



# CONCLUSION

Readings in Russian Literature: The Nineteenth Century  
IIIT Hyderabad  
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# “You mean there are Russian novels?”

- From a time when a Countess could scorn the idea of a Russian novel to an age widely regarded as **the golden age of Russian prose**.
- The nineteenth century not only saw the development of a robust Russian literature but led to **the emergence of Russia as a leader in defining literary and cultural standards** for the twentieth century.
- More contributions to World Literature than ever before or since: the significance of **nineteenth century Russian prose far exceeds its milieu** – Freud, Nietzsche, Gandhi, ML King Jr, Woolf, Desai.
- At the same time, all art exists in context: Russian literature was/is a **powerful mouthpiece of empire and revolution, oppression and dissent**. As an expansionist, highly militarized state, Russia encroaches on the autonomy of its neighbours, and culture plays an important role in reinforcing and maintaining this hegemony.

*“The crimes of Russians against the Ukrainian people: murder, torture of people, rape of women and children, destruction of Ukrainian cities have crossed out the entire culture of the Russian people. There is no explanation for these crimes. They leave us no choice. Everything Russian must be dismantled. Including the monument to the Russian writer.”*

*– Serhiy Nadal,  
mayor of Ternopil.*





- The most important themes we have covered:
  - 1. **The Westernizer and Slavophile debate:** Russia's place at home and in the world
    - What is Russian identity – do/can Russians have a separate identity, or is it in their own interests to look to Europe for models?
    - What is the core of Russia's own identity, separate from Europe: language, ethnicity (race), religion, ideas, unique position (plural/multicultural/transcontinental)?
    - Who are “we” as Russians, where do “we” begin and end – “self” and “other”

- The most important themes we have covered:
  - 2. Romanticism** (the Gothic and the uncanny, folklore, nature and human beings, patriotism and nationalism)
  - to
  - Realism** (psychological realism, social manners, structural inequalities, critique of the state, lyrical realism):
- Major milestones: Pushkin, Turgenev, and Chekhov

- The most important themes we have covered:
  - **Political, Didactic, and Ideological writing:**
    - Political: Pushkin's "Ode to Liberty," Lermontov's "Death of a/the Poet," Turgenev's story "The Office"
    - Didactic: Tolstoi's "A Spark Neglected Burns the House"
    - Ideological writing: "The Crocodile," "Asheek Kerib," "After Finishing School"
  - **Shifts in genre and treatment:**
    - Popular literature, realism (reportage), folk tale, epistle, satire (feuilleton), fictional autobiography, short story

- The most important themes we have covered:
  - 3. A Tradition of Writing by Women in Russian:** a part of the mainstream, marginal to the mainstream, and/or resistant to hegemonic currents in Russian literature;

- The most important themes we have covered:

- 4. Aristocracy, Bureaucracy, and Feudalism / Class, Autocracy, Power** – the Pillars of Empire;





- The most important themes we have covered:

## **5. Some Reflections on Translation:**

- Lermontov (politics of translation);
- Turgenev – struggle with language of working-class;
- Catriona Kelly – translator's and editor's priorities: limited to a particular kind of writing by women writers
- Constance Garnett vs. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky