

RUSSIAN AMERICAN LITERATURE The Russian presence in American letters dates back to the Romantic period. In the 1810s American readers learned of Paul Sverin (Pavel Svinin, 1787–1839), who, while stationed

in Philadelphia from 1811 to 1812, contributed to *The Portfolio*, an early American periodical. (Standard Anglicized spelling or spellings of the writers' names are used wherever available; otherwise a simplified version of the Library of Congress transliteration will be used for both Russian names and titles). In 1813 Svenin's *Sketches of Moscow and St. Petersburg* appeared in Philadelphia in English. Another notable Russian on the American scene was Helena Blavatsky (1831–91), who, in 1875, founded the Theosophical Society in New York City, where her famous *Isis Unveiled* first appeared.

In the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century many writers came to the United States from the Russian Empire and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as immigrants and refugees, fleeing political repression, **anti-Semitism**, and censorship. Of the Russian immigrants who switched to English, the most successful was **Vladimir Nabokov** (1899–1977), who came to America in 1940. Already a famous Russian émigré author, Nabokov refashioned himself in the 1940s and early 1950s, becoming a great American writer. Nabokov spent his final decades writing American fiction in Switzerland, and insisting he was "as American as April in Arizona." The second most successful Russian in American letters was **Joseph Brodsky** (1940–96), who arrived in the United States in 1972 from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1987 and become a U.S. poet laureate, while mainly writing poetry in his native Russian. It would be difficult to eclipse or even match the literary stardom of these two writers.

What does it mean for an exiled Russian writer to become American? After decades of living in America, some Russian writers never become Americans—either in language or in the themes and spirit of their work. A case in point is Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–). Forced into exile from the USSR in 1974, Solzhenitsyn found refuge in Vermont in 1976. He continued writing exclusively in Russian, shunning vestiges of Americanization, voicing bellicose criticism of American society, and insisting he was in exile temporarily. Author of meditative works on the future and reconstruction of Russia, Solzhenitsyn returned to Russia in 1994, where he now lives.

In addition to a dearth of scholarship on the subject and the vastness of the Russian American literary landscape, one faces various difficulties of classification and methodology. "Russian" can define the writer's language, culture, ethnicity, country of origin, and so forth. For example, an émigré writer of Armenian parentage raised in Moscow and writing in Russian is likely to be seen as a Russian American writer, whereas an Jewish immigrant from Moscow writing in English on Jewish topics might be viewed as a Jewish American author.

Leaving theater, screenwriting, and journalism outside its scope, this brief article attempts a selective, chronological overview of Russian American literature from the 1920s until the present. Exploring some of the boundaries separating such categories as "Russian émigré literature in America," "Russian American literature," and "literature by Russian

Americans," it seeks to illustrate the variety of typologies and hyphenated entities that both frustrate and exhilarate a student of the Russian literary presence in America.

Russian émigré literature belongs mostly to the twentieth century and is conventionally divided into three "waves." The First Wave émigrés left Russia during and in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the ensuing Civil War (1918–22). The Second Wave exiles left the USSR during and immediately following World War II; many of them were the so-called DPs (displaced persons). The majority of the Third Wave emigrants left the USSR in the 1970s and 1980s; they were Jewish or connected, by real or fictional family ties, to Soviet Jews. The last Third Wave writers came to the United States from 1987 to 1989 during the period of reforms in the USSR known as *perestroika* that led to the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The term Fourth Wave is sometimes used to refer to those who left in the last Soviet year and the first few post-Soviet years. During these years, leaving the USSR ceased to be a problem, whereas immigrating to the United States became increasingly difficult, as those trying to move to America were no longer treated as political refugees but rather as economic immigrants. Some of the differences between *late* Third Wave and Fourth Wave Russian American writers are better determined not chronologically but based on whether they perceive America as a new home or merely as a place of literary residence.

The shortcomings of chronological periodization become apparent when one considers the time when many First Wave émigré writers arrived in America. Whereas before 1940, the First Wave writers established major Russian literary centers in such European cities as Berlin, Paris, and Prague, the pre-World War II Russian literary life in America had been provincial. The scarcity of the Russian literary life in prewar America can be easily gleaned from the collective *Iz Ameriki: Stikhotvoreniia* (1925; *From America: Poems*). Very few important representatives of the First Wave reached the United States in the years before World War II; it was not until the early 1940s that writers such as Nabokov made the United States their home.

Mainly a writer of historical and philosophical novels, Mark Aldanov (1886–1957) had had several books published by Knopf even before he and his wife escaped from France to the United States in 1941. In the 1940s and early 1950s Aldanov was the most successful Russian writer in America. Translated into English and published by major New York City houses, his books included the novels *The Fifth Seal* (1943), *Before the Deluge* (1947), and *To Live as We Wish* (1952) and the short story collection *A Night at the Airport* (1949). America never became Aldanov's true home; he returned to Europe in 1947 and died in Nice.

Besides his original writing, Aldanov contributed to Russian American literature by cofounding with Mikhail Tsetlin (1882–1945, penname "Amari"), in 1942 in New York City, the émigré journal *Novyi zhurnal* (*The New Review*),

still published today on a quarterly basis. *The New Review* replaced the Parisian *Sovremennye zapiski* (Contemporary Annals), the leading Russian periodical of the interwar period. In the 1940s and 1950s some of the best Russian prose and remarkable poetry appeared in *The New Review*, including works by Isaac Babel, Nina Berberova, Mikhail Bulgakov, Ivan Bunin, Georgii Ivanov, and Vladimir Nabokov. In the subsequent decades dissident literature smuggled from the USSR appeared in the journal, as did translations of such American writers as Saul Bellow and John Cheever. From 1946 to 1959 Michael Karpovich (1888–1959), an émigré historian, edited *The New Review*. Subsequent editors include Roman Goul (1896–1986), who moved to New York City in 1950 to continue writing and publishing historical novels (the sensationist *Azef*, 1962), and Yuri Kashkarov (1940–96), a writer who arrived in New York in 1977 and described his émigré travails in the unfinished novel *East-West*, serialized in *The New Review* in 1986. Edited by Third Wave poet Vadim Kreyd (1936–) since 1995, the journal continues to publish valuable archival and documentary materials.

Andrei Sedykh (1902–94), prose writer and journalist, arrived in New York City from France in 1942 and joined *Novoe russkoe slovo* (The New Russian Word), America's oldest Russian daily, founded in 1910; in 1973 he became its editor-in-chief and president. Sedykh presided over momentous changes as his paper's readership shifted in the 1970s, from the First Wave and Second Wave émigrés to ex-Soviet Third Wave readers. Sedykh's principal contribution to postwar émigré culture was his memoir, *Dalekie, blizkie: literaturnye portrety* (1962; Distant Ones, Close Ones: Literary Portraits).

No account of Russian American poetry of the First Wave is complete without Vladimir Korvin-Piotrovskii (1891–1966), Iurii (George) Ivask (1907–86), and Igor Chinnov (1909–96). Soon after the end of World War II, Korvin-Piotrovskii moved to California from Europe. *Pozdnii gost'* (A Late Guest), his two-volume collected works, appeared posthumously in Washington, DC in 1968–69. Iurii Ivask (1907–86), who had spent the interwar years in Estonia, received a PhD from Harvard in 1954 and divided his time between university teaching and writing. He edited *Na Zapade* (1953; In the West), a landmark anthology of Russian émigré poetry. Igor Chinnov, who was born in Riga, Latvia, and died in Daytona Beach, Florida, wrote his best poetry in America, where he moved to become a university professor in 1962. Marked by lyrical grotesqueness and subtle homoeroticism, Chinnov's books published in America include *Metafora* (1968; Metaphors), *Autograf* (1984; Autograph), and others.

Few writers did more for the preservation of Russian émigré publishing than Sofiiia Pregel' (1894–1972), poet, memoirist, and philanthropist, who founded the journal *Novosel'e* (Housewarming) in New York City in 1942. A U.S. citizen, Pregel' returned to Paris in 1948, publishing and editing *Housewarming* there until 1950. The émigré critic Marc Slonim (1894–1976), who taught Russian literature in postwar America, edited Pregel's posthumous

Poskdnie stikhi (1973; Last Poems). Finally, a brief mention should be made of Sofia (Sophie) Dubnova-Erich (1885–1986), poet, essayist, translator, and memoirist, daughter of the great Jewish historian Simon Dubnov (1860–1941). In America, where she arrived in 1942, Dubnova-Erich contributed to Russian and Yiddish publications. Dubnova-Erich's memoir, *Bread and Matzos*, was partially serialized in the 1980s in the Third Wave émigré quarterly *Vremia i my* (Time and We); the complete text appeared in St. Petersburg in 1994.

In the foreword to the English translation of *The Gift* (1963), Nabokov wrote, "The tremendous outflow of intellectuals that formed such a prominent part of the general exodus from Soviet Russia in the first years of the Bolshevik Revolution seems today [written in Montreux in 1962] like the wonderings of some mythical tribe whose bird-signs and moon-signs I now retrieve from the desert dust. We remained unknown to American intellectuals (who, bewitched by Communist propaganda, saw us merely as villainous generals, oil magnates, and gaunt ladies with lorgnettes. That world is now gone. . . . The old intellectuals are now dying out and have not found successors in the so-called Displaced Persons of the last two decades who have carried abroad the provincialism and Philistinism of their Soviet homeland." Nabokov's remarks augment two key aspects of the postwar Russian literary life in America: the relative obscurity of Russian literary exiles in the American imagination and the ideological and aesthetic divides separating the writers of the First Wave and Second Wave.

The works of the Second Wave writers reflected the difficulties of their lives in Stalinist Russia, the experiences during World War II, during Nazi occupation, and in the DP camps in postwar Europe. Memoir and poetry were represented more prominently than fiction in the writing of these émigrés. Nikolay Narokov (1881–1969), who emigrated from Germany in 1950, was the most visible Russian prose writer of the Second Wave living in America. His best-known novel *Mnimye velichiny* (1952; *The Chains of Fear*, 1958), as well as his other fiction, depict post-revolutionary Russia.

Narokov's son, the poet Nikolai Morshen (1917–2001), became a well-known Russian American poet. He lived in California, and his books include *Tiulen'* (1959; *Seal*) and *Sobranie stikhov* (1996; *Collected Verses*). Perhaps the most celebrated poet of the Second Wave was Ivan Elagin (1918–87), who relocated to the United States in 1950. Elagin's American collections, such as *Kosoi polet* (1967; *The Slanted Flight*), spoke of his cultural fragmentation. The latter poems in Elagin's *Pod sozvezdiem topora: izbranno* (1976; *Under the Constellation of an Ax: Selected Poems*) were especially American in their themes. Elagin translated into Russian *John Brown's Body* by Stephen Vincent Benét (1979; *Telo Dzhona Brauna*). Among other Russian American Second Wave poets are Ivan Burkin (1919–); Boris Filippov (1905–91), poet and scholar who operated Inter-Language Associates, a major outlet of émigré publishing; and Valentina Sinkevich (1926–), author of the bilingual volume *Coming of Day* (1978) and founder of *Encounters*, an annual of émigré poetry.

The Third Wave gave America the largest constellation of its Russian literary artists, some of whom pursued publishing and writing in English. A number of them had been dissidents and left the USSR for reasons of political and ideological persecution. A key factor shaping the destinies of Third Wave writers was Jewish emigration from the USSR, which crested from 1977 to 1979, restarting in 1987. A number of Third Wave writers had been "refuseniks" (those whom Soviet authorities denied—"refused"—permission to emigrate) before being allowed to leave.

Some Third Wave writers came to America as mature, published authors and capitalized on their Soviet professional experiences, whereas others only began to publish abroad. For example, the New York-based poet Lev Khalif (1930–), who emigrated in 1977, recorded his literary past in the acerbic memoir-novel *TsDL* (1979; Central House of Writers) while remaining loyal to his poetic youth during Khrushchev's Thaw. In America, Russian writers of the Third Wave enjoyed vastly new publishing opportunities that were free of censorship and also encouraged self-publishing. Most Third Wave literary publications paid no honoraria, and some asked for a subvention fee. Few Russian immigrants could make a living as writers, and some resorted to other careers. Only several Third Wave Russian writers reached wider American audiences in translation. Few new literary careers flourished in America, and some Russian writers vanished after coming to the New World. Lev Mak (1937–), a poet from Odessa, emigrated in the 1970s, contributed for a few years to Russian Third Wave periodicals (*Time and We*), published two books, including the English-language *From the Night and Other Poems* (1978), and "disappeared" in the middle 1980s.

Although the Third Wave introduced dailies and weeklies (for example, the Los Angeles-based *Panorama*), Russian American communities formed in the 1970s and 1980s were much less concerned with the preservation of Russian culture abroad, as compared to their First Wave and Second Wave predecessors. Many readers looked to their writers for journalistic professionalism, occasional and measured doses of nostalgia, and Russian-language accounts of life in America, couched in traditional versification or simple representational prose. Only the elite few among Russian American readers were interested in formal experimentation.

Over the years, as the English skills of the Russian Americans improved; some of them stopped reading in Russian and grew increasingly skeptical of Russian American writing. The reform years and the collapse of the USSR brought about a publishing boom in Russia and the former Soviet republics that nearly paralyzed émigré literary publishing in America. For example, Ardis Publishers, founded in the 1971 by Carl Proffer (1938–84), published many works by Third Wave Russian American authors in the 1970s and 1980s, in Russian and in translation; by the late 1990s Ardis Publishers had ceased publishing new Russian titles.

At the same time, a number of Russian American writers, who had been unable to publish in the USSR, made their literary returns in the late 1980s

and early 1990s. Questions such as "One or Two Literatures?", previously the realm of academic punditry, acquired practical significance in the 1990s as Third Wave Russian American writers began to compete with writers living in Russia in the literary marketplace of the former USSR. Although, with a few exceptions, repatriation of Russian writers living in America has not been common, Third Wave writers can visit the former USSR and meet with their audiences.

Third Wave writers displayed a wide span of ages and generations. Some Russian Americans arrived as teenagers and became bilingual authors, such as Nina Kosman (1959–), who immigrated in 1972 to Israel and later to America. Writing poetry in both Russian and English (e.g., *Po pravuiu ruku sna/To the Right of A Dream*, 1996), Kosman has distinguished herself as an English translator of Marina Tsvetaeva's poetry while also becoming a writer of English prose for adolescents (her novel *Behind the Border*, 1994). Yet many of the Russian American writers, especially those who came in the middle of their careers, have remained monolingual literary practitioners. Naum Korzhavin (1925–), poet and essayist, and victim of Stalinism, immigrated to Boston in 1973, remaining an anti-Soviet *Soviet* poet. His Russian poetry volumes published in the West include *Weavings* (1981). In *Ne tol'ko Brodskii* (1988; *Not Just Brodsky*), a collection of photographs and accompanying cultural anecdotes, Sergey Dovlatov reported Korzhavin's statement: "I don't write for Slavists, I write for normal people."

Third Wave Russian American writers have also brought with them a great diversity of pasts (ethnic, linguistic, religious, ideological) and a broad representation of formal trends (from staunch avant-gardists to sworn traditionalists). The commonality of Russian as the lingua franca of the educated Third Wave immigrants from the USSR has resulted in an interplay between Russian American writers and émigré writers from ethnic Soviet republics (for example, Ukraine and Lithuania). Several Russian poets, including Joseph Brodsky, Vladimir Gandelsman, and Marina Temkina have rendered into Russian the verses of the Lithuanian poet Tomas Venclova (1937–), who immigrated to America in 1977 and contributed to Third Wave publications. Also intriguing is the career of Igor Mikhalevich-Kaplan (1943–), who originally wrote in Ukrainian. Having emigrated in 1979, Mikhalevich-Kaplan settled in Philadelphia and eventually switched to Russian; in 1992 he founded the literary annual *Poberezh'e* (The Coast) and a publishing house of the same name, which has since issued over one hundred books by Russian American authors.

A famous Soviet writer since the 1960s, Vassily Aksyonov (1932–) arrived in America in 1980, the year his novel *Ozhog* (*The Burn*, written during 1969–75), appeared in America in Russian (the English translation was published in 1984). Although Aksyonov remained prolific and enjoyed success in translation, his American works, including *Skazhi izium* (1985; *Say Cheese!*, 1989), never eclipsed either *The Burn* or his other major novel, *Ostrov Krym* (1981; *The Island of Crimea*, 1983).

The extremes of Soviet history and ideology inform the literary imagination of Yuz Aleshkovsky (1929–), who emigrated in 1978. His novels *Ruka* (*povestvovanie palacha*) (1980; *The hand, or, The confession of an executioner*, 1990), *Kenguru* (1981; *Kangaroo*, 1986), and others allegorize the brutality and absurdity of the Soviet regime. Aleshkovsky's manner is distinguished by a manipulation of non-normative slang and criminal jargon.

Philip Isaac Berman (1936–) emigrated from Moscow in 1981 and settled in Philadelphia. In the USSR only a few of Berman's works had appeared, whereas in America he became well known after the publication of his metaphysical short novel *Registrator* (1984; *Registry Clerk*). Problems of a dual, Jewish-Russian **identity**, permeate Berman's literary imagination, as evidenced by his frequently anthologized, Yiddish-infused short story "Sara i Petushok" (1988; "Sarah and Rooster").

A self-disarming intonation, combined with bitterly satirical, often biographically based, first-person fictions of life in the USSR, typifies the works of Sergei Dovlatov (1941–90). A journalist and a prolific writer, Dovlatov was marginalized in the USSR. Only after his **immigration** in 1978 did a number of his books appear, including *Kompromiss* (1981; *The Compromise*) and *Zona: zapiski nadziratel'ia* (1982; *The Zone: A Prison Camp Guard's Story*, 1985). Dovlatov's latter fiction, including *Inostranka* (1986; *A Foreign Woman*, 1991), satirized the daily lives of Russian immigrants.

An autobiographical imperative, sexual openness, radical critique of bourgeois values, and provocativeness, have become the trademarks of the novelist, memoirist, and poet Eduard Limonov (1943–). After emigrating, Limonov wrote *Eto ia, Edichka* (1982; *It's Me, Eddie: A Fictional Memoir*, 1983); the novel's disparagement of American culture and lives of the Russian émigrés in New York City initially made publication difficult (it first came out in French translation). Limonov later moved to France, where he enjoyed a successful literary career and became a citizen in 1987. Returning to Russia in 1991, Limonov devoted himself to extremist political activities.

The writings of Sasha Sokolov (1943–) make ingenious use of a Beckettian stream of consciousness in order to depict a Soviet childhood and youth. Sokolov's major novel, *Shkola dlia durakov* (1976; *A School for Fools*, 1977) came out soon after his emigration in 1975. His other works, including *Palisandria* (1985; *Astrophobia*, 1989), conflate fantasy and history but do not match the power of the narrative voice in *A School for Fools*. Having lived in Vermont, Sokolov later settled in Canada.

The Odessan writer Arkady Lvov (1927–) emigrated in 1976, settling in the New York City area. Set during the Stalinist years, Lvov novel, *Dvor* (1982; *The Courtyard*, 1989), takes its architectonics from an Odessan courtyard, a narrative amphitheater where the protagonists' families are both the gladiators and the spectators. Jewish themes are central in much of his writing, including his short stories.

Jewish themes and protagonists also inhabit the fiction of Felix Roziner (1936–97), who came to Boston in 1985 after having first emigrated from the

USSR to Israel in 1978. His major novel *Nekto Finkelmaier* (1981; *A Certain Finkelmayer*, 1991), won the 1980 Dahl Prize (Paris). Roziner's protagonist is a genius Russian poet whose fate mirrors and mimics Joseph Brodsky's. Roziner's post-**Holocaust** novella *Lilovyi dym* (1987; "Purple Smoke" in *Commentary*, 1989) is told by a Jewish Lithuanian protagonist living in Israel in the 1980s.

David Shroyer-Petrov (1936–), fiction writer, poet, and memoirist, was unable to publish in the USSR throughout his nine years as a refusenik. Emigrating in 1987, Shroyer-Petrov settled in Providence, Rhode Island. Part dirge, part confession of a Jew's expired love for Russia, his second American collection *Villa Borghese* (1992) bridged Russian and émigré years. Gently ironic fiction about Russian Jewish émigrés in America appears on both sides of the Atlantic. In 2003 his *Jonah and Sarah: Jewish Stories of Russia and America*, came out in English in the Library of Modern Jewish Literature Series.

Third Wave prose writers also include Vasilii Agafonov (1942–), who emigrated in 1979 and published *Kniga Svin'i. Poema* (1995; *Book of Swine. An Epic Poem*); Mikhail Morgulis (1942–), who emigrated in 1977, published the magazine *Literaturnyi kur'er* (*Literary Courier*, 1981–87) in Chicago, and described his first trip back to Russia in *Return to the Red Planet: 22 Days in Gorbachev's Back Yard* (1989); Irina Muravyova (1952–), who moved to Boston in 1978 to publish poetry and fiction (three of her tales were collected in English as *The Nomadic Soul*, 1999); and Ludmila Shtern (1937–), who emigrated in 1975 and wrote a memoir about Joseph Brodsky (2001).

Among the Third Wave poets, Dmitri Bobyshev (1936–), has received much critical attention. Bobyshev emigrated from **Leningrad** in 1979. His most original book, *Zveri sviatogo Antoniiia: Bestiarii* (1989; *The Beasts of St. Anthony: A Bestiary*), was marked by verbal artistry. A shift away from formal complexity and an emphasis on Christian metaphysics mark Bobyshev's collection *Angely i sily* (1997; *Angels and Powers*).

The *enfant terrible* of Russian American poetry, Konstantin K. Kuzminsky (1940–), emigrated from Leningrad in 1975. An avant-garde poet, Kuzminsky was the principal editor of the landmark compendium, *The Blue Lagoon Anthology of Modern Russian Poetry* (1980–1986). In recent years Kuzminsky has been mentoring a group of younger Russian American authors who publish the journal *Magazinnik*.

Mikhail Kreps (1940–94), poet and scholar, emigrated from Leningrad in 1974. Kreps wrote the first monograph about Joseph Brodsky, *O poezii Brodskogo* (1984; *On Brodsky's Poetry*). Author of several collections, including *Buton golovy* (1987; *Bud of the Head*), Kreps is best remembered for his collection of Russian palindromes, *Mukhi i ikh um* (1993; *Flies and Their Intelligence*). In 1997 the Michael B. Kreps Memorial Readings were inaugurated at Boston College, where he taught from 1981 until 1994.

Poet and literary scholar Lev Loseff (1937–), formerly of Leningrad, emigrated in 1976. Loseff's poetry is distinguished by distancing authorial

irony and sophisticated versification. Having written criticism in English, Loseff also collaborates in translating his poetry. His émigré poetry collections include *Chudesnyi desant* (1985; Miraculous Sortie) and *Tainyi sovetnik* (1987; translated as both Privy Councilor and Secret Adviser).

Marina Temkina (1948–), a New Yorker since 1978, has published several collections of poetry, of which the most original is *Kalancha: Gendernaia lirika* (1995; Fire Station: Gendered Lyric). Temkina is the cofounder and president of the Archive for Jewish Immigrant Culture. Other Third Wave Russian American poets include Pavel Babich (1933–), who emigrated in 1980; Ina Bliznetsova (1958–), who emigrated in 1970; Mikhail Iupp (1938–), who arrived in America in 1981; Aleksandr Ocheretyansky (1946–), who emigrated in 1979 and founded the avant-garde annual *Chernovik (Draft)* in 1989; Sergei Petrunis (1944–), who emigrated in 1978; and Viktor Urin (1924–), who emigrated in 1977.

A separate case could be made for Third Wave Russian American writers who emigrated in their twenties and early thirties and have since transitioned to writing in English. Before emigrating in 1986, Mikhail Iossel (1955–) had contributed to Leningrad's *samizdat* (underground) literary publications. *Every Hunter Wants to Know . . . A Leningrad Life*, his debut collection of English-language stories about living in the stagnating USSR, appeared in 1991. Iossel coedited, with Jeff Parker, the collection *Amerika: Russian Writers View the United States* (2004) and continues to write in his native Russian and adopted English. Maxim D. Shrayer (1967–), son of David Shrayer-Petrov, emigrated in 1987. Poems written prior to emigration formed the bulk of his first collection, *Tabun nad lugom* (1990; Herd Above the Meadow). Shrayer's second and third collections, *Amerikanskii romans* (1994; American Romance) and *N'iukheivenskie sonety* (1998; The New Haven Sonnets) captured the experience of Americanization. In 1995 Shrayer made a transition to writing creative prose in English, which he occasionally translates or cotranslates for publication in Russian.

The disintegration of the USSR in 1991 changed the face of Russian American literature. The émigré writers in the United States were transformed from exiles to expatriates; the political system some of them had criticized ceased to exist. The late Soviet reform and the post-Soviet era have brought about the Fourth Wave of Russian writers in America, resulting in new types of cultural transplantations.

Vladimir Gandelsman (1948–) arrived in New York City from Leningrad in 1990. Joseph Brodsky's introduction to Gandelsman's first collection *Shum zemli* (1991; Hum of the Earth) launched the poet's career, ricocheting to Russia, where Gandelsman became a popular poet. He went on to found Ars-Interpres, a New York-based press that publishes bilingual, English-Russian editions of works by American poets.

Ilya Kutik (1960–) left Russia in 1990 already a published poet, spent almost five years in Sweden, and arrived in America in 1995 to become a university professor. A translation of Kutik's *Ode: On Visiting the Belosaraisk*

Spit on the Sea of Azov (1997) was printed in a bilingual edition. Although bilingual, Kutik continues to write poetry in Russian. His essays have been gathered in *Hieroglyphs of Another World* (2000).

Katia Kapovich (1960–) grew up in Moldova and in 1990 moved to Israel, where her first poetry collection appeared. Kapovich later moved to United States, published other books of Russian poetry, and gradually embraced writing in English. Kapovich's first English-language collection is titled *Gogol in Rome* (2004); she coedits *Fulcrum: An Annual of Poetry and Aesthetics* with the poet Philip Nikolaev (1966–), a former Muscovite who writes poetry in English.

Originally from Moscow, Irina Mashinskaya (1958–) emigrated in 1991. Her first collection, the bilingual chapbook *Potomu chto my zdes'* (1995; *Because We Are Here*), was followed by other collections of Mashinskaya's Russian poetry, including *Posle Epigrafa* (1997; *After the Epigraph*), where the best poems record the contortions of a Russian psyche in American suburbia, and translations of contemporary American poetry.

With all the changes of the 1990s the term "Russian American literature" has become even more problematic. Yet one cannot disregard the emergence, in the 1990s, of another group: Russian-born young authors, who were raised in the United States or came here as young men and women and began to compose or publish in English, cultivating in their works the theme of immigrant culture and the sense of duality it precipitates. Gary Shteyngart (1972–), who came from Leningrad as a child, recently published *The Russian Debutante's Handbook* (2002). Emigrating in 1994, Lara Vapnyar (1971–) began writing fiction in English. *There Are Jews in My House* (2003), Vapnyar's debut collection, features formally unassuming accounts of Russian life. Russian Americans who write in English include poet and translator of Russian avant-garde Matvei Yankelevich (1973–), who emigrated in 1977 and founded Ugly Duckling Presse in 1993, poet Eugene Ostashevsky (1968–), who has lived in the United States since 1979 and has published chapbooks of English poetry and translations; and others.

The transition of Russian American writers to English entails not only the linguistic and epistemological wherewithal, but also psychological, cultural, and social barriers, and also what for some émigrés remains a principled stance. The majority of Russian writers living in America, even those who came young enough to have transitioned, continue to write in Russian, and the works of only a few of them are available in English translation. Can they be considered *American* writers? Whatever the definition, Russian American literature is a conglomeration of individual voices, whose historical past and bicultural experiences form a unique body of literary works.

Further Reading

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