CHAPTER 21

Religion and Culture, 1796–1855

As earlier, religious and educational developments were strongly influenced by government policy. The state also exercised major influence over art and architecture, primarily by its control over the St. Petersburg Academy of Fine Arts and by its granting of commissions. And it attempted to reign over literature by censorship and its treatment of writers. Some it favored, some it exiled, and one—the promising young poet Kondrati Ryleev—it executed for his part in the Decembrist conspiracy. Western cultural movements and study abroad affected many Russian writers and artists. Western influence on Russia and, partly in reaction, Russia's search for its own roots and uniqueness became central cultural issues.

Yet, as significant as government policies, Western influences, and the reaction to them were for the era's religion and culture, they did not provide the vital force, the breath of life, that made this period such a rich one in Russian cultural history. That came from individuals, including Alexander Pushkin, Nikolai Gogol, and Mikhail Glinka, whose minds were fed by both Western influences and the rich traditions of their own country.

RELIGION

In Alexander I's final years and throughout Nicholas I's reign, the state displayed little religious toleration except when state interests seemed to necessitate it (see, for example, Chapter 19 for Vorontsov's treatment of Muslims in the Caucasus). Nicholas's curtailment of Catholic Uniate rights was perhaps the most dramatic example of intolerance. But there were others, for example an 1830 edict that ordered the Dukhobors, Molokane, and another sectarian group called the Subbotniks to be resettled in Transcaucasia (South Caucasus). Once there, despite the pacifist beliefs of many of them, they performed valuable transport, medical, and other services to Russian troops during both the Crimea War and the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Until the 1890s, they remained the majority of civilian ethnic Russians in the region.

Government discrimination against the non-Orthodox was sometimes more

subtle than that displayed against the Uniates and sectarians. In 1849, for example, the government decreed a lifelong exemption from the soul tax, a six-year exemption from other taxes, and a monetary reward of up to 30 rubles for anyone who converted among the *inorodtsy*—a category including many eastern nationalities such as the Volga Tatars.

But the government's championing of Orthodoxy and its discrimination against non-Orthodox religions often failed to win permanent converts. Many Muslims who converted to Christianity soon returned to Islam. Despite new measures that Nicholas took against Old Believers and sectarians, their numbers increased. In 1859, the Ministry of Interior estimated that their true number was about 9.3 million, more than ten times the official figure.

From 1836 until 1855, Nicholas I relied on a former army officer, N. A. Pratasov, to oversee the Orthodox Church. As procurator of the Holy Synod, he strengthened the power of his office while weakening the role of the Synod's clerical hierarchy.

Although government policies tightened state control over religions, including Orthodoxy, they did little to strengthen the Orthodox faith. By 1855, despite some positive Orthodox developments, dissatisfaction with the condition of the Orthodox Church and the state's religious policies was widespread among educated people.

Bishops were most concerned with their loss of power to Procurator Pratasov and other lay government officials. Even some strong lay supporters of Orthodoxy and autocracy, such as the historian M. P. Pogodin, believed church reforms were needed. In early 1855, he encouraged a parish priest, I. S. Belliustin, to write a description of the clergy's condition. After the priest did so and the manuscript was published abroad a few years later, it stimulated a debate in the Russian press.

Although ignoring the state's increased control over the Orthodox Church, which was at the root of some church problems, Belliustin strongly criticized many aspects of church life. He thought the education and housing conditions at ecclesiastical schools, which were open only to the sons of clergy, were woefully inadequate. He decried the dominance of the unmarried, black (monastic) clergy, who alone could become members of the church hierarchy. He thought that the parish priests' lack of any regular salary and dependence on fees for certain religious services led to corruption and the people's hatred of their priests. And this hatred, in turn, stimulated hostility to religion and perpetuated spiritual ignorance. Belliustin wrote "Our *Orthodox* folk, and I say this without the slightest exaggeration, do not have the *remotest conception of anything spiritual*."[1]

Although Belliustin was critical of Westernizers like Belinsky and did not share his negative views on autocracy and Orthodoxy, some of this parish priest's criticisms call to mind Belinsky's famous letter to Gogol (see Chapter 19 and p. 397).

Like Belinsky, many other intellectuals, although being baptized into

[1]I. S. Belliustin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest*, translated with an Interpretive Essay by Gregory L. Freeze (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), p. 125; italics are Belliustin's.

Belinsky's Criticism of the Orthodox Church

Vissarion Belinsky's 1847 letter to Nikolai Gogol remained unpublished until Alexander Herzen published it abroad in 1855. Even before this, however, it circulated in thousands of underground copies, although circulating it was a serious crime—it was, for example, one of the government charges against Dostoevsky in 1849. Ivan Aksakov, a member of the Slavophile camp opposed to Belinsky, wrote in 1856: "There is not a single high-school teacher in the gubernia towns who does not know Belinsky's letter to Gogol by heart." This quotation and the following excerpt from the letter are taken from V. G. Belinsky, *Selected Philosophical Works* (Moscow Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1948), pp. 506–507, 530. Brackets and ellipses are mine.

It [the Orthodox Church] has always served as the prop of the knout and the servant of despotism; but why have you mixed Christ up in this? What in common have you found between Him and any church, least of all the Orthodox Church? . . . Do you really mean to say you do not know that our clergy is held in universal contempt by Russian society and the Russian people? Of whom do the Russian people relate obscene stories? Of the priest, the priest's wife, the priest's daughter, and the priest's farm hand. Does not the priest in Russia represent for all Russians the embodiment of gluttony, avarice, servility and shamelessness? Do you mean to say that you do not know all this? Strange! According to you the Russian people is the most religious in the world. That is a lie! The basis of religiousness is pietism, reverence, fear of God. . . .

Take a closer look and you will see that it [the Russian people] is by nature a profoundly atheistic people. It still retains a good deal of superstition but not a trace of religionsness. . . . Religiousness with us appeared only among the Schismatic sects who formed such a contrast in spirit to the mass of the people.

Orthodoxy, no longer felt any allegiance to it. Some searched for new religious answers. The writer Leo Tolstoy, while serving in the Crimean War, noted in his diary that he felt capable of devoting his life to the founding of a new religion based on Christ's teachings, but one seeking happiness on this earth and free from church dogma and mysteries.

Yet, along with such alienation from traditional Russian Orthodoxy, there were also signs of Orthodox renewal. Theology advanced, both in clerical quarters such as the four theological academies of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev, and Kazan, and among some educated laymen. It was stimulated both by earlier Orthodox thinkers and by recent Western philosophical ideas

The most important lay contribution was made by the Slavophile Alexei Khomiakov (1804–1860), sometimes called Russia's first original theologian. His most significant idea—and one that influenced later thinkers like Dostoevsky—was that of *sobornost* (conciliarism). According to Khomiakov, the Catholic Church had overemphasized unity and authority at the expense of freedom, and the Protestant churches in reaction had overemphasized individualism. The Orthodox Church, however, had maintained *sobornost*, or the free unity of its members through a love grounded on the love of Christ. Although mindful of the harm state

interference in church affairs had caused in Russia, Khomiakov believed it had not undermined the essential nature of Orthodoxy.

Russian monasticism was reinvigorated by the disciples of Paissi Velichkovsky (1722–1794), a Ukrainian who had studied at Mount Athos in Greece and later became the head of a monastery in Moldavia. From there, his followers brought to Russia his contemplative and mystical ideas, the practice of living under a common (cenobitic) rule and obeying a *starets* (a wise elder), and some translations of long-neglected works of early Eastern Orthodox thinkers.

A monastery greatly influenced by these followers was Optina, located in the Kaluga Province, south of Moscow. It became known for its *startsi* (elders), especially Leonid and Makari—and later in the century, Ambrose. In the late 1840s, Makari became, and remained thereafter, the main spiritual guide of one of the chief Slavophiles, Ivan Kireevsky (1806–1856). During this period, Makari and Kireevsky collaborated in publishing a number of Eastern Orthodox spiritual works. Although not relying primarily on Makari for spiritual guidance, the writer Gogol also visited Optina and conferred with him. As the nineteenth century proceeded, more such laypersons turned to the *startsi* for advice

One *starets* later canonized an Orthodox saint was Seraphim of Sarov (1759–1833) In 1825, after many years of seclusion, he began seeing all that wished his help, including sick people hoping for cures. In his mysticism and love of the Jesus prayer—also stressed by Velichkovsky—he calls to mind the hesychasts and Nil Sorsky (see Chapter 7). He preached that the acceptance of the Spirit of God would bring joy and the transformation of human life.

A strong supporter of monastic reform was Filaret, the Archbishop of Moscow from 1821 until 1867. Despite clashes with the Holy Synod's procurator, Pratasov, he was the most influential religious leader of his era. He not only supported Optina's publications, but also strongly encouraged the adoption of a more communal life in the monasteries and convents. Despite Velichkovsky's influence at places such as Optina, communal sharing was not the rule in most Russian monasteries and convents. Each person was responsible for his or her own support by such means as making handicrafts or begging. Although Filaret's reform efforts met considerable resistance from already established monasteries and convents, he was more successful with new ones, especially those upgraded from the status of "women's communities."

These communities had begun as a way of circumventing the government's limitation on the number of convents. From 1764 to 1894, 156 such communities were founded, often by widows. They included women from varying classes, from the nobility to the peasantry, and often performed charitable works. Some of the founders and heads of these religious communities were valued by laypersons for their practical and spiritual wisdom. Two-thirds of these communities ultimately were raised to convent status and operated on the basis of communal principles.

The religiousness of the Russian Orthodox peasant has been greatly debated. Although Belinsky and others denied it, others such as Gogol, the Slavophiles, and later Dostoevsky attested to it. Such differences were partly due to individual definitions of "religiousness"—what one regarded as a superstition, another thought of as a religious practice or belief. More recently, scholarly differences have

emerged regarding whether peasant religious beliefs should be thought of primarily as a Christian-pagan *dvoeverie* (double-faith) or simply a form of "popular Orthodoxy" (see Chapter 3).

After the Orthodox hierarchy had made a concerted effort in the late eighteenth century to bring people's religious beliefs more in line with strict Orthodox teachings, the Church authorities in the early nineteenth century adopted a more flexible and tolerant approach to the masses' beliefs. Freeze has suggested that this more accommodating stance recognized that the stricter approach of the late eighteenth century had been unsuccessful and was perhaps driving some people from the church and into the ranks of Old Believers and sectarians.

The peasants who remained Orthodox continued to have little knowledge of many church dogmas. The priest Belliustin wrote that none of his parishioners could intelligently relate even a portion of Christ's life and that no more than two or three out of a thousand knew the ten commandments. One reason for this was that priestly sermons were rare.

The peasants did, however, cherish church rituals and customs, and they were dutiful regarding church practices. Their observances in the early nineteenth century were probably little different than those observed later in the century by Donald Mackenzie Wallace. He wrote:

> It must be admitted that the Russian people are in a certain sense religious. They go regularly to church on Sundays and holy-days, cross themselves repeatedly when they pass a church or Icon, take the Holy Communion at stated seasons, rigorously abstain from animal food—not only on Wednesdays and Fridays, but also during Lent and the other long fasts—[and] make occasional pilgrimages to holy shrines.[2]

The peasants also venerated icons, both at church and in the icon corner of their huts. Many of the icons that made up the iconostasis at church were the illiterate peasants' chief windows to the Bible.

The peasants' Orthodoxy, however, remained interwoven with older pre-Christian beliefs and practices. Spirits like the *domovoi* (house spirit) and the *rusalki* (water and tree nymphs) continued coexisting in the peasant mind with the saints they revered. The belief in magic and sorcery lived on alongside that in miracles and faith in the power of icons, sacraments, and prayer.

This mixture of beliefs was mirrored in the peasants' yearly cycle of holy days and festivals and in the important events of their lives, from birth through marriage to death. Even Easter, the greatest Orthodox Christian holy day, was tinged with remnants of older pre-Christian practices, whereas other days such as those of the late winter festival *Maslenitsa*—during which winter was urged to depart by setting afire a straw dummy—were clearly dominated by pre-Christian vestiges. Such customs were often intricately connected with the peasants' agricultural life and their attempts to influence the workings of nature positively. The peasants also

[2]*Russia* (New York, 1877), p. 63. For more on him and this book, see Chapter 22, in which a selection from it is included.

appealed to certain Christian saints for help with different facets of nature and had patron saints for rain, cattle, horses, and so forth.

Thus, if religion is defined broadly to include both "primitive" and Christian beliefs and practices, the Russian peasants' world was far more religious than secular. Not only their fasts, feasts, and festivals were primarily religious, but also their everyday farming and social life was filled with practices that testified to their belief in spiritual and magical forces. Because of the close church-state connection in Russia, even the wishes of their tsar and government were often clothed in religious garb.

EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Although educational opportunities advanced considerably in this period, they still lagged far behind those available in Western Europe. By 1856, the number of students receiving some form of public education in European Russia (excluding Poland and Finland) had increased about sevenfold from the approximately 62,000 students in 1801.

Certain characteristics of Russian education became clearly evident in this

FIGURE 21.1. A village church (the Church of the Transfiguration, from the village of Kozliateva, 1756, presently in the Suzdal Outdoor Museum of Wooden Architecture and Peasant Life).

period. According to Ben Eklof, they included a suspicion of any private schooling and an emphasis on advanced (beyond basic) education and educational uniformity. Although the government believed in educating enough people to enable Russia to meet the needs of nineteenth-century international competition, it did not want education to destabilize the social order. This meant that peasants generally were to receive no more than a very basic education. The government feared that too much education for peasants would stimulate discontent.

During Alexander I's first decade of rule, this fear was not nearly as evident as it became later. In fact, Alexander's educational decrees and statutes of 1803–1804 were marked by his early liberal enthusiasms and aimed at restructuring the educational system to provide a "ladder" of linked schools from basic ones to universities. One's degree of ascent was to be based not on class but on talent. As Alexander's policies became more conservative, however, this dream faded.

The one-year parish schools, established in some towns and villages under Alexander I, were at the bottom of the ladder. Then came the district and provincial schools, originally created by Catherine II but transformed during this era into three-year district schools and seven-year gymnasiums—yet many district towns (over 130 in European Russia in 1825) remained without a school. At the top were the universities, which were granted considerable autonomy under the University Statute of 1804. By 1825 (and still by 1855), there were six of them in the European Russian provinces: in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kharkov, Kazan, Dorpat, and Vilna (replaced by one in Kiev in the 1830s). In addition, there was one each in Congress Poland (until the uprising of 1830–1831) and Finland.

Although Alexander I intended these different level schools to be the main rungs of the educational "ladder," by 1855, the lower rungs only rarely led any higher and indeed were not intended to for most of the common people. In all the gymnasiums and universities, there were by then only a little over 21,000 students, with about one-sixth of the total attending a university.

Besides these main institutions, other schools continued to grow or were newly created. The largest number of the former were the schools for military children and the church schools and seminaries for the sons of priests. The new schools that educated the most students, including a small percentage of girls, were primary church schools under the Holy Synod and the three-year schools that General Kiselev began establishing for state peasants in the late 1830s.

At a higher level, about twenty new women's institutes came into existence in this era, mostly modeled on the Smolny Institute created by Catherine the Great. These institutes, plus some private women's boarding schools, were mainly the preserve of the daughters of nobles and, less frequently, of wealthy merchants. For men, there were other secondary and higher educational institutions besides the gymnasiums and universities, including the four theological academies in St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan, and Kiev. Nicholas I was especially fond of technical and applied learning, and under him a number of institutions teaching such subjects as architecture, technical drawing, agronomy, and veterinary medicine began operation. For noblemen particularly, other new schools were opened. They included cadet schools and special institutions such as the Imperial Lyceum on the royal grounds of Tsarskoe Selo, opened in 1811, and the School of Jurisprudence, founded in 1835.

The quality of education in Russia's schools varied widely. At the basic level—for example, the parish, district, and church schools, and those Kiselev established for state peasants—the three Rs and religion were supposedly stressed. Because of insufficient government financing, inadequate books and teachers, poor classrooms, and peasant reluctance to send their children to school, the actual learning that occurred often fell short of expectations. The best-financed and best-run primary system was that of Kiselev's Ministry of State Domains, yet in 1855, empty seats in many of its schools led the ministry to conscript male and female orphans to fill them. The learning that did occur was often characterized by memorization without comprehension.

Because priests did much of the teaching, including that in Kiselev's schools for state peasants, Belliustin's comments on ecclesiastical schools are noteworthy. The preseminary schools stressed Latin, Greek, catechism and biblical history, and Russian grammar. Belliustin sums up this education by writing: "the entire course of study amounts to nothing more than rote memorization, a science of cramming."[3] He thought that the more advanced six-year seminaries were little better and that nothing in them was taught or learned thoroughly. Besides faulting the instruction given to future priests, Belliustin also complained of inadequate textbooks, unsuitable buildings, and dormitories.

Secondary lay education in the gymnasiums (seventy-four of them in 1851) and more advanced schooling seems to have been better, no doubt partly because such education was designed mainly for the sons of the nobility. By the 1830s, the gymnasiums stressed a classical education. The program followed by the future historian Sergei Soloviev at a Moscow gymnasium in the 1830s indicates how demanding the best of them could be. Besides heavy doses of Latin and Greek, he took courses in German, Russian language and literature, history, religion, mathematics, and physics. The students attended classes six hours a day, six days a week, and summer vacation lasted a month at the most. Only a minority of Soloviev's fellow students made it all the way through to graduation.

Women's "secondary schooling" at the Smolny and other institutes and boarding schools was much less rigorous. They were primarily "finishing schools" designed to produce young noblewomen who could speak good French, play the piano, and otherwise serve the social and domestic needs of their future husbands.

Under Alexander I, many university professors were foreign and did not speak Russian, instead giving their lectures in Latin, German, or French, and thereby being poorly understood by some of their students. As late as 1835, about a fourth of the professors lacked graduate degrees. At the University of St. Petersburg in 1834 and 1835, the writer Nikolai Gogol, who possessed not even an undergraduate degree, was an assistant professor of medieval history and demonstrated to his students that he knew little about his subject.

Gradually, however, instruction improved. This was especially true under Sergei Uvarov, who served as Nicholas I's minister of education from 1833 to 1849, and before Nicholas's fears of the 1848–1849 revolutions led him to place new restrictions on the universities and cut back their enrollments. From 1848 to

[3]Belliustin, p. 83.

1854, the number of university students fell from about 4,600 to about 3,600. Although new regulations and policies of the mid-1830s curtailed some of the considerable university autonomy earlier granted by Alexander I, they also strengthened faculty qualifications and improved salaries. Many new faculty were hired, including more than a few who had studied abroad. The improvement was especially marked at Russia's largest university, that of Moscow. By 1855, it had about 1,200 students, or about a third of the total university population.

Of the new Moscow professors, Timothy Granovsky (1813–1855) was particularly popular and influential. Many of the era's outstanding writers, thinkers, and educators were either his students (such as Sergei Soloviev and the historian and juridical scholar Boris Chicherin) or his friends (such as Ivan Turgenev and Alexander Herzen). After studying abroad for three years and absorbing European history from such scholars as the great German historian Leopold von Ranke, Granovsky became a professor of medieval and European history in 1839. Although influenced, like most of his generation, by Hegel's views on history, he emphasized not only the German philosopher's laws of history and its march toward progress, but also the individual's moral responsibility and role in history. In the fierce Slavophile-Westernizer debate over Russia's past and future, he stood with the Westernizers but was far more moderate than Belinsky, Bakunin, or Herzen. This debate's importance and Granovsky's humane personality and lecturing skills won him large audiences for the public lectures he gave during the 1840s.

Although some of Russia's great writers and thinkers who came to maturity under Nicholas I never attended Moscow University, many did, although not all graduated. Among its students, at least briefly, were the novelists Turgenev and Goncharov; the poets Lermontov, Ogarev, and Fet; the Slavophile C. Aksakov; and the Westernizers Herzen and Belinsky. Among influential professors at the university, there was also the conservative and nationalist historian M. P. Pogodin and Sergei Soloviev, who replaced him in 1845 as professor of Russian history.

Other universities also possessed some noteworthy professors and students. At the University of Kazan, the great pioneer in non-Euclidean geometry, Nikolai Lobachevsky (1793–1856), both taught and served as rector of the university from 1827 to 1846, helping it to recover from Magnitsky's disastrous policies. A student who entered Kazan University while Lobachevsky was rector later became one of world literature's greatest writers, Leo Tolstoy. But like another famous later student of the university, Vladimir Lenin, he left before graduating.

Yet Tolstoy's experiences at Kazan University tell us a good deal about both Tolstoy and Russian higher education in this period. In the spring of 1844, months short of his sixteenth birthday, Tolstoy took the entrance examinations for one of the university's most distinguished and difficult programs, the Faculty of Oriental Languages. Although doing well enough to pass in German, French, English, Arabic, Turko-Tatar, math, and literature, his scores in history, geography, statistics, and Latin were poor, and he was denied admission.

Months later, he tried again, was successful, and began his studies in the fall of 1844. But he soon became more concerned with his social life than classes, missed many lectures, and failed to complete his first year successfully. He then

transferred to the university's easier Faculty of Jurisprudence, but after less than two years in it decided to leave the university. Once, while being locked up overnight for missing a history lecture, he fumed that "history is nothing other than a collection of fables and useless details, interspersed with a mass of unnecessary dates and proper names."

Like many noblemen of the era, Tolstoy's early education was provided by tutors, some of them foreign. Whether educated by tutors or schools or both, the education of many noblemen never advanced beyond an elementary level. Only a minority of nobles graduated from cadet schools, gymnasiums, or private schools or (like Tolstoy and Herzen) received a secondary education primarily from their tutors and their own reading.

Many noble parents resisted the rigors of a classical gymnasium education for their sons, and the government allowed some less demanding five-year gymnasiums to be established by noblemen at their own expense. Among other courses they could take at these abbreviated gymnasiums were ones thought especially fitting for noblemen, such as fencing, horsemanship, and ballroom dancing. When they did attend the regular seven-year gymnasiums, they often lived in separate dormitories where commoners were excluded. The government of Nicholas I was willing to make such concessions because it believed that gymnasium and university education should be primarily for the sons of nobles. In the first decade of Nicholas's reign, about three-fourths of the gymnasium students were from the nobility.

Yet nobles who were both willing and able to complete a gymnasium or even more advanced schooling did not exhaust the government's need for well-educated individuals, especially officials; thus, the door to talented commoners, unless serfs, was never completely shut. From 1840 to 1848, no more than 55 percent of university students were from the nobility, and the percentage was notably less for non-Polish students—some of the universities, including St. Petersburg and Moscow universities, contained a significant number of Polish students, who were overwhelmingly from noble backgrounds. Among nonnoble laymen, those from the urban tax-paying groups had the best chance to obtain post-elementary education. The government also allowed some sons of priests, such as Sergei Soloviev, to pursue advanced secular schooling. In his memoirs, Alexander Herzen noted the democratic mix of students at Moscow University before the 1848–1849 European revolutions, after which Nicholas took new measures to restrict the entrance of poorer commoners.

LITERATURE

The early nineteenth century was a great age for Russian literature. It witnessed the Golden Age of Russian poetry; the writings of Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, and Nikolai Gogol; and the beginning of the careers of Fedor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Ivan Turgenev. Although Western authors and movements influenced all these writers, the poems, prose, and plays they wrote breathed of Russia and reflected its own uniqueness.

In the West, romanticism was the dominant literary movement of the time,

until replaced by realism in the middle of the nineteenth century. Although sharing some characteristics of the earlier sentimentalism, romanticism went much further in its rebellion against neoclassicism's emphasis on rationality and restraint.

Western romanticism emphasized individualism, imagination, emotion, the wonders of nature, the medieval, the strange, and the mysterious. Romantic writers often seemed discontented and alienated, unable to find satisfaction in common beliefs, whether of an everyday religious or secular nature. Thus, they looked for happiness and meaning in other places—in nature, the past, romantic love, music, mysticism, the German philosophy of Schelling, heroic action (Napoleon was a hero to some)—or the *Volksgeist* (folk-spirit) of their nation.

Although not as strong and long-lasting as in some Western countries, romanticism in Russia shared these characteristics but combined and displayed them in a way that reflected the Russian identity. The alienated heroes of Pushkin or Lermontov, although bearing some similarities to the heroes of the English poet Byron, exist in and are influenced by a Russian environment. The exotic settings of Russian romantic literature were often different (for example, the Caucasus) than those of Western romanticism. And the Russian romantic concern with national originality was greater than in other countries.[4]

One Russian writer who reflected romantic tendencies was Vasili Zhukovsky (1783–1852). This poet and tutor of the future tsar Alexander II was also one of the world's finest translators of poetry. Among his many English and German translations were some romantic works, including Byron's *The Prisoner of Chillon*. He was the first major poet of poetry's Golden Age, and his melodic poems were known for their "enchanting sweetness." Building on Karamzin's language reforms, he molded a poetic language that influenced later poets.

Two other excellent poets that were strongly influenced by romanticism were Evgeni Baratynsky and Fedor Tiutchev. The romantic element appears especially in their philosophical pessimism and in the subjects they treated.

Tiutchev often wrote about the sea, sky, and seasons but used them as a basis for philosophical reflections—he has often been labeled a "metaphysical poet." His romanticism owed something to the German philosopher Schelling, whose works he read and whose lectures he attended while stationed as a diplomat in Munich. He also wrote perhaps the greatest Russian tragic love poetry. In addition, this diplomat by profession and conservative panslavist by conviction wrote conservative political poems and prose, expressing his belief in the West's decline and Orthodox Russia's historical uniqueness and future historical mission.

The greatest Russian poet was Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837). After an upbringing that included being taught to speak French before Russian, learning Russian folktales from his nanny, and being educated at the Imperial Lyceum at Tsarskoe Selo, Pushkin spent the next three years (1817–1820) enjoying the prerogatives of a youthful nobleman in St. Petersburg. He went to balls and theaters, gambled, drank, and womanized. He also began to write poetry that was clearly superior to his schoolboy poems, some of which had been good enough to be

[4]Nicholas I's stress on Russia's national uniqueness (as well as Alexander I's earlier interest in mysticism) was thus in keeping with the romantic spirit of the era.

praised by Derzhavin and Zhukovsky. Unfortunately for Pushkin, however, some of his political poems helped get him into trouble, and the government exiled him to southern Russia.

After four years of southern exile, Pushkin spent two more years of exile on his family's estate. In 1826, Nicholas I summoned Pushkin, talked with him, and told him that henceforth his writings would be subject only to the tsar's personal censorship. From then on, however, Pushkin's activities and writings were closely watched by the Third Section.

Pushkin married the beautiful Natalia Goncharova in 1831. After a few years, he grew increasingly jealous of her many admirers. Finally in 1837, incensed by the ardent courting of Natalia by the adopted French son of the Dutch ambassador, Pushkin challenged the young man to a duel. Wounded in it, Pushkin died two days later.

Some of Pushkin's writings, especially his poetry, reflect his own stormy life and strong emotions. And there are certainly romantic elements in some of his works, especially those written in the south under Byronic influence. Yet Pushkin's style was generally more restrained, simple, and objective—more classical some would say—than that of the European romantic writers of his day.

His reputation rests not only on the quality of his poetry, but also on the wide spectrum of his writings, both poetry and prose. He wrote short poems on subjects from love, friendship, freedom, nature, and death, to poems on a water-nymph (*rusalka*), his own genealogy, his inkwell, and to slanderers of Russia. He wrote longer narrative poems, among the greatest of which are *Evgeni Onegin*, *The Gypsies,* and *The Bronze Horseman*. In them, he touched on a broad range of topics, including freedom and fate, the individual and the state.

He wrote poetic folktales such as the *Golden Cockerel* and *King Saltan* and plays such as *Boris Godunov* and *Mozart and Salieri*, the latter one of a number of "little tragedies." He penned fictional prose narratives: short stories such as "The Queen of Spades" and "The Stationmaster" and longer works such as *A Captain's Daughter* (set against the background of the Pugachev revolt). Finally, if we skip over his letters, critical essays, and other minor categories, we come to his historical works. Although his *The Moor of Peter the Great*, about Pushkin's African great-grandfather, took some artistic liberties with the facts, his *History of the Pugachev Rebellion* and an unfinished work on Peter the Great were more purely historical.

Not only have Pushkin's works been widely read and appreciated by Russians but also his writings have had a great impact on many subsequent writers. The language of his poetry and prose, his artistic realism, his fictional plotting and story construction, and his characters—especially Onegin and his love Tatiana—strongly influenced such writers as Lermontov, Dostoevsky, and Turgenev. Composers and choreographers were also greatly indebted to him. They used works such as *Evgeni Onegin*, *Boris Godunov*, and *The Queen of Spades*—to name just a few of many—as the basis for ballets and operas.

A more romantic and Byronic writer was Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841). In one of his early and best short poems, "The Angel," he expresses his longing for a better world than the tedious human world of sorrow and tears. This sense of alienation, sometimes unrelieved by romantic hopes or dreams, continued until his brief life ended in a duel. In "The Last House-Warming," in which he contrasts a

despicable and shallow France of 1840 with the greatness of Napoleon, it is evident that his contempt for society was not limited to Russia. Like Byron's poetry, Lermontov's sometimes expressed rebellion not only against society, but also against religion and God. Aspects of this rebellion can be seen in such long poems as *The Demon* and *The Novice* and in his late short poem "Gratitude," in which Lermontov cynically thanks God for his bitter life.

A good part of the romantic atmosphere in Lermontov's mature writings came from his exile to the exotic Caucasus, where he died. On two occasions, the government sent him to serve in the military there, once for his poem on Pushkin's death, which criticized Nicholas I's regime, and later for a duel with the son of the French ambassador.

Lermontov's poetry was generally more emotional and unrestrained than that of Pushkin's and has been valued especially for its melodious qualities. In some poems, however, especially of his last years, his style became more concise and his approach less romantic and more realistic.

This greater realism can also be seen in Lermontov's prose masterpiece, *A Hero of Our Time* (1840). Although the Caucasian setting is romantic and the hero, Pechorin, is typical in many ways of the alienated romantic hero who is at odds with his society, Lermontov's treatment of him is more objectively realistic than romantic. Some have referred to this work as Russia's first novel of psychological realism.

Another writer who displayed both romantic and realistic characteristics was Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852). Born in Ukraine, he came to St. Petersburg in 1828, hoping to become an actor, but instead achieved fame in 1831–1832 with a collection of stories called *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka*. These and a later collection, *Mirgorod* (1835), were primarily romantic in their use of legends, folklore, horror, and supernatural elements such as demons, witches, water spirits, and ghosts.[5] One of the stories in *Mirgorod* was "Taras Bulba," which Gogol later expanded and revised. In writing this piece of historical fiction, he was influenced not only by Ukrainian folk legends, but also by the historical romances of Walter Scott, which were then popular in Russia. Yet some of the stories in his two collections also displayed a great talent for depicting realistic details and dealt with rather unromantic characters whose lives were marked by banality.

One of Gogol's favorite writers was the German Romantic E. T. A. Hoffmann. In later stories set in St. Petersburg, Gogol continued, like Hoffmann, to display an ability to mix everyday life with the weird and supernatural. In "The Nose," a barber finds the nose of an official, one of his customers, in a loaf of bread; the official goes hunting for his nose, and it takes on a life of its own. In one of Gogol's most famous and influential stories, "The Overcoat," a poor copyist is robbed of his overcoat, appeals to an important official to urge a more robust police investigation but is thrown out by him, and dies grief-stricken shortly afterwards. His ghost, however, has his revenge, going on an overcoat-stealing rampage, including the theft of the important official's coat.

Two of Gogol's most famous works were the comedy, *The Inspector General*,

[5]For the continuing belief in witches in Imperial Russia (mainly female), see Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 2001), pp. 86–108.

first performed in 1836, and the novel *Dead Souls*, which appeared in 1842. Both reflect Gogol's unique satirical genius, are set in Russia's provinces, and revolve around a dishonest outsider who appears in an insignificant provincial town, full of banal characters. Both works helped establish Gogol's reputation as a social critic, a reputation that this supporter of Nicholas's Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality found uncomfortable.

This reputation owed a great deal to Belinsky, the most important literary critic of his day. In his short life, this Westernizer praised many of the works of Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol, the young Turgenev, and the young Dostoevsky. And he established a trend in Russian literary criticism which advocated that literature should be of social value and true to life. In his famous 1847 letter to Gogol, which attacked him for the conservative views of his *Selected Passages from a Correspondence with Friends*, Belinsky wrote: "Yes, I loved you with all the passion with which a man, bound by ties of blood to his native country, can love its hope, its honor, its glory, one of the great leaders on its path of consciousness, development and progress." Belinsky's anger with Gogol in 1847 stemmed largely from feeling betrayed by a man whose previous works he had so greatly admired. What Belinsky valued in Gogol was his "naturalism," or as he put it: [that his] "works deal exclusively with the world of Russian life and he has no rivals in the art of portraying it in all its truth."

For Belinsky, this "truth" was that Russia was backward, her political and social system was unjust, and the masses suffered as a result of it. Because works such as "The Overcoat," *The Inspector General*, and *Dead Souls* called attention to these conditions, they were, to Belinsky, important steps in the direction of progress.

Gogol's later work did little to change perceptions of the social value of his earlier writings. But more modern Gogol criticism, although disagreeing on many points, has indicated that Gogol was a much more complex writer than Belinsky had suggested. This newer criticism has revealed a tormented personality, and it has pointed out that Gogol did not approach literature primarily as a realist.

Like Tiutchev and the Slavophiles, Gogol came to believe that the West was mired in sin and falseness and that humanity needed to base its culture on Christian truth, a truth safeguarded properly only in the Orthodox Church. This belief developed primarily between 1836 and 1848, years spent chiefly abroad, especially in Italy. During the latter part of this period, Gogol worked hard over an uplifting sequel to *Dead Souls*, but he eventually burned it.

Besides Zhukovsky, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Gogol, there were other writers of note during this era. One was Ivan Krylov, whose satirical verse fables were extremely popular. Many of his lines became proverbs. This was also true of many lines of Alexander Griboedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* (written in the early 1820s). It stands alongside Gogol's *The Inspector General* as one of the two greatest plays of the early nineteenth century. Although its hero, Chatsky, like many a Romantic hero, was alienated from the society of his day, this work could no more be labeled a manifestation of romanticism than could Pushkin's *Evgeni Onegin*. Both works mixed classical, realistic, and romantic elements.

Along with Lermontov's Pechorin, both Chatsky and Onegin became part of a tradition of Russian "superfluous men," a category not limited to the alienated

heroes of romanticism. What these superfluous men had in common was being alienated from society but being unwilling or unable to act to change it.

ART AND MUSIC

In Russian architecture, painting, and music, as with its literature, romanticism was a weaker force than in the West. Despite some romantic manifestations, early nineteenth-century Russian architecture continued mainly in the classical (or neo-classical) tradition of the late eighteenth century, at least until the 1830s. The dominance of classicism is evident primarily in public buildings, including some famous churches.

Three examples should suffice to indicate classicism's dominance and then decline in early nineteenth-century architecture. All three were built in the capital and made ample use of columns, which were central to the era's architecture. The first was Kazan Cathedral, (1801–1811) (see Figure 21.2). Its architect was Andrei Voronikhin, who was born a serf but later studied in St. Petersburg, Rome, and Paris. The second was the semicircular General Staff Building (1819–1829), which faced the Winter Palace and was constructed by one of the period's most prolific architects, Carlo Rossi (see Figure 25.1). The third was St. Isaac's Cathedral, which took four decades to build and was not completed until the late 1850s (see Figure 21.3). Although it was designed by a Frenchman, August Montferrand, Nicholas I often interfered in the project, resulting in the cathedral becoming larger, heavier, more "authoritarian," and less graceful and classical than originally intended.

FIGURE 21.2. Kazan Cathedral, St. Petersburg, 1801–1811; architect A. Voronikhin.

FIGURE 21.3. St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg, 1818–1848, architect A. Montferrand.

It is ironic that both Kazan Cathedral, which housed General Kutuzov's remains and memorabilia from the victorious war against Napoleon, and St. Isaac's, which reflected the interference of the nationalistic Nicholas I, still looked more Western than uniquely Russian. But such buildings existed primarily because both Alexander I and Nicholas I believed them appropriate manifestations of Russian autocracy.

By the 1830s, however, Nicholas I, who prided himself on his knowledge and interest in architecture and whose tastes were more eclectic than Alexander I's, was sponsoring new construction that moved further away from the classical. Reflecting his desire to stress the Russian nationality, he encouraged more uniquely Russian, or at least Russo-Byzantine, constructions. The Cathedral of the Savior in Moscow, later blown up by Stalin, was a good example of this emphasis (see Figure 27.1).

The most famous painter of his era was Karl Briullov (1799–1852) and his most famous painting was the enormous (and then overrated) "The Last Day of Pompeii." Like many of the painters of his day he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg and later went to Italy, where he painted his acclaimed canvas. Although it dealt with a classical event and contained ample realistic detail, its scene of terror-struck people fleeing crumbling buildings and volcanic lava was more typical of romanticism.

A painter whose reputation has better stood the test of time is Orest Kiprensky (1782–1836). His many portraits, including numerous self-portraits and ones of Pushkin and Zhukovsky, reflected romanticism's increased emphasis on the individual, the unique, and the heroic.

Two other interesting painters of the era were Alexei Venetsianov and Alexander Ivanov. Venetsianov emphasized the importance of working from nature and painted many rural scenes and peasants. Although his peasants are too peaceful, neat, and contented to be fully realistic, he is often viewed as an important forerunner, of Russian realistic painting. Yet, like the writings of Pushkin, his paintings reflect not only romantic and realistic elements, but also neoclassical influences; and like the great poet, Venetsianov was both influenced by Western movements and developed his own unique Russian style.

Ivanov is often compared to his friend Gogol. Like Gogol, he came to believe in a special Russian spiritual mission, wished to create a spiritually uplifting piece of art, was politically conservative, and is difficult to place within any single artistic movement. For a quarter of a century, Ivanov worked in Rome over his "Appearance of Christ to the People." At one point (1845), he was encouraged by Nicholas I, who stopped by his studio on a trip to Rome—the tsar liked to encourage religious art and thought it in keeping with his emphasis on the principle of Orthodoxy. But by the time Ivanov's canvas was finally exhibited in St. Petersburg in 1858, its creator was dissatisfied with it, and its public reception was only lukewarm.

Like many painters, Russia's most famous composer of the era, Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857), studied in Italy. After returning to Russia, he composed his opera *A Life for the Tsar* (also called *Ivan Susanin*), which dealt with a peasant (Susanin) who gave his life for young Mikhail Romanov. Its 1836 appearance was much more successful than his subsequent *Ruslan and Liudmila*, which was later recognized as Glinka's masterpiece. The libretto of this latter opera was taken from Pushkin's poetic romance set in Kievan Rus. Glinka's use of Russian material, including elements of Russian folk music, helped set the stage for the brilliant generation of Russian national composers who would later follow him.

Like Venetsianov's paintings of Russian rural scenes and peasants, Glinka's reliance on old Russian settings and folk music was in keeping with Nicholas I's stress on the principle of *nationality*. Interest in the Russian "folk" had begun in the eighteenth century and then been stimulated by the romantic nationalism that developed after the defeat of Napoleon. Among the industrious collectors of unwritten folk songs was the Slavophile Peter Kireevsky.

The appearance of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* in 1836 helped make that year a special one for Russian culture. It was also the year that Pushkin's *A Captain's Daughter* appeared, Gogol's *Inspector General* was staged, and Briullov's masterpiece was first exhibited in Russia. And it was the year that the Slavophile-Westernizing debate began, as Chaadaev's first "Philosophical Letter" resounded, as Herzen said, like a shot in the night. Russian culture became caught up in the debate. Indicative of this were opposing views of Briullov's masterpiece, some saying the destruction of Pompeii was a foreshadowing of the descent of the West and the rise of Russia, and others countering that it foretold the destruction of autocratic Russia.

Two decades later, amidst the ashes of the Crimean War, Russia's future destiny became a pressing concern for the government as well as for the cultural elite.

SUGGESTED SOURCES*

Alston, Patrick L. *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia*. Stanford, 1969.

Breyfogle, Nicholas B. "Caught in the Crossfire? Russian Sectarians in the Caucasian Theater of War, 1853–56 and 1877–78," *Kritika*, New Series 2 (Fall 2001): 713–750.

———. "Swords into Plowshares: Opposition to Military Service Among Religious Sectarians, 1770s to 1874." In MSR.

Brown, W. E. A *History of Russian Literature of the Romantic Period*. Ann Arbor, 1986.

Brumfield, William C. *A History of Russian Architecture*. Cambridge, Eng., 1993. Chs. 12 & 13.

Christoff, Peter K. *An Introduction to Nineteenth-Century Russian Slavophilism*. 4 Vols. The Hague, Princeton, and Boulder, 1961–1991.

Cizevskij, Dmitrij. H*istory of Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. 2 vols. Nashville, 1974.

Dimnik, Martin. "Monasticism in Russia," *MERSH* 23: 29–34.

Eklof, Ben. *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861–1914*. Berkeley, 1986. Ch. 1.

Evdokimova, Svetlana. *Pushkin's Historical Imagination*. New Haven, 1999.

Fedotov, G. P., ed. *A Treasury of Russian Spirituality*. New York, 1948.

Flynn, James T. *The University Reforms of Tsar Alexander I, 1802–1835*. Washington, D.C, 1988.

Freeze, Gregory L. "Institutionalizing Piety: The Church and Popular Religion, 1750. 1850." In IR, pp. 210–249.

———. *The Parish Clergy in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Crisis, Reform, Counter-Reform*. Princeton, 1983.

Herzen, Alexander. *My Past and Thoughts*. 4 vols. London, 1968.

Kahan, Arcadius. "Social Structure, Public Policy, and the Development of Education." *In Russian Economic History: The Nineteenth Century*. Chicago, 1989.

Levin, Eve. "Dvoeverie and Popular Religion." In *Seeking God: The Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia. Ukraine. and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalen. DeKalb, 1993.

Lewin, Moshe. "Popular Religion in Twentieth-Century Russia." In T*he Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*. New York, 1985.

Lincoln, W. Bruce. *Between Heaven and Hell: The Story of A Thousand Years of Artistic Life in Russia*. New York, 1998. Chs. 7–8.

Maes, Francis. *A History of Russian Music*. Berkeley, 2002. Ch. 2.

Mathes, William L. "Education in Russia Prior to 1917," *MERSH* 10:132–140.

Meehan-Waters, Brenda. "Metropolitan Filaret (Drozdov) and the Reform of Russian Women's Monastic Communities," *RR* 50 (July 1991): 310–323.

———. "To Save Oneself: Russian Peasant Women and the Development of Women's Religious Communities in Prerevolutionary Russia." In *Russian Peasant Women*, eds. Beatrice Farnsworth and Lynne Viola. New York, 1992.

Orchard, G. Edward. "Filaret," *MERSH* 11: 126–130.

Reddel, Carl W. "Sergei Mikhailovich Solov'ev: The Early Years (1820–1848)." PhD. dissertation. Indiana University, 1973.

Remy, Johannes. *Higher Education and National Identity: Polish Student Activism in Russia, 1832–1863*. Helsinki, 2000.

Roosevelt, Priscilla R. *Apostle of Russian Liberalism: Timofei Granovskii*. Newtonville, Mass., 1986.

* See also works cited in footnotes and general works on literature cited in the General Bibliography at the back of this volume. In addition, there are numerous biographies in English of Russia's writers, and many of their works have been translated into English.

RYAN, W. F. *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia*. University Park, Pa., 1999.
RYDEL, CHRISTINE, ed. *The Ardis Anthology of Russian Romanticism*. Ann Arbor, 1984.
SAUNDERS, DAVID. *The Ukrainian Impact on Russian Culture*. Edmonton, 1985.
STAVROU, THEOFANIS GEORGE, ed. *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. Bloomington, 1983.
VITALE, SERENA. *Pushkin's Button*, trans. Ann Goldstein, and Jon Rothschild. New York, 1999.
VON GELDERN, JAMES, and LOUISE MCREYNOLDS, eds. *Entertaining Tsarist Russia: Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life. 1779–1917*. Bloomington, 1998. Pts. I and II.
WEEKS, THEODORE R. "Between Rome and Tsargrad: The Uniate Church in Imperial Russia." In R&E, pp. 70–91.
WARE, TIMOTHY. *The Orthodox Church*. New ed. London, 1993. Ch 6.
WHITTAKER, CYNTHIA H. *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786–1855*. DeKalb, Ill., 1984.