



THE NOVEL IN THE WORK OF RUSSIAN WRITERS OF THE LATE 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT: - The beginning of the 20th Century marked an era of unprecedented and radical changes in social structures, economic systems, and political organizations among other spheres of life. Various literary schools of thought developed and each had a distinct artistic approach and ideological aspects. The Russian literature developed as a major way to learn about the Russian culture and worldview coupled with ways of loving, fighting, and expression. This period ranks as the Silver Age of the Russian literature and it served the urgent mission to provide the Russian citizens with a kind of truth, which could only be conveyed through literature in a censored society.

KEYWORDS: The Silver Age developed the most prominent individual writers including Doctor Zhivago, Vladimir Maykovsky, Vladimir Makanin, Sasha Sokolov, and Vladimir Sorokin among others.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will evaluate the Russian literature with close reference to the works of the aforementioned authors and show that their ideological perspectives offered the most promising directions for understanding the 20th Century Russia. These authors aimed at interpreting the evidence about events that were experienced through the 20th Century. However, this paper will show that suffering was the main theme, which was greatly highlighted by the myriad divergent individual

interests and addressing this issue was the central focus in the Russian literature.

The Russian 20th Century literature has been widespread and highly utilized for good reasons, simply because one can learn about gender issues coupled with tracing the literary themes like death, love, war, revolution and punishment. Following the rapid revolutions of the 20th Century, realism was no longer the driving factor of the Russian literature (Brown 42). The rejection of the ancient literary models and change of values by many writers enhanced the development of modernism

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literary. Modernism was viewed as a response to socio-economic, political, and scientific changes within a certain period.

Modernism “emphasized the issue of gender, class, and pursuit for knowledge” (Platt and Brandenberger 86). In the early 20th Century, a sense of hopelessness was developing amongst many people and it was becoming evident that nothing was reliable to respond to the rising issues. Modernism embraced scientific innovation and viewed the progress as a rapid break from the past traditions of the previous centuries. Brown defines this period as an era characterized by the pursuit for uniqueness through art and poetry (37). Nevertheless, some authors regarded the radical leftist ideals as necessary to end the violence that characterized almost all aspects of the Russian society. This perspective was popular because people knew that literature would have a widespread impact on a huge audience and realism was seen as a style that the public had well known and could easily appreciate. However, this aspect did not alter the efforts to adopt and appreciate the impacts of the modernizing world.

Following the effects of the unrest of revolutions and the Stalin’s regime, the 20th Century authors sought to address the suffering that the public experienced as well as the social ills fueled by the Communist regimes. For instance, Vladimir Makanin is a Soviet writer whose writing style assumes a realist form. He uses novels and short stories to demonstrate the psychological implications that Russian citizens encounter in their lives. In his 1980 novel, the Antileader, Makanin depicted the kind of suffering that Russians were undergoing due to poor political and economic ideologies of the Communist leaders (Platt and Brandenberger 38).

Although, Stalin’s ideologies had been abandoned following his death, the resulting

economic impacts prolonged and were greatly magnified during the economic depression of the 1960s. Literature was one of the influential channels via which anti-communist leaders could enlighten the public since the regimes were hostile to public meetings.

Role of Individual identity

Apparently, The Russian 20th Century history is easily accessible via documented literature that helps current scholars to learn about issues such as representations of minority groups in the Soviet regime. The Soviet era was defined by ideological differences, misguided objectives, and lack of peace, thus tending towards war. This aspect made life unbearable and struggle in society coupled with duel amongst ideologies characterized the 20th century literature. Many thinkers and prominent writers emphasized the aspects of individualist philosophy, which was anchored in the values of freedom and individuals. Numerous writings by Boris Pasternak expressed this tradition of liberalism and pluralism, which attracted support from the masses and scholars in the field of politics. For instance, Pasternak was motivated by the escalation of war between the Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. He repeatedly assisted in sensitizing the public about what was going on and the implications of the war through literature (Platt and Brandenberger 50). This demonstrated the big role played by literature when communicating to the masses.

Gender issues have been a widespread topic among many writers, and thus during the mid-20th Century, gender emerged as a key factor in the Russian literature. Women played a major role in shaping the Russian literature, but their judgment and convictions had always been received with contempt by the male dominated society. They were regarded as feminine, weak, submissive, and stupid. Male philosophers and writers depicted women as

conveniences, necessary for maintaining a household and bringing pleasure to men. Women were seen as enemies of civilization whereas order, theory, and reason were termed as masculine traits.

This perception about women was morally wrong and served the interest of men to remain dominant. This assertion is evident in the way men dominated the literary field with a few female authors rising at the end of the 20th century. Pasternak, in his publication about Dr. Zhivago, shows that in the first half of the 20th Century, a steady family life was the common theme, which motivated political stability. He discovered that women were essential to bringing the much-needed change since wars were claiming many men, thus creating a gap, which had to be filled by women (Dobrenko and Balina 72). Consequently, the 20th Century literature gradually changed its perception about women and started to address the new roles of females in society.

The roles of men were highly distinguished from those of women during the early 20th Century. Men took roles outside the homes such as family representatives, farming, and military officials, while women concentrated on household chores. However, modernization later altered the social organization and the individuals' influence on the social system deteriorated, thus leading to change in gender-oriented roles. Various authors and the government encouraged equal access to education and competition for jobs. In addition, Stalin's regime and the World War II led to massive loss of men. This aspect reduced the male population substantially, thus creating opportunities for women to fill the various men's duties in several sectors, hence transforming them to women's career.

This aspect shows that the Russian literature was appropriate and timely because it

described the status quo from which the women were motivated to stand firm and fight for their place in the society. Creating counter environment initiated a perception that enlightened women to respond assertively to the changing world (Brown 50). Initially, the Russian leaders expressed good ideas, but due to human failings, the ideas were ignored as the fight for change transformed into a civil war. Pasternak used literature to cleverly demonstrate that the suffering caused by the misguided upheavals were very devastating to Russian community.

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