

Introduction: Parody, Satire and Intertextuality in Russian Literature

Universally popular in the West, where a free press is taken for granted, parody, satire and intertextuality have typically functioned in Russian literature, constrained until recently by the censorship, as commentators on societal vices or shortcomings. Nor is this the only role they play. Since Russian literature has drawn on foreign models early on, the references to external texts or situations inherent in parody, satire and intertextuality have figured prominently in the evolution and fluctuation of literary genres and schools. Russia's early debt to Byzantine exemplars set the stage for the later wholesale borrowing characteristic of seventeenth- and, especially, eighteenth-century Russian literature, with the occasionally uneasy synthesis between native and foreign practice encouraging a Russian preoccupation with cultural self-definition, genres and schools. In the Russian context, the doubling or dialogism inherent in parody and intertextuality can endow borrowed texts or genres with a national, indigenous "spin."¹ Given the significance of parody and

¹ No single writer more aptly exemplifies this bivalent patterning than the great literary pioneer Aleksandr Pushkin, "one of the first Russian writers to make the tradition conscious of itself as both European *and* other and to teach it to borrow and rework prior sources—often ones that were foreign and therefore in the reading public's eye privileged—in a way that was mature, self-confident, edged with parody, incessantly *dialogic*."

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intertextuality, then, in Russian literature, it is not surprising to find a number of the most important writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from Dostoevsky and Tolstoy to Zamyatin and Mayakovsky, turning to this mode.²

Parody

Parody refers back to a primary text providing the inspiration or impetus for a secondary one that incorporates or echoes it. Familiarity with the primary text is crucial, enabling parody to make its point. Unlike stylization, which simply recalls an original, parody mixes or reverses texts, creating in its wake an effect different or even opposite from the one originally intended by the parodied model.³ The crucial distinction between parody and stylization lies in the presence or absence of this critical variance between texts. Where stylization underscores similarity, parody stresses difference.⁴ Refusing to stay on a semantic fence, parody asserts itself by passing judgment on the original model. It emerges victorious in a contest of semantic rivalry, echoing an earlier utterance and then establishing

David Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors: Alexander Pushkin and the Life of the Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 39; emphasis in original. Tynianov comments on the central role of Pushkin as well, noting that nineteenth-century Russian writers were engaged in a "silent struggle with Pushkin..." Iurii Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory* (Priboi, 1929; reprint Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1985), 412.

² Can a later movement be inherently superior to its predecessor? As Linda Hutcheon points out, change does not necessarily mean evolution, which presupposes some sort of improvement. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 36.

³ Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, 416.

⁴ Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 20.

itself as the new authoritative voice. Parody, notes Gary Saul Morson,

aims to discredit an act of speech by redirecting attention from its text to a compromising context. That is, while the parodist's ironic quotation marks frame the linguistic form of the original utterance, they also direct attention to the *occasion* (more accurately, the parodist's version of the occasion) of its *uttering*.⁵

The "semantic intention" inherent in parody directly opposes the original one of the primary text,⁶ which was deliberately chosen to be familiar—even obvious—to the reader. Not just simple mimicry, since imitation can flatter, parody relies on ironic inversion of an original model to establish a distance between texts.⁷ Bakhtin argues that "parody is a double-voiced utterance designed to be interpreted as the expression of two speakers,"⁸ a type of satire in

⁵ Gary Saul Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre: Dostoevsky's Diary of a Writer and the Traditions of Literary Utopia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 110-11, 113, emphasis in original; Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors*, 171.

⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 193, cited in Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 152.

⁷ Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 6, 32. Not that parody should be confused with travesty, which operates outside the stylistic sphere as a character, situation, or notion with comic overtones. See Emil Draitser, *Techniques of Satire: The Case of Saltykov-Ščedrin* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 128-29.

⁸ Morson, *The Boundaries of Genre*, 108.

which the author imitates an original text to distort and ridicule a literary "victim."⁹

With its inherently dual nature, parody typically functions as a metaliterary vehicle for the development and rise of new schools or movements. Directed against even respected works, the parodic mode operates as an instrument for evolution or modernization¹⁰ (sometimes as a realized metaphor, as when Pushkin equates "parody" with burying the dead and a coffin with a precursor's outmoded practice).¹¹ Tynianov maintained that literary evolution employed old forms in a new way, producing the comic contrast between new and old typical of parody.¹² Parody enables a writer to stand aloof and comment on an earlier text, precisely the dialogical model central to Bakhtin. Dostoevsky, for instance, at once echoes Gogol and sets up a critical distance from his predecessor.¹³ By the time we get to Dostoevsky, Gogol's stammering, humiliated clerk from "The Overcoat" has evolved into the "poet-cockroach" Captain Lebiadkin in *Demons* (*The Possessed*).

⁹ Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 68-69. Caryl Emerson has observed that this model can, perhaps, be reversed, with satire subsumed under parody, which always implies a second voice responding to a first one. Private correspondence.

¹⁰ Margaret A. Rose, *Parody//Meta-Fiction: An Analysis of Parody as a Critical Mirror to the Writing and Reception of Fiction* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 30.

¹¹ Bethea, *Realizing Metaphors*, 56-57, n. 96.

¹² Draitser, *Techniques of Satire*, 130. Draitser points out that humor, which lacks a critical distance, differs from satire. *Techniques of Satire*, 29-30, 39.

¹³ Iurii Tynianov, "Dostoevskii i Gogol (k teorii parodii)," *Poetika. Istoriia literatury. Kino* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 199. Tynianov here anticipates Hutcheon's critical distance.

Satire

Forced into political and social commentary in the absence of a free press and loyal opposition, Russian literature has often been compelled to function as a satirical counterweight to established authority. That this authority need not be strictly political—associated with an autocratic regime—is readily apparent from an examination of Dostoevsky's *Demons* or Lev Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. The doubling—dialogue—characteristic of parody distinguishes satire as well, especially Menippean satire, and the writer's authority—the only legitimate voice in the context of a given work—undermines the spurious dominance of an external target. With an eye to reform, satire critiques its victim, functioning as "a literary Trojan horse for which polite (or politic) artfulness produces a dissembling form, serving first to contain and conceal, and then to unleash the ... passions of the satirist."¹⁴ If that satirist follows the Juvenalian pattern, he will savagely attack his victim; should he wish instead to be more moderate, he will pattern his satire after Horace's.

Satire and parody have a respected pedigree reaching back to ancient Greece, with Aristotle categorizing poetry as hymns and panegyrics or "invectives" including "satire," "lampoon," or "parody."¹⁵ Satirical media can be broad, taunting or

¹⁴ Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe, "Theorizing Satire: A Retrospective and Introduction," in *Theorizing Satire: Essays in Literary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), esp. 2-9.

¹⁵ Robert C. Elliott, *The Power of Satire: Magic, Ritual, Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 4. Draitser reminds us that the Latin *satura* denotes "a mix of heterogeneous things." Draitser, *Techniques of Satire*, 101.

ridiculing literary works or even entire historical epochs. Satire can take the form of narrative fiction, such as Voltaire's *Candide*, or, like Aristophanes' *Frogs*, it can be dramatic.¹⁶

Characterized by a virus-like ability to inhabit other genres, satire need not be aggressive. An offensive tone is not satire's only definitive indicator; it can be playful as well as hostile, with Voltaire's *Candide* a case in point.¹⁷ A writer may himself supply a "pedigree," selecting an established satiric theme and labeling a novel or poem a "satire." Ideally, he should depict an absurd predicament, stun or shock the reader, and arouse a "blend of amusement and contempt."¹⁸ Satire needs two basic components: wit and an external victim.¹⁹ Applicable to a readily recognizable historical period and pointing to individuals or situations within a given society, satire then mounts an attack. Most significantly, it must refer to situations or events external to the text, establishing an opposition parallel to the stylistic one encountered in parody. Satirical polarities depicted in their extremes help to achieve maximum tension.²⁰ The restrictions of a partial dictatorship or totalitarian system, as in pre-revolutionary Russia or the former Soviet Union, tend to give rise to this kind of self-examination, typically communicated indirectly. Along with parody, satire emphasizes the gap between an ideal world and the real one and brings the external world into art,

¹⁶ Hightet, *Satire*, 14-15.

¹⁷ George Test, *Satire: Spirit and Art* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1991), 7-34.

¹⁸ Hightet, *Satire*, 15-23.

¹⁹ Northrup Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 224-25.

²⁰ Connery and Combe, "Theorizing Satire," 4-6.

making society fair game for the satirist.²¹ While these attacks may be candid during fairly relaxed times, political tyranny calls for a degree of caution and ingenuity, with indirect criticism far safer than blunt censure. Given the historically repressive nature of Russian political systems, the satiric mode in the Russian tradition is "reformative" rather than oppositionist,²² surely, the safer way to go. While satire can adhere to the Juvenalian pattern and savagely attack its victim,²³ Russian practice typically follows the gentler Horatian model, with literary characters frequently acting as a chorus to explicate events, functioning, according to the traditions of Menippean satire, as mouthpieces for ideas.²⁴ Lev Tolstoy's and Dostoevsky's characters illustrate this quite aptly, as do the visitors paying court at the beginning of Goncharov's *Oblomov*.

Intertextuality

In parody, a later text comments on an earlier one through ironic distance. Employing the same dialogical structure present in parody, satire attacks an external situation or institution. Intertextuality is clearly different, presupposing a relationship between different texts and using earlier texts to comment on a contemporary situation. The author of the second text acknowledges a debt to literary tradition instead of

²¹ Hutcheon, *Theory of Parody*, 104.

²² Karen Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire: A Genre Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

²³ Test, *Satire*, 28, 91.

²⁴ Frye, *Anatomy*, 309. Menippean satire is marked by an "extraordinary freedom of plot and philosophical invention," which makes it a natural choice for Dostoevsky. See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 114.

attempting to overturn it. Perhaps intertextuality fits in more readily with Tynianov's term "stylization," in which one text can recall another without a critical distance necessarily being present. Evgenii Zamyatin's novel *We* (the subject of Jerzy Kolodziej's essay) is just such a work. Backshadowing to multiple texts—Aleksandr Pushkin's "The Bronze Horseman" and Andrey Bely's novel *Petersburg—We* develops the Petersburg theme in the Soviet context. In Iurii Olesha's *Envy* (subject of the editor's essay) competing perceptions of reality, incorporated into visual images, vie for the reader's attention. As Josephine Woll reminds us in her essay, Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's sordid vision of Russian life in the late twentieth century—depicted in her novel *The Time: Night*—recalls Dostoevsky's scandals, rows and verbal violence. In all these examples, intertextuality grounds a later text in an established tradition and recalls an earlier or external source to make its point. Similar to both parody and satire in its reliance on external references, intertextuality functions in reverse by stressing similarity instead of difference and by incorporating the earlier text to bolster its case.

The Historical Background

Russian satire can be traced back to short tales of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,²⁵ with satire and parody imported from Western and Central Europe as part of a larger complex of the wholesale borrowing linked with modernization. In keeping with their traditional role as both critique and amusement, narratives of this period often function

²⁵ Richard L. Chapple, *Soviet Satire of the Twenties* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1980), 1-2.

as entertainment, not just invective. The association of satire and humor, plus the intimate involvement of the reader, would characterize Russian literature for the next three centuries. In the wry seventeenth-century tale "Frol Skobeev, the Rogue," for instance, the anonymous author treats his protagonist, a contemporary Muscovite social climber, with a healthy degree of contempt, inviting the reader to do the same. "Frol Skobeev" is more than just a thumbnail sketch of the "new man" on the rise. Its anonymous author judges not only the fluctuating social strata of Muscovite society in the late seventeenth century, but, more to the point, skewers the audience whose mores and social practices are distilled in the image of Frol, a superficially amusing yet intrinsically negative character.²⁶ In chastising readers and protagonists alike and, in effect, stuffing them into the same pigeonhole, "Frol Skobeev" anticipates Denis Fonvizin's comedic masterpieces of the eighteenth century. "Misery-Luckless-Plight," also from the seventeenth century, relies instead on intertextuality, looking backward to the religious literature of the medieval period to underscore change in contemporary society.

Characterized and shaped by wholesale borrowing from Western genres, eighteenth-century Russian literature—most notably satire and parody—turned to classical and French neo-classical models. Verse satire figures in this context not just as a critique of societal mores or conditions, but, like parody, plays a role in the evolution of genre. Neo-classical Russian satirists evolved beyond merely

²⁶ For comments on the role of the reader, see Caryl Emerson, "'The Queen of Spades' and the Open End," *Puškin Today*, ed. David M. Bethea (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 32, 35.

producing Russian versions of foreign works to make important original contributions. Antiokh Kantemir followed his translations of Boileau's and Horace's poetic satires with his own Russian versions. An important arbiter of style, Aleksandr Sumarokov was himself the author of eight satires.²⁷ Their contributions established a foundation that satirical poetry could build on later, in the nineteenth century. Aleksandr Pushkin's "Count Nulin" and "Little House in Kolomna" continued the neo-classical tradition of amusing verse satire, followed in this vein by Nikolai Nekrasov's "Who Can be Happy in Russia?" Satirical journals of the period functioned, however briefly, as critics of the status quo and carried on the venerable classical tradition of exposing an enemy while, at the same time, they furthered the evolution of satirical prose, itself crucial in shaping and defining prose genres in the eighteenth and, later, the nineteenth centuries. Emulating Addison's and Steele's *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, Fyodor Emin and Nikolai Novikov continued this tradition of journalistic satire.²⁸ Catherine the Great, no mean journalist herself, "censored" Novikov by shutting down his journal, *The Drone*. Novikov's attempted independence illustrates a crucial feature of the eighteenth century: the emergence of Russian literature as an autonomous voice in its own right. As Russian authority learned belatedly, the incorporation of Western models also meant exposure to Western values. Because parody and satire are, by definition, inherently critical, Russian literature imported the substance along with the form.

²⁷ Hugh McLean, "Satire," *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. Victor Terras (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 385.

²⁸ McLean, "Satire," 384-85.

The great eighteenth-century playwright Denis Fonvizin humorously lampooned societal shortcomings in his ever-popular comedies *The Minor* and *The Brigadier*, his double-edged dramas catching characters and audience alike in the same net. Fonvizin focused on his contemporary bifurcated society, characterized by an uneasy amalgamation of native plus partially digested foreign influences, his plays anticipating the conflicts between Slavophiles and Westernizers that emerged early in the nineteenth century. The earlier tradition of employing humor to chide the larger community—including the reader—was continued in the nineteenth-century theatre by such gifted dramatists as Aleksandr Griboedov in *Woe from Wit*, Nikolai Gogol in *The Inspector General*, and Aleksandr Sukhovo-Kobylin in his *Trilogy*. Griboedov documented the vices, petty and otherwise, of early nineteenth-century Moscow society. His reader/audience is at once hunter and prey, responsive to Griboedov's criticisms, yet the target of his invective. Griboedov's character Skalozub (Grinner) encapsulates this double-edged sword within his very name. Nor can the overall importance of Gogol in the development of Russian satire be underestimated.²⁹ His drama *The Inspector General* is a scathing indictment not only of the limitations of contemporary Russian society, but of human shortcomings generally (including, of course, the audience's). Gogol freezes the action at the end of the final scene, not only dehumanizing his personae

²⁹ Leslie Milne considers *Dead Souls* the first Russian picaresque novel to achieve a universal reputation as a "satirical panorama." Leslie Milne, "Satire," Malcolm V. Jones and Robin Feuer Miller, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Classical Russian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 86-89.

by rendering them inanimate, but also emphasizing the timelessness of his enterprise. Sukhovo-Kobylin opposes the writer's principled authority to the miscarriage of justice endemic in the Russian autocratic state.³⁰ *Krechinsky's Wedding*, first of the *Trilogy*, follows the French tradition of Eugène Scribe and the *pièce bien faite* (the well-made play), the intricately plotted, suspenseful comedy popular in contemporary Paris.³¹ In his middle play, *The Case*, the author shifts from comedy to a drama with tragic overtones, a classic confrontation between good and evil.³² *The Death of Tarelkin*, last of the *Trilogy*, draws on vaudeville elements of Parisian boulevard theatre and the Russian puppet theatre (combining thereby Western and Russian conventions). Because of its structure, this final piece lent itself well to experimental staging under the avant-garde director Vsevolod Meyerhold in 1922.³³

Aleksei Konstantinovich Tolstoy and his cousins the Zhemchuzhnikov brothers thrust parody to its logical extreme by inventing an author, Koz'ma Prutkov. Not only does Prutkov himself parody contemporary literature in his verse, his *poshlye* (banal) poetic themes mock the elevated status of the Romantic poet and any reader who might take him seriously. Prutkov enables his creators to take potshots at their targets in relative safety and, in

³⁰ See Harriet Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 15-54.

³¹ Harold Segel, "Introduction," *The Trilogy of Sukhovo-Kobylin* (New York: Dutton, 1969), xxiv-xxvii.

³² Elizabeth Stenbock-Fermor reminds us that "the problem of Good and Evil lies at the bottom of any *Menippean* satire." Elizabeth Stenbock-Fermor, "The Master and Margarita and Goethe's *Faust*, *Slavic and East European Journal* 13, no. 3 (Fall 1969): 310.

³³ Segel, "Introduction," xxxvii-xxlvii.

effect, parodies literature, literary creation, and other authors. As a literary fabrication, his twentieth-century echo is Andrei Sinyavsky's literary alter ego Abram Tertz, the subject of Caryl Emerson's essay.

Following the reign of the reactionary Tsar Nicholas I (1825-55), Russian literature and, especially, civic criticism began to make gingerly attempts to expose and correct major societal problems. Almost immediately after the publication of Goncharov's *Oblomov* in 1859, therefore, critics responded to the novel as a social document. Nikolai Dobroliubov's essay "What is Oblomovism?" ("Chto takoe oblomovshchina?"), which appeared in the same year, represents only the first of many such reactions. But Goncharov was not simply a "critical realist" bent on a detailed examination of societal ills; he was a brilliant parodist as well. Amy Singleton Adams' essay on *Oblomov* explores this aspect of Goncharov's genius. Throughout the novel, *The Odyssey* figures simultaneously as a backdrop and an echo of Russian "Homers," especially Antonii Pogorelsky (pen name of Aleksei Perovsky, who enjoyed enormous popularity early in the nineteenth century) and the literary idylls of the previous century.³⁴ Odysseus' return—hampered by numerous misadventures—is the focus of *The Odyssey*, echoed in the homecoming theme in *Oblomov*. But Goncharov's protagonist lacks Odysseus' heroic stature. Where *The Odyssey* is an epic, *Oblomov* functions as mock-epic, Oblomov's "return" to his miniature estate spoofing Odysseus' great quest. Goncharov's parodic masterpiece creates a "dialogue" (the essence of parody and satire) between Homer's original and contemporary texts, and functions as a satiric

³⁴ Robert A. Maguire, "The City," Jones and Miller, eds., *The Cambridge Guide to the Classic Russian Novel*, 29.

commentary on the idiosyncracies and flaws peculiar to Russian society on the eve of the liberation of the serfs, in 1861.

Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (Saltykov) is one of the dominant satirists of nineteenth-century literature. A Juvenalian satirist, Saltykov savaged Russian bureaucracy and the failings of Russian culture and society in *Provincial Sketches*, *Pompadours and Pompadouresses*, and *The Story of a Town*.³⁵ Despite denials to the contrary, he castigated Russian historians and historiography, themselves powerful shapers of the national image. That Russia had no formal tradition of historiography is significant here, since literature then had to step into the breach,³⁶ and Saltykov's town of "Glupov" ("Foolsville") drives this point thoroughly home. Echoing Koz'ma Prutkov's ingenuous foolishness, Saltykov's parody doubles back on itself in anticipation of Sinyavsky's later intricacy.

Bakhtin's conviction that parody is "double-voiced" is particularly apt for Dostoevsky, who frequently uses one character to double and undermine another in, for example, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Brothers Karamazov*, and, most significantly for our purposes here, *Demons*. Deborah Martinsen's essay examines Dostoevsky's treatment of Lebiadkin (in *Demons*) as a parodic double of his brother-in-law Stavrogin. Conflicts between these characters force the society tale—inherited from English and French literature—to its furthest realization, in effect exploding a genre too limited for the Russian context. Dostoevsky's ruthless parody opens up the novel to the metaphysical questions lying behind the physical details and the

³⁵ Chapple, *Satire*, 1-2.

³⁶ Svetlana Evdokimova, *Pushkin's Historical Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1.

immediate social issues that constitute the framework of the traditional novel. These confrontations highlight the very center of Dostoevsky's work: the larger questions of God's existence and man's place in the universe relative to God.

Central to Lev Tolstoy's castigation of societal foibles, satire, distinguishing his work from *Sebastopol' Sketches* to *War and Peace* and *Hadji Murad*, is the subject of Derek Maus's essay. Tolstoy's satirical tone flows quite naturally from his narrator, the supreme authority always ready to debunk or disparage characters who fail to measure up to his elevated standards. His assertion that his work is "true to life" gives Tolstoy enormous stature.³⁷ The more exalted a character's position in society and the greater the power he holds, the more likely he is to incur Tolstoy's invective. Negative traits vary according to the work, with cowardice skewered in his *Sebastopol Sketches* and self-mythology (especially Napoleon's) in *War and Peace*. The false values of Russian society provide a prime target in *Hadji Murad*.

The October Revolution of 1917, a watershed in Russian history and culture, established a great rift between the entrenched system that finally collapsed and a new one, initially identified with revolution itself, that would eventually deteriorate into stagnation interrupted periodically by stark terror. After October, parody and satire (and art in general) embarked down a dangerous path into unfamiliar terrain and found itself in the anomalous position of criticizing a system which, while not ideal, was assumed to be on the road to perfection.

³⁷ George Steiner, "A Reading Against Shakespeare," *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1995* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 116-21.

The role literature in general was expected to play throughout Soviet history produced an especially precarious environment for the (unofficial) parodist and satirist, whose work had traditionally touched on societal and political issues. The new Soviet regime, which allowed only a single official voice, undermined the dialogical structure basic to parodic and satirical writing by insisting on a monological apprehension of reality.

Official satire and parody, however, were champions of state control from the very beginnings of the Soviet rule, when pro-regime writers mass-produced satirical feuilletons for newspapers and magazines.³⁸ The Soviet journal *Krokodil* (*The Crocodile*), for example, took aim at such safe targets as "sleepy street sweepers, drunken plumbers, and inefficient factory guards,"³⁹ targeted as impediments to the realization of a perfect society. In its primary role as a "corrector of morals," "official" Soviet satire was more closely akin to the classical tradition than to the experimental literature of the Silver Age.⁴⁰ Official satire was directed against the *disempowered* rather than the empowered, the standard satirical pattern. At this early stage of Soviet culture, satire, like Cubo-Futurism and Constructivism, was an enthusiastic partisan of the new regime, and official parody and satire complied with the

³⁸ Chapple, *Satire*, 3-4.

³⁹ Draitser, *Techniques of Satire*, 34.

⁴⁰ I am grateful to the anonymous reader for this insight. Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky) also maintains that socialist realism was much closer to the eighteenth century than the nineteenth. Abram Tertz (Andrei Sinyavsky) "Chto takoe sotsialisticheskii realizm?" *Fantasticheskii mir Abrama Tertza* (Paris: Inter-Language Literary Associates, 1967), 431.

monological model inherent in the new system.⁴¹ Unofficial satire of the nineteen-twenties climaxed with Mikhail Zoshchenko's immensely popular short stories and Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov's picaresque novels *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Little Golden Calf*.⁴² Evgenii Zamyatin's *We* alludes to earlier texts and artifacts associated with the culture displaced by the revolution, creating a dystopia that castigates the contemporary system. The most important subtext in *We* is the Petersburg motif, dominant in the work of such nineteenth-century writers as Pushkin, Gogol, Lev Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and resurfacing in the twentieth century in Andrey Bely's eponymous novel *Petersburg*, which captures the explosiveness of Russian society on the eve of the 1905 Revolution while anticipating the upheavals of 1917. Bely echoes major writers who preceded him: from Pushkin, Gogol, and Dostoevsky to Tolstoy and Chekhov. His misquotes of Pushkin and allusions to Tchaikovsky's opera librettos based on Pushkin's originals set up complex, additional intertextual paradigms with parodic overtones. As Gary Saul Morson reminds us, an anti-genre (parodic genre) parodies a target genre that operates as a subtext.⁴³ But Bely turns parody on its head in *Petersburg* and, like Bitov in *Pushkin House*, instead uses a subtext to deflate the (apparent) hegemony of contemporary authorities, be they governmental or revolutionary (both identified with Peter the Great, who functions in the novel as a form of self-parody). The very paradigm of text/subtext is built into the city of Petersburg: an uneasy amalgam of

⁴¹ For a discussion of the monological limitations of Soviet Marxism, see my *Revolution Betrayed: Jurij Oleša's Envy* (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1996).

⁴² Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, 2.

⁴³ Morson, *Boundaries of Genre*, 115-16.

authority and rebellion, of Russian tradition versus the West, marked Petersburg from its very beginnings in 1703. This uncomfortable, essentially, untenable combination is reproduced in the parodic dialogue of the novel and, Jerzy Kolodziej notes, dominates in *We*.

In *Red Cavalry*, Isaak Babel employs *skaz* and oral usage as satirical devices to undermine the dubious aims of the new Soviet order. Babel focuses on the traditional culture of the illiterate and semi-literate masses and, through his imagery—a twisted echo of the Russian folk tale—he provides a critical examination of the horrific impact that the October Revolution and subsequent civil strife created in Soviet Russian society. Babel explodes the very foundations of the revolution by alluding to its fatal impact on those very masses in whose name it had been made.

Iurii Olesha, whose novel *Envy* is the subject of the editor's essay, focuses on the primacy of the visual image and the imagination as counterweights to contemporary political dominance and authority. Olesha divides his characters into two camps that reflect each other through the visual imagery of the novel: visionaries unable to act, and actors devoid of any vision. The shift in narrators—completely antithetical to Lev Tolstoy's practice—between parts 1 and 2 results in a mirrored structure, itself a form of self-parody. By teasing, nudging, and chiding his readers, Olesha recalls Pushkin, anticipates Sinyavsky/Tertz, and reminds us of the creative intricacy and playfulness characteristic of parodic and intertextual literature.

Zamyatin's imaginative evocation of a future dystopia is echoed later in Mayakovsky's dramas *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, which Julie Cassiday treats in her essay. Both plays were directed by

Vsevolod Meyerhold and followed on the success of Mayakovsky's revolutionary miracle-play, *Mystery-Bouffe*. The staging of these later pieces met with resistance on the part of the political establishment,⁴⁴ at least in part because, by the end of the first revolutionary decade, the new regime felt uncomfortable with satire and parody. Meyerhold's and Mayakovsky's experimental theater would also have been distasteful to a government that increasingly favored either realism—modelled on Lev Tolstoy's practice but soon to degenerate into socialist realism—or the propaganda art that flourished in the twenties. Mayakovsky, who incorporated a critical sketch of life under NEP (the New Economic Policy) during the nineteen-twenties in *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, anticipated a sterile future closely patterned on the unappetizing dystopia of Zamyatin's *We*.

Aesthetic concerns important in the nineteenth century also figure significantly in the twentieth, with such writers as Arkhangel'skii and Sinyavsky (Tertz) stressing literary issues. Arkhangel'skii's parodies on Mikhail Zoshchenko are a case in point. Inspired in his turn by Gogol, Zoshchenko was the prolific author of numerous amusing yarns. A foremost humorist/satirist of the nineteen-twenties, his work inspired not only imitators, but also parodists. Arkhangel'skii's later stories "unmask" Zoshchenko's parody and focus in a cunning way on the limitations of Zoshchenko's readers, as well as on the strictures of contemporary criticism. Arkhangel'skii brought out a collection of parodies in 1930, with the infamous critic Leopold Averbakh providing the introduction for this volume. The elusiveness of his parody probably accounts for its

⁴⁴ Edward J. Brown, *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (New York: Collier Books, 1963), 64.

survival even during the increasingly tense and dangerous conditions of the nineteen-thirties.

Satire and parody suffered under socialist realism, the only officially acceptable form of art from 1934 until recent changes under *glasnost'* and *perestroika*. Yet, even in this cultural wasteland, they survived and continued to thrive underground, with the absurd extremism of socialist realism providing fertile ground. The most prominent parodist who continued to work into the nineteen-thirties was the great absurdist Daniil Kharms (Yuvachev). Along with Aleksandr Vvedensky, Konstantin Vaginov and Nikolai Zabolotsky, among others, Kharms was a member of OBERIU (*Ob'edinenie real'nogo iskusstva*, The Association for Real Art), an avant-garde Leningrad group that flourished in the late nineteen-twenties. Committed to experimentation, Kharms and his fellow Oberiuty (OBERIU members) soon ran into trouble. Kharms, who was initially arrested in 1931, several years before the beginnings of the Great Terror, eventually perished of starvation in a camp ten years later.⁴⁵ His parody, intimately connected with aesthetics as well as politics, was metaliterary as well as social in its thrust. Perhaps Kharms engaged, to at least an extent, in the self-mockery that figures in the work of his great avant-garde predecessor Andrey Bely.⁴⁶

Officially-sanctioned satire re-entered literature during World War II as a part of the war effort and served as propaganda directed against the

⁴⁵ Henryk Baran, "Kharms, Daniil Ivanovich," *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. Terras, 221.

⁴⁶ For self-mockery in Bely, see Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad, "Notes," Andrey Bely, *Petersburg*, trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), n. 316.

Nazis—only to be eclipsed once more with the end of the conflict in 1945.⁴⁷ The death of Stalin (March 1953) eased constrictions in all facets of Soviet life, with the arts benefitting enormously from this relaxation. Circumscribed yet tangible freedom transformed literature, and limited official criticism of the system reappeared openly after a hiatus of over two decades. In 1956, the Twentieth Party Congress and Nikita Khrushchev's secret speech brought about a striking transformation. Once Khrushchev had denounced Stalin's excesses and condemned the "Cult of Personality," writers could be more open in their censure of the system.⁴⁸ Harkening back to the nineteen-twenties and drawing especially on the work of Mayakovsky, Zoshchenko, Bulgakov, and Il'f and Petrov,⁴⁹ satire and parody flourished in the more liberal atmosphere that prevailed following Stalin's death (albeit with alternating repressive intervals), and writers frequently paid only lip service to the tenets of socialist realism.⁵⁰

The final essays of the present collection, on Sergei Dovlatov, Andrei Sinyavsky (Abram Tertz) and Lyudmila Petrushevskaya, deal with this era. Dovlatov flourished during the period of stagnation (*zastoi*) that characterized the later days of the Soviet regime under Brezhnev. And while his ironic satire is directed to some extent against an aging and bankrupt political system, Alexander Prokhorov

⁴⁷ Peter Henry, *Modern Soviet Satire* (London: Collet's, 1974), ix-x.

⁴⁸ Deming Brown, *Soviet Russian Literature Since Stalin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 4.

⁴⁹ Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, 1-2.

⁵⁰ As the anonymous reader reminded me, by this point socialist realism was observed more in the breach than in actual practice.

and Helena Goscilo contend in their essay that Dovlatov's scope is larger. His is a comprehensive assault, perhaps similar to what we find in Anton Chekhov's works, on the oddities and shortcomings of the human condition. Dovlatov indulges in ironic asides and drops hints to the reader, stressing the basic absurdity of human behavior: the ridiculous situations that we create for ourselves and those visited upon us by a fate with a paradoxical sense of humor.

Dovlatov's use of irony was typical for parody in general and for the *zastoi* in particular, since irony can underscore the "critical distance of parody."⁵¹ "A collapse of hopes and loss of faith brought the turn to irony in the literature of the 1970s," Anatoly Vishevsky stresses, noting that "sociopolitical processes create a dominant taste, a special approach to literary and cultural texts... In the time of disillusionment and despair of the 1970s, people were especially attuned to irony...,"⁵² with irony clearly central to Dovlatov's *Ours*. Like Chekhov's characters, Dovlatov's in *Ours* are typical of the larger society in which they (dys)function. Dovlatov's ironic smile is especially wry when considered in the context of a collapsing system, resembling Chekhov's own reaction during an earlier (and comparable) period of social and political disintegration.

With Sinyavsky/Tertz we have self-directed parody defined by narratorial shifts and focused on the aesthetic theme established earlier by Prutkov, Olesha, and Arkhangel'skii. Parody in Sinyavsky/Tertz is frequently internal and, Caryl

⁵¹ Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire*, 7.

⁵² Anatoly Vishevsky, *Soviet Literary Culture in the 1970s: The Politics of Irony*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1993), 5-6.

Emerson reminds us, is a bifurcated entity critiquing itself and, in the process, questioning the established conceptions that a culture holds about itself and its most sacred values. The very divisions between subject and critic, orthodoxy and iconoclasm, propriety and naughtiness underscore a basic schism in human behavior in general and within Russian culture in particular. As Sinyavsky/Tertz gently instructs us, parody and satire basically exist to remind us that the reality we think we see and comprehend slides out of our grasp, larger than any single political system or literary method.

In his brilliant novel *Pushkinskii dom* (*Pushkin House*), Andrei Bitov looks back to Bely's remarkable achievement in *Petersburg*. Like Bely, Bitov stresses Pushkin's central and abiding role in Russian culture. Bely's references to earlier writers, most notably Pushkin, underscore the emptiness of his own revolutionary era. How much more barren by comparison is the world of Bitov's novel, with Pushkin reduced to a bust in a museum and his values subordinated to the very societal opportunism he detested. By demonstrating how far standards have fallen in the mediocre banality of contemporary Russian society, Bitov recalls Iurii Tynianov's argument that almost all Russian writers of the nineteenth century carried on a "silent struggle" with Pushkin.⁵³

Liudmila Petrushevskaya's caustic excoriation of contemporary Soviet and post-Soviet society echoes themes touched on in Dostoevsky's works and brings us, in a sense, full circle, back to her great nineteenth-century predecessor. Women populate the laboratory where Petrushevskaya conducts her

⁵³ Tynianov, *Arkhaisty i novatory*, 412. My thanks to the anonymous reader for the suggestion to comment on *Pushkinskii dom*.

experiments. The weakness of their position parodies Dostoevsky's protagonists and symbolizes a society in disintegration. In her essay on Liudmila Petrushevskaya, Josephine Woll proposes that Dostoevsky's internal "drawing room" scenes are microcosms of tensions and dilemmas found in the larger society and hint at the most important social and philosophical questions dominant in his time. Petrushevskaya focuses on individuals—specifically women, and their relationships with one another and the men and children in their lives—as a way of addressing vital contemporary issues. The fault lines running through the fragmented families in her works echo stresses underlying the entire society, with its loss of a center, its harsh everyday reality, its hopelessness and pessimism. The towering political apparatus that progressively overwhelmed writers in the course of the Soviet period and loomed over Zamyatin's and Olesha's works has now disappeared. Balanced at the edge of the black hole that has replaced the previous oppressive state, Petrushevskaya's post-Soviet citizens peer into the void. The societal wreckage resulting from Soviet political oppression, ominously present in the form of a vacuum, is echoed by the distant powerful wind scouring her work. Her biting parody, lacking the playfulness that distinguishes Sinyavsky/Tertz, serves as a reminder of the perilous state of Russian affairs at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of an uncertain future.