



# Three Russian Tales of the Eighteenth Century: The Comely Cook, Vanka Kain, and "Poor Liza"

*Mikhail Chulkov, Matvei Komarov, Nikolai Karamzin*

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For those who cannot read the language of the original texts, the lively and varied world of eighteenth-century Russian literature has been largely inaccessible. In this valuable collection, expert translator David Gasperetti presents three seminal tales that express the major literary, social, and philosophical concerns of late-eighteenth-century Russia.

The country's first bestseller, Matvei Komarov's *Vanka Kain* tells the story of a renowned thief and police spy and is also an excellent historical source on the era's criminal underworld. Mikhail Chulkov's *The Comely Cook* is a cross between *Moll Flanders*, with its comic emphasis on a woman of ill-repute who struggles to secure her place in society, and *Tristram Shandy*, with its parody of the conventions of novel writing. Finally, Nikolai Karamzin's "Poor Liza," the story of a young woman who kills herself over a failed love affair, set the standard for writing sentimentalist fiction in Russia.

Taken as a whole, these three works outline the beginnings of modern prose fiction in Russia and also illuminate the literary culture that would give rise to the Golden Age of Russian letters in the middle of the next century.

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