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Destruction of the Moral Values: Village Prose of the 60's

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DESTRUCTION OF THE MORAL VALUES: VILLAGE PROSE OF THE 60'S

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Village prose has always existed in Russian Literature. In the 19th Century, Pushkin wrote on village themes. There were other Russian writers who also wrote about the village life such as Tolstoy and Goucharov. After the Bolshevik revolution, Soviet writers used village prose to express their feelings about the political and social changes that were occurring. At this time the village prose writers created a false picture about the village. This style of prose which glossed over any problems with the Soviet system was called "Social Realism". After World War II, there was a massive movement from the villages to the cities. This movement took place because of the extensive damage that the village experienced as a result of the war. Stalin's forced collectivization of all of the farms in Russia also made the existence of a peasant population almost impossible. This migration also caused a destruction of the customs and values of the countryside. At this point in time, many writers changed their emphasis in village prose from positive change to the destruction of the Russian morality. In the late 50's and early 60's the village prose writers were more critical of the countryside. This new openness was caused by two events, the death of Stalin and the 20th Party Congress. Stalin died in 1953 and after his death there was a great change in censorship of Russian authors. No longer did writers have to praise collectivization of the villages in order to be published. In addition to this, in 1959 the 20th Party Congress made a statement denouncing the "cult of personality" that Stalin possessed. With this denunciation, writers could criticize the Stalin era easier.

Three novellas illustrate an emphasis on the peasants problems. *Carpenters Stories* by Belov shows how the peasants respect the ancient Russian culture but how it is being destroyed against their will. *Matryena's Home* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn is a bittersweet tale of the hard life of a peasant woman. Finally, *Three, Seven Ace* by Vladimir Tendryakov shows how the Soviet system has no roots, such as religion, to support the laws which make morality an impossible dream.

With all the political and social freedoms of the late 50's and early 60's, the village prose was able to show the true destruction of moral values in Russia.