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UTOPIAS TO NORMS: FROM CLASSICISM TO SOCIALIST REALISM

Introduction

The cultural history of Russia is a battle between different movements. A new movement has always started from a rebellion against a previously occurring movement, aiming to destroy the older one by proving it false, harmful and wrong. However, the old movement can never be destroyed: it has been pushed aside, to the periphery, from which it has almost always risen again in a new situation. Traces of the old are always visible in the new movements, forms and contents of art.

This interaction is between opposite forces in a dynamic battle, the bases of which are the dual models of Russian culture introduced in the article that deals with Russia's own and the alien in Russian culture. Lotman and Uspenskij uncovered these in Old Russian culture. In what follows, we examine them from classicism to socialistic realism.

The pairs of Russia's own versus the alien and the centre versus the periphery parallel each other in many ways in Russian culture.

Peter the Great changed the course of Russia and Russian culture in the 18th century. As is well known, the models came from the West, particularly in the life of art. The alien model was made a norm. Leaning on these models, Russia created its own new culture. It was a utopian goal, but it was realized. The classically beautiful city of St. Petersburg was created, along with a Russian theatre that followed western models, an opera, court orchestras, a library system, newspapers, and an academy of art and science, an academy that would later hold tight to the observance of the prevailing defined norms. These norms were provided by classicism, which had developed into the prevailing movement in Western European art from the end of the 17th century. What were those norms?

C l a s s i c i s m

The background for the ideals of classicism was Enlightenment thinking, which emphasized a person's mastery of his will and emotions and a subordination of private goals to universal and social ones. The enlightened individual of the classicist period was led by lofty universal principles, a sense of duty, and the goal of being a useful citizen. The ideal was a harmonious, balanced person who aims for a similar kind of harmony as an artist.

In classicism, different branches of art had strict boundaries and rules. The ideal description of man and of the environment was static and invariable. For example, in literature, visual art, and theatre, this led to simplicity in character description [1]. The characters usually reflected only one particular characteristic or general moral principle.

The topics were historical, most often adopted from the classical period [2]. The ideals and moral values of antiquity were role models, even when present-day reality was being described.

Characters and their environment were presented as abstract in their static nature: they symbolised higher values, instead of aiming for the sense of reality or the illusion of life.

The demands of abstraction and normativeness were applied most of all to the higher forms of art, for example, in literature, to tragedy [3]. In comedy, more realistic and vernacular tones were accepted. A falseness alien to life held sway over almost all branches of art. But, on the other hand, the harmony of classicism led to a rich and beautiful language of form, especially in architecture [4].

The utopia of an imposing new Russian culture was realised on the basis of norms. Norms also became a chain from which there would later be inevitable attempts to break loose. In the creation and retention of these norms, the seeds of revolt had already been sown. But rebels were disciplined, and Peter the Great had already found out how to keep discipline: opponents of authority and norms were to be mercilessly destroyed or at least pushed aside to the periphery. This is what happened to the Old Believers and others who clung to the old Russian way of life and its religious norms. In 18th-century Russian culture, the counterforce to

strict norms was not a lack of norms.

An art and art politics imposed and maintained by the state in the name of a grand and beautiful utopia took root in Russian culture in the 18th century. Differing culture and dissidents were pushed underground, to the periphery. The roots of dissidence and underground culture, too, are in the 18th century. Over the centuries since then, there have been attempts to realise the centrally directed culture born at that time. Just as fierce has been the resistance to it.

Romanticism

Romanticism rose up against classicism at the turn of the 19th century, in a Russia now completely following Western patterns and models.

Classicism and its ideal of a harmonious person in control of his emotions and his will was no longer an inspiration to the artist stimulated by the ideals of romanticism. The strict formal norms of classicism suffered an even harsher verdict.

The roots of romanticism are primarily in German philosophy, for instance, in the thought of Schelling and Fichte, which began to spread to Russia. Emphasizing the new role of the artist and seeking the roots of the national culture [5] were crucial. Romanticism grew together with national revival and the pursuit of a country's own history and folklore. In Russia this development was especially visible. The Russian literary language flourished during the Romantic period, as did Russia's nationally and internationally significant visual art and music.

In Russia romanticism involved a social revival, as well. The reserved abstraction of classicism was replaced by the open analysis and representation of the self and the environment.

Tied to romanticism is its precursor, sentimentalism. The border between sentimentalism and romanticism is fairly fluid, and there is no relationship of opposition. Sentimentalism attempted to awake feelings that had been bottled up by classicism; it tried to set them free and bring out society's reality by openly appealing to feelings [6]. Sentimentalism introduces the ordinary, little man [7] as the object of depiction, a man whose treatment has been programmatic ever since, in romanticism and especially in

realism.

With sentimentalism and romanticism there was a shift from classicism's emphasis on abstract, general feelings to concrete, individual emotions. As for sentimentalism, there was a characteristic over-emphasis on emotions; it lacked a rebellious spirit and the pathos of freedom, which are at the core of romanticism.

Romanticism dominated in Russian art and literature from the 1810s to the 1830s, but its traces can be found later, too, and the romantic period and its influence in music lasted much longer, both in Russia and throughout Europe.

Romanticism's starting point is the vision of the artist as a genius, as an exceptional individual. The artist had to have total freedom. The main thing was the depiction of the artist's inner world [8] and the presentation of social reality through that world. The romantic artist's resources were the imagination, emotions, and dreams. The artwork is a product of inner intuition and enthusiasm. Through his inner world, the artist has the ability and opportunity to reach the unreachable, the hidden alternative realities. Their mediation is one of his principal functions. The artist is a visionary and, as such, comparable to a philosopher. His function is not to mediate his vision through abstractions, but rather through feelings. He clothes emotions in images in his art form's language, his control and development of which is the measure of his greatness.

Romanticism emphasised art's means and power of expression. These were based on an individual, original, and emotional language of expression, which was seen as universally applicable. References, hints, connotations and associations are romanticism's expressive means. A referential obscurity is often the means of expressing the inexpressible.

The romantic sought his topic, not only in the subjective, inner world of experience, but also in the past and in remote realities. If he used the recent or present reality as his material, then it often received a suggestive, exotic emphasis. His own country's history, its dramatic and colourful figures were crucial, almost obligatory, material for the romantic. Exotic topics connected to other countries and to the past were also favoured. Through these the romantic artist sought his self and a link to his own time. Such a link was essential, but not straightforward [9].

Romanticism was a grand utopia on both the individual and the societal

level. Romanticism's utopia was freedom. The artist had to have it fully. The requirement of freedom as an ideal also led to social themes and to demands for changing a society that restrained freedom. In Russian romanticism this can be seen especially clearly, and the desire to emphasise it was even clearer in the Soviet period, when the demand for social freedom was a norm that had to be followed even in the past. In Russian art history, the only good and progressive artist was one who practised art for social change or at least anticipated it. This utopia and norm for history led to talk of passive and active, individual and social, or, to put it simply, reactionary and progressive, revolutionary romanticism. The first of each of these above-mentioned pairs emphasises the individual's inner world and its freedom, while the second of each pair, in its pathos of freedom, brings out the demand for social freedom and, along with it, society's defects [10].

The division is a rough one, but partly functional in Russian romanticism's relation to social reality. In later interpretations, it is often forced to function roughly (e.g. Pushkin interpretations). The rougher the interpretation, the more programmatically romanticism is seen as a precursor to realism. Social criticism was realism's programmatic starting point, but it never was romanticism's. So realism had to push romanticism to the periphery by struggling against its ideals.

During the romantic period in Russian art, there was a shift from classicist rationalism and abstraction that emphasised formal norms, through the one-sided subjectivity of sentimentalism, to the individual's inner world, and through that to the concrete depiction of the reality surrounding him. There grew realism, which began as a counter-reaction to romanticism and then took over its mainstream position, just as realism did throughout Europe, though it never completely ousted romanticism.

R e a l i s m

Realism raised Russian art to worldwide fame in all artistic fields. Russian realism is exceptionally bound up with realist theory, since it was born partly due to the inspiration of theory, which is rare in art history. The theory's creators were strugglers. Their perspectives were born as part of a heated discussion about Russian society. Realism's authorities developed in political-artistic circles and secret societies of the 1830s and 1840s. There the newest European philosophy was read and studied, and there attempts

were made to spread it to Russia. The greatest consequence of this distribution work was a realism of worldwide fame.

For its theoreticians, right and wrong were clear. For the right side one should sacrifice everything, especially art. Good art should inevitably possess dogmas and norms. Old, wrong things should be abandoned, so they had to be shown as having outlived their time and as having become harmful and ridiculous. The tradition in Russian art life to convict and destroy through laughter really began with the appearance of realism, though laughter culture in general has long roots extending back to medieval times. Humour in good and bad, in the service of right and wrong, has since been a great resource for Russian culture.

Vissarion Belinskij, realism's great theoretician, distinguished himself in using humour. He was a fanatically serious person, who paradoxically knew how to use satire and who understood the great humorists, especially Nikolaj Gogol, although he was simplistic in his interpretation of Gogol's worldview. But realist theory did not recognise ambiguity. It proclaimed a great and serious doctrine: making the world anew, a utopia that had to be realised here and now.

The development of Belinskij's views typically reflects the ideological line of development of a Russian intellectual of his time, starting from romanticism, and moving, through Fichte and Hegel, to utopian socialist views [11]. Belinskij combined philosophical and aesthetic questions with social ones. For him they were all one. According to Belinskij, 19th-century Russian reality was a legitimate stage in the Russian people's organic development. The artist's function was to reflect that reality correctly and objectively [12]. Belinskij and his followers believed in an objective truth, by which injustice would be overthrown and conquered.

What was unjust was romanticism's view of art's self-evaluation, as well as of the artist's right to reflect only his inner reality. The artist had to depict reality as it really was. According to Belinskij, romanticism distorted and prettified reality. For Belinskij, the individual is a direct product of his circumstances. He believed that, by changing the environment, one could change the individual. So, the artist had to start by depicting the environment, that is, social circumstances. The artist had to take a stand on social injustices. His art had the power to change them. This was realism's great utopia.

Art's power is always based on each art's own specific quality. In this it

differs from philosophy or other kinds of dogmatic structures. Art is effective only if it uses its means well. In emphasising this, Belinskij stands out from his later, simplistic, vulgar socialistic followers [13]. For Belinskij, the artist had to indicate and show, not testify. Testifying was a philosopher's function. The artist thinks and creates through images. Realism emphasises a comprehensive worldview as the basis for art. Realism is not copying reality, but, instead, is depicting it through a worldview that strives for totality. This is a decisive difference from naturalism. Belinskij paid a great deal of attention to art's expression and language of form. Unity of thought in a work must correspond with unity of form. All the work's parts must form a harmonious whole. Belinskij presented his realist programme as a school of thought, which he called "natural'naya shkola", the natural school. It would be misleading to speak of naturalism, since Belinskij drew a sharp distinction between realism and naturalism. However, naturalness means, not only veracity, but also inevitability and necessity. Both these meanings are seen to be absolutely correct. According to his programme, realism was a movement towards struggle. His followers, for whom art was merely a social weapon, presented this much more uncompromisingly than Belinskij. Nikolaj Chernyshevskij's work, Art's Aesthetic Relations to Reality (1855) was in its day a bible for many radical makers of art, and there were users for it later, too. For Chernyshevskij, the relationship between art and reality was simple and automatic. Art had to be life's instruction book. In addition to explaining, art should also change life. "What is right is good" was Chernyshevskij's basic thesis.

What was right was a utopia that had to be realised. In his well-known novel, *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), Chernyshevskij presents it as a crystal palace that is within everyone's reach when injustice is destroyed and justice and truth prevail. The crystal palace angered Dostoevskij (Vasili Perov's portrait). As a response to it, Dostoevskij wrote a tale, *Notes from the Underground* (1864), about a man in a cellar hole who is manically suspicious of absolute truths.

Russian realism's great paradox is that the dogmas of absolute truth and great utopias produced art in which the image of reality is very complex. Most often this occurred even when the artists themselves proclaimed a very simplistic worldview, whether that view was Dostoevskij's nationalist-religious one or Tolstoj's moral-ethical one. Social optimism and revolutionary doctrine appear in literature and also frequently in visual art, chiefly as psychological realism.

Their combination is also the issue in so-called critical realism. This term is created from the perspective of socialist realism and, to put it simply, it means the kind of critical depiction of reality in which the prevailing injustices are brought forward, but for the correction of which no true "remedy" is presented. Both Dostoevskij and Tolstoj were clever but mistaken, as were many other Russian and European writers and artists.

Reality, however it was understood and interpreted, was the starting point, target, and utopia - all at the same time.

In Russian realism, Russian reality dominated; that is, the realists, in their object of depiction, remained in Russia, and when they did turn somewhere else - visual artists more than writers - they were interpreting Russia [14]. The realists demanded a change, and the change had to happen to Russia. Many talked about revolution, but not everyone, and there were many revolutions in Russia, both real and prophesied. The modernists, who undertook to overthrow realism and its supremacy, also participated in the creation of these revolutions.

M o d e r n i s m

Modernism is a general title, originally for the artistic movements at the turn of the 20th century and in the first part of that century; these movements started from the denial of actual reality as the primary subject of depiction and emphasised, instead, the artist's subjective experience and mediation of reality [15]. Some of modernism's movements, above all symbolism, are sometimes spoken of with the parallel term neo-romanticism. In relation to subjectivity, modernism's different movements could differ decisively from one another.

Modernism aimed to express another reality, which is behind actual reality. For many, it was the only true reality, or at least more real than reality. The issue again was a utopia, which should be realised in art. As a starting point, it needed reality to be denied and pushed to the periphery. In active art-life, modernism and realism appeared side by side both in Russia and elsewhere in Europe. In Russia the focus was always Russia and its fate, the functions and future of Russian art. Russia's own, which got its start from alien influences, was seen as universal, just as in realism.

Seeking new means of expression was crucial for modernism. These means

were the most essential target for many of modernism's movements, and everything besides the aesthetic functions was denied to art. This was realism's sharpest antithesis.

It was an issue of art for art's sake ("l'art pour l'art"). However, this does not characterise all of Russian modernism. Modernism sought means of expression for a modern sense of life. Instead of a reality seen mechanistically, there was a search for inner experience, powerful impulses, and stimuli. What drew modernists' interest were reality's inexplicable dimensions, other realities, subconscious powers, and tensions. Experiences were sought from these sources, and attempts were made to give a new form to those experiences.

Also belonging to a modern sense of life was a premonition of the end of time, and following from that a feverish and reckless form and rhythm of life [16]. Modernism meant the appearance of the way of life and art called decadence. To its opponents, it meant omens of decline and fall. At the turn of the 20th century, the great realist Lev Tolstoj gave the final death stroke to modernism, and a little later a new great realist and future socialist realist, Maksim Gorkij, did the same. In particular, they both tore into symbolism, which was Russian modernism's first and most influential movement.

S y m b o l i s m

Symbolism's roots were Western. It was a pan-European phenomenon in art, and one that in Russia clearly acquired national features. Symbolists believed that the function of art and the artist is to be the explainer and mediator of the inexplicable. Symbolism was a neo-romantic movement. It emphasised the artist as an exceptional individual with the ability to see and mediate that which was the whole society's common property, but which was not within everyone's reach.

The artist had to mediate the feelings and visions of his inner experience in a formal language, in which the crucial elements are symbols, the outward forms of expression of mystical experience. Between the experience and the expression, a correspondence, a symbolic unity, had to prevail.

Symbolism's roots are in philosophy that emphasised the ability of art and the artist to penetrate the unknown and, with his inner intuition, to

illuminate that which otherwise would be impossible to illuminate. Through this, art gained in meaning as an explainer and re-creator of worlds. Art's function was to overcome the chaos that prevails in the world. Arthur Schopenhauer, whose views were part of the background for European symbolism in general, had taught this utopian doctrine.

Friedrich Nietzsche became a cult figure for symbolism. It was considered that the figures of the visionary and the maker united in him. Nietzsche himself emphasised art's role in resolving the secrets of existence and creating the model for a new life. Nietzsche's view of art's double nature - the Apollonian, creating order and harmony to replace chaos, and the Dionysian, letting subconscious powers of chaos loose - were crucial substrates for symbolist art.

The symbolists emphasised their art movement as a universal art, which at its best had to be accessible and comprehensible to all. The symbolists aimed for a universal language of expression, so music, the most absolute form of art, became the ideal for all other art forms. Poets tried to achieve music's absolute language and paid a great deal of attention to rhythm and melody; visual artists also aimed for music's means of expression. Richard Wagner and his strivings for a total work of art (Gesamtkunstwerk) uniting all forms of art was an ideal for the symbolists, and Wagner himself was a cult figure like Nietzsche.

Symbolism was born in France - with much German influence - and the central object of its interest was precisely the expressive language of art. In French symbolism, the centrality of expression was emphasised as a view of art's intrinsic value. Art was not allowed to have external functions; it was supposed to be art and nothing else. Symbolism in Russia displayed two partly diverging movements. In the field of literature, they are referred to as symbolism's older and younger generations [17].

The older generation was more clearly influenced by the French, and it emphasised art's intrinsic value and the primary position of a new kind of expressive language. Art was allowed to have neither social nor any other kind of obligations. The language of form, inner harmony and the attainment, through that harmony, of another reality were the primary points of interest. The younger generation, following symbolism's German sources, emphasised art as a model for cosmology and world re-creation. The function of art and the artist was to use intuitive abilities to attain alternative realities and mediate them. The creation of art meant creating

the world anew. Art acquired the functions of philosophy and religion. Art was a religion of life and the artist an exceptional individual, creating the world anew, a theurge performing his godlike function. In his creative work, form and expressive language were central: "Without words there is no world", the leading symbolist theoretician, Andrej Belyj, provocatively said. His thesis also matches with the aims of other art forms.

There were also national sources for the emphasis on art's religious and world-changing functions; the most important of these were the philosophy and poetry of Vladimir Solov'ev. Art's function was the creation of a new world. Art meant a revolution in a person's creative consciousness. Art was born from the spirit of music, just as Nietzsche had taught; it was to become a music that would change everything with its power. Many symbolists believed in the revolution as a revolution of the spirit. "The real revolutionaries are not Marx and Engels, but Strindberg, Ibsen, and Wagner," proclaimed Andrej Belyj in his work, *Literature and Revolution* (Literatura i revolyutsiya), in 1918.

Symbolism was a focal point of conversation in Russia, chiefly in the first decade of the 20th century. After that the conversation and manifestos decreased, but many symbolist artists continued to exert an influence through their work, in which a symbolist spirit can be felt. Symbolism was a target for attack by others besides the realists. The futurists saw symbolism as a ridiculous romantic softy.

F u t u r i s m

Futurism is Russian modernism's other powerful movement, besides symbolism. Futurism also emphasised the language of expression and opposed simplistic, didactic realism. But the futurists did not approve of transcendental and mystical functions and tunings for art. Art had to be focused on the present, on finding its pulse and language. Futurism was supposed to be the art of the future. It was a utopia that denied utopias.

The futurists wanted to throw out art's traditional means and forms of expression [18]. The old, the faded, and the outdated were to be destroyed and the new created from scratch. The extreme futurists emphasised this. In his manifesto, Italian futurism's leading figure, Marinetti, demanded the destruction of old cultural values and of the institutions that upheld them, such as libraries and museums. Corresponding demands were put forward

in Russia after the 1917 Revolution, but destructive vandalism was not one of Russian futurism's basic demands.

Instead, Russian futurists wanted to shock the petit bourgeois and his ossified concepts of art with a new view of the world and of the future. Russian futurism's best-known manifesto is the anthology *A Slap in the Face of the Public Taste*, published in 1912. Russian futurists demanded that art be in the midst of the everyday. Nothing human could be alien to it and no expression could be sacred. There were attempts to purposefully combine the sublime and the everyday. Although transcendent experience was absolutely forbidden as ridiculous mysticism, the futurists did not stop at identifying a simple one-level reality, but rather aimed for a utopia, the art and society of the future. For them, it was free and without norms.

Characteristic of the futurists was a bold, daredevil nature: some went wandering on paths entirely their own, while others found a new world and its expression in social activity. Vladimir Mayakovskij (see picture taken by Aleksandr Rodchenko) started out as an anarchistic futurist, a bustling madcap of language; then he put his faith in revolution and the new Soviet society, to whose service he dedicated his work. In the 1920s his idea of a continuing revolution no longer fit in with the rulers' view, and he got into difficulties.

When realism was defined and dogmatised as the socialist Soviet society's dominant art movement at the beginning of the 1930s, modernism earned for itself the general meaning of opposition art, and modernism became a strongly evaluative, and specifically pejorative, term. It started to be used to refer to all artistic phenomena that were opposed to realism, phenomena that had to be vigorously fought against. In Soviet usage, modernism was art that was considered lacking in social content and that emphasised form at the expense of content. As such, it was also formalist and perpetual, instead of being limited to early 20th-century art. Various artistic phenomena were condemned as modernist and formalist decadent art well into the 1980s.

Modernist movements proclaimed a revolution in art, and changing "everything" was their utopian goal. Change and beauty were canonised, but normative dogmas were not made for creating them. There were many interpretations of right and wrong. The new uniform culture, though, would not put up with pluralism, but pushed it aside, using all sorts of means, a process that intensified in a well-known way during the 1930s. Modernism

in different forms is a typical peripheral phenomena, pushed underground, where it survived and waited all the time for new opportunities to be let out.

Socialist Realism

Realism's canonisation into socialist realism is both a paradox and a self-evident fact. Socialist society was based on a great utopia. So the depiction of reality itself, just as it was, could not be possible there. But, because the only true reality was utopian, depiction of it became, not only possible, but also the inevitable and the only true depiction. This required some theory, which was created for socialist realism at the beginning of the 1930s. The theory was extremely simple and at the same time intricately speculative. Kilometres of this theory's explication were written over a span of fifty years.

Socialist realism was defined as art that is realist in form and socialist in content. "Socialist in content" meant the canonisation of official dogma, of the utopia, and "realist" referred to 19th-century realism and the adoption of its theory as a norm that became stricter all the time. Compared with realism, other "forms of reflecting reality" were wrong and reactionary. Even 19th-century critical realism was progressive, but the socialist version showed a path and means for the better, towards the future.

The starting point for the normative concept of art was the denial of normativity. So socialist realism was not, according to the orthodox - normative-definition, a movement, but rather "a method for creative artistic work". A "method", though, did not mean strict norms, defined from above, but meant, instead, the worldview and broad ideological viewpoint freely chosen by the artist and directing and controlling all creation of art. Using this method, the artist creates. The definers of the socialist realist method speak also of a critical realist or critical romanticist, even critical classicist, method. The concept is confusing, but became deeply rooted in socialist realist theory.

Certain principles and concepts directed the selectors and users of the socialist realist method; the first and most essential of these was party spirit ("partijnost'") [19]. According to the method's orthodox theoreticians, this did not mean an uncritical, automatic acceptance and propagandising of the party's orders and programmes, but rather a genuine and freely

chosen adoption and mediation of a party-spirited world-view. Only on this basis was a real socialist art possible. If the artist did not accept the party's role as the authority, then he could not be a real socialist artist and he could not create genuine socialist realism.

In addition to party spirit, national character ("narodnost'") was required of artists [20]. This concept was already included in Belinskij's realist theory. In socialist realism, national character meant the "true" depiction of the people's life, circumstances, goals, and role. The people and its viewpoint had to be the central object of depiction. The people equalled the proletariat, the driving force of the revolution and socialist society. Art had to depict the proletariat to whom the art belonged. Art was supposed to be comprehensible to everyone. This demand for simplicity was especially easy to use as a striking weapon, and submitting to the demand produced the most clichéd and simplistic socialist realism.

Also derived from Belinskij was the category of typicality ("tipichnost'") [21]. The artist's function was to create types, in which the multiplicity of types is emphasised in one character: a socialist background and psychologically specific features. Socialist realism required the types to depict a specifically socialist background and its class nature. Types had to depict the social situation in such a way that its correct development towards socialism and communism would be visible. Over the course of different Soviet periods, the concepts for dealing with how direct this typing should be varied, depending on the strictness of art politics at a particular time. The socialist factors, however, had to take precedence over the psychological factors. The relationship in the art itself could be very weak and, at its best, complex, whereas in art theory, there was a firm emphasis on orthodoxy.

The supreme type in socialist realist theory was the positive hero [22]. This concept is, in the theory in question, the best known and most ridiculed. The positive hero is taken as a simplistic, cut-to-pattern, faultless and instructive party mouthpiece. This would be a more or less accurate description. On the other hand, socialist realist theory emphasises that the positive hero is not an ideal, sugar-candy figure that cannot change or develop; instead, he has to be psychologically convincing and complex. The hero's arc of development, however, must give rise to hope and faith in the direction of society's development towards everything right and better.

The most clichéd of positive heroes were clean workers mowing a field,

familiar from visual art, or people waving while astride a tractor, the scientific-technological symbol of the 1930s. In all fields of art, creative work had to be harnessed according to the social order. The social order varied over different historical stages of development, but it was always unavoidably there. How the artist had to respond to it was interpreted in very many different ways.

According to Marxist-Leninist philosophy, a dialectical relationship prevailed among the past, the present, and the future, and historical optimism controlled this relationship [23]. The past was to be seen as an unavoidable stage of development towards the present, which is controlled by a faith in a bright and better future, that is, towards a transition to socialism and from socialism to communism. Historical optimism was not baseless, but, rather, dictated by development and by the facts when seen correctly from an ideological standpoint. Socialist realism required artists to realise this and to exploit it as art's driving force.

The future was thus part of the present. It was already determinable. Utopia was the truth.

Being charged with a lack of historical optimism meant being charged with distortion of the truth or transmission of false truths. Pessimism and ideological wavering meant the same thing, and later even cosmopolitanism was used with the same meaning [24]. In the internationalist socialist society, truth was universal by being national. Drawing equal signs was strictly normed. In various disputes, the possibility of an alienated and lonely hero in socialism was forbidden in the name of the demands for historical optimism and a positive hero. On the other hand, the thaw and the gradual compromise on norms began from compromise on the strictness of these demands. However, this compromise was a temporary one, never a total one.

Socialist realism prevented, not only the publicising of ideologically wavering and heterodox art, but also the appearance of aesthetically different, non-realist art. The Russian avant-garde, having created something new and having followed the modernist tradition, continually had difficulties with the demands of realism. Despite the authoritarian position of socialist realism, interaction and tension between modernism and realism retained its position and meaning in the development of all forms of art. In the 1920s it was a public basic force and the most important characteristic in socialist art. From the beginning of the 1930s, this tension moved

underground, but was a fruitful one, even so.

Officially, socialist realism was a crucial guiding principle for art and art-life up until the middle of the 1980s. Even in 1984, the Soviet Union's then-president, Konstantin Chernenko, publicly expressed his worry about giving up its principles. The concept lost its significance only with perestroika. In 1989 the critic and writer Viktor Erefeev wrote an article, *The Funeral of Socialist Realism* (*Pominki sotsialisticheskogo realizma*) for the principal organ of the Writers' Union, *Literaturnaya gazeta*.

But did socialist realism completely die? Was any of it left on the periphery, from which it could reappear? The matter can be seen in two ways. One resurrection occurred fairly soon, actually simultaneously with the funeral. The politically and ideologically banned art that was raised up in the first years of perestroika consisted, on one level, mainly of memoirs, documentary literature, and belles-lettres, which strongly possessed the features of those genres. The truth-proclaiming tones were firm. The issues were talked about as they really had been. Realism? Or socialist realism, in which the plus and minus signs have changed places?

Of course, it was blasphemous to talk about the tradition of socialist realism in connection with Solzhenitsyn's prose and historical documents, and it does not do justice to the real perestroika novels, such as Aitmatov's *The Scaffold*, Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat*, or Pristavkin's *Golden Cloud Spent the Night*. Their works fulfilled the demands of Belinskian realism, and the utopia of socialist society is not found in them, though an antisocialist utopia is present. The tradition of realism has been activated in recent Russian art; it is, in particular, a stylistic tendency of interpretations expressing conservative, nationalistic, and religious views. It is considerably backward and at its worst, hollow, because one can speak of a new arrival of socialist realism. But, since the 1990s, there has been a demand for a complex psychological realism in Russian culture. If we are talking about literature, we can conclude that the new Sholohovs and Simonovs have already been found, but where are today's Tolstoj and Dostoevskij?

This position was ready to be given to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn as soon as it became possible to publish his works in the Soviet Union as a result of perestroika. In the West and in the circles of émigré literature, he had been a great preacher since the 1960s. Solzhenitsyn has perhaps travelled from the centre to the periphery and back more than any other 20th-century writer. He rose to great fame at the beginning of the 1960s, both in the

Soviet Union and in the West. In the 1960s he got into trouble in his homeland at the same time as his fame started to grow along with the appearance of his greater works in the West. In the 1970s Solzhenitsyn had to leave his homeland, and he became the figurehead of anti-Soviet culture and a great proclaimer of truth. At the end of the 1980s, Solzhenitsyn's return to his homeland was awaited like the coming of a Messiah. His works circulated in millions of copies. When he finally returned and made his well-known journey through Russia, he was not received by a united crowd of admirers, but rather by several different camps, each of whom wanted to see him as their "own". For others, he was alien, not at first for political reasons, but for aesthetic ones. Solzhenitsyn was a preacher who continued the tradition of traditional realism. He has since become an uncompromising supporter of Russian nationalism and an opponent of all Western corruption. The plus and minus signs of socialist realism and utopia have indeed changed places. In literary conversation, Solzhenitsyn has moved to the periphery and is in the centre only for his "own".

The second way of seeing socialist realism is to condemn all that was publicly released in its name and during its hegemony through official channels. In that case, the art of the thaw would go into the wastebasket, as would critical realism published in the 1960s and 1970s, work in which there was an attempt to bring forth reality as it really was, not as socialist realism required, and without utopia and strict norms. The liberation of human depiction and the appearance of mundane and individual-level problems were an essential part of the development of Russian culture for 30 years, starting in the mid-1950s. It was not so much a question of compromise art, as has been presented, strictly normatively, in the fever of today's condemnation, but rather, at its best, the skilful, discreet bringing forward of existing tensions. In the reality of their time, they were important. And they are still alive as art; let literature serve as an example: Aitmatov, Shukshin, Trifonov, Okudzhava, Vysotsky, Tarkovskij in film, or Lyubimov in the theatre, with his Taganka - these were the most well-known. This art continually had to struggle for its official existence; but, on the other hand, this same art acquired a reputation abroad and became the focus of interest. It was the "display window" of Russian art. Because there was no desire to accept the most boring of socialist realism, even these above-mentioned works and their makers were sometimes labelled as such.

Ever since the thaw, modernism had started to rise from the periphery where it had been buried. It started to appear in all fields of art and extended its influence even to those who did not expressly continue its

tradition.

The current culture's peripheries are easy to define: socialist realism is there and, in many ways, so is all realism. But realism is already being brought to the culture's hub, in order to destroy the hated post-modernism. But what is happening to socialist realism? One seminar dedicated to it in the West has already been given, even if ironically, the title "Sweet Memories".

The development of Russian culture is deeply bound up with its history, fixed and systematic, and at the same time completely chaotic and unpredictable.

Notes

[1] See e.g. the anonymous artist's portrait of Mihail Lomonosov (1711-65), who was the greatest influence on Russian scientific life. The portrait is a cute, gaudy picture of the great man, a picture that, in the face and figure, does not reflect even a bit of the subject's complexity. In plays of the Classicist period, the heroes generally represented just one character trait.

[2] Subjects adopted from antiquity were crucial in 18th-century plays; in poetry, the images and metaphors issued from classical tradition; and the language of both poetry and plays was stiff and far from the spoken language. The rulers and aristocrats built palaces and whole complexes, such as gardens, dominated by straight lines, classical columns and statues. Among the most beautiful and renowned are the Summer Gardens (*Letnyj Sad*) in St. Petersburg.

[3] The famous Russian poet and scientist, Vasili Tredyakovskij (1703-69) developed a doctrine of three styles: high, middle, and low. The high style, which was written, imitating Latin syntax and poetics, and which was, in its expression, unlike anyone's actual speech, was to be used in written tragedies about lofty subjects. The use of the low style, that is, of the rhythm and vocabulary of the spoken language, was allowed in comedy. These stylistic norms began to be broken only at the turn of the 19th century.

[4] The best document of splendid architecture is the city of St. Petersburg. The Admiralty. The Academy of Sciences. The Birzha (Exchange). The Smolny Institute.

[5] An interest in people's own nations' pasts and folklore awoke along with romanticism in all European countries. In Russia, too, folk poems began to be collected. In the 1790s, the masterpiece of Old Russian literature, *The Lay of Prince Igor* (*Slovo o Polku Igoreve*), was "found". It tells of Prince Igor's military campaign against the Polovtsians at the end of the 12th century. In the West, this poem is best known as the basis for the libretto of the opera, *Prince Igor* (*Knyaz' Igor*, 1869-87), by Aleksandr Borodin (1833-87). The more systematic collection of folklore began in the 19th century, still in the spirit of romanticism. The central genres of the Russian folk tradition are "byliny", hero stories, folk tales, and wonder tales ("volshebnye skazki"). The folk tradition was a bottomless source for representatives of all forms of 19th-century culture.

[6] The best-known product of Russian sentimentalism is perhaps Nikolaj Karamzin's (1766-1826) story, *Poor Liza* (*Bednaya Liza*, 1792). It is the tale of a peasant girl's unhappy love for a nobleman.

[7] The "little man" ("malenkij chelovek") later acquired a special significance in Russian literature: a person of low origins, who has to suffer for those origins and for various social inequities, and who is helpless to fight against them. An artist awakes social sympathy with this little human figure and awakes, with its help, the receiver's social conscience. Russian literature's first well-known "little people" are, for instance, Pushkin's main figure in *The Postmaster* (*Stantsionnyij smotritel'*, 1830) and the heroes in Gogol's *Petersburg Stories* (1835), above all, the hero in *The Overcoat* (*Shinel*), Akaki Akakievich.

[8] Perhaps Russian romanticism's most famous work of visual art, Orest Kiprenskij's *Portrait of A. S. Pushkin* (1827), reaches for a romantic reflection of the artist's inner world.

[9] Exotic subject matter is reflected in one of Russian romanticism's well-known works, Karell Bryullov's (1799-1852) *Last Days of Pompeii* (1830-33), which depicts the destruction of the ancient city famous for its decadence. The most renowned of a highly favoured genre, that is, paintings on Biblical themes, was Aleksandr Ivanov's (1806-58) *Christ's Appearance to the People*, which he worked on for twenty years (1837-57).

[10] Romanticism's different shades perhaps combined in the best way in Aleksandr Pushkin's verse novel, *Evgenij Onegin* (1827-31). It is -all at the same time-- a romantic, tragic love story (which is the basis for Petr Chajkovskij's (1840-1893) famous opera (1878) of the same name), a skilful psychological drama about a person's inner emotions, and a grand panorama of 19th-century Russia. There is no real, open social criticism in it, but the problematic Russia of its day is its organic context, from which the work cannot be removed.

[11] Utopian-socialist views began to spread to Russia in the 1840s; their most famous introducer was Ludwig Feuerbach. His ideas inspired many circles and secret societies. Marxism was still a long way off.

[12] Visual art's depiction of reality can be exemplified by Pavel Fedotov's (1815-1852) satirical *The Aristocrat's Breakfast* (1850), or Vasili Perov's (1834- 82) *Troika* (1866), which depicts children carrying the body of their brother, who has starved to death. See more early 19th-century art at Los Angeles Institute of Modern Culture.

[13] These followers included Grigori Plehanov (1856-1918) and a little bit later Anatolij Lunacharski (1875-1933).

[14] The most famous realist in the visual arts was Ilya Repin (1844-1930). His piece *Volga Ferrymen* (1870-73) displayed direct social criticism; his *Portrait of Modest Musorgskij* (1881) is a skilful psychological portrait of the composer and a picture of the times, which is bound to its concrete subject and still, in its theme (the morning-after hangover), timeless. Ivan Kramskoj's (1837-87) *Christ in the Wilderness* (1872) depicts a Biblical subject, but displays at the same time the everlasting problems faced by leaders of people and by those sacrificed for the sake of others, a moment of crisis for a man of strong convictions, from which he will rise as a victor and sacrificer of self. More about realist pictures at Los Angeles Institute of Modern Culture.

[15] An artist's inner world can be displayed in many ways: by the projection of inner storms onto a mythological, demonic figure, as in Mihail Vrubel's (1856-1910) famous painting *The Demon* (1890), or by reducing the subjective experience of the world to an extreme, as in Kazemir Malevich's (1878-1935) epochal piece in the painting art, *Black Square* (1915). See more about Vrubel's work at Los Angeles Institute of Modern Culture.

[16] The big city's rhythm, the hurried pace of life, and at the same time premonitions of the end of time, which are connected to the prophecies of the Book of Revelations, are reflected in a typical manner in the symbolist Valeri Bryusov's (1873-1924) poem, *Kon' bled*.

[17] The older generation emphasized art's self-evaluation and independence from all ideologies, and it saw language and form as central; the most famous representative was Valeri Bryusov (see *Bryusov's portrait*, by Mihail Vrubel). The younger generation of symbolists saw art's function as the attainment of another reality, the raising of art to be a religion of life, and the replacement of philosophy as the explainer of the world, all without forgetting the importance of expression. The younger generation's major representatives were Vyacheslav Ivanov (1866-1949), Aleksandr Blok (1880-1921), and Andrej Belyj (1880-1934).

[18] For an example of futurist poetry, see Gerald Janacek's work, which deals mainly with the futurists' "zaum"-idea (trans-rationalism). A good way to get acquainted with this kind of poetry is to read his chapter about Aleksej Kruchenyh, as it includes many sample texts.

[19] Party spirit was reflected in the party leadership's absolute authority and in their presentation to the people as the righteous rulers, who were given saintly features.

[20] National character had to reflect the simple, ordinary man's positive relationship to the Soviet regime and its goals. See e.g. E. Mirzoev's poster, *5 December*, in which Stalin is surrounded by zerbaijanis.

[21] Types are at their most typical in Vera Muhina's famous sculpture, *Worker and Kolkhoz Farmer*

(1936).

[22] The prototype of the positive hero in real life was the norm-exceeding worker, Aleksej Stahanov, whose name was the origin for the term "Stakhanovite". See Leonid Kotlyarov's work.

[23] Historical optimism could be expressed as faith in the revolution ("Long live the Proletarian Revolution!"), in military victory (A. A. Denejka's (1899-1969) *Defence of Sevastopol*), or in tomorrow (Yuri Pimenov's *Wedding on the Streets of Tomorrow* (1982)).

[24] In the late 1940s, under the leadership of the notorious A. A. Zhdanov, the charge of cosmopolitanism was made against writers such as Anna Ahmatova and Mihail Zoshchenko, and against composers such as Dmitri Shostakovich and Sergej Prokofiev.

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See the bibliography in artile "East or West - the Crucial Question of Russian Culture".