SATIRICAL ELEMENT: FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

SATIRICAL ELEMENT: FROM THE 19TH CENTURY TO CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

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This thesis explores the function of satire in Russian literature, from the late 19th-century Russian Empire to the Soviet era and then post-Soviet Russia, examining how it has adapted to shifting political ideologies and social dispositions across these different periods. This paper outlines the main cultural movements, along with the political events, underlining satire's evolution as a tool for socio-political critique and reflection, subtle resistance, and even support for the current regime. Through the works of prominent Russian authors such as Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, Anton Chekhov, Mikhail Bulgakov, Ilf and Petrov and contemporary writers like Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Dmitry Bykov, the study indicates how satire works as a flexible medium capable of challenging authority. Locating within the broader area of Eurasian Studies, this thesis demonstrates how satire in Russia responded to and critiqued civic life and authority throughout these periods. Combining literary-historical analysis with socio-political perspectives, the study underlines the enduring popularity of satire both as a mirror and as a complex instrument for navigating Russian society.

Keywords: 19th Century Russian Empire, Soviet Era, Post-Soviet Russia, Russian Literature

ÖZ

19. YÜZYIL'DAN GÜNÜMÜZE RUSYA'DA HİCİV UNSURU

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Bu tez, 19. yüzyıl Rus İmparatorluğu'ndan Sovyet dönemine ve ardından Sovyet sonrası Rusya'ya kadar Rus edebiyatında hicvin işlevini incelemektedir. Farklı siyasi ideolojilere ve toplumsal yapıların değişimlerine nasıl uyum sağladığını araştırmakta, hicvin sosyo-politik eleştiri, toplumsal yansıma, direniş ve hatta rejimi destekleme aracı olarak kullanıldığını vurgulamaktadır. Rus edebiyatının önde gelen yazarlarından Nikolay Gogol, Ivan Gonçarov, Anton Çehov, Mihail Bulgakov, Ilf ve Petrov ile çağdaş yazarlardan Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin ve Dmitry Bykov'un eserleri hicvin otoriteye meydan okuyabilen esnek bir ortam olarak nasıl işlediğini göstermektedir. Daha geniş bir alan olan Avrasya Çalışmaları çerçevesinde konumlanan çalışma, hicvin bu dönemlerde sivil yaşama ve otoriteye nasıl yanıt verdiğini ve eleştiriler ortaya koyduğunu aktarmaktadır. Edebi-tarihsel analiz ile sosyo-politik perspektifleri birleştirerek ortaya konan bu araştırma, hicvin Rus toplumunu anlamaya yönelik hem bir ayna hem de çok yönlü bir araç olduğunu savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: 19. Yüzyıl Rus İmparatorluğu, Sovyet Dönemi, Sovyet Sonrası Rusya, Rus Edebiyatı

To my beloved grandmother, İkbal

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope and Objectives

This thesis, situated within the field of Eurasian Studies, describes the specific role that satirical literature has played in the development of Russian civic society from the 19th century to the present. Rather than focusing solely on literary analysis, this study examines satire as a socio-political tool that has reflected and critiqued the conditions of the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia. Each period represents a distinct form of authoritarianism, structured by specific political ideologies, structures, and levels of state control over cultural production. This study aims to reveal how satire has consistently articulated issues of censorship, public dissent, and social critique during the mentioned timeline, proving its adaptability and resilience under different intensities of repression.

The primary objective of this thesis is to uncover how satire has adapted within these three regimes as a medium for popular discourses, promoting societal introspection and sometimes even resistance. It explores the way in which the specific social, political, and cultural contexts of each period influenced the evolving nature and role of satire as both a literary and societal tool. This study examines the similarities and differences in satirical approaches across these periods. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how Russian society has navigated its relationship with authority and censorship through satire. Key questions informing this thesis include:

> How has Russian literature, from the Russian Empire through the Soviet era to contemporary times, reflected and responded to authoritarianism, censorship, and socio-political change?

Why has satire remained a consistent and effective tool within Russian literature for critiquing and navigating these forces across distinct historical periods?

1.2 Literature Review

Russian satire is a genre inextricably linked with historical and political contexts. Many scholars have explored its relationship with Russian social structures and governance. This thesis takes a specific approach, borrowing from the expertise of literary studies, but places satire within the broader paradigm of Eurasian Studies. Notable scholars such as Evgeny Dobrenko and Carly Emerson have examined literature's role in reflecting and critiquing Russian societal structures.[1] Additionally, academics like Michael Bakhtin, Boris Eikhenbaum (a representative of Russian formalism), Irina Paperno, Katerina Clark, and D.S. Mirsky have contributed to the study of Russian satirical literature and its political, historical, and social context.[2]

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) was a Russian philosopher and literary critic who became a significant intellectual figure, focusing on the social nature of language, literature, and the meaning of the two world wars.[3] In his most famous works, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929,1963), *Rabelais and His World* (1975), and *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Bakhtin explains theories of language,

[1] For further information on these scholars, see "Caryl Emerson," Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Princeton University, accessed July 23, 2024, https://slavic.princeton.edu/people/caryl-emerson; see also "Evgeny Dobrenko," School of Languages and Cultures, University of Sheffield, accessed July 23, 2024, https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/slc/people/academic/evgeny-dobrenko.

[2] For further information on these academics, see "Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin," *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, Encyclopedia.com, accessed July 11, 2024, https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/mikhail-mikhailovich-bakhtin; see also Carol Any, "Boris Eikhenbaum in OPOIAZ: Testing the Limits of the Work-Centered Poetics," *Slavic Review* 49, no. 3 (1990): 409–26, https://doi.org/10.2307/2499987; see also "Irina Paperno," Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, University of California, Berkeley, accessed July 23, 2024, https://slavic.berkeley.edu/people/irina-paperno/; see also "Katerina Clark," Comparative Literature Department, Yale University, accessed July 23, 2024, https://complit.yale.edu/people/katerina-clark; see also Charles A. Moser, "Literature: Prince Mirsky: A History," *The American Scholar* 61, no. 2 (1992): 260–66, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41212012.

[3] "Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin," *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, Encyclopedia.com, accessed July 11, 2024. https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/mikhail-mikhailovich-bakhtin.

literature, and meaning.[4] During the Soviet period, Bakhtin witnessed many historical and political changes in Russia. Therefore, his theories and critiques embody the essence of this period and the Russian subconscious. In his book on Dostoevsky, he explains that the meaning is shaped by the interaction between the reader, the work, and the author, each influencing the other, with prevailing social and political forces manipulating this entire process.[5] Moreover, his theories, such as polyphony, heteroglossia, dialogism, carnival, and grotesque realism, have introduced new ways of understanding the nature of meaning in literature.[6] For example, Bakhtin outlines carnival and grotesque images in Gogol's works,[7] with the exaggerated characters and mocking tone (satire) challenging social structure.

Similarly, Prince Dmitry Petrovich Svyatopolk-Mirsky (1890-1939) was a Russian literary critic and historian[8] who became one of the most influential Russian literature critics of the 20th century. D. S. Mirsky was born into a well-known and enlightened family, which afforded him a higher education.[9] In *A History of Russian Literature*, his most famous work, he provides an overview of the progress of Russian literature from its beginning to the early 1900s and demonstrates the parallels between Russian writers and English, American, European, or classical writers, emphasizing standard literary features across vast periods.[10] He also maintained a keen awareness of the historical contexts.[11] D. S. Mirsky did not only

[4] Ibid.

[5] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Mikhail Bakhtin," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 19, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mikhail-Bakhtin.

[6] For further information on theories of Bakhtin, see M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981).

[7] Mikhail Bakhtin and Patricia Sollner, "Rabelais and Gogol: The Art of Discourse and the Popular Culture of Laughter," *Mississippi Review* 11, no. 3 (1983): 34–50, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20133922.

[8] Charles A. Moser, "Literature: Prince Mirsky: A History," *The American Scholar* 61, no. 2 (1992): 260, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41212012.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 262.

[11] Ibid.

focus on the literary text but also the social, cultural, and political circumstances that shaped these texts. Remarkably, he underlines the influence of historical events on Russian writers.

In his analysis of Soviet readership, Evgeny Dobrenko examines how the Soviet state purposefully created readers as part of the collective identity of "reader-people." According to him, literature in the Soviet era was a means of ideological transformation, not created for individual or artistic purposes but to inculcate socialist attitudes among citizens as part of a state-initiated project of "reshaping society." The Soviet readers were not passive consumers but were called upon to be active participants in this ideological enterprise, where the "guidance of reading" was an institutional way of combining cultural and ideological production. Further, Dobrenko also mobilizes the idea of Yulii Aikhenvald that "the reader himself is a critic," showing how the Soviet regime exploited that notion by placing readers as working agents of state ideology rather than autonomous interpreters.[12]

Through these comparisons, Dobrenko illustrates how individualized literary culture eventually became a state-controlled and collectivist framework in which literature became a medium for social conformity. His work emphasizes the singularity of Soviet literature in forming one single socialist identity and simultaneously underlines how the Soviet approach to readership differs from the traditional views of literature as a domain of subjective withdrawal into inner life and intellectual autonomy.[13]

Alexander Etkind's *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* discusses the specific model of Russian imperialism, concentrating on "internal colonization" against the conventional European colonial model. He argues that while most empires were overseas in their dominion, Russia made its colonial effort inward, extending control over its heartland and fostering a center-periphery relationship within its borders. The political control of various ethnic groups within Russia and

[12] Evgeny Dobrenko, *The Making of the State Reader*, trans. Jesse M. Savage (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 1–42.

[13] Ibid.

their cultural assimilation involved this process, placing the state in an ambiguous position as both colonizers and quasi-colonized. Within this framework, Etkin argues that Russia's approach to colonization created a complex internal hierarchy that reflects and shapes the structure and identity of Russian society.[14]

Likewise, it shows how Russian literature and culture reflected and critiqued these colonial practices. He considers Russian literature a half-strong and versatile institution within the Empire, creating a shared cultural identity across social divisions while challenging the imperial hierarchies. For example, taking the accounts of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy, not a few writers explored the moral and social implications of Russian dominion over diverse peoples, often using literature as a counter-narrative to imperial ambitions. This cultural dynamic proved literature to serve as both an instrument of state ideology and a space for anti-imperial dissent, representing a complex and critical reflection on Russian identity.[15]

This literature review, therefore, demonstrates that although there have been studies about the historical importance of Russian literature and satire, there remains a lacuna in understanding satire as a function of more general Eurasian socio-political dynamics, particularly concerning authoritarianism and censorship. This thesis proposes to fill this lacuna through a critical analysis of satire not merely as a genre but even more significantly as a mirror to socio-political life within three sharply differing periods of Russian history.

1.3. Thesis Argument

This thesis argues that Russian satire has consistently functioned as a medium of resilience, critique, and adaptation, evolving to address the changing political structures and societal constraints within the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and contemporary Russia. By tracing the evolution of political satire from the Russian Empire through the Soviet era to modern times, we can understand the enduring power and adaptability of satire in Russian culture. Although these distinct periods'

[14] Alexander Etkind, *Internal Colonialization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011), 249–256.

[15] Ibid.

social and political frameworks have different structures, satire has played a significant role in each.

Satire is a double-edged sword and may serve different purposes. On the one hand, it addresses the deficiencies of the political and social landscapes. On the other hand, it may also support the political regime that restricts it. The use of comedy and irony as literary tools creates a perception that everything is under control while potentially underestimating societal problems. Especially in Russia, satire is an influential genre due to the history of censorship. This flexibility makes satire a unique lens for observing the Russian socio-political evolution, underlining the progressive attitude of the public with respect to power and authority.

1.4. Methodology

The methodology of the thesis is a combination of literary-historical analysis and socio-political perspectives of Eurasian Studies. This approach examines satirical literature in the Russian language as a window into the dynamics of censorship, authoritarianism, and societal adaptation. The analysis investigates key texts from each period to understand how satire deals with issues of governance, authority, and social critique. Situating such works within their respective historical and cultural contexts, this study brings into view how satire has operated not merely as entertainment but as an urgent mode of commentary and survival. Primary sources involve important satirical works from the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia. Ultimately, secondary sources use history and critical analysis of dynamics in Russian politics, mainly focusing on censorship and state regulations over free expression in the arts. This approach places satire within the socio-political context, from which we can assess satirical literature's reflective and responsive nature in consideration of changes in Russia’s tendencies toward authoritarianism throughout different periods of history.

1.5. Structure of Thesis

This thesis comprises six chapters: Introduction, General Overview of Satire and Its Connection with Political Authoritarianism in Russia, The Russian Satire During The

Imperial Period, The Russian Satire During The Soviet Period, The Russian Satire During The Post-Soviet Period, and Conclusion. It follows a chronological structure from the general explanation of satire and its function across different cultures and periods. It is chronological in nature, running from general coverage of the origins and roles of satire into more specific analysis of its part within each separate period of Russian history.

The second chapter explores satire in terms of etymology, historical roots, elements and techniques, functions, and purpose. As a part of the discussion, this section urges the development of satire through cultures and ages. Satire, as a literary genre, uses humor, irony, and exaggeration to criticize human follies and has played a crucial role in literature worldwide. This genre comes from ancient Greek and Roman traditions; thus, it has evolved into a modern form aimed at social, political, and moral issues. Early satirists like Lucilius, Horace, and Aristophanes pioneered ancient traditions and helped develop satire.

There are three distinct styles of satire: Horace, Juvenalian, and Menippean. Satirical techniques such as sarcasm, irony, and caricature uncover social and political problems and serve as a tool for commentary. By focusing on the use of satire through cultures and ages, this chapter highlights the possibilities of the genre to reflect and put into question socio-political processes.

The third chapter investigates satire in the 19th-century Russian Empire through selected literary works. This period is defined as a cultural golden age, which witnessed crucial political upheavals and social reforms. Corruption was uncontrolled due to slow bureaucratic procedures and underpaid workers. The central values of traditional Russian Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Narodnost suppressed the government and social system, notwithstanding new reforms and cultural movements. Notable authors such as Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, and Anton Chekhov utilized satire to analyze society. Gogol's *Dead Souls* demonstrates the corruptness of statesmen, Goncharov's *Oblomov* reflects the resistance to progress under aristocratic stagnation, and Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" indicates the social movements after the abolition of serfdom.

The following chapter is concerned with the satire of the Soviet period, during which satire was compelling. Prominent satirical writers such as Bulgakov, Ilf, and Petrov, along with earlier influences like Saltykov-Shchedrin, Chekhov, and Gogol, formed the genre to state the contradictions of Soviet life. Humor was perceived as a potential threat to the Soviet regime and became an instrument for reinforcing stated ideologies in the system. The satire of the period apparently reflected rather more social issues in the bureaucratic inefficiencies than the targeting of the regime as such. Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and *The Heart of a Dog,* Ilf and Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs,* and *The Little Golden Calf* combined reality and fantasy to criticize the Soviet system and Soviet individuals. Despite strict censorship during the Soviet period, these satirists distributed their works, continuing to employ satire effectively as a powerful tool of societal critique.

The fifth chapter examines the post-Soviet Russian satire and its impact. During the post-Soviet transition, Russia faced multiple challenges: economic stability, a redefinition of national identity, and a political transformation. A shift from an authoritarian Soviet ideology to a more pluralistic and chaotic state framework was reflected in literature with satirical devices. Satirists like Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Dmitry Bykov have described the problems that exist in the political and social structures of the Soviet and post-Soviet eras in their works. Pelevin's *Generation P* discovers the new consumer age derived from capitalism, while Sorokin's *Day of the Oprichnik* criticizes the authoritative regime for the current authoritative period by including fictional elements. Bykov's *Grazhdanin Poet* project provides an unusual experience in which satire is combined with online platforms to criticize the Russian political system. Despite increasing challenges and censorship, these writers have continued to use satire in commenting on social and political issues to guide modern Russian society and the political system to develop a more established nation.

The last chapter synthesizes the findings of the previous chapters into a final affirmation of satire's endurance in withstanding censorship, offering room for criticism and encouragement of thinking over Russia's socio-political development. This chapter highlights the value of satire as a means to better understand the

interconnection between Russian society and authority. A genre can reflect and act in response to an evolution of socio-political reality regarding Russia by examining satire's role in these three periods. It thus places satire as fundamental for understanding the relationships between Russian society and censorship and authoritarianism in its interaction. Therefore, this thesis contends that satire is more than a literary form; it is a very enduring instrument of critique and reflection that offers a better perception of the socio-political forces that have shaped Russian society over time.

CHAPTER 2

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF SATIRE AND ITS CONNECTION WITH POLITICAL AUTHORITARIANISM IN RUSSIA

Satire is defined as "a poem or a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary."[16] In literature across different cultures and historical periods, it has served as a critical tool. Inheriting ancient Greek and Roman traditions and evolving with its characteristic mixture of wit, ridicule, and invective to address social, moral, and political issues.[17]

Satire has been durable and adaptable because, throughout history, it has navigated various cultural and political contexts. From the satirical plays and poems of ancient Greece and Rome, passing through the Renaissance and Enlightenment art and performances, to reaching the digital age with satirical television shows and online platforms, satire remains one of the most potent means of voicing social commentary and critique,[18] proving its relevance and timelessness. This has been the strength of satire in Russia from the time when it changed from an instrument of social critique to a multi-layered one used both by the state and in resistance to it.

However, the purpose of this chapter extends beyond merely examining satire as a genre. Instead, satire here serves as the critical frame through which one can reflect

[16] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "satire (n.)," December 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8653119568.

[17] Mary Beard, "Roman Laughter in Latin and Greek," in *Laughter in Ancient Rome: On Joking, Tickling, and Cracking Up* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 49-69; Arthur Melville Clark, *Studies in Literary Modes* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1946), 32, quoted in Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2018), 66.

[18] For further information on history of satire, see R. C. Elliott, "Satire," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 1, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/art/satire.

on the structures and mechanisms of authoritarian power, especially within Russia's historical and political terrain. Indeed, some of the most powerful satire has arisen from within strictly authoritarian systems.[19] Satire occupies a unique and complex position, often suppressed, manipulated, or subverted by the state. Thus, understanding satire's roots, techniques, and purposes allows us to appreciate how it functions not only as an artistic form but also as a form of resistance that adapts to state-imposed boundaries. For this reason, satire in Russia has evolved as a force in consolidating state authority and resistance to it. The double function underlines the resilience and adaptability of satire: through its acts of mirroring and criticism concerning the relationship between state authority and the public, satire finds its presence.

In this respect, this chapter provides a background beginning with the historical development of satire through an examination of its critical techniques, styles, and functions within various ages and proceeds with an explanation of how satire has revolted against or adapted so often to structures of authoritarian power. It is a preliminary necessity to appreciate how satire evolved within the specific Russian context from the Imperial period through the Soviet era and into the post-Soviet landscape.

By tracing the historical roots and development along several political climates, this section further examines Russian satire as both a form of cultural expression and a reflection on authoritarian rule. As described in this chapter, satire plays a peculiar role as an instrument of subversive critique and a tool for social commentary that calls attention to its enduring effect in challenging, entertaining, and provoking under even repressive regimes.

2.1. Origins and Core Techniques of Satire

The term "satura" (feminine adjective) originates from the Latin word "satur," meaning "stuffed" or "full," generally in the context of food, as noted by Paul Allen

[19] Leonard Freedman, *The Offensive Art: Political Satire and Its Censorship around the World from Beerbohm to Borat* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2009), 5.

Miller.[20] Over time, it turned into a noun. Notably, it is not coincidental issues that grotesque humor performs a central role in satiric criticism, with Latin verse satire usually drawing on themes of scatological, sexual, and gastronomical aspects.[21] Thus, "satura" came to mean a mixture of ingredients, referring to the world of victuals and of body-food, digestion, sexuality, and excretion.

The term "satire" is taken from the dish filled with fruits, which symbolically are "carried into the temple of Ceres," which, later on, people named a genre of poetry due to the fact that it was filled with different elements and pleased the audience.[22] The Roman poet Lucilius is accepted as the founder of satire, influenced by the Old Comedy poets such as Eupolis, Cratinus, and Aristophanes.[23] The Latin word for satire, "lanx satura," is cognate with "a platter of mixed fruits offered to the deities at festival time."[24]

Moreover, scholar Carpenter defines the word "satyr" as "boozy, randy half-goats, half-men of Greek mythology."[25] This mythological picture adds a new dimension to the genre, but surprisingly, according to scholars, these two terms, satyr and satura are not related terms.[26] The phonetic similarity between "satura" and "satyr" likely caused confusion. Additionally, in the early Middle Ages, satire writers were referred to as satyrs;[27] hence, another factor that contributed to the confusion was the

[20] Paul Allen Miller, *Latin Verse Satire: An Anthology and Critical Reader* (London: Routledge, 2005), 4.

[21] Ibid.

[22] J. W. Jolliffe, "Satyre: Satura: Σάτυρος: A Study in Confusion," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 18, no. 1 (1956): 88, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20673813.

[23] Ibid., 93.

[24] Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*, Linguistic Approaches to Literature 2 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), 4.

[25] H. Carpenter, *That Was Satire That Was: The Satire Boom of the 1960s* (London: Victor Gollancz, 2000), 91, quoted in Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*, Linguistic Approaches to Literature 2 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), 4.

[26] Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*, Linguistic Approaches to Literature 2 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), 4.

[27] William Frost, "Dryden and 'Satire,'" *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 11, no. 3 (1971): 406, https://doi.org/10.2307/449903; D. J. Shaw, "More About the 'Dramatic Satyre,'" *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 30, no. 2 (1968): 303, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41430071.

similarity in spelling. Satyrs are woodland spirits depicted as goatish, indulgent, and mischievous,[28] while "satura" is a form of literature that uses humor, irony, and exaggeration to attack and ridicule the follies of humanity, as defined above.

According to Quintilian, "Satura quidem tota nostra est" ("Satire, on the other hand, is all our own.")[29] It means that, apart from the genres of tragedy, epic, lyric, epigram, and bucolic, which have well-defined Greek models adapted to Roman society, satire is regarded as an entirely Roman invention.[30] Therefore, despite the dispute over the origin of satire, it is widely regarded as the true Roman genre. The first satirist known among them was Gaius Lucilius, who was Roman.[31]

Examining the works of the early satirists provides insights into how satire developed and how Greek and Roman cultures enriched this genre. Each early satirist contributed something peculiar and different to the genre, gradually improving in later periods. As one of the initial writers of satire, Horace defined the essence of satire, proclaiming in his theory that satirists should speak their minds and encourage people to abandon their folly.[32] In principle, his central approach consists of playful teasing and a moralistic attitude.[33] Though Horace and Lucilius do not seem to make much difference in using techniques of satire, they actually differ in style. Both poets connected to the satura tradition, creating varied tones and content in their satires.[34] The satire for Aristophanes, known as Aristophanic satire, is called

[28] Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (New York: Cambridge Press, 2004), 19.

[29] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 10.1.93.

[30] Paul Allen Miller, *Latin Verse Satire: An Anthology and Critical Reader* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1.

[31] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Gaius Lucilius," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 22, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Gaius-Lucilius.

[32] Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1994), 6-7.

[33] Bernd Renner, "From Satura to Satyre: François Rabelais and the Renaissance Appropriation of a Genre," *Renaissance Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (2014): 389, https://doi.org/10.1086/677406.

[34] Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, Kentucky: Kentucky University Press, 1994), 8.

an ancient comedic style that is attached to the festive rejoicing by giving participants some time for license.[35] During these festivals, individuals had the opportunity to be free from the shackles of social and hierarchical systems.[36] This temporary liberation permitted Aristophanes to make his accent a forum of ostensible criticism of social mores and political figures, providing a cultural space.

Further diversifying satire as such, there are three different styles of satire: Horace, Juvenalian, and Menippean.[37] Evan Gottlieb, a professor of British Literature, identifies Horatian satire as "good-natured and light-hearted, looking to raise laughter to encourage moral improvement," found in the various poems by Alexander Pope.[38] On the other hand, Juvenalian is "more bitter and dark, expressing anger and outrage at the state of the world,"[39] exemplified by the poems of Jonathan Swift. Menippean satire differs from the rest in that the target is mindset and not individuals, and abstract theories and ideas are dealt with in the processes leading to attack of particular attitudes.[40]

As a genre, satire mainly employs the devices of irony, humor, and exaggeration. Melville Clark broadly defines the satirical elements as "wit, ridicule, irony, sarcasm, cynicism, the sardonic and invective,"[41] all of which are designed to cause unease or even discomfort since the most predominant aim of satire is in ridiculing and criticizing its target. With such techniques, satirists tell the truth but in unexpected ways. The epigram below by the Earl of Rochester is one satirical example that says much about the truth concerning the deeper realities about King Charles II:

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[35] Stephen Halliwell, "Aristophanic Satire." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 14 (1984): 8, https://doi.org/10.2307/3508299.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Kaelyn Barron, "Types of Satire: Definitions and Examples from Literature," TCK Publishing, accessed July 25, 2024, https://www.tckpublishing.com/types-of-satire/.

[38] Evan Gottlieb, "What is Satire?" Oregon State University, August 16, 2019, https://liberalarts.oregonstate.edu/wlf/what-satire.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1957), 309

[41] Arthur Melville Clark, *Studies in Literary Modes* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1946), quoted in Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2018), 66.

Here lies our Sovereign Lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on,
Who never said a foolish thing
Nor ever did a wise one.
(Epitaph on Charles II)[42]

According to Simpson, satire represents a discursive practice that uniquely relies on context, which is set within a specific culture, system of institutions, and framework of knowledge and belief with respect to such institutions.[43] Moreover, it depends on motivation; that is, the satirist's disapproval of certain aspects of some possible target for satire.[44] In these respects, satirical endorsement depends unusually on the following three salient factors: "sincerity," "appropriateness," and "truth."[45]

Pollard argues that "the best satire, that which is surest in tone, is that which is surest in its values."[46] In essence, his assertion signifies that the most effective satire has a confident tone because it is firmly anchored in well-defined values.[47] Taking this idea further, Emil A. Draitser emphasizes, "Satire is a genre of literature whose goal is not only to point out a social vice but to make it clear that this vice is intolerable."[48]

2.2. Functions and Purpose of Satire Across Cultures

Satire as a genre has proved remarkably resilient, from the ancient times when Romans started writing satires to the present day, and this resilience seems tied to its nature of flexibility; the motif of plenitude and satyrs is never out of date.[49] As both

[42] Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2018), 66.

[43] Paul Simpson, *On the Discourse of Satire: Towards a Stylistic Model of Satirical Humour*, Linguistic Approaches to Literature 2 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2003), 8.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 10.

[46] Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2018), 3.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Emil A. Draitser, *Techniques of Satire: The Case of Saltykov-Scedrin* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), xx

[49] Catherine M. Schlegel, *Satire and the Threat of Speech: Horace's Satires*, *Book 1* (London: Winconsin Press, 2005), 5.

Dryden and Defoe equally believed, satire can restore and heal.[50] Swift added in the preface to *The Battle of the Books*, 1704, "Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's face but their own, which is the chief reason for that kind of reception it meets in the world, and that so very few are offended with it."[51] Thus, satire sharply captures the difference between how things are and how they ought to be. The satirist remains essentially an outsider but cannot afford to be declared an outcast, working on a socially and morally appreciated job with universal acceptability.[52]

Although satire is not the most vital genre of literature, it is unquestionably one of the most genuine, demanding, and unforgettable genres, according to Gilbert Highet. It has been practiced by a host of vigorous minds like Voltaire, Rabelais, Swift, and Petronius, skillful stylists like Pope, Aristophanes, and Horace; and some geniuses like Goethe, Lucretius, and Shakespeare. Satire notably draws brilliant portraits of human beings as they are, bold and striking, yet always remarkably real. It refrains from clichés and dead convention. The difference is in its formality and distance, with satire being forthright, engaging, and lively. A great satirist should make use of the maximum reality along with the minimum conventions.[53]

In the light of techniques, Gilbert Highet's *The Anatomy of Satire* represents a satirical depiction of the world, presenting only human inhabitants, which should appear like a photograph but essentially be a caricature.[54] In this regard, satire reveals the preposterous and repulsive features of humanity where their capacity for living decently is played down, their finest qualities mocked, and their vices magnified. Accordingly, it dismisses their religions as hypothetical, art as worthless, literature as numbing, love as lust, virtue as insincere, and their happiness as a meaningless illusion.[55]

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[50] Arthur Pollard, *Satire* (London: Routledge, 2018), 1.

[51] Ibid., 2.

[52] Ibid., 3.

[53] Gilbert Highet, *The Anatomy of Satire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962), 3.

[54] Ibid., 190.

[55] Ibid.

In defining satire's unique effect, Valentine Cunningham explains it as a form of deformation and indicates that if satire is a form of reformational art, it produces change by distorting its objects.[56] Satire has been regarded as an evil, even a cancerous form of art. It is considered a catachrestical genre due to its elements, such as hostility and malice. For example, Lewis said that good satire contains "stiffening" of the "grotesque."[57] Generally, satire tends to conclude with less-than-happy endings, which makes it quite distinct from other forms.

Notably, satire as a genre essentially addresses individuals, either the target it criticizes or the audience it seeks to convince, according to Jean Weisgerber. By this two-way approach, satire gives back the language its communicative efficiency since it has, in fact, "rhetorical" purposes. From this point of view, the satirical effect underlines problems without indicating anything about the possible direction of the solution. The satirist is often compared to a healer or surgeon, though their methods are more like those of an executioner than a regular practitioner.[58]

In its effects, satire is sometimes despised because it hurts people by exposing them to slander, causing inward pain, and leaving individuals to deal with their own recovery rather than promoting healing.[59] In simple terms, it takes an opposing stance, indicating one's awareness of positive evil yet failing to align with the positives. In doing so, it guides readers toward aesthetic pleasure to an "awareness of truth," enabling them to regard life from a "fresh perspective" and more intricate opinions.[60]

As Ronald Paulson observed, "The satirist, in short, demands decisions of his reader, not feelings: wishes to arouse his energy to action, not purge it in vicarious

[56] Valentine Cunningham, "Twentieth-Century Fictional Satire," in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 408.

[57] Ibid., 408-409.

[58] Jean Weisgerber. "Satire and Irony as Means of Communication." *Comparative Literature Studies* 10, no. 2 (1973): 160, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40246147.

[59] Ibid., 161.

[60] Ibid.

experience."[61] A genuine satirist should be more than a partisan advocate or entertainer; a true believer in humanitarian values and individual indignation is utterly required.[62] Satirists work to bring people toward an ideal alternative, and they advocate their beliefs with great concern and attention to the betterment of society.[63]

Moreover, satire traditionally carries a moral intention, and satire aims to lead the onlooker in accepting or rephrasing a critical attitude toward its target, according to Nicholas Diehl.[64] Thus, a satirist creates a burden of moral mission and authentic care for the public good while seeking to spark investigation rather than to preach explicit moral dogmas. However, satire faces philosophical shortcomings due to the artistic and philosophical interests that often conflict with each other quite frequently.[65] First, humor can undermine philosophical values by stating them against analytical philosophy, and secondly, this emphasis on humor may lighten the philosophical quality of the main argument by analogy itself.[66]

Satire and realism represent two poles of understanding of literature's relationship with the world it depicts; satire involves a moral attitude toward the world, bringing out truths or conditions to express judgment on humanity, while realism has as its intention to picture the world as it is and is perceived to be a descriptive and demonstrative genre.[67] Unlike tragedy and epic, satire and realism are considered lower forms of literary genres that are free to disclose those ordinary and physical aspects of the everyday life of human beings.[68] Satire is both the most and least

[61] Ronald Paulson, *The Fiction of Satire* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins, 1967), 15, cited in Ruben Quintero, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 3.

[62] Ruben Quintero, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 3.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Nicholas Diehl, "Satire, Analogy, and Moral Philosophy." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71, no. 4 (2013): 311, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42635868.

[65] Ibid., 319.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Aaron Matz, *Satire in an Age of Realism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

[68] Ibid., 13.

ordinary of literary genres; its literary style of writing depends on the day-to-day level, far from the concept of being aloof, generally availing oneself of street talk and some colloquial speech.[69]

Built through history, satire remains unique and dynamic across cultures and periods. Satire has been a common tool in literature and other performances like theatre ever since ancient times.[70] Although it lost its charm during specific periods,[71] satire has always regained momentum to keep relevance for two thousand years onward. For example, Greek and Roman satire provided the very foundation for styles of satire, including but not limited to Horatian and Juvenalian. In this context, works like Aristophanes, *Satires,* and *Epistles* by Horace and *The Sixteen Satires* by Juvenal are primary resources of ancient satires.[72] These early works rooted satire as a literary form and, therefore, influenced many writers to hold this as a benchmark in regard to satirical expression all through history.

Illustratively, in "The Knights," Aristophanes critiques the Athenian political leaders and the system. For example, Demos, an old representative of the populace, is portrayed as unwise and easily deceived; it is possible to surpass him through only a new crooked leader, Cleon, who tries to surpass Demos in trickery.[73] With the help of satire, Aristophanes condemned the long war that took place between Athens and the Peloponnesian alliance, reprimanded intellectuals like Socrates, and berated all the major politicians and artists of that particular era. As long as humankind exists, satire will also exist; it can only cease when there is nothing about humanity.[74]

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[69] Daniel Hooley, *Roman Satire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 9.

[70] R. C. Elliott, "Satire," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 1, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/art/satire.

[71] Paola Ugolini, "Satire," in *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Marco Sgarbi (Springer International Publishing, August 2016), 10.1007/978-3-319-02848-4_878-1.

[72] For an in-depth discussion on the primary resources of ancient satires, see Aristophanes, *The Complete Plays of Aristophanes*, trans. Paul Roche (New York: New American Library, 2005); Horace, *Satires and Epistles*, trans. Niall Rudd (London: Penguin Classics, 2005); Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires*, trans. Peter Green (London: Penguin Classics, 1998).

[73] Aristophanes, *The Knights*, trans. A. H. Sommerstein, (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1981), 2.

[74] Daniel Hooley, *Roman Satire* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 2.

Satire continued to evolve during the Middle Ages, with a primary focus on the feudal system and the Church.[75] Geoffrey Chaucer is considered an English poet and writer who used satire as a filtration of social classes and institutions in the book *The Canterbury Tales* through ironical humor, which was supposed to mock societal corruption. His short story "Pardoner's Tale" in his book tends to criticize the pardoners' fraud and higher-order decay of religious institutions accordingly.[76]

Likewise, Thomas More's *Utopia* and Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly* are two satires from the Renaissance that mainly targeted the political as well as social mechanisms during that period. In the Age of Enlightenment, satire against human nature, social behavior, and reasoning was widespread.[77] Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and *Gulliver's Travel* are also two major satires of that age. More precisely, *Gulliver's Travel* as a satirical work targets human nature as well as the Age of Reason:

> How diminutive, contemptible, and helpless an Animal was Man in his own Nature; how unable to defend himself from the Inclemencies of the Air, or the Fury of wild Beasts: How much he was excelled by one Creature in Strength, by another in Speed, by a third in Foresight, by a fourth in Industry. He added, that Nature was degenerated in these latter declining Ages of the World….[78]

Satire, since the beginning of modernity, has maintained its tendency to change while indicating contemporary problems: social change, capitalism, consumption, social status, and political corruption.[79] George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* are

[75] For further information on the primary resources of Middle Age satirical literature, see Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, trans. Nevill Coghill (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Classics, 1977); William Langland, *Piers Plowman: The C Version: A Verse Translation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).

[76] Alfred L. Kellogg and Louis A. Haselmayer, "Chaucer's Satire of the Pardoner." *PMLA* 66, no. 2 (1951): 251, https://doi.org/10.2307/459604.

[77] For further information on the Enlightenment, see B. Duignan, "Enlightenment," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 28, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/event/Enlightenment-European-history.

[78] Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travel* (New York: Oxford, 2005), 126.

[79] For further information on contemporary satire, see "What Is Satire? How to Use Satire in Literature, Pop Culture, and Politics, Plus Tips on Using Satire in Writing," MasterClass, accessed July 27, 2024, https://www.masterclass.com/articles/what-is-satire-how-to-use-satire-in-literature-pop-culture-and-politics-plus-tips-on-using-satire-in-writing.

notable satirical examples of the 20th century, while Viktor Pelevin's *Generation P* is a significant satirical paradigm of the new age.

2.3. Political Satire and Authoritarianism

As an art of expression, political satire allows writers to comment on social and political issues using irony and humor. As noted by Freedman, "an offensive art, and malice is its defining mood irrespective of the period or the satirist's race or ethnicity."[80] In other words, the reasons for satirical writing are as diverse as any other form of writing. Satirists write not just out of personal indignation but also from a sense of public concern and morality.[81] In political rhetoric, when a national leader defames another, labeling them a Hitler or a devil, the satire ends, and the propaganda begins since satire requires nothing without admitting human failure.[82] As a literary genre, satire aims not only to demonstrate a social vice but also to highlight that this vice is unacceptable.[83]

Leonard Feinberg claims that "satire offers the reader the pleasures of superiority and safe release of aggressions."[84] The perspective demonstrates that satire is a pleasure since it exists in the knowledge that it is strictly amusement. The fundamental reason stems from the belief that people are not expected to take any real-world intention in response. Therefore, political satire is considered primarily as a form of entertainment.[85] On the other hand, there are variant views. As Hutcheon indicates,

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[80] Leonard Freedman, *The Offensive Art: Political Satire and Its Censorship around the World from Beerbohm to Borat* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2009), 2.

[81] Ruben Quintero, "Introduction," in *A Companion to Satire: Ancient and Modern*, ed. Ruben Quintero (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 1.

[82] Ibid., 2.

[83] Emil A. Draitser, *Techniques of Satire: The Case of Saltykov-Scedrin* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), xxi.

[84] Leonard Feinberg, *Introduction to Satire* (Ames: University of Iowa Press, 1967), 5, cited in Amber Day, *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011), 12.

[85] Amber Day, *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011), 12.

irony and satire have "the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very 'sites' of discourse, a hierarchy based in social relations of dominance."[86] The common view among theorists is that satire will indeed have a limited political effect. Edward and Lilian Bloom also confirm this by stating, "Even the best intended satire does not readily convert desire into action."[87]

Furthermore, Lisa Colletta identifies modernist dark humor satire dealing with an individual's place, underlying a futile effort to belong, signifying the familiar group experiences and subverting the notion of getting genuinely shared experiences. In this context, it is accurate to say that the satires of dark humor tend to insinuate that oppression and tyranny emerge not only from the selfish acts of some individuals but even from the patterns buried in society. This kind of satire insinuates that all individuals, victims or tyrants alike, are inescapably complicit in a system keeping the same dynamics.[88]

Even in the twenty-first century, authoritarianism is still active and does its work, and political satire is yet employed in many different countries playing a "cat and mouse" game with political restrictions such as censors.[89] For instance, in George Orwell's Big Brother, the totalitarian regime is criticized by literary devices like satire. Similarly, many European countries had faced similar situations; for example, Nazi Germany, from 1933 to 1945, did not have any publications that were critical of the regime or leading figures.[90] This enduring struggle highlights satire's role as a powerful tool for resistance and social critique.

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[86] Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London: Routledge, 1994), 30; quoted in Amber Day, *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011), 12.

[87] Edward Bloom and Lillian Bloom, *Satire's Persuasive Voice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), 16; quoted in Amber Day, *Satire and Dissent: Interventions in Contemporary Political Debate* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2011), 13.

[88] Lisa Colletta, *Dark Humor and Social Satire in the Modern British Novel*, 1st ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 8, 72.

[89] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

[90] Ibid.

2.4. The Evolution of Russian Satire

In the following chapters, we delve into Russian satire from the 19th century to the contemporary period. The present chapter serves as an overview of Russian satire for readers to introduce themselves with general information related to the topic. Detailed information on Russian satire calls for a perusal of the ensuing chapters.

Russian satire has a very long and tortuous history of development within varied cultural and political environments. For instance, those acquainted with the works of Saltykov-Shchedrin, Gogol, Griboyedov, and Chekhov likely already have insights into Russian cultural and societal aspects.[91] Stemming from these classical beginnings, satire formed the basis of much Russian literature and survived in the original satirists of the Soviet period and beyond. It was owing to these works that we saw the complexity and contradictoriness of Russian society, where humor and irony unraveled another folly and social vice.

During the Soviet period, satire took on new dimensions to Russian satire. In this context, satire was both a tool and a form of resistance to the state; hence, it demonstrated a duality that is explored in the following chapters. For example, writers like Mayakovsky, Ilf and Petrov, Katayev, Shishkov, and Zoshchenko adeptly navigated the shifting political landscape, using their works to critique and comply with state ideologies.[92] The period between 1917 and 1932, marked by War Communism, the New Economic Policy (NEP), the Cultural Revolution, and the First Five-Year Plan,[93] significantly influenced Soviet satire. Satirists were viewed as hardworking farmers in defense of the commonweal against both domestic and foreign dangers.[94]

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[91] Manuil Samyonov, "Soviet Satire," *Indian Literature* 12, no. 2 (1969): 40, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329636.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Evgeny Dobrenko, "Utopias of Return: Notes on (Post-)Soviet Culture and Its Frustrated (Post) Modernisation," *Studies in East European Thought* 63, no. 2 (2011): 160, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41477765.

[94] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 336, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

Apart from that, satire also played a significant role in de-Stalinization. In the post-Stalin period, many satirical works often emphasized Stalin's foreignness and non-Russian characteristics,[95] reflecting a broader societal shift towards criticism of bureaucratic inefficiencies and abuses within the Party. Despite strict censorship and the risk of persecution, Soviet writers published their works even in the most hearing period as a means for the critique of the regime and hardly to touch upon the problems of society.[96]

A notable platform during this time was the journal *Krokodil*, which became a point of reference in Soviet satire, publishing works that criticized bureaucratic abuses and inefficiencies without ever directly criticizing the regime.[97] The comic weekly marked a Soviet Union that, while not fully authoritarian, retained a sense of humor and allowed free expression, though constrained by the bonds of Soviet censorship.[98] The transition following the Soviet Union's collapse introduced new opportunities and challenges for Russian satire. With the relaxation of censorship under Glasnost and following policies, writers could explore more critical and open narratives.[99] As a result, Satirical literature started to flourish, with contemporary writers like Pelevin, Sorokin, and Bykov using their works to critique post-Soviet Russia's political and social systems.

In the digital age, platforms like *Grazhdanin Poet* have continued this tradition of political satire, which changed form with every new medium and shifted audience preference into the digital era.[100] Despite evolving political landscapes and new

[95] Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917-1991* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 9.

[96] Margarita Tomazova, "Istoriya sovetskogo samizdata. Kak eto bylo" [History of Soviet Samizdat: How Was It], vc.ru, June 11, 2020, https://vc.ru/u/528817-margarita-tomazova/133567-istoriya-sovetskogo-samizdata-kak-eto-bylo.

[97] J. A. Posin, "Soviet Satire," *The Russian Review* 9, no. 4 (1950): 302, https://doi.org/10.2307/125988.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Jonathan Stone, *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 9.

[100] Annelie Bachmaier, "The 'Poetic' Protest in Putin's Russia: 'Grazhdanin poet'," in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, ed. Aleksei Semenenko (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 141, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76279-7.

technologies, satire has remained a sharply working tool of social and political expression in Russia. From its purely classical manifestations in the 19th century to the more dynamic, multifaceted satire of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, satire as a genre has outgrown its initial form in this country. Russian satire is permanently a mirror to society with all its defects and anomalies, institutionally prescribed through humor, irony, and exaggeration.

2.5. Conclusion

Satire, with its roots buried under the weight of history and different techniques, has stood up to time as one resilient and robust genre through the ages. This genre has long served as a vessel with which to mix humor, irony, and exaggeration in pursuit of social critique. From early satirists, such as Lucilius and Aristophanes, to Roman poets Horace and Juvenal, satire branched off into distinct styles, namely Horatian and Juvenalian, which continue to influence modern methods of satire. Menippean satire, concerned more with ideas and mental attitudes than with people, further extended the possibilities of the genre to grapple with intricate abstract theories and social ideologies. Satire is entertaining and exposes the flaw, often using sarcasm, caricature, and parody, calling the audience into question about prevailing norms and values.

The functions and purposes of the genre are many-sided, from social critique to moral reflection and instruction. By its very nature, satire is bound to challenge and show corruption, hypocrisy, and injustice in an attempt to stir the audience toward reflective thought and, occasionally, the action itself. It is with satire that such disparities between ideal and reality, once captured, are invested with an unprecedented power to tell truths that might otherwise have remained unuttered. The ability of satire to stretch and morph into different forms has allowed it to remain relevant over centuries, showing that satire has a vital place in literary history and social discourse.

This introduction sets the scene for Russian satire in later chapters, allowing us to look deeper into its specific role and meaning in the authoritarian political context.

The Russian satire from Imperial to Soviet to modern post-Soviet Russia is a prism through which we can view the complex interplay of state authority with public dissent. Russian satirists have constantly shown the ability to adapt this art in correspondence with various historical contexts, whether through allegories, veiled criticisms, or overt ridicule. Their works reflect not only the infirmities of the society in which they lived but also serve as a reflection of the enduring power of satire as a medium for subversive commentary under repressive regimes.

Therefore, satire's staying power rests in the ability to adjust within smoothly and, at times, without boundaries set forth by society and authority. The piercing of satire into a fresh perspective woven together through humor and critique continues to hold its ground in that important form of literature by which one challenges, entertains, and inspires. In such a way, it is the global context of satire, especially insofar as it evolved within Russian history, which allows us to understand it as a mirror and tool for change, a genre uniquely equipped to give voice to dissent, converse with authoritarianism, and echo throughout generations.

CHAPTER 3

THE RUSSIAN SATIRE DURING THE IMPERIAL PERIOD

The 19th century was a period of essential political events, social turmoil, and the gradual accumulation of the revolution in Russia. It started with the Napoleonic Wars and the reign of Alexander I and ended with Nicholas II; it brought down finally the Romanov Dynasty and the Russian Empire.[101] Corruption and inefficiency were pervasive throughout this period, affecting all levels of Russian society; many officials, specifically those in lower positions, were driven to bribery due to underpayment and injustice as they struggled to support their families.[102] Corruption and nepotism thus became part of the social conduit of a poor and undeveloped country without access to education.[103] Corruption was the means that kept up the economy, while nepotism was a form of welfare system.[104] Those processes were too slow and cumbersome, encouraging a corruption culture.

The main values of the Russian Empire—Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and Narodnost (the national principles)[105] remained powerful throughout much of the 19th century despite the emergence of revolutionary actions and groups towards its end. These values embodied the essence of Russian tradition and mission. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 marked the turning point, driven by economic forces that

[101] For further information on the political and social changes in 19th-century Russia, see David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801-1881*, Longman History of Russia (London; New York: Longman, 1992); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

[102] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 211-212.

[103] Ibid.

[104] Ibid.

[105] Ibid., 220.

understood serfdom to be an institution with which a modern economy was incompatible.[106] But even though Alexander II himself was a reformist emperor who wished to abolish serfdom along with other vestiges of medieval society, his progressive undertakings were largely disrupted following his assassination.[107] But despite this social and political challenge, the nineteenth-century growth of the intelligentsia in Russia was the indication of its cultural golden age,[108] wherein the elevation of cultural and literary life was present.

This chapter is devoted to the corruption and bureaucratic inefficiency that marked 19th-century Russia, touching on some key themes, including social stagnation and resistance to reform, tradition versus modernization, and censorship, together with the fight for freedom of expression. These themes are developed through the satirical use of famous Russian writers throughout history, including Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, and Anton Chekhov, the greatest satirists of their time. The authors used satire to criticize the extensive absurdity of the social order and the fates of classes. Gogol's *Dead Souls* and Goncharov's *Oblomov* reflect stagnation in society and the need for progress; Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" depicts an inevitable social transformation from the old aristocratic structure into the new structure.

3.1. Corruption and Bureaucratic Inefficiencies

As it was shown in Lektsiya, the corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies in the Russian Empire could be traced back to Peter I. To avoid these, Peter Romanov brought about the administration and state apparatus reforms. However, despite the notable changes in administration and controlling system, corruption was a persistent element in the Russian Empire. For example, Prince M. Gagarin, a Siberian governor, was accused of embezzlement of state funds and accepting bribery. Even the favorite of the Tsar, Alexander Menshikov was investigated for embezzlement,

[106] Ibid., 229.

[107] For further information on Alexander II, see W. Mosse, "Alexander II," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 25, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-II-emperor-of-Russia.

[108] Lee Trepanier, "Russian Wonder and Certainty," *The Public Discourse*, June 29, 2023, https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2023/06/89327/.

but due to the tsar's benevolence, he escaped severe punishment. During Catherina II, the real fight against bribery started. Under Paul I, the situation deteriorated further, and it became difficult to survive on an official's salary. By the first quarter of the 19th century, administrators drew the attention of the power to the urgent discovery of the sources of corruption. In 1881, a committee was established to create the Criminal Code. The full version of the Criminal Code came into force under Nicholas II. Seemingly, the fight against corruption in the Russian Empire lacked a systematic order in which each leader implemented their system and canceled previous policies; therefore, it was ineffective.[109]

Corruption is deeply rooted in traditions and mentality under the economic system and conditions of the Russian Empire. As Shpaltakov underlined, only the transformation of corruption into a system in contemporary Russia is connected with the existence of an authoritarian political regime, the paternalist mentality of the Russians, and underdeveloped economic mechanism.[110] 18th-century Russia was one of the great powers,[111] but this influence gradually diminished throughout the 19th century, coming to an end with the dissolution of the empire. Preparing revolutions also joined the political events that outlined the 19th century in Russia. Starting with the Napolean War, the rule of Alexander I, this era finally ended with the rule of Nicholas II, followed by the eventual destruction of the Romanov dynasty along with the Russian Empire.[112]

Hugh Seton-Watson mentions that this era was highlighted by corruption and laziness within all vertical levels of Russian society. Most officials, especially lower

[109] "Lektsiya 2" [Lecture 2], *Gosudarstvennyy Universitet Upravleniya*, 7-13, https://ido.dgu.ru/docs/lection2.pdf. Accessed 23 Aug. 2024.

[110] Vladimir Petrovich Shpaltakov, "Korruptsiya v Rossii: istoricheskie korni i prichiny razrastaniya v postsovetskoe vremya" [Corruption in Russia: Historical Roots and Reasons for Expansion in the Post-Soviet Era], *Vestnik Omskogo Universiteta. Seriya «Ekonomika»*, no. 3 (2016): 85.

[111] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41.

[112] For further information on the political and social changes in 19th-century Russia, see David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801-1881*, Longman History of Russia (London; New York: Longman, 1992); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

ones, were miserable due to underpayment and injustice because they struggled to support their families and inevitably fell into corruption. Corruption became necessary for the economy in a poor and backward country where few individuals were educated. Nepotism played an important role as a substitute for welfare states.[113]

The bureaucratic procedures were not very speedy, leading to corruption cases. Corruption was deeply rooted in the Russian Empire; thus, this problem was highly emphasized by so many intellectuals and writers. Many prominent Russian writers used this topic to indicate social flaws while using an indirect method of composition that included satirical elements. Faced with a system where the very possibility of direct criticism of the repressive state was out of the question, authors such as Gogol and Goncharov expressed their reaction against the inefficiency and corruption of the tsarist bureaucracy through satire. Their novels, such as *Dead Souls* and *Oblomov*, are vivid examples of this satirical approach.

This environment of corruption and moral decay is vividly portrayed in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, where the protagonist, Chichikov's schemes reflect the bureaucratic manipulation and ethical void of the time. The Russian bureaucracy was not only clouded by corruption but also became the representative of incompetence and the moral decay of the system in Gogol's novel. *Dead Souls*, originally known as *Мёртвые души* (*Myortvye Dushi*), was published for the first time in 1842.[114] The whole novel is written in a satirical and dark tone. In the novel, we come across 19th-century Russia, its villages, and how Russian people practiced manners. Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov visited five landowners to buy their dead serfs at low prices to secure prestige and wealth. The main motif of the protagonist is to become a landowner availing of a loan provided by the government against the availability of several serfs. The satire of his moves sets a pointer for corruption and inefficiency in the Russian system. Besides, the "dead souls" express not only the dead serfs but

[113] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 211, 354.

[114] T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Dead Souls," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 27, 2020, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Dead-Souls.

also corrupted bureaucrats working with the protagonist and playing his perfidious game.[115] The novel blames the government system, corrupted bureaucrats, and class differences within the Russian Empire. In the book, serfs are called souls:

> "Bobrov, Svinin, Kanapatiev, Khapakin, Trepakin, and Plieshakov."
> "Are they rich men?"
> "No, none of them. One of them may own twenty souls, and another thirty, but of gentry who own a hundred there are none."[116]

Here, the criteria of wealthiness are described in terms of the number of serfs. In Russian society, serfs were generally called dushi (души),[117] which means "souls" in English. Serfs were regarded as units of human labor and taxation rather than human beings.[118] This expression indicates how little value was placed on serfs as individuals.

In the following chapters, a conversation between a landowner and Chichihov reflects how aristocracy views serfs:

> "Yes, yes, of course. But at first sight I felt afraid lest I should be incurring a loss—lest you should be wishing to outwit me, good sir. You see, the dead souls are worth rather more than you have offered for them."
>
> "See here, madam… How could they be worth more? Think for yourself. They are so much loss to you—so much loss, do you understand? Take any worthless, rubbishy article you like—a piece of old rag, for example. That rag will yet fetch its price, for it can be bought for paper-making. But these dead souls are good for nothing at all. Can you name anything that they are good for?"[119]

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[115] Winston Weathers, "Gogol's *Dead Souls*: The Degrees of Reality," *College English* 17, no. 3 (1955): 161, https://doi.org/10.2307/495738.

[116] Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. D.J. Hogarth and John Cournos (London: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1916), 44-45.

[117] "Dushi: Pochemu tak nazyvali krepostnyh krestyan" [Souls: Why Serfs Were Called This], *Weekend Rambler,* August 8, 2019, https://weekend.rambler.ru/read/42628982-dushi-pochemu-tak-nazyvali-krepostnyh-krestyan/.

[118] Evgeny Zhirnov, "Dusha soglasno preyskurantu" [Soul According to the Price List], *Kommersant Money Magazine*, no. 5, February 8, 2010, accessed July 27, 2024, https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/1317820.

[119] Nikolai Vasilevich Gogol, *Dead Souls*, trans. D.J. Hogarth and John Cournos (London: J.M. Dent; New York: E.P. Dutton, 1916), 51.

Society's decay is also portrayed in Goncharov's *Oblomov*. Whereas Gogol pointed to bureaucratic inefficiency and dehumanization among serfs, Goncharov is more concerned with the resistance to change within the aristocracy. This stagnation further exacerbated the need for reform. Towards the end of the novel, Schtoltz remarks about Oblomov, "His intellect [Oblomov's] was equal to that of his fellows, his soul was as clear and as bright as glass, his disposition was kindly, and he was a gentleman to the core. Yet he - he fell."[120] Here, he proves that due to Oblomovka disease, which is characterized as a condition of fatalistic apathy and laziness, Oblomov goes through suffering all his life. Oblomov is a romantic dreamer who disengages from life, goes into the past, and is unable to move forward. This ultimately leads him to his destined fall. He cannot bear change and wishes his ideal days to continue forever, into his old age and death as well. Oblomov cannot break free from this life philosophy brought about by his family. Chonghoon Lee observes that this condition was a significant concern in Soviet psychiatric and neurological research, considered a "national disease."[121] This disease became known as common aristocratic apathy in the 19th century.

3.2. Social Stagnation and Resistance to Reform

Nicholas I's reigns (1825-1855) witnessed active lawmaking and the slowing of reforms, which resulted in a rising crisis.[122] These reforms were primarily aimed at perfecting and reinforcing autocracy by means of centralizing the managing system, creating a vertical power structure, and codifying Russian laws.[123] Without opposing the authority, the Secret Committees of 1826-1848 aimed to alleviate the severe conditions of the society trying to establish a legal system in Russia by granting civil

[120] Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915), 316.

[121] Chonghoon Lee, "Visual Stalinism from the Perspective of Heroisation: Posters, Paintings and Illustrations in the 1930s," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 3–4 (2007): 503, https://doi.org/10.1080/14690760701571148.

[122] Tatiana Vasil'evna Andreeva, "Vlast'i reformy v Rossii v pervoi polovine XIX v.: istoriografiia kontsa XX - nachala XXI v." [Power and Reforms in Russia in the First Half of the 19th Century: Historiography of the Late 20th and Early 21st Century], *Peterburgskii istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 2, 2014, p. 204, doi:10.24411/2311-603X-2014-00035.

[123] Ibid., 204-205.

rights to the whole population and establishing a novel state of court and legal proceedings.[124] In order to comprehend 19th-century Russia, the diversity of class should be examined. Tsarist Russia was divided into five classes: the ruling class, the Tsar, and the Royal family; the nobility, landowners, commanders, and high-class civil servants; middle class, middle-class civil servants, doctors, lawyers, and merchants; working class, artisans, craftspeople, and soldiers; peasants comprised about 82% of the population, and before 1861, many of them were serfs.[125] However, most reforms, like the abolition of serfdom, were postponed due to the immense opposing pressure from the more conservative elements in society, such as the nobility and the bureaucracy. Tsar Nicholas I gave his opinion on serfdom and the stubbornness of society back in the year 1842:

> There is no doubt that serfdom in its present situation in our country is an evil, palpable and obvious for all, but to attack it now would be something still more harmful. The late Emperor Alexander, at the beginning of his reign, intended to give the serfs freedom, but later he himself abandoned his thought, as being altogether premature and incapable of execution. I too shall never make up my mind to do this, considering that if the time when it will be possible to undertake such a measure is in general very far away, any thought of it at present would be no less than a criminal sacrilege against public security and the welfare of the state.[126]

Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and the Narodnost, or the national principles of Russia in other words,[127] were the main values of the Russian Empire that played an important role during the 19th century except for some revolutionary actions and some groups at the end of a century. This triad represented a Russian tradition and mission; therefore, the Russian population resisted societal change. However, some changes were unavoidable even in 19th-century Russia. For instance, there are arguments to the effect that serfdom was bound to disappear on account of the economic forces,

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[124] Ibid.

[125] "Imperial Russia - Government and People: Class Divisions in Russia," *BBC Bitesize*, accessed September 5, 2024, www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z6rjy9q/revision/4.

[126] *Sbornik Imperatorskogo russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* (SPB, 1867-1916), vol. 89, pp. 114-115, qtd. in Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[127] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 220.

and it was incompatible with a modern economy.[128] As such, it was inevitable in the course of Russian history to abolish serfdom in 1861. Alexander II's reign initiated many reforms, such as the abolition of the Russian social and political system.[129] However, imperial Russia was unprepared for these changes, so the reformist tsar was associated. These reforms failed and did not provide a coherent policy that provided an absolute solution, which gave rise to other problems, such as a revolution. It, therefore, indicates that Russian society was not stable enough to accommodate these reforms as the majority of the Russians were still conserving the triad and viewed the reformist tsar as the barrier to their traditional life.

The stagnation in the Russian aristocracy was signified in Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov*, where the inertia and resistance to change showed. *Oblomov* came out in 1859,[130] just two years before the abolishment of serfdom, and foreshadowed changes to come. The book illustrates changes in patriarchal Russia and opens to the new world. In Russian literature, he is the main figure and the eternal and "superfluous" character.[131] He characterizes reluctance to adapt in Russia during its transitional period. According to Goncharov, the character portrays a lack of ambition, which was common among 19th-century Russian aristocrats. Throughout the novel, Oblomov spends all his time daydreaming, lying on the sofa, always wearing his dressing gown, and avoiding an active life. Literally, everything in Oblomov's life, even his room, demonstrates his stagnation and slowness. The room, upon first glance, is aristocratic in style and well endowed; then it's dusty, and most of the things in it are broken:

> Also the room contained silken curtains, a few mats, some pictures, bronzes, pieces of china, and many other pretty trifles. Yet even the most cursory glance from the experienced eye of a man of taste would have detected no

[128] Ibid., 229.

[129] W. Mosse, "Alexander II," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 25, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-II-emperor-of-Russia.

[130] T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, June 14, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ivan-Aleksandrovich-Goncharov.

[131] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A history of Russia*, Ninth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 408.

> more than a tendency to observe les convenances while escaping their actual observance. Without doubt that was all that Oblomov had thought of when furnishing his study.[132]

Thus, this room symbolizes the backwardness of Russia and the stagnation of the upper class, which is completely expressed by the character of Oblomov. Although aristocrats are not prepared, Goncharov insinuates that physical and mental change is necessary.

By depicting the character of Oblomov and presenting him in contrast with other characters, like Stoltz, who is much more energetic and practical in everyday life, Goncharov underlines the very destructive outcomes of inertia and resistance to changes.[133] In the same way, through his satire, Goncharov sheds light on the urgent need for society to be much more distinct and participate in order to save it from the stagnation of Russian life at that time.

Furthermore, the Oblomov family is a full embodiment of the autocracy's stagnation. His family prays to live just the same way day by day: "Well spent it has been, and God send that tomorrow be like it. Glory, O Lord, to Thee this night! Glory, O Lord, to Thee!"[134] Relief overwhelms Oblomov when his day ends without any changes: "Another day is over, praise be to God!"[135] Time in Oblomovka is calculated by holidays, seasons, and family or domestic events, not by dates. This is because the names and succession of months are constantly confused by the characters. Oblomov's reasoning about time is not linear and progressive; it is circular.[136] The life in Oblomovka, which is pastoral life, symbolizes the monotonous life and aversion to change.

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[132] Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915), 11.

[133] Helen Rapp, "The Art of Ivan Goncharov," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 36, no. 87 (1958): 376-380, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4204958.

[134] Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915), 109.

[135] Ibid., 108.

[136] Christine Borowec, "Time after Time: The Temporal Ideology of Oblomov," *The Slavic and East European Journal* 38, no. 4 (1994): 562, https://doi.org/10.2307/308414.

They do not open a letter for many days, fearing it might disturb their routine of monotony. Oblomov's philosophy is fully and directly syphoned from his family. Not only does the stagnation of the aristocratic way of life contribute to the perpetuation of the tradition, but it also goes further to the use of specific given names. Ilya Ilyich, Oblomov's name, signifies his slot in that tradition – that he is another Ilya Ilyich and not just the son of Ilya. The continuity is both physical and verbal. Oblomov cannot escape this cycle and dies as one of Ilya in Oblomovka. Further, Goncharov blames the conventional old Russians: "Our poor forefathers lived by instinct. Neither wholly, giving rein to nor wholly restraining their volition, they found themselves either naively surprised at or overcome with terror by the evils and the misfortunes which befell them."[137] The former Russians believed that death and other phenomena were the results of superstitious beliefs. They lived in the post-Enlightenment age like Oblomov, but they still believed the part of legends, tales, and concepts quite unpractical.

Like Goncharov, Chekhov also explored themes of social stagnation and resistance to change. Through "The Cherry Orchard," Chekhov captured the decline of the aristocracy and the rise in its place of a new class of rich merchants personified in Lopakhin. This essentially symbolizes the more general transition in society from feudal-like structures toward an economy more similar to capitalism. It depicted the stagnation of the aristocracy and resistance to change through satirical elements. In this novel, Lyubov, a state-owner aristocratic lady, is in agony over the selling of her estate. Trofimov pushes her to face reality and accept that long ago, this way of life on the estate ended. She says:

> What truth? You can see where truth is and where falsehood is, but I seem to have lost my sight. I can't see anything…. I was born, after all, this is where my father and my mother lived, my grandfather, I love this house, without the cherry orchard I couldn't make sense of my life, and if it really has to be sold, then sell me along with the orchard.[138]

[137] Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, *Oblomov*, trans. C. J. Hogarth (New York: The Macmillan Company; London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1915), 113.

[138] Anton Chekhov, *The Complete Plays*, trans. Laurence Senelick (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 1125.

Lyubiv Ranevskaya feels close to the family estate and cherry orchard. She is not ready for the inevitable change of society in which the aristocracy has lost power and faces more serious financial problems every year. She judges the new social system and its aftermath. The writer criticizes her appearance of detachment towards the aristocratic order and the refusal of social changes that took place in Russia. Tradition prevents Lyubov from understanding the new order. This concept also relates to the clash between tradition and modernization; hence, this example is given correspondingly in the next part.

3.3. The Clash of Tradition and Modernization

Starting in the 1840s, the Russian intelligentsia coalesced into two main camps: the Slavophiles and the Westernizers.[139] Hugh Seton-Watson underlines the misassumption of these groups; the first group did not support Russian traditions and the moral superiority of Russians while rejecting all Western ideology.[140] Similarly, the Westernizers did not want to introduce Western institutions and ideas into Russia with the aim of abolishing Russian identity.[141] Both groups disapproved of the political and social systems of the Russian Empire and advocated new reforms.[142]

However, with the greatest probability, there is an acute difference between the groups: the Slavophiles drew upon the Orthodox traditions, while the Westernizers concentrated their attention on the reforms of their European neighbors. Such a belief is at least supported by many other sources which contradict the one stated by Hugh Seton.[143] First of all, it is possible to trace the very concept of Westernism as early as Peter the Great (1682-1725) and the St. Petersburg period of Russian history; Peter

[139] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 256.

[140] Ibid., 259

[141] Ibid.

[142] Ibid.

[143] For furher information on the Slavophiles and the Westernizers, see Vladimir Ivanov, "Slavianofily i zapadniki" [Slavophiles and Westernizers], *Rossiyskaya istoriya*, June 5, 2018, https://histrf.ru/read/articles/slavianofily-i-zapadniki.

the Great aimed at the modernization of Russia according to the Western pattern, which created a gap between the distinctive classes.[144]

As previously mentioned, the intellectual movement took place in the 1840s; however, its ideas appeared earlier. Whereas the Westerners regarded Russia as basically a European nation whose development had been delayed by the Mongol conquest and demanded modernization along Western lines with regard to technology, culture, social system, and political system, the spirit of Peter the Great was followed fundamentally by Westernizers.[145]

This trend of politicization of Russian literature first took root under the reign of Nicholas I from 1825 to 1855, after which the literary works among the aristocracy, such as those by Pushkin and Lermantov, and among the lower classes, such as Gogol's works, flourished.[146] Gordon Cook said that even in the dawn of the 19th century, "Russian literature was in the process of becoming the barometer of the nation's social and political development."[147] Karamzin, a very influential Russian writer, once announced that literature seems more valuable when concerned with providing services in Russia.[148] Thus, with the emergence of the intelligentsia, there emerged a so-called cultural golden age of Russia in the early 19th century,[149] which paradoxically dawned notwithstanding the challenges suggested by such an autocratic regime and censorship of works. The emphasis lays on the meaning and

[144] Dmitry Merezhkovsky, "Gogol and the Devil," in *Gogol from the Twentieth Century: Eleven Essays*, ed. Robert A. Maguire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 82, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv25wxcvx.6.

[145] Ibid.

[146] For further information on Nicholas I, see "Emperor Nicholas I," Alexander Palace, accessed July 26, 2024, https://www.alexanderpalace.org/palace/NickolasPavlovich.php.

[147] Gordon Cook, "Civic Criticism and Public Libraries in Early Nineteenth Century Russia: Interplay or Isolation?" *The Journal of Library History* 12 (1977): 27, quoted in David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801-1881*, Longman History of Russia (London; New York: Longman, 1992), 90.

[148] David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801-1881*, Longman History of Russia (London; New York: Longman, 1992), 91.

[149] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41.

mission of both the individual and the nation, in opposition to the Enlightenment ideals of harmony and unity.[150]

As was seen in the last few pages, the tussle going on between tradition and modernization in Russian society here meets a satirical presentation in Gogol's *Dead Souls*: the high-class way of life in Petersburg is a subject for Gogol's satire. Thus, such excessive politeness, table manners, dresses, and conversations in a foreign language-French-represent the disintegration of the social structure, according to Gogol. In the novel, two ladies laugh at the ignorance of speakers, considering themselves more civilized. However, Gogol indicates that their laughter derived from their own absurdity of adopting French. The customs of the upper class are strictly criticized by the author. Gogol believed that the custom of speaking foreign languages is detrimental, as "the language one spoke was not a matter of manners, but of understanding one's culture, country, and self."[151]

Besides *Dead Souls*, another representative of the clash between old and new order is "The Cherry Orchard." In the play, Anton Chekhov broaches a clear-sighted vision in regard to the transition period in the changing social, economic, and political landscape of Russia. In "The Cherry Orchard," the older generation represents the old, traditional Russian feudal system, while the younger characters reflect a new era, as it was during the time after serfdom began that they were raised, as was Chekhov. It was also this piece that was performed at the Moscow Theatre just prior to his death.[152]

In the play, there is a rumor of the engagement between Varya, the adopted daughter of Lyubov, and Lopakhin, a rich businessperson, though nobody ever proposes. Lyubov, being the old aristocratic lady, allows Trofimov to marry Anya if they want to, though he maintains they are past that sort of thing. Waiting is one of the main

[150] Nicholas V. Riasanovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A history of Russia*, Ninth edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 319.

[151] Danielle Jones, "Multifaceted Metaphor: Gogol's Portrayal of St. Petersburg in *Dead Souls*," *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature* 56, no. 2 (2002): 18, https://doi.org/10.2307/1348366.

[152] Theatre Royal Windsor, "The Cherry Orchard: 5 Fascinating Facts," accessed July 27, 2024, https://theatreroyalwindsor.co.uk/cherryorchardfacts-2/.

themes in the current piece; everyone waits to see what happens with the estate and the orchard, Varya waits for Lopakhin to propose, and Trofimov waits for a change in Russia.[153] The spans from spring to autumn represent the change in Russia, which is the death of the traditional old Russia. Lopakhin is not an ordinary merchant; he is a former serf and shares similarities with the author.

As the play opens, Lopakhin speaks boastfully: "My father, true, was a peasant, and here I am in a white waistcoat, yellow high-button shoes."[154] At the close of Act Three, after he buys the cherry orchard, he boasts: "I bought the estate where my grandfather and father were slaves, where they weren't even allowed in the kitchen. I'm dreaming, it's a hallucination, it looks only this way."[155] This change in hierarchical structure during that period is highlighted within the play when it indicates that the serf has become a landlord in the new era. The biography of the character resembles Chekhov himself because his grandfather was a serf, too, and his father was also a coarse, disciplinarian shopkeeper. Similarly, Chekhov worked in his father's shop. It is possible to see fragments of his life in the novel, which makes it a more realistic work of literature.

Pyoty Trofimov, eternal student, idealist, and former tutor of Ravenskaya's son, is the representative of that part of Russian society with which a contract is made by Lopakhin. Being of serf origin, Lopakhin is uneducated and not well-read despite his wealth. He says, he says, "Only difference is I'm rich, plenty of money, but if you think it over and work it out, once a peasant, always a peasant…. (Leafs through the book.) I was reading this here book and couldn't make head or tail of it. Reading and nodding off."[156] However, the difference between the two characters is nothing since the new age does not discriminate on background but on hard work. Trofimov tells Lopakhin, "Your father was a peasant, mine a druggist, and it all adds up to

[153] Rose Whyman, *Anton Chekhov* (London: Roudledge, 2011), 150.

[154] Anton Chekhov, *The Complete Plays*, trans. Laurence Senelick (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 1086.

[155] Ibid., 1132.

[156] Ibid., 1086.

absolutely nothing."[157] The quotes prove that Lopakhin was a serf and carried both the good and bad aspects of serfdom. However, according to Trofimov, there is no difference between being a serf and any other occupation as time has changed. Everyone is equal now.

3.4. Censorship and the Freedom of Expression

Censorship in Russia goes way back in history, starting with the Russian Empire, where many censorship policies were put into place.[158] However, during the period of the Russian Enlightenment, these restrictions were relaxed, especially during the second half of the 18th century, mainly during the reign of Catherine II (between 1762 and 1796).[159] The reforms, such as the emancipation of the nobility and the easing of censorship, among others, during the reign of Empress Catherine gave the military culture relative independence from the government.[160]

During the beginning of Nicholas I's reign, St. Petersburg was indeed an intellectual center where in Russia lived the most important writers, but it did not experience much intellectual interaction with lively discussion.[161] The Tsar graced Alexander Pushkin's request, in 1826, to be released from his provincial banishment, and to live in the capital, and even promised him personal protection on the ground that he would act as a censor to the poet.[162] This called for excessive use of time and creativity by writers and editors to please or somehow get around that censorship. This job was further complicated by the new Censorship Statute, which Admiral

[157] Ibid., 1137.

[158] Viktoriya Artemyeva, "Rossiyskaya knizhnaya tsenzura: s drevnosti do nashih dney i sotnia sposobov ee oboyti" [Russian Book Censorship: From Ancient Times to the Present Day and a Hundred Ways to Bypass It], *Novaya Gazeta*, July 18, 2024, https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2024/07/18/rossiiskaia-knizhnaia-tsenzura-s-drevnosti-do-nashikh-dnei-i-sotnia-sposobov-ee-oboiti.

[159] Eugene Miakinkov, *War and Enlightenment in Russia: Military Culture in the Age of Catherine II* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 10.

[160] Ibid., 232.

[161] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 250.

[162] Ibid.

Shishkov had framed and to which the emperor gave his approval on June 10, 1826; the new statute reflected in part Shishkov's conviction that censorship, in addition to its negative role, should play a positive one regarding both form and subject matter of literature.[163]

It would appear that the object of this censorship was to confine and direct literature along paths from which it would be useful to the nation or at least not injurious. In addition, Gogol's novel faced censorship regarding religious and political issues. One of them is interestingly related to the title of the novel. Gogol had to rename his novel *The Adventures of Chichikov* (*Pokhozhdeniya Chichikova*) so as not to face possible heresy and political criticism, as the Church viewed the original title as blasphemous.[164]

3.5. Conclusion

This fact deeply reflects the evolution of Russian society in the 19th century, as revealed in the biting satire of writers like Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, and Anton Chekhov. These authors employed humor, irony, and satire as their tools of work to criticize the political, social, and economic realities surrounding them to show them the works and dysfunctions within Russian society in a time marked by stagnation, corruption, and social inertia. Each of them, in his own peculiar way, was involved with urgent questions about the day and placed them at the very forefront of literary overcoming and the formation of the whole landscape of Russian literature as the most vital way of social reflection.

Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* of 1842 is probably the most dramatic verdict against bureaucratic inefficiency and corruption, infamously known to rule 19th-century Russia silently. The main character, Pavel Ivanovich Chichikov, and his morally bankrupt schemes for buying "dead souls," serfs who had died but were still counted in property records, Gogol reveals profound dehumanization ingrained in the Russian

[163] Ibid.

[164] Robert Maguire, *Exploring Gogol* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 214.

system. Even the title of the novel speaks for dead serfs and morally dead people running the system, an ominously satirical comment on the ethical void and hollow administrative structures of the Russian Empire. Gogol's work was a very sharp revelation of how bribery became one of the crucial flaws in the social fabric of the nation. The absurdity of the characters and their dealings points out a seriously flawed system that reduces human beings into units of labor and taxation- a critique of the loss of individual value and moral decaying in society.

Where Gogol left off, Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* of 1859 took over but took on the more cultural and social stagnation of the aristocracy. The character of Oblomov reflects both a lazy, passive nobleman and is symbolic of the resistance to change that so much of Russia's upper class represented during this period. Coming just two years before the abolition of serfdom in 1861, *Oblomov* is the literary bridge between an old, decaying aristocratic order and looming reforms necessary to push Russia into the modern era. Goncharov sharply criticizes the unwillingness of the aristocracy to change with the times. The sharp critique reflects the bigger problems of Russian society due to the inertia of the upper classes that contributed to the general stagnation of the nation. By Oblomov's inactivity and fatal apathy, Goncharov designates the pernicious results of adherence to outdated tradition, a phenomenon that just mirrored the greater reluctance to reform in Russian society.

Anton Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" (1903) is the last word about the passing of the aristocracy and the entrance of new forces into the social sphere. Chekhov sets off a family estate against the impending sale to a merchant class for debts, recording the inevitable decline of the old order and the emergence of a new class of wealthy merchants to which the character of Lopakhin-a former serf who buys the estate where his family once served-vividly attests. The sale of the cherry orchard, deeply sentimental in value to the aristocratic family, is the symbol and representative of the dogmatic social and economic changes to ensue in Russia. Chekhov's subtlety and strength in satire point out the detachment and shallowness of the aristocratic class, which is completely blind to the dramatic changes in society happening around them. Chekhov reveals in "The Cherry Orchard" the incapability of the aristocracy to

realize the need for change; he points out the way in which they are totally incapable of adapting to a new society.

Taken all together, *Dead Souls*, *Oblomov*, and "The Cherry Orchard" form the beginnings of a complete literary map of 19th-century Russian society, its deep structural flaws, social stagnation, and the inevitable push toward reform. Chronicling a Russia in between its imperial past and an unsure future, these several authors employed satire over the span of half a century both as a mirror and a weapon in which to expose the absurdities of their own age.

Gogol's criticism of bureaucratic disintegration and Goncharov's aristocratic inertia, Chekhov's presentation of the fallen old order, are only a reflection of larger sociopolitical change taking place within Russia while fighting the forces of modernization and change. In their works, benign entertainment became triggers of deep introspection on the nature of power and class and human behavior; they are masters of Russian satire. In other words, 19th-century Russian literature, as reflected in these three authors, condemned the society of transition. The satirical elements of the three writers were not only a source of amusement but a very functional method for unmasking deficiencies in society and stirring public debate with questions about which destiny awaited Russia. As the century gained momentum, this cry for reform became more hectoring, and these writers used the tools of their craft to illuminate the crying need for change in society, politics, and economics.

Gogol, Goncharov, and Chekhov are the three Russian writers discussed here, who, with their satire in the frameworks of their narratives, managed to record a commentary on the moral and structural disintegration of Russian society and, at the same time, recorded the rich complexity of a nation standing on the cusp of transformation. Their works continue to be largely studied and admired to this day for scathing social critiques and brilliant uses of satire. These literary giants laid the groundwork for future Russian writers who would later confront the challenges of the Soviet Era and beyond. Their works remain timeless reflections of the human condition, noting struggles between tradition and progress, corruption and reform,

stagnation and change. While continuing with this investigation, the next chapter on the Soviet period shows how satirical literature continued to evolve as a genre, answering specific challenges and upheavals of the 20th century.

CHAPTER 4

RUSSIAN SATIRE DURING THE SOVIET PERIOD

Throughout the 20th century, vast political, social, and economic changes roiled Russia, fundamentally transforming the nature of its governance and its relations with other nations.[165] At the dawn of the century, Russia was a vast empire bereft of democratic institutions.[166] That empire then took a different shape as a communist state, officially termed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which came under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. The writings of K. Marx, F. Engels, and V. I. Lenin drew the main features of the communist regime, which distinguished it from the bourgeois regime.[167]

In particular, Lenin underlines that the suffering of the proletariat for equality gives a proper understanding of the abolishment of classes, while democracy gives only formal equality.[168] While the Soviet regime imposed equality upon the working class, this would often be at the cost of the rights and privileges that the upper classes enjoyed, as if these adversaries were to impede the progress of the socialist revolution.[169]

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[165] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

[166] Ibid.

[167] L. N. Mazur, "Formirovanie sotsial'noi struktury sovetskogo obshchestva: ot idei ravenstva k novomu neravenstvu" [Formation of the Social Structure of Soviet Society: From the Idea of Equality to a New Inequality], in *Sovetskoe obshchestvo v sotsial'nom izmerenii: restrukturizatsii, transformatsiya i mobil'nost', UDK* 94(47).084:316.323.72 (2017): 472.

[168] Ibid.

[169] Valentina Aleksandrovna Igolnikova, "Elementy sotsial'nogo gosudarstva v sovetskoy Rossii 1917-1920 gg" [Elements of the Social State in Soviet Russia 1917-1920], *Sotsiologiia vlasti*, no. 6 (2010): 167.

Satire has always held a place of prominence in both Russian art and literature,[170] acting both as a tool for critique and the accompaniment to social commentary. It would be right to say that Saltykov Shchedrin, Gogol, Griboyedov, and Chekhov are considered the greatest Russian classical satirists.[171] A reader acquainted with their works has sound knowledge of Russian classical satire. Besides this, the names of Mayakovsky, Ilf and Petrov, Katayev, Shishkov, and Zoshchenko can be traced to the line of development that satirical literature took in the new Soviet environment.[172]

The fear of the Soviet regimes fear of humor probably originated from the dangerous ambiguities it introduced into what was supposed to be strictly controlled. The general belief is that sharing political or everyday jokes under the socialist regime forms a kind of resistance or rejection of the Soviet regime, which consolidates the idea that humor was a means of critique against Soviet ideology and authority.[173] However, this highly held opinion was eminently contested by the counterarguments. As a matter of fact, literature was considered in the official Soviet newspaper *Pravda* as a powerful means of enlightening the people and spreading socialism.[174] Consequently, the Soviet writers were obliged to contribute to the regime as well as to synchronize their literary output with the wider objectives of the communist system, either out of volition or under compulsion.

This chapter discusses Soviet satire, not from a literary point of view, but rather based on the very political, ideological, and social system of the Soviet Union. Works of satire allowed Soviet writers to comment on the ambiguities of their time through humor, commenting on the absurdities of living under the regime within the

[170] Laurence Senelick, *Russian Satiric Comedy* (New York: Performing Art Publications (1983), 9.

[171] Manuil Samyonov, "Soviet Satire," *Indian Literature* 12, no. 2 (1969): 40, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329636.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Jonathan Waterlow, "Sanctioning Laughter in Stalin's Soviet Union," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 79 (2015): 199, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43917316.

[174] "K novym uspeham sovetskoy literatury" [Towards New Achievements of Soviet Literature], *Udmurtskaya Pravda*, December 15, 1954, No. 247, accessed August 2, 2024, https://elibrary.unatlib.ru/web/viewer.html?dsfile=8091cf72-5f7f-4b68-b8e7-6f1f20cd24e1&dstitle=Удмуртская%20правда,%201954,%20№%20247%20от%2015.12.1954.

very tight limits of censorship. The key emphasis in this chapter would be to decipher how Soviet satire addressed vital themes that became synonymous with bureaucratic inefficiency, collectivism, class struggles, and censorship. Focusing on some key ideas, the chapter has shown how satire has emerged as a strong weapon of criticism of the Soviet government while it often had to support official ideologies to avoid punishment.

Through the key works of Ilf and Petrov, and Mikhail Bulgakov, among other Soviet satires, the genre broached the most important subjects then and even now: bureaucratic absurdity, collectivism, class dynamics, and censorship. The section also brings out how satire, despite crippling restrictions, was a strong medium for critiquing the Soviet regime while simultaneously navigating the boundaries of censorship. In such works as *The Twelve Chairs*, *The Little Golden Calf*, and *The Master and Margarita*, one can receive great views regarding the development of satire within Soviet society and its consequences for Soviet cultural identity.

4.1. Bureaucratic Absurdity and Collective & Soviet Ideology

The government system of the Soviet Union heavily relied on administrative and repressive methods with broad political-ideological control, according to S. B. Lugvin. The Bolsheviks presumed that the carrying out of such a determined measure from the proletarian state, based on the working mass "class instinct," would be sufficient to give a sharp turn to social life according to communist patterns, even without the economic and cultural substrata. Here, before coming to power, they fell into the false belief that the Soviets, as an instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, were capable of drawing the masses into the work of state management. According to Lenin, capitalism had already prepared for that: big productive industries, factories, and means of communication have simplified management so that it was reduced to very simple operations so any literate person could perform them. This led to a simplification of governance and underestimation of the appropriate professional administrative training required, therefore leading to incompetence and amateurism at the top leadership levels.[175]

[175] S. B. Lugvin, "Patrimonial'nye cherty sovetskoy byurokratii [Patrimonial characteristics of Soviet bureaucracy]," *Via in tempore. Istoriya. Politologiya* 26, no. 8 (151) (2013): 174-179.

As S. B. Lugvin indicates, with the dissolution of the old state apparatus, once in power, the Bolsheviks destroyed pre-revolutionary public service legal frameworks through such vehicles as the 1917 "Decree on the Abolition of Estates and Civil Ranks." This allowed them to introduce a new hierarchical form of governance, one that was to be based on professional bureaucracy. In this way, it also represented a return to some sort of traditional governance in which judicial processes were simply part of the administrative power exerted. The ideal Soviet citizen, especially for leadership, would be loyal, physically and mentally robust, focused on practical knowledge, and obedient to authority through this system. These individuals were ambitious but indifferent to the suffering of others, a characteristic essential for success in the Soviet hierarchy. They were driven to work tirelessly and were willing to sacrifice themselves for the collective, the Party, or the Motherland. This was similar to figures from earlier moments of Russian history, such as servants from the 16th century or the era of Nicholas I, but with all Christian and European moral influences removed. All of this produced a certain type of militarized, directive command regime based upon an absolute and unconditional discipline of obedience and execution.[176]

According to Z. N Trifonova, Soviet collectivism stands on two basic concepts. To the latter, it views the Western world as alienated, where success in individuals and competition is pitted against solidarity, while the Soviet model idealizes the latter. The Soviet model supposed that such a consensus among people, though imposed or flawed, engenders the operations of collective self-determination and group cohesion. Accordingly, Soviet collectivism places the collective above the individual; the needs and goals of society or a particular group, like a family or work unit, thus take clear precedence over personal interests or ambitions.[177]

Property, society, and productivity mean that even the lives of people depended on Soviet bureaucracy. It was the bureaucratic apparatus, not created by himself, that

[176] Ibid.

[177] Z. N. Trifonova, "Kollektivizm v sovetskoy ideologii i v pedagogicheskoy sisteme A. S. Makarenko: sravnitel'no-sopostavitel'nyy diskurs" [Collectivism in Soviet Ideology and in the Pedagogical System of A. S. Makarenko: A Comparative Discourse], *Sotsial'naya pedagogika*, no. 1 (2019): 125-126.

had stamped Stalin's regime, according to Trotsky.[178] He described Stalin as just a bureaucrat and an embodiment, whereas "the apparatus itself is an inanimate, extra-creative machine, and Stalin-a spittoon of all its virtues," which is the most appropriate expression of it.[179]

During the Soviet era, science was substituted for religion and idolized by the official ideology.[180] As the Soviet Union's ideology was based upon Marxism, to understand this very foundation makes it rather easy to understand this regime's take on literature and the arts. Here, the involved ideology is not mere politics but is deeply implicated in social and cultural relations, especially literature. Nikita Khrushchev, while sending a message to the Soviet artists and writers, gave due recognition to the importance of raising Soviet art and literature:

> Our country's arts and literature can and must seek to become the best in the world, not only in the richness of content but also in artistic power and skill. We cannot be reconciled, as are some comrades in art agencies, editorial offices, and publishing houses, to dull and hasty works.[181]

His statement says much about the position of art and literature in the Soviet Union, reflecting the goal of excellence in the arts. In their very essence, Soviet literature and art turned into levers of Soviet ideological influence.

Similarly, G. Malenkov,[182] in his 1952 speech, contended that the Soviet Union needed writers akin to Gogol and Shchedrin, who could, "by their fire and their satire

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[178] Viktor Pavlovich Makarenko and Khaled Refaat Kemalel'din Badawi, "The Problem of the Comparative-Historical Nature of Soviet Bureaucracy in the Theoretical Legacy of L.D. Trotsky," *Sravnitel'naya politika* [Comparative Politics], vol. 12, no. 1 (2021): 23-33, doi:10.24411/2221-3279-2021-10003.

[179] Ibid.

[180] George Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw, 1954-1957* (London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1960), 32.

[181] Ibid., 13.

[182] Georgy Malenkov was a Soviet politician who briefly assumed leadership of the Soviet Union following Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. By January 25, 1955, the Central Committee decided to remove Malenkov from his role as head of the Soviet regime, but he remained a member of the Presidium. After organizing an unsuccessful attempt to challenge Khrushchev, his political career

would burn up all the negative, decaying, dead elements in our life, everything that impedes progress."[183] The intellectual class of that time had become weary of the overly optimistic literature, which is a sentiment by Malenkov when he remarked that Soviet citizens cannot endure "platitude, falsity, or works that are dull and mediocre and sometimes just careless, which distort Soviet reality."[184]

Novels like *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Little Golden Calf* by Ilya Ilf[185] and Evgeny Petrov,[186] for instance, satirically caught the bureaucratic absurd and the contradictions of Soviet collectivism so often demonstrating that mechanisms faint an equal and solidary fellowship ended up in inefficiency, corruption, and disconnection from the individual. Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov surely rank among the most renowned satirical writers of the NEP[187] period.

They were two Soviet prose writers who regularly wrote together as co-authors. Ilya Ilf was born in 1897 into a Jewish family and spent much of his teenage years trying everything from typesetting to marketing before starting to work as a journalist at the age of 18 in Odessa.[188] Petrov, the son of a teacher, worked as a correspondent until he became an accredited journalist and moved to Moscow.[189]

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ended. He was removed from all positions in the Presidium and reassigned to manage a hydroelectric power station. In 1968, he returned to Moscow, spending his life in seclusion with his family. For further information, see "Georgy Maksimilianovich Malenkov," *Rossiyskaya istoriya*, November 16, 2022, https://histrf.ru/read/biographies/georgiy-maksimilianovich-malenkov.

[183] F. F., "The Dilemma of Soviet Writers: Inspiration or Conformity?" *The World Today* 11, no. 4 (1955): 154, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40392808.

[184] Ibid., 155.

[185] His full name is Ilya Arnoldovich Feinsilberg (Илья Арнольдович Файнзильберг).

[186] The writers' full name is Yevgeniy Petrovich Katayev (Евгений Петрович Катаев).

[187] New Economic Policy (NEP) (Новая экономическая политика-НЭП) is Soviet Union's economic policy proposed by Vladimir Lenin in 1921. The policy was active between 1921 to 1928. For more information look at the V.I. Lenin, "The Role and Functions of the Trade Unions under the New Economic Policy", in *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 33 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), 184, Decision of the C.C., R.C.P.(B.), January 12, 1922, published in *Pravda*, no. 12, January 17, 1922.

[188] T. Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Ilf and Petrov," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 8, 2015, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Ilf-and-Petrov.

[189] Ibid.

Ilf and Petrov's work, *The Twelve Chairs*, also referred to as *Diamonds to Sit On*, was published in print in 1928 during the NEP period.[190] The tale takes place throughout European Russia, from Moscow to the Caucasus Mountains, serving to effectively act as a prop to reveal the Soviet atmosphere systematically. All action revolves around Ostap Bender. The narrative unfolds as a former noblewoman, Petukhov, discloses the location of hidden jewels on her deathbed in one of twelve chairs. Vorobianinov, her son-in-law, and Father Feodor, her confessor, join in the treasure hunt. Vorobianinov finds Bender and teams up to hunt for the jewels. But that treasure, in proper Soviet style, is put to a collective purpose: the chair with the jewels in it serves as the restructuring of the workers' club. In that novel, the personal serving for all central Communist ideology is vividly expressed.

At the beginning of the novel, Claudia Ivanovna, Ippolit's mother-in-law, asks him if he remembers their old mansion just before she reveals to him the location of her hidden diamonds, Ippolit recalls the parlor in his mansion, vividly reminisces the elegant aristocratic life before the revolution:

> A couch, a dozen chairs, and a round six-legged table. It was magnificent furniture, Gambs furniture. But what made you think of it?" But Claudia Ivanovna couldn't answer. A sulfuric color slowly started washing over her face. For some reason, it took Ippolit Matveevich's breath away, too. He clearly remembered the parlor in his mansion, the symmetrically arranged walnut furniture with curved legs, the spotlessly scrubbed and waxed floor, the antique brown piano, and the black oval frames on the walls holding daguerreotypes of highly ranked relatives.[191]

The jewelry hidden in the chair represents fortune and Vorobianinov's past life before the revolution (Russian Empire aristocracy). Searching for the jewelry also symbolizes the Soviet trauma. His futile attempt to make a personal gain in the Soviet sphere is directly connected to his nostalgia for the previous regime.

The Central Committee then called *The Twelve Chair* a "slander of Soviet society" and it was officially denounced; the book vanished from the libraries and catalogues,

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ilya Ilf, Evgeny Petrov, *The Twelve Chairs*, Northwestern World Classics (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 21–22.

silenced as were those who had copies.[192] Following 1956, however, Ilf and Petrov's works were issued and hailed as new works with features that earned them permanent positioning in the pantheon of Soviet classics.[193] This is indicative of the manipulative power of the Soviet Union. Initially, *The Twelve Chairs* received only a simple lack of fame and serious criticism. From a critical review of the issue of *Evening Moscow* in 1928 to official condemnation in 1948, this novel has gone through all kinds of appraisals.[194]

Ilf and Petrov's other novel, *The Little Golden Calf*, was published in 1931 during Stalin's First Five-Year Plan.[195] Another treasure hunt by Ostap Bender: from Asia through Europe to Russia. He decides to find a man owning one million rubles and steal his fortune there. Because he is successful in winning his rubles, Bender realizes that the mass society of the Soviets doesn't permit him to enjoy his fortune. As a matter of fact, it becomes really irritating to find even basic needs like food and accommodation due to his lack of official status. Desperate for an exit, he finds the Romanian border; the Romanian thieves take his fortune from him and push him across the Russian border.

The novel also dealt with Soviet virtue, where people had difficulties when they profited in the name of the Soviet Union for high personal gain. He concludes with Bender stating, "No ovations are necessary. I did not become a Count of Monte Cristo. I shall have to qualify as a janitor!" [196] Amazingly, despite his misfortune, there is no lingering resentment against the Soviet Union. In the apparent victory of Soviet virtue, vice gets its right dues, just like Bender.[197] The novel narrates the

[192] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 341, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

[193] Ibid.

[194] Ibid., 334.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, *The Little Golden Calf: A Satiric Novel* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), 402.

[197] J. A. Posin, "Soviet Satire," *The Russian Review* 9, no. 4 (1950): 301-302, https://doi.org/10.2307/125988.

struggles of a Soviet individual who strikes it lucky and amasses much wealth in Soviet society. In his experiences, he underlines how very different wealth is from everyday life in a collectivist state. Despite struggling to reach it, Bender finds himself out of place and loses his wealth to the authorities.

In the following parts, Ostap runs into the Soviet students and mingles with them. By evening, he knew all of them by name and even began calling some with the familiar "you." But he couldn't understand much from what the youngsters were relieving. Suddenly, he felt awfully old. Bulgakov describes his feelings: "He had been quite different at twenty. He confessed to himself that when he was twenty, he was much more many-sided but much worse. He did not laugh at them but merely laughed something. But these young folks laughed for all they were worth." [198] The identity of the Soviet Union is vividly underlined in comparison with the old regime. According to the passage, the Soviet era created a happier environment than previous systems.

Indeed, according to many critics, the two novels by Ilf and Petrov employ subversive humor; while superficially, they follow the political parameters of Soviet Union rule, actually challenging it.[199] It is ironically said by one of the minor characters in *The Golden Calf* that "in Soviet Russia, the insane asylum is the only place where a normal man can live."[200] Uncomfortably, the ironic statement did ring somewhat true. Meanwhile, it reflected the subversive approach of the novel since such was attained with characters that, in their negativity, came to represent problems within the Soviet system. While these novels criticize the Soviet policies, at the same time, they discourage dwellings on the trauma experienced by Soviet citizens during both the Soviet and post-Soviet eras. Through humor, Ilf and Petrov contributed to the creation of a particular Soviet form of laughter harnessed for managing collective trauma based on Soviet experiences.

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[198] Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, *The Little Golden Calf: A Satiric Novel* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), *378.*

[199] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 335, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

[200] Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, *The Little Golden Calf: A Satiric Novel* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1961), *190.*

While Soviet humor at first glance appeared destructive to the building of socialism, it turned inwardly into the supportive tool of social discipline for the regime. Seemingly opposed to the common supposition about humor and satire, these became the most prominent players in the advancement of Soviet ideology and projects. Despite the popularity among anti-Soviet thinkers, Ilf and Petrov bear strong Soviet sentiments in their novels. Ostap targets the flawed Soviet citizens, hence his anti-Soviet implication.

According to The Musical Comedy Films of Grigorii Aleksandrov, under the slogan "laughter is the blood brother of strength," The Central Committee called a meeting of directors and scriptwriters.[201] Both Ilf and Petrov contributed to turning Soviet laughter from mainly Gogolian "laughing through tears" into stoic Soviet "laughter without tears."[202] Both helped the creation of a unique Soviet narrative using laughter as a means of enforcing social discipline and building collective identity.[203]

4.2. Class Dynamics and the Proletarian Ideal

The early Soviet period (1917-1930) reflects a certain experience of social restructuring being carried out with the aim of creating a new society, according to L. N. Mazur. The basic emphasis during this time was based on the concepts of equality, freedom, and justice, each of which became a cornerstone of Soviet mythology. The organization of a "dictatorship of the proletariat" was the first step taken by the state in the development of this process. Consequently, this ideology molded a new system of equality based on property and wealth but not at a bureaucratic level in relation to power. Former slaves (serfs) turned out to be masters, while former masters had to recognize the equality of peasantry and proletarians. While building this equality-based society, the policy of the Bolsheviks aimed at a set of legislative and organizational works such as 'abolition of private

[201] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 345, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

[202] Ibid., 347.

[203] Ibid.

ownership of means of production; second, regulation of productions and distribution; third, eradication of class distinction' among others.[204]

Building on this context, Sergey Mikhailovich Sergeev further adds that the October Revolution was a momentous break in Russia's nation-building process, which had been conducted with painful slowness but without interruptions at the outset of the 20th century. Under Alexander III, the policies of national state-building and reliance on the nobility hampered any rise in the class-based structure of the peasant-owners despite all efforts taken up for Russian nation-building. The Russian society was divided by means of the Revolution and the Civil War, wherein the first group consisted of the national elites who personified the national ideologies, while the second supported the lower classes as well as the Bolsheviks. Accordingly, the triumph of the Bolsheviks was followed by repressive policies such as emigration, forced assimilation, and destruction. Ironically, whereas the Soviet regime was planning to create a non-national state, it ended up building a Russo-Soviet cultural identity, which was an essential element of the nation-building process in contemporary Russia.[205]

As the Bolshevik regime initiated the restructuring of the social and political ways of life, Soviet literature depicted intricate details that mended their way into this period of transformation. Michail Bulgakov wrote *The Heart of a Dog* in 1925, and it was first published in a Russian journal in 1987.[206] As such, this novella strongly reflects the early Soviet era in which it was written. The plot, themes, and satire suggest many more complex ideas about Soviet society upon closer look. Hence, more correct evidence, apart from direct quotations, would hint at the general subject and the satire driven into it.

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[204] L. N. Mazur, "Formirovanie sotsial'noi struktury sovetskogo obshchestva: ot idei ravenstva k novomu neravenstvu" [Formation of the Social Structure of Soviet Society: From the Idea of Equality to a New Inequality], in *Sovetskoe obshchestvo v sotsial'nom izmerenii: restrukturizatsii, transformatsiya i mobil'nost', UDK* 94(47).084:316.323.72 (2017): 470-476.

[205] Sergey Mikhailovich Sergeev, "Russkoe i russko-sovetskoe" [Russian and Russo-Soviet], *Voprosy natsionalizma*, no. 4 (12), 2012, 93-96.

[206] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, "The Heart of a Dog," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed July 27, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Heart-of-a-Dog-novel-by-Bulgakov.

The whole action of the novel starts with a description of the plot from the point of view of the starving stray dog taken in by a rich professor, Filipp Filippovich Preobrazhensky. The professor, in a wild experiment, transplants the organs of a recently deceased man into a dog. This experiment appears to be a success at first, but then complications subdued when the dog Sharik began to act like a human being. Matters get worse when it is discovered that the transplanted organs belonged to a criminal and alcoholic. Soon, Preobrazhensky realizes that his transplant of the hypophysis hadn't resulted in rejuvenation but in the humanization of the dog. Sharik now acquires speech, learns to laugh and curse, and builds up an excellent vocabulary.

Beginning with the action, the hypophysis that has been transplanted into Sharik's brain fully switches on the dog's speech center and hence creates a homunculus. This development could be said from one perspective to validate the theory of evolution. However, the issue arises with the transformation of Sharik into Sharikov. He lacks social manners, is offensive to others, and retains his old animalistic habit of chasing cats. Moreover, he requires having a name and birth certificate for himself and intends to rent a room. Further, he allies with a new housing committee, which he believes to be truly representative of the interests of the "working people." In such a way, Sharikov starts being a Soviet citizen, which is marked by the Soviet frame of mind, which Bulgakov's satire indicates throughout the novel. Here, the conflict between Preobrazhensky and Sharikov reflects the broader struggle between revolutionary changes and old values.

Moreover, Bulgakov masterfully portrayed the world of the petty bourgeoisie and used everyday occurrences to make more significant ideological questions clear. *The Heart of a Dog* is a grotesque analysis of the dystopian effects of the October Revolution at the grass-roots level, intermingled with elements of science fiction, and Preobrazhensky's suspicions further deepens the narrative's exploration of societal upheaval and individual transformation.[207] Bulgakov shows that while

[207] Douwe Fokkema, "Dystopian Fiction in the Soviet Union, Proletkult, and Socialist-Realist Utopianism," in *Perfect Worlds: Utopian Fiction in China and the West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 315, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mwnv.18.

society may take up a revolutionary change, it is hard to change individual natures, for people always retain their particular identity.[208]

In Chapter 9, when Sharikov is completely transformed into a professional revolutionary, he is finally representing himself in his new identity as a Soviet citizen.[209] He finds a job with the Moscow sanitation department, which undertakes the elimination of stray animals, including cats, which already shows a clear parallel with the regime's harsh policies. As a result, Sharikov's human traits gradually fade, replaced by the contented demeanor of a dog, signaling a return to the natural order and the folly of tampering with fundamental aspects of existence.[210]

4.3. Censorship and Political Critique

During the Soviet Union, the anecdotes strongly depended on the regime's control of use; thus, the regime was allowed to shape and reinterpret meanings, thereby controlling the narrative and context in which laughter was used.[211] Between 1917 and 1932, Soviet society underwent several transformative stages: War Communism, the New Economic Policy, the Cultural Revolution, and the First Five-Year Plan.[212] Consequently, all these phases deeply affected Soviet writers and citizens. For example, the polemics of the 1920s and 1930s defined Soviet satire as a weapon and Soviet satirists as conscious workers, so to say, for the social good, protecting the latter against both external and internal enemies.[213]

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[208] Ibid., 315–316.

[209] Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Heart of a Dog*, trans. Avril Pyman (Moscow: Raduga Publishers, 1990), 61-66.

[210] Douwe Fokkema, "Dystopian Fiction in the Soviet Union, Proletkult, and Socialist-Realist Utopianism," in *Perfect Worlds: Utopian Fiction in China and the West* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 314–16, http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46mwnv.18.

[211] Jonathan Waterlow, "Sanctioning Laughter in Stalin's Soviet Union," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 79 (2015): 211, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43917316.

[212] Evgeny Dobrenko, "Utopias of Return: Notes on (Post-)Soviet Culture and Its Frustrated (Post-) Modernisation," *Studies in East European Thought* 63, no. 2 (2011): 160, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41477765.

[213] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 346, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

However, as Leonard Freedman identified, at the expense of such control over access to information and assuring ideological conformism, the majority of the Soviet works and their authors faced inevitable consequences. To this can be added, as a surrealist attack on the Stalinist era, Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* was not published until 1967. The time of Brezhnev also witnessed writers being repressed; for example, Vladimir Voinovich was thrown out of the Union of Writers immediately after the publication of *Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin*; he then went into exile. The general Soviet Union rule was that one could make fun of corrupt officials, everyday life situations, residual bourgeois attitudes, and bureaucracy but never anything about the Soviet system itself, "No lese majeste, no criticism of the leaders."[214]

According to Donna M. Farina, censorship during the Soviet era is a topic that has only recently become an object of active research for Russian scholars. Although the field of history in Russia is well developed, there are two main reasons for the delayed scientific examination of censorship: until the late Soviet times of Glasnost and Perestroika, the subject itself was forbidden.[215] The most relevant materials were closed to them because they were secretly transferred from one inaccessibly archived place to another.[216]

Throughout most of the Soviet era, political satirists were under constant attack, and the repression they endured was as intense as it ever was under the czarist period. During the Soviet era, the repression was much greater than it had been during the time of the czar; political satirists endured censorship and suppression much more extensive than what the czarist censors ever managed.[217] The authorities strictly controlled writers' activities during the Soviet era, and many, including Boris

[214] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 89, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

[215] Arlen Viktorovich Blium and Donna M. Farina, "Forbidden Topics: Early Soviet Censorship Directives," *Book History* 1 (1998): 268–70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/30227290.

[216] Ibid.

[217] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 89, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

Pasternak, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Evgeny Ginzburg, and Mikhail Bulgakov, suffered severely because of their works.[218] Strict censorship in the USSR gave birth to so-called Samizdat literature, a network of unofficial distribution for literary works, articles, and other materials spread by the writers themselves.[219] This censorship was not limited to the explicitly "anti-Soviet" material but also extended to works that were not in line with Soviet ideals and those that were harmful or useless.[220]

For instance, anonymity was a deliberate strategy to avoid repercussions in cases in which authors critiqued the regime. An article titled "The Dilemma of Soviet Writers: Inspiration or Conformity"[221] was signed by F. F., an apparent effort to conceal the writer's identity in fear of personal safety. This anonymity suggests a deliberate attempt to conceal their identity and avoid detection by Soviet authorities during a period of political uncertainty. In the hands of F. F., published in 1955, underlines the caution still deeply ingrained among most intellectuals and writers during the post-Stalin era.

This shift in censorship allowed political critiques to surface more openly. Although censorship was at a very high level during that time, as previously mentioned, satire became a powerful tool for political critique. The famous novel by Fazil Iskander entitled *Rabbits, and Boa Constrictors* included a satire of Stalin as an intimidating Great Python. This work, however, could only be published long after Stalin's death since the censors cut Iskander's more direct portrayal of Stalin as a despot.[222] In contrast, during the Gorbachev period, one of Voinovich's plays contained a graphic

[218] Ilya Varlamov, "Kak rabotala sovetskaya tsenzura" [How Soviet Censorship Worked], Varlamov.ru, August 22, 2018, https://varlamov.ru/3059992.html.

[219] Margarita Tomazova, "Istoriya sovetskogo samizdata. Kak eto bylo" [History of Soviet Samizdat: How Was It], vc.ru, June 11, 2020, https://vc.ru/u/528817-margarita-tomazova/133567-istoriya-sovetskogo-samizdata-kak-eto-bylo.

[220] Ibid.

[221] For further information on the article of F. F. see, F. F., "The Dilemma of Soviet Writers: Inspiration or Conformity?" *The World Today* 11, no. 4 (1955): 153, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40392808.

[222] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 90, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

satirical image of the general secretary; no penalty was assessed by the actors, and the play was allowed to continue.[223] This approval was a signal of shifting in the approach of the Soviet Union towards satire and political critique.

According to Bytwerk, even Nazi Germany had a sense of humor, having published satirical journals that targeted Jews, Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin, and domestic idlers but never touching regime-related subjects.[224] Similarly, Stalin-the Soviet strongman who suppressed most dissent and mandated "socialist realism" in published works-protected Mikhail Bulgakov's 1926 play, "The Day of the Turbines," and also read Mikhail Zoschenko's anti-bureaucratic stories to his young sons.[225]

While works stifled during the years under Stalin's rule ultimately saw their publications during Khrushchev's rule, the Brezhnev era brought renewed repression. Nonetheless, Fazil Iskander managed to publish a sharply satirical story about the Soviet system, *Rabbits and Boa Constrictors*, in 1982.[226]

Moreover, Russian satire played a great role in the course of de-Stalinization. In post-Stalinist times, satirical works tended to focus on Stalin's foreignness and non-Russian traits.[227] Following the death of Stalin and the Twentieth Party Congress, the Soviet Union slightly relaxed its strict control over scientific literature, even encouraging some more critical approaches when bureaucratic inadequacies, red tape, and other forms of abuse within the Party needed to be discussed.[228]

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[223] Ibid.

[224] Randall L. Bytwerk, *Bending Spines* (East Lansing: University of Michigan Press, 2004), quoted in Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 88, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

[225] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 89, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

[226] Ibid.

[227] Karen L. Ryan, *Stalin in Russian Satire, 1917-1991* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), 9.

[228] George Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw, 1954-1957,* (London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1960), 34.

4.4. Evolution of Soviet Satire

Soviet satirists of the era drew roots from 19th-century writings of Saltykov-Schedrin and Gogol, among others, as well as some early Soviet writers of the Golden Age, as clarified by Karen L. Ryan-Hayes. The core of Soviet satire was formed by works such as Vladimir Maiakovskii's *The Bedbug* and *The Bathhouse*, which appeared in 1928 and 1930, respectively, along with several works by Mikhail Zoshchenko. The fantastic and absurd elements of the take overlap in such works as Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Heart of a Dog* and *The Fatal Eggs*, foreshadowing his magnum opus, *The Master and Margarita*, written in 1940. Meanwhile, the apex of the Soviet satire is expressed in Ilf and Petrov's works *The Twelve Chairs*, 1928, and *The Golden Calf*, 1931.[229]

Satire started appearing on a graduated scale in Soviet newspapers and periodicals. *Krokodil*, Russia's comic weekly, attained this significance in the Soviet context: it focused on government-oriented subjects like bureaucratic abuses, inefficiencies in production, and neglect of government property, as reported by J. A. Posin. *Krokodil*, however, avoided explicitly attacking the ineptitude of the Soviet regime or the incumbent leadership itself. The comic criticized capitalism and imperialism within an international context. Though it had restrictions on what subjects it could tackle, the very existence of *Krokodil* proved that the Soviet Union had a sense of humor, not as widely perceived as a very strict regime. It might be said that the Russian sense of humor in the Soviet era gave hardly any liberty for free expression in the form of satirical texts.[230]

Moreover, according to the report by Manuil Samyonov, *Krokodil* issued 36 works of satire annually, with each edition printing approximately 250,000 copies. On-screen and on stage, satire occupied an even more major significance in Soviet popular culture. Almost every Soviet theater was offering comedies that attracted a

[229] Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 1-2.

[230] J. A. Posin, "Soviet Satire," *The Russian Review* 9, no. 4 (1950): 302, https://doi.org/10.2307/125988.

huge audience. Additionally, Soviet film studies produced several comedies each year, most of which became successful. The aforementioned examples show that satire was indeed one of the most popular and significant genres in Soviet Society.[231]

However, socialist realism presented too many challenges for writers in Russia when it became the dominant literary rule in 1934.[232] The new doctrine on the creation of a typical character, conflict-free, and positive hero made it limiting for satirists such as Zoshchenko, Maiakovskii, Bulgakov, Ilf, and Petrov as they tried their way with this genre of literature.[233]

In Soviet literature, more comments were given to heroes than their opposites, who were the villains.[234] The negative hero in Soviet literature is mainly characterized by a diverse personality and multiple features displaying passionate desires. These characters had two different functions: first, they would enable them to dissociate the hostile feelings against the government by projecting them onto the villains.[235] Second, the depiction of villains commonly exposed the subconscious of the authors themselves, which is connected to their feelings, observations, and thoughts about Soviet lifestyles.[236] Hence, villains are a great medium to expose repressed desires or anger against the regime. The Stalinist villains were portrayed as anti-Soviet citizens connected with the pre-Soviet ways of life and ideologies and as enemies of Soviet Russia.[237]

The evolution of satire can be traced through various times. As the Russian Empire transformed into the Soviet Union, satire remained an important tool for social

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[231] Manuil Samyonov, "Soviet Satire," *Indian Literature* 12, no. 2 (1969): 41, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23329636.

[232] Karen L. Ryan-Hayes, *Contemporary Russian Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 2.

[233] Ibid.

[234] George Gibian, *Interval of Freedom: Soviet Literature During the Thaw, 1954-1957,* (London: The University of Minnesota Press, 1960), 106.

[235] Ibid., 110.

[236] Ibid.

[237] Ibid.

commentary, and during Stalin's rule, the oppression increased, and writers like Bulgakov tried to adapt the system by using satirical elements, as mentioned before. Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, written between 1928 and 1940,[238] provides a masterful mix of humor, philosophy, and criticism of Soviet life. It also stands as a prime example of how satire evolved to survive under oppressive conditions. Although the censored version was published in 1966–67, the complete, uncensored text was not published until 1973.[239] The novel is at once humorous and bold but a deep philosophical exploration of the timeless issues of good and evil; it is considered one of the leading masterpieces of 20th-century literature.[240] Furthermore, the novel reflects the combination of evolved satirical structures, including magical realism, religious allegory, and sharp social commentary.

Other authors, such as Angela Carter and Salman Rushdie, use metaphorical elements in their writing to address political concerns replenished with overtones of the magical.[241] Magical realism (Realismo magico), first and foremost, is realism, impregnated with magical aspects to develop an additional dimension of reality; it is nonetheless realist.[242] Not like fantasy, magical realism doesn't address the marvelous or fantastic. Instead, all that occurs in the story stays within the confines of reality.[243] Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita* incorporates these supernatural elements into a probe of the political ills of the Soviet Era.

As critics have observed, Bulgakov was a "satirist just at the time when real satire (satire that penetrates forbidden zones) became absolutely inconceivable."[244] His

[238] S. Thomas, "The Master and Margarita," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, July 4, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/The-Master-and-Margarita.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Ibid.

[241] Ian Gregson, *Character and Satire in Postwar Fiction* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 111.

[242] Lee A. Daniel, "Realismo Mágico: True Realism with a Pinch of Magic," *The South Central Bulletin* 42, no. 4 (1982): 129, https://doi.org/10.2307/3188273.

[243] Ibid.

[244] Mikhail Bulgakov, "Pis'mo M. Bulgakova sovetskomu pravitel'stvu" [Letter from M. Bulgakov to the Soviet Government], *Grani* 66 (1977): 158, quoted in Peter Petro, *Modern Satire: Four Studies*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum 27 (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1982), 47.

novel *The Master and Margarita* resonates with religiousness, with mysticism-like Dante's *The Divine Comedy* or Goethe's *Faust*.[245] Ellendea Proffer describes the novel as extraordinary, not just within the context of literature in the Soviet era but in a broader sense, calling it "a technicolor extravaganza in the time of black and white."[246]

Val Bolen suggests that it may be anticipated that "Bulgakov intends *The Master and Margarita* to be a polemic sequel to Il'f and Petrov's satires . . . showing the error of their optimistic prognosis for the Soviet State."[247] Indeed, he was not a loner in his hostile attitude; other writers like Zamyatin, Pilnyak, Platonov, and Zoshchenko also wrote critical and non-conformist satires.[248] However, Bulgakov's distinctive contribution combines satire, philosophy, history, Hermenism, and fantasy.[249] General Soviet satire focused on the existence of a bourgeois mentality, while Bulgakov's satire confronted the new Soviet mentality.[250]

In *The Master and Margarita*, Bulgakov expresses the complex layers of symbolism and critique brought against the background of Soviet censorship and cultural taboo. The novel is held to be an allegory: Pilate-dictatorship of the proletariat, Yeshua-the proletariat, Caesar-Stalin, Caiaphas- the Communist Party.[251] The Master represents the Russian intelligentsia, principally its spiritual and idealistic orientation, while Margarita represents Russia, whose cultural and spiritual identity is rooted in the pre-

[245] Peter Petro, *Modern Satire: Four Studies*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum 27 (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1982), 47.

[246] Ellendea Proffer, "On The Master and Margarita," *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 6 (Spring 1973): 533-564, quoted in Peter Petro, *Modern Satire: Four Studies*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum 27 (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1982), 48.

[247] Val Bolen, "Theme and Coherence in Bulgakov's The Master and Margarita," *Slavic and East European Journal* 16, no. 4 (1972): 429, quoted in Peter Petro, *Modern Satire: Four Studies*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum 27 (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1982), 52.

[248] Peter Petro, *Modern Satire: Four Studies*, De Proprietatibus Litterarum 27 (Berlin; New York: Mouton, 1982), 52.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Ibid.

[251] Ibid.

Revolutionary past.[252] Thereby, the novel unmistakably claims to be universally valid beyond the borders of the USSR, strongly asserting its universalistic character. The satire against grayness in daily life, a shortage of housing, widespread ignorance, vile forms of mass culture, and a shortage of basic foodstuffs, lines, and bureaucracy gives the background to the criticism of the vices of human nature.[253]

Woland is one of the novel's main characters, and his profile is suspiciously connected with ideological "distrust" of particular ethnic groups and foreigners usual for the 1930s Soviet Union.[254] In the novel, Bulgakov describes Woland: "He looked to be a little over forty. Mouth somehow twisted. Clean-shaven. Dark-haired. Right eye black, left - for some reason - green. Dark eyebrows, but one higher than the other. In short, a foreigner."[255] Here, the foreigners are symbolic of those outside of the Soviet Union, to whom Soviet citizens are fascinated yet suspicious.

Bulgakov further illustrates the Soviet security force as highly suspicious toward foreigners, often accusing them when guilty evidence is hardly present. People were made scapegoats in the nonsensical subject files of that time.[256] For instance, the absence of Ivan's censored text- a poem about Jesus serves as a foundational element in the novel. The reference is there at the beginning as a deliberate act of the author to introduce the concept of missing, censored texts throughout the book that demonstrates suppression of information and control.[257] As the Bolshevik regime initiated the restructuring of the social and political ways of life, Soviet literature depicted intricate details that mended their way into this period of transformation. All these novel examples denote how satire evolved during the Stalin period due to

[252] Ibid.

[253] Ibid.

[254] Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), 58.

[255] Mikhail Bulgakov, *The Master and Margarita*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 21.

[256] Cristina Vatulescu, *Police Aesthetics: Literature, Film, and the Secret Police in Soviet Times* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2010), 59.

[257] Ibid., 67.

the novel's unique style, which incorporated new elements such as magical realism and social allegory; therefore, it was so unique for its time.

4.5. Conclusion

The Soviet satire, followed in detail throughout this chapter, formed part of one of many instruments against criticism and obedience, vividly entwined with the Soviet political, social, and ideological life. It revealed contradictions within the Soviet life of superior ideals in the name of collectivism, equality, and class struggle, but also with bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, and state repression. Despite the extraordinary obstacles the regime of censorship threw in its way, Soviet writers such as Ilf and Petrov, Bulgakov, and so many others succeeded in writing works that subtly criticized the absurdities of life under the Soviet regime.

Ilf and Petrov, in such works as *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Little Golden Calf*, characterized the contradictory trends of Soviet collectivism by reflecting on the fact that the most ambitious of ideological goals often had their resolution filled with a begrudgingly comedic form of bureaucratized inefficiency and corruption. Their humor was not simply a rebellion against the system but also a means of survival, suggesting readers a way to laugh at the system's failures. Their novels represent how satire can be used both as a criticism and as a coping mechanism in pointing out the disconnect between ideals in Soviet rhetoric and the realities of everyday life. Further extension of satire Mikhail Bulgakov included in his works *The Heart of a Dog* and *The Master and Margarita* by including elements of social allegory, magical realism, and philosophical reflection.

Bulgakov critically rendered the Soviet attempts at social engineering in his novel *The Heart of a Dog* by using the transformation of a stray dog into a crude human and combined thoughts on the chaos and failures of early attempts by Soviet society to build up a new order of the proletariat. His works touched upon how complex human nature was, with the attempt at drastic changes within humanity by artificial means being futile. Meanwhile, *The Master and Margarita* stands at the pinnacle of Soviet satire. Blended with that masterly fantasy is the deep judgment of the Stalinist

civilization. It became even more philosophical and allegorical, dealing with the struggle between good and evil or freedom and with the relation between art and power. The oppressive environment of the Stalinist regime could not be able to stop Bulgakov from penning his novel, questioning the very credentials of the Soviet system and symbolizing the resilience of creativity and intellectual resistance. Through magical realism and allegory, *The Master and Margarita* could express deep critiques of Soviet repression, the nature of censorship, and the cost of living inside a totalitarian state within the strict limitations of Soviet literature.

As Soviet society was changing, so was its satire. The post-Stalin period, the period of de-Stalinization, marked the time when satire began to wear quite a new face as a genre to reflect on the regime. Authors like Fazil Iskander, through his novels such as *Rabbits and Boa Constrictors*, used satire as a medium of continuous criticism of the legacies of Stalinism and the contradictions within Soviet society, even when this period faced the loosening grip of censorship. Gradual liberalization in the Khrushchev period made satire even more public and open, hence acquiring a more critical outlook on the insistent problems of Soviet bureaucracy, inefficiency, and the gap between policy and practice.

Satire was not only one form of aesthetic expression in Communist Russia; it would, in fact, reflect the deep inner complexities and contradictions within Soviet life itself. This means that authors and readers could address the realities of their society in ways other forms of expression were not capable of. Dressing up criticism in humor and allegory allowed Soviet writers to point out the absurdities of the regime without facing the harsh realism of its consequences head-on.

After all, the tradition of Soviet satire is much more than the literature of its time. It is a window into how art, politics, and society are interrelated. Situated in the shadow of censorship and repression, satire presented perhaps the only way for Soviet writers to comment upon their society, reflect upon its failures, and somehow imagine alternatives. In so doing, it permanently stamped Soviet literature, and, with that, the wider world's imagination of what art can be as a form of resistance and reflection in the most desperate of political times. As the Soviet Union transitioned

and eventually collapsed, the satire created at that time continued to echo, reminding one of the powerful uses of humor combined with critique while navigating life in an authoritarian regime.

As we proceed to the next chapter, on the post-Soviet period, we discuss how satire adapted to the absence of such strict control by the Soviet regime. It is with the fall of the Soviet Union that not only was the political landscape transformed, but it paved new avenues to literary and satirical expression. The following chapter examines the work of key post-Soviet satirists and how satire played a role in critiquing and reflecting the difficulties of a new Russia, whose everyday reality deeply influenced its Soviet past.

CHAPTER 5

RUSSIAN SATIRE DURING THE POST-SOVIET PERIOD

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the post-Soviet countries began developing their political identities, including writing historical narratives, using post-colonial discourse, and forming an idea of a national state that would have been in accordance with the dominant ethnic groups.[258] Russia, as the most considerable successor state to the Soviet Union, proclaimed itself a legal successor to the USSR and Russian Empire.[259] Such positioning underlined complex duality, whereby Russia attempted to balance a Soviet legacy with one of imperial roots. While trying to balance these past legacies against the new reality of nationhood, tensions, and contradictions in the country's identity became evident. What had once been a shared ideological framework of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire started to shift and transform into distinctive aspirations of the nations.

These shifts in political, cultural, and economic attitudes reshaped all aspects of Russian society,[260] including literature, which became an essential space for negotiating the rapidly changing social landscape. Post-Soviet writers began using diverse modes and styles to connect with both the historical past and the evolving contemporary Russia. They engage with the residual presence of Soviet ideology, the growth of capitalism, and the diverse pursuit of a new national tale. Since Vladimir Putin's rise to the presidency in 2000, there has been a shift towards a socially conservative society, which has facilitated an official condemnation of authors and

[258] D. E. Letnyakov, "Sozdavaya natsiyu: politika identichnosti v postsovetskih gosudarstvah" [Nation-Building: Identity Policies in Post-Soviet States], *Mir Rossii* 25, no. 2 (2016): 144-167.

[259] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 4.

[260] Jonathan Stone, *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 9.

works pondered unacceptable.[261] While the media have also faced severe censorship, many authors in Russia have not been silenced and have kept their status of bearers in society.[262]

This chapter leverages satirical literature as an analytical tool within the broader field of Eurasian studies. By examining the works of contemporary Russian satirical writers such as Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Dmitry Bykov, the chapter shows how these authors critique the evolving Russian state and its governance. Rather than an exercise in literary critique, this text attempts to make explicit how these authors wield satire vis-à-vis the continuities and shifts between the current government of Russia and its predecessors- the Soviet Union and even the Russian Empire.

Issues like censorship and authoritarianism, satire regarding societal and national identity, consumerism, and the technological effect on literature in post-Soviet Russia all give insight into Russia's post-Soviet development. The chapter examines all these aspects for evidence of continued authoritarian tendencies, historical revisionism, and cultural transformation influencing the identity of Russia in the 21st century. This chapter is not a purely literary analysis but an attempt to show how satire reflects more profound political, social, and ideological transformations in post-Soviet Russia. Accordingly, the chapter tries to present a more detailed understanding of how contemporary Russian power structures both parallel and diverge from the past through parallels with the present-day government and historical regimes. It provides a comprehensive view of the current transformation in Russia within the general Eurasian process.

5.1. Censorship and Authoritarianism

In the 20th century, Russia faced various political, social, and economic crises, which completely changed the then-current government and its relations.[263] At the

[261] Ibid.

[262] Ibid.

[263] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

beginning of the century, Russia was a vast empire that lacked democratic institutions.[264] It later turned into a communist regime under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin, and it took the name Union of Socialist Republic- USSR.

In December 1991, the USSR finally disintegrated into pieces and partitioned itself into fifteen independent states; the largest successor state, Russia, announced itself as the heir of both the USSR and the Russian Empire.[265] In other words, this statement means that the state did not recognize Soviet and Empirical heritage or Russian nationalism. However, this newly born Russian Federation declared its goal of switching as a multinational state from a socialist regime to liberal capitalism.[266] The ambiguous recognition of the two previous regimes and adapting to a new capitalist system brought about incongruent and conflicting goals for the leadership.

According to Vladimir Shlapentokh and Joshua Woods, during the beginning years of the new epoch, sharp divergence in individual attitudes toward primarily political and economic issues, along with significant differences in perceptions of the country's political and economic institutions, marked Russia. Liliia Shevtsova describes present-day Russia, which moved from "oligarchic authoritarianism" during the Yeltsin era to "bureaucratic authoritarianism" under the rule of Putin. During Yeltsin's rule, the "Seven Bankers' Regime" was the popular name of a group of bankers who stood behind his regime in return for assets and the opportunity to control every significant political decision made in the Kremlin. In Russia, the fear of criminals became ingrained in daily life, leading to a perception that any intimidating individual encountered on the streets was a significant threat. In the Soviet era, attackers typically acted alone or with a few acquaintances, unlike in the present, where individuals may have powerful criminal connections. Furthermore, businesspeople of the new era had conflicting relations with the criminals. While deeply fearful of the criminals since the beginning of privatization, they also often called on them for help in dealing with their problems. The elements

[264] Ibid.

[265] Ibid., 4.

[266] Ibid.

or ingredients of feudal societies are decentralized power, high degrees of crime and corruption, insecure property rights, and hindered trade.[267]

The first president of post-Soviet Russia, Boris Yeltsin, utilized personal funds to bribe parliament members, potentially preventing his impeachment and aiding his reelection in 1996.[268] Since shortly after the fall of the USSR, his family has bossed Russian politics.[269] In the more clearly feudally-tinged societies, a leader's personal domain in the form of private property seems to play a significantly enhanced role. Evidently, in contemporary Russia and various post-Soviet republics, leaders such as Nazarbayev, Akayev, Shevardnadze, Niazov, and Aliev were notably associated with a great deal of personal wealth, and the influence on their domains in their decision-making and the general political process in their countries.[270] In contrast, under Putin's presidency, he and his inner circle have managed to maintain complete control over major companies like Gazprom and Sibneft, along with their affiliated companies, wielding substantial financial power and influence.[271] With Putin, family influence in politics was reduced;[272] however, he expanded his circle of power based mainly on eliminating the difference between his personal interests and that of the Kremlin, a fact supported by the stranglehold he had on the oil and gas firms in Russia.

In 2011, public protests emerged following the announcement of Putin's intention to seek an unprecedented third presidential term in 2012.[273] The move was believed to be contentious as the Russian constitution sets a limit on presidents serving a

[267] Vladimir Shlapentokh and Joshua Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society: A New Perspective on the Post-Soviet Era*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 7-13, 41-53.

[268] Ibid., 91.

[269] Sergey Medvedev, "Semeynoe delo Kremlya" [Kremlin's Family Affair], *Svoboda*, January 9, 2022, https://www.svoboda.org/a/semeynoe-delo-kremlya-efir-v-18-05/31642871.html.

[270] Vladimir Shlapentokh and Joshua Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society: A New Perspective on the Post-Soviet Era*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 93.

[271] Ibid., 91.

[272] Sergey Medvedev, "Semeynoe delo Kremlya" [Kremlin's Family Affair], *Svoboda*, January 9, 2022, https://www.svoboda.org/a/semeynoe-delo-kremlya-efir-v-18-05/31642871.html.

[273] Mark Lipovetsky and Lisa Wakamiya, eds., *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader, Vol. I (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 271.*

maximum of two consecutive terms. In Putin's second term as Prime Minister from 2008 to 2012, when Dmitry Medvedev was president, a "tandem" system of governance seemed to exist.[274] During this period, writers like Dmitri Bykov, Boris Akunin, and other prominent figures participated in marches advocating for fair elections.[275]

Sorokin's novel *Day of the Oprichnik* (2006) depicts an authoritarian Russia governed by a faction of secret police members known as the Oprichnina. Through the book, a vision is set for the future where the restoration of Russian Tsardom has the epoch of Ivan the Terrible, a time when Oprichnina, a secret police, acted directly for the Tsar. Much satire has saturated the book. Even during the easing of censorship, like many of his fellow writers, Sorokin continued operating under the cloak of satire. In his book, Sorokin provided insight into contemporary Russia, as explained in this Spiegel interview, he gave:

> Sorokin: "Of course it's a book about the present. Unfortunately, the only way one can describe it is by using the tools of satire. We still live in a country that was established by Ivan the Terrible."
> Spiegel: "His reign was in the sixteenth century. The czardom was followed by the Soviet Union, then democracy under (former President Boris) Yeltsin and (current President Vladimir) Putin. Has Russia not yet completed its break with the past?"
> Sorokin: "Nothing has changed when it comes to the divide between the people and the state. The state demands a sacred willingness to make sacrifices from the people."[276]

The book also criticizes Putin's policy, more precisely, the ban on the usage of swearwords in numerous fields of activity. President Vladimir Putin has enacted a regulation prohibiting profanity in films, television programs, theatrical productions, and the media, and violators are facing monetary penalties.[277] Books containing

[274] Ibid., 271-272.

[275] Ibid.

[276] Vladimir Sorokin, "Russia is Slipping Back into an Authoritarian Empire," *Spiegel Interview* by Martin Doerry and Matthias Schepp, February 2, 2007, translated from the German by Christopher Sultan, in *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader*, ed. Mark Lipovetsky and Lisa Wakamiya (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 278.

[277] BBC News, "Russian Law Bans Swearing in Arts and Media," *BBC News*, May 5, 2014, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-27286742.

swearwords have to carry warnings on their cover as obscene. It was never conducted in Russian history, though the Soviet Union tried to stop swearing, too. As noted before, President Putin wanted to bestow upon Russian society a "national and spiritual identity." While the novelist Sorokin has applied swear words in his novel *Day of the Oprichnik,* there are characters in his novel who warn one another about the use of swear words. This juxtaposition mirrors the tension between the authoritarian control of language and the enduring power of literature to challenge societal constraints.

Under Putin's rule, the regime portrays the state as a sacred entity, emphasizing strong central authority and continuity while using historical revisionism and nationalist education to reinforce ideological control.[278] Sorokin's *Day of the Oprichnik* serves as a satirical critique of this authoritarian resurgence. The novel depicts a dystopian future wherein Russia has relapsed into Tsarist-style rule with a secret police force patterned after Ivan the Terrible's Oprichnina. It is used by Sorokin as a point of reflection on modern-day issues such as censorship and political repression, serving as an indication that the very same authoritarianism recurred in Russia.

Another case of censorship issues is Dmitry Bykov's *Grazhdanin Poet*. Nevertheless, the impact of *Grazhdanin Poet* was short-lived. Public attention and political effects faded quickly despite initial success and follow-up projects. By 2018, Putin was re-elected for his fourth presidential term, potentially staying in office until 2036.[279] According to television critic Irina Petrovsky, "Political satire on major television channels is impossible in conditions where the regime becomes authoritarian. It is worth recalling the example of NTV, which was largely crushed because of the parody of Putin in the program Kukly."[280]

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[278] Maria Snegovaya, Michael Kimmage, and Jade McGlynn, "Est' li u putinskogo rezhima ideologiya?" [Does Putin's regime have an ideology?], Re:Russia, October 10, 2023, https://re-russia.net/discussion/0101/.

[279] Annelie Bachmaier, "The 'Poetic' Protest in Putin's Russia: 'Grazhdanin poet'," in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, ed. Aleksei Semenenko (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 142, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76279-7.

[280] "Proekt poezii Dmitriya Bykova" [Dmitry Bykov's Poetry Project], *BBC Russian*, October 5, 2012, https://www.bbc.com/russian/russia/2012/10/121005_bykov_poetry_project.

Bykov's portrayal of the country as being a "Semi-divided country / Rife with a dirty press / And full of dirty elections"[281] indicates the corruption and lack of transparency in Russian society and politics. Bykov uses metaphorical language within satire to address the corruption of the country in elections concerning Putin's third-term presidency, underlining most of all the opposition to his governance. Also, the term "semi-divided" prescribes to the government, which implies the social division that emanates from political mistrust and tensions.

Here is the beginning of one of Bykov's poems, which advances some themes such as political disillusionment and personal betrayal: "Here is what is happening to me: My old friend doesn't come to visit, And even opens his mouth, and says the opposite!"[282] In these lines, the speaker reminisces about a close friend: "I used to take him skiing, taught him not to give away the Kurils..."[283] However, his friend is "saying the opposite" and no more extended visits, revealing a rift due to political differences and personal divergences. Besides, the speaker's mistrust is interestingly depicted in the following lines: "Always wear my watch on the right, But I can't remember which side he wears his on,"[284] which is a sign that political allegiances bring losses of trust.

In another stanza, there is satirical criticism regarding the perceived power dynamics between Putin and Medvedev despite their official positions held during that time. Putin is quoted as saying, "He is the President, but I'm—the leader," highlighting a subtle critique of the power dynamics and hierarchical structure within the political leadership of that period.[285] That just brought to the fore how out of balance the

[281] Annelie Bachmaier, "The 'Poetic' Protest in Putin's Russia: 'Grazhdanin poet'," in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, ed. Aleksei Semenenko (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 136, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76279-7.

[282] Dmitry Bykov, "Poet i grazhdanin" [The Poet and the Citizen], LiveJournal, January 1, 2015, https://ru-bykov.livejournal.com/967570.html.

[283] Ibid.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Annelie Bachmaier, "The 'Poetic' Protest in Putin's Russia: 'Grazhdanin poet'," in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, ed. Aleksei Semenenko (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 137, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76279-7.

power structure was perceived, with the presidency of Medvedev as no more than symbolic while Putin retained actual authority.

5.2. Satirical Reflections on Society and National Identity

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia struggled to reconcile its Soviet and Imperial legacies with the construction of a new national identity.[286] As a multinational state, the Russian Federation sought to position itself as both the successor to the USSR and the Russian Empire.[287] However, this tension between a firm movement toward a capitalist system together with the residuals of Soviet-era ideologies created great contradictions. This duality comes up rather frequently in literature, whereby sometimes satire comes up because of the failure of history and the manipulation of identity.

As Elisa Coati said below, a mass culture dominated by economic forces rather than by ideological dictate and audience preference ruled Russia in the early post-Soviet period. The transition period signaled a development of literature from high art to more commercial entertainment. At the time, entertainment was often more popular than traditional forms of literature. Books became commodities driven by market forces and advertising rather than cultural artifacts, and they lost some of their old magic. Literature no longer held its privileged place, and writers seemed little more than those who could tell a good story. Thus, the panorama of Russian literature is undergoing several changes thanks to the digital era and changing relationships within society to books and their authors. The technological changes that have occurred with the Internet have lionized the production and consumption of books, which in turn has dictated how authors reach their audiences and readers read about their favorite works online.[288]

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[286] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 4.

[287] Ibid.

[288] Elisa Coati, *Russian Readers and Writers in the Twenty-first Century: The Internet as a Meeting Point* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, 2012), 14-16.

In the mid-1980s, Mikhail Gorbachev introduced economic and cultural reforms that ultimately led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.[289] The policy of Glasnost removed the main censorship from publications, and that radically altered the literary landscape for the Russians.[290] The removal of censorship was a significant factor in hastening the collapse of the Soviet Union. With censorship an intrinsic part of the Soviet system, its lack led directly to the system's collapse. However, Gorbachev's policy was not strong enough to remove preventive censorship altogether because, in order to do that properly, new laws and codes needed to be instituted to enact these freedoms.[291] With that relative freedom, Russian writers have used the privilege of using less censored language and investigating new spheres of literature, which was impossible during the Soviet era. Consequently, the literary process became more alive and limitless, and a traditional concept of the writer as a cultural or moral leader changed in the direction of a concept in which a writer is primarily a narrator or an entertainer, as it has been mentioned above.

Both Pelevin and Bykov reflect upon how post-Soviet Russian identity has been shaped by a tenuous balance between Soviet nostalgia and the embracing of capitalism. Satire becomes a tool for dissecting the contradictions inherent in post-Soviet society, revealing the absurdities of both the Soviet legacy and the capitalist system that replaced it. Their works suggest that national identity in post-Soviet Russia is fluid and contested, influenced both by historical legacies and contemporary realities.

In *Generation P*, Pelevin suggests that the post-Soviet legacy has marked Russian literature with the stroke of satire. In his works, he objectively observes the tension between Soviet ideals and emerging post-Soviet reality, focusing on the issue of national identity in the changing society.

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[289] Jonathan Stone, *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 8.

[290] Ibid.

[291] Seweryn Bialer, "Gorbachev's Move," *Foreign Policy*, no. 68 (1987): 69, https://doi.org/10.2307/1148731.

By using satire, he critiques the remnants of Soviet nostalgia and reflects on the social and political dynamics that shape post-Soviet Russia. This approach allows Pelevin to highlight the contradictions and complexities of Russian society as it navigates its past and present.

In Pelevin's work, there is a linguistic game blending Russian and English when characters use a vast number of foreign words in their dialogues. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Europe and the USA became the ideals for a Russian person, and English, which used to be viewed simply as some useless school subject, suddenly burst into the lives of people.[292] The replacement is satirical, as indicated throughout the book. All the main Soviet ideological things have been replaced. In the following chapters, through the use of various images, it is shown how even the portrait of the Soviet leader was substituted with an American flag and ideology:

> Above the desk, at the spot where a portrait of the leader would have hung in Soviet times, there was a picture in a heavy round frame. The coloured rectangle set at the centre of a white field was hard to make out from the door, but Tatarsky recognized it from its colours - he had one just like it on his baseball shirt. It was a standard label with the American flag and the words: "Made in the USA. One size fits all."[293]

In the novel, this linguistic blend of Russian with English is given to such an extent that even the characters in their dialogues use lots of foreign words. Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Europe, and the USA became ideals for the Russian person, and English, which used to be viewed simply as a useless school subject, unexpectedly burst into people's lives.[294] These satirical texts reflect criticism toward consumerism and the capitalist system.

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[292] Anna A. Kirpichnikova, "Yazykovye osobennosti postmodernistskogo romana i spetsifika ego perevoda (na primere romana V. Pelevina 'Generation "P"' i ego perevoda A. Bromfielda)" [Linguistic Features of the Postmodernist Novel and the Specificity of its Translation (The Case of V. Pelevin's Novel 'Generation "P"' and its Translation by A. Bromfield)], *Kazan Linguistic Journal* 1, no. 3 (2018): 92-93.

[293] Viktor Pelevin, *Generation "P"*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), 80.

[294] Anna A. Kirpichnikova, "Yazykovye osobennosti postmodernistskogo romana i spetsifika ego perevoda (na primere romana V. Pelevina 'Generation "P"' i ego perevoda A. Bromfielda)" [Linguistic Features of the Postmodernist Novel and the Specificity of its Translation (The Case of V. Pelevin's Novel 'Generation "P"' and its Translation by A. Bromfield)], *Kazan Linguistic Journal* 1, no. 3 (2018): 92-93.

Pelevin's "Eastern gaze" is relatively objective. He reflects on Russian history through post-modernist techniques and seeks ways for the nation and individual survival through Eastern wise.[295] Unlike Western postmodern literature, Pelevin's works always contain two distinct themes: one is satire on Soviet totalitarianism and contemporary Russian consumerism, and the other is a quest for answers to eternal questions like what truth is and is the world we perceive real.[296] Pelevin discusses the consumerist and capitalist values that came from the West and against both the present and the previous system. In Chapter One, the main character struggles to cope with the new system: "He didn't write any more poems after that: with the collapse of Soviet power, they had simply lost their meaning and value."[297] In Chapter Three, Lenin's statues are removed from the streets, and Pelevin describes this removal:

> Lenin's statues were gradually carted out of town on military trucks (they said some colonel had thought up the idea of melting them down for the non-ferrous metal content and made a lot of money before he was rumbled), but his presence was merely replaced by a frightening murky greyness in which the Soviet soul simply continued rotting until it collapsed inwards on itself. The newspapers claimed that the whole world had been living in this grey murk for absolute ages, which was why it was so full of things and money, and the only reason people couldn't understand this was their "Soviet mentality."[298]

Additionally, Pelevin and Sorokin criticize the previous regime. Both writers established cultural connections, and their impacts distort the cultural landscape, highlighting a distinct manifestation of core values within their works.[299] Pelevin and Sorokin share a common theme in their works: a total rejection of communism.[300]

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[295] Xiaoting Zheng, "Viktor Pelevin i vostochnyy postmodernizm" [Viktor Pelevin and Eastern Postmodernism], *Vestnik Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo lingvisticheskogo universiteta. Gumanitarnye nauki*, no. 2 (857), 2022, 155, https://doi.org/10.52070/2542-2197_2022_2_857_154.

[296] Ibid., 156.

[297] Viktor Pelevin, *Generation "P"*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), *3-4.*

[298] Ibid., 10.

[299] Daria A. Funtova and Sergei B. Sinetskiy, "The Space of Cultural Values in Modern Russian Literature," *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 6 (2018): 929.

[300] Belgorod National Research University et al., "Again Pelevin, Again Houellebecq? The First Twenty Years of the 21st Century (Proceedings of the Round Table)," *Research Result. Social Studies and Humanities* 6, no. 2 (June 30, 2021): 105, https://doi.org/10.18413/2408-932X-2020-6-2-0-6.

Their writings reflect a trend in Russian literature during the transition period, blending post-traumatic and postmodern themes. They take an anti-essentialist approach to national identity, using collective disorientation and self-doubt as central themes in their complex narratives.[301]

5.3. Satire and Consumerism

Advertising in post-Soviet Russia evolved into a significant economic, political, and cultural force.[302] Its impact on depoliticizing Russian society was profound, offering the allure of a "brave new world" to a populace exhausted by years of shortages.[303] The main problem a citizen dealt with under the Soviet system was a shortage of goods and services, leading to long queues and empty store shelves, hence a highly scarce environment where basic necessities were not available.[304] Privileges were reserved for a select group who had access to special goods, further supporting the regime. [305] By the late 20th century, advertising had grown through television into a powerful consumer culture that shaped media realities and normalized consumption.[306] It is a consumer society wherein the illusion of abundant choice cloaks more profound control to create a population that is fragmented, standardized, and united in a subtle conformance to the dictates of global corporations and "global democracy."[307]

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[301] Boris Noordenbos, *Post-Soviet Literature and the Search for a Russian Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 202–203.

[302] Olga L. Tsvetkova, "Genezis obshchestva potrebleniia v postsovetskoi Rossii i kul'turnoe vliianie SShA" [The Genesis of Consumer Society in Post-Soviet Russia and the Cultural Influence of the USA], *Verkhnevolzhskii filologicheskii vestnik*, no. 4 (2018): 281, doi:10.24411/2499-9679-2018-10223.

[303] Ibid.

[304] Vladimir Gryaznyevich, "Life Inside the Land of Deficits," openDemocracy, January 10, 2013, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/russian-consumerism-market-boom-chaos/.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Olga L. Tsvetkova, "Genezis obshchestva potrebleniia v postsovetskoi Rossii i kul'turnoe vliianie SShA" [The Genesis of Consumer Society in Post-Soviet Russia and the Cultural Influence of the USA], *Verkhnevolzhskii filologicheskii vestnik*, no. 4 (2018): 281, doi:10.24411/2499-9679-2018-10223.

[307] Ibid.

By the millennium, the standards of the American way of life and the roots of consumerism had gained a foothold in Russia, and the influence of the U.S. deeply invaded Russian culture and daily life, which Olga Tsvetkova has explained. Concerning cultural norms, advertising went a long way in projecting images through the media, not always reflecting reality. This media dominance was willingly embraced by society, turning itself into a semiocratic system in which signs became all-powerful. In this system of symbolic capital, at least as important as material wealth, all-things-power, money, goods, and persons-became signs. The growth of capitalism, expanded under U.S. influence, turned consumption into one of the main features of Russian society, where entertainment-driven consumption became one of the main peculiarities of the emergent economic system.[308]

Viktor Pelevin's *Generation P* is a prime example of how satire and consumerism have intersected in post-Soviet Russia. The novel brings out the absurdity of post-Soviet capitalism and especially the way consumerist culture, stimulated by Western ideals, managed to substitute for Soviet ideology. Pelevin sarcastically reproaches the superficial consumerism that has come to be the dominant influence in contemporary Russia, where materialism and Western brands have taken over the ideological vacuum left by draining communism. The characters in the novel do not find it very easy to deal with this new, capitalist Russia, and their struggle reflects the larger societal shift towards consumerism that Pelevin portrays with a critical eye. The book criticizes the extent to which Russian society embraces consumerist culture, usually passively-just as Soviet citizens did communist ideology. The satire of *Generation P* reflects the commodification of all aspects of Russian life, from political to personal identity. By providing satire on this new socially tangible reality, Pelevin's work exposed the contradictory nature of post-Soviet Russia embracing Western consumerism while showing how it is underlain by the ideological structures of the Soviet Union. The time frame of the novel *Generation P* (1999) does not extend beyond the present, coinciding with the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent short period of forming new social relations and value systems.[309]

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[308] Ibid., 282-290.

[309] *A. B. Seydashova,* Prostranstvenno-Vremennoy Kontinuum Romana V. Pelevina "Generation "P" Kak Virtualnaya Realnost" [The Spatio-temporal Continuum of V. Pelevin's Novel "Generation "P" as

In the novel, the fictional character, Babylen Tatarsky,[310] was born in the wake of Pepsi's arrival in Russia. His father admired the semi-dissident writer Vasily Aksyonov (Russian as Василий) and the revered Vladimir Lenin. This rare combination encouraged the father to name his son a shortened form of both names combined, Vavilen (Babylen), expressing the generation stuck between traditional Soviet ideals and the new influences of that time.[311]

The title of the book, *Generation P*, is an idea that symbolizes the Pepsi Generation that had a chance to taste Pepsi right after its appearance in the Soviet Union. *Generation P* becomes a myth about a once young and happy generation that, having once chosen "Pepsi," is left only as material for consumption.[312] Gregory Freidin reveals his experience as a Pepsi Generation:

> As one who has also tasted Pepsi while a captive of communism, some dozen years earlier, I can attest to the beverage's ideologically corrosive effect. It was 1959, the year of innocence; the place was Moscow's Sokolniki Park; the event was the U.S. Industrial and Cultural Fair. For me, a Moscow youth of 13, the free Pepsi offered at the fair was even more shocking than the fair sculpture garden consisting of the tormented, twisted figures of American expressionism and the tantalizing display walls showcasing hundreds of different models of men's shoes.[313]

The experience of repeatedly drinking Pepsi in Moscow in 1959 symbolized a shift in loyalty and ideology as the taste of the forbidden beverage eroded the narrator's Soviet loyalties, highlighting the impact of such encounters on personal perspectives during that time.[314] Interestingly, it was just six years after Stalin's death.

Virtual Reality], *Vestnik Chuvashskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Universiteta im. I. Ya. Yakovleva, no. 4 (100), 2018, 98.*

[310] Originally, Вавилен Татарский (Vavilon Tatarsky), but it changes to Бабилен Татарский (Babylen Tatarsky) in English.

[311] Gregory Freidin, "Review of Generation 'P'," in *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader*, ed. Mark Lipovetsky and Lisa Wakamiya (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 300.

[312] *A. B. Seydashova, "*Prostranstvenno-Vremennoy Kontinuum Romana V. Pelevina "Generation "P" Kak Virtualnaya Realnost" [The Spatio-temporal Continuum of V. Pelevin's Novel "Generation "P" as Virtual Reality], *Vestnik Chuvashskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Universiteta im. I. Ya. Yakovleva, no. 4 (100), 2018, 103.*

[313] Gregory Freidin, "Review of Generation 'P'," in *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader*, ed. Mark Lipovetsky and Lisa Wakamiya (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 299.

[314] Ibid., 300.

According to Pelevin, the advertising campaign by Pepsi-Cola became a kind of "turning point" in the developing world culture. In the context of the novel focused on advertising, this statement does not seem to be an overestimation. The described video compares two monkeys: one drinking Coca-Cola gains the ability to perform simple actions, while the other drinking Pepsi-Cola evolves to a new level (driving a jeep to the sea with cheerful girls).[315]

In the Soviet Union, Pepsi-Cola became associated with dynamics, new values, trendy music, youth, and semi-nude beauties. All this was associated with a protest of a new generation against the established way of life. The depiction of the transitional era, the collapse of the old system of values, and the further formation of new worldviews and behavioral principles on its ruins form the basis of the novel's plot.[316]

Tatarsky, just like Pelevin, is a representative of the generation that came of age during the governance of Leonid Brezhnev, with its minimal capitalism and only one Pepsi bottling plant, a real monumental sign of Western influence. The warm Pepsi symbolizes the young pioneers' yearning for the forbidden world beyond the ocean, fostering dreams of a distant reality beyond their reach.[317] Generation P did not have any other choice but to name Pepsi as their favorite drink, and thus, the favorite drink of all the Soviet children in the 1960s and 1970s was Pepsi. There was a choice, yet there was not, just like in the elections of the leader of the Soviet Union. No choice was provided for Soviet people in terms of the political and social system, and Pelevin, using the satirical style, extends this into the book. This perception also insinuates that, even with the transition through Perestroika and the defeat of Soviet ideology, a complete change in social values has not occurred. Moreover, Generation P, as represented in Pelevin's novel, did not actively choose the new consumption

[315] *A. B. Seydashova, "*Prostranstvenno-Vremennoy Kontinuum Romana V. Pelevina "Generation "P" Kak Virtualnaya Realnost" [The Spatio-temporal Continuum of V. Pelevin's Novel "Generation "P" as Virtual Reality], *Vestnik Chuvashskogo Gosudarstvennogo Pedagogicheskogo Universiteta im. I. Ya. Yakovleva, no. 4 (100), 2018, 98-99.*

[316] Ibid.

[317] Gregory Freidin, "Review of Generation 'P'," in *Late and Post-Soviet Russian Literature: A Reader*, ed. Mark Lipovetsky and Lisa Wakamiya (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2014), 299.

culture; rather, they passively put it on its mantle, just as their parents and grandparents had accepted the ideologies.

Sofya Khagi identifies *Generation P* as the first post-Soviet work to address the rise of consumer capitalism and global pop culture. According to her, the novel both parodies and embodies consumer culture, satirically undermining itself as a consumer product.[318] Pelevin exemplifies a new Russian society while combining the Russian narrative and American consumerism. In that book, Soviet ideology is replaced by capitalism and consumerism. One can note such a transformation which is reflected in a conversation between the protagonist and his friend in Chapter Eight:

> "You see, there used to be a hammer and sickle there, and a star, but he took them out and put in Coca-Cola and Coke instead."
> "Yes, I see," Tatarsky said, amazed. "But you can't see it at first – they're exactly the same yellow colour."
> "If you look closely you'll see it. I used to have the poster over my desk, but the other guys started getting awkward about it. Malyuta took offence for the flag and Seryozha took offence for Coca-Cola. In the end I had to bring it home."[319]

5.4. Technological Impact on Russian Literature

In the 19th century, Russian writers significantly influenced public consciousness through their works.[320] In the 20th century, Soviet writers would soon be called "engineers of human souls" due to their work on carriers of readers' personalities, but nowadays, few people are ready even to read big books, not to mention changing their lives upon having read them.[321] The collapse of the Soviet system and the revolution in communication technology did much to alter the gesture of Russian literature. When communism fell, Russian literature was orphaned, and a long-

[318] Sofya Khagi, "From Homo Sovieticus to Homo Zapiens: Viktor Pelevin's Consumer Dystopia," *The Russian Review* 67, no. 4 (September 2008): 560-563, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9434.2008.00500.x.

[319] Viktor Pelevin, *Generation "P"*, trans. Andrew Bromfield (New York: Faber and Faber, 2000), 57.

[320] L.A. Fedotova and A.A. Fedotov, "Literaturnoe prostranstvo postsovetskoi Rossii i stepen' ego vozdeistviia na chitatel'skuiu auditoriiu" [The Literary Space of Post-Soviet Russia and Its Impact on the Reader Audience], *Na puti k grazhdanskomu obshchestvu*, no. 1 (45), 2022, 66.

[321] Ibid.

standing relationship between radical revolutionaries and literature began with the arrival of the typographic age in Russia, which Lenin embraced.[322] The concept of the "end of literature" emerged in the post-Soviet era due to shifting societal values and a growing demand for alternative information and entertainment sources.[323] Factors like competition from other media and changing priorities led to a decline in the number of active readers in Russia.[324] Books continued to be published, but the print runs became much smaller than those in Soviet times, often in the thousands or hundreds.[325] The Russian readers began to follow other sources of information, such as television. Because of this, literature started to lose its position as an information source and became an entertainment tool.

This is the relationship between the Internet and literary culture: technology started to revolutionize the production and consumption of books, shaping the logic of how authors reach their audience and readers approach literary content online.[326] Websites like Stihi.ru (for poetry) and Proza.ru (for prose) have become major hubs for contemporary Russian literature, offering not only storage for works but also serving as cultural platforms where authors can learn about literary awards, find jobs, check rankings, and connect with fellow writers.[327] Digital platforms have finally created that avenue whereby satirical writers can bypass conventional mechanisms of censorship and reach perceived audiences directly. Thanks to the rise of social media and online distribution, satire will resonate much more efficiently in a space where it

[322] Frank Ellis, *From Glasnost to the Internet: Russia's New Infosphere* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 125.

[323] Elisa Coati, *Russian Readers and Writers in the Twenty-first Century: The Internet as a Meeting Point* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, 2012), 60-61.

[324] Ibid.

[325] L.A. Fedotova and A.A. Fedotov, "Literaturnoe prostranstvo postsovetskoi Rossii i stepen' ego vozdeistviia na chitatel'skuiu auditoriiu" [The Literary Space of Post-Soviet Russia and Its Impact on the Reader Audience], *Na puti k grazhdanskomu obshchestvu*, no. 1 (45), 2022, 68.

[326] Elisa Coati, *Russian Readers and Writers in the Twenty-first Century: The Internet as a Meeting Point* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, 2012), 14-16.

[327] L.A. Fedotova and A.A. Fedotov, "Literaturnoe prostranstvo postsovetskoi Rossii i stepen' ego vozdeistviia na chitatel'skuiu auditoriiu" [The Literary Space of Post-Soviet Russia and Its Impact on the Reader Audience], *Na puti k grazhdanskomu obshchestvu*, no. 1 (45), 2022, 70.

can really engage with larger audiences and be able to make hard-hitting pieces on political and social problems with greater ease.

Such is the case with the *Grazhdanin Poet* project by Dmitry Bykov, which epitomizes how technology has changed satirical literature. Bykov distributed satirical poetry on YouTube and social media, reaching a broad audience and opening the site of dissent and political critique in contemporary Russia. The virtual format allowed Bykov to bypass at least some elements of control characteristic for traditional media and gave him an increased potential to express critical evaluations of government and societal structures. In this sense, technology has not only impacted the distribution but also brought about new forms of resistance to authoritarian control. In a satirical dialogue, Bykov portrays Putin as "Puu," a leader who demands loyalty, although his power is increasingly questioned by the people:

> "Do you see me, Bandar-logs?"
> "We see you, oh Puu!"
> "Are your hands and legs shaking?"
> "They aren't shaking at all, oh Puu! We all have access to a computer."[328]

Here, President Putin is depicted as Puu. Bykov implies that people are no longer scared of Putin as they use computer technologies to overcome political repression. The internet provides a space of freedom despite some restrictions and risks. Bykov underlines the significance of his project, and *Grazhdanin Poet* is in these lines as well. The Internet offers a space of liberty despite some limits and risks.

According to Annelie Bachmaier, it is a very special satirical project, and for that reason, it has acquired immense cultural and political potential. Great popularity testifies to the fact that such kind of poetic protest turned out to be precisely what quite a big part of the Russian population had been seeking. Using the given media to extend the reception of his critical works, *Grazhdanin Poet* managed to mix satirical poetry with the Internet. The virtual landscape of these platforms has created an alternative space for the audience to make sense of current political and social issues.

[328] Annelie Bachmaier, "The 'Poetic' Protest in Putin's Russia: 'Grazhdanin poet'," in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, ed. Aleksei Semenenko (Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2021), 138, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76279-7.

Indeed, this innovative approach in *Grazhdanin Poet* captured the attention of audiences by offering a platform for opposite perspectives to resonate and circulate, thereby improving a broader discourse on political and social matters.[329]

5.5. Conclusion

Satire has been a persistent and potent device both to critique and to reflect on the many-sided challenges that post-Soviet Russian society faced. In Russia, satire has become a vital space in which public discourse gets framed as the nation negotiates not only its complex Soviet and imperial legacies but also new political, social, and economic realities in the 21st century. Writers like Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Dmitry Bykov lead the movement; each has used satire not only for entertainment but as an effective mechanism to articulate the contradictions and tensions between Russia's past and present. These authors provide sharp, often humorous, critiques of the evolving political landscape, offering insight into how Russia continues to redefine itself in an era of growing nationalism, authoritarianism, and capitalist integration.

Merging political power with personal wealth in post-Soviet Russia, along with its ideological hangover from the Soviet era, formed a fertile ground for satire. The contradictions implicit in contemporary Russian life juxtaposition of capitalist consumerism with Soviet nostalgia, the resurgence of Tsarist-style authoritarianism, and an ongoing struggle to forge a cohesive national identity in a multinational state incarnation in the works of Pelevin, Sorokin, and Bykov. Through satire, this trio of writers engages and showcases political and social tensions that dominate Russian society.

Their works critique the mixing of historical revisionism with modern-day authoritarianism, as well as the increasing commodification of every aspect of Russian life in the wake of the rise of capitalism. The technological evolution in post-Soviet Russia has also played an essential role in enabling satirical literature to

[329] Ibid., 141.

take new leaps. With even more censorship and government control in traditional media channels, digital platforms such as Stihi.ru, Proza.ru, and social media have given way to creating and pushing satire for resistance. Bykov's *Grazhdanin Poet*, drawing on YouTube and social media for the distribution of his politically satirical poetry, illustrates well how technology has enabled a wider diffusion of oppositional voices, passing by the traditional mechanisms of censorship.

Yet, in equal measure, the internet has enabled satire to flourish in an infinitely more democratic and available setting and simultaneously provide an independent platform for a critique of state authority and structures of civic society in contemporary Russia. These writers' satirical narratives point toward post-Soviet Russia's effort to reconcile the incongruent elements of its identity. For example, Pelevin's *Generation P* uses satire to belittle the rise of consumerism and the strong influence of Western capitalist culture. It portrays a society that has traded one dominant ideology-communism-for another, consumerism. *Day of the Oprichnik* by Sorokin is such a dystopian view towards a future Russia that revives elements of Tsarist rule and juxtaposes them with the cycles of authoritarianism throughout Russian history.

It is in such works that the deep-seated contradictions between the imperial, Soviet, and capitalistic past and present come to the fore, suggesting an identity crisis with which Russia has had to cope constantly. Thus, by the double legacy of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire, satirical authors point to the contradiction between modern Russia's ambitions and its historical load. Their works are evidence that even as the Soviet Union collapsed and gave way to capitalism, much of the old ideological and cultural structures continue to contribute toward the molding of contemporary Russian society. Satire provides an insight into the multi-dimensional and often ambiguous processes at work within a Russia struggling at once with the influences of global capitalism, the resurgence of authoritarianism, and the search for a cohesive national identity. What makes satire so relevant in post-Soviet Russia is that it can oppose dominant narratives and allow space for other voices to exist together as part of a continuously more authoritarian environment.

Despite the pressures of censorship and political repression, satirical works do remain a kind of vehicle for social critique, affording writers an avenue with which to question the status quo and perhaps create a sense of provocation in the minds of readers. This continuing tradition of satire testifies very well to the fact that even in times of political constraint, literature remains an effectively resistant and reflective medium. As Russia continues to change, the role of satire will doubtless continue to remain an integral feature in its literary and cultural topography. In all, the sum of works of satire by these authors will, in the future, remain a reflective critique on Russian society, politics, and identity and help in negotiating realities of both the present and the future. Such writing about post-Soviet Russia offers priceless insight into a labyrinth that provides poignant space for readers to navigate the contradictions and uncertainties that mark the forward road. After all, their works remind us that satire is not an attack but rather a dynamic method for learning more profound truths not only about humanity but also about continuous change within society.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the type of satire genre in Russian literature within three significant periods: the late Russian Empire, the Soviet era, and modern-day Russia. By investigating crucial social movements and political events through the lens of Eurasian Studies rather than purely literary analysis, this research unravels how Russian satirical literature has served as a vital means of critique and reflection relevant to social and political issues. It demonstrates the evolution of satire, emphasizing its adaptive responses to different socio-political contexts in Russian history.

The thesis claims that Russian satirical literature has been a significant medium of social and political evaluation. The evolution of satire from the Russian Empire through the Soviet era to contemporary Russia underlines satire's enduring power and adaptability in Russian culture. Even though political contexts differ, satire has constantly kept its appeal to Russian society in order to draw attention to issues such as corruption, authoritarian control, and social disparity.

6.1. Cultural Movements and Political Events

The 19th century was marked by a lot of political events and the preparation for revolution. This century started with the Napoleonic wars and ended with the rule of Nicholas II, furthering the collapse of the Romanov dynasty and the Russian Empire.[330] The corrupt and lazy attitude prevailed at all levels of society. The central

[330] For further information on the political and social changes in 19th-century Russia, see David Saunders, *Russia in the Age of Reaction and Reform 1801-1881*, Longman History of Russia (London; New York: Longman, 1992); Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991).

values of the Russian Empire—Autocracy, Orthodoxy, and the Narodnost (the national principles)—[331] were influential in that period despite the existence of some revolutionary actions and groups. Alexander II promoted many reforms, including abolishing the Russian social and political system.[332] On the other hand, Russian society was not ready to support these reforms because the Russian triad, comprising Autocracy, Orthodoxy, as well as the Narodnost, still significantly influenced the citizens. In the 1840s, the Russian intelligentsia was divided into two basic groups: the Slavophiles and the Westernizers.[333] Westerners insisted on the country's modernization along with the Western technology, culture, social system, and political system, believing that Russia was fundamentally a European nation whose development had been delayed by the Mongol conquest.[334] At the same time, Slavophiles supported the Russian triad and traditions.

During the 20th century, Russia underwent significant political, social, and economic upheavals that dramatically transformed its governance and international relations.[335] At the dawn of the century, Russia was an expansive empire with an absence of democratic institutions.[336] Eventually, Russia turned into a communist state.

The early years of the Soviet rule (1917-1930) reveal a peculiar experience of social reconstruction with the aim of creating a new society. The early years were mainly preoccupied with equality, freedom, and justice, constituting the cornerstone of Soviet mythology.[337]

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[331] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917* (Oxford History of Modern Europe) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 220.

[332] W. Mosse, "Alexander II," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, April 25, 2024, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-II-emperor-of-Russia.

[333] Hugh Seton-Watson, *The Russian Empire 1801-1917*, Oxford History of Modern Europe (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 256.

[334] Dmitry Merezhkovsky, "Gogol and the Devil," in *Gogol from the Twentieth Century: Eleven Essays*, ed. Robert A. Maguire (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 82, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv25wxcvx.6.

[335] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

[336] Ibid.

[337] L. N. Mazur, "Formirovanie sotsial'noi struktury sovetskogo obshchestva: ot idei ravenstva k novomu neravenstvu" [Formation of the Social Structure of Soviet Society: From the Idea of Equality

The ground for the Soviet Union's ideology was Marxism, and it is found in the writings of K. Marx, F. Engels, and V. I. Lenin. Consequently, the victory of the Bolsheviks resulted in repressive policies that were expressed in emigration, forced assimilation, and destruction.[338] The Soviet regime, though seeking to build up a non-state nation, in the end, established one of the main features of contemporary Russia since it identified Russo-Soviet cultural identity.[339]

In 1991, the Soviet Union was legally dissolved and divided into fifteen sovereign states. As a larger successor nation, Russia proclaimed itself the legal successor of the USSR and the Russian Empire.[340] Actually, the earlier period of post-Soviet Russia resembled something like the Dark Ages: despite the fear of a centralized Soviet regime, people suffered from decentralized anxieties about several threats, such as criminals, gangs, corporations, and rich people who surpassed citizens.[341] The first president of new Russia used personal funds to bribe parliament members and put his family in politics. Meanwhile, Putin has maintained total state ownership of some of the significant entities, such as Gazprom and Sibneft, along with their affiliated companies, as indicated in Chapter Five. In Russia, the emergence of capitalism has contradicted Soviet and empirical ideologies and traditions.

In this view, the history of Russia has been characterized by sequences of crises since the 19th century. These problems are all representations of the same dilemmas in society based on the division of society. In the 19th century, these divisions were mainly between peasants (serfs) and aristocrats; in the Soviet period, between leaders-bureaucrats and citizens; and in the Russian Republic, between president-bureaucrats and citizens. Despite changes in policies and ideologies, Russia still has

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to a New Inequality], in *Sovetskoe obshchestvo v sotsial'nom izmerenii: restrukturizatsii, transformatsiya i mobil'nost', UDK* 94(47).084:316.323.72 (2017): 470.

[338] Sergey Mikhailovich Sergeev, "Russkoe i russko-sovetskoe," [Russian and Russo-Soviet], *Voprosy natsionalizma*, no. 4 (12), 2012, 94.

[339] Ibid., 96.

[340] Roy Medvedev, *Post-Soviet Russia: A Journey Through the Yeltsin Era*, trans. and ed. George Shriver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 4.

[341] Vladimir Shlapentokh and Joshua Woods, *Contemporary Russia as a Feudal Society: A New Perspective on the Post-Soviet Era*, 1st ed (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 41.

lingering elements from previous Russian states. Considering that Russia is a successor state of the Soviet Union, it declared itself heir to both the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. Reestablishing some empirical elements and retaining some of the Soviet teachings showed Russia still retains similar values with the political, social, and economic changes. Ironically, although the Soviet regime was making great efforts to eliminate the Russian triad, it eventually helped, in many ways, to create the groundwork for Russian nationalism, which became the foundation of the post-Soviet state of Russia.

6.2. Censorship in Russia

Censorship was indeed an integral part of Russian society, deeply rooted in the political system. Despite the Enlightenment period, Glasnost, and periods where censorship was loosened, censorship plays an important role in Russian society. In the 19th century, censorship was not only restrictive but also provided positive guidance to literature regarding both form and content, as indicated in Chapter Three. Imposing restrictions and guiding literature seemed beyond the concern of the censor. Censorship controlled and imposed upon the writers what to write.

In the Soviet era, publishing and writing were rigidly controlled by the authorities. It was claimed that repression in the Soviet era was much larger than under the czarist period, with attacks on political satirists far more intrusive than any managed by the czarist censors.[342] The strict censorship in the Soviet Union resulted in the creation of Samizdat literature, an unofficial distribution of literary works, articles, and other materials through the writers' efforts.[343] As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Soviet authorities controlled not only the writers but also used them to introduce and justify Soviet ideologies. Soviet satire turned into a weapon of the regime, while the satirical authors were dedicated workers serving the common good, protecting it

[342] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 89, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

[343] Margarita Tomazova, "Istoriya sovetskogo samizdata. Kak eto bylo" [History of Soviet Samizdat: How Was It], vc.ru, June 11, 2020, https://vc.ru/u/528817-margarita-tomazova/133567-istoriya-sovetskogo-samizdata-kak-eto-bylo.

from both external and internal dangers.[344] For this reason, Soviet satire performed a double function: the original satirical function, a critique of the immoral or lack in the social and political sphere assisted by means of irony and humor, and secondly, justification and dissemination of Soviet ideologies.

Mikhail Gorbachev's political and cultural reforms eventually led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with the Glasnost policy mainly lifting the ban on publications.[345] The abolishment of censorship contributed to the acceleration of the demolition of the Soviet regime. That just goes to show how publications and authors are valued in Russian society. Even the Russian Republic, after lifting Soviet censorship, still had some censorship on publications, as indicated in Chapter Five.

The shifting societal values and growing demand for alternative information and entertainment sources emerged the "end of literature" concept in the post-Soviet era, and factors like competition from other media and changing priorities have led to a decline in the number of active readers in Russia.[346] Since literature was less influential, it became an entertainment means. Nevertheless, Soviet writers also transformed their works into the internet and alternative resources like *Grashdanin Poet*.

A comparison of different periods in Russian history in terms of censorship would show that the institution of censorship has existed in this society for centuries. One of the significant objectives of censorship was to save the regime from any critical opposition. It seemed from time to time that the restrictions were loosened, yet censorship has always held its significance, especially during the critical phase of Russian history. Mainly, the censorship in the 19th century was directed at the writings that criticized the Imperial regime and the Russian triad. It suppressed all

[344] Maya Vinokour, "Books of Laughter and Forgetting: Satire and Trauma in the Novels of Il'f and Petrov," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 2 (2015): 346, https://doi.org/10.5612/slavicreview.74.2.334.

[345] Jonathan Stone, *Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 8.

[346] Elisa Coati, *Russian Readers and Writers in the Twenty-first Century: The Internet as a Meeting Point* (PhD thesis, University of Manchester, School of Languages, Linguistics and Cultures, 2012), 60-61.

publications that were against the Soviet regime and its ideas during the Soviet era. Censorship throughout post-Soviet Russia has focused on publications that criticized the current government. Through all these social, cultural, and political changes, Russia has continued to enforce its restrictions for the same fundamental reasons.

This persistence highlights that Russia's approach to censorship is still rooted in the practices of Imperial Russia. Moreover, in the state's structure, the importance of censorship is evident from how Gorbachev's Glasnost era reduced censorship, resulting in dramatic changes in the state. For Russia, censorship appears to be a significant part of state policy; without censorship, the structure of the state threatens to be dismantled.

6.3. Evolution of Satire in Russia

As it was pointed out in Chapter Two, representing a very special genre of literature, satire has its roots back in ancient Greece and Rome, containing elements such as wit, ridicule, irony, sarcasm, and cynicism. Satire is referred to as "a poem or a novel, film, or other work of art which uses humor, irony, exaggeration, or ridicule to expose and criticize prevailing immorality or foolishness, esp. as a form of social or political commentary."[347] This literary form, which originated with Lucilius, has persisted to the present day, maintaining its popularity. Due to its flexible and resilient nature, satire has achieved to adapt to various cultural and political spheres, ensuring its survival for centuries.

From poetry and play, satire has evolved to modern technology, finding a place on online platforms. In ancient times, satire provided a space where people could escape social hierarchies, thus enabling freedom of speech. "Satire is a genre of literature whose goal is not only to point out a social vice but to make it clear that this vice is intolerable."[348] This underlines its importance for social development. Satirists often

[347] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "satire (n.)," December 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8653119568.

[348] Emil A. Draitser, *Techniques of Satire: The Case of Saltykov-Scedrin* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), xxi.

write with a moral purpose and genuine concern for the public interest while encouraging inquiry rather than promoting blatant morals. Mainly, political satire can engage writers in discussions about political matters by employing elements of satire such as humor and irony. In many societies dominated by an authoritarian regime, political satire often plays an active role, often in a "cat and mouse"[349] game with varieties of political restrictions, such as censorship. This distinctive feature makes satire different from other genres and gives it a certain degree of freedom of speech, offering it a way to avoid some forms of censorship.

In the case of Russia, considering the trajectories from the imperial period through the Soviet Union to the Russian Federation, this country has lived under several authoritarian regimes, and in many areas of Russian life, censorship has been a common feature. Unsurprisingly, satire has often been the only way to address sensitive political and social issues in authoritative regimes. While satire has equally suffered censorship, it generally received softer treatment compared to other genres of literature. However, as seen in Soviet-era works, satire sometimes became an instrument of the regime, used to uphold and reinforce state ideologies.

Examining state systems and social structures through satirical elements like comedy and irony drew attention from society and led to underestimating these issues. Satire, especially in the works of the Soviet period, often turned out to be a tool of the regime and changed into a literary work defending state ideologies. In other words, satire in Russia not only criticizes the flaws of the Russian system itself but also tries to influence the thoughts of the public by guiding them. This demonstrates how satire can be used in both ways and highlights its significant role in shaping societal perceptions.

6.4. Contribution of Selected Satirical Writers

In the 19th century, great satirical writers like Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Goncharov, and Anton Chekhov played a crucial role in exposing social issues such as aristocracy

[349] Leonard Freedman, "Wit as a Political Weapon: Satirists and Censors," *Social Research* 79, no. 1 (2012): 88, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23350299.

stagnation in consequence of bureaucratic corruption. For instance, in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, bureaucracy and its corruption are attributed to inefficiency, while in Goncharov's *Oblomov*, the stagnation of aristocracy is unmasked. Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" points to the social changes that presented the fall of the old regime and the emergence of the new era.

Satirical writers like Bulgakov, Ilf, and Petrov comment on the difficulties and the contrasts in Soviet life. Despite the strict censorship, they indicate bureaucratic deficiencies and social problems. Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and *The Heart of a Dog* present a mixed structure combining fantasy and reality to critique the Soviet system. Ilf and Petrov's *The Twelve Chairs* and *The Little Golden Calf* emphasize the difference between the Soviet and empirical periods while continuing to favor the Soviet system and employing satire for state propaganda.

Modern satirical writers such as Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin, and Dmitry Bykov faced restrictions in continuing to work with satire while analyzing the political and social Russian system. Pelevin's *Generation P* is an investigation into post-Soviet consumer culture regarding the context of capitalist domination. Sorokin's *Day of the Oprichnik* depicts a futuristic world to critique the current authoritative regime using exaggeration and dark humor. On the other hand, Bykov uses satirical poems combined with online platforms to express criticism of the Russian political system through the project *Grazhdanin Poet*. These post-Soviet works underline how satire adapts to a new era along with media and social platforms while remaining influential in service during the modern age.

These authors share a common trait. They highlight the deficiencies of the Russian political system along with weaknesses in the societal structure. Despite facing certain obstacles, these writers succeeded in publishing their works, unlike many other literary works. They made a significant impact on Russian society and a contribution to Russian and Eurasian studies. Even though every period has its particular texture, satire remained an essential tool since the unchanged Russian intersystem has remained the same and has been able to mirror society. Publishing their works was an outstanding achievement, especially considering that some parts

of Soviet history have recently been exposed. This accomplishment can likely be related to the use of satire, a form of indirect speech, which led the writers to mention the problems in the system through satirical elements such as humor and irony.

Meanwhile, Soviet satire often avoided the directly critical attitude toward the system and instead tried to underline some social issues, eventually creating texts aligned with Soviet ideology. This testifies to the manipulative power of the Soviet regime, which controlled not only the content of the works but also the perception of the public. We see how mass consciousness would have been shaped, not only by influencing what writers created but also by changing the public's perception of the works initially critiqued by the regime.

In conclusion, this thesis offers a contextualization of Russian satire within Eurasian Studies, with significant emphasis on its importance beyond literary analysis. By examining satire's evolution across different political landscapes, the research demonstrates its role as a resilient instrument of critique and reflection, offering insights into Russian society’s ongoing engagement with authoritarianism and censorship. This study also points out satire’s double role, not only as a vehicle of dissent but very often as an instrument of the regime itself. Particularly during the Soviet era, satirical works were sometimes co-opted to reinforce state ideologies, transforming the genre into a medium that could simultaneously critique and validate the political order. This study underlines the fact that satire, as a genre, has aided both in navigating and challenging the sociopolitical landscape of Russian history and has emerged as a flexible and robust medium for cultural critique and state support.

This thesis opens new dimensions of exploration into satire on various levels. Modern Russian literature is developing with the dynamically changing socio-political climate, and satire continues to be an essential part while observing the attitude, critique, and adjustment of society. Future research might focus on podcasts, social media, or other digital platforms as emergent venues for contemporary satire, studying the ways in which such new technologies are changing print-based

literature and public expression on matters of social and high concern. These venues even provide freer criticism of Russian social arrangements and political structures, offering a close perspective on both past and present autocratic regimes. Such insights, emerging directly from Russian citizens' contributions, are of high value due to the insights born from lived experiences within the country.

The point where satire crosses international influences is an interesting field for further research because Russia is slowly joining international cultural currents. By combining the interdisciplinary perspectives emanating from sociology, political science, and digital studies, the researchers will deeply comprehend satire's impact on evolution and transformation. Satire is the link between modern media and those traditional forms; it has managed to reflect the changes and criticisms taking place in society more vividly than any other genre. Deep engagement with satirical works provides a mirror into society and opens pathways toward critical information about public sentiment and views necessary to make any sense of the complexities of Russian life.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, Avrasya Çalışmaları alanında konumlanarak hiciv edebiyatının 19. yüzyıldan günümüze kadar Rus sivil toplumunun gelişimindeki özel rolünü tanımlamaktadır. Çalışma, yalnızca edebi bir analiz sunmak yerine, hicvi Rus İmparatorluğu, Sovyetler Birliği ve modern Rusya koşullarını yansıtan ve eleştiren bir sosyo-politik araç olarak incelemektedir. Her dönem, kültürel üretim üzerindeki devlet kontrolü ve belirli siyasi ideolojilerle yapılandırılmış otoriterliğin farklı bir biçimini temsil etmektedir. Bu çalışma, hicvin sansür, kamuoyu muhalefeti ve toplumsal eleştiri gibi konuları ele alma biçimini ve farklı baskı seviyeleri altında sergilediği uyum ve dayanıklılığı ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Tezin birincil hedefi, hicvin bu üç rejimde popüler söylemlerin bir aracı olarak nasıl uyum sağladığını ortaya çıkarmaktır. Aynı zamanda toplumsal içgörüleri teşvik ederek ve bazen direnişi destekleyerek nasıl bir işlev gördüğünü irdelemektedir. Çalışma, bu dönemler arasında hiciv yaklaşımlarındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları inceleyerek, Rus toplumunun otorite ve sansürle ilişkisini hiciv aracılığıyla nasıl yönettiğini kapsamlı bir şekilde anlamayı hedeflemektedir. Tezin anahtar soruları şunlardır:

> Rus edebiyatı, Rus İmparatorluğu'ndan Sovyet dönemi ve çağdaş zamanlara kadar otoriterlik, sansür ve sosyo-politik değişimlere nasıl yanıt verdi ve bunları nasıl yansıttı?
> Hiciv, farklı tarihsel dönemler boyunca bu güçlerle yüzleşmek ve onları eleştirmek için neden tutarlı ve etkili bir araç olarak kaldı?

Bu tez, Rus hicvinin dayanıklılık, eleştiri ve uyum aracı olarak işlev gördüğünü ve Rus İmparatorluğu, Sovyetler Birliği ve çağdaş Rusya'daki değişen politik yapılar ve

toplumsal kısıtlamalarla başa çıkacak şekilde evrildiğini savunmaktadır. Rus hicvinin tarihsel süreçteki dönüşümünü izleyerek, bu türün Rus kültüründeki kalıcı gücü ve uyarlanabilirliği anlaşılabilir.

Hicvin, Rus kültüründeki dayanıklılığı ve esnekliği tezin merkezinde yer alır. Hiciv hem toplumsal ve politik eksiklikleri eleştirme aracı hem de bazen bu eksiklikleri meşrulaştıran rejimlerin hizmetine giren bir tür olarak çift yönlü bir işlev üstlenmiştir. Özellikle sansürün yaygın olduğu Rusya'da, hiciv eleştiri ve direnişin en etkili araçlarından biri olmuştur. Bu bağlamda hiciv, Rus sosyo-politik evrimini anlamak için eşsiz bir mercek sunar.

Bu tezin metodolojisi, edebi-tarihsel analiz ile Avrasya Çalışmaları'nın sosyo-politik perspektiflerini birleştirmektedir. Bu yaklaşım, hiciv edebiyatını sansür, otoriterlik ve toplumsal uyum dinamiklerinin bir penceresi olarak incelemektedir. Her dönemden temel metinler, hicvin yönetişim, otorite ve toplumsal eleştiri konularını nasıl ele aldığını anlamak için analiz edilmiştir.

Birincil kaynaklar, Rus İmparatorluğu, Sovyetler Birliği ve modern Rusya'dan önemli hiciv eserlerini içermektedir. İkincil kaynaklar ise, sansür ve ifade özgürlüğü üzerindeki devlet düzenlemelerine odaklanarak Rus politikalarındaki dinamiklerin tarihsel ve eleştirel analizini sunmaktadır. Bu yaklaşım, hiciv edebiyatının Rusya'nın tarihsel dönemler boyunca otoriterliğe karşı nasıl bir yansıtıcı ve tepki veren doğaya sahip olduğunu değerlendirmeyi mümkün kılmaktadır.

Rus hiciv edebiyatının tarihsel ve politik bağlamlarla derin bir şekilde ilişkili olduğunu ve birçok akademisyenin bu türün Rus sosyal yapıları ve yönetimiyle olan ilişkisini incelediğini görülmektedir. Bu tez, edebi çalışmalardan yararlanmakla birlikte hicvi daha geniş bir paradigma içinde konumlandırarak, özellikle otoriterlik ve sansür bağlamlarında hicvin toplumsal yansıma ve eleştiri aracı olarak işlevini irdelemektedir.

Mikhail Bakhtin, Boris Eikhenbaum, Irina Paperno, Katerina Clark ve D.S. Mirsky gibi akademisyenler Rus hiciv edebiyatının politik, tarihsel ve sosyal bağlamına

önemli katkılar sağlamışlardır. Mikhail Bakhtin, edebiyatın anlamının okuyucu, eser ve yazar arasındaki etkileşimle şekillendiğini savunarak, toplumsal ve politik güçlerin bu süreç üzerindeki etkilerini analiz etmiştir. Bakhtin'in *Dostoyevski'nin Poetikasının Sorunları* ve *Rabelais ve Dünyası* gibi çalışmaları, edebiyatta çoklu seslilik (polifoni), heteroglossia, diyalogizm ve grotesk gerçekçilik gibi kavramları ortaya koymuştur. Gogol'ün eserlerinde görülen grotesk ve alaycı imgelerin toplumsal yapıyı eleştirme işlevine dikkat çekmiştir.

D.S. Mirsky, Rus edebiyatının tarihini ele aldığı *Rus Edebiyatı Tarihi* adlı eserinde, Rus edebiyatının gelişimini Batı edebiyatıyla karşılaştırarak analiz etmiş ve bu süreçlerin tarihsel bağlamlardan nasıl etkilendiğini vurgulamıştır. Mirsky, edebiyatı yalnızca bir metin olarak değil, aynı zamanda sosyal, kültürel ve politik koşullarla şekillenen bir ürün olarak ele almıştır. Bu bağlamda, tarihsel olayların Rus yazarları üzerindeki etkilerini açığa çıkarmıştır.

Evgeny Dobrenko ise Sovyet edebiyatının okuyucu kitlesini bir "okuyucu-halk" kimliği yaratma amacıyla nasıl yönlendirdiğini incelemiştir. Dobrenko, Sovyet edebiyatının bireysel veya sanatsal bir amaç taşımaktan ziyade sosyalist tutumları vatandaşlara aşılamak için bir ideolojik dönüşüm aracı olarak kullanıldığını savunmuştur. Edebiyatın bireysel bir deneyimden çıkarılarak devlet ideolojisine uyum sağlamış kolektivist bir çerçeveye nasıl dönüştüğünü göstermiştir. Sovyet okuyucularının pasif tüketicilerden ziyade devlet ideolojisinin aktif katılımcıları olarak konumlandırıldığını ve bu durumun edebiyatın bir sosyal uyum aracı hâline gelmesine yol açtığını belirtmiştir.

Alexander Etkind, *İç Sömürgecilik: Rusya'nın İmparatorluk Deneyimi* adlı çalışmasında, Rusya'nın geleneksel Avrupa sömürgecilik modelinden farklı olarak içe dönük bir sömürgecilik yaklaşımı geliştirdiğini öne sürmüştür. Bu model, Rusya'nın kendi sınırları içerisindeki etnik gruplar üzerinde siyasi kontrolünü genişletmesini ve kültürel asimilasyonu içermektedir. Etkind, bu sürecin Rus toplumu içindeki hiyerarşik yapıları şekillendirdiğini ve bu durumun edebiyat ve kültürde nasıl yansıtıldığını analiz etmiştir. Dostoyevski ve Tolstoy gibi yazarların eserlerinde, Rusya'nın farklı halklar üzerindeki egemenliğinin ahlaki ve sosyal

sonuçlarını ele aldıkları ve bu eserlerin, emperyalist emellere karşı bir karşı-anlatı olarak işlev gördüğü belirtilmiştir.

Bu literatür incelemesi, Rus edebiyatı ve hicvin tarihsel önemine dair çalışmalar yapılmış olmasına rağmen, hicvin Avrasya sosyo-politik dinamikleri bağlamında, özellikle otoriterlik ve sansürle ilgili bir işlev olarak tam anlamıyla anlaşılmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tez, hicvi sadece bir edebi tür olarak değil, aynı zamanda Rusya'nın üç farklı tarihsel dönemindeki toplumsal ve siyasi yaşamın bir aynası olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Hiciv, tarihi derinlere gömülü kökleri ve çeşitli teknikleriyle, çağlar boyunca dayanıklı ve sağlam bir edebi tür olarak varlığını sürdürmüştür. Uzun yıllar boyunca hiciv, mizah, ironi ve abartıyı sosyal eleştiri amacıyla harmanlayan bir araç olarak hizmet etmiştir. İlk hiciv yazarları olan Lucilius ve Aristophanes'ten, Roma şairleri Horatius ve Juvenal'e kadar uzanan bir çizgide, hiciv Horatian ve Juvenalian olmak üzere iki farklı tarza ayrılmıştır ve bu tarzlar modern hiciv yöntemlerini şekillendirmeye devam etmektedir. İnsanlardan ziyade fikirler ve zihinsel tutumlarla ilgilenen Menippean hicvi ise türün potansiyelini genişleterek karmaşık soyut teoriler ve toplumsal ideolojilerle başa çıkmayı mümkün kılmıştır. Hiciv yalnızca eğlendirmekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda toplumun kusurlarını, alay, karikatür ve parodi yoluyla ortaya koyar ve izleyicileri mevcut normlar ve değerler üzerine düşünmeye teşvik eder.

Hiciv türünün işlevleri ve amaçları çok yönlüdür; sosyal eleştiriden ahlaki yansıma ve eğitime kadar uzanır. Hiciv, doğası gereği, yozlaşma, ikiyüzlülük ve adaletsizliği ortaya çıkarır ve izleyicileri düşünmeye, hatta bazen harekete geçmeye yönlendirmeye çalışır. Hiciv, ideal ile gerçeklik arasındaki uçurumu yakalayarak, bu eşitsizliklere dair daha önce dile getirilemeyen gerçekleri söyleme gücüyle donatılır. Farklı biçimlere uyum sağlama ve değişim geçirme yeteneği sayesinde hiciv, yüzyıllar boyunca güncelliğini korumuş ve edebiyat tarihinde ve toplumsal söylemde önemli bir yer edinmiştir.

Bu yünelim, Rus hicvine yönelik daha derin bir inceleme için zemin hazırlamaktadır. Rus hicvi, İmparatorluk Rusya'sından Sovyetler Birliği'ne ve modern post-Sovyet

döneme kadar, devlet otoritesi ile toplumsal muhalefet arasındaki karmaşık etkileşimi görmemizi sağlayan bir prizma işlevi görür. Rus hiciv yazarları, alegoriler, örtük eleştiriler ya da doğrudan alay yoluyla bu sanatı tarihsel bağlamlara uygun şekilde sürekli olarak uyarlama yeteneği göstermiştir. Bu eserler, sadece yaşadıkları toplumun kusurlarını yansıtmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda baskıcı rejimler altında muhalif yorumlar yapmak için hicvin kalıcı gücünü de gözler önüne serer.

Dolayısıyla, hicvin sürekliliği, toplum ve otorite tarafından belirlenen sınırlar içinde ve bazen de dışında uyum sağlayabilme yeteneğinde yatmaktadır. Mizah ve eleştiri yoluyla dokunan yeni bir bakış açısını hicivle yansıtmak, bu edebi türün hem meydan okuma hem de eğlendirme ve ilham verme yoluyla önemli bir alanını korumasını sağlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, hicvin özellikle Rus tarihinde nasıl evrildiğini anlamak, onun bir ayna ve değişim aracı olarak nasıl işlev gördüğünü, otoriterliğe karşı nasıl bir diyalog kurduğunu ve kuşaklar boyunca yankılandığını ortaya koymaktadır.

Bu gerçek, 19. yüzyılda Rus toplumunun evrimini, Nikolay Gogol, Ivan Gonçarov ve Anton Çehov gibi yazarların keskin hicvinde ortaya koyulduğu şekilde derinlemesine yansıtmaktadır. Bu yazarlar, çevrelerindeki siyasi, sosyal ve ekonomik gerçeklikleri eleştirmek için mizah, ironi ve hicvi birer araç olarak kullanmış ve Rus toplumunun durgunluk, yolsuzluk ve sosyal ataletten etkilendiği bir dönemde işleyiş ve işlevsizlikleri gözler önüne sermiştir. Her biri, kendine özgü bir yaklaşımla, dönemin acil sorularına eğilmiş ve bu soruları Rus edebiyatının toplumsal yansımaların en güçlü aracı olarak gördüğü bir noktaya yerleştirmiştir.

Nikolay Gogol'ün *Ölü Canlar* (1842) adlı eseri, büyük olasılıkla 19. yüzyıl Rusya'sında sessizce hüküm süren bürokratik verimsizlik ve yolsuzluğa yönelik en dramatik eleştiridir. Eserin baş karakteri Pavel İvanoviç Çiçikov, mülk kayıtlarında hâlâ yer alan ölü köleleri satın alma planlarıyla ahlaki yozlaşmayı gözler önüne sererken, Gogol Rus sistemine yerleşmiş derin insanlık dışılığı açığa çıkarır. Romanın başlığı bile yalnızca ölü köleleri değil, aynı zamanda sistemi işleten ahlaki olarak ölü insanları temsil etmektedir. Gogol'ün eseri, rüşvetin ulusun toplumsal dokusundaki en büyük kusurlardan biri haline geldiğini keskin bir şekilde ortaya

koymaktadır. Karakterlerin ve işlemlerinin absürtlüğü, bireylerin değerini yitirdiği ve toplumsal çürümenin hüküm sürdüğü ciddi biçimde kusurlu bir sistemi işaret eder.

Gogol'ün kaldığı yerden Ivan Gonçarov, *Oblomov* (1859) ile devam eder ancak bu kez aristokrasinin kültürel ve sosyal durgunluğunu ele alır. Oblomov karakteri, hem tembel ve pasif bir soyluyu temsil eder hem de dönemin üst sınıflarının değişime direncinin sembolüdür. Serfliğin kaldırılmasından sadece iki yıl önce yayımlanan *Oblomov*, eski ve çürüyen bir aristokratik düzenle Rusya'yı modern döneme taşımak için gerekli reformlar arasında bir köprü işlevi görür. Gonçarov, aristokrasinin zamanın gereklerine ayak uydurma konusundaki isteksizliğini keskin bir şekilde eleştirir. Oblomov'un hareketsizliği ve apatiği, modası geçmiş geleneklere bağlı kalmanın zararlı sonuçlarını ortaya koyar ve bu durum Rus toplumundaki reformlara karşı genel isteksizliğin bir yansımasıdır.

Anton Çehov'un "Vişne Bahçesi" (1903), aristokrasinin geçişi ve sosyal alana yeni güçlerin girişi hakkında son sözü söyler. Çehov, borçlar nedeniyle bir tüccar sınıfına satılmak üzere olan bir aile malikânesini merkeze alarak, eski düzenin kaçınılmaz düşüşünü ve Lopahin karakterinde somutlaşan yeni zengin tüccar sınıfının yükselişini anlatır. Aile için duygusal bir değeri olan vişne bahçesinin satışı, Rusya'da gerçekleşecek sosyal ve ekonomik değişimlerin simgesi ve temsilcisidir. Çehov'un hicvi, aristokrat sınıfın dramın farkına varamayan, yüzeysel ve toplumda meydana gelen dramatik değişimlere tamamen kör olan yapısını açığa çıkarır. "Vişne Bahçesi" aracılığıyla Çehov, aristokrasinin değişim ihtiyacını kavrayamadığını ve yeni bir topluma uyum sağlayamayacak durumda olduğunu gösterir.

Ölü Canlar, *Oblomov* ve "Vişne Bahçesi" bir araya geldiğinde, 19. yüzyıl Rus toplumunun yapısal kusurlarını, sosyal durgunluğunu ve kaçınılmaz reform baskısını yansıtan kapsamlı bir edebi harita oluşturur. İmparatorluk geçmişi ile belirsiz bir gelecek arasında kalan Rusya'yı betimleyen bu yazarlar, yarım yüzyıl boyunca hicvi bir ayna ve kendi zamanlarının olumsuzluklarını ifşa etmek için bir silah olarak kullanmışlardır.

Gogol'ün bürokratik çözülmeye yönelik eleştirisi, Gonçarov'un aristokratik ataleti ve Çehov'un eski düzenin düşüşünü ele alışı, modernleşme ve değişim güçleriyle

mücadele eden Rusya'daki daha geniş sosyopolitik değişimlerin bir yansımasıdır. Bu eserlerde, zararsız eğlence unsurları, güç, sınıf ve insan davranışlarının doğası üzerine derin düşünceleri tetikleyen unsurlar haline gelmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, bu üç yazarın yansıttığı 19. yüzyıl Rus edebiyatı, geçiş halindeki bir toplumu eleştirmiştir. Bu üç yazarın satirik unsurları sadece eğlence kaynağı değil, aynı zamanda toplumdaki eksiklikleri ortaya çıkaran ve Rusya'yı bekleyen kader hakkında kamuoyu tartışmalarını tetikleyen çok işlevli bir yöntem olmuştur. Yüzyıl ilerledikçe bu reform çağrısı daha da belirgin hale gelmiş ve bu yazarlar, toplum, siyaset ve ekonomi alanlarındaki değişim ihtiyacını aydınlatmak için yeteneklerini kullanmışlardır.

Nikolay Gogol, Ivan Gonçarov ve Anton Çehov, hicivlerini anlatılarının temellerine yerleştirerek Rus toplumunun ahlaki ve yapısal çözülmesini kayda geçirmiş, aynı zamanda dönüşümün eşiğindeki bir ulusun karmaşık yapısını yansıtmışlardır. Bu yazarların eserleri, hicvin ustaca kullanımı ve keskin sosyal eleştirileri nedeniyle bugün de geniş ölçüde incelenmekte ve takdir edilmektedir. Bu edebiyat devleri, ileride Sovyet döneminin ve sonrasının zorluklarıyla yüzleşecek olan gelecekteki Rus yazarlarına zemin hazırlamışlardır. Eserleri, insanlık durumunun zamansız yansımaları olarak kalmaya devam etmekte; gelenek ve ilerleme, yolsuzluk ve reform, durgunluk ve değişim arasındaki mücadelelere dikkat çekmektedir. Bu incelemenin devamında, Sovyet dönemini ele alan bir sonraki bölüm, hiciv edebiyatının 20. yüzyılın özel zorluklarına ve çalkantılarına yanıt olarak nasıl gelişmeye devam ettiğini gösterecektir.

Sovyet hicvi ise eleştiri ve itaate karşı kullanılan birçok araçtan biri olmuş, Sovyet siyasi, sosyal ve ideolojik hayatıyla yakından iç içe geçmiştir. Kolektivizm, eşitlik ve sınıf mücadelesi gibi üstün ideallerle donatılmış Sovyet yaşamındaki çelişkileri açığa çıkarırken, aynı zamanda bürokratik verimsizlik, yolsuzluk ve devlet baskısını da gözler önüne sermiştir. Rejimin sansür yoluyla koyduğu olağanüstü engellere rağmen, Ilf ve Petrov, Bulgakov ve daha birçok Sovyet yazar, Sovyet rejimi altındaki yaşamın absürd incelikleirni eleştiren eserler yazmayı başarmıştır.

Ilf ve Petrov, *On İki Sandalye* ve *Altın Buzağı* gibi eserlerinde, Sovyet kolektivizminin çelişkili eğilimlerini yansıtarak, en iddialı ideolojik hedeflerin bile

bürokratik verimsizlik ve yolsuzlukla dolu, istemeden komik bir çözümle sonuçlandığını göstermiştir. Onların mizahı yalnızca sisteme karşı bir başkaldırı değil, aynı zamanda bir hayatta kalma yöntemiydi; okuyuculara sistemin başarısızlıklarına gülmeyi önermektedi. Bu romanlar, hicvin hem eleştiri hem de hayatın zorluklarıyla başa çıkma mekanizması olarak nasıl kullanılabileceğini, Sovyet retoriğindeki idealler ile günlük yaşamın gerçekleri arasındaki kopukluğu nasıl işaret ettiğini temsil eder. Bulgakov ise, *Köpek Kalbi* ve *Usta ile Margarita* gibi eserlerinde toplumsal alegori, büyülü gerçekçilik ve felsefi düşünceleri kullanarak hicvi daha da genişletmiştir.

Bulgakov, *Köpek Kalbi* adlı romanında, bir sokak köpeğinin kaba bir insana dönüşümünü kullanarak, Sovyet toplumunun yeni bir proleter düzen kurma girişimlerinin kaosunu ve başarısızlıklarını eleştirmiştir. Bu eser, insan doğasının karmaşıklığını ele almış ve insanlık üzerinde yapay yollarla yapılan köklü değişikliklerin boşa olduğunu göstermiştir. Öte yandan, *Usta ile Margarita* Sovyet hicvinin zirvesinde yer alır. Fantastik öğelerle ustaca harmanlanmış bu eser, Stalinist medeniyetin derin bir eleştirisini içerir. İyi ile kötü, özgürlük ile güç arasındaki mücadeleyi ve sanat ile otorite arasındaki ilişkiyi ele alır. Stalinist rejimin baskıcı ortamı bile Bulgakov'u romanını kaleme almaktan alıkoyamamış ve bu roman Sovyet sisteminin temellerini sorgularken yaratıcılığın ve entelektüel direnişin dayanıklılığını simgelemiştir. Büyülü gerçekçilik ve alegori yoluyla *Usta ile Margarita*, Sovyet baskısını, sansürün doğasını ve totaliter bir devlette yaşamanın bedelini derinlemesine inceleyerek eleştirebilmiştir.

Sovyet toplumu değişirken, hiciv de değişmiştir. Stalin sonrası dönemde, özellikle de-Stalinizasyon sürecinde, hiciv rejimi yansıtmak için yeni bir yön kazanmıştır. Fazıl İskander gibi yazarlar, *Tavşanlar ve Boa Yılanları* gibi romanlarında Stalinist mirası ve Sovyet toplumundaki çelişkileri hiciv yoluyla eleştirmiştir. Kruşçev dönemindeki kademeli liberalleşme, hicvi daha halka açık ve eleştirel bir hale getirmiş, Sovyet bürokrasisi, verimsizlik ve politika ile uygulama arasındaki boşluk gibi ısrarcı sorunlara yönelik eleştiriler artmıştır.

Hiciv, Komünist Rusya'da yalnızca sanatsal bir ifade biçimi değil, aynı zamanda Sovyet yaşamının derin içsel karmaşıklıklarını ve çelişkilerini yansıtan bir araç

olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Eleştiriyi mizah ve alegori ile süslemek, Sovyet yazarlarının rejimin olumsuzluklarıyla doğrudan yüzleşmeden ifade etmelerini sağlamıştır.

Sovyet hicvi, dönemin edebiyatından çok daha fazlasını temsil eder. Sanat, politika ve toplumun nasıl birbiriyle ilişkili olduğunu gösteren bir pencere işlevi görür. Sansür ve baskı gölgesinde, hiciv belki de Sovyet yazarlarının toplumu eleştirebilmesi, başarısızlıkları yansıtabilmesi ve alternatifler hayal edebilmesi için tek yoldu. Bu durum, Sovyet edebiyatını kalıcı bir şekilde damgalamış ve sanatın en zor politik zamanlarda bile bir direniş ve yansıma biçimi olabileceğine dair daha geniş bir dünya hayal gücüne katkıda bulunmuştur.

Sovyetler Birliği'nin dönüşümü ve nihayetinde çöküşüyle birlikte, o dönemde yaratılan hiciv eserleri yankılanmaya devam ederek, otoriter bir rejimde yaşamı şekillendirirken mizah ve eleştirinin güçlü kullanımını hatırlatmıştır. Bir sonraki bölümde, Sovyet rejiminin sıkı kontrolünün yokluğunda hicvin nasıl uyum sağladığını tartışacağız. Sovyetler Birliği'nin yıkılmasıyla yalnızca politik manzara değişmedi, aynı zamanda edebi ve hicivsel ifadeler için de yeni yollar açıldı. Bir sonraki bölümde, kilit post-Sovyet hiciv yazarlarının çalışmalarını ve hicvin modern Rusya'nın zorluklarını eleştirme ve yansıtma rolünü inceleyeceğiz.

Hiciv, post-Sovyet Rus toplumu tarafından karşılaşılan çok yönlü zorlukları ele almak ve bunları yansıtmak için kalıcı ve güçlü bir araç olmuştur. Rusya'da hiciv, yalnızca eğlence değil, aynı zamanda toplumun karmaşık Sovyet ve imparatorluk miraslarını ve 21. yüzyıldaki yeni politik, sosyal ve ekonomik gerçeklikleri müzakere ederken kamuoyunun çerçevelendiği hayati bir alan haline gelmiştir. Viktor Pelevin, Vladimir Sorokin ve Dmitry Bykov gibi yazarlar, hicvi sadece eğlence için değil, aynı zamanda Rusya'nın geçmişi ve bugünü arasındaki çelişkileri ve gerilimleri dile getirmek için etkili bir mekanizma olarak kullanmışlardır.

Bu yazarlar, tarihsel revizyonizm ile modern otoriterlik arasındaki karışımı, kapitalizmin yükselişiyle birlikte Rusya'daki her şeyin metalaşmasını ve çok uluslu bir devlette uyumlu bir ulusal kimlik oluşturma mücadelesini hiciv yoluyla

eleştirmiştir. Böylece, hicvin çağdaş Rusya'da otoriter anlatılara karşı koyabilme ve diğer seslerin var olmasına alan açabilme gücü, onu daha otoriter bir ortamda bile hayati bir tür haline getirmiştir.

Elde edilen sonuçlar, bu hiciv geleneğinin, siyasi baskı ve sansür dönemlerinde bile edebiyatın dirençli ve yansıtıcı bir araç olmaya devam ettiğini açıkça göstermektedir. Rusya değişmeye devam ettikçe, hicvin rolü şüphesiz ki edebi ve kültürel manzarasının ayrılmaz bir parçası olarak kalmaya devam edecektir. Bu yazarların hiciv eserleri, Rus toplumunu, siyaseti ve kimliğini eleştiren ve gelecekteki gerçekliklerin müzakeresine katkıda bulunan bir yansıma olarak kalacaktır.

Genel olarak, bu tez hicvin, Rusya'nın sosyo-politik evriminde önemli bir rol oynadığını göstermektedir. Hiciv, otoriter rejimler altında bile eleştirel düşüncenin ve toplumsal yansımanın bir aracı olarak varlığını sürdürmüştür. Hicvin esnek ve dayanıklı yapısı, onu her dönemde etkili bir araç hâline getirmiştir. Gelecekte, dijital platformlar ve küresel etkilerle hicvin yeni boyutlar kazanarak Rusya'daki toplumsal ve siyasi süreçlere katkı sağlamaya devam edeceği öngörülmektedir. Bu çalışma, hicvin yalnızca bir edebi tür değil, aynı zamanda toplumsal ve siyasi değişimi anlamak için güçlü bir araç olduğunu vurgulamaktadır.

Bu tez, hiciv alanında farklı boyutlarda yeni keşif yolları açmaktadır. Çağdaş Rus edebiyatı, değişen sosyo-politik manzaralarla evrim geçirirken, hiciv toplumun tutumlarını, eleştirilerini ve uyum süreçlerini değerlendirmek için vazgeçilmez bir araç olmaya devam etmektedir. Gelecekteki çalışmalar, podcastler ve sosyal medya gibi dijital platformlarda modern hiciv için ortaya çıkan alanların rolüne odaklanabilir ve teknolojinin edebiyatı ve kamusal söylemi nasıl etkilediğini analiz edebilir. Bu platformlar, Rusya'nın sosyal ve politik yapısına yönelik daha özgür eleştirilerin yapılmasına olanak sağlayarak, geçmiş rejimlere ve mevcut rejime dair daha keskin bir bakış açısı sunabilir. Bu tür içgörüler, doğrudan Rus vatandaşlarının katkılarından doğarak, ülke içindeki yaşanmış deneyimlere dayalı perspektifler açısından büyük bir değer taşır.

Ayrıca, hicvin uluslararası etkilerle kesiştiği noktalar, araştırma için büyüleyici bir alan oluşturmaktadır; çünkü Rusya, giderek uluslararası kültürel akımlara

katılmaktadır. Sosyoloji, siyaset bilimi ve dijital çalışmalar gibi disiplinler arası perspektiflerin harmanlanması, hicvin evrim ve dönüşüm üzerindeki etkisini daha derinlemesine anlamayı mümkün kılabilir. Hiciv, modern medya ile geleneksel biçimler arasında bir köprü görevi görmektedir; toplumdaki değişimleri ve eleştirileri diğer türlerden daha canlı bir şekilde yansıtma kapasitesine sahiptir. Hiciv eserlerine derinlemesine bir ilgi, toplumu yansıtan bir ayna görevi görmekte ve kamusal duygular ile görüşler hakkında kritik bilgilerin keşfedilmesine olanak sağlamaktadır ki bu, Rus yaşamının karmaşıklığını anlamak açısından hayati öneme sahiptir.

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