

In this volume, Golden Age [Russian: золотой век, *zolotoj vek*] refers to literature in nineteenth-century Russia—an unrivaled, rapidly evolving period of literary development, out of which emerged some of the most famous Russian authors in the West: Fyodor Dostoevsky, Lev Tolstoy, and Anton Chekhov. The most famous Russian poet, indeed Russia’s national poet, Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), less well known in the West, set the tone for the nineteenth century with his Romantic compositions of verse, including a novel in verse [роман в стихах, *roman v stikhakh*], which set the course for Russia’s Golden Age of Poetry, occurring during the first half of the nineteenth century. The two terms, Golden Age and Golden Age of Poetry refer to two different, but coinciding, periods in the evolution of Russian literature from the classical, heavily European influenced literature of the eighteenth century. This volume treats the former, although the latter is certainly important within the context of the former. There are differing opinions as to when exactly Russia’s Golden Age begins and ends, some believing it to have begun as early as the mid- to late eighteenth century and continued as late as the early twentieth century. For the purposes of this volume, intended as a broad overview for a general audience, we will take a more moderate view: that the Golden Age encompasses the bulk of the nineteenth century, beginning conservatively with Pushkin and continuing through Chekhov. The authors and texts that emerged in Russia’s Golden Age are not only important in and of themselves, they represent a canon of works from which later Russian authors, both in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, were and continue to be influenced. It is difficult to fully contextualize the writing of great Russian twentieth-century authors such as Mikhail Bulgakov, Vladimir Nabokov, or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn without some acquaintance with nineteenth-century Russian literature, particularly with authors of the Golden Age. This volume seeks to provide this vital context for a general audience,

while also providing an overview of Russian history and society leading up to and throughout the nineteenth century.

Four Critical Contexts pieces preface the volume's ten chapters, in order to provide much-needed insight into the historical, cultural, and societal contexts of the major texts, authors, and themes of Russia's Golden Age. In "My Country is Russian Literature," Kathleen Conti provides a much needed historical and political context of the nineteenth century that explains the surge in production of literature during the Golden Age. For the novice in nineteenth-century Russian literature, this first piece discusses the most important trends, events, and influences on Russian literary development, leaving no stone unturned. Donald Rayfield's piece on the Golden Age of Poetry is a reprint from the Routledge Companion to Russian Literature and has been included here to help the reader understand the role of poetry within the larger context of the Golden Age, providing a critical lens on Russian versification in particular, since no thematic or author-oriented chapter solely discusses this important genre. Derek Offord's chapter on nineteenth century Russian philosophy and thought provides needed comparison and contrast between relevant Russian trends and those of the West, with which many readers are likely to be more familiar. Katya Jordan's piece on critical reception offers the reader understanding of how the works discussed in the subsequent ten chapters were interpreted and critiqued in their time.

The ten chapters, of which the rest of this volume is composed, offer diverse approaches, largely based around a particular author, text, or theme of Golden Age Russian literature. The overarching topics for these chapters were selected by the volume editor, but contributors were given a great deal of space to be selective and/or creative in their approaches to their respective topics. No volume on Russia's Golden Age would be complete without attention to those authors, most of whom are well-known in Russia and in the West. Similarly, the editor wanted the volume to provide balanced representation of the two major movements of the Golden Age: Romanticism and Realism. For this reason, the volume contains chapters devoted to Romantic authors, namely Pushkin and Mikhail

Lermontov (1814–1841). Also, there are three chapters devoted to transitional authors and periods between Romanticism and Realism, including Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852) and Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883). Additionally, there are chapters devoted to a transitional period between Romanticism and Realism, known as the Natural School (1840–1855), and chapters devoted to the great Realists, Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881) and Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910). One of these chapters considers the American reception to their lives and works through old newspapers.

The second-to-last chapter of the volume discusses, in detail, *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov (1860–1904), another of Russia’s many Realist authors, and the only playwright included in this volume. The last chapter by Anna Piotrowska departs from literature, presenting an intriguing look into Russian musical composition in the nineteenth century, notably by The Five, who were also known as The Mighty Handful [Могучая кучка, *Moguchaya kuchka*], and the important question of Russia’s geographic identity crisis throughout the Golden Age (and persisting into the present): to be itself not quite Western or to assume more purposefully the ways of the West? The third chapter, on Pushkin and Lermontov’s depictions of the Caucasus, also addresses this key question of Russian identity—a question that pervaded nineteenth century thought, literature, and discourse—analyzing Pushkin and Lermontov’s depictions of Russia’s neighboring south throughout its conquest of the nations and peoples north and south of the Caucasus mountain range.

Following this preface is an introduction to the volume that provides a substantial overview of the history of Russian literature up to the nineteenth century. In the greater context of Russian literature, the Golden Age stands out, in part owing to the sheer amount of writing within an otherwise short period. In comparison to other literary traditions, for example in the Greco-Roman and Arab-Islamic worlds, India, or China, Russian literature is comparatively young. Before the Christianization of Kievan Rus’ in the late tenth century, there was no written Russian language. The rapidity with which the Golden Age progressed from predominantly sacred texts and heavily formularized eighteenth-century works

to the production of some of the world's longest and most well-known novels (e.g., Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*), is stunning. By providing the reader with a comprehensive history of the Russian people, the Russian language, and the slow development of Russian literature from the tenth century to the dawn of the Golden Age, we hope that the unrivaled excellence and magnitude of the Golden Age will be clearly observed.

Of course it is impossible to capture the entire essence of a century in only fourteen chapters. With more space, we would certainly highlight the many poets, critics, artists, authors, and texts that are less well-known in the West, but of significance in Russia such as Vasili Zhukovsky (1783–1852), Nikolai Nekrasov (1821–1878), Vissarion Belinsky (1811–1848), Nikolai Chernyshevsky (1828–1889), and Fyodor Tiutchev (1803–1873). An equally important inclusion, given the possibility of more chapters, would be a discussion of the few female authors in Russia's nineteenth century, such as Karolina Pavlova (1807–1893). Also valuable would be a chapter devoted to the development of Russian visual art, specifically Russian painting, which beautifully reflects the themes, perceptions, societal complexities, and movements of Russian literature and thought throughout the nineteenth century. Indeed, an entire volume could be devoted exclusively to Russian poetry of the nineteenth century or the emergent Russian émigré community, including many authors, among them Ivan Bunin (1870–1953), the first Russian to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. For those readers who wish to learn more about Russian literature in the nineteenth century, we have included two sections of resources for continued reading and research. One, "Additional Works of Russia's Golden Age," includes suggested works of literature by the authors discussed in this volume as well as a few others. The other is a general bibliography of current and canonical secondary sources commonly referenced in the field. These are excellent volumes to consult for purposes of research or for the development of deeper understanding of topics illuminated in the present volume.

This volume is intended for a general English-speaking audience. Because the Russian language presents many problems of translation and transliteration into English, we have provided titles of works in Russian, using the Cyrillic alphabet and also transliterated (written using Roman letters). Transliteration style may vary but generally follows the guidelines of the Library of Congress (<http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpsd/romanization/russian.pdf>) or the International Phonetic Association (IPA). Some Russian names (e.g., Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Nikolai) have a more generally accepted transliterated standard that may differ from the transliteration system indicated below or the others mentioned above.

In general, the following guidelines may be used in this volume for interpreting Russian sounds using pronunciation guidelines (which are not always adequate or accurate) from American English:

Russian English

а	a='father'
б	b='boy'
в	v='vodka'
г	g='get'
д	d='do'
е, э	je='yet', jo='yolk' or e='bet'
ж	zh='measure'
з	z='zoo'
и	i='feet'
й	j='you', and as a glide after vowels, e.g., 'boy'
к	k='coat'
л	l='light'
м	m='mom'
н	n='no'
о	o='oar'
п	p='gap'
р	r=rolled as in Spanish 'burrito'
с	s='sick'
т	t='get'

у	u='glue'
ф	f='far'
х	kh=as in Yiddish 'l'chaim
ц	v='vodka'
ч	ch='cheese'
ш	sh='fresh'
щ	shch='fresh cheese'
ы	y=high front vowel (no English equivalent)
ь	'=indicates preceding consonant is palatalized
ю	ju='you'
я	ja='yacht'

The editor of this volume wishes to express her gratitude to Grey House Publishing for acknowledging Russia's importance among literary, historical, and cultural studies meriting inclusion as a Critical Insights volume. A debt of gratitude is also owed to the contributors, who come from across the United States, as well as from Germany, Russia, and Poland. They are a fascinating group of individuals with a common interest: Russia's legacy as an artistic giant. We hope that this volume will provide an insightful and thorough introduction to Russia's nineteenth-century literary boom for those with less familiarity, although we equally hope that the volume may also be of use for those more well-acquainted with Russia and its Golden Age.

The Life, Works, and Times of Fyodor Dostoevsky: Realism in the Golden Age

Tatyana Kovalevskaya

“A human being is a mystery which must be solved.”

—Fyodor Dostoevsky

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky was born on November 11, 1821 to the family of Mikhail Dostoevsky, a doctor in St. Mary’s Hospital for the Poor in Moscow. Born in the small apartment his father had been given in a wing of the hospital building, Dostoevsky lived in Moscow until 1837 when, upon the death of his mother, he went to St. Petersburg to study at the Engineering School. The school was housed in Mikhailovsky Palace, originally built as the principal residence of Emperor Paul I, who had been afraid of plots against his life and had envisioned the palace as his stronghold. In an all-too-coincidental twist, Paul was assassinated there in 1801, after only five years on the throne. It was widely rumored that the assassination had been carried out with the knowledge and consent of Paul’s eldest son, the future emperor Alexander I. Not coincidentally, the subject of patricide remained an important theme throughout Dostoevsky’s life.

Although Dostoevsky was trained to be an engineer, a literary career always seemed more attractive to him. In 1845, his novel *The Poor Folk* landed before Nikolai Nekrasov, a famous poet, who, ecstatic, took the manuscript to Vissarion Belinsky, one of the most influential critics of the time, exclaiming, “a new Gogol appeared!” (Dostoevsky 1465). Belinsky was a little skeptical at first, yet he, too, admired the young writer’s first work. *The Poor Folk* (Бедные люди, *Bednye ljudi*, 1846) is a novel in letters exchanged between a small-time official, Makar Devushkin, and a young girl, Varenka Dobroselova. The image of a small-time official in his small-time and excruciatingly poor life takes the readers, indeed, back to Nikolai Gogol and his famous character Akakii Akakievich Bashmachkin from “The Overcoat” [Шинель, *Shinel’*, 1842], with

its message of compassion for the downtrodden. “The little person,” as such characters came to be known, became a staple of the Russian literature in the nineteenth century.

Dostoevsky continues Gogol’s tradition by depicting the social ills that plague people like Devushkin, yet he puts his own spin on the social message so typically inferred from Gogol’s writings. Makar Devushkin reads “The Overcoat” and revolts against Gogol’s portrayal of Bashmachkin. Devushkin sees in Gogol not the social diatribe against the cruel and inhumane treatment of the underprivileged, but yet another example of that very cruelty and inhumanity. In Devushkin’s view, in describing the privations Bashmachkin is prepared to suffer to get a new overcoat, Gogol mocks his character. Moreover, Gogol’s character has no desires beyond an actual overcoat, which takes the place of a real human companion. Devushkin, on the other hand, is capable of devotion and love, as he meekly humors Varenka’s every whim because she is suffering, too, even though she is casually cruel to him. Whereas Bashmachkin dreams of his future overcoat as a life companion, Devushkin sells his uniform to aid a real, living, breathing human being he thinks is in need of help. Gogol, in Devushkin’s view, dehumanizes the “little person,” while Devushkin, through actions aimed at benefiting other people, establishes his own human dignity. The theme of humanity found in every human being, no matter how undeserving or ridiculous outwardly, will run throughout Dostoevsky’s works, including his last great novel, *The Brothers Karamazov* [Братья Карамазовы, Brat’ja Karamazovy, 1880]. Devushkin also sees true understanding of the “little person” in Alexander Pushkin and his story “The Station Master” [Станционный смотритель, Stantsionnij smotritel’, 1831].

The epistolary genre chosen by Dostoevsky for his first novel serves two purposes. Firstly, it links *The Poor Folk* to such famous novels in letters as P. Ch. de Laclos’ *Dangerous Liaisons*, J. J. Rousseau’s *Julie*, or the *New Heloise*, S. Richardson’s *Clarissa*, J. W. von Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, warning the readers to expect a sentimental novel, yet with a dash of melancholy or even cruelty. Secondly, it disguises the authorial voice, permitting

the characters to speak for themselves. About the readers' reception of his narrative technique in *The Poor Folk*, Dostoevsky wrote, "They are used to seeing the author's physiognomy in everything, but I never showed mine" (Dostoevsky 28–1:117). The technique of letting the characters' competing voices speak for themselves with little or no imposed authorial message will become Dostoevsky's trademark in his later works, even those written in the traditional third-person narrative.

Dostoevsky's next works met with diminished critical welcome. In 1846, he published *The Double* [Двойник, Dvojnik], a story of another small-time official, Golyadkin, who goes mad thinking that he is haunted by a doppelgänger, who eventually assumes his identity and takes his place in life. The readers never learn whether the replacement actually occurred, or was, indeed, a result of Golyadkin's insanity. The theme of doubles—characters who starkly reflect each other's particular traits and even complement each other in plot mechanics—becomes another of Dostoevsky's trademarks throughout his writing career. Critics found the story to be too drawn-out, and some condemned it as an inept imitation of Gogol's fantastic stories "The Nose" [Нос, Nos, 1836] and "Diary of a Madman" [Записки сумасшедшего, Zapiski sumasshedshego, 1835]

In general, Dostoevsky's early writings already demonstrate the topics that will preoccupy him in his later and most famous works. The tale "The Landlady" ["Хозяйка", "Khozyaika", 1847] touches on the subject of freedom as a burden for an average human, who yearns to shift that burden onto someone else. The short story, "Mr. Prokharchin" ["Господин Прохарчин", "Gospodin Prokharchin", 1846], puts yet another twist on the theme of the "little person." Prokharchin, a dirt-poor official, is discovered upon his death to have amassed a large fortune hidden in his torn mattress. This is a nod to Pushkin and his Covetous Knight from the eponymous work. For Pushkin's knight, possession of money is more important than the joys the money can afford. At the same time, in Dostoevsky's story, the money is viewed as a potential for acquiring a different identity, for becoming a master instead of a slave. Mr. Prokharchin is a little

person who is searching for power he could wield over others. At the same time, witnessing a fire, Mr. Prokharchin suddenly discovers that other people around him are living, suffering human beings, and the shock of compassion proves too difficult an ordeal for him. These themes will all appear again and again in Dostoevsky's later works.

In his early years, Dostoevsky adhered to liberal views and participated in the activities of a politically active group led by Mikhail Petrashevsky. In 1849, Dostoevsky was arrested for having an illegal printing press in his possession. He was sentenced to death, led to the Semyonov Square in St. Petersburg with a group of fellow inmates. Just as he was awaiting execution, his death sentence was commuted, and he was instead sent to Omsk hard labor prison for four years. These four years in Siberia changed Dostoevsky. He himself spoke about the rebirth of convictions he experienced in prison. His political views changed from avowedly liberal to deeply conservative, yet in his literary works, he continued to explore the themes and subjects he had undertaken prior to his prison experience. After prison, he was eventually able to settle in St. Petersburg, where he lived until his death in 1881. The city, too, as in Gogol's stories, became a character in his works.

In 1861–62, Dostoevsky published *Notes from the House of the Dead* [Записки из мертвого дома, *Zapiski iz mertvogo doma*], a fictionalized account of his prison years. A fictitious narrator, Goryanchikov, whose crime is one of passion, not politics, retells Dostoevsky's own experiences. *Notes from the House of the Dead* continues the theme of dehumanized humanity. This time, dehumanization doesn't always come as a result of societal oppression. Political prisoners aside, the murderers described in the novel chose to sever themselves from humanity through their own willfully committed crimes. A large number of those criminals were Russian peasants, traditionally referred to in Russia as "the people" (narod), and here lies Dostoevsky's startling discovery. "The people" were something of a sacred cow for a faction of the Russian intellectuals. Still motivated by Rousseauist ideals of the natural man, a large share of intellectuals viewed the Russian peasants (at that time, mostly serfs, that is, property of their landlord or the state)

as the bearers of the true spirit of morality and Christianity. Those were the views specifically proclaimed by the so-called Slavophiles and the related native soil movement.

Adherents of this movement called for the return to the “native soil,” to the national roots, and saw “the people” as the depository of the true Christian faith (the Orthodoxy) and the Christian spirit of unity embodied in the traditional social organization of peasants into communes with their collective responsibility. Although Dostoevsky subscribed to those views, he discovered that the peasants he encountered in the labor prison lacked the comprehension of the cornerstone of Christianity that he himself considered the most essential part of it: human free will and the responsibility it entails. Dostoevsky was deeply religious, and it is impossible to discuss his works in separation from his Christian faith. The central part of the loosely structured *Notes from the House of the Dead*, which is more a series of sketches than a novel with a continuous plot, is the chapter “Akul’ka’s Husband. A Story,” which tells a seemingly incomprehensible tale of the murder of saintly Akul’ka by her husband. This is a motiveless crime that baffles even the murderer, who tells his own story to his listener and the readers alike. *Notes from the House of the Dead* implicitly questions the salvific essence of the Russian peasantry, and it will take Dostoevsky more than a decade to come to terms with his prison revelations.

In 1864, Dostoevsky published one of his seminal works, *Notes from the Underground* [Записки из подполья, *Zapiski iz podpol’ja*]. The first part is a heated argument against the popular utilitarian philosophy of the time. Influential writers and literary critics (literature in Russia has traditionally done triple duty as philosophy and theology, too), such as Nikolay Chernyshevsky, the author of *What Is To Be Done?* [Что делать? *Chto delat’?* 1863], Nekrasov, and Dmitry Pisarev, a critic who proclaimed that boots are greater than Shakespeare, proposed the utilitarian nature of everything and the theory of reasonable egotism as the mainspring of human action. Human beings, according to these proponents of utilitarian philosophy, are always guided by their material benefits, and once it is explained to them where their true benefit lies, they will behave

in such a manner as to achieve it. The nameless Underground Man, writing in the first person, declares that a person's freedom is his ultimate desire, and in order to feel truly free, a person must be ready to do anything, even to cause grievous harm to themselves. Such an understanding of free will separates the Underground Man from the entire world. The novel explores human loneliness conceived on a metaphysical scale, a loneliness that stems from the inability to form a meaningful relationship of equals. In the Underground Man's view, love is only "the right to tyrannize" (Jackson 183). His underground is of his own making, and no matter how badly he wants to leave it, his philosophy keeps him prisoner to it.

Notes from Underground was censored heavily and in ways unexpected by the writer. Dostoevsky complained to his brother, "Censors, pigs as they are, let pass all the make-believe blasphemies, yet excised those parts where I deduced the need for faith and Christ" (Dostoevsky 28–1:73). The manuscript didn't survive, and Dostoevsky himself never restored the excised parts for subsequent publications, so we will never know what the original form of the work was. Yet his reticence in restoring the unequivocally positive message of the novel is interesting, indicating that Dostoevsky prefers to convey his message by having his readers work the meaning out for themselves, proceeding mostly *ex adverso*.

In 1866, Dostoevsky published *Crime and Punishment* [Преступление и наказание, *Prestuplenie i nakazanie*], probably his most famous novel, the title of which has become proverbial across the globe. The novel essentially replays the problem of the little person in search of power. The crime from the title, the murder of a vile pawnbroker, committed ostensibly to provide the criminal, Rodion Raskolnikov, with some money, is, in fact, committed to test his idea that there are people in the world who, by virtue of being exceptional beings ("Napoleons," as he calls them) are allowed to break the rules set for the ordinary folk, and Raskolnikov is one of them. "Am I a trembling creature, or do I have the right?" (pt. 5, ch.4) Raskolnikov muses. Raskolnikov doesn't simply do away with society's rules. He sets himself apart from "creatures," i.e. from humans. He appropriates superhuman, godly prerogatives and

essentially establishes himself to be a god in his own right, disposing of people as he sees fit.

His crime, however, involves the kind of punishment he cannot bear. That punishment is a complete severance from the humanity. He is unable to maintain meaningful human contact. Raskolnikov's crime is not a simple criminal matter. It turns into a metaphysical transgression, which is emphasized in an important episode in the novel, where he is read the scene of the raising of Lazarus from the Gospels, hinting that he is as dead to humanity as Lazarus, yet even Christ can resurrect him, too. The way out of metaphysical death, however, is not found in a straightforward religious conversion. Raskolnikov is offered the same chance as the Underground Man, the chance of human companionship and love, but, unlike the Underground Man, he evolves, seizing the chance to escape his metaphysical predicament through fully embracing human love and companionship from Sonya Marmeladova, one of society's outcasts, who prostituted herself to save her family from starvation. Sonya's own transgression doesn't sever her human ties, on the contrary. Paradoxically, sin in Dostoevsky often serves as an eye-opening experience, enabling people to truly comprehend and share the suffering of others and find true human companionship. That is the epiphanic breakthrough that enlightens Raskolnikov at the novel's end.

Every detail in Dostoevsky's novel is significant, including characters' names, which are almost invariably meaningful. Raskolnikov's last name comes from the Russian *raskol*: split, dissent, schism. Sonya's first name is a diminutive from Sophia, "wisdom," traditionally used to denote the wisdom of God, and Marmeladova, comes from *marmelad*, marmalade, a bitter irony given her actual life.

Crime and Punishment is tightly woven into the fabric of the Russian literary tradition. One of its most unusual characters is the city of St. Petersburg itself, an instigator of Raskolnikov's crime. Dostoevsky continues the so-called St. Petersburg myth in Russian literature, started by Pushkin's poem *The Bronze Horseman* [Медный всадник, *Mednyj vsadnik*, 1833] in which the city, built

at huge human cost in the Baltic coastal swamps on the orders of Peter I (the Bronze Horseman of the title is a famous monument to Peter), is represented as a dual entity, both strikingly beautiful and strikingly cruel, trampling ordinary human lives in the name of the grand idea of a powerful sea-faring empire.

The novel, like all Dostoevsky's works, has a careful and complicated structure. It contains a system of doubles as Raskolnikov's thoughts and actions are reflected in the figures of Arkady Svidrigailov and Petr Luzhin. Moreover, even though the narration is in the third person, Mikhail Bakhtin, one of Russia's most influential twentieth century thinkers and literary scholars, considered *Crime and Punishment* an excellent example of what he called "the polyphonic novel," meaning a novel without a dominant authorial voice, where characters' voices are all given equal weight and substance. Bakhtin considered the ending of the novel a failure, or possibly, a forced imposition. However, it is important to take into account that Bakhtin's time was during the Stalinist purge (1935–1940), which dictated uniformity of thought. Therefore, he tended to overemphasize everything that represented a departure from authority in any shape or form, and his evaluation of the novel's ending might have been influenced by this. Bakhtin's perspective, however, is not entirely inaccurate. Dostoevsky's works are unrivaled in the degree of independence and equality permitted to characters, and this makes his novels both difficult to summarize or explain neatly. It also makes them fascinating as subjects for thought and discussion. Dostoevsky, like no other Russian writer of the Golden Age, forces his readers to think for themselves. He offers them guidance, yet the opposing points of view are expressed with such force and conviction that the readers sometimes fall under their sway completely.

Dostoevsky's next novel is *The Idiot* [Идиот, Idiot, 1868), the subject of heated critical debates. Dostoevsky himself proclaimed that he attempted to depict a "positively beautiful human" (Dostoevsky 28–2:251). Yet this is a story with a tragic ending, in which the alleged positively beautiful human, Prince Myshkin (from the Russian mysh', mouse), fails to help any of the people he strives to help and ends up in a mental hospital in Switzerland,

with virtually no hope of recovery. Myshkin is traditionally viewed as a Christ figure, and his apparent failure posits some unfavorable questions for Dostoevsky's religious beliefs. Yet the novel would fare best being read *ex adverso*. In Dostoevsky's declared goal, the emphasis should be put on the word human. A famous scene in the novel depicts Myshkin and another character, Rogozhin, gazing at the reproduction of the painting *Dead Christ* by Hans Holbein, which is a claustrophobic picture depicting a virtually decomposing body of Christ. "Why, a man's faith might be ruined by looking at that picture!" (pt. 2, ch. 4) Myshkin remarks. The crux of Dostoevsky's declaration and Holbein's painting is the humanity of the positively beautiful being and Christ. Humanity alone is insufficient. Christ's dual nature as both divine and human overcame the purely human decomposition so vividly pictured by Holbein and so conducive to the loss of faith. He was God and man, and He returned to life and saved humankind. Myshkin is purely human, and his humanity is insufficient for the tasks he sets for himself, the tasks of salvation. In this novel, human companionship is viewed as essential for humanity, yet as an obstacle to the universality that marked Christ's mission. After the death of his first wife, Dostoevsky jotted down theological ruminations that concentrate very much on that duality of human companionship, its necessity, and its exclusion of others from the union of the two. Only the divine mystery of the afterlife could transcend that duality. In *The Idiot*, pure humanity is tested and found lacking. *The Idiot* is probably Dostoevsky's most overt, and, in a typically Dostoevskyan way, most disguised apophatic theological argument.

Dostoevsky's next novel was *Demons* [Бесы, Besy, 1871–72]. Dostoevsky mocks his former ideological soulmates from the 1840s. Stepan Verkhovensky is a parody of a typical 1840s liberal, who is



Hans Holbein the Younger. *The Body of the Dead Christ in the Tomb*. 1521–22.
[Kunstmuseum Basel]

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This volume on Russia's Golden Age unites her teaching interests in Russian literature and her love of writing and collaborative scholarship. In 1994, she checked out *Anna Karenina* from her high school library and never returned it, definitively deciding to major in Russian because of that one, very long novel. Studying Russian led to moving to Moscow, where she studied Russian and Georgian, while also working as a civilian security guard in the consular and residential sections of the U.S. Embassy in the late 1990s. As a graduate student, she studied in Irkutsk and Siberia, and her job at the University of Virginia provided opportunities to travel to China and Korea. She takes any opportunity to visit Russia when possible.