktor Khlebnikov, David Burlyuk, and Vladimir Mayakovsky. Ego-Futurism, founded by Igor Severyanin were, opposed to what it regarded as the excessively objective attitude in the poetry of the Cubo-Futurists and argued for a more subjective attitude in poetry.

Futurism rapidly declined as a coherent artistic movement after 1917, but its influence continued to be felt in Soviet poetry until around 1930.

**Imaginism:** The Imaginists were active between 1919 and 1924 and were indirectly influenced by the works of Ezra Pound. For Imaginists the image was almost the sole basis for poetic composition, and Imaginist

poems were created by linking a series of striking, unexpected images, sometimes without the use of verbs. Sergey Esenim, Vadim Shershenevich, and Anatoly Marienhof are among the better know Imaginist poets.

**Constructivism:** Constructivism was another short-lived artistic movement from the early years of the Soviet Union, 1924-1930. While supportive of Soviet ideology, Constructivists also labored to form a new theory or aesthetics of artistic creation. They argued that the subject matter of a poem should determine its form, included scientific and technical terms in their works, and attempted to employ some of the methods of prose writing in their poetry. The two leading figures of Constructivism were Eduard Bagritsky and Ilya Selvinsky.

**Letter-poems:** Folklore, folklore studies, and old literary genres began to fall out favor with the regime following the implementation of Stalin's first five-year plan in 1928. Regarded as reactionary and expressing support for both the tsar and capitalism, epic poetry was no longer considered an appropriate format for praising the Soviet leadership or its actions. Instead, in the mid-1930s letter poems addressed to Stalin began to make their appearance. Folk performers and professional poets would create an initial draft that was then re-worked in numerous later meetings until agreement was reached on a final text. Thousands would then sign this final version before it was sent to Stalin. Important events for workers and other professional groups across the Soviet Union could also be commemorated with a letter poem.

**Russian Heritage-Going Back to its Roots:** Some poets attempted to combine the old and the new in their work by combining elements of Symbolism with other elements taken from Russia's earlier literary heritage as well as its classical literary tradition. Two of the more prominent poets of this movement were Boris Pasternak and Marina Tsvetayeva.

**After Stalin:** For a brief period under Khrushchev, Russian poets were allowed a degree of freedom unheard of under Stalin. Some who had been imprisoned were released, and the poetry of this period explored themes, public and private, that had previously been off limits.

However, these freedoms came to an abrupt end with Leonid Brezhnev's assumption of power in 1964. Literature was once again brought under strict state control, with some poets being forcibly exiled and others choosing to emigrate to the West. Despite the restrictions imposed on poets and their work under Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the poetry of Robert Rozhdestvensky, Andrey Voznesensky and Yevgeny Yevtushenko that was deemed politically acceptable was able to reach the public. In contrast, some poets of the post-Stalin period towed the standard Party line, among them Nikolay Rubtsov, and Yury Kuznetsov.

However, those poets whose works put them in clear opposition to the Soviet regime could take one of two paths. They could decide to write "for the desk drawer", to keep their work private to avoid trouble with the state. If they chose to try and make their voice heard and disseminate their poetry, they faced exile or even death. Two poets who took the latter path were Joseph Brodsky and Yuri Galanskov.

Russian poetry flourished with the end of most official censorship after 1985, part of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost* introduced after his ascension to power in that year. With permission more easily granted for gatherings and the publication of new anthologies, poets sought larger audiences for their work, and young poets were also able to have their works made public. In addition, numerous works that had been suppressed in previous years began to see the light of day. Some of the most prominent poets from this era were Viktor Sosnora, Ivan Zhdanov, Gennady Aygi, and Aleksandr Kushner.

DRAMA

In the early 20th century, there was a blossoming of theatrical performances as official control of the arts relaxed. A number of private theaters appeared. One of them was Alexander Tairov's Chamber (Kamerny) Theater that opened its doors in 1914 after the end of the government's theater monopoly in 1882. In Tairov's theater the repertoire was largely composed of foreign plays, but some Soviet propaganda plays were also staged.

Shortly after the Bolsheviks seized power in October1917 they issued a decree of the Soviet of People's Commissars on 9 November 1917 that placed all the theaters under the authority of the arts section of the State Commission for Education, and all served as *agitprop* (agitation and propaganda) theater. So the Soviet theatre became a *director's theatre*, but not a *writer's theatre.* It was utilized to do what has been ordered rather than provide only entertainment, and used as propaganda and communication agent.

During the era of Stalin Russian theater continued to be primarily a propaganda tool, and failed to keep up with the development seen in other literary genres. The majority of works performed in Soviet theaters continued to be foreign or pre-revolutionary dramas.

During the 1930s and 1940s Socialist Realism was the predominant style for drama. Mayakovsky's plays during this period *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse* were anti-utopian satires written for Meyerhold's theater. Both works move from portrayals of a subversive, chaotic present during the NEP era, to a future that is at times ideally perfect, and at other times regulated and controlled.

Another classic example of this genre is *Fear* by Alexander Afinogenov with a happy ending for the Communist hero. While the play incorporates the good-to-better development typical of Socialist Realist works, it is clear that complex situations from real life are ignored in the plot in favor of ideology. Other examples of this type of drama are *Aristocrats* and *Kremlin Chimes* by Nikolay Pogodin.

When the Soviets began preparing for WWII, the state turned its attention to the previously condemned Russian past, and to increase patriotism, they used the Russian tsars, princes, military leaders and religion. Soviet playwrights contributed their share to the Soviet war effort. Afinogenov's *On the Eve*, Leonov's *Invasion* and *Lyonushka*, and Simonov's *Russian People* all extolled the courage of ordinary Russians, but their plots were all predictable and melodramatic.

After the war, both Soviet literature and drama failed to produce any works worthy of notice. Most dramas from the period between the end of the war and Stalin's death were very cautious efforts to dramatize the party line of the day.

Khrushchev's Thaw period (1956-1964) saw a dramatic change in the official attitude to the theater. Playwrights were suddenly free to portray both Russian history and life in the Soviet Union in a more realistic way. Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Days of the Turbins* adapted from his novel *The White Guard*. *The Days of the Turbins*, took the struggle between the Bolsheviks and the Whites as its subject matter, and portrays the upheaval of the Civil War through its impact on a Kievan family. Other notable dramatists from this period are Leonid Zorin, Alexander Shtein, Viktor Rozov and Alexey Arbuzov. Abuse of power and corrupt party officials were the focus of both Zorin's *The Guests* and Shtein's *A Personal Matter.* Unsurprisingly, neither play was received warmly by the authorities.

The period of the Thaw saw a revival of experimental theater, and innovations in theater of the absurd from Europe were enthusiastically incorporated into the works of Russian playwrights. The plays *Christmas at Ivanov's* by Alexander Vvedensky and *Elizaveta Bam* by Daniil Kharms are perhaps the most representative of this brief trend. Another important playwright of the period was Viktor Slavkin with his famous play *A Young Man's Grown-Up Daughter*.

Much like the period of Khrushchev's Thaw, the Glasnost era witnessed a return to the avant-garde in Russian theater and dramas that explored periods of Russian history that had previously been off limits. Mikhail Shatrov's plays *The Sixth of July* and *The Bolsheviks* were centered on Lenin, while the Third Youth League Congress was the subject of *Blue Horses on the Red Grass*. For the first time in Russian drama Trotsky and Bukharin, both officially eliminated in Soviet history books, appeared in Shatrov's *The Dictatorship of Conscience*. Its performance in 1985 marked a clear break with previous state policy towards the theater.

During the 1990s Nikolay Kolyada and Roman Viktyuk through both their plays and their support for new playwrights made significant contributions to the development of Russian drama. They were able not only

to revive the traditions of avant garde theater, but to then move beyond them. However, one of the major challenges facing the Russian theater in this period was the adaptation to commercialization, a process which took a number of years. New trends and developments in Russian drama could only emerge after this transition had been completed.

FICTION

In the decade following the revolution prose fiction displayed two prominent characteristics – tremendous diversity in its subject matter and stylistic experimentation.

In this period, the realist writer Ivan Bunin was interested in his country life during the revolution of 1905 and portrayed his disappointment over the destruction of the idealistic picture of his traditional village life in his short fiction *The Village*.

**Criminal Fiction:** Short story writer Leonid Andreev took the material for his stories mostly from common criminal cases and from his experiences as a court reporter as in his *In the Fog*, *The Life of Vasily Fiveisky* and *The Tale of the Seven Who Were Hanged.* He also used biblical themes, imbuing them with modern symbolism and psychological insights, as in *Eleazar and Judas Iscariot*.

The writer Aleksey Remizov's prose fiction stories were marked by details of everyday life, such as violence, illness, death and suicide. In his satirical novel *The Indefatigable Cymbal* Remizov portrayed sectarians from the countryside as superstitious and odd. Another work of this period was his Gothic horror story *The Sacrifice*.

**Symbolist Fiction:** The symbolist writer of historical prose fiction, Dmitry Merezhkovsky, became famous with his trilogy, *Christ and Antichrist, Julian the Apostate* and *Antichrist: Peter and Alexis*.

Another Russian symbolist writer Fyodor Sologub published sixteen volumes of short stories titled *The Sting of Death* and *A Book of Enchantments*. He also wrote several novels: *Heavy Dreams* and *The Petty Demon*.

Andrey Bely is considered the most important innovator of 20th century Russian prose fiction. His symbolist novel *Petersburg* is widely regarded as his finest work, and is characterized by the stylistic device of colors being evoked by sounds. The events of the novel take place in St. Petersburg before the Russian Revolution of 1905. His Moscow trilogy *A Moscow Eccentric, Moscow under Siege* and *Masks* are considered as other masterpieces of his narrative style.

**Anti-Utopian Fiction:** One such writer was Evgeny Zamyatin who created a new genre, the anti-utopian novel (dystopia). He published his short novels as satires of provincial life in *A Provincial Tale* and military life in *At the World's End*. It was *We* which earned high-praise when it appeared abroad in the 1920s, first in English and then in Czech; it was published in Russia only in 1988. Zamyatin's dystopic novel *We* depicts a unified totalitarian state which has produced a society of almost complete conformity and harmony.

Mikhail Sholokhov wrote his realist novel *The Quiet Don* to show the living conditions and struggles of the Don Cossacks to survive during World War I, the Bolshevik Revolution, and the Civil War. His second novel, *Virgin Soil Upturned,* depicts life during the collectivization period and the liquidation of the kulaks in a Don Cossack village.

**Science Fiction:** One of the early science fiction writers, Aleksey Tolstoy gained popularity with the novels *Aelita* and *The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin*. He also wrote *Nikita's Childhood, The Sisters* and a historical novel *Peter the First. A Tour of Hell* was Tolstoy's effort to depict the hell that the tumultuous upheavals of the revolution had been for Russian intellectuals.

**Realist Fiction:** During the NEP period, Yury Olesha in his fictional novel *Envy,* depicted a new man created as a result of the NEP and placed him in contrast with the older society. Olesha also wrote several short stories such as *Liompa*, *The Cherry Stone*, and *Natasha*.

Andrey Platonov earned his reputation as a writer with his collection of stories *The Sluices of Epiphany*. Most of his works were published in the West because of his criticism of Stalinist policies such as the liquidation of Kulaks as a class, the Five-Year Plan and Collectivization. Among these works were his novels *Chevengur* which describes a fictional city undergoing a rapid transition to communism, and The Foundation Pit which presents the building of socialism in one country under Stalin from the perspective of the common citizen.

Odessa's Jewish gangsters and the Red Cavalry Cossacks were favorite subjects of Isaac Babel's short fiction. Set in the Polish-Soviet War, the stories in *Red Cavalry* are taken from entries in a diary that Babel kept.

*Twelve Chairs*, a collection of short works satirizing the NEP in the Russian countryside, made Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov popular figures.

In the 30s, some writers, such as Mikhail Bulgakov and Boris Pasternak continued to write in the classical tradition. Bulgakov was unable to publish his novel *The Master and Margarita* under Stalin in the Soviet Union. The work first appeared, heavily censored, after his during the Khrushchev Thaw. Describing the devil's visit to the Soviet Union, The Master and Margarita defies simple classification with its mix of Christian thought, the supernatural and satire. Bulgakov also published the satirical science fiction novel *Heart of a Dog*, an allegory of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Boris Pasternak's novel *Doktor Zhivago* portrayed the Bolshevik Revolution as a political coup rather than a mass uprising, and because of the negative reaction of Soviet officials, the novel had to be published in the West, and did not appear in publication till the Thaw.

Some writers, opposed Soviet ideology, chose to deal with rural settings in their works. Among them were Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Sergey Antonov, Vladimir Soloukhin, Aleksandr Yashin, all of whom attempted to portray the misery and backwardness of the Russian countryside.

**Prison-Camp Fiction:** It was during the Thaw, with the personal approval of Khrushchev, that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, master of prison-camp genre, published his short prose fiction *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* which was about the Gulag camps. The novel was only published in the 60s, and long remained the sole example of a work published in the Soviet Union and critical of Stalin's legacy. Nevertheless, Solzhenitsyn was expelled from the Union of Soviet Writers in 1969 and five years later from the country.

The Khrushchev years, regarded as a period of literary stagnation, took their toll on Vladimir Tendryakov and Yury Trifonov, both of whom would clearly have been more productive in a more liberal atmosphere. However, despite the restrictions on literary expression, both found their own means to cope with the circumstances they found themselves in and to make significant contributions to Russian literature.

**Urban Fiction:** In the 60s and the early 70s, Trifonov started a new genre *Urban Prose*. His keen eye for detail, both physical and psychological, awareness of the rhythms of city and suburban life, and understanding of the inner turmoil of urban dwellers all made Trifonov the best-known writer of the Soviet middle class. He published his historical novel *The House on the Embankment* that portrayed the period of Stalin, his purges, the late Stalinist era, and the stagnation interpreting fundamental strains of development over the decades. In 1973, he published his historical novel, *The Impatient Ones*, depicting the assassination of Alexander II by the revolutionary anarchist group called *People's Will* which was active in the 1870s and 1880s. His *Another Life* dealt with the relationships and conflicts between the generations during the Soviet period.

**Village Fiction:** In the decades from the 1950s through the 1970s numerous works treating the life of the peasantry in Russia and Siberia were written in a movement known as Village Prose. Despite official censorship that often prevented authors from telling the full truth of the difficulties and injustices that confronted Russian farmers – the loss of autonomy that came with having to work on state farms or agricultural collectives, the unrealistic demands made on the rural sector by central planners as well as its

exploitation and neglect by distant urban powers – village prose writers were able to depict this sector of Soviet society with more realism than almost any other. Because these writers themselves were frequently from rural backgrounds, they were able to examine all aspects of rural Russian society in great detail, celebrating its positive aspects and unflinchingly delving into its darker areas.

One example of such writers was Valentin Rasputin from Siberia, whose fame as a writer was based on a number of short stories and four novels. Rasputin used Siberia as the setting for all of his works, and his first novel, *Money for Maria*, concerns how a village responds when one family is confronted with an emergency. *Live and Remember* is tragedy about a soldier who deserts the front lines, while Farewell to Matyora is a protest against the disruption of traditional rural lifestyles and environmental degradation all in the name of progress.

In the early 1960s, Vladimir Tendryakov earned his reputation with his prose fiction of rural and urban settings and characters with various occupations and stations in life. Tendryakov displayed a deep suspicion of Marxist-Leninist utopianism and the mindset that was the bedrock of standard Soviet optimism in his novel *Attack on Mirages*.

**Historical Fiction:** Tendryakov also began writing stories based on his two-year experience as a field-telephone specialist in several battles in World War II. *A Day that Ousted a Life* gives a detailed depiction of battlefield atmosphere and the psychological transformation it brings about.

An historical novelist Yury Davydov in his novels focused on the revolutionary movement the *Populism* (Narodnichestvo) of the 19th century. His novel *March* was about the revolutionary Populist (Narodnik) organization *People's Will* that advocated violence. His work *The Slack Period of Autumn* was another work in which he portrayed *People's Will*. In *The Fate of Usol'tsev* Davydov depicts an unsuccessful expedition by peasants and intellectuals to found a socialist colony in Ethiopia.

The Soviet writer Sergey Zalygin, who wrote his prose fiction *The South American Variant* late in the 20th century, portrayed the psychological problems of a woman in her middle years during the Soviet system. In his novel *On the Irtysh*, Zalygin portrayed the forced collectivization in Siberia under Stalin, and the sufferings of Siberian peasants. He was also the editor of an anthology called *The New Soviet Fiction: Sixteen Short Stories*.

Moral questions, whether the result of complex ethical choices that faced an individual or those that resulted from scientific and industrial activities, were the subject matter of Daniil Granin's works in the 1960s and early 1970s. He wrote his fiction about World War II together with Ales Adamovich *Leningrad Under Siege* (The Book of Blockade) which gave detailed accounts of the 900-day siege of Leningrad. Granin's other book *The Bison: A Novel About the Scientists Who Defied Stalin* was a fictional portrait of genetician Nikolay Timofeyev-Resovsky.

In the 1960s the political liberal Elena Ventsel' (also known as I. Grekova) rose to prominence as an author. Her writing was distinctive for its ironic sense of humor, sharp understanding of people's strengths and weaknesses, strong sense of justice, and mix of compassion and understanding for people's sufferings and frustrations. *The Faculty*, a novel that centers around the lives of the researchers, teachers and students from the same academic department of a research institute, was one of Grekova's most popular works. Despite being unable to publish some of her writing before 1985, her critical, skeptical views on life in the Soviet Union remained unchanged, as shown in her critical story Without Smiles, written in 1970 but published in 1986.

For Georgy Semyonov, human interactions, thoughts, emotions, and behavior in both the natural and human worlds constitute the subject matter for his writing, as evidenced in *The Smell of Burnt Powder*. Semyonov's stories were frequently melancholy, depicting the loss and sense of inadequacy felt by many. However, his short story The Collection takes a darker turn, conveying a sense of horror.

Andrey Bitov published several volumes of short fiction in the Soviet Union under the title *Life in Windy Weather*. His work Pushkin House examines the mental and emotional life of an intelligent young to middle-aged man with an education. It was banned in the Soviet Union. The complete text was first published in the United States and it was allowed in the Soviet Union in 1989. His fiction *The Symmetry Teacher* is called by him as an "novel-echo" of an untraceable English novel written by a writer called A. Tired-Boffin. It was never quite finished, and a compiled version was released in 2008, and republished in 2014.

ESSAY

Towards the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, a new group of writers appeared expressing their criticism of rationalism, political conservatism and apolitical individualism as in Dmitry Merezhkovsky's essay *On the Reasons for the Decline and the New Trends in Contemporary Russian Literature* (1893).

Like Merezhkovsky, Valery Bryusov also wrote essays like *The keys of mysteries* (1893) and *Contemporary Thoughts* (1905) criticising those intellectual movements hostile to symbolism. Bryusov expressed his criticism of the poetry of Aleksandr Pushkin in his essay *Pushkin's Verse Techniques* (1915).

At the beginning of the 20th century, the 1905 Revolution became a major event for writers like Nikolay Berdyaev, Sergey Bulgakov, Mikhail Gershenzon**,** Semyon Frank, Petr Struve, and Alexander Izgoev to express their concerns and expectations from the radical intellectuals and the Revolution in their *Landmarks: A Collection of Essays on the Russian Intelligentsia* (1909).

During the "Silver Age", there were essayists such as Vasily Rozanov and Lev Shestov who devoted their time only to religious issues. In his essays, collected in his books, *Solitaria* (1912) and *Two Baskets of Fall Leaves* (1913–1915), Rozanov talked about the issues of Christianity, the Christian Church, Jews, and Russian society.

Under the influence of Nietzsche, the Russian existentialist Lev Shestov devoted his criticism to Hegelian rationalism, and the concepts of reason and scientism in his works *Beginnings and Endings* (1908) and *The Great Vigils* (1911).

The symbolist writer Aleksandr Blok was interested in social and political problems in his essays such as *The People and Intelligentsia* (1909); *The Intelligentsia and Revolution* (1918), and *The Collapse of Humanism* (1921). In these essays, Blok discussed the problems of intellectuals and art, and he claimed that the intellectuals followed an individualistic path, wasted their energies in literary and philosophical speculations, and political activities which did not answer the needs and desires of the Russian people, bringing Russia to the brink of catastrophe.

Maksim Gorky in his early years in Capri (1906–1913) published essays of literary and social criticism, rejecting the individualism of the Russian writers and supporting collective creativity. In his essay *The Destruction of the Individual* (1909) he praised the ideals of socialism and the purity of the working class and in *About Karamazovism* (1913) he criticized Dostoyevky's views and his bitter style of presenting the Russian character. During the Revolution, Gorky published a series of articles such as *Revolution and culture* (1918) and *Untimely Thoughts* (1917–1918), in which he expressed his reaction to the October Revolution and advocated the preservation of cultural values.

Osip Mandelshtam, together with Nikolay Gumilyov, Anna Akhmatova, and Sergey Gorodetsky founded the Acmeist school of poetry, and wrote some essays on the idea of acmeist aesthetic such as *François Villon* (1913) and *On the Nature of the Word* (1922 ) and *The Morning of Acmeism* (1919).

The author Yevgeny Zamyatin penned essays which included his observations and thoughts on the problem of literature in a totalitarian state. He criticized censorship and ideological dogmatism in his essays *Tomorrow* (1920) and *On Today and the Contemporary* (1924). In 1923, Zamyatin wrote an essay titled *On Literature, Revolution, Entropy, and Other Matters* and talked about the effects on Russian Modernism of

Nietzsche's Dionysianism, Einstein's relativity, and the campaigns against the illusion of realism. And in his essay *I Am Afraid*, he examined the state of postrevolutionary literature.

Literary critic and one of the main theorists of Left Art, and one of the active practitioners of factography (linking writers to contemporary life directly and encouraging them to turn reporter, historian, memoirist etc.) Viktor Shklovsky expressed his personal views and observations on the theory of literature, theater and film that were gathered in his *Hamburg account* (1928). In his essay *Monument to a Scholarly Error* (1930), under the pressure of the Soviet authorities, Shklovsky tried to embrace the theory of Socialist Realism. Vladimir Mayakovsky's *How to Make Verse* (1926) and his *My Discovery of Amerika* (1925-1926) were also remarkable contributions to this genre.

Theorist of Symbolism, Andrey Bely published his three volumes of essays which included his essay *Symbolism*, *Green Meadow* (1910) in which he discussed the state of contemporary literature and its development, and *Arabesques* (1913) in which he depicted the modern literary era. His essay *Rhythm as Dialectic* (1929) was about a new method of studying poetic rhythm. Bely also wrote essays such as *Revolution and Culture* and *The Mastery of Gogol* in 1934.

In the late 1960s, Andrey Sinyavsky was one of the Soviet writers who was published outside the Soviet Union. He was arrested and put on trial for publishing his works in the West. In his essays *On Socialist Realism* (1959), *Thought Unaware* (1965), *For Freedom of Imagination* (1971), *The Literary Process in Russia* (1976), and *Soviet Civilization: A Cultural History* (1989) he discussed the classical tradition of Socialist Realism and Soviet literature.

As being one of the supporters of a neo-Slavophile trend during the Soviet Union, Vladimir Soloukhin in his essays, *A Walk in Rural Russia* (1958), *From Lyrical Points of View* (1965) and *Searching for Icons in Russia* (1972) looked back with longing, remembering Russia's native culture, religious art and literature and criticizes the Soviet regime.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The writer Aleksey Remizov's autobiographical novel *The Pond* (1908) was a reflection of his early childhood. It includes the depiction of the life of two merchant families: one rich and the other-poor.

Life writing began to adopt more experimental forms of expression in the 20th century. An early example of avant-garde autobiographical writing can be found in Vasily Rozanov's *Solitaria, Fallen Leaves* (1913-15).

One of the active revolutionaries, Maksim Gorky wrote his autobiographical stories in three novels: *Childhood* (1913), *My Apprenticeship* (1916) and *My University Years* (1923). His *Childhood* contains his experiences with the people, pain, sorrow, social injustice and incidents that he encountered in his younger days. In his second volume *My Apprenticeship*, he gives information about his adolescence in the years after the death of his mother, how he survived and how earned his own living. The third volume of his autobiography *My University Years* covers the years he spent in Kazan between 1884 and 1888 in which the only university he attended was the university of life. During this period, struggling to make ends meet, Gorky moved from one job to another.

Andrey Bely's autobiographical novel *Kotik Letaev* (1922) portrayed the author's experiences through his hero Kotik from his own early childhood and through his psychological and social developments. His *The Baptized Chinaman* explores the evolution of consciousness into self-consciousness in the mind of a child.

The nostalgia for childhood was the theme of several works such as Aleksey Tolstoy's *Nikita's Childhood*. *Nikita's Childhood* (1922) was a life story containing autobiographical sketches and realistic depictions of the life of a small boy living in a village.

Mikhail Bulgakov was a doctor, and in his autobiographical stories *Extraordinary Adventures of a Doctor* (1922) and *Notes of a Young Country Doctor* (1926) he covered his personal experiences while attempting to portray the circumstances of his current life.

Osip Mandelshtam's collection of autobiographical sketches *The Noise of Time* (1923) includes "The Egyptian Stamp," a novella; "Fourth Prose;" and the famous travel memoirs "Theodosia" and "Journey to Armenia". These works are an evocative portrayal of the intellectual milieu of early 20th century St. Petersburg as well as the author's own affairs of the heart.

Boris Pasternak's autobiography *Safe Conduct* (1930) portrayed his daily life, ideals, philosophical views, and negative statements about the Stalinist period.

Nikolay Ostrovsky's autobiography *How the Steel Was Tempered* (1936) was an account of his actions in the Civil War on the side of the Bolsheviks and his difficult process of recovery after the war from his serious injuries.

Mikhail Zoshchenko's autobiographical novella *Before Sunrise* (1943), about how the author tried to overcome his chronic depression, negative emotions and fear of life, was banned and three years later the writer was expelled from the Soviet Writers' Union. After Stalin's death, attempts were made to clear his name, and he was eventually re-accepted into the union.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s Vladimir Tendryakov established his reputation with a more profound and memorable story, *Donna Anna*, which combines the same detailed depiction of the battlefield atmosphere with a portrayal of the disastrous effects of a Stalinist mentality on military behavior. *Donna Anna* is actually one of a series of eyewitness stories, autobiographical in nature.

Stalin's death in 1953 marked a new era in the development of Soviet literature usually referred to as the Thaw. Life writing of this period is represented by the autobiographical memoir.

Evgeny Evtushenko in his *A Precocious Autobiography* (1963) introduced snatches of his life experiences with his family, his grandfather, his schools years, his labor work on two geological expeditions, and his sorrow upon the news of Stalin's death.

Yury Olesha's *No Day Without a Line* (1965) is a collection of miscellaneous writings whose only common thread is that they all relate to the author's life and thoughts. They range from recollections of Olesha's childhood before the revolution, his ideas about literature in general and 20th century Russian literature in particular, and his impressions of famous cultural figures.

Ilya Erenburg's multi-volume *Memoirs: 1921-1941* (1961-65) recounts his memories of the historical events he had witnessed, and of his acquaintance with leading figures such as Sergey Yesenin, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Andrey Bely, Andrey Remizov, and Vsevolod Meyerhold. The *Memoirs* also included his recollections about Boris Pasternak Alexander Tairov, Marina Tsvetayeva, Osip Mandelshtam and Isaak Babel.

Yury Trifonov wrote his autobiography *The House on the Embankment* (1976) which embodied the everyday lives of his family and the residents living in a house on Embankment complex in Moscow. The novel covered the period of the Stalinist purges, the post-war late Stalinist time, and the stagnation.

Sergey Dovlatov's *The Preserve*'s (1983) plot was autobiographical, narrating a summer that was spent as a tour guide at the Pushkin Museum near Pskov, and reflected his views on provincial life. *Ours: A Russian Family Album* (1989) was another of Dovlatov's autobiographical works consisting of a collection of character sketches of four generations in the Soviet Union.

**Émigré Writers:** Kuprin's *The Junkers* (1932), written while an émigré, conveyed nostalgia for the Russia of his early childhood and his emotions during the long separation from his country.

Realist writer Ivan Bunin's autobiographical novel *The Life of Arseniev* (1952) was also from his émigré period. It was published in parts in France; later the complete version of the book appeared in New York. *The Life of Arseniev* depicted the narrator's childhood, his education, his ignorance, his struggles, and his emotions in the social and cultural atmosphere before and after the Revolution.

Émigré writer Ivan Shmelev's *Pilgrimage* was an autobiographical work of his own first pilgrimage to Trinity-Sergius in the 1930s.

Vladimir Nabokov's *Speak Memory* was an autobiographical memoir containing twelve short stories about his childhood days in an aristocratic family in pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg from 1903 until his emigration to America in 1940; and three stories about his émigré life at Cambridge, in Berlin and in Paris.

Andrey Sinyavky's autobiography *Goodnight!* was published after his emigration to France in 1984. In his novel he attempted to find the meaning of his life in the Soviet Union, his role as a writer and his thoughts on literature and ethical questions.

**Women Writers:** Anastasiya Verbitskaya's autobiography *To My Reader* echoes her childhood and youth and traces her development into confirmed individualist in conflict with the revolutionaries and their ethos of selfless service to the state.

Valentina Dmitrieva wrote her autobiography, *The Way it Was* in the 1920s to document her difficult transition from a peasant daughter to a physician and a writer, and her acquaintances with the literary thinkers and intellectuals.

Anastasiya Tsvetaeva in her *Reminiscences* echoes the psychological shifts she went through in her first twenty years, and examines her youth from the perspective of tolerant old age.

Nina Berberova wrote her autobiography, *The Italics Are Mine* to portray her acquaintances with many influential Russian writers of the 20$^{th}$ century.

Osip Mandeshtam's wife Nadezhda Mandelshtam's autobiographical story *Hope Against Hope* reflected her life with Osip, and the daily struggle to survive in most desperate circumstances during Stalin's Soviet Union.

The autobiographical trilogy *The Little Caftan*, *The Polack*, and *The Break* (1930-31) written by Vera Gedroits was originally published under the masculine name Sergey, indicating possibly that conventional sex roles were merely arbitrary.

Journey into the Whirlwind was Evgeniya Ginzburg's account of her time in prisons and labor camps that included a two-year stint in solitary confinement.

Lidiya Chukovskaya's *Going Under* (1949) was an attempt to portray the Stalinist epoch, a period that destroyed people physically, mentally, and morally with its cruelty.

Anna Akhmatova's *Requiem* (1963-64) was a cycle of poems about the Great Terror, the suffering of people, and her personal life during the time of terror and her son's arrest.