The very first formulation of Socialist Realism in the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers took inspiration from characteristics of earlier novels that were retroactively deemed ideal for emulation. One of these proto-Socialist Realist works, Maxim Gorky’s 1906 novel Mother, reflects a Marxist twist on a much earlier so-called realistic aesthetic proposed by nineteenth-century thinker Nikolay Chernyshevsky. Though Chernyshevsky called his aesthetic realism, it was less focused on verisimilitude than the faithful depiction of social realities and thus ripe for Marxist reinterpretation. Mother capitalizes on that depiction of social realities, especially social expectations for women, but it also incorporates critiques of bourgeois values that are explicitly Marxist in nature, making it ideal for official favor in the Soviet Union. Thus as characteristics of Mother were retaught to aspiring Soviet writers, and the novel itself was promulgated as part of the Socialist Realist canon, Chernyshevsky’s realism left an indirect yet profound imprint on later Soviet Socialist Realist novels and on Socialist Realism in general.

One of Socialist Realism’s many paradoxes is that despite its name, on the surface it hardly resembles realism. Indeed, Rufus W. Mathewson is hard-pressed to find any realist elements in Socialist Realism at all and sees it instead as a “heroic” aesthetic, one better termed “socialist romanticism” since it often glorifies a Communist future and Marxist ideology in lieu of depicting realistic personages [1]. Meanwhile, Katerina Clark diagnoses Socialist Realism with “modal schizophrenia,” a paradoxical mixture of epic and realistic qualities, the simultaneous treatment of what is and what ought to be [2]. However, even if Socialist Realism does not resemble what most think of as realism, it draws inspiration from an unexpected shade of realism: that of radical nineteenth-century thinker and writer Nikolay Chernyshevsky. From its outset, Chernyshevsky’s realism separated itself from verisimilitude: it prioritized discussing social and political, especially class, realities, over making stylistic elements such as dialogue naturalistic. The influential vision of Socialist Realism that writer Maxim Gorky espoused in his 1934 Writers’ Congress address drew on Chernyshevsky’s focus on social realities and added that a writer must address these realities using Marxist critiques. Gorky’s early novel Mother, by retroactively embodying Gorky’s conception of Socialist Realism, reflected the influence of Chernyshevsky’s realist thought and imparted that influence to later Soviet writing through its status as an exemplary Socialist Realist novel.

Socialist Realism refers broadly to the literary aesthetic the Soviet state promoted and enforced from 1932, when the term was coined, to the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991 [3]. Although the Western consensus sees it as a static oppressive system imposed from the top, the more complex reality is that Socialist Realism underwent many iterations, and even its genesis was not a top-down imposition of form but rather the organic evolution of an ideal that Maxim Gorky and Andrei Zhdanov’s renowned 1934 formulations could not pin down [2]. Nevertheless, as a working definition of Socialist Realism, those formulations suffice to describe the Socialist Realism theorized and practiced in 1930s Soviet Russia.

At the First Congress of Soviet Writers in 1934, Zhdanov famously provided the most concise formulation of Socialist Realism:

In the first place, it means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art…not simply as “objective reality,” but to depict reality in its revolutionary development. In addition to this, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal should be combined with the ideological remodeling and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism [4].

Though Zhdanov emphasized “truthfulness” in artistic and literary depictions of how the working classes lived, he also encouraged artists to layer on an ideological interpretation of ordinary people’s living conditions. A Marxist examination of real-life events and conditions, which would teach people to think in a socialist mindset, must supplement historical accuracy and the accurate portrayal of details such as dialogues and settings [4]. This formulation is not original to Zhdanov; it actually restates the definition of Socialist Realism that Maxim Gorky
Socialist Realism reveals [5]. His and Zhdanov’s 1934 definition of and largely overlooked it thereafter, as rotten, dying” approach to literature attention to small details as an “old, shape soon [5]. He dismissed extreme the “truth…we are building” and the Stalin consolidated power, Gorky turned [5]. After the late 1920s, especially as to fixate on “inexactitudes in language [6]. Yet even though he used to fixate on “inexactitudes in language and quotidian details” in the 1910s and early 1920s, Gorky did not comment on the “truthfulness” that Zhdanov implied [5]. After the late 1920s, especially as Stalin consolidated power, Gorky turned his focus to portraying a higher truth, his focus to portraying a higher truth, and possesses numerous national and individual offshoots, some common values include portraying ordinary people (with special attention to the industrial and rural poor) and mundane, day-to-day events, employing objective narration, using natural-sounding dialogue, and maintaining psychological accuracy [8]. Gustave Flaubert, a French realist, noted that “[t]he author in his work must be like God in the universe, everywhere present, but nowhere visible.” In other words, the narrator must not obviously impose an ideology

e Or layer any interpretation upon events as good or bad, desirable or undesirable, but rather report events and characters detachedly [7]. Generally speaking, the term realism implies mimesis of life, or depicting life as it is—verisimilitude to forms of speech, faithful depictions of socioeconomic situations, and the use of mundane, plausible events to drive fiction.

Although this definition of realism more or less captures the popular conception of realism, it glosses over the intricacies of nineteenth-century Russian realism. Russian realism is itself an umbrella term for numerous aesthetic practices in nineteenth-century Russia that could arguably be construed as realist. Ernest J. Simmons distinguishes between at least six authors’ flavors of Russian realism during this time [9]. Meanwhile, the Cambridge History of Russian Literature highlights the work of radical realists whose flavor of realism departs from the realism often attributed to Tolstoy or Dostoyevsky. These radical realists hailed predominantly from the motley, mixed-background raznochintsy (literally “of many ranks”) and included many nihilists, among them Nikolay Chernyshevsky [10].

Radical realism took the portrayal of the poor that was always part of traditional realism and ascribed to it a social agenda, sacrificing typical realist tenets like natural dialogue. Radical Russian realism, particularly Chernyshevsky’s, refers less to the accurate reproduction of reality than the use of socioeconomic realities as a springboard for commentary and criticism. More than a faithful portrayal of daily life, the treatment of real, relevant socioeconomic or political situations—for example, the industrial poor’s mistreatment or the systematic oppression of women—as literary inspirations characterizes radical realism. Notably in What Is To Be Done?, which focuses on an extraordinarily empowered heroine, Chernyshevsky forewent mundanity altogether in favor of proposing a solution to the current, relevant problem of women’s oppression through the self-enlightenment of Vera Pavlovna, the novel’s protagonist. Chernyshevsky himself did not believe in mimetic realism. The aesthetic he articulated in his seminal Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality did emphasize the accurate portrayal of socioeconomic or political realities, but he did not see it as an end in itself. Rather, he saw that accurate portrayal as a foundation for commenting effectively on these realities from a subjective or even ideological standpoint.

This room for the artist to layer on a subjective interpretation of reality proves crucial in distinguishing his approach to realism from others. Art’s primary purpose might well be “to reproduce what is of interest to man in real life” [11]. Even so,

The poet or artist cannot cease to be a man and thus he cannot, even if he

supplied in bits and pieces starting in 1930, so Zhdanov’s conception of Socialist Realism is really a condensed version of Gorky’s [5]. At the same conference, Gorky added:

Socialist realism proclaims that life is action, creativity, whose aim is the continual development of man’s most valuable individual abilities for his victory over the forces of Nature, for his health and longevity, for the great happiness of living on earth, which he, in conformity with the constant growth of his requirements, wishes to cultivate as a magnificent habitation of a mankind united in one family [6].

According to him, Socialist Realist works extol the collective accomplishments of humankind and glorify man’s power to overcome both nature and the bourgeoisie [6].

Gorky’s Socialist Realism extended the implications of Zhdanov’s formulation to assert that Socialist Realism should actually lay more importance on historical accuracy than realistic, believable details or language. Still at the Writers’ Congress, Gorky suggested that exemplary Socialist Realist works did not have to be fiction, noting that journalistic nonfiction like a “history of towns once ruled by independent princes or located on the old borders” related through “sketches and stories” seemed particularly promising [6].

Realism broadly refers to an aesthetic system prominent in Western Europe and Russia between 1830 and 1890 that reacted against Romanticism’s perceived emotional and individualistic excesses and extremely subjective narration [7]. Although realism was never cleanly summarized in a manifesto and possesses numerous national and individual offshoots, some common values include portraying ordinary people (with special attention to the industrial and rural poor) and mundane, day-to-day events, employing objective narration, using natural-sounding dialogue, and maintaining psychological accuracy [8].

Gorky’s Socialist Realism

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wants to, refrain from pronouncing judgment on the phenomena he depicts. This judgment is expressed in his work – this is another purpose of art, which places it among the moral activities of man [11].

Although writers may strive to reproduce social realities in a novel, for example, they cannot help but impose an interpretation on the realities they portray. An author might, for instance, unconsciously focus on one particular social issue, or emphasize aspects of reality that bolster an ideological position, even if he or she tries to remain objective. Furthermore, Chernyshevsky explicitly warns against an interpretation of his aesthetics as advocating for mimetic portrayals of reality. He deemed art that solely mimicked natural dialogue or devoted painstaking attention to mundane details “superfluous”: since the details such art tries to reproduce already exist perfectly in nature, this type of realism represents a “vain effort” [11]. Contrary to what Mathewson asserts, Chernyshevsky did not believe that art should be judged primarily by “the accuracy with which this relatively humble act of reporting” on day-to-day matters “is carried out,” nor did he think that any slight deviation results in “falsification” [1]. He certainly saw value in verisimilitude, but just as integral for him was the lens through which the author filtered realistic events and, by extension, the lens through which the reader would interpret the realities portrayed— in fact, he deemed these interpretative stages an accompanying “moral” aspect of art [11]. This interpretive lens distinguishes Chernyshevsky’s realism from the mimetic realism to which the word realism typically refers. Indeed, James P. Scanlan notes that the term realism itself misleads heavily when used to describe Chernyshevsky’s aesthetics, since it evokes a mimetic idea of “faithfulness to an existing reality” that comprises only part of Chernyshevsky’s idea [12].

Certainly the subject matter of a work must be derived from real-life social problems, but simply by virtue of turning that content into a narrative, every author manipulates the manner in which that subject matter is treated, whether by giving importance to some issues or strongly implying opinions on them [12]. In fact, the good artist was obliged to explicate life much as scientists explained natural laws [11].

**GORKY'S SOCIALIST REALISM: AN OUTGROWTH OF CHERNYSHEVSKY’S REALISM**

Gorky’s conception of Socialist Realism also valued truth so long as it permitted the author to cast an ideological—in his case Marxist-Stalinist—judgment on the reality depicted. At least in theory, Gorky lent some credence to art that depicted life as it is, acknowledging that mimetic works contributed “formal achievements in the art of word imagery” [6]. He was quick to clarify, however, that critical realism, his vision of mimetic realism, was useful “only in order to throw light upon survivals of the past, and wage a struggle for their eradication,” in other words to elucidate historical conditions [6]. As much as one can discern his meaning through ideological rhetoric, he wanted Socialist Realism to build on critical realism’s achievements by incorporating a “socialist individuality” lacking in critical realism [6]. He hoped that by encouraging the “continual development of man’s most valuable individual abilities” to triumph over common adversaries like natural forces, Socialist Realist literature would enlighten its readers to the need to unite and liberate themselves from capitalist oppression [6]. That said, Gorky still expected authors to adhere to some realism in their work, for they remained “judges of the world and of people’, and ‘critics of life’” just as in “traditional realistic literature” [6]. Still, he did not enumerate standards for realism, leaving the option open for artists to pursue techniques departing from pure verisimilitude.

Gorky’s flexible vision, which addressed social realities and ventured Marxist interpretations of their solutions, allowed it to mingle with seemingly contradictory aesthetic principles. Thus it encompasses the apparently antithetical “revolutionary romanticism,” a style in the early 1930s that demanded that writers “anticipate the future shape of man’ and ‘heroize,’ ‘monumentalize,’ ‘romanticize,’ or ‘exaggerate’ him” [2]. Under Gorky’s conception of Socialist Realism, writers could express such exaggerations while still claiming to be realist, even if they pulled themselves “away from verisimilitude” in the process [2]. These exaggerations would be part of the interpretive, in this case Marxist, lens an author would layer onto the realities he or she portrayed. Edward J. Brown further testifies to Socialist Realism’s ability to fold in aesthetics even diametrically opposed to mimetic realism when he claims that “symbolist technique” is typical of Gorky’s work [13]. Alleging that this mix of styles constitutes “contamination,” he ventures that the eponymous heroine of Mother, “by moving in the direction of the Bolsheviks[,] rejects her traditional woman’s lot in the world,” a blatantly progressive stance bordering on romantic individualism. Even if a character like the mother was atypical in her tsarist Russian setting, however, by casting her development as empowering and attributing its success to her socialist agitation, Gorky proposes a solution to the social reality of women’s oppression and the class reality of lower-class suffering.

Clark raises an objection to a core premise of Gorky’s definition of Socialist Realism, that Socialist Realism is a legitimate aesthetic and not just empty shorthand for a Soviet state-approved work. Describing “Soviet Socialist Realism as a canonical doctrine defined by its patrician texts,” Clark
implies that Socialist Realism is devoid of intrinsic qualities—Socialist Realism is hardly more than a term encapsulating salient characteristics of certain pre-1934 works [2]. (“Patristic” here indicates a parallel between so-called Socialist Realist writers and early Christian theologians who later had works written about them.) To be sure, what constituted a Socialist Realist novel was not static or fixed. However, without taking a detour into pure aesthetic philosophy and defining what constitutes a true literary aesthetic, it seems problematic not to acknowledge Socialist Realism’s legitimacy as an aesthetic. Much like modernism or Dadaism, Socialist Realism was more than a descriptive term: it originated a new standard for literature. Even as the 1934 definition based itself on the characteristics of past works, including Mother but also other pre-1934 works like Dmitri Furmanov’s Chapayev (1923) and Fyodor Gladkov’s Cement (1925), it set a precedent for most later Soviet literary works, a standard that was rigorously and famously enforced. As for the proto-Socialist Realist novels, the novels written before 1934 that the Soviet state later deemed exemplars of Socialist Realism, the 1934 definition certainly summarized their characteristics as well, but it accomplished more than that in establishing a formal aesthetic future artists would be expected to follow.

In fact, if there were one work the 1934 definition described best, it would be Mother. Granted, numerous novels made up the Socialist Realist canon, but in addition to being published the earliest, Mother was best suited as a blueprint for an ideal Socialist Realist work. Cement, for example, suffers from “ambiguity in placing its heroes on the positive/negative spectrum” that prevents the reader from inferring a strict, ideologically pure Marxist interpretation [2]. Meanwhile, though Chapayev convincingly applies a Marxist turn to the biography of a Russian Civil War hero, Furmanov explicitly tried to humanize Chapayev’s protagonist, inserting a “human” element that would distract from Socialist Realism’s ideological emphasis [14]. Mother, on the other hand, lacks this individuality, its plot and characterization being designed to glorify socialism in part by commenting on social realities through a socialist lens.

From a Western or non-Marxist viewpoint, this ideological interpretation of reality might be a fault, but from a Marxist viewpoint, it is aesthetic orthodoxy.

**MOTHER: AN UNCANNY PREDICTOR OF SOCIALIST REALISM**

Mother was primarily responsible for spreading Chernyshevsky’s ideas and techniques to later Socialist Realist literature. Not only did it embody the Chernyshevskian qualities of Socialist Realism (despite being written prior to the formulation of Socialist Realism in 1934), it was also officially deemed an exemplar of Socialist Realism, a status that allowed its influence to permeate later Soviet literature. Through this influence, Mother transmitted an aesthetic borrowing greatly from Chernyshevsky into later Soviet writing.

Gorky wrote Mother during his involvement with the Znanie publishing house, where he was “largely responsible for its orientation towards realistic works with a social tendency, contributing some himself” [7]. In other words, these works would criticize existing social situations [15]. In 1906, he traveled to the United States to raise funds for the Bolshevik Party and wrote Mother while there [15]. Later Gorky would repudiate the novel, admitting to Gladkov that Mother was “a really bad book” [16]. However, his original intention when writing the novel is easily inferred from an article he wrote in the same year Mother was published, “The City of Mammon,” where he castigated Americans’ idolatrous materialism and predicted “a conflagration which will cleanse this country from the dirt of gold,” a thinly veiled metaphor for Communist revolution [17]. Granted, part of his vitriol stemmed from his poor treatment in America after people discovered that the woman traveling with him was not his wife [15]. Still, his primarily class-centric critiques reveal that he believed sincerely in socialism’s ultimate triumph and thus most probably wrote Mother with genuine intentions.

In any event, whether Gorky later developed a distaste for Mother is largely moot: whatever private comments he made, his novel was still retroactively held up as an exemplar of Socialist Realism and made its largest mark on Soviet literature through that designation. Clark argues convincingly against the idea that Mother influenced other Soviet novels in a chain reaction where one writer read Mother, was inspired, wrote a similar novel, and so on [2]. Meanwhile, Brown draws attention to the press and critical commentary that Gorky’s more Symbolist short stories garnered, duly recognizing that Gorky was not just known for Mother [13]. The key was that in the Soviet Union at the time the foundations of Socialist Realism were being laid, Mother became part of “a core group of novels that are cited with sufficient regularity to be considered a canon” of Socialist Realist literature, that is, widely enough regarded as Socialist Realist that it could be touted as one exemplar among many to aspiring writers [2]. Thus when 1930s Soviet writers underwent training in literary institutes to craft proper Socialist Realist novels, they assimilated the style, characters, and even the overall plot structure, which Clark terms the “master plot,” of canonical works including Mother [5]. As a result of the incorporation of its structure and style into writer training, Mother laid a foundation for the “Russian revolutionary novel” that “assert[ed] the right of literature to make an independent, unorthodox, free judgement of social and political reality in the name of revolutionary change” [18]. Later novelists, from Aleksandr Fadeyev to Vsevolod Ivanov, Aleksey Tolstoy, and even Pasternak would write novels in a similar vein [18]. One of Mother’s exemplary aspects was the positive hero, an archetype it helped pioneer. This indirect influence on the overall literary style of the period, more than direct inspiration of specific authors or works, constitutes Mother’s greatest impact on Soviet literature.

Mother predicts most of the characteristics of the Socialist Realism Gorky and Zhdanov ventured in 1934: in addition to maintaining historical accuracy, the novel ingrains socialist thinking in his or her readers by interpreting real-life conditions from a Marxist perspective. Of course, part of Mother’s task of historical veracity is accomplished simply by taking inspiration from the real-life 1902 May Day demonstration. Gorky based the
novel’s primary characters, Pavel Vlasov and his mother Nilovna, on two socialist figures, Pyotr Zalomov and his mother Anna Kirillovna, who organized a May Day demonstration in the town of Sormovo in 1902, and he structured the plot to parallel the 1902 demonstration [18]. Much as the real Anna Kirillovna began taking part in organizing socialist demonstrations after Zalomov’s exile, the mother in Gorky’s novel distributes socialist pamphlets to further the socialist cause following Pavel’s arrest. This real-life inspiration in itself suggests Gorky intended to address the social and political realities surrounding people like Zalomov and his mother, and he indeed did so by fictionalizing the Zalomovs’ broader narrative into a more specific yet believable story. For instance, elaborating on the ways Anna Kirillovna persisted in aiding her son “in his political activity” even after his exile, Gorky has his Nilovna up her revolutionary activity following her son’s arrest, smuggling revolutionary pamphlets in her dresses to a neighboring town [18]. This interplay between situations taken from real life and fictional specifics aimed at furthering an agenda point to Mother’s intent to raise “workers’ political awareness and their expression of dissatisfaction” and spread Marxist revolutionary ideals [18].

Furthermore, the text comments heavily on then-current social realities, in particular injustice directed towards the peasants and the oppression of women. Granted, the question of how feminist Gorky and the Socialist Realists might have been is hefty and not the focus of this paper. Still, the character of Sofya demonstrates Gorky at least tried to portray a counterpoint to the traditional expectation for women to be housebound and passive. She also encapsulates several features of a Socialist Realist character: her role addresses the contemporary reality of women’s oppression, and her views object to bourgeois frivolity. A devoted socialist, Sofya leads an indubitably active life assuming various identities, smuggling “illegal books,” and helping “comrades in exile” or banished political prisoners flee abroad [19]. Moreover, Gorky grants her the pivotal role of giving the mother a stronger reason to help the socialists than just love for Pavel: he uses Sofya’s evocative piano playing as a metaphor for helping the mother relate personally to the revolutionary moment. Much as Nilovna does not quite understand at first what Pavel advocated but later realizes what socialism is, the incomprehensible “ringing chaos” of Sofya’s music becomes “music, distinguished from the tumultuous chaos of sound” [19]. The music subsequently leads the mother to remember “wrongs long forgotten,” in particular an incident in which her husband beat her and threw her and Pavel from the house [19]. These recollections, combined with the “perplexed hopes” that the music grants her with its “fresh and firm embrace,” lead Nilovna to a new socialist consciousness that solidifies her resolve while inspiring her to reflect personally on proletarian hardships [19].

That said, Sofya’s pseudo-feminist characterization falters when she observes that some behaviors, like “throw[ing] cigarette stumps any and everywhere,” are especially unseemly “in a woman,” demonstrating complicity in a traditional expectation for women to be cleanly and unobtrusive [19]. Still, she comments on the fine dress of “grande dame[s],” or middle-class women: “Do you think I always dress this way? I can’t bear this fine tattiness, this sumptuous rustle. A human being is simple by nature, and should dress simply—beautifully but simply” [19]. Sofya implies that women have no special obligation to dress more fancily than human nature warrants, an empowering sentiment considering the constrictive nature of women’s clothes at the time. More figuratively, she suggests that elaborate etiquette, a social and behavioral “toggery” or vestment, to which higher-class women subjected themselves at the time, is unnecessary, as are the constrictive gender norms of the time.

This criticism of the habits of upper-class women doubles as Gorky’s implicit indictment of bourgeois superficiality and artificiality. It goes without saying that Gorky frequently lambasted the upper classes, whom he conflated with capitalist decadence, and one criticism addresses the inflated grande dame-like culture with which he claimed the bourgeoisie obsessed itself. The bourgeoisie, he said, felt a profound “obligation to defend culture,” even though bourgeois artists translated the “corruption and meanness” of their lives into their work and espoused moral nihilism, demonstrating their fundamental indifference to culture [6]. On the other hand, the key to art—and dressing is a type of art—lay with the less sophisticated yet powerful collective, which from prehistory lay the foundations to “the history of world culture” [6].

In addition to commentary through figurative language and literary devices, the novel features moralistic passages that aim specifically to indoctrinate the reader towards socialist thinking. After Nilovna attends a funeral gathering at which the police attack and wound several townspeople, she conveniently reflects on the townspeople’s “ability to recover from the horrible, an ability which clearly testified to their manly readiness to meet any demand made on them for work in the cause of truth” [19]. At this moment, since the reader has just learned Nilovna is wounded and is thereby invested in her welfare, the reader is especially attuned to her thoughts at the moment and vulnerable to the statement of Marxist morality.

Lacking as a result of this heavy-handed moralizing is verisimilitude, especially in dialogue. The novel is replete with lengthy monologues and exclamations decrying the repressive government, and even a coachman reflects artifically on the psychology of being an oppressor: “The rich man feels crowded, even in Paradise. That’s the way it is. Once he begins to oppress, the government authorities are his friends” [19]. It is important to remember, however, that Mother is not Socialist Realist but proto-Socialist Realist, predicting some of Socialist Realism’s core tenets. Mother may embody enough of these tenets to qualify as Socialist Realist, but one should keep in mind that Gorky did not intend it to be Socialist Realist when he was writing it. He may have intended to promote socialism, and he may have been working within a Chernyshevskian realist framework, but the concept of Socialist Realism did not exist in 1906, when he wrote the novel. That said, Mother certainly shares the same priorities of Socialist Realism: addressing facts “prompted by
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CONCLUSION

Socialist Realism is understandably perceived as an inflexible aesthetic imposed from the top down, but in fact, it underwent a complicated genesis and implementation. Drawing inspiration from Chernyshyevsky’s interpretation of realism, Gorky—one of multiple intellectuals and writers associated with the Bolshevik Party—devised his own flavor of a Soviet state-sponsored aesthetic, which resembled Chernyshyevsky’s realism but inserted a Marxist component. This flavor in turn saw itself reflected mostly accurately, yet imperfectly, in Gorky’s earlier work Mother, itself not Socialist Realist per se so much as a model for Socialist Realism, and Mother then indirectly influenced the themes of Socialist Realist literature through its implementation in curricula. At each juncture of thought, the main idea of realism, and eventually Socialist Realism, transformed. Yet Socialist Realism never lost the impulse it inherited from the nineteenth century to balance the accurate representation of realities with a subjective interpretation of those realities in literature. Not only did Socialist Realist not appear overnight, it drew from complex aesthetic thought dating half a century earlier: it is both unique to the Soviet Union and an inheritance from nineteenth-century Russia.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was made possible by a grant from the Mitra Family Endowment. Special thanks to Tiffany’s mentors, Dr. Christopher Hurshman, Byron Stevens, and Lauri Vaughan at the Harker School, for their endless support and inspiration in her exploration of Russian literature and aesthetics.