

**Title:** Poetry and Politics: Reading Shalamov's Poem «Аввакум в Пустозерске» Allegorically  
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Although known primarily as a prose writer, Varlam Shalamov regarded himself foremost as a Russian poet. The poem «Аввакум в Пустозерске» (1955), an important and near programmatic lyric in his dynamic poetic production, invites an exploration of connections between Shalamov and Russian poetry as well as Russian history. Written in iambic tetrameter and consisting of thirty-seven four-line stanzas, the poem engages with the fate of the seventeenth-century schismatic priest Avvakum. Read as an allegory, the poem can be suggested to address the violent oppression in the twentieth century which Shalamov personally experienced: the terror under Stalin.

A self-proclaimed atheist, Shalamov endows the historical figure of Avvakum with political connotations: as a lyric hero of his poem, the archpriest becomes a representative of Russian resistance to the abuse of power. While explicitly evoking a religious dispute, the poem is implicitly directed at one of the most urgent artistic questions of the second half of the twentieth century: Is poetry allowed after Auschwitz? Whereas Shalamov's prosaic works both contradict and succumb to Adorno's negative contemporaneous assessment of art and culture, the poem «Аввакум в Пустозерске» displays an unrelenting belief in the significance of poetry.

Through a conscious combination of the Siberian exile of Avvakum with the Siberian imprisonment of Shalamov, the poem blurs the temporal distance between seventeenth-century religious resistance and twentieth-century political opposition to articulate a unity through painful experiences endured, as well as shared, over centuries. The necessity of such a temporally removed connection, premised as it is on allegory, could have allowed for the poem's publication during Shalamov's lifetime.

The twofold historical contexts of «Аввакум в Пустозерске» thus allow the reader not only to locate Shalamov in the tradition of Russian poetry but also to interpret the implications of the Russian poetic tradition for Shalamov as a poet.