

Challenging the Barriers of Expectation: Female Voices in Russian Literature in the
First Half of the Nineteenth Century

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Вам –

Всем женщинам, которые были и есть в моей жизни, которые меня растили и воспитывали и своим примером научили, как быть сильной, стойкой и независимой, одной из них.

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Introduction

In the last thirty years scholars have been rediscovering women writers and reintegrating them into the history of Russian literature. Twentieth century writers like Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) and Marina Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) have been accepted into the literary canon but the predecessors who came a century before them have yet to be recognized by more than a few specialists in an already small field. Western scholars like Catriona Kelly, Wendy Rosslyn, and Diana Greene have been essential to the growing interest in the women writers who lived and published in the nineteenth century. Much of the existing scholarship features individual writers, like Susanne Fusso's and Alexander Lehrman's *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* or Wendy Rosslyn's *Anna Bunina (1774-1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry*, but there are few comparative studies, particularly of work by women in the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, Olga Peters Hasty recently published *How Women Must Write: Inventing the Russian Woman Poet* in 2019, but her study has a much broader focus than this dissertation, and it analyzes only two of the five women I will be discussing here.

The five writers I will be commenting on are Anna Bunina (1774-1829), Nadezhda Teplova (1814-1848), Elena Gan (1814-1842), Evdokiia Rostopchina (1811-1853), and Karolina Pavlova (1807-1893). The work of these five writers has never been studied in a comparative manner. My analysis will focus on the views these women express on love and marriage, on the state of being a woman writer, and on their sense of their identity as a woman. As this study will show, while there are common themes and concerns to be found in all of the writers under review, there gradually emerged a consistent perspective in their work that became increasingly socially aware and critical of society. As the women found their own voices in literature, their

thoughts came together to create a single woman's voice that could speak for the majority of women writers in Russia during this time period.

At a time when women were expected to be gentle, docile, and submissive, Bunina, Gan, Teplova, Rostopchina, and Pavlova wrote and acted explicitly against set gender norms by publishing original Russian works, participating in literary groups, and becoming highly esteemed for their writing. They wrote within fifty years of each other and gained the same positive reception from contemporaries, so their literary experiences are very similar despite their differences in class, education, and personal lives. Through their literary works the writers provide very intimate and genuine glimpses of their ideas regarding their own place in society, while also purposefully inserting a message and a particular point of view for the reading public, thus forming their literary voice.

As Barbara Heldt emphasizes, "all of the most memorable heroines of Russian literature appear in works by men" and "the most famous feminist novels in Russian literature have all been written by men."¹ The problem with literature written by men, as expressed by feminist literary scholar Judith Fetterly, is that it "insists on universality at the same time that it defines that universality in specifically male terms," shaping the image of how women are portrayed and giving women a voice from their male perspective.² Even today, the literary canon includes very few women. Thus, it is essential to rediscover and examine the works written specifically by women. This dissertation does not focus on the evaluation of the literary value of works by Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova, but rather highlights and assesses the

¹ Barbara Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3.

² Judith Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), xii.

messages, ideas, and feelings their works convey on three important aspects of their lives and identities: ideas on love and marriage, their identities as women writer, and their identities as women per se.

Choice of Authors and Works

These specific five writers were chosen for a multitude of reasons. They were generally widely respected for their works and were esteemed as much as their more famous contemporaries, like Vasily Zhukovsky (1783-1852) and Aleksandr Pushkin (1799-1837). In part due to their popularity at that time, these women have sufficient biographical information and published collections of works to allow serious scholarship today, unlike many of their contemporaries who have very few materials that remain. The fifty years spanning the publications of their works covers a range of literary and social movements and literary conventions, creating a fascinating foundation for comparative study. Bunina was chosen as the earliest professional writer, Nadezhda Teplova was chosen as the last representative of Romantic elegiac poetry, and Elena Gan was chosen as the first Russian feminist in prose. Rostopchina and Pavlova are arguably the best writers of their generation and therefore the most studied, so they were naturally chosen as the last representatives of the late Romantic movement. Most significantly all five writers incorporate powerful ideas on the state of women in Russian nineteenth century society, decades before the social and political movements allowed conversation around women and their place in society to take shape.

As Catriona Kelly writes, everyone creating scholarly work must “negotiate the explosive area of personal choice.”³ There were many notable women who wrote in the studied time period who are all deserving of further research. The writer and salon hostess Zinaida Volkonskaia (1789-1862), the poet Aleksandra Fuks (1805-1853), and the prose writer Mariia Zhukova (1804-1855) are just a few of important names from the first half of the nineteenth century who published important original works. Zinaida Volkonskaia, and others like her, were not ultimately chosen for the project because most of her prose was originally published in French. Aleksandra Fuks, while important, did not receive nearly the same level of recognition as other poets in her time. Mariia Zhukova does not have substantial biographical information and, as Catriona Kelly suggests, saw writing as a lucrative vocation so she “shape[d] and direct[ed] her material in order to ensure its appeal.”⁴ In contrast, the five chosen, writers wrote works “as a one-way process of emotional communication” and imbued their writings with genuine messages.⁵

Barbara Engel asserts that “fiction provides an unreliable means of ascertaining an author’s ideas,” but I do not think this is the case when evaluating a wide range of the author’s full collection of works because some ideas appear many times in similar ways, allowing the possibility that they are the author’s true ideas.⁶ The writers have extensive collections of work and incorporate a wide variety of themes and genres. For the purpose of this project, however, only the works which provide the most cohesive and strongest messages centered on womanhood, marriage and love, and being a writer were considered for further examination.

³ Catriona Kelly, *An Anthology of Russian Women's Writing, 1777-1992* (Kiribati: Oxford University Press, 1994), xix.

⁴ Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing, 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 81.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶ Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 28.

These three topics were chosen for study in this dissertation because they are the most prominent in the writers' lives. In their time period, noblewomen were only expected to have roles as wives and mothers, yet the five women chose additional roles of writers for themselves. Thus, the most important parts of their identities became wife and mother, writer, and woman.

When the works of the writers are studied in a chronological order, patterns of messages and ideas begin arising. As the earliest writer of the five, Anna Bunina's poetry provides a foundation for the comparison for the later women's work. With each following writer there is a distinct progression of ideas. Regarding love and marriage, Anna Bunina's works contain a message that union should be based on the higher emotion of love, Nadezhda Teplova shows that love is an elevated feeling but that it can cause harm to a woman, Elena Gan portrays unhappy heroines who endure marriage, Evdokiia Rostopchina shows that love and marriage are incompatible, and Karolina Pavlova conveys that the Romantic and idealized expectations of love do not exist and can be harmful to women. Similarly, their ideas on womanhood share a progression spanning from questioning a woman's place in society to condemning society for constricting women. The same dissatisfaction informs their ideas regarding being a woman writer, stemming from feelings of isolation to depicting unfair treatment women face as writers.

Notably, this progression does not stem from the writers interacting with each other and each other's works. As Heldt comments, unlike the male writers "the women poets of Russia have no such overt tradition of interconnection. For the most part separated in their homes, not educated together at lyceums or universities, having no links with the business world of art – literary journals read by women were owned and edited by men – they rarely met."⁷ The four

⁷ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 105.

later writers might have been aware of Bunina's poems as they were mentioned a few times by various critics like Vissarion Belinskii (1811-1848), but by the time the other four began publishing Anna Bunina was considered old-fashioned and her literary reputation was almost forgotten. In Belinskii's 1834 review of Elena Gan's works he also mentions Bunina and highly praises Nadezhda Teplova, which allows the possibility that the later writers were not only aware of each other but Bunina too.⁸ The same article also criticizes both Pavlova and Rostopchina, the former for her choice of translations and the latter for incorporating feelings but lacking thoughts. Evdokiia Rostopchina in her own letter discusses the critics' comparison of her works to those of Elena Gan's and Karolina Pavlova's.⁹ Pavlova and Rostopchina even wrote poems dedicated to each other, though the tone is more antagonistic than positive. Despite the women being aware of each other, their works do not directly reference each other or copy each other's ideas, so the works and the ideas expressed within them can be considered entirely their own. In part, this distinction makes these writers even more interesting for comparative study.

Structure

The dissertation is divided into five main chapters, two of which feature historical and biographical information and three of which are dedicated to the analysis of the writers' poetry and prose. The first chapter provides a very brief historical and social foundation to understanding the lives, education, and opportunities of women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The second chapter serves as a continuation of historical background of the writers'

⁸ Vissarion Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*, tom 5 (Moskva: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1979) 249.

⁹ Evdokiia Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia, Proza, Pis'ma* edited by Boris Romanov (Moskva: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1986) 352.

works by featuring the biographies of the five women, their literary movements, and their reception. The following three chapters are each dedicated to a chosen literary theme, starting with love and marriage, then their identity as women, and finally their status as writers. Lastly, I examine the writers' main messages to emphasize why Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova are worthy of continued scholarly attention and why their literary voices are significant to understanding the concerns and feelings of women.

In each chapter I discuss some broad societal and literary factors associated with the time period, genre, or literary movement in order to further contextualize the women's writing. Then, I analyze the chosen works in order to discern the underlying message and ideas presented in either poems or prose. The chapters follow the sequence of Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, Elena Gan, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova, a sequence derived from the decades they were most active, and the literary movements associated with them. Analyzing the works in a chronological order allows patterns and themes to emerge that appear to be inherent to these figures as women writers and poets. The last discussion of each chapter will focus on the specific aspects of the writers' work that meld them into a single cohesive group.

Transliteration, Translation, Orthography, and Dates

This dissertation follows the Library of Congress of transliteration guidelines for Russian, including all names, unless the materials were published in English with a different spelling. Unless otherwise stated, the translations from Russian to English text for both prose and poetry are my own with the notable distinction of Joe Andrews translations of Elena Gan's prose and Barbara Heldt's *A Double Life*. The translation for poetry is direct and as close as possible to the

original Russian in order to provide the best understanding of the words and meaning. Any quoted sources that use pre-Soviet Cyrillic orthography have been automatically changed to the modernized version of spelling. All dates are given according to the Old Style of the Julian calendar used before 1918, as they appear in original sources.

Chapter 1: A Historical Perspective

The nineteenth century in the Russian Empire was one of the most dynamic and transformative in history, producing some of the greatest accomplishments in industry but also in art, music, and literature. There were major changes in education, occupation, and laws over the course of the century which allowed previously powerless social groups to improve their life. In this period, the Russian Empire divided subjects into official social estates based on birth and location that defined individual rights and duties, called *sosloviia*, such as nobility, clergy, and merchantry. As the scholar Alison K. Smith explains, “although *soslovie* membership meant different things at different times, it consistently defined the kind of taxes one paid, the kind of duties one owed the state, the kind of legal process one was entitled to, and the economical and educational opportunities available to one.”¹⁰ In the nineteenth century, women of all *soslovie* groups gained unprecedented rights and opportunities. This allowed women to begin living more independently than at any time in the past, both socially and financially. In order to understand the significance of the emergence and eminence of writers like Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, Elena Gan, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova, their social environment needs to be addressed and evaluated because it sheds light on society’s attitudes and expectations of women and the women’s limitations. This chapter first examines the history of the education of women and their literary opportunities leading up to the nineteenth century, and then provides a broad view of the social and political changes of the century in relation to the opportunities they afforded women.

¹⁰ Alison K. Smith, *For the Common Good and Their Own Well-being: Social Estates in Imperial Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 1.

Education

Education of women in Russia has had a long and turbulent history. According to scholar Sophie Satina, the history of education spans back as early as 1025, at which time Yaroslav the Wise established the first public libraries and educational institutions in which women were allowed to learn.¹¹ The Tatar-Mongolian rule over Slavic lands from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, however, put a halt on education for both men and women. Until Peter I (r. 1682-1725) in the seventeenth century, most people remained uneducated and illiterate. Peter I revolutionized the Russian education system by establishing the Academy of Sciences, publishing newspapers, and opening primary and secondary schools for boys of all social estates, except the peasant estate.¹² This was the first time in Russian history that literacy became compulsory for clergy and sons of the nobility, even though this was not strictly regulated.¹³ It was only in his last year of life that Peter I provided women with the opportunity to learn by attaching schools to nunneries. Despite initially ignoring women's education, he did demand that women attend and participate in public "assemblies," or open public gatherings that were previously attended solely by men, or also gatherings in the homes of prominent families.¹⁴ This ended the public segregation of men and women that was previously characteristic of society and provided the foundation of later literary circles.

Catherine II (r. 1762-1796) expanded learning institutions for women by opening schools for both sexes. In 1782 two-class elementary schools were established and in 1786 four-class

¹¹ Sophie Satina, *Education of Women in Pre-Revolutionary Russia*, trans. Alexandra F. Poustchine (New York, 1966) 12.

¹² *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³ Joseph Laurence Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland: Education, Educators, and Pedagogical Ideals in Eighteenth Century Russia* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1979) 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

schools were established, with both being free for the pupils. In this first phase, 223 schools were opened and by 1796 1,121 girls attended, with the majority of them living in St. Petersburg.¹⁵ According to the scholar George K. Epp, in 1782 Catherine also established the School Commission to carry out major reforms, such as creating a central administration for the public school system, preparing textbooks, and selecting a standard school curriculum.¹⁶ Additionally, the School Commission introduced special courses for teachers, trying to increase the number of teachers, which presented a major problem for the progress of schools as schools were opening in the provinces but waiting for trained teachers. As Epp remarks, in a few decades “by the end of Catherine's reign, uniformity of teaching methods, textbooks, and teacher training had been achieved throughout Russia.”¹⁷ In 1782 the Russian public school system had 8 schools with approximately 518 students: by 1796 there were 316 schools and over 17,000 students, and by 1855 about 450,000 students were learning in 8,277 elementary schools.¹⁸ Notably, these figures do not account for the students in parochial schools, technical schools, or other learning institutions. Also, the overwhelming majority of students were male, with female students accounting for less than 10 percent.

Along with other educational reforms, Catherine II was the first to establish secondary education for girls. She opened the Smolny Institute in 1764 for 200 noble girls. The school had a very strict curriculum as education in Smolny lasted about 10 years and the girls could not leave the school until graduation. The students were taught many different courses in French, including elementary anatomy, beginner physics, and economics in their older years.¹⁹ While this

¹⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁶ George K. Epp, *The Educational Policies of Catherine II: The Era of Enlightenment in Russia* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984) 112.

¹⁷ Ibid., 125.

¹⁸ Ibid., 173, 175.

¹⁹ Satina, *Education of Women*, 38.

first phase of the program had extensive focus on academic education, the graduates were very unprepared for the real world. The limited contact with life outside the school was intended to groom morally perfect girls, but it had a disastrous effect. The graduates knew very few practical and social skills, and most importantly returned as complete strangers to their families. In the 1780s the emphasis of Smolny Institute's education shifted to become more feminine and traditional. According to the scholar Barbara Clements "New government instructions emphasized the importance of teaching young women to be actively involved in rearing their children and reaffirmed the importance of women's accepting the power structure of the family."²⁰

After Peter's and Catherine's establishment and expansion of state-run and private educational institutions, an increasing number of children of nobility, including girls, began receiving education. Instead of sending their children to school, however, learning at home through tutors and governesses became the customary form of education for an overwhelming majority of the nobility in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries.²¹ Families hired mostly foreign tutors to teach children foreign languages, arithmetic, and ancient history, although a girl's education focused primarily on literature, art, and music. According to the scholar T. I. Staroverova, the trend of tutor employment coincided with specific eras in history; French tutors were popular under Elizabeth I and reached the peak of popularity under Catherine II, then the trend turned to German teachers in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and finally to English tutors in the second half of the twentieth century.²² Also, due to their meticulousness, pedagogy, and organizational ability, German tutors and governesses were more

²⁰ Barbara Evans Clements, *A History of Women in Russia: From Earliest Times to the Present* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 75.

²¹ T. I. Staroverova, "Home Education in Russia," *Russian Education and Society* 53.10 (2011): 30.

²² *Ibid.*, 30.

often hired to teach in military families and merchants. “As a rule, German governesses taught girls to be housewives, qualities especially valued in the merchant community,” such as the one to which Teplova belonged.²³

Some noble families sought tutors to provide a Western education for their daughters because they shared “the new belief that refined society required women’s participation.”²⁴ However, it is important to note that male figures held the role of gatekeepers of education because, as Olga Glagoleva remarks, “the responsibility for choosing the right books for them usually lay with their fathers or older brothers,” who selectively allowed the girls in their lives to read the books they deemed appropriate.²⁵ Elena Gan introduces this problem of purposefully restricting education at the hands of a German tutor in her work *A Futile Gift* [Напрасный дар]. In regard to the writers discussed in the dissertation, Bunina’s childhood education was unfortunate, but Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova benefitted directly from tutors because they all received some form of education at home, even if it was of poor quality.

Tsar Alexander I’s reforms (r. 1801-1825) expanded education by creating the Ministry of Education, headed by Mikhail Speranskii (1772-1839), who himself came from the clergy *soslovie* and was educated in a seminary. He introduced free public education and a school system that was distributed over multiple academic districts over the territory of Russia. These schools were divided into four categories of parish schools, county schools, gymnasiums, and universities. The schools were divided by gender and girls were only allowed to attend the elementary schools. The poet Nadezhda Teplova (1814-1842) wrote in 1839 in a letter to her

²³ Ibid., 26.

²⁴ Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 15.

²⁵ Olga Evgen’evna Glagoleva, *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies, 1700-1850* (Pittsburgh: Center for Russian & Eastern European Studies, University of Pittsburgh, 2000) 12.

friend about her account of the opening of one such a provincial school, which her husband oversaw near Moscow.

Together with the arrival into the world of [my daughter], a woman's school was established here, it is rather original in its structure. Here they learn: French language, music, dance, drawing, grammar, penmanship, and arithmetic, and all this for 120 rubles a year. The poorest can be accepted at half price or even for free. You will not believe, what kind of radical change occurred with the local merchants, who are old-fashioned and stagnant to an impossible degree, and in addition miserly. Now they send many girls, and by the spring there will be, I think, around thirty. The building for the school is big, spacious, and in the past spring it was rebuilt and wonderfully decorated.²⁶

One important consideration is that most parents did not want to send their children to school, especially not their daughters. Teplova touches on this reluctance and describes the older generation of parents, who were against education for girls, as old-fashioned and stagnant. As the government placed more social emphasis and finances into the school systems, the number of schools and their importance grew, and in turn the rates of attendance also increased. Alongside the government schools, church schools were also established.

In 1843 the first schools were opened specifically for clergymen's daughters with the aim of having educated wives and daughters provide a positive influence on the peasant

²⁶ “Вместе с появлением ее в свет устроилось у нас женское училище, довольно оригинальное по своему устройству. У нас учатся: французскому языку, музыке, танцованью, рисованью, грамматике, чистописанию и арифметике, все это за 120 руб. в год. Беднейшие могут быть приняты за половину и даже даром. Вы не поверите, какой трудный переворот совершился в здешнем купечестве, старинном и закоснелом до невероятности, и притом скупом. Теперь отдают много девочек, и к весне будет, думаю, около тридцати. Дом для училища у нас большой, поместительный и нынешней весной перестроен и прекрасно отделан” Vadim Erazmovich Vatsuro, “Zhizn' i poeziia Nadezhdy Teplovoi” *Pamiatniki kul'tury, novye otkrytiia: pis'mennost', iskusstvo, arkheologiya* (Moscow: Krug, 1990), 33.

parishioners.²⁷ Some of the women who attended these schools became schoolteachers and after 1865, some schools were opened for clergymen's daughters specifically for that purpose. The main goal of these schools, however, was to craft the perfect wives for clergymen, as the church believed they were the only women who could fulfill the task and help peasants without feelings of superiority or disgust toward the peasants. This idea seemed sound because clergywomen were the only women among the different *soslovie* groups to grow up among peasants, thus knowing their customs and values.

Initially, the schools' teaching focused purely on household and agricultural chores, but after 1868 the schools expanded their curriculum.²⁸ The newer curriculum, strongly based on religion, emphasized learning liturgy equivalent to the knowledge of clergymen and knowing and emulating the lives of female saints. Women were also allowed to take secular courses in these schools, though courses like French required a fee. By knowing these subjects, women became the best candidates to help clergymen as well as becoming schoolteachers for peasants. The goal was for the women to not only teach academic subjects, but also to provide a domestic atmosphere in the classroom, which the pupils could emulate at home, covering such topics as hygiene, childrearing, among many others. More than half of the graduates did become schoolteachers, regardless of whether they married or whom they married. Interestingly, even as women were getting educated and gaining more influential roles in society, the religious press still wrote about the dangers of women. Church publicists often warned against "bad wives" who did not perform their godly duties, wrote about "good wives" who could still tempt their husbands away from performing their church duties, and constantly reminded people that women

²⁷ Laurie Manchester, "Gender and Social Estate as National Identity: The Wives and Daughters of Orthodox Clergymen as Civilizing Agents in Imperial Russia," *The Journal of Modern History* 83.1 (2011): 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 56.

are not equal to men.²⁹ Even within the structure that educated women, allowed them a new social role, and gave them influence over others, women were still believed to be lesser than men.

In 1845, as conversation began about the opportunities for women, the Head Council for Women's Institutions of Education was formed under the newly formed Statutes for the Institutes, which handled all matters dealing with secondary education for women. In 1862 girls from all social estates were permitted to attend secondary schools. The school curriculum was also expanded for an additional year or two for them to be trained as teachers. At the end of the century, women who completed their seven years could opt in for another three years for commercial or technical subjects instead of the one-year pedagogical training.³⁰ The technical subjects involved needlework and applied art while the commercial subjects involved stenography, English language, and international correspondence.

In 1850s the "woman question" began to arise, asking what woman's nature is, what their possibilities are, and what women should do in society. The works of Rostopchina and Pavlova coincide with this period of questioning a woman's position and her limitations. Feminists, who became more prominent at this time, argued that women could and should be provided with work and gain a useful education. The historian Richard Stites writes that some were "bewailing the uselessness of girls' private school education that did not prepare them for life and that was passed on, willy-nilly, to the next generation of daughters."³¹ These early ideas of Russian feminism emphasized that women's education can improve a family's domestic life and women

²⁹ Ibid., 62-63.

³⁰ Satina, *Education of Women*, 40.

³¹ Richard Stites. *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 33.

can become better mothers. The major difference between Russian and European feminism lies in Russia's heavy emphasis on the possibilities of social justice after emancipation. The first wave of feminists in the 1850s and 1860s, led by the first-generation activists like Anna Filosofova (1837-1912), Nadezhda Stasova (1822-1895), and Mariia Trubnikova (1835-1897), concentrated their efforts on helping the urban poor and improving education.³² In 1858 more rigorous secondary schools for girls were established, and these taught more courses like literature and languages. Even though the government provided minimal funding and guidance, feminists, philanthropists, and local governments themselves worked to establish 125 schools by 1868, which enrolled more than 10,000 girls.³³

Due to the isolated nature of Institutes and their poor education, their students became the subjects of jokes and ridicule, and considered by many to be "light-headed and ultra-naïve."³⁴ In response, in 1858 a type of secondary day school was created called *gymnasia*, featuring classes that were open to all social estates of society. Unlike the schools for boys, those for girls did not prepare the students for universities but instead trained them for pedagogical work. These schools had a curriculum of 7 years and taught a variety of classes like literature, history, and geography. Similar to the Institutes, the *gymnasia* had very strict rules and fixed curricula. Likewise, they provided 2 optional years of pedagogical courses. Alongside the government sponsored *gymnasia*, privately-owned *gymnasia* were also established. By the end of the century, there were thousands of schools with more than a quarter of a million pupils from all *soslovie*, especially the nobility. This contrasts strikingly with the beginning of the century when Gan and

³² Clements, *A History of Women*, 115.

³³ Clements, *A History of Women*, 117.

³⁴ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 5.

Rostopchina received a mediocre education from tutors and Bunina educated herself. Teplova and Pavlova stand apart from the rest because they received a good education from their tutors.

Higher education opportunities for men began in 1755 with the first university established in Moscow, followed by the establishment of universities in Kazan, Kharkov, and St. Petersburg, as well as the reopening of the previously closed schools in Vilna and Dorpat, between 1803 and 1819. None of the universities, however, allowed women to attend. According to the scholar Vera Kaplan, the universities were mostly autonomous until the changes of the 1835 reform that created a general university chapter, replacing each university's distinct statutes and regulations.³⁵ The universities emphasized generalized knowledge over specific vocational training, so an increasing number of specialized institutions were founded throughout the century.³⁶ For example, "a technical institute was opened in St. Petersburg in 1828, a law school in 1835, an engineering school in 1842; in Moscow, a drafting school (1826), a technical school (1830), a surveying school (1844); and in Dorpat, a technical school (1834) and veterinary institute (1848)."³⁷ These all-male schools expanded the possibilities for men, but women were not afforded the same privilege. Richard Stites credits the devastating loss of the Crimean War (1853-1856) as the beginning of the major changes regarding women, including their entrance into higher education.³⁸

The surgeon and educator Nikolai Pirogov (1810-1881) organized and trained a group of women volunteers to become the "Sisters of Mercy of the Society of the Exaltation of the Cross," who went to the front lines to serve as nurses for the soldiers. Out of the 163 members,

³⁵ Vera Kaplan, "The History of Reform in Russian Higher Education," *European Education* 39.2 (2007): 43.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁷ Catherine Evtuhov, et al, *A History of Russia: Peoples, Legends, Events, Forces*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004) 356.

³⁸ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 30.

most were wives, daughters, and widows of the landowning social estates, but some were also from the bourgeois estate, *meshchanstvo* (townspeople) estate, and a few others.³⁹ With the success of this opportunity, according to Barbara Engel, by 1864 there were 60 women attending the Medical Surgery Academy of St. Petersburg, taking advantage of the fact that no law prevented women from taking classes.⁴⁰ Medical professors encouraged them to study but conservative officials, however, saw women going against the social order as radicals, so they tried hard to prevent their education. They argued that women were only fit to be mothers and wives, continuing the rhetoric of women belonging in a domestic sphere and being unfit for other roles. This rhetoric was so pervasive that in 1864, officials barred women from pursuing a higher education, calling this a response to rising radical activity.⁴¹ This led to many women seeking an education abroad.

In response to the universities' refusal to accept women, feminists were able to lobby for the establishment of higher women's courses, which were private colleges staffed by volunteer professors and funded by donations.⁴² The most prestigious of these were the Bestuzhev Courses in St. Petersburg founded in 1878, which initially focused on liberal arts but gradually added science and mathematics, becoming equivalent to a university program. More than 700 women were enrolled annually in the first eight years, but the minister of education, Dmitrii Tolstoi (minister 1866-1880) refused to give the program degree-granting authority, so the graduates were prohibited from receiving degrees.⁴³ By the 1880s, courses similar courses were established in Moscow, Kazan, Kharkov, and Kiev, allowing women to concentrate in humanities or in

³⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁰ Barbara Engel, "Women Medical Students in Russia, 1872-1882: Reformers or Rebels?" *Journal of Social History* 12.3 (1979): 396.

⁴¹ Ibid., 396.

⁴² Clements, *A History of Women*, 118.

⁴³ Ibid., 118.

natural sciences. This progress that allowed women to adopt roles beyond mother and wife, as eighteenth and early nineteenth century writers wished to do, occurred nearly half a century after the deaths of Bunina, Teplova, and Gan.

Literature

Before Peter I, Russia did not really have high secular culture or art, including literature in the way people perceive it today. After Peter's Westernizing reforms that introduced new customs and institutions, theatre paved the way for other forms of art and literature. According to Laura Donnels O'Malley, Peter's sister Natal'ia Alekseevna (1693-1740) staged plays in private theatres based on German companies and eventually wrote plays herself, becoming the first woman to do so in Russia.⁴⁴ Empress Anna Ionnovna (r. 1730-1740), Peter's niece who ruled for a decade after him, invited numerous foreign theatre companies to perform for the court, including ones headed by women. Elizabeth I (r. 1741-1761) expanded theatre's influence even more when she created the first professional theatre company in Russia during her reign. Finally, Catherine II built new theaters, including the Hermitage Theatre in the Winter Palace, founded the Imperial Theatrical School in 1779 for actors, singers and dancers, and included drama in the curriculum for the girls in Smolny Institute.⁴⁵

Catherine II herself not only wrote plays but also encouraged others to do so, including her good friend Princess Ekaterina Dashkova (1743-1810). These plays were both published and performed for the court. Additionally, Catherine II appointed Dashkova as the director of the

⁴⁴ Laura Donnels O'Malley, "Signs of Empresses and Actresses: Women and Theatre in the Eighteenth Century." *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) 10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

Academy of Sciences, during which time Dashkova edited a 43-volume periodical anthology of Russian drama, which caused a rift between the two women as Dashkova published works which referred to revolt, this angering Catherine who feared a revolution.⁴⁶ This initially positive relationship to drama and literature sparked other noble women to write works too, though most of it consisted of translations. Many wives and daughters of poets, such as Elizaveta Kheraskova (1746-1797), Ekaterina Sumarokova (1746-1797), and Aleksandra Rzhevskaja (1740-1769), gaining encouragement from their spouses and families, became the first women to publish poetry in Russia.

In 1795 in St. Petersburg, Catherine II established the first public library in Russia, called “The Imperial Library.”⁴⁷ The scholar Nataliya Romyantseva writes, “the interest of the population in reading was an enormous one here – during the first 30 years the readers were given more than 100 thousand of publications.”⁴⁸ By 1802, there were about 20 bookshops in Moscow and new ones were opening in provincial towns, receiving not just male but also female readers. Literacy rates, however, were estimated to be between 3 and 7 percent in the 1790s and most of the printed literature consisted of foreign translations or adaptations. Despite the low literacy rates overall, by the end of the century about 90% of the noblewomen were literate.⁴⁹ According to Olga Glagoleva, over the course of the eighteenth-century reading went from being a male activity to a significant pastime for noblewomen with a serious impact on their minds and lives.⁵⁰ As Glagoleva claims, at the turn of the nineteenth century, “women quickly became important subjects of literature and its chief target audience,” causing writers to look for ideas

⁴⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁷ Romyantseva, “State Reforms,” 50.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁴⁹ Evtuhov, et al, *A History of Russia*, 299.

⁵⁰ Olga E. Glagoleva, “Imaginary World: Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750-1825), *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003) 130.

and methods that would appeal specifically to women.⁵¹ However, men were also concerned about women's reading and often directed or supervised the content of books, which stemmed from their concern that family structures would be disrupted by women becoming swept up in the imaginary world of novels.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the phenomenon of Sentimentalism advanced women's opportunities in the literary sphere, allowing some to transition from passive readers to active writers. The key tenets of Sentimentalism rested on morality, and emphasized sensitivity, compassion, and purity. Men attributed all these traits to women, so naturally they became examples and inspiration for their works, or as N. N. Verevkin later wrote, women's role was to "be beauty, not create it."⁵² This idealization of feminine qualities and women as innocent muses sparked patriarchal thinking. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), the Swiss writer and philosopher helped shape Sentimentalism in Russia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Rousseau's ideas relied heavily on the premise that men and women are inherently different, so they need a separate education, and women should dedicate their life to being helpful to their spouses. This new wave of philosophy was spread by those who agreed with Rousseau, like Nikolai Karamzin, who reaffirmed that women should be viewed as models of sentiment who belonged in the home with family, creating a cult of domesticity that lasted for the majority of the nineteenth century and incorporated beliefs that women were innately more moral than men. As Barbara Clements writes, "safe within the domestic circle, far from the corruptions of the public world, they could cultivate their natural piety, teach their children to be moral people and good citizens, and provide support to their husbands. By building stable

⁵¹ Ibid., 132.

⁵² Kelly, *A History*, 42.

families, women would contribute to stability in the society at large,” and “women could serve as moral guides for their husbands and children.”⁵³

This kind of thinking, while restricting women’s roles, also partially allowed women to contribute to literature. Since Sentimental writers and philosophers expected women to raise the morality of the nation, educated women were encouraged to write for the benefit of society. For the most part, however, the works of women were not viewed as literature, but rather as writing exercises [упражнения].⁵⁴ Nikolai Ostolopov, the editor of the journal *Lover of Philology* [Любитель словесноти] actively encouraged women to write, yet in 1806 he wrote “we know that a commonplace composition by a woman has more effect on our sex than a model work by a man, because when we read the former we imagine the lady writer herself, transport ourselves mentally into her study, see the beautiful lady, kiss the hand which depicts her thoughts and feelings for us, and strive to imitate ourselves.”⁵⁵ Many other publishers echoed the condescension conveyed by Ostolopov, but some women nonetheless chose to enter the literary field and write original works following the models of Sentimentalism.

Writers like Mariia Pospelova (1780-1805), Ekaterina Puchkova (1792-1867), and Mariia Izvekova (1789?-1830) chose to conform to the ideals set forth by literary men, as scholar Alessandra Tosi remarks.⁵⁶ This means the women chose content and created an authorial voice that aligned with the predetermined notions of Sentimentalism. This included lyric meditations, moralizing messages, poetry featuring idyllic nature, and support of traditional femininity in

⁵³ Clements, *A History of Women*, 82-83.

⁵⁴ Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii, (1086-1856)* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevicha, 1899) 270.

⁵⁵ Wendy Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina (1774-1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry in Russia* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997) qtd. in 61.

⁵⁶ Alessandra Tosi, "Women in Literature: Female Authors of Fiction in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 40.

women. As these ideas spread into the domestic sphere, works by these writers also included support for the ideals of submissiveness and selflessness and images of women in their roles as wives. Some women followed these patriarchal conventions of contemplation and moralization, but also included their own ideas regarding women. However, Tosi identifies only two women from this time who completely challenged traditional roles on femininity and Sentimentalism.

Anna Bunina (1774-1829) and Princess Zinaida Volkonskaia (1789-1862) became the archetypes for independent women for future generations. Unlike the previously mentioned writers, Bunina and Volkonskaia chose to “break the vicious cycle of sentimental femininity and dilettantism to create works original in their conception, message, and style.”⁵⁷ Bunina’s poetry and prose expressed feelings of isolation, frustration of working in a male-dominated field, rebellion, and so much more. Through her work, she gained access to an entire network of male writers, many of whom showed her respect as a poet. Volkonskaia too, gained recognition for her work, though she tended to focus on social conditions and contemporary issues. Sometimes dubbed as a proto-feminist, Volkonskaia directly addressed women’s oppression in some of her works. Most famously, perhaps, Volkonskaia was renowned as a salon hostess in the early nineteenth century who directly interacted with women like Karolina Pavlova. Her salon became the center of the literature in the 1820s, providing a space for the most prominent Golden Age writers.

Russians began hosting salons toward the end of the eighteenth century and they influenced intellectual life and the public sphere because they offered a place to gather beyond the reach of the state.⁵⁸ As Olga Glagoleva claims, “for the first time in Russian history (if we

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁸ Engel, *Women in Russia*, 37-38.

exclude the empresses and their female favorites), women had opportunities, if only potential, to gain some public recognition as individuals” because “personal qualities such as education, talent, character, manners, and, certainly good looks, began to play a part of importance in shaping a woman’s independent social status.”⁵⁹ This applied to both salons in the capitals as well as the growing number of provincial salons. By the 1810s, salons provided the main literary space for intellectuals, poets, and other members of high society, allowing them to create and debate art and literature.

During the second decade of the nineteenth century literary journals were also emerging, following the example of Nikolai Karamzin’s *Herald of Europe* [Вестник европы] that he started publishing in 1802. Along with published books, literary journals allowed people to write and publish literature, and they became the dominant mode of transmission of literature and its gatekeeper. It is important to note that most people who contributed to literature or actively read it were urban nobility and wealthy landowners, which was a very small percentage of the population. In the 1850s, they numbered about 886,000 – 1.5 percent of the population and about 5 percent of those inhabiting the capitals.⁶⁰ Literature and intellectual discussion, however, were not restricted to the capitals. According to Olga Glagoleva, in the 1830s almost all provinces of the Russian Empire experienced a rapid growth of the book trade and public libraries, which granted women the access to both Russian and European books and magazines.⁶¹ Likewise, the number of people who participated in creative work and cultural activities kept growing throughout the century as more provincial people wrote fiction, scholarly works, and memoirs. As Glagoleva aptly remarks, the “educated stratum of the Russian provincial noble class

⁵⁹ Glagoleva, *Dream and Reality*, 12.

⁶⁰ Evtuhov, et al, *A History of Russia*, 372.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

provided a solid basis for ‘high’ literature and art” because it “largely determined the environment in which the younger generation grew up” and “became one of the essential factors in driving the entire country’s cultural progress.”⁶²

Nadezhda Teplova and Elena Gan lived in the provinces and this information suggests that they were not completely removed from the intellectual discussions associated with the capitals. Perhaps due to the emergence of schools and universities across Russia, by the end of the century, even in the most provincial areas of the empire educated women subscribed to a few national magazines and newspapers, incorporating literature in their daily lives. Starting in the 1870s historical journals like *Russian Archive* [Русский архив] and *Russian Antiquity* [Русская старина] gained popularity, especially among the bourgeois reading public. Unlike their predecessors earlier in the century, in the second half of the century women had a more active role in shaping the educational upbringing of their children, including the cultivation of an appreciation of literature and art in the household.

These historical journals that were meant to rediscover the past allowed the names of the earlier poets and writers like Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, and Elena Gan to be discussed again. For example, the nineteenth century historian Erazm Stogov published his memories of Anna Bunina in *Russian Antiquity* in 1879 and in the same journal in 1887 Vera Zhelikhovskaia published her childhood memories of her mother Elena Gan. The historians Elena Nekrasova and Daniil Mordovtsev published biographical information about a few different writers, in *Russian Antiquity* and as a separate book, respectively. The full collections of Evdokiia Rostopchina’s works were published separately in 1890 too. Karolina Pavlova herself also published “My

⁶² Ibid., 72.

Memories” [Мои воспоминания] in 1875 in *Russian Archive*. As more women were reading in the provinces, Russia’s women from earlier in the century were being rediscovered.

Economy and Opportunity

In addition to gaining opportunities in the literary and educational sphere, women were also becoming more independent from men in new ways. Anna Bunina was the first woman in Russia to make a career out of her literary works, and many others followed. Likewise, even though Nadezhda Teplova had a husband who supported her, her letters point to her keen awareness and interest in the business aspect of publishing her works. In other spheres of society women were also gaining unprecedented career opportunities that were partially encouraged by new laws in the nineteenth century. Galina Ulianova’s *Female Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth Century Russia* provides a very useful comprehensive look at female entrepreneurs and economic statistics. In 1753 the government adopted a law that allowed wives to sell their own property without their husband’s consent and independently acquire their own property by any legal means.⁶³ This law was reconfirmed in 1825, and later in 1832, another law made it impossible for the husband to claim his wife’s property, regardless of when it was acquired. This was a major step for women becoming independent from their spouses and families, at least in the sense of property ownership. By this point in time, some women were already independent and had flourishing businesses, but these laws allowed more women to join their ranks.

⁶³ Galina Ulianova, *Female Entrepreneurs in Nineteenth Century Russia* (London: Pickering And Chatto, 2009) 2.

In 1775, Catherine II granted women rights equal to men for engaging in commerce by allowing women to have the same guild membership requirements as men, and this applied equally to unmarried, married, and widowed women. Aside from guild membership, businesses and commercial income allowed some women to change their status and position in society. By the 1820s several hundred women owned businesses in the empire. The majority of these were noble women, followed by merchant women, but some soldier's wives, peasants, and women from the petty bourgeois, *meshchanstvo* estate, the lowest urban class, owned businesses. Like their counterparts in other social states, peasant women were unhappy with their stations and in the years between 1814-1817, 55% of all people petitioning to enter the Moscow *meshchanstvo* class were women. This trend extended even past the Emancipation, though with declining rates, according to historian Alison Smith.⁶⁴ In the years between 1814 and 1832 the total number of female entrepreneurs nearly tripled to almost five hundred. As before, noblewomen owned the most with half of all businesses, but merchants and *meshchane* owned the rest. Also, by 1838, almost 40% of all business premises were owned by women. It should be noted, however, that in most of these instances, sons managed the businesses, but the mothers remained the proprietors. Many of the businesses were also started by husbands, with wives taking official control of the companies after their death. Regardless of who started the business, the numbers of female entrepreneurs rose in these decades and they continued to rise after Russia began its industrial revolution.

For single women, the *meshchanstvo* estate offered security they lacked without husbands, such as social support to help them and their children. Some women upon entering the

⁶⁴ Alison K. Smith, "The Shifting Place of Women in Imperial Russia's Social Order," *Cahiers Du Monde Russe* 51.2/3 (2010): 362.

estate ended up unsuccessful and had to leave the *soslovie*, but others did manage to succeed. Once women entered the *meshchanstvo* estate, many of them married and stayed within the class, some even gaining an education and professional status, which allowed them to move higher in the social ranks. Perhaps most significantly, most of the single mothers who entered the society had successful children. Everyone had an opportunity to gain from their new *soslovie*, which was especially important for the women who would not be able to get those opportunities in their original estate. In 1853, 97 women owned almost 12% of Moscow businesses and produced nearly 10% of annual industrial output for the city, reaching a historic high in the 1860s and continuing the trend until the 1890s.⁶⁵ As the writers struggled for acceptance in the male-dominated literary environment, other women were creating their own opportunities in business.

Despite the economic independence some leading women might have achieved, most were still completely dependent on their spouses. Women required the consent of their husbands before they could get a job, they were required to live with their husbands, and they could not hold a passport in their own name, which prevented them from travelling or living apart from their husbands. Several laws were passed to keep wives submissive to their husbands, such as the 1832 law that stated a “wife is obligated to obey her husband as the head of the family, to live with him in love, respect and unlimited obedience, and to render him all pleasure and affection as mistress of the household.”⁶⁶ This law was in effect until the twentieth century, partly preventing women from divorcing their husbands. Perhaps it was this law that prevented Karolina Pavlova from divorcing her husband, but the fervent belief in a wife’s submissiveness to her husband

⁶⁵ Ulianova, *Female Entrepreneurs*, 77.

⁶⁶ Qtd. in Clements, *A History of Women*, 90.

certainly contributed to the animosity she received from her contemporaries for suing her husband.

Religious authorities decided all cases of marriage law and the Russian Empire had some of the most stringent laws in Europe. According to the historian William Wagner “the church annulled marriages for procedural or similar defects only very rarely, and it permitted divorce only for adultery, prolonged disappearance, sexual incapacity, and exile to Siberia after conviction for a felony.”⁶⁷ However, even under these circumstances the process was so complex and expensive, that people were rarely granted divorce. Another option for women was to receive separate residence permits, which allowed them to live away from their husbands. “The pain experienced in an unhappy marriage was no different from all the other suffering of life, Christians were taught. Suffering was a necessary means to the end of learning how to be patient and dutiful; it brought one closer to Christ, who had suffered agonies for humankind’s sake. So a bad marriage was to be endured humbly, with the hope that things would improve if people stuck it out long enough.”⁶⁸ The writings of nineteenth century women often include themes of unhappy marriages and suffering at the hands of husbands, themes that often corresponded with their own lives.

The discontent toward the government and society experienced by the intelligentsia earlier in the century turned to radicalism by the 1860s. As Barbara Engel explains, feminists and revolutionaries had similar goals of improving women’s situation in society by “mobilizing the support of government officials and propertied people.”⁶⁹ The radicals, many of whom were

⁶⁷ William G. Wagner, *Marriage, Property, and Law in Late Imperial Russia* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1994) 67.

⁶⁸ Clements, *A History of Women*, 92.

⁶⁹ Engel, *Women in Russia*, 125.

women, wanted an egalitarian society, which meant overthrowing the regime. These ideas first appeared in the 1860s with the formation of the nihilists, who rejected traditional beliefs in favor of socially responsible ones. Female members wanted to shock society by smoking cigarettes and cutting their hair short, showing publicly their disdain for their constrained roles. Even though the initial movement of nihilists lasted only for a few years and some previously rebellious women adopted traditional roles, many retained their ideas and turned to revolutionary socialism. In the 1870s, the Land and Liberty [Земля и воля] organization appeared, and its members went to the peasants in the countryside and attempted, mostly unsuccessfully, to teach them about socialism. Women comprised about 20% of the people arrested for this crime. Some members of this group turned radical and became the People's Will [Народная воля] party, and one woman in particular, Sophia Perovskaia (1853-1881), helped lead the group to assassinate Alexander II in 1881, thus becoming the first woman to be executed for revolutionary acts.⁷⁰ However, even though a small group of women became radicals, most feminists focused their attention on equality and reform.

Despite the prevailing traditional patriarchal values and laws that perpetuated the oppression of women, the nineteenth century was one of unprecedented progress for women economically, socially, and politically. Many women were able to receive not just an education but become entrepreneurs, teachers, doctors, writers, and much more. By the 1860s women championed change for themselves and for the poorer classes, some even becoming radicals in the process. This drastically transformative time allowed for the appearance of trailblazing writers and feminists who served as strong role models for their successors. Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, and Elena Gan wrote their works portraying a dissatisfaction with society

⁷⁰ Clements, *A History of Women*, 125.

long before the “woman question” arose in the 1850s. This indicates that individual women were voicing their opinions and rejecting some of society’s traditional values long before women were banding together and creating change. Evdokiia Rostopchina and Karolina Pavlova, likewise, were voicing their concerns but already explicitly blaming society for the limitations it imposed on women and heavily criticizing the values and expectations with which women were raised.

Chapter 2: Biographical Background

During such a dynamic century of social, economic, and intellectual progress, some women were able to thrive and gain recognition among high society as authors. Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, Elena Gan, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova experienced this progress for themselves and pushed the boundaries of accepted norms for women. In order to understand their works and their messages it is important to first review their lives. While authors and their characters and narrators are distinctly different and literature should not be seen as a direct autobiographical reflection of the author's life, literature does provide specific messages shaped by the author, and their life experiences contribute to their ideas. These five women stood apart from many of their contemporaries because they chose to write and publish, so they represent an extremely small percentage of high society women, but they had the experience and the means to assess and disseminate their views on life, womanhood, and authorship.

Anna Bunina (1800s-1820s)

The earliest of the five examined writers is Anna Petrovna Bunina, is not the first Russian woman poet to publish her works, but she is considered to be the first professional writer because her writing solely provided her income. Bunina's position in history is unique because, as historian Konstantin Grot writes, "Bunina herself, her gifts, and her energy are solely responsible for her education and her successes; arriving to the capital from the depths of the countryside by

her own inclinations, she created for herself a prominent and notable standing in the St. Petersburg literary world of the 1810s-1820s.”⁷¹

Wendy Rosslyn’s monograph *Anna Bunina and the Origins of Women’s Poetry in Russia* provides a comprehensive biography on Bunina’s unique life. She was born on January 7, 1774 to a rather affluent noble family in Urusovo, a town in the Ryazan’ region. Bunina’s mother died giving birth to her, so a grief-stricken father allowed family members to raise his seven children. Bunina did not have a constant and stable home, so her education was very neglected, and she did not have a female presence to monitor her propriety and pick suitors once she reached a marriageable age. Rosslyn attributes Bunina’s very independent lifestyle in adulthood to her very uncommon childhood.⁷² When she turned thirteen, the age of marriageability, Anna began living with her oldest brother, Vasilii, in Moscow and she began writing poems. Her brother was very educated for his time, so through him Anna was first introduced to the world of literature and intellect, though very little is known from this time of her life. She did, however, publish a short essay titled “Love” [Любовь] in 1799 in the journal *Hippocrene* [Иппокрена], which disputed Rousseau’s and Karamzin’s ideas on femininity, which will be discussed further in chapter 4. Bunina asserted that “man and woman were similar in nature and equal in status,” and that both partners should be exceptional, not just the woman, which disputed Karamzin’s belief that women were exceptional and meant to elevate the morality of men.⁷³

⁷¹ “Всецело обязанная своим образованием и своими успехами себе самой, своему дарованию и энергии, Бунина, прибывшая в столицу по собственному влечению из деревенской глуши, создала себе видное и почетное положение в Петербургском литературном мире 1810-х--20-х годов.” Konstantin Iakovlevich.Grot, *Al’bom Anny Petrovny Buninoi*, (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1902), 1.

⁷² Wendy Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina (1774-1829) and the Origins of Women’s Poetry in Russia* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997) 12.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 32.

In 1802, Bunina's father died, so she gained unhindered independence in her life and chose to move to St. Petersburg despite her small inheritance. There, at the age of twenty-eight, she hired a member of the Russian Academy, Petr Sokolov, and other tutors to teach her Russian literature, German, French, English, music, physics, and mathematics. In just six months, Bunina spent her inheritance on her education and decided to stay and go into debt rather than return to her family or work as a governess. Through her brother Ivan, Bunina began mingling in literary circles and met her future patrons, which included Alexander Shishkov (1754-1841). Shishkov became one of Bunina's most prominent supporters and often petitioned benefactors on her behalf, gave her literary advice, and published her poems in his journals. Despite her circumstances, Bunina began publishing original poems starting in 1803 in various journals like *The Herald of Europe*, *The Moscow Spectator* [Московский зритель], and *The Lover of Philology*.

Bunina released her first collection of poems in 1809 called *The Inexperienced Muse* [Неопытная муза], earning recognition, respect, and the titles "Russian Sappho" [Русская Сафо] and "The Tenth Muse" [Десятая муза]. Years before her major publication, Bunina began regularly attending a literary circle with Gavriila Derzhavin, Mikhail Murav'ev, and many others through her connection to Shishkov. It is unclear how or exactly when Bunina joined the literary evenings, but her acceptance itself is astonishing. At this time, leisure activities were rather segregated and literary circles were the only places for men to turn to intellectual discourse. Even female salon hostesses, which became commonplace by the 1820s, were uncommon at this time.

In 1807, Sergei Zhikharev wrote his account of attending this literary circle that he later published as part of his "Diary of a Civil Servant" [Записки чиновника] cycle in *Notes of the*

Fatherland [Отечественные записки] in 1855. Zhikharev's account comments on Shishkov's reading of Bunina's original poem about the death of her sixteen-year-old friend out loud to the group. He stated that the poem has "thoughts and enough power in its expressions but, it is strange, they are as if written on command and do not inspire any movement of the soul; these are not the verses of a woman, grieving for her friend, but more like those of a student who is reasoning about life and death; the absence of emotion is their main weakness. ... This thought [her epigraph of 'God gave her to us not for her to leave her here / but to show the earth His creation'] Bunina could have evolved in her verses, not chasing profundity, which is not always appropriate, and especially there, where only feelings should prevail."⁷⁴

Zhikharev's criticism provides insight as to how others viewed Bunina as a salon member. His criticism rests on the idea that Bunina did not provide enough emotion in her poem, but instead focuses too much on philosophy. According to the expectations and ideas promoted during the age of Sentimentalism and Romanticism, women were seen as beings who set the tone for morality and emotional display in society. Zhikharev's comments can be viewed as emphasizing the prevailing notion of women as creatures of feelings who do not need to concern themselves with reason and philosophy. However, men rarely critiqued women's writing as a means of encouraging them to continue with the pastime, so Zhikharev's literary criticism of the poem as lacking emotion for the subject matter is a very uncommon event because it placed Bunina equal to the men in the literary circle, as a member worthy of critique.

⁷⁴ "В них есть мысли и довольно силы в выражениях, но, странное дело, они как будто написаны по заказу и не производят никакого действия на душу; это стихи не женщины, оплакивающей свою подругу, а скорее студента, рассуждающего о жизни и смерти; отсутствие чувства главный их недостаток. ... Эту мысль [ее эпиграф 'Бог дал нам ее не для того, чтоб оставить ее здесь / но чтоб показать на земле свое творение'] могла бы развить Бунина в своих стихах, не гоняясь за глубокомыслием, которое не всегда бывает у места, и особенно там, где должно преобладать одно чувство..." Nikolai Leont'evich Brodskii, editor, *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki: pervaiia polovina XIX veka* (Moscow: Academia, 1930) 25-26.

In 1808 Bunina published a translation of Charles Batteaux's *Rules of Poetry* and the original poem "On Happiness" [О счастья], which was the first *poema*, a type of narrative poetry, written in Russian by a woman poet.⁷⁵ She gained fame beyond the literary circles, even earning patronage from Alexander I and his wife Elizaveta Alekseevna. A year later in 1809 Bunina published the first part of her cycle of poems entitled *The Inexperienced Muse* [Неопытная муза], followed by the second part in 1812. In 1811 Bunina published a work of prose titled *Village Evenings* [Сельские вечера] and joined the premier literary circle *The Conversations of Lovers of the Russian Word* [Беседы любителей русского слова], headed by poet Gavril Derzhavin (1743-1816) and featuring fabulist Ivan Krylov (1769-1844), poet Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783-1852), and many others.

According to the historian Daniil Mordovstsev, at the peak of her fame Bunina's name was as respected as Gavril Derzhavin's, the leading Russian poet of the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. In 1902 scholar Konstantin Grot published Bunina's album, which was a place for friends and family to leave notes and verses for the owner. In Bunina's album many important historical figures left their mark. For example, on March 21, 1810, Derzhavin wrote in rhyming verse "Your verses are pleasant, resounding / they show us your delicate mind / and they are liked because of all that / and nothing more."⁷⁶ Shishkov wrote below, adding "Against the charms of your verses / we are all defenseless / and we, the crows / will caw at least a few words. / It seems to us, that as you are among people / like among us you

⁷⁵ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 34.

⁷⁶ "СТИХИ ТВОИ ПРИЯТНЫ, ЗВОНКИ / ПОКАЗЫВАЮТ УМ НАМ ТОНКИЙ / И НРАВЯТСЯ ТЕМ ВСЕМ / А БОЛЕЕ НИЧЕМ" (qtd. in Grot, *Al'bom Anny Petrovny*, 5).

are a nightingale.”⁷⁷ Derzhavin’s praise seems reserved compared to Shishkov’s, who elevates Bunina above both himself and the other poets.

Even though she found success in the literary world, Bunina never had children or got married, though scholars are unsure as to why. According to the historian Erazm Stogov (1797-1880), who knew Bunina when he was a child and later a young man, Bunina enjoyed a lot of success socially. In the personal memories of her published in 1903 Stogov wrote, “Bunina was not very tall but quite attractive, they say she had many suitors but she valued the glory of her name so much, that she decided not to give up her fame and died an old maid.”⁷⁸ Stogov went into more detail about Bunina’s appearance and social disposition in his work published in 1879. “She was not very tall with a slightly oblong face, black hair, but [her] face was white with a beautiful blush, very lively glittering eyes, graceful movements – [she] was remarkably good looking.”⁷⁹ He notes that she was a favorite guest among the highest aristocracy in St. Petersburg, spoke beautifully, and almost always reigned in social settings. Many emphasize Bunina’s success as both a society woman and poet in order to emphasize the crucial idea that she remained unmarried by choice and not because she lacked suitors.

There were rumors linking Bunina to Ivan Dmitriev (1760-1837), a fellow poet and statesman. The only concrete piece of evidence for the rumors was Derzhavin’s November 10, 1808 letter to Dmitriev. He mentions an account of discussing Dmitriev with Bunina, writing “how shy and modest she is that any time with the mention of your name she hiccups and

⁷⁷ “От прелестей твоих стихов / Все, все без обороны; / Так каркнем же хоть пару слов / И мы, вороны. / Нам кажется, ты то между людей, / Что между нами соловей” (qtd. in Grot, *Al’bom Anny Petrovny*, 5).

⁷⁸ “Бунина была небольшого роста, но прехорошенькая, говорят, она имела много женихов, но так дорожила славой своего имени, что не решилась лишиться известности, и умерла девицей” Erazm Ivanovich Stogov, “Zapiski E. I. Stogova,” *Russkaia starina* 113 (1903): 145.

⁷⁹ “Она была небольшого роста, немного продолговатое лицо, черные волосы, но лицо белое спрекрасным румянцем, очень живые, блестящие глаза, движения грациозны – была замечательно хорошенькой” (Ibid., 51).

trembles,” teasingly and almost sarcastically attributing it to Bunina’s tender and pleasant disposition.⁸⁰ In 1805 Dmitriev published a poem titled “In the Event of Receiving a Gift from an Unknown Woman” [На случай подарка от неизвестной] that was speculated to be about Bunina at the time and thought to be directed at Bunina by the historian Georgii Makogonenko.⁸¹

Нечаянный мне дар целую с нежным чувством!
 Лестнее сердцу он лаврового венца.
 Кто ж та, которая руки своей искусством
 Почтила... в старости счастливого певца?
 Не знаю, остаюсь среди недоумений!
 Так будь же от меня ей имя: добрый гений.

I kiss the accidental gift with tender feelings!
 It is more flattering for the heart than a laurel wreath.
 Who is she, who with art made by her hand
 Honored... a fortunate poet in his old age?
 I do not know, I remain at a loss!
 So her name from me will be: kind genius.⁸²

Wendy Rosslyn examines the relationship and the implications of such an action in depth. Focusing on the fact that the gift was a piece of embroidery and not a poem, Rosslyn speculates that this may have been an attempt by Bunina to diminish her unconventional status as a woman poet and to speak as a woman to a man; or it could be that she wanted to avoid the commonplace situation of woman admirers praising well-known poets in verse.⁸³ A year later, in 1806, a poem was published anonymously titled “To A. P. B-a” [К А. П. Б-ой, в день рождения] on Bunina’s

⁸⁰ “С Анной Петровной мы иногда видимся и беседуем о вас; и как она застенчива и скромна, то всякий раз при имени вашем заикается и дрожит: - это, я думаю, от того, что столь нежного и приятного стихотворца, как вы, иначе невозможно вспомнить” Gavriila Derzhavin, *Sochineniia Derzhavina* (6, St. Petersburg: V tipografii imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1871), 192.

⁸¹ Dmitriev, Ivan Ivanovich *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, edited by Georgii Makogonenko (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1967) 433.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 145

⁸³ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 63

birthday. Evgenii Sviasov attributes the poem to the journal editor, poet, and Bunina's friend Petr Shalikov (1768-1852).⁸⁴ Rosslyn, however, believes Dmitriev himself wrote the poem.⁸⁵

«Будь Сафою другой!» – Природа изрекла –
И стихотворица Лезбийска вновь родилась.
Но чтобы ты ее счастливее была,
Чтоб жизнь твоя в тоске, в слезах не прекратилась
И чтоб Фаон творцем был радости твоей, –
Вот пламенна мольба в сей день души моей!

“Be another Sappho!” – Nature proclaimed –
And the Lesbos poetess was born again.
But may you be happier than she,
So that your life does not end in longing, in tears
And may Phaon be the creator of your joy, -
Here is the fiery plea of my soul on this day!

No matter who wrote the poem, the message seems to promote a successful marriage as a suitable path for Bunina. The writer acknowledges Bunina's talents, which are deemed natural and not a learned skill, but also advises that she find happiness outside of her poems and in a man. Underneath the poem is Bunina's powerful response, titled “The answer to the question of the author of the previous verses, whether they can be printed in *The Moscow Spectator* [Ответ на вопрос автора предыдущих стихов, можно ли их напечатать в Московском зрителе].

Нет истины в речах твоих, о Автор льстивый!
Лишь только оборот в них виден слов игривый.
К несчастью, когда родилась я на свет,
Природа строгое молчание хранила;
Ко счастью, в твоих мольбах мне нужды нет;
Где можно, я люблю; не должно – вдруг остыла.

There is no truth to your speech, o flattering author!
Only the turn of your playful words is seen in them.
Unfortunately, when I was born on this earth,
Nature kept strict silence;
Fortunately, I have no need for your pleas;

⁸⁴ Petr V. Sviasov, *Safo i russkaia liubovnaia poeziia XVIII-nachala XIX vekov* (St. Petersburg: Dmitri Bulanin, 2003) 228.

⁸⁵ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 64.

Where possible, I love; Where I should not, I suddenly grow cold.⁸⁶

With her answer, Bunina reveals a lot of personality and wit. She first points to the words of overt flattery in the original poem, rejecting its claims. Then, she rejects the image of being born a natural poet and reincarnation of Sappho, as the anonymous poem implied. This can be attributed to the modesty she often displayed in the literary world or it can be read as a reference to the hard work she exhibited in learning and writing. The last portion of Bunina's reply directly speaks to the poet's pleas of finding happiness in marriage by stating that she has no need for them. She implies that any feelings she may have had in the past are gone by expressing that she loves when she can and stops loving when it is unnecessary. The poem, no matter to whom it is addressed, clearly depicts that she is in charge of her emotions and by extension, she is control of her own happiness. Despite her assertions, though, Bunina often called herself unhappy. For example, she reflected on her life in what she calls her spiritual will [духовное завещание] in a letter to her brother written on December 4, 1827.

I was permitted to capture bad and good examples without a guide, who could have indicated a place for some on the right, and for others on the left. If it was so desired by God to afflict me with misfortune, then I wailed dejectedly; if in my soul ignited some sort of fire, I thought: 'my soul is created to be fiery – it is not in my power to cool it.' I could not even imagine the freedom of a person. It never occurred to me that a person, especially a woman, should not strive for anything other than the fulfillment of their own responsibilities. I knew well that it is necessary to restrain oneself when our unrestraint could harm someone close to you; I did not cause anyone harm and did not even know

⁸⁶ Bunina, *Neopytmaia muza* 299

how to be malicious. With this, I thought to fulfill all my responsibilities. At the same time I fell from one abyss, into another, from one disaster to another.⁸⁷

One of the struggles Bunina faced all her life was poverty. Despite the patronage she received, Bunina was in constant debt and had to petition the empress for money, as seen by various letters to Shishkov and Count Semyon Vorontsov [1744-1832]. Part of the reason she experienced so much debt was her poor health, which made her unable to write and publish prolifically. As early as 1809 Bunina begins writing poems about illness and death, such as “My Portrait” [Мой портрет], written in 1809 and “To My Nephews and Niece” [Моим племянникам и племяннице], written in 1811, in which she mentions her own death. Perhaps the most tragic poem about her illness is the autobiographical poem “A Sick Woman’s May Walk” [Майская прогулка болящей], written in 1811.

The work includes lines like “hell is nesting in my soul / Etna ignites my desiccated breast / the greedy serpent, weaving around my heart / sucks my boiling blood,” and “my breathing has turned to fire / each breath turned into a sharp arrow / all the deep ulcers have opened up / their pain clouds my mind.”⁸⁸ With these graphic depictions of her illness, Bunina also adds, “there is no doctor to clean my wounds, / there is no hand to wipe my tears, / there are no mouths to comfort me, / there are no breasts on which to rest. / Everyone distances

⁸⁷ “Я была попущена ловить дурные и хорошие примеры без указателя, который означал бы место для одних одесную, для других ошую. Если Богу было угодно посещать меня несчастьями, то я стенала безотрадно; если в душе моей возгорался какой-либо пламень, я думала: «душа моя создана пламенной – охладить ее не в моей воле». Я даже не подозревала свободы человека. Мне никогда не приходило в голову, что человек, в особенности женщина, не должны стремиться ни к чему иному, кроме исполнения своих обязанностей. Я знала твердо, что надлежит обуздывать себя там, где необузданность наша может повредить ближнему; никому не вредила и даже не желала зла. Сим я думала исполнить все свои обязанности. Между тем падала из бездны в бездну, ввергалась из напасти в напасть” Daniil Lukich Mordovtsev, *Russkie zhenshchiny novogo vremeni: biograficheskie ocherki iz russkoi istorii* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia O. I. Baksta, 1874) 55.

⁸⁸ “Ад в душе моей гнездится, / Этна ссохшу грудь палит; Жадный змий, висясь вокруг сердца, / Кровь кипучую сосет” “В огонь дыханье претворилось, / В острую стрелу каждый вздох; / Все глубоки вскрылись язвы, / Боль их ум во мне мрачит” (Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 206).

themselves, run away / I am alone... oh woe is me!”⁸⁹ According to the poem, Bunina felt isolation and helplessness while dealing with her pain, and felt like there was absolutely nobody to whom she could turn.

Many scholars, such as Konstantin Grot and Wendy Rosslyn, attribute Bunina’s symptoms to breast cancer, but Maksim Amelin and Marina Nesterenko propose that Bunina would not have lived so long with breast cancer. Instead, they propose that based on modern medicine Bunina potentially had chronic fibrocystic breast changes [хроническая мастопатия], though their proposed diagnosis does not fully cover all of Bunina’s symptoms.⁹⁰ Her condition had gotten so severe that in 1815 Bunina received money from the crown to leave Russia for England, which she did on July 15, 1815. She returned to St. Petersburg two years later in 1817 without curing her illness, but by that time she was already associated with old-fashioned poets.

Criticism against Bunina started at the same time as her rise to success. For example, Konstantin Batiushkov (1787-1855) wrote in an epigram addressed to Bunina “You are Sappho – I am Phaon: / I do not question this, / but to my misfortune, / you do not know the way to sea.”⁹¹ Batiushkov was acerbically referring to Sappho’s tragic suicide by drowning. He continues his attack against Bunina in his unpublished but widely circulated work “Visions on the Bank of the Lethe” [Видения на берегах Леты] written in 1809. The poem imagines contemporary writers on the banks of the mythological river Lethe in the Underworld with some of the writers falling into its waters of oblivion. Batiushkov depicts three Sapphos, one of which is Bunina, saying “here the miserable Russian Sapphos / like our midwives / carried wailing children,” and he

⁸⁹ “Нет врача омьить мне раны, / Нет руки стереть слезы, / Нет устен для утешенья, / Персей нет, приникнуть где; / Все странятся, убегают: / Я одна... О, горе мне!” (Bunina, *Neopitnaia tuza* 207).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁹¹ “Ты Сафо, я Фаон; об этом и не спорю: / Но, к моему ты горю, / Пути не знаешь к морю” Batiushkov, Konstantin Nikolaevich Batiushkov, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvoreniï* (Moscow-Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel’, 1964) 108.

sends them straight into the river, implying they will be quickly forgotten.⁹² As Rosslyn points out, this depiction returns women back to their proper place in society relating to motherhood and children, depriving them of their status as writers.⁹³ Batiushkov's criticism both spoke against Bunina but also women writers, displaying blatant sexism.

Bunina also received sexist criticism for being a member of Shishkov's literary circle, which by 1815 comprised of mature and established writers known for their political conservatism. At this time, a group of young and aspiring writers later associated with the Golden Age of Russian poetry created a literary society called *Arzamas* [Арзамас], which included members like Petr Viazemskii (1792-1878), Vasily Zhukovskii (1783-1852), Batiushkov, and Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826) serving as an honorary member. Their main problem with Bunina was her gender. "Women could not be writers, and their proper occupation was love. Any woman who did write was therefore an inferior writer and not a real woman."⁹⁴ *Arzamas* member Sergei Uvarov (1786-1855) notably wrote and performed a scathing speech against Bunina in 1815, reducing her to a slave of passion, sexually tied to Shishkov, who received the worst criticism from the society. Thereafter, *Arzamas* members became the most prominent writers in society, including such poets as Aleksandr Pushkin who attended the circle at sixteen years of age, and they shaped the literary canon, leaving writers like Bunina to be forgotten by the public.⁹⁵

Despite the growing criticism from the younger generation, Bunina decided to publish a major collection of her works and decided to allow subscribers to buy the work. Of the 116

⁹² "Тут Сафы русские печальны, / Как бабки наши повивальны, / Несли расплаканных детей" (Batiushkov, *Polnoe sobranie* 112).

⁹³ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina* 153.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 277.

subscribers, which included a lady-in-waiting, senators, and two merchants, over a quarter were women and one in five were from Kiev.⁹⁶ For the time period, the number of subscribers was a good number and the range of places the subscribers came from is surprising, from the capitals, to Kiev and Chernigov, though the range probably depended on the recruiters of subscribers. There were two reviewers of the collection, Aleksandr Izmailov (1779-1831) and Wilhelm Küchelbecker (1797-1846), and both left positive reviews for the collection in 1820.

In January, Izmailov wrote “We have [in our country] rather good women writers, but among them the first place indisputably belongs to A. P. Bunina. Strong feeling and even the gift of painting is seen in her poems, *and the one who feels strongly and depicts things in a lively way, is a true Poet*. Only her versification is not completely correct.”⁹⁷ Bunina both receives praise not only as a leading woman poet but also as a “true poet,” at least in the way Izmailov pictures it. He goes on to list the ways in which her verse is incorrect, citing many outdated spellings and terms, and not really commenting on her poetics. He does mention that in the third part Bunina wanted to include more poems, but that she apologizes because due to her illness she was not able to complete them. This shows the extent to which Bunina’s health impacted her career. Nonetheless, she also received high praise from Küchelbecker in March for her poetry in general and her poem “A Sick Woman’s May Walk.”

With pleasure we announce to our readers the publication of the first part of *Sochineniia* of Madame Bunina. Her poems in many ways deserve the attention of the public:

Madame Bunina is a woman poet, a rare occurrence in our country, and additionally, a

⁹⁶ Ibid., 288.

⁹⁷ “Мы имеем у себя довольно хороших писательниц, но первое между ними место бесспорно принадлежит А. П. Буниной. В стихотворениях ее видно сильное чувство и даже дар живописи, а кто сильно чувствует и живо изображает, тот настоящий Поэт. Только версификация у нее не совсем исправна...” Izmailov, Aleksandr Efimovich, *Blagonamerennyi* 9 (1820): 350-351.

poet with a gift, a poet who does not impersonate. A detailed analysis of her best poems, in our opinion, would bring genuine, substantial benefit to literature...⁹⁸

“The Walk” by Madame Bunina: the verses are sometimes gloomy and horrible, then change to touching, artful, and meditational in this wonderful work, they constrict the soul, represent her sorrows and tremors, and elicit tears unbiddenly. Regarding her phrases, they are not the phrases of the newest poetry, refined by the efforts of Dmitriev, Zhukovskii, Batiushkov: Madame Bunina walked her own path and formed her own talent, without using the creations of other talents.⁹⁹

Both Küchelbecker and Izmailov commented on Bunina’s verses as unique, emphasizing that she paved her own path and she stayed on that path, without changing for others. Both commented on her old-fashioned speech which was to be reformed by members of *Arzamas* and the younger generations of poets, showing that she was already becoming associated with the past and not the future. Both reviewers felt genuine emotion in her verses, especially in such works like the autobiographical “A Sick Woman’s May Walk” depicting her ailing health. It is notable that in 1820 Izmailov said “a detailed analysis of her best poems ... would bring genuine, substantial benefit to literature.” Bunina began receiving substantial scholarly attention as a poet worthy of recognition and providing a benefit to literature only in the last few decades with Wendy Rosslyn’s work in the West and Maksim Amelin’s and Maria Nesterenko’s

⁹⁸ “С удовольствием извещаем наших читателей о выходе в свет первой части Сочинений Г-жи Буниной. Стихотворения ее заслуживают во многих отношениях внимание публики: Г-жа Бунина женщина — поэт, явление редкое в нашем отечестве, и сверх того, поэт с дарованием, поэт неподражатель. Подробный разбор лучших ее стихотворений принес бы Словесности по нашему мнению истинную, существенную пользу...” Wilhelm Karlovich Küchelbecker, “Vzgliad na tekushchuiu slovesnost’ *Nevskii zritel’* 1 (1820): 78.

⁹⁹ “В Прогулке Г-жи Буниной: стихи то мрачные и ужасные, то трогательные, живописные и задумчивые переменяются в сем прелестном произведении, стесняют душу, исполняют ее жалости и содрогания, и противу воли извлекают слезы. Что же касается до слога, он не есть слог новейшей Поэзии, очищенной трудами Дмитриева, Жуковского, Батюшкова: Г-ж а Бунина шла своим путем и образовала свой талант, не пользуясь творениями других талантов” (Küchelbecker “Vzgliad, 79).

published collection in 2016 in Russia. Despite Bunina's groundbreaking triumphs in literature as an independent woman ahead of her time, after her death on December 4, 1829, she fell into obscurity until nearly fifty years later when scholars began revisiting women's works.

Nadezhda Teplova (1820s-1830s)

After Anna Bunina's emergence and prominence as a woman writer, more and more women began publishing original works. It was at this time that Romanticism rose as the dominating literary movement, and with this movement came an increase of sexism and female exclusion from philosophical and literary conversation. If during Sentimentalism women were encouraged to participate in the literary sphere to help raise the morality of the nation, under early Romanticism women were often excluded and, like Anna Bunina, mocked for their literary endeavors. According to Catriona Kelly, the generation of Romantic poets and writers like Aleksandr Pushkin rebelled against many norms and values of their parents and grandparents, including against the idea of women occupying powerful positions like Catherine II. "The resentment inspired by women's institutional and sexual authority can also be sensed in the anxiety about marriage which haunted the young men of Pushkin's generation. ... As for the 'young ladies' themselves, they were expected to be decorative and to offer sexual companionship where required."¹⁰⁰

With the wave of Romanticism also came the idea of the poet holding a special social role in society as prophet with an elevated state of inspiration, and the male Romantic poets linked this with masculinity. As Kelly indicates, it was not until men moved away from the genre

¹⁰⁰ Kelly, *A History*, 37-38.

of poetry to prose in the 1830s and 1840s as a utilitarian ethos took hold of the Russian intelligentsia and called for literature to offer social commentary, that women began publishing poetry more freely than before because the Romantic genres now became marginal and could be utilized by the already marginalized. “The greatest woman poet of the nineteenth century, Karolina Pavlova, was to be a beneficiary of this contradiction: her poetry generated hostility because of its Romanticism, not solely because she was a woman; she could therefore enjoy a sense of the community of poets denied to her immediate predecessors, such as Teplova.”¹⁰¹

At this time the locus of literary activity shifted from private literary circles to salons, which began dominating Russian culture and became the preferred site to read and review literature. Salons were a distinctive feature of the nobility and were created with a certain aesthetic purpose to embellish the lives of high aristocracy, who sometimes welcomed talented outsiders into their midst.¹⁰² As scholar Vladimir Murav’ev writes, a salon was a “very delicate and difficult form of public life, in which serious and deep interests were united with entertainment, public profession with intimate daily life, personal with public, and with this, each side did not suppress the other.”¹⁰³ Women also gained new roles as salon hostesses, being deemed the perfect ideal for such a role. For example, Petr Viazemskii wrote “the mind of a woman entices and prevails specifically because it is sensitive to another mind. A woman’s mind is often hospitable, it actively calls for and welcomes intelligent guests; attentively and skillfully settling them: So, a perceptive and experienced hostess does not promote herself in front of her

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰² Brodskii, *Literaturnye salony*, vii.

¹⁰³ “Салон — очень тонкая и сложная форма общественной жизни, в которой соединялись серьезные, глубокие интересы с развлечением, публичная деятельность с интимным бытом, личное с общественным, и при этом каждая из сторон не подавляла собой другую,” Vladimir Bronislavovich Murav’ev, *V tsarstve muz.: moskovskii literaturnii salon Zinaidy Volkonskoi, 1824-1829*, Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii: 1987), 7.

guests, does not contradict them, does not hurry to interrupt their path, but instead, she almost hides herself so that it feels spacious and unrestricted to the guests.”¹⁰⁴

According to this quote and the general consensus, a woman is the perfect hostess of a salon because she has the perfect mind to entertain and make guests feel at ease since she will not contradict them or participate in the intellectual discussion herself. In the 1830s women began publishing poetry in large enough numbers to garner critical attention, but critics rarely referred to their works as such, preferring to call it “embroidery.”¹⁰⁵ Women often took on male personae or published anonymously to avoid the scrutiny that came with publishing as a woman. It was in this literary period that Nadezhda Teplova, whom Barbara Heldt calls a poet of dreams and of mysticism focusing on the escape from earthly life, began publishing her poetry.¹⁰⁶ There are very few sources on Teplova’s biography and literary process, so she remains an understudied writer who deserves more scholarly recognition.

Nadezhda Sergeevna Teplova was born in Moscow to a wealthy merchant class family on March 19, 1814. According to her sister’s Serafima Pel’skaia’s (née Teplova), account about their childhood, the children received a good education which focused on literature and music.¹⁰⁷ Teplova began writing poems at eight years of age and published her first poem at thirteen in *The Moscow Telegraph* in 1827. Mikhail Maksimovich (1804-1873), a man who went on to become a notable historian and ethnographer, is attributed as helping Teplova publish her first poem. He went on to serve as a patron and mentor for the Teplova sisters, helping them completely in their

¹⁰⁴ “Ум женщины тем и обольщает и господствует, что он отменно чуток на чужой ум. Женский ум часто гостеприимен; он охотно зазывает и приветствует умных гостей, заботливо и ловко устраивая их у себя: так, проникательная и опытная хозяйка дома не выдвигается вперед перед гостями, не перечит им, не спешит перебить у них дорогу, а, напротив, как будто прячется, чтобы только им было и просторно, и вольно” (qtd. in Murav’ev, *V tsarstve*, 7).

¹⁰⁵ Kelly *A History*, 41-42.

¹⁰⁶ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 110.

¹⁰⁷ Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 17.

literary careers and partially contributing to their success. It is probably through Maksimovich that the Teplova sisters began attending Avdot'ia and Fyodor Glinka's literary salon, which the couple began in the late 1820s.

In 1830 Maksimovich published an almanac titled *The Morning Star* [Денница], featuring the most prominent writers of the day, like Aleksandr Pushkin, Evgenii Baratynskii (1800-1844), Petr Viazemskii (1824-1878), and many more. Maksimovich also included poetry of only three women, the Teplova sisters and their friend and fellow poet Maria Lisitsyna (dates unknown). Serafima's poem "To****" [K****] caused repression of the almanac and the journal's censor, Sergei Glinka to be removed from his position.¹⁰⁸ Censors believed the poem, which featured sadness over the death of a young man near the waves of the Neva, to be about the Decembrist Kondratii Ryleev (1795-1826), one of five who was executed on the banks of the river for his part in the revolt. Even though Maksimovich had Teplova write a letter for the censors stating that the poem was not about Ryleev's execution, the intelligentsia believed otherwise and enthusiastically welcomed all three women poets to the literary world, allowing Nadezhda Teplova to gain attention. They especially became popular among Moscow University students, like the future leading literary critic Vissarion Belinskii (1811-1848) and other democratically inclined youth.¹⁰⁹ It is interesting to note that both Teplova sisters would go on to marry university students from these circles.

Teplova continued publishing poems and "around 1830-1831 her poems took on motifs of unfulfilled destiny and the impossibility of happiness."¹¹⁰ In general, the poems displayed features of sentimental elegies, focusing on the poet's inner world and suffering. Even though

¹⁰⁸ Vatsuro, "Zhizn'," 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 20.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 23.

Teplova was praised for writing poetry depicting a “woman’s heart” and her inner pain, and as a woman was thought to simply be recording her feelings, Vatsuro points out that she carefully and rationally crafted the messages of her poems, as seen by her letters to Maksimovich. For example, in a letter written sometime in 1832 or 1833 before the publication of her poetry collection, Teplova writes “your edits are good for versification, but they distort my thoughts...”¹¹¹ Teplova obviously speaks about potential changes suggested to her poem but in a way that rejects that advice in favor of her own message.

Likewise, Teplova shows her professionalism and seriousness about her writing career in her letters to Maksimovich in 1832 and 1833 as she prepared for the publication of her collection. For example, she kept asking Maksimovich to check with Semen Selivanovskii (1772-1835), one of Moscow’s largest book publishers of the period, about the publication. “...and what about my book? It would be a pity if Selivanovskii deceived us (I heard that he left for St. Petersburg). Because I have created new plans. Specifically, there is a rumor that in May the imperial family will come here, and I want to give my book to the Emperor and Empress... ..we will push back printing till the new year, and by the way in the winter the sales will be better.”¹¹² Teplova’s thoughts express anticipation and careful planning for the publication but also consideration about the reception and sales of her collection. She was not merely concerned with writing her poems but also about the technical aspects of the career, proving to be a driven and business-oriented woman.

¹¹¹ “Переправки ваши хороши для стихосложения, но изменяют мои мысли” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 26).

¹¹² “И что моя книга? Мне очень жаль будет, ежели Селивановский обманул нас (я слышала, что он уехал в Петербург). Потому что у меня родились новые планы. А именно: носится слух, что в мае месяце будет сюда императорская фамилия, и мне хочется поднести мою книжку Императору и Императрице... ..отложим напечатание до нового года, а между тем зимою и продажа пойдет лучше” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 26).

Upon the publication of her book as a nineteen-year-old in 1833, Teplova earned a respectable name among other writers. For example, fellow poet and philosopher Nikolai Stankevich (1813-1840) wrote in a letter, “These are the kinds of verses women are capable of writing! She is in her sphere, among feelings and love! To be sure, this is not absolute beauty, – but in order to completely like the poems, it is necessary to unite them with the woman-author in your mind; it will be a single, complete work, and all the uncertainties will then have significance. The main qualification – honesty of feeling – is in these poems.”¹¹³ The praise Stankevich bestows upon Teplova expresses the sentiments of the young generation of poets and the opinion they were forming of women writers. Stankevich places a woman poet in her own sphere of feeling and emotion but deems the writing to be worthy of appreciation only by uniting the poet and the work.

This distinction between the writing of men and women presented problems for the reception of the works of all women writers. According to the scholar Rebecca Bowman, “women’s writing was supposed to have a different, more delicate nature than men’s writing. Unless women writers were successful as ‘true’ women, they could expect little credit to be given to their writings.”¹¹⁴ However, the qualities that were associated with “true” women, such as sentimentality, emphasizing emotions, and adopting a meek persona, were the same ones associated with a writer’s inferiority. “Automatic praise as well as automatic condemnation, both grounded in gender assumptions that led critics and practitioners to associate women’s writing

¹¹³ “Вот какие стихи могут писать женщины! Она в своей сфере, в кругу чувства, любви! Разумеется, это не абсолютная красота,— но чтобы стихи нравились вполне, надобно их в своем понятии соединить с автором-женщиною; это будет одно, цельное произведение, все неопределенности получают тогда значение. Главное условие — истина чувства — есть в этих стихах” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 29).

¹¹⁴ Rebecca Linton Bowman, *Russian Society Tales: A Gendered Genre* (1997, University of Virginia, PhD Dissertation), 92.

with artlessness, shapelessness, naturalness and so forth, precluded a more serious, balanced appraisal of writing by women.”¹¹⁵

Despite the well-received collection, after Maksimovich’s permanent move to Ukraine Teplova published rarely, but her publications always gained attention. Perhaps one of the main reasons for her rare publications is her marriage in 1837 to captain Nikolai Teruikhin, who gained the position of head of the county schools [уездные училища] in Serpukhov, a city south of Moscow.¹¹⁶ In her own words, Teplova describes him to Maksimovich as an “*universitant*, who often visited the late aunt Katherine Mikhailovna Stogova and participated in our plays.”¹¹⁷ It seems that the couple initially bonded intellectually because they participated in theatre performances together, both knew Maksimovich, and Teruikhin was among the university students who held the Teplova sisters held in high regard. In 1839 Teplova also shows interest in both his work and women’s education in her letter to Maksimovich by praising the women’s school that opened in her town.

Despite her marriage and growing family, Teplova published a second edition of her collection of poems in 1838, adding new poems to her original publication, but it was left unnoticed by critics and the reading public. Part of the problem with the lack of reception for the publication is that the mainstream Russian literature had moved away from elegiacal poetry of feelings and toward utilitarian prose or radical poetry that became a vehicle for social issues.¹¹⁸ Teplova tried to turn to prose in verse, publishing a few fragments separately, such as “The Victim of Love” [Жертва любви] in 1842, as well as pure prose, which she never published.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 92.

¹¹⁶ Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 30.

¹¹⁷ “Он также *университант*, часто бывал у покойной тет(ушки) Екат. Мих. Стоговой и участвовал в наших спектаклях” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 31).

¹¹⁸ Kelly, *A History*, 44.

However, tragedy struck Teplova in 1845 with the death of her husband, after which she moved to the town of Dmitriev with her three children and her recently widowed sister. She turned to the church, spending her time “in isolation, constant attendance of church service, and religious texts.”¹¹⁹ In October 1846 two of her children died, after which time Teplova and her remaining daughter moved to Zvenigorod. There, Teplova died in June 1848.

In her life, Teplova gained a positive reputation for her sentimental poetry, earning respect as a late Romantic poet featuring major themes like disappointment with the world and yearning for the higher spiritual realm. She published in some of the most prominent publications like *Notes of the Fatherland*, *The Telegraph* [Телеграф], *The Telescope* [Телескоп], and collections like *The Morning Star* and *The Kiev Citizen* [Киевлянин]. Literary preferences shifted rapidly during her career and she moved away from Moscow in her marriage, preventing Teplova from fully participating in the literary world of the 1830s and 1840s. In the nineteenth and twentieth century Teplova did not gain any significant critical attention. Diana Greene suggests that “Teplova has been ignored because of her woman-centered subject matter, which male critics may have considered uninteresting,” such as many poems addressing other women and depicting the death of loved ones.¹²⁰

In 1843, Belinskii wrote an article detailing the history of women’s writing in Russia, in which he praised Anna Bunina as the first serious woman poet and translator, as well as Nadezhda Teplova. He emphasized only four women from the Romantic Pushkinian era of

¹¹⁹ “уединение, постоянное присутствие при богослужении, духовное чтение” (words of Serafima Teplova qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizn’,” 36).

¹²⁰ Diana Greene, “Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: Critical Reception vs. Self-Definition,” *Women Writers in Russian Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994), 102.

literature, with Teplova being the only one of the four to garner further commentary.¹²¹ Even though Belinskii stated that Teplova's poetry rested purely on feelings, dismissing the intellectual messages in her works, he says that for the first time a woman poet's work started resembling true poetry. Interestingly, this history of women's writing praising Teplova and Bunina was written in an article about the works of Elena Gan.

Elena Gan (1830s-1840s)

The earliest conceptions of the classic Russian novel appeared in the 1820s along with the emergence of the adventure tale, travelogue, essay genre, the familiar letter, and the society tale.¹²² Elena Gan, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova all participated in contributing to the genre. Coinciding with the development of Romantic prose, the society tale [светская повесть] arose in the 1820s and 1830s and mainly featured the concerns of high society as told from the perspective of people who were a part of that society. The scholar Raisa Iezutova writes that as a story, the plot can be considered a "love story, the actions of which occur in the sphere of 'high society,'" in which society is the bearer of moral ideals, acting as an obstacle for the couple and leading them to tragedy should they disobey these morals.¹²³ High society in the stories reflected not just superficial appearances, but also the true conditions of how society with

¹²¹ The other three women are Zinaida Volkonskaia (1789-1862), Anna Gotovtseva (1799-1871), and Maria Lisitsyna, Teplova's friend. (Belinskii, *Sobranie*, 249).

¹²² Neil Cornwell, editor, *The Society Tale in Russian Literature: From Odoevskii to Tolstoi* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998) 2.

¹²³ Raisa Vladimirovna Iezuitova, "Svetskaia povest." *Russkaia povest' 19-ogo veka: Istoriia i problematika zhanra* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973), 171-173.

its rigorous rules negatively influenced relationships. Society's strict rules and norms stifled life and imbued it with artificiality, all starting with the ballrooms of St. Petersburg.

Marquis de Custine's accounts of his visit to Russia in the 1830s feature the Frenchman's impressions of the country and its people, calling Russia "the country of useless formalities."¹²⁴ In ballrooms, Custine says "the general rule is that no one ever proffers a word which could actively interest anyone" to prevent arousing "any real feeling" because "all the resources of language are exhausted to strike ideas and emotions out of conversation, without, at the same time, having the appearance of concealing them."¹²⁵ For Custine, Russians strip themselves of feeling and freedom in their speech – and by extension – their life. Custine additionally perceives a lack of freedom because for him "military discipline dominates Russia," making people seem stiff and constrained.¹²⁶ Likewise, Custine adds that "Russia is governed by deceit," which includes the superficiality of St. Petersburg and people having a "naturalness in falsehood."¹²⁷ Custine's account features a very critical and acerbic tone because Custine was most preoccupied with the autocratic and despotic regime, thus viewing the people and society as trapped victims without freedom or voice.

Though Custine was a foreigner, he touched on many of the frustrations Russians had with their own life. For example, the precision, reminiscent of military protocols, and the strict regulation observed in the ballrooms, where everyone had their own place and role, often appear in society tales. Women writers also showed how such constricting expectations can harm

¹²⁴ Astolphe Marquis de Custine, *Custine's Eternal Russia: A New Edition of Journey for Our Time*, translated by Phyllis Penn Kohler (Miami: Center for Advanced International Studies University of Miami, 1976) 43.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 93.

women and how they must learn to adapt to such rigidity or become social outcasts.

Superficiality and the lack of freedom likewise present a common theme for society tales, as well as family dynamics and matchmaking, often with a negative view. Elizabeth Shepard provides a good delineation of the specific characteristics of the society tale, writing, “through the lens of observation the heroic and public dimensions of life recede from view, and what comes into focus is the ordinary and the personal, the routine patterns of the everyday life of apparently unremarkable persons, life in all its ‘littleness.’ The experiential range of this ordinary, personal life which is observed and analyzed in the society tale is denoted by the terms domestic (domashnij) and private (chastnyj). It encompasses those innermost feelings and inner events which, as the core lexicon of the literature has it, are *secret, hidden, cloaked, masked, and varnished over.*”¹²⁸

Shepard further characterizes this short story genre that focused on a person’s inner world against the backdrop of society by identifying categories of tales.¹²⁹ The two main types of tales she identifies are the “destruction of love” tale and the “death of feeling” tale. The first type encompasses stories that depict mutual love with genuine feelings, some featuring relationships in which one partner is married and thus their relationship is doomed to fail, and others featuring relationships in which both are unmarried and social circumstances prevent their union. The “death of feeling” stories feature tales of unrequited love in which one partner is incapable of love, or in which both partners are incapable of love due to egoism, materialism, or vanity. In all cases, the seemingly perfect society exerts influence through established customs and

¹²⁸ Elizabeth Shepard, “The Society Tale and the Innovative Argument in Russian Prose Fiction of the 1830s,” *Russian Literature* 10.2 (1981): 131.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

conventions to create an environment that prohibits higher, poetic love. This was one of the main themes for Elena Gan's society tales.

Hugh Aplin has written the most comprehensive biography of Elena Gan's life.¹³⁰ She was born Elena Fadeeva on January 11, 1814 into a family of gentry in Rzhishchiv, near Kyiv in Ukraine.¹³¹ Her father, Andrei Fadeev, was an educated military civil servant but her mother was born Princess Elena Dolgorukaia to a prominent aristocratic family. According to Ekaterina Nekrasova, Dolgorukaia was one of the most educated women of her time, especially in the field of botany, but also in history and archeology.¹³² The young woman fell in love with Fadeev, an officer without a title or substantial sums of money, so they married despite Elena's parents being against the marriage. Together, they had four children and their eldest was Elena Andreevna Gan.

By the time Elena turned thirteen, her mother had passed on to her knowledge of botany, history, French and German, but this was not enough for the child, so she turned to teaching herself English, Italian, and foreign and Russian literature.¹³³ Around this time the mother became sick, so the family moved to the Crimea for her health, creating the perfect atmosphere for Gan's first attempts at literature. "Little Fadeeva read all of this [Pushkin, Dante, Sophocles, and more]. The day seemed short, so she lengthened it at night, and at nighttime copied from her favorite poets what she especially enjoyed. The aspiration for creative work was noticeable

¹³⁰ Hugh Anthony Aplin. *M. S. Zhukova and E. A. Gan: Women Writers and Female Protagonists, 1837-1843* (1988 University of East Anglia, PhD Dissertation).

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹³² E. S. Nekrasova, "Elena Andreevna Gan (Zeneida R-va) 1814-1842 biograficheskii ocherk," *Russkaia starina* 51 (1886): 338.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 340.

already in those early years.”¹³⁴ At sixteen years of age and living in Ekaterinoslav’ (modern day Dnipro) Gan met and quickly married a horse-artillery captain of German descent, Petr Gan, who was twice her age and constantly moving for his work. A lot of the commentary and biography surrounding the marriage comes from scholars like E. S. Nekrasova finding biographical details from Gan’s works. Regarding their marriage, Gan’s sister Nadezhda Fadeeva, corrected false information by saying, “later it turned out that their personalities did not match, but this could not have been foreseen” despite Petr Gan being “intelligent, highly educated with a kind and noble character.”¹³⁵ Gan’s marriage often left her moving from one provincial town to the next and surrounded by people who did not value intellect or literature.

Gan’s first child, Elena, was born in 1832 and her son soon after. However, Gan’s son died due to lack of medical care in her provincial town near Ekaterinoslav, and she watched him slowly die.¹³⁶ This was a traumatic experience for the writer, so in early 1835 Gan took her family to Odessa where her father was stationed. By this time, Odessa had become a significant European town and cultural center with theatres, music, and art, creating a powerful impression on Gan. Her life had not provided much opportunity to experience the atmosphere and culture of a city until Gan’s husband was sent to St. Petersburg in 1836. Due to her husband’s lack of interest in the city, Gan formed a friendship with his brother Ivan who took her to see different galleries and introduced her to theatre, which her husband deemed too expensive.¹³⁷ She wrote to her sister about growing feelings of isolation, probably alluding to her husband’s lack of

¹³⁴ “Всем этим [Пушкин, Данте, Софокль и т.д.] зачитывалась молоденькая Фадеева. День казался мал, она удлинняла его часами ночи, и по ночам переписывала из любимых поэтов то, что особенно нравилось. Стремление к творчеству замечалось уже в эти ранние годы” (Qtd. in Nekrasova, “Elena Andreevna, 341).

¹³⁵ Nadezhda Andreevna Fadeeva. “Po povodu stat’i ‘Roman odnoi zabytoi romanistki,’” *Istoricheskii vestnik* 26 (1886): 460.

¹³⁶ Nekrasova, “Elena Andreevna,” 347.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 350.

participation to her interests.¹³⁸ In St. Petersburg she also met with various poets and authors, like Pushkin, but it was her meeting with the journalist and editor of *Biblioteka dlia chtenia*, Osip Senkovskii (1800-1858) that began her literary career.

Upon meeting Senkovskii, Gan was first dazzled by him and fostered a close relationship while feeling that he had darker intentions toward her.¹³⁹ The first original work she published became “The Ideal” [Идеал] in 1837 under the pseudonym Zeneida R-va, featuring a story of a provincial girl who was heartbroken and disillusioned by a popular St. Petersburg writer. Senkovskii claimed a lot of credit for this work, including teaching Gan proper grammar, but the original manuscript shows that Gan’s story was already written by the time he provided major edits for publication in his *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*. Even though Gan left St. Petersburg with her husband, the publication gave her confidence and a sense of purpose, so she continued writing. In a letter to Senkovskii Gan wrote about the experience of writing and being in a family. “On one side children were repeating their lessons and on the other side – in the nearest room was the instruction of soldiers, with all of its features.”¹⁴⁰ This is a very intimate and genuine glimpse into the life of a mother and writer.

As early as 1833 there is evidence of Gan having an illness, but by 1839 it was causing delays in her writing.¹⁴¹ The act of writing itself was very personal and painful for Gan. “You have not experienced how difficult it is to draw to yourself people’s gazes, when you want to hide from them on the sea floor; how degrading it is for pride to become a storyteller, to entertain, to present yourself for judgement, – but most of all, how painful it is to rip from your

¹³⁸ Aplin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 216.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁴⁰ “С одной стороны, подле меня дети твердили уроки свои, с другой – в ближней комнате происходило ученье солдат, со всеми его принадлежностями” (qtd. in Aplin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 234).

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 235.

heart a native thought or feeling, one that is valuable in a thousand memories, in order to cram them into a journal and afterward to listen to critiques and comments about them from insignificant acquaintances as unavoidable as grief, and as omnipresent as foolishness.”¹⁴² This quote from her letter to her friend Sergei Krivtsov (1802-1864) implies that Gan put a lot of herself and her emotions and memories into her works. Yet despite the professed pain and vulnerability, Gan continued to write and publish her works, imbuing them with concrete messages about her ideas on life. “I write because it unburdens my soul; speaking in the words of my heroine I can express everything that weighs on me, I can pour out my feelings, and sometimes my tears onto the paper.”¹⁴³ Sometimes however, Gan wrote because her family had financial difficulties and her income proved indispensable.

With the publications of her works “Utballa” [Утбалла] (1838), “Dzhellalledin” [Джеллалледин] (1839), and “The Medallion” [Медальон] (1839), Gan become increasingly frustrated with Senkovskii’s edits and changes to her works. By the publication of “Society’s Judgement” in 1839, Gan wrote to Senkovskii pleading specifically not to change the heroine, Zeneida, because the story was important to her.¹⁴⁴ The more she published, the more other publishers became interested in her work and offered to print her stories. Gan published her last two stories in *Notes of the Fatherland*, avoiding Senkovskii and his edits. However, in 1841 Gan’s health became much worse and she suffered from weakness, chest and side pains, and had

¹⁴² “Вы не испытали, как тяжело обращать на себя взоры людей, когда хотелось бы скрыться от них на дне морском; как унизительно для гордости делаться сказочницей, забавлять, предавать себя на суд, - но выше всего, как больно отрывать от сердца родную мысль или чувство, драгоценное по тысяче воспоминаний, чтобы тиснуть их в журнал и после слушать об них критики и толки ничтожных приятелей, неизбежных, как горе, вездесущих, как глупость” (qtd. in Aplin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 238).

¹⁴³ “Я пишу потому, что это облегчает мою душу; говоря языком моей героини, я могу высказывать все, что гнетет меня, могу изливать чувства, а подчас и слезы, на бумагу” (qtd. in Aplin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 245).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

difficulty walking. Gan moved to Odessa to her family for her health, but on June 24, 1842 Elena Gan died after an intense bloodletting treatment.

The full publication of her works occurred posthumously in 1842 with great success. Vissarion Belinskii highly praised Elena Gan, saying that no writer before Gan had such “strength of thought, such tact of reality, such a wonderful talent” and that the main merit of Gan’s works consists of her thoughts.¹⁴⁵ For Belinskii, at the heart of all of Gan’s prose is a woman’s love, or more specifically “how women are capable of love and how men are not” in a seeming protest against men.¹⁴⁶ Belinskii’s focus on those aspects of Gan’s work, which were centered on relationships and the opportunities for women, appeared at a time when the ideas on the state of women in the works of French feminist writer George Sand were beginning to be disseminated in Russian society. According to Olga Kafanova, nearly a century later, in 1914 in the newspaper *The Russian Word* [Русское слово], Elena Gan was dubbed the “first Russian feminist” and in scholarship today Gan is considered to be heavily influenced by Sand.¹⁴⁷

The French writer George Sand (1804-1876) was one of the leading figures of feminism in her generation, and her impact reached the Russian Empire. In the 1830s critics were primarily focused on her personal life and her support of women’s emancipation and her critique of marriage as an institution, and these critics ardently denounced her works. According to Olga Kafanova, Sand wrote that love is the absolute totality of body and soul; therefore, marriage should be based on love and not convenience, and she believed in a type of democracy within a union. Perhaps most problematic for the Russian public was her negative view of the church and

¹⁴⁵ “Такою силою мысли, таким тактом действительности, таким замечательным талантом” (Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* 252).

¹⁴⁶ “Как умеют любить женщины и как не умеют любить мужчины” (Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* 252).

¹⁴⁷ Olga Kafanova, *Zhorzh Sand i russkaia literatura xix veka: mify i real'nost'* (Tomsk: Tomskii Gosudarstvennyi Pedagogicheskii universitet, 1998), 34.

her certainty that no organized religion can encompass the absolute truth of God, and that they all have pieces of the truth, which only when combined can lead people closer to God. Compared to Western critics, Russian critics had more traditional views on literature, so Sand was not received positively by everyone.

For example, Ivan Golovin wrote in his article “Notes of a Traveler” [Записки путешественника] in the journal *Son of the Fatherland* [Сын отечества] in 1838, “a terrifying and abhorrent spirit of self-will has widely begun reigning in French literature. Is there a high quantity of books that a kind and wise father will let his daughter read? One should be afraid of a girl who has been imbued with the works of George Sand, and run away like the plague from her, or the beloved Paul de Kock.”¹⁴⁸ Compared to the negative, predominantly male view of Sand, women had a completely different reaction to her works. After Sand’s introduction to the Russian reading public in 1832, the concept of a “woman’s voice” started taking shape, one which encouraged women to speak up about their own lives, problems, and worldview. Women began to examine themselves and conceptualize their lives and their rights in love, marriage, and in society. As Kafanova argues, feelings of deep dissatisfaction with their standing, education, and dependence on a man who does not always respect in them their individuality, arose in a lot of women.¹⁴⁹

By the beginning of the 1840s, the concept of the status of women [положение женщин] in society first began appearing in writing by women about the lives of women, in the works of writers like Gan and Evdokiia Rostopchina, and it was immediately associated with Sand’s

¹⁴⁸ “Страшный, отвратительный дух своеволия широко воцарился во Французской литературе. Велико ли число книг, которья добрый и благоразумный отец дозволить читать своей дочери? Бояться, убегать, как чумы, подобно девицы, которая была бы напитана творениями Жорж Занд, или возлюбленного Поль де-Кока...” I. G. Golovin, “Zametki Puteshestvennika,” *Syn otechestva* 6 (1838): 98.

¹⁴⁹ Kafanova, *Zhorzh Sand*, 32.

influence. Elena Gan's works retain the legacy as some of the first in Russian literature to explore ideas regarding women and their place in society because she showed "the painful truth that love itself is not enough to endow life with meaning" for a woman.¹⁵⁰ Her literary works centered on the conflict of a higher dream of an ideal love and the elevated destiny of women with the crude and harsh world in which women lived. Gan expressed the feelings of many contemporary women who longed for personal rights and artistic respect. She became the herald of women's freedom and independence, and even in the end of the 1830s was called the Russian George Sand for the sincerity of women's feelings conveyed in her work.¹⁵¹

Gan's stories reflect the idea that women's nature is inherently better than men's, but society discriminates against women. Gan goes so far as to point out the blatant discrimination against women in her work. She notes that women are raised to be liked by men, to throw themselves into society despite their real interests. A woman, she points out, is shackled by propriety and can only achieve what society defines as "success," through marriage. Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova build on the foundations of the society tale but focus on how differently society exerts its power and influence over men and women in similar situations, and how women suffer in ways that men cannot imagine.

Evdokiia Rostopchina (1830s-1850s)

A major shift in Russian literature in the 1840s that Gan had just begun to experience before her untimely death was the emergence of serious literary criticism. Scholar Rebecca

¹⁵⁰ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 24.

¹⁵¹ Kafanova, *Zhorzh Sand*, 84.

Bowman remarks, “as the formation of ‘reading cadres’ and competitions among ‘thick journals’ started to replace the institutions of salons and almanacs of the culturally elite, literary criticism became an arbiter of literary standards, and women published in relatively large numbers.”¹⁵²

Men like Vissarion Belinskii set the standard for literature and shaped the influence of literature, deeming people like Elena Gan or Nadezhda Teplova to be writers worth remembering, re-evaluating women of the past, like Bunina, and contributing to the reception of contemporary writers like Rostopchina and Pavlova. Overall, Rostopchina’s reputation was extremely favorable, and she was friends with the most prominent writers of her day.

Evdokiia Petrovna Sushkova was born on December 23, 1811 in Moscow to a wealthy family of nobility. At the time of her birth, Petr Sushkov, Rostopchina’s father, was a commissariat commissioner of the eighth rank on the Table of Ranks [Табель о рангах] and her mother, Dar’ia Pashkova, was from a prominent and wealthy family. When Rostopchina was six years of age, her mother died and her father left the care of his three children to their grandfather, Ivan Pashkov. According to an account by her brother, Rostopchina’s education was, while expensive, mediocre because nobody oversaw the lessons.¹⁵³ However, the girl was naturally bright, and she had two outstanding tutors who inspired her to love poetry and Russian literature. She had tutors for Russian, French, German, divinity, drawing, and music.

Rostopchina began writing poetry around 1828, which her brother attributes to genes because, among other family members, their grandmother was most notably the translator of French literature Maria Sushkova (1752-1803). It is curious to note that Rostopchina’s cousin Ekaterina Khvostova (nee Sushkova, 1812-1868) was a memoirist and the cousin of Elena Gan,

¹⁵² Bowman, *Russian Society*, 94.

¹⁵³ Dmitrii Petrov Sushkov. “K biografii grafini E. P. Rostopchinoi.” *Istoricheskii vestnik* 5 (1881): 302.

loosely linking Gan and Rostopchina as family members. In addition to being a literary family, historian Boris Romanov also indicates that the Pashkov house was “an open house” [открытый дом], visited by many literary figures, such as Zhukovskii, Pushkin, Adam Mickiewicz (1798-1855), and Petr Viazemskii.¹⁵⁴ Rostopchina’s brother claimed that he young Evdokiia hid her first attempts at literature even from her own family members, but as early as 1825 many writers comment on Rostopchina’s readings. For example, Nikolai Durnovo (1835-1919) noted in his journal, “evening at countess Leval’s. Little mademoiselle Sushkova read a novella in verse of her own creation. I do not regret that I had to listen to her.”¹⁵⁵ According to historian Victor Afanas’ev, around 1829 Rostopchina met Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841), forming a life-long friendship, which can be traced both in letters and poems in which the two writers refer to each other.¹⁵⁶

In 1831, according to the accepted narrative advanced in part by Sushkov, Petr Viazemskii accidentally acquired Rostopchina’s poem “Talisman” [Талисман] and published it under the name D–a, probably assuming that Rostopchina’s nickname Dodo stemmed from the name Daria, without her knowledge. Diana Greene compares this introduction to society to the state of virgin, in which a powerful male figure sweeps an innocent girl into the world of literature, thereby stripping her of the ultimate sin for a woman – literary ambition.¹⁵⁷ “In Moscow for some reason the name of the creator became known, in the Pashkov house everyone rounded on her, reprehending her in every way for this shameful and indecent action.”¹⁵⁸ This

¹⁵⁴ Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 10.

¹⁵⁵ “Вечер у графини Лаваль. Маленькая м-ль Сушкова читала пьесу в стихах собственного сочинения. Я не жалею, что должен был слушать ее” (qtd. in Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 9).

¹⁵⁶ Viktor Afanas’ev, *Svobodnoi muzy prinoshen’e: literaturnye portrety, stat’i*. (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1988), 400.

¹⁵⁷ Diana Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry: Russian Women Poets of the Mid-nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004) 88.

¹⁵⁸ “В Москве почему-то сделалось известным имя сочинительницы, в доме Пашковых все набросились на нее, упрекая всячески за этот постыдный и неприличный поступок...” (Sushkov, “К biografii,” 303).

event must have had a great impact on the family because Rostopchina did not subsequently publish her works until after she was married. Evdokiia married Count Andrei Rostopchin in 1833. He loved rare books, purebred horses, and he opened the first art gallery accessible to the public in Moscow, so they likely had many similar interests. However, in the three years they lived in the village Anno after their marriage they did not have children and Rostopchina only got pregnant when they moved to St. Petersburg in 1836.¹⁵⁹ Rostopchina had a daughter in 1837, another in 1838, and then a son in 1839. In 1833 literary critic Ivan Kireevsky (1806-1856) wrote “About Russian Writers” in a letter, mentioning Rostopchina.

Without doubt you have heard about one of the most glittering ornaments of our society, about a poet, whose name, despite her definite talent, is yet unknown in our literature. Not many fortunate ones have access to her *fortunate* verses; for others they remain a secret. Her talent is hidden from society, which is condemned to see in her only the mundane, only that which does not leave the sphere of the ordinary; and it is only by the extraordinary brilliance of her eyes, by the enthralling poetry of her speech or by the grace of her movement, that one can recognize her as a poet and uncover in her that talisman, which so delicately stirs up her dreams.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ “Diana Greene touches on various rumors about the couple, starting with the widely accepted idea of the husband being a spendthrift and their marriage was antagonistic. Their daughter also implied that her father was physically abusive and a few men, including Sushkov suggested Rostopchin was homosexual or at least sexually uninterested in his wife. The children were rumored not to belong to Rostopchin due to Rostopchina’s affairs” (Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 92).

¹⁶⁰ “Так, без сомнения, вы слышали об одном из самых блестящих украшений нашего общества, о поэте, которой имя, несмотря на ее решительный талант, еще не известно в нашей литературе. Не многим счастливым доступны ее *счастливые* стихи; для других они остаются тайною. Талант ее скрыт для света, который осужден видеть в ней одно вседневное, одно не выходящее из круга жизни обыкновенной, и разве только по необыкновенному блеску ее глаз, по увлекательной поэзии ее разговора или по грации ее движения может он узнать в ней поэта, отгадывать в ней тот талисман, который так изящно волнует мечты.” Ivan Vasil’evich Kireevskii, *Kritika i estetika* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1979), 126.

Not even a year after Kireevsky's words – in 1834 – Rostopchina began publishing poems, anonymously or with just initials until 1838, even though most people knew they were hers. She published in *The Moscow Observer* [Московский наблюдатель], *The Reader's Library* [Библиотека для чтения], *The Contemporary* [Современник], and other prestigious journals, gaining considerable fame, especially among female readers. At the end of 1836, the family moved to St. Petersburg where the same literary figures who visited her family in Moscow continued their acquaintance, along with Vladimir Odoevskii (1803-1869), Petr Pletnev (1792-1865), and many others. By 1838 Rostopchina also started publishing prose and in 1841 the first collection of poems was published.

Even though the reception of the collection was generally positive, critics did focus heavily on her gender and many commented on problems with her verses. “We think that such noble, harmonious, light, and lively verses are very few in our contemporary literature, and in women's [literature] – they are decisively the best poems out of all those that ever fluttered onto paper from the darling fingers of a woman,” wrote censor and historian of literature Aleksandr Nikitenko (1805-1877).¹⁶¹ Stepan Shevyrev wrote, “From the first instance numerous poetic silhouettes astound us, drawn under the influence of delicate feminine thought... Behind the silhouettes follow bright remarks about many impressions of life, the special charm of which constitute features of a woman's soul, with all of its intriguing inconsistency, sometimes frivolous, sometimes meditative, sometimes carelessly flighty, sometimes seriously contemplative.”¹⁶² As Greene emphasizes, a lot of the praise and critique for Rostopchina mainly

¹⁶¹ “Мы думаем, что таких благородных, гармонических, легких и живых стихов вообще не много в нашей современной литературе, а в женской — это решительно лучшие стихи из всех, какие когда-либо выпархивали на бумагу из-под милых дамских пальчиков” (qtd. in Afanas'ev, *Svobodnoi muzy*, 406).

¹⁶² “С первого раза поражают нас множество поэтических силуэтов, рисованных под влиянием нежной женской мысли... За силуэтами следуют яркие заметы многих впечатлений в жизни, которых особенную

focused on her femininity and was riddled with condescension.¹⁶³ Belinskii, even while praising her poetic inspirations of her muse and saying there is an imprint of true poetry in her works, also states that Rostopchina is “shackled to the ballroom” [прикована к балу].¹⁶⁴

Rostopchina seemed to embrace the image of femininity and society woman as indicated by the themes and concepts in her poems. Perhaps as a result of this, she was overlooked as a serious writer both in her own time and in subsequent scholarship. It is only in recent scholarship that Rostopchina gained recognition as a writer deserving scholarly attention. Her works prominently feature themes love and a woman’s emotion, but she uses the theme to emphasize how poorly society treats women and women writers. Rostopchina’s biography appears uneventful in the few years between her first published collection of poems and her family trip to Europe in 1845. While in Italy, Rostopchina read to Nikolai Gogol (1809-1852) her poem “The Forced Marriage” [Насильный брак] and with his encouragement sent it to be published in December 1846, asking for it to be published in a series with three other poems and published anonymously.¹⁶⁵ The initial censor, Thaddeus Bulgarin (1789-1859) believed the poem to be about Rostopchina’s own unhappy marriage, but Tsar Nicholas I personally saw a veiled allegory of Russia forcing Poland into union, referencing the annexation.

As a result, Rostopchina lost the Emperor’s favor forever; she was banned from court functions; and she was exiled to Moscow and only allowed to visit her country estate.¹⁶⁶ Her brothers and her literary supporters tried to lessen Rostopchina’s message in the poem by stating

прелесть составляют признаки души женской, со всем ее завлекательным непостоянством, то веселой, то задумчивой, то беспечно-ветреной, то важно мыслящей” (qtd. in Afanas’ev, *Svobodnoi muzy*, 407).

¹⁶³ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 99.

¹⁶⁴ Afanas’ev, *Svobodnoi muzy*, 407.

¹⁶⁵ Louis Pedrotti, “The Scandal of Countess Rostopchina's Polish-Russian Allegory,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 30.2 (1986): 199.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

that there was either no political motive or she was misled by talk she had heard of politics, and there were some who could not believe she would write anything political. This insistence is undermined by Rostopchina's poems that defend the Decembrists, such as "The Dream" [Мечта] and "To the Sufferers" [К страдальцам], which also uses an epigraph from a poem by Kondratii Ryleev, the same Ryleev who was executed on the Neva and whom Serafima Teplova referenced in her own poem.

In 1847 Rostopchina permanently moved to Moscow with her family, but she did not end her literary career. In 1849 Rostopchina began "Rostopchina's Saturdays," her own salon, which was attended by many contemporaries both Russian and foreign. Writer Aleksandr Ostrovskii (1823-1886), sculptor Nikolai Ramazanov (1817-1867), Hungarian composer Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Austrian ballerina Fanny Elssler (1810-1884), writer and husband of Karolina Pavlova, Nikolai Pavlov (1803-1864), and many more attended the salon (Brodskii 418). Nikolai Berg (1823-1884) recalled that there were few elements of a literary salon, but rather the gatherings involved a lot of talking and gossiping, tea drinking and dinner, and current events. In fact, in the rare cases literature readings occurred, they revolved around Rostopchina's own works and often involved fully reading her novels and novellas. These readings caused a lot of mocking and jokes from her contemporaries like poet Nikolai Shcherbina (1821-1869).¹⁶⁷

Along with leading her salon, Rostopchina continued publishing and turned to novels and novellas, such as *The Fortunate Woman* [Счастливая женщина] written in 1851-1852 and *At the Pier* [У пристани], written in 1857. She also published a two-volume collection of poems in 1856. However, the works received no praise or even mention because Rostopchina's writing

¹⁶⁷ Brodskii, *Literaturnye salony*, 421.

was already considered outdated. Rostopchina still incorporated a lot of Romantic ideas and used the form of society tale, which had been popular in the 1830s and 1840s. In the 1850s prose literature shifted to longer novels or works with a specific social message. In terms of women, this was also the beginning of the discussions surrounding the ‘woman question’ [женский вопрос], promoted by socially minded philosophers. Beginning with the devastating loss of the Crimean War (1853-1856) the Russian intelligentsia began to evaluate weaknesses in society, one of which included the state of women. What began as concern about the education of women turned to a “full-scale anthropological discussion of woman’s peculiar genius and destiny.”¹⁶⁸ Rostopchina’s “increasingly religious, patriotic, and antirevolutionary beliefs” that presented a shift from those attributed to “The Forced Marriage,” caused literary critics, the majority of whom were radical, to launch attacks on Rostopchina and her writing in the 1850s.¹⁶⁹

Rostopchina simply no longer had a literary space for her poetry and society tales, something which she realized and directly addressed in her 1856 poem “To My Critics” [К моим критикам] and a satirical comedy *The Return of Chatskii to Moscow, or a Meeting of Familiar Faces After Twenty-Five Years of Separation* [Возврат Чацкого в Москву, или Встреча знакомых лиц после двадцатипяти летней разлуки], written in 1856 but not published until after her death in 1865. Rostopchina also discussed this estrangement from the literary world in her letter to friend and journalist Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1875) in 1856 by writing:

I remembered that with my heart and inclination I do not belong to our time, but to a different, most noble one, – one which wrote not for profit, not for some prospects, but directly and simply from a surfeit of thought and feeling; I remembered, that I lived in

¹⁶⁸ Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement*, 30.

¹⁶⁹ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 97.

closeness to Pushkin, Krylov, Zhukovskii, Turgenev, Baratynskii, Karamzin, that they, our pure celebrities loved, praised, and blessed me onto a path following their footsteps, – and I separated, so to speak, from my epoch, from my peers and contemporaries, growing closer and closer to my elders, my precious models and my mentors.¹⁷⁰

Notably, in that same letter, she also writes about the reception created for her by Belinskii and the competition created among women writers. “They offered me as sacrifice to the altar erected by Zinaida R., that is Madam Gan, at that time the idol of journals in which she printed her stories. Then they destroyed me in favor of Pavlova, Sel’ias, and finally Khvoshchinskaia...”¹⁷¹ Here Rostopchina touches on a significant aspect of the literary reception experienced by women writers in Russia. Olga Peters Hasty discusses this occurrence of competition between women as one that arose due to the fact that males not only established literary conventions, but they also established gender conventions and expectations. “A cultural setting that problematizes gender intensifies women poets’ need to win approval from the male establishment,” Hasty asserts.¹⁷² Instead of uniting women and their shared experiences, male critics created competition between them. This process alienated women writers from each other and contributed to their feeling of isolation, which was a common theme in their works despite the fact that multiple women wrote and published at the same time.

¹⁷⁰ “Я вспомнила, что принадлежу и сердцем, и направлением не нашему времени, а другому, благороднейшему, - пишущему, не корысти ради, не из видов каких, а прямо и просто от избытка мысли и чувства; я вспомнила, что я жила в короткости Пушкина, Крылова, Жуковского, Тургенева, Баратынского, Карамзина, что эти чистые славы наши любили, хвалили, благословляли меня на путь по следам их, - и я отрешилась, так сказать, от своей эпохи, своих сверстников и современников, сближаясь все более и более с моими старшими, с дорогими образцами и наставниками моими” (qtd. in Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 351).

¹⁷¹ “...меня принесли в жертву на алтаре, воздвигнутом Зинаиде Р., то есть г-же Ган, тогдашнему кумиру журналов, где она печатала свои повести. Потом меня уничтожали в пользу Павловой, Сальяс, наконец Хвошинской...” (qtd. in Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 352).

¹⁷² Olga Peters Hasty, *How Women Must Write: Inventing the Russian Woman Poet* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2020), 20.

After suffering from cancer, Evdokiia Rostopchina, one of the last representatives of the Romantic movement, died on December 3, 1858. Romanov writes that even though her works were typical Romantic creations, Rostopchina had a distinct voice and a clear message, creating her own legacy. “Familiar opposition of a hero or heroine to society, their tragic rift with the world, in which together with material inequality there are too many conditions that regulate life, – this is the main idea of her prose. To the rational hypocrisy of society Rostopchina contrasts simplicity of genuine feelings, the idealism of youth, and the open human soul. In her own way she bravely, even in the frame of certain ‘preconceptions of her time period’ defends the rights of women to be individuals and to live fully and genuinely with feelings.”¹⁷³

Karolina Pavlova (1840s-1860s)

Karolina Pavlova has a very similar biography to Evdokiia Rostopchina and the two women wrote in the same period, facing the same social and historical problems of the changing expectations placed on literature in society. Due to their similarities, they are often studied together, such as in Sergei Ernst’s “Karolina Pavlova i gr. Evdokiia Rostopchina,” Olga Peters Hasty’s *How Women Must Write: Inventing the Russian Woman Poet*, and many others. The two women were not on good terms, however, even being called rivals, because they represented different schools of thought in the beginning of their careers. As Patrick Vincent discusses,

¹⁷³ “Знакомое противопоставление героя или героини обществу, их трагический разлад с миром, в котором вместе с имущественным неравенством слишком много регламентирующих жизнь условностей, – вот главная тема ее повестей. Рассудочному лицемерию света Ростопчаина противопоставляет непосредственность настоящего чувства, идеализм молодости, открытую человеческую душу. Она по-своему смело, хотя и в рамках определенных «предрассудками века», отстаивает право женщин быть личностью, жить чувством, искренне и наполненно” (Romanov’s introduction in Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 16)

Rostopchina adopted views of the Westernizers, for whom St. Petersburg and Europe represented the ideals to which Russia should strive.¹⁷⁴ Pavlova belonged to the nationalistic Slavophile group, which was based in Moscow and believed Russia should turn to pre-Petrine times to discover the nation's identity. As Slavophiles and Westernizers attacked each other and criticized each other's works, Rostopchina and Pavlova likewise developed a literary feud by writing poems antagonizing each other. By the 1850s the competition between them became irrelevant as they were both ostracized from the mainstream literary movements.

Hasty also introduces the idea that the women became literary rivals not just because of their philosophies, but also their conceptualizations of themselves as women writers. The two writers were similar in age, were both raised in Moscow, and shared the same personal and professional struggles, but the main difference between them was their literary self-representation. As Hasty sees it, Pavlova “used demonstrative dedication to the poetic calling to sidestep her womanhood, while Rostopchina developed a poetic identity that embraced it.”¹⁷⁵ Pavlova's poetic identity tried to conceal the woman, but Rostopchina's tried to conceal the poet, thus coping differently with the rift between woman and poet. Pavlova distanced herself from emotions to emphasize her intellect, while Rostopchina embraced emotions and often wrote works featuring desires and frivolity. Ultimately, both were attacked by their contemporaries – Pavlova for being unfeminine and emotionless and Rostopchina for her focus on ballrooms and feelings. However, as we shall see, this opposition is a little too facile and obscures some important shared concerns.

¹⁷⁴ Patrick H. Vincent, *The Romantic Poetess: European Culture, Politics, and Gender, 1820-1840* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2004), 86.

¹⁷⁵ Hasty, *How Women*, 21.

Karolina Karlovna Ianysh was born on July 10, 1807 to a father of German descent and a mother of French and English descent. Her father, Karl Ianysh was a rich and very educated man who taught physics and chemistry in the medical academy in Moscow. Pavlova received an exemplary education at home which allowed her to speak Russian, French, English, German, and a little bit of Italian and Polish. Pavlova also recalled reluctantly helping her father with his interest in astronomy, so it might be assumed that she also had some rudimentary knowledge of science. She shared a lot about her childhood in her article “My Memories” [Мои воспоминания] published in 1875, in which Pavlova evaluated concepts of kindness, fate, and happiness through the lens of a few crucial moments from her childhood.¹⁷⁶

Her happiest memories were of the few summers she spent in the village Bratsovo, where she spent a blissful time in freedom from propriety by spending days in the gardens with the gardener, and she felt utterly devastated when she returned years later to see the trees cut down.¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, she would incorporate this theme of trimming gardens and plants to reflect society’s superficiality prominently in her work, such as in *A Double Life* [Двойная жизнь], probably stemming from these memories.¹⁷⁸ Pavlova also reminisces about women who contributed to her nuanced worldview, such as the contradictions she saw in the strong Countess

¹⁷⁶ Karolina Pavlova, “Moi vospominaniia,” *Russkii arkhiv*, (3, 1875).

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 230-231.

¹⁷⁸ For example, Pavlova writes “here too everything corresponded to the demands and conditions of society. Surrounding the luxurious cottage was a luxurious garden, its greenery always an excellent, a choice, one might say an aristocratic greenery. Nowhere a faded leaf, a dry twig, a superfluous blade of grass; banished was everything in God’s creation that is coarse, vulgar, plebian. The very shrubbery around the house flaunted a kind of Parisian haughtiness, the very flowers planted in every available space took on a certain semblance of good form, nature made herself unnatural. In a word, everything was as it should be” to show that society values everything unnatural to the point of changing the natural to conform to its standards. Karolina Pavlova, *A Double Life*, translated by Barbara Heldt Monter (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1978) 31.

Likewise, Pavlova used the same metaphor to show the limitations of a woman’s upbringing, by writing, “her morals and intellect were improved upon as arbitrarily and thoroughly as were the poor trees in the gardens of Versailles when people were trimming them mercilessly into the shapes of columns, vases, spheroids or pyramids, so that they might represent anything other than trees” (Pavlova, *A Double Life*, 43).

Strogonova who was terrified of thunder or the kind Natalia Karpova who had no empathy for her servants. Karpova especially seemed significant because she was a spoiled and capricious woman who hated the smallest inconveniences yet lived silently with the unbearable pain of cancer that was killing her without letting anybody else know her pain.¹⁷⁹ The idea of the external appearances contrasting with internal appearances also commonly appears in Pavlova's works. Pavlova also briefly mentions a friend she had when she was staying with Prince Odoevsky, who took it upon himself to raise, educate, and marry off orphaned girls. Pavlova's friend shared how difficult it was to hear that she would soon need have an arranged marriage with someone, perhaps helping Pavlova form her ideas regarding marriage and the lot of young women.¹⁸⁰

Pavlova's entrance to the literary world began with her invitation to the literary salon held by Princess Zinaida Volkonskaia (1798-1862) in 1826. Starting in 1824, Zinaida Volkonskaia, a highly educated and notable writer in her own right, moved to her Moscow home on Tverskoi Boulevard and opened her famous literary and musical salon. Andrei Murav'ev (1806-1874) wrote "Through her aristocratic connections, the most glittering group of the old capital gathered in her home; writers and artists treated her as some kind of patron, and agreeably met each other at her splendid evenings. Here the representatives of high society united, government officials and beauties, youth and those of mature age, people of intellectual professions, professors, writers, journalists, poets, artists. Everything in this home held the impression of serving art and thought."¹⁸¹ One such group of people who actively attended her

¹⁷⁹ Pavlova, "Moi vospominaniia," 236-237.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 238.

¹⁸¹ "По ее аристократическим связям собиралось в ее доме самое блестящее общество первопрестольной столицы; литераторы и художники обирались к ней, как бы к некоему меценату, и приятно встречали друг друга на ее блистательных вечерах. Тут соединялись представители большого света, сановники и красавицы, молодежь и возраст зрелый, люди умственного труда, профессора, писатели, журналисты, поэты,

salon were the young Decembrists before their failed uprising. Volkonskaia supported the Decembrists, so after their cruel punishment, Volkonskaia continued to uphold their spirit in her salon, especially after Pushkin returned from exile in autumn of 1826. Thus, providing a safe environment for her guests, where they could discuss all political topics, literature, and music. Among her most famous literary attendees were Aleksandr Pushkin, Evgenii Baratynskii (1800-1844), Petr Viazemskii, Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856), and Adam Mickiewicz.

Most biographers begin their account of Pavlova's life with her connection to Adam Mickiewicz, an exiled Polish poet. After initially attending Volkonskaia's salon, Pavlova requested that her parents provide her with a Polish tutor, so Mickiewicz took the role. The two obviously fell in love and became engaged on November 10, 1827, much to the dissatisfaction of her parents, who were unhappy with his poverty and political standing.¹⁸² Their engagement lasted for more than a year but Mickiewicz broke off the engagement in February 1829 and subsequently left Russia forever. Notably, they only ended the engagement after Pavlova took a decisive step and wrote Mickiewicz a letter saying she "could no longer endure such a long uncertainty" [не могу дальше выносить столь продолжительной неизвестности] and asked for him to decide her fate.¹⁸³ As Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles note, Pavlova's failed engagement created a poetic response both contemplating and resisting the self-image of an abandoned woman poet, and this contributed to her poetic identity.¹⁸⁴

художники. Все в этом доме носило отпечаток служения искусству и мысли" (qtd. in Murav'ev, *V tsarstve muz*, 12).

¹⁸² Karolina Pavlova *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, edited by Valerii Iakovlevich Briusov. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo K. F. Nekrasova, 1915), xiii.

¹⁸³ Qtd. in Boris Evgen'evich Rapgof, *K. Pavlova: materialy dlia izucheniia zhizni i tvorcherstva* (Petrograd: Izdatel'stvo Tirema, 1916), 8.

¹⁸⁴ Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles, "Abandoned Meditation: Karolina Pavlova's Early Poetry," *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 33.

This same year Pavlova's engagement ended, she established a relationship with Iazykov and Baratynskii, creating German translations of poems for Iazykov and receiving encouragement for her original poems from Baratynskii.¹⁸⁵ Pavlova published her first collection of translations, which mostly consisted of Pushkin's poetry, in 1833 and continued to create translations both into German and French. In 1836 Pavlova inherited a considerable amount of money and 1,000 serfs, which made her a good candidate on the marriage market. In 1837 she married Nikolai Pavlov (1803-1864), a man of a poor background and a past actor who had already achieved moderate success as a writer. The match seemed surprising to a lot of people and years later a friend confirmed that Pavlov married Karolina for her money.¹⁸⁶ In 1839 Pavlova decided to open her own salon in Moscow, attracting attendees like Nikolai Gogol, Aleksei Khomiakov (1804-1860), Aleksandr Herzen (1812-1870), Afanasii Fet (1820-1892) and Mikhail Lermontov. Just as Rostopchina was criticized for the readings of her works, Pavlova was criticized by contemporaries for being a dominant force and actively participating in readings. Nikolai Berg provides an account of Pavlova's salon that deserves to be reviewed in length, as it touches on many contemporary opinions regarding Pavlova.

During these evenings, without fail, her works would be read. Typically, one of her friends would read her works, for example Konstantin or Ivan Aksakov. Karolina Karlovna at this time sat with a footstool in shape of a boat so that the Tritons and ships had to skirt around the promontory and not disturb the galley of the empress. The works of Madame Pavlova had some dignity, but they were never such that they would be remembered for long. But Madame Pavlova constantly thought that she wrote like a

¹⁸⁵ Pavlova, *Sobranie sochinenii*, xx.

¹⁸⁶ Alexander Lehrman, "Appendix 1: A Chronology of Karolina Pavlova's Life," *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) 255.

Russian male poet. In any case, the Russian verse of this German woman was much more flawless than the verse of the Russian Lady Rostopchina. Pavlov, when the poems of his spouse were read, typically stood near her chair, dropping his gaze to the ground, as if listening and trying to comprehend.¹⁸⁷

Berg first mocks Pavlova's presence by alluding to the elevated status onto which she placed herself, as depicted by her chair. Likewise, when Berg compliments Pavlova's works he also undermines the praise by calling them forgettable and worse than the writer herself appraised them to be. He continues to contrast Pavlova, reminding the reader that she is German, with Rostopchina, insulting the other's verses with the comparison. Lastly, he comments on Pavlov's insignificant presence next to his wife and implies that he is not intelligent enough to understand them. Berg's perception seems to come from a place of anxiety regarding a strong female presence because he mocks Pavlova's view of herself and her seeming domination of her husband, who is depicted standing uselessly and helplessly at her side. Khomiakov also touches on the couple's relationship in his letter to Iazykov in 1841, writing "Recently Pavlova recited her beautiful ballad 'Old Woman' [Старуха]. Pavlov defers to her. Soon her poems will be read more than his novellas. It seems he's afraid of that."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ "На литературных вечерах у Павловой читались непременно ее произведения. Читал обыкновенно кто-нибудь из ее друзей, напр., Константин или Иван Аксаков. Каролина Карловна сидела в это время с подножием в виде лодочки, чтобы плавающие кругом полуботы и бриги огибали мысом и не беспокоили гички царицы. Произведения госпожи Павловой имели некоторое достоинство, но никогда не были такими, чтоб их долго помнить. Но сама госпожа Павлова постоянно думала, что она пишет как русский поэт-мужчина. Во всяком случае, русский стих этой немки был гораздо совершеннее стиха русской барыни Ростопчиной. Павлов, когда читали стихи его супруги, обыкновенно стоял подле ее стула, опустив в землю глаза, как бы слушая и соображая." Nikolai Vasil'evich Berg, "Posmetrye zapiski," *Russkaia starina* 69 (1891): 264.

¹⁸⁸ "Недавно Павлова читала прекрасную балладу свою «Старуха». Павлов перед ней пасует. Скоро ее стихи будут читаться больше его повестей. Он, кажется, боится этого" (qtd. in Pavlova, *Sobranie sochinenii*, xxix).

In the mid-1840s Pavlova began publishing her poems in collections and more people began taking notice and commenting about her works. Those who supported Slavophilism, like the Aksakov brothers and Ivan Kireevsky supported Pavlova's literature but Westernizers often wrote negatively about her works.¹⁸⁹ Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883) wrote in a letter to Pogodin, "the poems of Pavlova and Rostopchina – this is some sort of lascivious squeal which they want to pass off as antiquity, at the very least they should be good! No, this type of poetry is unacceptable."¹⁹⁰ However, when Pavlova's *A Double Life* was published in 1848 it was favorably reviewed and widely discussed. One review in *The Reader's Library* stated, "The writer, as you can see, bears a name that is literary in the highest degree. But if she had not received it previously through the will of fate, then she would be able to create a similar one through the strength of her talent. I do not recall that I ever happened to read in Russian anything more original, more refined and more artistic in terms of form, and more witty and graceful in phrasing, and softer and smoother in decoration. ... In the middle of the book I suddenly had doubts and once again looked at the title page of the book in order to make certain – have I not made a mistake? – is it truly written by a woman? It seemed to me that only men can be so malicious."¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ James M. Edie provides a comprehensive view of the philosophical movements, but broadly, "to [Slavophiles], Russia was neither Asiatic nor European; it was Russian, and by turning to the soil of Russia, to the institutions it had unconsciously developed by itself, to the tradition of Orthodoxy, they believed it would be possible to understand the true place of Russia in history and the basis on which Russia could bring salvation to the West. The Westernizers wanted to "save" Russia by helping her achieve a social consciousness which could assimilate the values of European civilization."

James M. Edie, et al, *Russian Philosophy* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965) 161

¹⁹⁰ "Стихи Павловой и Ростопчиной – это какой-то любострастный писк, который нам хотят выдать за античность, и хотя бы стихи были хороши! Нет, этого рода поэзия негодится никуда" (qtd. in Pavlova, *Sobranie sochinenii*, xxxi).

¹⁹¹ "Сочинительница, как вы видите, носит имя в высокой степени литературное. Но если бы она и не получила его предварительно, по воле судьбы, то могла бы создать себе подобное силой таланта. Я не помню, чтобы мне случилось когда-нибудь читать на русском языке что-либо оригинальнее, изящнее и художественнее относительно к форме, остроумнее и грациознее по выражению, нежнее и глаже по отделке. ... В середине книги, я вдруг усомнился и еще раз посмотрел на заглавный лист книги, чтобы

As early as 1842 Pavlova began writing *The Quadrille* [Кадриль] and in 1849 there was a notice in *The Moscow Citizen* [Москвитянин] about its upcoming publication, but it was not published until 1859.¹⁹² Perhaps the delay in her writing was caused by her marital problems with Pavlov, who started a second family with Pavlova's niece and who had mounting gambling debts that put a strain on their marriage. In 1852 Pavlova's father placed a complaint against Pavlov to the general governor, who called for a search of Pavlov's home and discovered a number of banned books. Pavlov was exiled for nine months, at which time he complained to his friends and wrote about the dangers of leaving his son with the Germans, until he was pardoned and returned victorious to Moscow.¹⁹³ Pavlova's act of defiance against her husband turned public opinion completely against her, many calling her "trash" [дрянь], "beast" [чудовище], among other insults.

In the spring of 1853 Pavlova left Moscow with her family for St. Petersburg, but the city's cholera outbreak drove her away and killed her father, whom she left before the burial, thus sparking another wave of antagonism against her. She briefly settled in Tartu after the death of her father and for a few years spent her time travelling and attempting to move back to Russia, until she ultimately settled in Dresden, Germany in 1861, where she remained for the rest of her life. Pavlova published "A Conversation in the Kremlin" [Разговор в Кремле] in 1854 but even the previously sympathetic critics derided this work. A similar fate met her 1863 collection of poems, for which Aksakov paid one ruble per poem and published in a haphazard way, with some poems published individually and the rest published in a collection "which was poorly

удостовериться – не ошиба ли я? – точно ли это написано женщиной? Мне как-то показалось, что одни только мужчины могут быть такие злые.”

“Dvoinaia zhizn’. Ocherk. K Pavlovoi.” *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 87 (1848): 1-17.

¹⁹² Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, xxxiii.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, xxxix.

thought out, incomplete, and had no commentary,” as scholar Frank Göpfert remarks.¹⁹⁴ *The Quadrille* [Кадриль], which was published in 1859, only received criticism and became the target of satirical verse. In Dresden, however, Pavlova was able to form a literary relationship with Aleksei Tolstoi (1817-1875) and created German translations for his works, which she was able to publish in Russia. Little is known about the last few years of her life, but on December 4, 1893 Karolina Pavlova died.

Only a year after her death, the Symbolist movement began taking notice of her life and works, but especially a few decades later after Valerii Briusov’s publication of Pavlova’s collection of works in 1915, which not only increased interest for Pavlova herself but it sparked interest in the history of women’s literature, according Göpfert.¹⁹⁵ This interest allowed Pavlova’s works to inspire poets like Marina Tsvetaeva and Anna Akhmatova, who both adopt some of her ideas, such as her image of the poetic gift being a “divine craft” [святое ремесло].¹⁹⁶ Pavlova was an especially talented writer, so even contemporary critics who criticized Pavlova for being unfeminine and having a high opinion of herself, did not deny her talent. If critics could negatively discuss Rostopchina’s works on the basis of literary quality, they could not do so with Pavlova. In her works Pavlova “emphatically rejected the idea of any essential gulf between extraordinary and ordinary women, depicting extraordinary women as very human and ordinary women as extraordinary,” showing a growing interest in the shared conditions of all women.¹⁹⁷ Pavlova gradually turned to analyzing why women are limited in

¹⁹⁴ Frank Göpfert, “The German Period in the Life and Work of Karolina Pavlova,” *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) 245.

¹⁹⁵ Frank Göpfert, “Poniatie ‘remeslo’ v traditsii russkoi zhenskoi poezii,” *Gender Restructuring in Russian Studies: Conference Papers, Helsinki, August 1992* (Tampere: University of Tampere, 1993) 65.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁹⁷ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 166.

their opportunities, and later included protest against women's lack of freedom, so she is particularly notable as a feminist in the literary context.

Broadly speaking, Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova had different life experiences derived from their social standing, childhood, marriage, and literary careers. Bunina, though belonging to nobility, was born essentially poor, had to educate herself, and chose not to marry. Teplova was born to a wealthy merchant-class family, received a wonderful education for her time, seemed to be happily married, and she entered the literary world in the company of her sister and best friend. Gan was born in Ukraine and lived there the majority of her life, received a good foundation of education from her mother but is mostly considered to be self-taught, and she was unhappy in her marriage. Gan also travelled a lot, so she was distanced from the literary centers and felt isolated intellectually. Her two daughters became important figures in their own right, one being writer Vera Zhelikhovskaia and the other Elena Blavatskaia, the founder of theosophy. Rostopchina was born into Moscow nobility and entered the literary world very early through her family's connections, enjoyed success until her exile to Moscow, and was for a long time regarded as the perfect society woman. Pavlova was born to a family of German descent, had an unhappy married life, and lost all connections to the literary world when she chose to stand up for her rights against her husband.

Despite their superficial differences, the women all chose to write and publish original works, rebelling against expected gender norms. All of them entered the literary world with the help of men who sponsored and supported them, but they managed to stand apart from them through their own talent. According to Barbara Engel, in the first third of the nineteenth century "only a limited number of women were likely to acquire unrealistic expectations or to aspire to a life that was different from that of their mothers," beginning their rebellion at home in

isolation.¹⁹⁸ These five women can be considered rebels and their works a form of protest against the limitations of their life. They chose to publish their works, their ideas, and their messages, thereby allowing readers even centuries later to understand their views on life and learn from them.

¹⁹⁸ Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 26.

Chapter 3: Love and Marriage

In the nineteenth century, and for most of history, the most significant aspect of a woman's life was her connection to love as a wife and mother. Arguably, love is also the most common theme in literature and poetry. Depending on the time period and the culture, the understandings regarding love and what it truly means for people can shift. For women, their entire identity depended on marriage, and love was a conceptual idea, not a practical one. Most literature, including works that explore experiences of women, was written by men, so it is the men's feelings and ideas regarding love and marriage that was projected onto women. This is why the works written by women hold a lot of value for readers wishing to understand their authentic views on life, love, and marriage. This chapter explores Bunina's and Teplova's poetry, Gan's "The Ideal," Rostopchina's *The Fortunate Woman*, and Pavlova's *The Quadrille* to understand the messages and social commentary on this topic provided by the women writers.

Despite social, economic, and academic progress that began during the reign of Peter I, women's roles were often limited to their household, which heavily constrained their opportunities. Family status and networks determined social roles and male identity followed women starting from their birth, in the form of patronymics and patriarchal families, to their married life when they adopted the name of their husbands.¹⁹⁹ Their role within the family was primarily daughter, wife, and mother with limited opportunity to extend past those roles. Even though forced marriages were not widely accepted, the main goal of marriage was still to contribute to the family's social position and financial health, so senior family members made

¹⁹⁹ Robin Bisha, et al, *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression, an Anthology of Sources* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 58.

decisions about marriage partners. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ideas on romantic love and companionate marriage entered Russian society, but they conflicted with religious teachings which reinforced patriarchal values. Only by the middle of the nineteenth century were women afforded an opinion and their personal preference of spouse were considered.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau heavily influenced the eighteenth-century Sentimentalist philosophy, especially in Russia. At this time, philosophers also started speculating about women's possibilities, their roles in society, their potential opportunities and education, as well as the traits of ideal men, women, and their marriage. Rousseau's words from his 1762 book *Emile, or on Education* provide many of his ideas regarding his ideal partnership and the roles of women in the bounds of marriage.²⁰⁰ Rousseau's writings influenced European ideas, and they promoted a view of marriage as a necessary union for men and women to thrive.

In the union of the sexes each contributes equally to the common aim, but not in the same way. From this diversity arises the first assignable difference in the moral relations of the two sexes. One ought to be active and strong, and the other passive and weak. One must necessarily will and be able; it suffices that the other put up little resistance. Once this principle is established, it follows that woman is specially made to please man. If man ought to please her in turn, it is due to a less direct necessity. His merit is in his power; he pleases by the sole fact of his strength. This is not the law of love, I agree. But it is that of nature, prior to love itself. If woman is made to please and to be subjugated, she ought

²⁰⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau's Emile, or Treatise on Education* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).

to make herself agreeable to man instead of arousing him. Her own violence is in her charms. It is by these that she ought to constrain him to find his strength and make use of it. The surest art of animating that strength is to make it necessary by resistance. Then *amour-propre* unites with desire, and the one triumphs in the victory that the other has made him win. From this there arises attack and defense, the audacity of one sex and the timidity of the other, and finally the modesty and the shame with which nature armed the weak in order to enslave the strong.²⁰¹

Men's morals, their passions, their tastes, their pleasures, their very happiness depend on women. Thus the whole education of women ought to relate to men. To please men, to be useful to them, to make herself loved and honored by them, to raise them when young, to care for them when grown, to counsel them, to console them, to make their lives agreeable and sweet – these are the duties of women at all times.²⁰²

Rousseau's principles about marriage and love rest on the foundation that men and women are inherently different, that is that men are stronger and more active while women are passive and weak. This difference allows men to use their strength over women and the duties of the women center on pleasing the men and submitting to their will. Likewise, they should not aggravate men to use their strength in a hostile way, yet they are also responsible for igniting said strength and evoking the men to use it properly. These contradicting statements allude to a middle ground in which women make men strong yet also constrain that strength with their only

²⁰¹ Ibid., 358.

²⁰² Ibid., 365.

weapon, their charms. Women have these charms in order to attract men and win their affections and gain power over men. Despite women possessing power to temper men, there is still a large power imbalance created in such a union in which men hold all the power and the women submit. Their entire lives should be dedicated to their men, whether children or husbands, and to always improve their lives. With this idea, Rousseau also discusses some of the duties of women, which include maintaining a perfect image in society.

It is important, then, not only that a woman be faithful, but that she be judged faithful by her husband, by those near her, by everyone. It is important that she be modest, attentive, reserved, and that she give evidence of her virtue to the eyes of others as well as to her own conscience. If it is important that a father love his children, it is important that he esteem their mother. There are the reasons which put even appearances among the duties of women, and make honor and reputation no less indispensable to them than chastity. There follows from these principles, along with the moral difference of the sexes, a new motive of duty and propriety which prescribes especially to women the most scrupulous attention to their conduct, their manners, and their bearing.²⁰³

The image that a woman possesses among her peers holds much more value than her true actions, even though she should always be modest and reserved, among many other constricting qualities. Honor and reputation should stand above all else for the woman in order to maintain her standing for her husband and her children. As part of her duties, she should be monitored at all times to avoid any grievances or mistakes. The wife Rousseau promotes has no identity or

²⁰³ Ibid., 361-362.

role outside of being an obedient wife and dutiful mother. Essentially, if a woman does not have a successful union in which she gives up her own desires and dreams, she has no value. Love, likewise, seems not to play a dominant role in the woman's life or the union Rousseau advocates. Rousseau's ideas were often repeated in Russian philosophers and poets such as Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826).

Karamzin's famous poem "Epistle to Women" [Послание к женщинам], written in 1795, features such lines like "you will be born to adorn the sublunar light" [вы родитесь свет подлунный украшать], poetically linking women with adornment. He also states, "In your eyes shines the heavenly, peaceful beam of light / which has to show us the path to bliss / goodness and perfection / we will never reach there on another path."²⁰⁴ The man who succumbs to the wishes of the woman achieves a "tender heart" and "kind actions."²⁰⁵ Karamzin, like Rousseau, places the education and molding of man's morality and behavior heavily on women, implying they are perfect beings whose duty is oriented toward a man's moral enlightenment. This might be considered a response to the relative freedom women began experiencing toward the end of the eighteenth century.

There was a period of time during the second half and the end of the eighteenth century during which women led freer lives than previously, and freer than in the nineteenth century. The women inspired "fear and respect" by dressing like men, participating in masculine activities, such as drinking vodka, smoking pipes, and playing billiards.²⁰⁶ Historian Vladimir Mihnevich

²⁰⁴ "У вас в очах блестит небесный, тихий луч / Который показать нам должен путь к блаженству / Добру и совершенству / Другим путем к тому вовеки не дойдем" Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii N. M. Karamzina* Vol. 13 (Petrograd: Izdanie kopeika, 1915) 171.

²⁰⁵ "Нежен сердцем, добр делами" (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii*, 172).

²⁰⁶ Vladimir Osipovich Mihnevich, *Russkaia zhenshchina XVIII stoletia: istoricheskie etudy VI. Mihnevicha* (Kiev: Iuzhno-russkoe knigoizd-vo F. A. Ioganson, 1895) 131.

attributed the phenomenon to powerful figures like Anna Ioanovna (r. 1730-1740), Elizabeth Petrovna (r. 1741-1761), and especially Catherine II (r. 1762-1796), who all enjoyed men's clothing and sport. At this time, the "girls' protests" against despotic parents turned to the women running away to marry for love, sometimes running from husbands. Many women refused to marry, choosing to reject men altogether. These protests were easier for provincial women and those of lower classes, but aristocratic girls hurried to marry to partake in what Derzhavin called "fashionable art to give each other freedom," meaning having an open marriage.²⁰⁷ For these few decades women acted against norms, defying their parents and society because they had a strong craving for freedom, independence, and agency and this was one of the few ways they could fulfill their wishes.

Anna Bunina

As Catherine's reign ended and her male successors began ruling, society became more conservative, especially under the guidance of Mariia Fedorovna and her traditional values that permeated society and women's education. Anna Bunina grew up just in time to experience a brief moment in the history of liberation, which might explain her life decision to remain independent and unmarried. Her first publication in 1799, a short essay titled "Love," [Любовь] included many of her ideas regarding love and marriage. Wendy Rosslyn calls Bunina's ideas "a different model, based on the thesis that man and woman were similar in nature and equal in status," which directly opposes Rousseau's conclusion that man and woman are inherently

²⁰⁷ "Модным искусством давать друг другу свободу" (qtd. in Mihnevich, *Russkie zhenshchiny*, 137).

different and their union depends on the woman obediently submitting to the man's strength.²⁰⁸ Bunina advanced the idea that in order to please a woman, it is necessary for a man to be like her. Instead of marriage for social and economic gain, as was the accepted practice, Bunina praised love based on "personal affection and companionship, and thought love should be based on a free choice of partners with thorough knowledge of each other."²⁰⁹

If it (love) were based only on the qualities of the soul, the feelings would remain inactive; if it were based only on external charms, the heart would feel a vacuum and would be still. A true lover is captivated equally by virtue and charms; he is tender and passionate, respectful and jealous, sensitive and impulsive. He aspires to the satisfaction of sensual pleasures; but he wants to receive them from mutual feeling. He can easily be audacious, but not an abductor; for to be happy he needs wellbeing which is shared on both sides.²¹⁰

The foundation of the relationship Bunina imagines to be ideal rests on mutual affection, which can be gained by coming to understand the person on a deeper level than many superficial relationships allow. Both the soul and the heart have to be captured in order for a connection to occur. "She did not approve of the libertinism of previous decades, of coquetry, flirtation, and philandering, which she found immoral and dishonest ... but she was also suspicious of sensibility, which, she considered, enabled men to exploit women by using tender feeling as a mask for lust. Her understanding of love as requiring ardor, strong feeling, activity, and desire, as well as constancy, modest and sacrifice included strong emotions which were alien to the

²⁰⁸ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 32.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹⁰ Quoted in Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 33.

tranquil gentle affection idealized by the Sentimentalists.”²¹¹ When looking at Karamzin’s 1792 story “Poor Liza” [Бедная Лиза], a story of a nobleman seducing a young and innocent peasant girl, we find that the beginning of Erast and Liza’s love story features the type of love Rousseau would appreciate and Bunina would dislike. The major social and economic power imbalance depicted in the story adds to Liza’s passive stance in their relationship, as well as promotes the notion that women should elevate the feelings of men. “Rejecting Karamzin’s assertion that a man was manly, sensitive, charitable and magnanimous because he loved, she [Bunina] declared that he could love only because he already had these qualities: a woman’s love could not refashion an unworthy man.”²¹²

Bunina’s stance on a union based on equality appears in her *basnia* [fable] titled “Cast Iron and Clay Pots,” written in 1809.

Какой-то мещанин ведя горшками торг,
И накопя от них изрядное именье,
По силе, сколько мог,
 Им вздумал сделать награждение.
Собрал последушки — и говорит:
 «Мне исстари ваш род благодворит,
 Я вами сыт, одет, доволен.
За предков ваших труд — и в память их заслуг,
Хочу, чтоб всяк из вас: их внук, их сын, их друг—
Отныне был бы волен.
Вот две дороги вам:
Хотите ль счастья искать по городам,
 Сей час в возы — и сам отправлюсь с вами;
 На родине ль останетесь меж нами,
 Живите в неге, без трудов,
 Как будто бы у вас горшков,
 Хозяина и не бывало».
Довольны тем горшки — и стали рассуждать,
 Кому какой удел избрать.
 «Нам жить в глуши ни мало не пристало, —
Чугуны в голос все, — желаем видеть свет!»

²¹¹ Ibid., 35.

²¹² Ibid., 32-33.

«А мы, — сказал горшок, — по слабости сложенья,
 Должны искать уединенья.
 Останемся, друзья! в нас столько силы нет,
 Чтоб по свету таскаться,
 Их милость может прогуляться;
 Такая ль крепость в них!
 Их кожа всотеро плотнее,
 Им будущи лета вернее,
 Чем нам единый миг;
 От первой неприятной встречи
 Из нас останется лишь прах...»—
 «Когда вас держит только страх,—
 Прервал чугуны горшковы речи,
 То мы вам верный щит.
 Везде, во всех бедах укроем вас собою;
 Напрыгнет ли буян — мы тотчас к бою,
 Из вас же всякой пусть спокойно спит».
 Горшок поклон — и в воз к чугунам завалился.
 Хозяин тут же к ним и в путь пустился.
 Известно, что в пути во всех местах
 Без трудности не достигают цели,
 И наши путники узнали то на деле;
 Где должно проезжать овраг,
 Где горы, где мосты, где вязкия болоты,
 Где даже каменны оплоты.
 Горшку невмочь, хотя буянов не видать;
 Соседи прыгают, как будто бы хмельные,
 Иль угорелые, шальные;
 Тот в бок его, тот в грудь — не знает, что начать.
 Толчки приятельски, равно как от врагов,
 Всегда толчки от них не меньше больно.
 Соседи ради бы покой взять от прыжков;
 Но прыгают невольно.
 Едва усядутся — как новая беда!
 Там пни перескакнуть — там кочки;
 Друг друга толк — и без вреда,
 А хрупкого горшка остались черепочки.

Блажен, кто с равными свой жребий съединил!
 Союз тот гибелен, где нет равенства сил.

Some meshchanin who conducted trade with pots,
 And amassed a generous estate,
 He got the idea to give them a reward,
 To the best of his ability.
 He gathered everyone — and says:

“Since olden days your kin has been good to me,
 Due to you I am sated, clothed, happy.
 For your ancestors’ labor – and in remembrance of their merit,
 I want, for everyone of you, their grandson, son, their friend –
 To be free from now on.
 Here are two paths for you:
 If you want to seek happiness in cities,
 Get into the carts right now – and I will go with you;
 If you stay in the homeland among us,
 Live in comfort, without hardships,
 As if you, pots,
 Never had a master.”

The pots were satisfied with that – and began to discuss,
 Who should choose which fate.
 “We are not tired to live in solitude,-
 The iron pots said as one, - we wish to see the world!”
 “And we, - said the clay pot, - by the weakness of our disposition,
 Must seek solitude.
 We’ll remain, friends! We do not have so much strength,
 To traipse around the world,
 Their grace can take a walk;
 Such strength is in them!
 Their skin is a hundred times more solid,
 Their future years more certain,
 Than our single moment’
 At the first unpleasant encounter
 Only dust will be left of us...”
 “When only fear holds you back, -
 The iron interrupted the clay pot,
 Then we are your trusty shield.
 Everywhere, in all woes we will cover you;
 If a brawler attacks – we will immediately fight;
 Each of you can sleep peacefully.”

The clay is obedient – and tumbled into the cart with the iron.
 The master immediately joined them and they set off.
 It is known, that anywhere during travels
 A goal is not achieved without hardships,
 And our travelers learned this from experience;
 Where one must ride by a ravine,
 Where there are mountains, bridges, and marshy swamps,
 Even where there are stone supports,
 It is unendurable for the clay pot, even though there are no brawlers;
 Its neighbors jump, as if they are drunk,
 Burnt, or foolish;
 One gets him in the side, another in the chest – he does not know what to begin.
 The friendly shoves are equal to those of the enemy,

Their shoves are always no less painful.
 The neighbors would happily rest from jumping;
 But they jump involuntarily.
 As soon as they sit still – there is a new woe!
 There they jump over a stump – there bumps;
 They push each other – without harm,
 But only fragments were left of the delicate pots.

Blissful is he, who unites his fate with an equal!
 A union is fatal, where there is no equality of strength.²¹³

Bunina's fable directly comments on the idea of a union consisting of a "stronger" partner [сильный] and a "weaker" one [слабый] through the metaphor of different pots. When the pots have an opportunity to leave their home, the clay pots are reluctant because they are aware of their structure and know that should they encounter anything bad, they will be destroyed. The iron pots first attribute the clay pots' thoughts to fear and then promise to protect the others if they encounter any trouble. When they set off, the jarring ride causes the cast iron pots to completely destroy the clay ones, showing that the enemies are not robbers or outsiders but the strong pots themselves. This story could have had an ambiguous message but Bunina adds the last two lines separately from the rest speaking directly to the reader, stating that "a union is fatal, where there is no equality of strength" [союз тот гибелен, где нет равенства сил].

Aside from the very explicit message of an equal partnership, there are also a few minor ideas that appear in the poem. The clay pots are aware of their own disposition and initially want to stay behind, but the strong pots convince them to leave. The iron pots do not look beyond their own perception at the reality and do not believe the words of the clay pots, believing their own strength to be the others' salvation. This strength is what eventually destroys the other pots, just

²¹³ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 115.

as they clay ones predicted. Bunina places the fault with the iron pots, showing that the arrogance and power of the pots creates the problems for the weaker ones. As Rosslyn indicates, Bunina rejects “Rousseau’s principle of the complementarity of sexes” by depicting the destruction that arises when a power imbalance occurs in a union and she warns against it.²¹⁴

Similar ideas also appear in her poem “The Philosophy of the Butterfly,” published in 1806.

В один приятный летний день,
 Как солнце к западу склонилось,
 И падала с холмов в долины тень:
 Из дома где-то в сад окошко отворилось,
 На коем цвел левкой.
 То видя, бабочки летят в окно толпой:
 Иные на цветах душистых поместились,
 Иные же пустились
 Осматривать той комнаты убор;
 Порхают к зеркалам, садятся на фарфор,
 На шкапы, на стопы, на книги – по разбору,
 Что лучше нравится которой взору.
 Благодаря судьбу – за дар столь дорогой,
 Соединивший им свободу с их крыльями,
 Все счастье – радости в свободе видят той.
 Спустились сумерки со тьмой,
 И в комнате столы оставили огнями:
 «Вот подлинно где рай – сто солнцев вдруг горит, –
 Летуньи говорят, - у нас одно светило,
 И то так высоко... а здесь – как мило,
 Ленивой долетит».
 И с словом сим одна – порх к ближнему светилу;
 Но что ж – увы!.. сожглась..
 Другая вслед за ней, резвясь и кружась,
 Нашла подобно ей свою могилу.
 Потом – еще пяток; потом – и счету нет;
 Хоть гибнут – но летят с охотою на свет;
 Осталось две иль три, не более, в живых.
 «Печален жребий их, –
 Оставшая уныло рассуждает, –
 Что жизнь? – единой миг; а счастье? – мечты.

²¹⁴ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 107.

Безумец верное опасным заменяет!
 На что бы покидать душистые цветы,
 Привольные сады, зеленые долины;
 Иль в блеске кроются всех радостей причины?
 На что бы им искать
 Блаженства за эфиром,
 Когда своим довольным миром:
 К чему так далеко летать?..
 Вот суетных надежд награды!
 Вот истинный урок несмысленным глупцам,
 Сколь волю бедственно давать своим сердцам!
 Кто ищет вдалеке – тот гибнет без пощады». –
 «Разумно говоришь,-
 Подруга ей в ответ, - но что ж, куда летишь?» –
 «Так... посмотреть светило». –
 «Возможно ли? сейчас оно других губило...» –
 «Но это я, - а не оне:
 Давно, мой друг, живу, - и все известно мне;
 Все знаю, как, когда, где должно обойтись,
 Где близко подойти и где отсторониться.
 Пожалуй, обо мне все страхи отложи;
 О юности своей неопытной тужи.
 Я вдруг не кинуся – слегка и осторожно –
 Везде и к случаям, и к месту применюсь, –
 Опасно где, хотя не невозможно,
 Тотчас назад вернусь.
 Со всех сторон его сначала облетаю,
 И все издалека, - потом,
 Когда своим умом
 Все качества его в подробность испытаю,
 Тогда и ближе подойду;
 И там, где многие нашли беду,
 Я, может быть, сыщу свое блаженство.
 Не всем равенство
 В напастях суждено». – Окончила – летит,
 И правила свои хранит
 Довольно строго:
 Все вьется издали, чуть-чуть что над огнем;
 Потом, опасности не видя в нем,
 Иль так по случаю, – но лишь спустя немного
 Вдуг прямо на него трепещущим крылом,
 И крылышком одним, увы! – уж меней стало!
 Хотя остались три; но то не помогло,
 И в сем несчастьи злом
 Упала, бедная, с размаха.
 Когда же первые прошли движенья страха,

Опять к огню, – но тут при всей
 Надежде на себя своей
 Ошибку сделала в измеренном полете,
 Иль память потеряв при близком ярком свете;
 Но только вдруг взяла дорогу уж не ту –
 И вихрем пламенным влекома с силой,
 Поверглась участи всеобщей и унылой;
 Сколь ни боролася... Погибла за мечту.

Так часто наш язык рассудку вслед идет;
 А сердце в тот же миг нас к гибели ведет.

During one pleasant summer day,
 As the sun descended to the west,
 And the shadow of hills dropped into the valleys:
 A window opened from a house somewhere in the garden,
 On which stock flowers bloomed.
 Seeing that, butterflies fly to the window in a crowd:
 Some situated themselves on the fragrant flowers,
 Others set off
 To see the decoration of that room;
 They flutter to the mirrors, land on the porcelain,
 On the cabinets, on the beams, on books – as they see fit,
 Whatever each's eyes like best.
 Thanking fate – for such a valuable gift,
 Having combined freedom with their wings,
 All the happiness – the joy they see in that freedom.
 Twilight descended with the darkness,
 And the tables were fixed with lights:
 “Here is truly heaven – a hundred suns suddenly burn, -
 The flyers say, - we have one luminary,
 And even then it is so high... but here – how nice,
 A lazy one will fly to it.”
 And with this word one – flutters to the closest light,
 But... alas!.. she burned...
 Another going after her, gamboling and spinning,
 Found a similar grave like her.
 Then – another five; then – countless;
 Even though they perish – they fly with eagerness to the light;
 There remained two or three, not more, alive.
 “Their fate is sad, -
 The remaining one gloomily reasons, -
 What is life? – a single moment; and happiness? – dreams.
 A madman will trade the reliable for the dangerous!
 For what would I leave fragrant flowers,
 Open gardens, green valleys;

Or do the causes of all joys lie hidden in splendor?

Why would they seek

Bliss beyond the ether,

When they are satisfied with their world:

Why fly so far away?..

Here are the rewards of vain hopes!

Here is a genuine lesson for unreasonable fools,

Who give a little freedom disastrously to their hearts!

He who seeks in the distance – he perishes without mercy.”-

“You speak reasonably, -

Her friend says in response, - but, where are you flying?” –

“So... to see the light.” –

“Is this possible? It just destroyed others...” –

“But it is I, and not they:

For a long time, my friend, I have lived, - and all is known to me;

I know everything, how, when, where is necessary to get by,

Where to come closely and where to move away.

I suppose you should put aside all fear for me;

Worry about your own inexperienced youth.

I will not abruptly fling myself – lightly and carefully –

I will adapt everywhere to situations and place, -

Where it is dangerous, even though not impossible,

I will immediately retreat.

I will fly around it from all sides,

And all of it from afar, - then,

With my mind

I will experience all qualities thoroughly,

Then I will come closer;

And there, where many found woe,

I will, perhaps, find my bliss.

Not for everyone equality

In misery is fated.” – she finished – flies,

And keeps to her rules

Rather strictly:

Weaves from afar, a little bit over the fire;

Then, not seeing the danger in it,

Or by accident, - but only lowering a little

Suddenly she fell right on to it with a shaking wing,

Alas! – there was now one less wing!

Even though three remained; that did not help,

And in all of this misfortune

She fell, poor thing, with full force.

When the first movements of fear subsided,

Again toward the fire, - but here despite all

Her hope for herself

She either made a mistake in her calculated flight,

Or she forgot her memories before the close bright light;
 But she suddenly took a different path –
 And as a fiery whirlwind beckoned with strength,
 She surrendered to the general and gloomy fate;
 No matter how she fought... she perished for a dream.

So often our tongue follows reason;
 But at the same moment the heart leads us to ruin.²¹⁵

“The Philosophy of the Butterfly” creates a beautiful but heartbreaking image of butterflies being tempted by lights and fire and dying for being unable to stay away. Rosslyn states that “the poem comments on the upbringing of young women, which neglected the training of reason, and segregated the young woman from men almost until the moment when she had to choose her marriage partner. She was thus prone to idealize her suitors and was obliged to make her decision with neither experience nor reason to guide her. Hence the self-destructive love... which many suffered.”²¹⁶ Such a reading, while apt, assumes a lot from Bunina’s ambiguity. The butterflies, representing young women, become dangerously attracted to “light” [свет]. This word can also mean high society. This idea is further emphasized when the butterfly comments on butterflies thinking happiness lies in the splendor [блеск], a word often associated with society. Even though *svet* tempts the women, it is the fire [огонь] that destroys the butterfly, and the fire is referred to as он [he/him] in the passage of destruction. Thus, though the poem can be read as a warning against the blandishments of society, the last few lines about the heart leading one to ruin suggests that the underlying theme of the poem is love.

The poem was published in 1806 in various journals, but it was not included in her publication of *The Inexperienced Muse*, first published in 1809. Bunina depended heavily on her

²¹⁵ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 300.

²¹⁶ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 66.

patrons, so she most likely censored her own ideas and avoided publishing controversial works. Since the poem “The Philosophy of the Butterfly” is about the ruin of young women, the reader can discern many other ideas about women and men. In the beginning of the poem Bunina emphasizes the butterflies’ freedom above all else, something they naturally have. Once they leave their reliable home with valleys and flowers for the unnatural, cultivated garden with only the appearance of freedom, they meet their ruin. The flower box initially attracts the butterflies, creating the perception of a positive environment, but behind the flower box in the house is a life incompatible with the lives of the butterflies. Society too, has the perception and splendor of a comfortable and welcoming place but has dangers hidden everywhere.

Once the *svet* tempts the butterflies, the flames capture all of the butterflies’ attention and one after another they all land on the fire, destroying themselves. This is an important distinction because the butterflies themselves choose their fate, being unable to resist. Bunina includes a voice of a single butterfly who provides the words of reason. She explicitly states that only “madmen” [безумцы] trade their reliable homes for the dangerous and seek bliss elsewhere. Here, as well as in a few other lines throughout the poem, Bunina places emphasis on distance. This most likely refers to the poet’s idea about men and women not truly knowing each other before their marriage. As the butterfly states, she has observed and learned everything about the flame and feels she can handle herself against it. The reader watches, knowing that this confidence and assurance is in vain because the flame will always conquer the delicate butterfly. The reader sees the butterfly making multiple attempts, continuing its journey even after being burned. The poem can be read from Bunina’s perspective, as she never gave up the freedom of her metaphorical wings for marriage and watched on as other women married. In this poem, the heart, or love, sends women on an unceasing journey to be destroyed by men.

“The Philosophy of the Butterfly” has a very similar message to “Cast Iron and Clay Pots” and her personal essay. The danger posed in the poem about pots rests on the inequality of the partners. The idea that one partner, the man, should be stronger and more active than his counterpart, creates danger for the weaker partner. The union between the flame and the butterfly, likewise, consists of an inherent inequality in which one always destroys the other. The butterflies, when they first enter the room, do not realize the problems and the dangers and even when they think they know the flame, their perception is wrong. “Cast Iron and Clay Pots” presents the advice that a union needs to consist of two equals, but “The Philosophy of the Butterfly” seems to advance the advice that one should constrain the heart and choose true freedom, which the butterflies rejected as soon as they came to the house and saw the flames. For Bunina, it appears, love and the heart lead women away from a truly free state and destroy them if it is based on an imbalance of power.

Nadezhda Teplova

At the turn of the century and in the first few decades of the nineteenth century, when Bunina was most active, notions of feminism or even of questioning the position of women in society were nonexistent. “The early nineteenth century witnessed a conscious attempt by Russia to reject ‘French’ values. With the rejection came a romantic idealization of the Russian woman as the embodiment of Virtue and Maternity.”²¹⁷ In the 1830s, idealistic German philosophy and romanticism ruled Russian thought, focusing on the absolute and the sublime, which promoted

²¹⁷ Stites, *Women's Liberation*, 16.

the belief that literature and art should only portray the positive and beautiful aspects of life. Critics like Thaddeus Bulgarin (1789-1859), Nikolai Grech (1787-1867), and many others defended traditional morality, so they considered feminism too negative to be portrayed in literature and they heavily criticized feminist ideas coming from the West. Belinskii, likewise opposed George Sand initially but by the 1840s French intellectual influence returned to Russia and with it came ideas with socially driven messages, shifting Belinskii's perspective in favor of Sand and her ideas. Other philosophers and critics shifted their opinion too. With the movement of literature to a more social and political sphere, the ideas regarding a woman's place in society started to take shape. Women were given the freedom to explore the topic further in their writing, even getting praised for doing so in the 1840s.

Teplova published in the 1830s and 1840s, but her tone was still rather conservative from the feminist perspective, and her work more closely resembles that of Bunina than that of contemporaries like Gan and Rostopchina. This is in part due to their mutually preferred medium of poetry, which favors a limited message in a short piece of work, much shorter than the prose of other writers. Nevertheless, Teplova offers views about her own life and ideas regarding the broader concepts such as love and marriage. We can see a progression of ideas in the poems, beginning with the poem titled "Love," written in 1831.

Любовь, небес святое слово!
Лишь для тебя воскресну вновь!
Меня душой возвысит снова
Одна любовь, одна любовь!

С моей душою утомленной
Я не снесу земных оков,
И примирит меня с вселенной
Одна любовь, одна любовь!

Меня томит земная келья!

Как дым, взлечу до облаков,
И принесу на новоселье
Одну любовь, одну любовь!

Love, the sacred word of the heavens!
Only for you will I be resurrected again
Only love, only love will
Elevate me through the soul again!

With my exhausted soul
I will not discard the earthly chains,
Only love, only love
Will conciliate me with the universe!

The earthy cell torments me!
Like smoke, I will fly to the clouds,
And bring as a housewarming gift
Only love, only love!²¹⁸

This poem was the first in the cycle of her works first published in 1831, creating a positive and spirited, albeit conventional take on love. For the narrator, love is a “sacred word” [святое слово] and it has the ability to resurrect, elevate, and connect with the universe. As in many of Teplova’s works, the idea of the world as one full of torment and anguish briefly appears, but love can conquer this feeling because it can take the narrator to the heavens. When she imagines entering the world of the heavens, she takes only love with her. The work has a poetic and innocent view on love as able to help a person overcome anything and as being the only feeling on earth worthy of being in the heavens. The use of exclamation points and the repetition of the words “only love” [одна любовь] only emphasizes Teplova’s enthusiasm and conviction.

In an 1829 poem, “Russian Song,” [Русская песня] Teplova depicts the consequences of unrequited love.

Ранним утром под окном

²¹⁸ Nadezhda Teplova, *Stikhotvoreniia Nadezhdy Teplovoi (Teriukhinoi)* (Moscow: V Tipografii Katkova, 1860) 114.

Красна девица сидела;
Непогодушка шумела
И мятелица кругом.

Тайной грустию полна,
В даль смотрела на дорогу,
И сердечную тревогу
Не могла унять она.

«Кто без горя проживет?
«Он приедет чтожь тоскую?
«И невесту молодую
«Он с собою привезет!...»

Пролетели дни, недели,
Чередой зима прошла;
Непогоды и мятели
За собою унесла.

Что же девица моя?
Безразцветно увядая,
Блекнет жизнь ея младая,
Гаснет юности заря.

Ранним утром под окном
Блещут свечи восковые,
Пастырь с причетом кругом,
И печальные родные.

Где же девица моя?
Сладок сон ея могильный;
Пробудить ее безсильны
Все обманы бытия.

One early morning under the window
A beautiful maiden was sitting;
Foul weather was whirring
And a snowstorm was everywhere.

Filled with a secret sadness,
She looked into the distance at the road,
And a panic of the heart
She could not calm down.

“Who can survive without woe?
He will come... why do I languish?

And a young fiancée
He will bring with him!...”

Days passed by, weeks,
Next passed winter;
Bad weather and snowstorms
The winter carried away with it.

What about my maiden?
Withering without blooming,
Her young life pales,
The dawn of youth is fading.

One early morning under a window
Wax candles shimmer,
A pastor with a lamentation ritual is about,
And sorrowful relatives.

Where is my maiden?
Her deathly dream is sweet;
All the lies of mundane life
Are helpless in waking her.²¹⁹

The narrator offers two scenes in the same house under the same window. The first, a young girl looks at the distance feeling panic in her heart, waiting for a man knowing he will come with his fiancée. She has a secret sadness, implying that she feels love for the mysterious man. The second scene, after months have passed, details the scene of the girl’s funeral rites and the grief of her relatives. The two scenes imply that she has died of a broken heart, though the narrator never explicitly states this. Whether the young man came with his fiancée and their marriage is at the root of her grief, or he died in the winter thunderstorm before his arrival, the girl’s love is left unrequited and caused her to die before she ever truly grew up. The poem subtly touches on the idea of a fatal love from the perspective of a young girl who died due to her feelings.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 73.

“Love” and “Russian Song” were written in the earlier stages of Teplova’s career, but her poem written sixteen years later in 1847 titled “Romance,” [Романс] moves away from the earlier innocence for more realistic emotions.

Друг милый, мой ангел прекрасный!
 Как много люблю я тебя;
 Люблю я так нежно, так страстно, —
 И гибну безумная я!

Хочу лобызать твои милыя руки,
 И жажду колени обнять,
 И радость свиданья и горесть разлуки
 Мечтаю в сей жизни узнать.

Прекрасный! зачем я тебя увидала?
 Ах! лучше бы век не видать!
 И сердце, и думы к тебе приковала,
 И тщетно их силуюсь отнять.

И помыслы гонят меня отовсюду,
 Нарушен душевный покой. —
 Хочу позабыть — на минуту забуду,
 И вот ты опять предо мной!

В душе пробудились уснувшия страсти,
 Все прежняя думы мои,
 И сердце не хочет ни славы, ни власти
 А только взаимной любви.

Dear friend, my beautiful angel!
 How much I love you;
 I love you so tenderly, so passionately, —
 And I perish, a madwoman!

I want to kiss your dear hands,
 And yearn to hug your knees,
 And I dream to learn in this life
 The happiness of a meeting and the bitterness of separation.

Handsome! Why did I see you?
 Oh! Better never to have seen you!
 Both my heart and my thoughts I have chained to you,
 And in vain I strain to remove them.

And my thoughts pursue me from all sides,
 My inner peace has been disturbed. –
 I want to forget – I forget for a minute,
 And here again you are before me!

In my soul have awakened slumbering passions,
 All my previous thoughts,
 And my heart wants neither glory, nor power
 But only mutual love.²²⁰

This particular poem describes the feelings of love, at least the way Teplova imagines it. The narrator depicts both passionate love and the helpless wish to remove the beloved person from her thoughts. The key to understanding the love here are the phrases my “inner peace has been disturbed” [нарушен душевный покой] “and my heart, and “my thoughts I have chained to you” [сердце, и думы к тебе приковала]. The narrator feels consumed by her feelings, her life feels upturned, and she wants to stop obsessing over the man; but at the same time she also wishes to experience the positive and negative feelings of love. She seems to want to feel love without it overwhelming her mind. The last line ends with her greatest wish, which is mutual love. This sentiment almost echoes Bunina’s wish for equality in a relationship because it considers the place of the partner in the potential relationship. Likewise, the narrator does not mention wanting marriage, just mutual affection.

Teplova’s works on love feature a very poetic version of the subject, featuring a lofty ideal, a fatal consequence, and the contrasts of feelings love causes. Love, it seems, is reserved for the heavens because in earthly existence it causes death or obsession. Teplova describes both the passion that the emotion evokes and its aftermath, which causes grief for the woman. The readers never get the male’s perspective in these poems because the poems are more about the woman’s inner life than about the external sphere of love. Teplova’s fragment prose titled “The

²²⁰ Ibid., 109.

Victim of Love” [Жертва любви], originally published in *Notes of the Fatherland* in 1842, begins delving deeper into the concepts of love and marriage. The first fragment centers on Princess Ludviga and her fiancé Count Stanislav at a ball. He finds her in the ballroom sitting alone and “and tenderly kissing her hand / he said: ‘you are alone here / and probably, sweetly dreaming / about our happiness, about me?’”²²¹ They begin to dance, catching everyone’s attention and envy, but the narrator describes Ludviga’s thoughts:

Богатство, знатность Станислава,
 Красивый стан, веселость нрава,
 Все паннам нравилось в нем,
 Но, ограниченный умом,
 Заносчив, горд, непостоянен,
 Храбрец лишь только на словах,
 Теперь в Людвигиных глазах
 Он был и мелочен, и странен..
 И в чувство новое княжна
 Была душой погружена....
 Ея цветущия ланиты,
 Ея могущественный взгляд,
 Блестящий праздничный наряд,
 И пышный локон, вкруг обвитый
 Восточным крупным жемчугом,
 И туник, шитый серебром, —
 Все в ней о счастье говорило,
 И ей ничто не изменило —
 Ни скорбь во взоре, ни порыв
 Тоски, любви, негодованья....
 Она таит свои страданья,
 Их твердой воле покорив.

Wealth, the gentility of Stanislav,
 His beautiful figure, mirth of his manners,
 The *pans*²²² liked everything about him,
 But his mind is limited,
 He is haughty, arrogant, inconsistent,
 Valiant only in his speech,
 And now in Ludviga’s eyes

²²¹ “И нежно руки ей лобзая, / Он говорил: «вы здесь одне / И верно, сладостно мечтая / О нашем счастье, обо мне?” Teplova, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 79.

²²² The term used for gentleman in Poland and Ukraine.

He was petty and strange..
 And into a new feeling
 the princess was submerged with her soul....
 Her blooming cheeks,
 Her powerful gaze,
 The glittering celebratory attire,
 And the voluminous hair, entwined in a circle
 With large eastern pearls,
 And the tunic, sewed with silver –
 Everything in her spoke about happiness,
 And nothing betrayed her –
 Not the grief in her gaze, not the outburst
 Of anguish, love, resentment....
 She hides her sufferings,
 Subduing them with cast-iron will.

The relationship described in this short fragment creates a much broader image than in Teplova's other poems. Unfortunately, Teplova does not give a lot of context to the couple's relationship, but Ludviga clearly thinks poorly of her fiancé while the rest of society and Stanislav himself are unaware of her feelings. The first critique of Stanislav is his limited mind, emphasizing that as the most significant shortcoming, followed by arrogance and then implied cowardice. Teplova also includes a representation of his arrogance when he approaches Ludviga and assumes she is thinking of him and their relationship happily, despite this being far from the truth. Just this simple fragment shows disappointment in a future marriage, though the stance on love remains unclear because neither character displays it. Teplova thus demonstrates her opinion on love as something sacred, something for which people yearn and potentially die. Marriage, it seems, might not bring happiness to a woman.

Bunina's and Teplova's poems provide limited messages due to their form, but prose writers like Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova were able to include many more ideas in their works. Elena Gan as a writer included a lot of her own life and experiences into her stories, creating a semibiographical account of an intellectually and spiritually driven young woman forced to live with a coarse and practical officer she does not love. The man not only denies her the affection and intellectual stimulation she craves, but he also makes her constantly move across the country, all while forcing her to confront society's harsh judgement. Gan's first story "The Ideal," published in 1837, describes the life of a young woman named Olga struggling to find her place in society that does not accept her due to her poetic and romantic nature. As most of Gan's heroines, she is young, humble, and intellectual. She has a child-like shyness, a shadow of sadness on her face, and she seems to be "striving towards the near heavens with radiant hope."²²³ The narrator continues to say, "I felt sad looking at this uncommon woman who was born to be the adornment of humanity; it was sad to this radiant poetic soul surrounded by a poisonous swarm of wasps, who found pleasure in stinging her from all sides."²²⁴ As a colonel's wife, Olga moves between rural towns throughout Russia, which prevents her from forming connections and friendships. The poisonous swarm of wasps Gan describes are the other women who place their own twisted ideas of propriety and identity onto Olga.

Throughout the story, Gan emphasizes Olga's naiveté and pure emotions about the world, which are contrasted with the cruelty and superficiality of other women in society. They

²²³ Joe Andrew, *Russian Women's Shorter Fiction: An Anthology, 1835-1860* (United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1996) 4. All subsequent quotations from this text will be noted by a parenthetical reference providing the page number of the quotation.

"стремясь с светлою надеждою к близким небесам" Elena Andreevna Gan *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii E. A. Gan (Zeneidy R-voi)* (St. Petersburg: Izdanie N. F. Mertsya, 1905) 4.

²²⁴ "Мне грустно было смотреть на эту необыкновенную женщину, рожденную украшать собою выбор человечества; грустно было видеть эту светлую поэтическую душу окруженную ядовитым роем ос, которые находили удовольствие жалить ее со всех сторон." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 4)

ostracize her and create vicious rumors about her supposed feelings of superiority over other women and her affairs with other men. Instead of defending herself against the attacks, Olga chooses the route of a martyr and ignores the whispered lies, as she deems them unworthy of addressing. In the voice of a narrator, Gan writes “When one meets with women like these... the question is voluntarily born in the mind, out of what special material are they created? Are they demons’ brood or nature’s mockery, the wrath of God, sent down to earth together with famine and plague? A woman’s beauty, courtesy, and purity seem to them a personal insult. They need slander and gossip to breathe...” (Andrew 18).²²⁵ Most significantly, people resent her for reading too many books and even writing works herself, which they use to judge and humiliate Olga. Gan, like many other writers of her time, really emphasized how ostracizing the experience of being a woman writer can be. The readers are meant to assume that had Olga gone against her pure nature, given up her passion for literature, and chosen to ingratiate herself by gossiping with the other women, then she would finally be accepted.

Perhaps it is natural for strangers to mock and belittle Olga, but it is her family that provides most of the discontent in her life. Her husband’s coarse attitude seems to present a much more damaging experience for the protagonist. “He had a succinct and clear picture of what made women happy: treat them nicely, be tolerant of their whims, and let them have a fashionable hat – this is what, in his opinion, couldn’t fail to make a woman happy and when he got married this is what he mentally subscribed to do” (Andrew 12).²²⁶ The problem with the

²²⁵ “И когда встречаясь с подобными женщинами... невольно рождается в уме вопрос, из какого особенного вещества созданы они? Исчадие ли они демонов или насмешка природы над человечеством, гнев божий, ниспосылаемый на землю вместе с голодом и язвою? Красота, любезность, непорочность женщины кажутся им личным оскорблением. Злословие и клевета нужны им как воздух...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 17)

²²⁶ “О счастья женщины он имел короткое и ясное понятие: благосклонное обращение, снисходительность к капризам и модная шляпка, -- вот что, по его мнению, не могло не осчастливить женщины, и к этому он, вступая в супружеское звание, обязался мысленно подпискою.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 11)

general's treatment of his wife rests with his inability to see and appreciate her as a person with feelings and a mind. Instead, the general adopts the contemporary stereotype of women and refuses to look past it. Gan writes, "fate did not only not give this poetic woman a man who might have been able to understand her, take advantage of all the treasures of her mind, enjoy the beauties of her inner world, or who at the very least would have cleverly buried them and hidden them from her own consciousness, but, on the contrary, it threw her into a world which was utterly uncongenial to her" (Andrew 12).²²⁷ In the beginning of the marriage, Olga had hoped to share her interests and emotions with her husband, but instead she was met with his indifference and boredom. Over time, she learned to hide herself from him too. Feeling isolated in all facets of her life, Olga laments about her own fate and the fate of all women in a conversation with her only friend, Vera.

But what evil genius has so distorted the destiny of women? Now she is born for the sole purpose of pleasing, flattering, entertaining men's leisure, of putting on her finery, dancing, holding sway in society, although she's only a paper queen to whom the clown bows down while the audience is there, but then chucks into a corner. They set up thrones for us in society; our vanity adorns them, and we don't notice that they're tinsel – and have only three legs, so that we only have to lose our balance slightly to fall over and then be trampled underfoot by the blind mob. Truly, it sometimes seems that God's world has been created for men alone; the universe is open to them, with all its mysteries, for them there are words, the arts and knowledge; for them there is freedom and all the joys of life. From the cradle a woman is fettered by the chains of decency, ensnared by the

²²⁷ Таким образом, судьба не только не дала этой поэтической женщине мужчины, который был бы в состоянии понять ее, воспользоваться всеми сокровищами ее ума, души, сердца, наслаждаться красотами ее внутреннего мира или по крайней мере ловко зарыть их в землю и скрыть навсегда от собственного ее сознания, но еще бросил ее в круг, вовсе не сродный ей. (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 12)

terrible ‘what will people say’ – and if her hopes for family happiness do not come true, what does she have left outside herself? Her impoverished, restricted education doesn’t even allow her to dedicate herself to important things, and willy-nilly she has to throw herself into the maelstrom of society or drag out a colorless existence until she dies!

(Andrew 22)²²⁸

Olga turns to reading poetry to feel a connection with the world, further distancing herself from both her husband and high society. She feels the strongest connection to the poetry of a man named Anatolii, whom she calls her ideal. His poetry inspired, comforted, and soothed Olga when she needed to feel a connection to someone. To Vera, Olga admits her feelings: “I’ve become familiar with his every thought; I know all the nuances of his noble heart; I adore him; I would sacrifice the last joy of my life, which is not rich in comforts, the last drop of my blood for his happiness; I would give my soul to prolong his life... Yes, yes, I love him, but I love him not with an earthly love, I love not the man...” (Andrew 19).²²⁹ With these lines Gan demonstrates the depth of Olga’s emotions and the purity of her ideas. Unfortunately for Olga, she meets

²²⁸ “Но какой злой гений так исказил предназначение женщин? Теперь она родится для того, чтобы нравиться, прельщать, увеселять досуги мужчин, рядиться, плясать, владычествовать в обществе, а на деле быть бумажным царьком, которому паяц кланяется в присутствии зрителей и которого он бросает в темный угол наедине. Нам воздвигают в обществах троны; наше самолюбие украшает их, и мы не замечаем, что эти мишурные престолы -- о трех ножках, что нам стоит немного потерять равновесие, чтобы упасть и быть растоптанной ногами ничего не разбирающей толпы. Право, иногда кажется, будто мир божий создан для одних мужчин; им открыта вселенная со всеми тайнствами, для них и слова, и искусства, и познания; для них свобода и все радости жизни. Женщину от колыбели сковывают цепями приличий, опутывают ужасным "что скажет свет" -- и если ее надежды на семейное счастье не сбудутся, что остается ей вне себя? Ее бедное, ограниченное воспитание не позволяет ей даже посвятить себя важным занятиям, и она поневоле должна броситься в омут света или до могилы влачить бесцветное существование!...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 21-22)

²²⁹ “Нет, я сроднилась с каждою его мыслию; я знаю все изгибы его благородного сердца; я его обожаю; я пожертвую последнюю радость жизни моей, небогатой утехами, последнюю каплю крови для его счастья, я отдам душу свою для продолжения его жизни... Да, да; я люблю его, но я люблю не земною любовью, я люблю не человека...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 18)

Anatolii during her brief stay in St. Petersburg, so her spiritual love clashes with reality, as the ideal she has of a man is transformed into a real person.

As it turns out, Anatolii becomes enthralled with her purity and her adoration for him, so he decides to befriend and seduce her, as he does with many other women. Olga loved him completely but with a pure and spiritual love, one that any worldly liaison had the potential to ruin. Knowing this, he “cleverly wormed his way into her heart; gradually and imperceptibly he taught her to think as he thought, to forget her own opinion for his opinions; in a word, he carefully wrapped himself around her like a snake with a sleeping lamb, so as not to wake it prematurely, but so that, at the very moment the poor thing stirs, it could smother it with its embrace” (Andrew 33).²³⁰ When he becomes bored with her purity, he turns his attentions away and onto another woman. When Olga learns that her idol, the poet for whom she always held a spiritual love and the man whom she started to love in a very concrete and physical way, only saw her as a conquest, she becomes distraught. Olga not only feels heartbroken, but everything she had once held dear, the object of her comfort in the world, took advantage of her.²³¹ As the ultimate view of Olga’s experience, Gan compares her to a bird.

²³⁰ “Он искусно вкрадывался в ее сердце; постепенным и незаметным образом приучал ее мыслить его мыслями, забывать свои мнения для его мнений; словом, он обвивал ее осторожно, как змей спящего ягненка, чтоб не разбудить его преждевременно и в ту минуту, когда бедный встрепетнется, задушить его в своих объятиях.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 32)

²³¹ There is evidence that suggests that the character of Anatolii is based on Osip Senkovskii and the situation presented in the story might be a fictionalized representation of real events of her time in St. Petersburg. In her letters Gan initially writes “I was charmed by him in the beginning of our acquaintance... all of this made my head spin.. yes, I was in rapture” [я была им очарована в начале нашего знакомства... все это не могло не вскружить моей бедной головы... Да, я была упоена]. Similarly, she writes “suddenly S. noticed me, welcomed me into his home, surrounded me with attention and friendship, sought everything that could give me pleasure, emboldened me, elevated me in my own eyes, even convinced his wife [to have] a special friendship with me” [вдруг С. заметил меня, ввел в свой дом, окружил вниманием, дружеством, изыскивал все, что могло доставить мне удовольствие, ободрил, возвысил меня в моих собственных глазах, даже жене своей внушил особенную дружбу ко мне]. When she left the Senkovskii household she wrote in a letter “seeing more clearly through the fog upon noticing dark intentions under the cover of patronage” [прозрев сквозь туман, заметив под плащом дружбы и покровительства черные замыслы] (Aplin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 220-221).

I have seen a young fledgling in the spring of her life: she's jumped out of its dark nest for the first time; she had imagined the sky, the beautiful sun, the God's world: how joyfully her heart started to pound, her wings to flutter! In advance she embraces the broad expanses with her wings; in advance she prepares to live – and on her very first flight she falls into the hands of a fowler, who doesn't chain her up, or lock her in a cage; no, he puts out her eyes, clips her wings, and the poor thing lives on in the same world where she was promised freedom and so many joys, the same sun warms her, she breathes the same air, but she frets, is miserable and, chained to the cold earth... (Andrew 44).²³²

Reading Gan's "The Ideal" allows the reader to understand the struggles and the deeper feelings of a nineteenth-century woman who wants more out of life than it provides her. Gan's statements regarding the lot of women paint a rather bleak picture. Whether a woman is a paper queen who is displayed and then hidden at will, or a bird whose wings are clipped, a woman truly suffers. The unfortunate women, the educated ones who wish to love and write literature are more ostracized than the rest. They find no comfort in fellow women, who viciously attack those they deem too pure. They also find no comfort in marriage, as the husbands rarely try to understand their wives for who they are as people. Love, most of all, provides no solace, but instead destroys innocent women at the hands of those who want to take advantage. Men, it seems, are the source of the worst torment. As Kelly writes, "the dullness of husbands can be an

²³² "Я видела молодую птичку в весне ее жизни: она в первый раз выпорхнула из темного гнезда; ей представились небо, красное солнце и мир божий: как радостно забилося ее сердце, как затрепетали крылья! Заранее она обнимает ими пространство; заранее готовится жить и с первым стремлением попадает в руки ловчего, который не оковывает ее цепями, не запирает в клетке; нет, он выкалывает ей глаза, подрезывает крылья, и бедная живет в том же мире, где были ей обещаны свобода и столько радостей; ее греет то же солнце, она дышит тем же воздухом, но рвется, тоскует и, прикованная к холодной земле..." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 43).

obstacle; but a far more fundamental problem is the self-interest, vanity, and sexual predation of suitors, lovers, or friends.”²³³

Gan provides two ways for women to cope with their circumstances. Vera follows the path of what she calls pure egoism. Once she realized that “lofty ideas, magnanimity, nobility” are irrelevant in society, she decided to direct feelings of love, friendship, and loyalty toward herself. By choosing to never marry and forge any lasting connections, Vera protects herself from the world. Gan’s other alternative to coping with life for women, and one that she heavily endorses, is to surrender oneself to the higher love of God and the church. Olga finally finds lasting comfort, hope, and acceptance in the church, which helps heal her shattered heart. She describes her thoughts in a letter to Vera, which provides the last lines of the story.

I have finally realized that, if a woman, by the malicious caprice of fate or according to a will we cannot understand, is given a character which is incompatible with the morals which prevail in our world, a passionate imagination and a heart which is greedy for love, then she will look in vain for reciprocity or a worthy goal for her existence. Nothing will fill up the emptiness of her being, and she will exhaust herself in fruitless efforts to attach herself to anything in this world. Only otherworldly attachments may satisfy her thirst. Her love must be the Saviour, her goal – the heavens! (Andrew 49).²³⁴

It seems that for Gan, as she has written in “The Ideal” and many of her other works, love brings pain and grief. The author first provides a view of marriage, which consists of two vastly

²³³ Kelly, *A History*, 116.

²³⁴ “Я постигла, наконец, что если женщина по злой прихоти рока или по воле, непостижимой для нас, получает характер, не сходный с правами, господствующими в нашем свете, пламенное воображение и сердце, жадное любви, то напрасно станет она искать вокруг себя взаимности или цели существования, достойной себя. Ничто не наполнит пустоты ее бытия, и она истомится бесплодным старанием привязаться к чему-нибудь в мире. Неземные привязанности могут удовлетворить ее жажду. Ее любовью должен быть Спаситель, ее целью – небеса!” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 47).

different people who cannot understand or appreciate each other. The man, as depicted by the Colonel, lacks the emotional depth and inner complexity of his wife, so he remains on the mundane plane while she yearns for spiritual and intellectual enrichment. This is the kind of relationship which Bunina wrote against, one that is not based on mutual interests and connection. Gan then includes a relationship in which Olga falls in love with a man with whom she shares interests and passions. However, this relationship also fails because Gan depicts the poet as someone who uses his charms to seduce women, instead of being a true love interest. For Gan, neither marriage nor love bring a woman true happiness, but instead she can find comfort in divine love and God.

Evdokiia Rostopchina

When Rostopchina's work *The Fortunate Woman* [Счастливая женщина] appeared in *The Moscow Citizen* in 1851-1852 it stirred many rumors in the St. Petersburg high society. The story, which is about the passionate love and longtime affair of a young woman named Marina Nenskaia, depicts a "fortunate woman killed by her own happiness" [счастливая женщина убита своим счастьем]. Everybody assumed that the love story depicted in the tale was about Rostopchina herself, something she addresses in March 1852 in a letter to her friend Petr Pletnev (1792-1865).

It has reached me, that in the highest St. Petersburg society [they] rebel a lot against my novel, [they] insist that I described myself in it, discussed my life, that in it famous faces are recognized, even those who are currently in society, that this is *cynicism* Yes! This expression was *truly* used, and I know exactly where and by *whom*! I again call upon you

to be a judge, my friend! Are there writers in this world, who would not be blamed for the same thing, and is it not always, everywhere that vapid gossip and idle comments of society tried to maliciously combine the author with his hero, see the creator himself in the face of some type he imagines, in the traits of a silent creation judge and insult his creator, who is involuntarily helpless, so that he patiently endures personal attacks on him?.. ... Now kind people have been found, who certainly want to see me in *The Fortunate Woman*, various events from my life and people, who encountered me... It is impossible to dissuade them, and is not worth the effort, but has each person, who lived, looked, and thought in this world, not met a hundred times in his lifetime people, personalities, and characteristics, that have been placed in the same situations as described in my novel? Are women who love, and ill-wishers who ruin them so rare, so invisible around us, that [they] inevitably must *apply names*, and in an episode from a general picture of mores seek *all familiar people*?²³⁵

Rostopchina's indignation at the situation covers many important topics concerning both the novel and society. She speaks passionately against people who assume with their "vapid gossip and idle comments" that the authors are writing about themselves in their work. This type

²³⁵ "До меня дошло, что в высшем петербургском обществе очень восстают на мой роман, уверяют, что я в нем описала *себя*, рассказала свою жизнь, что в нем узнаются известные лица, и теперь существующие в обществе, что это *цинизм*. Да! Это выражение *точно* было употреблено, и я знаю, где именно и *кем!* Вас опять призываю в судьи, друг мой! Есть ли на свете писатель, кого бы не упрекали тем же самым, и не всегда ли, не везде ли праздные сплетни и безучастные толки света старались злоумышленно смешать автора с его героем, видеть самого создателя какого-нибудь типа в лице, им представленном, и в чертах безмолвного творенья порицать и оскорблять его творца, невольно беззащитного, чтоб терпеливо сносить личные на него нападения?.. ... Теперь нашлись добрые люди, которые и в «Счастливой женщине» непременно хотят видеть меня, разные случаи из моей жизни и людей, которые были в столкновении со мною... Разуверять их нельзя, и не стоит труда, но разве каждый человек, поживший, посмотревший и подумавший на свете, не встречал сто раз на веку своем людей, личностей и характеров, поставленных совершенно в те положения, которые описываются в моем романе? Разве женщины любящие и недоброжелатели, их губящие, так редки, так невиданны около нас, что непременно к типам должно *применять имена*, а в эпизоде из общей картины нравов отыскивать *знакомые все лица*?" (Rostopchina, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 355).

of criticism applied both to men and to women, but especially to the latter.²³⁶ As Greene comments, this was a very common problem for women writers and poets because “men critics often assumed women poets to be too ‘artless’ to use personae at all, taking for granted that anything a woman writes in a poem is completely autobiographical.”²³⁷ Society, likewise, linked writers and their heroines, so Rostopchina was helpless in dissuading anyone, showing that rumors hold much more sway in society than reality. People also will seek and find proof of their assumptions even when it does not exist, something that can be detrimental to the subject of the gossip. Additionally, Rostopchina addresses the novel itself. For her, the people, situations, and events are types, ones that can be applied to hundreds of real people and scenarios. Rostopchina asserts that the events of the novel are so common that readers should take the novel’s contents as a mirror of society. With this in mind, the message of the novel and its characters become that much more powerful because Rostopchina not only speaks against the society she depicts but also the society in which she lives.

Part I of the novel is supposedly by Marina Nenskaia herself, describing her emotions before New Year’s Eve with her family. She begins by saying that some weak-nerved women have a sense of intuition, but nobody listens to them. Then, she tells the reader her own suspicions about the farce of family life, which the reader is more apt to believe because

²³⁶ For example, Rostopchina’s friend and poet Mikhail Lermontov (1814-1841) published *A Hero of Our Time* [Герой нашего времени] (1839-1840) with a foreword to his readers specifically distancing himself from his character Pechorin and calling Pechorin not an individual but a composite of all faults of society. “Others very delicately remarked that the author painted his own portrait and the portrait of his acquaintances... *The Hero of Our Time*, my good sirs and ladies, is a portrait, but not of a single person: it is a portrait of consisting of the flaws of our whole generation, in their full development” [Другие же очень тонко замечали, что сочинитель нарисовал свой портрет и портреты своих знакомых... Герой нашего времени, милостивые государи мои, точно портрет, но не одного человека: это портрет, составленный из пороков всего нашего поколения, в полном их развитии].

Mikhail Iur’evich Lermontov, *Geroi nashego vremeni: izbrannye stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo pravda, 1979) 5-6.

²³⁷ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 45.

Nenskaia has already linked a woman's intuition to truth and reality. The rest of the novel shows how different factors, including family, ruin a woman. Nenskaia wanted to be alone with the man she loves, but instead he leaves her alone to celebrate New Year's Eve with his family. The passage sets the mood for the rest of the story.

And what if everything from their side is not even egoism and not the excessive demands of a familial attachment exaggerated to the point of tyranny! What if it is simply – charlatanism, the wish to show society some rare agreement, some exemplary, single-minded kinship and domesticity? What if today's gathering is nothing but a previously prepared picture, where everyone plays his own role, must be in his assigned place, like the essential person at some Chinese ceremony? This thought, this doubt has already come to me a few times... I am afraid to linger on it, I rush to reject it as an impossibility, like the ghost of my disturbed imagination. It pains me now to be in a daily unpleasant encounter with this family, who are ill disposed toward me; but it would twice as difficult if I were confident of their insincerity among themselves and had to see it deceived and blinded by the lies of such relationships! No, it is best to distance myself from this suspicion – it causes me to feel sad and sick...²³⁸

²³⁸ “А что если это все с их стороны даже не эгоизм и не излишняя требовательность преувеличенного до тиранства чувства семейной привязанности!.. Если это просто — шарлатанство, желание показать свету какое – то редкое согласие, какую – то примерную, единоклубную, родственность и семейность?.. Если сегодняшнее собрание не что иное, как заранее приготовленная картина, где каждый играет свою роль, должен быть на своем положенном месте, как необходимое лицо в какой – нибудь китайской церемонии?.. Эта мысль, это сомнение уже не раз приходили мне в голову... боюсь на них остановиться, спешу отвергнуть их как не возможность, как призрак моего расстроенного воображения. Мне больно теперь, находясь в ежедневном, неприязненном столкновении с этим семейством, дурно ко мне расположенном; но мне стало бы вдвое тяжелее, если б я была уверена в их неискренности между собою и должна бы была видеть его обманутого и ослепленного ложью таких отношений! Нет, лучше удалить от себя это подозрение — от него и грустно, и тошно...” Evdokiia Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchina: Literaturnye sochineniia* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravda, 1991) 19.

These words are written by Marina herself, showing her inner feelings and frustrations. The reader is primed to believe the intuition of women, so when Marina brushes off her feelings, the reader knows to take heed of her words seriously. Other writers have commented on the insincerity of society, but here the attack is on family as well. Marina depicts that even in a family there is a false tone because it feels carefully choreographed. Families want to show to other people how happy they are, so they do everything for this image, regardless of the reality. Familial attachments can be expressed and experienced as tyranny stemming from the need to impress others. This negative view creates the expectation that the rest of the story will touch on these ideas more in depth and provide more details to these thoughts. The reader is left feeling suspicious of family structures, as Rostopchina wishes.

The rest of the chapters covers many years of Marina's life through the lens of a narrator, beginning with a description of Marina, whom society dubs a fortunate woman, and her husband. "She was pretty, smart, kind, and additionally free; free even though she was married, because the complete discrepancy of ages, personalities, interests, and habits quickly weakened the union, which was created from both sides not through the wishes of the heart, but through mistaken assumptions. Without arguments and dissatisfactions, without complaints and proclamations, which are not permitted among people of famous society and upbringing, but respectably and with dignity preserving all forms of mutual respect, Marina Nenskaia and her husband separated, so that each could live as they wish..."²³⁹ Marina's husband is a much older man who has become weary and bored of the lifestyle he has always led in the capital, so he retires to the

²³⁹ "Она была хороша, умна, добра и к тому же свободна; свободна, хотя замужем, потому что совершенное несогласие возрастов, характеров, склонностей и привычек скоро ослабило союз, заключенный с обеих сторон не по сердечному желанию, а по ошибочным соображениям. Без ссор и неудовольствий, без жалоб и огласки, не допускаемых между людьми известного света и воспитания, прилично и с достоинством, сохраняя все формы взаимного уважения, Марина Ненская и муж ее разъехались, чтоб жить каждый по – своему..." (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchnina*, 19)

countryside to take over his estate. Marina, however, is at the beginning of her youth, where she wants to explore society and all it has to offer. According to society, a woman finds happiness with the husband and her family, but Rostopchina suggests that perhaps there is more to a woman's life. Marina, for example, has no children, lives away from her husband, and does not serve the role of a wife. The match was poorly decided initially, as they are incompatible people. The story implies that there are many similar unhappy unions and that these unions are inherently troubled.

Rostopchina sets the heroine up for sin, but she blames the way women are raised as the root cause. The narrator points out the Chinese method of foot binding as a way for society to keep women dependent and tied to the home and compares this to European binding of the woman's mind, limiting her intellectually. Women raised in society are akin to greenhouse flowers and caged birds – they live and grow, but they are not as bright, beautiful, and free as those created under God. Here, the crucial idea rests on the argument that God created creatures, including women, to thrive and to be free, which is their natural state, but society restricts them. Powerfully, the narrator says that whenever society produces a mindless doll who only how to dress prettily and stay silent, she is much more preferred to the autonomous woman “gifted with an immortal, all-encompassing soul, a loving heart, and a bright mind.”²⁴⁰

Rostopchina's criticism also attacks literature that seems to reflect but instead glorifies everyday life. Her heroine was raised with her mother's tastes, which took a Sentimental and philosophical approach, and appreciated the works of Shakespeare, Dante, Pushkin, Balzac, and many more. Through this literature, Marina gained awareness of herself and the world, which

²⁴⁰ “одаренной бессмертной, всеобъемлющей душою, любящим сердцем и светлым умом” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchina*, 22)

inspired imagination, feelings, and a pure and poetic outlook on life. This upbringing, which she hid from others when her mother passed away, raised her differently than the other girls in society, who learned from the “empty and mundane” literature.²⁴¹ Marina’s childhood explains how she sees the world and why she craves a true connection with a partner.

The narrator then explains the events leading up to Marina’s marriage, beginning with her entering society and quickly arousing the jealousy of her own aunt and other women, as well as the attentions of a forty-five-year-old rich Nenskii as a beautiful eighteen-year-old. When Marina vehemently protests Nenskii’s proposal due to her aspirations to marry for love, which is the only way she thinks she can be happy, her aunts convince her otherwise. At this time, one of them discusses the men in society, saying that “a young man seeks a wife for himself not so much as a friend, but more as a toy, and he does not offer her his love but instead demands love and his own happiness from her. He knows that he is liked, that he needs and must be liked; he marries as a victor, and as a victor he typically does not yield.”²⁴² This startling and frank view of men is then juxtaposed with the idealized version of marrying an older man. The aunt continues to say “a mature man, on the other hand, cannot have self-confidence and self-assurance; he is no longer liked, and thank God for the woman or girl whom he chooses!”²⁴³ The aunts’ ideas rest on the belief that as men grow older, their ego diminishes and that an older man can make a woman happier because he does not see her just as a conquest, as does the younger man.

²⁴¹ “Пустого и пошлого” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 26)

²⁴² “Молодой человек ищет себе в жены не столько подругу, сколько игрушку, не столько дает ей свою любовь, сколько требует от нее ее любви и своего счастья. Он знает, что нравится, что может и должен нравиться; он в брак вступает победителем и как победитель, обыкновенно, и не подчиняется!” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 27)

²⁴³ “Мужчина зрелых лет, на против, не может питать самоуверенности и самодовольствия; он уже перестал нравиться, и слава Богу для женщины или девушки им избранной!” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 27)

Without a husband, Marina's youth and beauty present a direct threat to other women, but as soon as she marries, Marina will have stability that goes with marriage and the title "a fortunate woman." As the common worldview of the day suggested, a marriage and a man can make a woman happy. When Marina disregarded the aunts' attempts at convincing her to marry Nenskii, he "attacked" her himself by appealing to her mind. "They did not compliment her directly, they did not talk about her beauty and comeliness, but they showed that they place her above others and understand how she wants to be understood. The utmost delicate attention and respect was paid to her opinions, tastes, and to the smallest words and hints. How was she supposed to resist?"²⁴⁴

In the following passages, the narrator clarifies that Nenskii did not love Marina in any capacity because he is essentially incapable of such an emotion for a woman. The narrator says, "a woman for them is a lady, whom they value based on what status she holds in society and who her relatives or relations are. An ornate dress, a stylish hat, a necessary gentility, and fine manners, this is all what they require of a woman and especially from their wife. They do not need anything else!"²⁴⁵ Rostopchina's narrator shows the empty and heartless nature of not just Nenskii, but of men in general because of their need for someone to uphold their name and title with dignity rather than searching for a genuine life companion. Mirroring the aunts' words earlier about young men wanting to be liked and conquering women, the narrator describes Nenskii's thoughts on choosing a young beautiful woman with a rumored bright mind to elevate

²⁴⁴ "ей не льстили прямо и в лицо, ей не говорили о ее красоте и миловидности, но ей показывали, что ее ставят выше всех и понимают, как она хочет быть понятою. К ее мнению, вкусам, к малейшему ее слову или намеку оказывалось утонченное внимание и уважение. Как было ей противостоять?" (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 28)

²⁴⁵ "Женщина для них дама, которую они ценят, смотря по тому, какое положение она занимает в свете и с кем в родстве или сношениях. Нарядное платье, модная шляпка, необходимая светскость и благовоспитанность, вот все, чего они требуют от женщины вообще и от своей жены особенно. Более им и не нужно!" (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 29).

his social standing, capturing her attention, and doing everything possible to positively present himself to gain her affection.

The actions of an older man, according to the narrator, are in no way different from those of a young man, meaning that all men want to conquer women for their own purpose. The trouble for the women arises when they realize that the image initially presented to them does not reflect the full reality, but this knowledge only comes after married life begins. “This cannot be considered a lie; it only means that, as the phrase ‘sell merchandise in a good light,’ and appear before an inexperienced woman in their best light. Women are not free to know that this best light of character and people is not in general use later, in a domestic quotidian life, and that it, like a full dress uniform, is worn only on occasion and for show, but at home is typically taken off and carefully saved until it is needed again!”²⁴⁶ According to this idea, men specifically target younger women so that they will be too inexperienced when dealing with men and will be easily blinded by their attention. Once men gain the status of husband, they are free to revert to their previous behaviors and habits and no longer feel the need to impress their women, leading to the feeling of betrayal for their wives.

This duality between perception and reality creates the foundation of Rostopchina’s criticism with society’s definition of a “fortunate woman.” To society, a fortunate woman has everything material she could need and a husband who provides her with money, but a woman who wishes for something beyond material wealth in a marriage is called naïve and inexperienced by society. Even when Marina first enters the marriage, she does not expect to

²⁴⁶ “Это ведь нельзя почитать обманом; это значит только, по пословице: «товар лицом продавать» и являться неопытной девушке в праздничной форме. Вольно же девушкам не знать, что эта праздничная форма характеров и людей не общеупотребительна потом, в домашнем, обиходном житье, и что она, подобно парадному мундиру, надеваемому только при случае и в оказии, дома обыкновенно складывается с плеч и бережется тщательно, впредь до востребования!” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 29-30).

have a union of love but she is “prepared to give her husband a direct and lofty friendship, to share with him good and evil, happiness and woe, to take part in everything that interests him, and give to him as much as possible from the abundant spring of her inner world.”²⁴⁷

Unfortunately, just as in the relationship described by Elena Gan in “The Ideal,” the husband was completely uninterested in his own wife. Whenever she tried to participate in his life, he would turn her away, and whenever she would try to engage him in her interests of books and music, he would grow bored and dismissive. In response to this, Rostopchina addresses men directly.

Oh husbands!.. Are not all of you like this?.. Do the best of you not follow this system of not standing on ceremony and not being shy, as soon as the ritual of marriage confirms you eternally and irrevocably as the rulers of those same girls, to whom you generously express so much flattery and complaisance before the marriage?.. Does the inventory of your domestic relationships not completely consist of this indifferent apathy, this deadly sloth when you are face to face?.. Do not all of you, or almost all of you, push away with such tactics these inexperienced and unassuming hearts of young wives, who beg for attachment, and so easily would be satisfied, if you wanted to, if you had the skill to pamper them with affection and leniency?.. And when your gloomy positivity, when your insulting indifference distance from you your disillusioned [female] friends, when under your roof begins this agonizingly unequal battle, these inextricable situations, which so often forever destroy harmony, peace, even the very holiness of marriage, when the enmity and disgust become the unwavering guards at your head, and the blood of Eve will begin speaking in the breasts of her great-granddaughters, and they, from this

²⁴⁷ “Готовая подарить мужу прямую и высокую дружбу, делить с ним добро и зло, радость и горе, принимать участие во всем, его занимающем, и уделять ему сколько можно из богатого родника своего собственного внутреннего мира.” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 31)

domestic oppression and emptiness, which you poisoned, will strive and beg, like languishing souls, for the expanse of another existence, closer to them, when... Tell [me] yourselves, tell [me], who is at fault?²⁴⁸

This passage directly addresses husbands from the voice of the narrator, and by extension Rostopchina herself, and it presents a very powerful message. Marriage is depicted as a ritual which allows husbands to become the “eternal and irrevocable rulers” [владельцами навеки и безвозвратно] of women, showing the inherent power imbalance and subtly criticizing the institution. In this passage, women are described as young and naïve beings who only want affection and attention, but husbands treat them coldly and with indifference. Men are blamed for disrupting marital harmony and peace with their inaction, even being accused of poisoning relationships. Most significantly, the attack is on all men, or at least most, stating that this type of behavior is the norm and that most women feel empty and dissatisfied in their marriage.

Rostopchina also shows the effects of a husband’s treatment on the woman by describing Marina’s feelings. “Cold disgust gathered as drops of ice in this deep and mysterious soul. Boredom, apathy, and melancholy replaced in her the previous strength, previous freedom; intellectual slumber chained all her abilities. Marina Nenskaia began to view her husband not as

²⁴⁸ “О мужья!.. Не все ли вы такие?.. Лучшие из вас не следуют ли этой системе не церемониться и не жениться, как скоро обряд венчания утвердит вас владельцами навеки и безвозвратно тех самых девушек, которым вы расточаете так много исканий и угождений прежде брака?.. Это равнодушное безучастие, эта убийственная лень не составляют ли весь запас ваших домашних отношений, когда вы с глазу на глаз? Не все ли, или не почти все ли вы отталкиваете такими приемами эти неопытные и невзыскательные сердца молодых жен, которые напрашиваются на привязанность, и так легко были бы удовлетворены, если бы вы хотели, если б вы умели их лелеять ласкою и снисхождением?.. И когда ваша угрюмая положительность, когда ваше обидное нерадение удаляют от вас разочарованных подруг, когда под кровом вашим начинается эта томительно–нервная борьба, эти безвыходные положения, которые так часто разрушают навсегда согласие, спокойствие, даже самую святость брака, когда вражда и отвращение садятся бессменными стражами у ваших изголовий, и кровь Евы заговорит в груди ее правнучек, и они из тесноты и пустоты этой домашней, вами отравленной, жизни рвутся и просятся, как тоскующие души, на простор другого, более им сродного существования, когда... Скажите сами, скажите, кто виноват?..” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 31)

a friend, in order to see him in love and joy, but as an unwanted and unpleasant comrade given to her by fate as a companion on the long path.”²⁴⁹ Marina’s feelings for her husband changed over time from hopeful and excited to resentful and disgusted. Rostopchina also seems to implicitly criticize society’s and the government’s anti-divorce stance, as emphasized by Rostopchina’s use of the word “irrevocable” for the union, and Marina’s resignation with being forever tied to her husband.

The narrator’s comments on marriage and a husband in the story end with direct blame placed on men for causing unhappy marriages and they provide the justification for Marina’s unhappy state and eventual affair. When Marina realizes that she cannot gain companionship, interest, or even respect from her husband, she turns to find solace in society. The narrator calls Marina a passionate woman driven by her emotions, but society balls only cause a temporary distraction for a deeply ingrained yearning for a deeper connection. After two years into her marriage, attending every ball, Marina understands that she wants something life has yet to give her and she feels truly ill, though without a concrete cause. Society, however, still views her as the happiest of women. It is at this time of utter internal desolation that she meets Boris, a man with whom she feels a pure connection, one that completely contrasts to her relationship with her husband. Scared at what the feelings could mean, Marina avoids Boris and her feelings as he relentlessly pursues her and eventually wears down her defenses.

Two weeks did not pass from the gala memorable for both, when Boris and Marina both knew, both felt, that they were destined for each other. Insurmountable compassion drew

²⁴⁹ “Холодное отвращение собирало по каплям льдины в этой душе глубокой и таинственной. Скука, апатия, сплин заменили в ней прежнюю силу, прежнюю волю; умственная дремота оковала все ее способности. Марина Ненская стала всматриваться в мужа уже не как в друга, чтоб изучать его на любовь и радость, а как в нежеланного и неприятного товарища, данного ей судьбою в сопутники длинного пути” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 32-33).

one to the other. All tastes, all opinions were in accordance for them. Even all desires, all secret movements of their hearts agreed unbeknown within them, and before any explanations they understood one another. It would be impossible to find a man and woman who were a more suitable match, more worthy of each other. Only Marina could fully understand Boris's deep soul and brave mind; she alone could talk to him about modernity, which occupied him, and about the arts, which were dear to him; to her alone were accessible all of his all-encompassing and all-questioning thoughts.²⁵⁰

The way Rostopchina's narrator describes love makes it seem sacred and transformative. For Marina, "It was as if [she] were resurrected. She felt a new life, new soul, new capabilities, and new desires within herself."²⁵¹ A true, higher love "elevates and expands the soul."²⁵² The feeling brings people closer to the heavens specifically because those who are truly meant to love are predestined to do so, presumably by the heavens themselves. The author depicts love as two people completely understanding and agreeing with each other on various subjects, especially connecting intellectually. They are two halves of the same whole and share a mutual and equal bond. This depiction of love has many similarities to Anna Bunina's and George Sand's version of true love, and like the ideas expressed in their works, Rostopchina shows that marriage and love do not have to coincide. In fact, Rostopchina's stance on the way husbands treat their wives

²⁵⁰ "Две недели не прошли с памятного обоим раута, как Борис и Марина оба знали, оба чувствовали, что они предназначены друг другу. Непреодолимое сочувствие влекло их одного к другому. Все вкусы, все мнения были у них соответственны. Даже все желания, все тайные движения их сердец согласовались без их ведома, и прежде всяких объяснений они понимали один другого. Нельзя было бы найти мужчину и женщину более под пару, более достойных один другого. Одна Марина могла понимать вполне глубокую душу и смелый ум Бориса; она одна могла говорить с ним и о современности, его занимавшей, и об искусствах, ему дорогих, ей одной были доступны все стороны мысли его, все обнимающей и все вопрошающей" (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 40-41).

²⁵¹ "...Марина как будто переродилась. Она почувствовала в себе новую жизнь, новую душу, новые способности и новые желания" (Rostopchina FW 52).

²⁵² "возвышает душу и расширяет ее" (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 52).

implies that true love cannot occur within a marriage due to the power imbalance and inequality within the union.

When Marina and Boris accept their love and begin their relationship, initially society does not react. It is only when people discover that their relationship has deep feelings of love that society begins judging them, and this makes a deeper comment on society's resentment for the emotion. For the man, this judgement has no lasting consequences, but Rostopchina says that "for a woman misfortune begins the minute her name is uttered in society with a name of an unfamiliar man! Her safety is destroyed and the first lie, the first slander, the first foolishness that an unreasonable gossip takes into his head about her, will be accepted and repeated everywhere as the sacred truth."²⁵³ Without any protection from others, women become the center of destructive lies often caused by their love for another person. While love itself may not be detrimental, its social consequences may be ruinous for the woman.

The story has multiple layers of challenges for the couple in love. Firstly, society creates rumors about their romance. Secondly, their own families provide harsh criticism and cruelty. Marina's own aunt, who cannot not stand her happiness, betrays their secret to everyone else, causing the rumors to begin. Boris's own family likewise meets him with judgement and reproach. The narrator does not attribute any of their actions to familial concern borne out of love. Marina's aunt gets so used to accompanying her to balls and outings that she becomes jealous of the time Marina spends with Boris, keeping her away from society's amusements. She betrays Marina in part as revenge and in part to feel special as the first one to reveal such

²⁵³ “для женщины несчастье начинается с той самой минуты, как имя ее произносится в свете вместе с именем постороннего ей мужчины! Безопасность ее уничтожена, и первая ложь, первая клевета, первая глупость, которую вздумается про нее распустить бессмысленному болтуну, будет принята и повторена везде за святую истину” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 54-55)

important gossip. Boris's family, too, become used to his attention and devotion to them, relying on him to bring them to the most important society events. When they hear the rumors, they denounce Marina as a coquette who is ruining Boris's life and prospects. Ego motivates both families, harming everyone in the process.

Instead of fighting for their love and defending Marina, Boris allows his family to pull him away from her, sacrificing his time with her for time with his mother and sisters. The narrator gives countless examples of the excitement and love Marina feels as she waits for him, and the utter despondency and disappointment when he does not honor their agreements. "Yes, on the eve of the holiday, and on the holiday, everything for them was ruined, taken away; he sacrificed everything for his family, mother, social and familial relations, and his beloved, that heart which to him was the closest and most cherished, he condemned to suffering and anguish... why? Because Boris was weak, weak of character and spirit, and could not oppose people or things that knew how to ensnare him with habit and preconceptions."²⁵⁴ Boris's passive nature allowed his family to come between the couple and he did not stop the gossip and rumors that his own mother and sisters spread about Marina. They personally created so much hate, that Marina pulled away from society, thereby letting them socially destroy her.

In their relationship, Rostopchina creates two worlds for men and women. Marina is restricted in her movement because she is either seen at a social gathering, such as a ball or the theatre, or she is at home waiting for Boris. Boris, however, rarely enters her space and is mostly seen visiting other people at the request of his mother. She usually waits statically for him at

²⁵⁴ "Да, и канун праздника, и самый праздник, все было у них испорчено, отнято; всем пожертвовал он семейству, матери, светским и родственным отношениям, а любимая женщина, а то сердце, которое было ему всех ближе и дороже, он осудил на страдание и томление... почему? Потому, что Борис был слаб, слаб характером и духом, и не мог противостать ни людям, ни вещам, умевшим его оплести привычкою и предубеждениями." (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 66)

home while he moves dynamically and freely between all social locations. As Marina is tied to her marriage and husband, she is also depicted tied to their home. Just like the husband, Boris fails Marina multiple times throughout the story, and Rostopchina once again blames men for the mistreatment of women. Notably, Rostopchina's narrator does not blame her heroine for falling in love with a man other than her husband. In fact, when society turns against Marina, the narrator asks, "tell me, whom did it bother, whom did it harm, this quiet and dignified happiness, from which even the so-called husband did not suffer, who with his absence, his indifference himself rejected his young wife who was alien to him in every way?"²⁵⁵

When Marina's health and beauty wane from the stress of their relationship, she decides she is done waiting in vain for Boris to choose spending time with her over the requests of his family, and decides to end their relationship. In this crucial moment, many of Rostopchina's important ideas shine in these passages. "I cannot be happy when I know that my happiness is pure and hopeless, like an ill man sentenced to an inevitable death!.. I cannot love when I see that I am not loved the way I demand... And I also do not love during those minutes, as yesterday... when it is too painful and difficult, my heart closes up, and what I feel is similar to hatred..."²⁵⁶ Additionally, Marina declares "I feel that I will degrade myself in my own eyes if I remain any longer in such an ambiguous relationship unworthy of me."²⁵⁷ These statements present a very modern take on relationships and love, one that centers on the woman's self-worth

²⁵⁵ "Скажите, кому мешало, кому вредило это счастье, тихое и пристойное, от которого не страдал даже так называемый муж, который своим отъездом, своим равнодушием сам отказался от молодой жены, ему чужой по всему?" (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 70)

²⁵⁶ "Я не могу быть счастлива, когда знаю, что мое счастье непорочно и ненадежно, как больной, приговоренный к неизбежности смерти!.. Я не умею любить, когда вижу, что меня не так любят, как я того требую... Да я и не люблю в минуты, подобные вчерашним... когда мне слишком больно и тяжело, сердце мое закрывается, и то, что я чувствую, похоже на ненависть..." (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 87)

²⁵⁷ "Я чувствую, что унижусь в собственных глазах своих, если останусь долее в таких двусмысленных и недостойных меня отношениях." (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshnina*, 88)

as a person. Just because they have what the narrator declared to be a predestined bond of higher, true love, does not mean that those feelings cannot fade if they are not properly fostered. It also touches on the idea that a woman has expectations of the way she should be loved, and a man who does not treat her like she wants is unworthy of her.

When Boris says that she will die if they separate, Marina wildly exclaims “but have you not already killed me with your love?.. Look at who I have become now and remember, how was I when you took me?.. Where is my beauty?.. My strength?.. Where is my health?.. Everything, everything has become emaciated in this hellish battle, in these daily sufferings, which burn and desiccate me on the fire of all torments... I do not regret anything, I would even now give everything a second time as a sacrifice for love, but were you right in sacrificing me for your family?”²⁵⁸ Boris’s treatment of Marina sparked deep physical and mental changes within her, ones she would not regret if he treated her properly. “You, are a man – and you do not know how to protect a woman who trusted herself to your honor.”²⁵⁹ Marina’s main argument rests on the basis that she, a woman, had the strength to face society and stand with Boris to defend their relationship in the eyes of society even if she became a social outcast. Boris, however, could not do the same. Rostopchina’s narrator directly addresses the reader to explain the deeper issues.

We have already said, and now must insist on it, that the main, the only deficiency, which eclipsed the glittering traits and the bright, loving nature of Boris, was his lack of independence and his weakness. Raised in the slavish fear of people’s opinion, he feared

²⁵⁸ “но разве вы уж не убили меня теперь своею любовью?.. Смотрите, какова стала я теперь, и вспомните, какую вы меня взяли?.. Где моя красота?.. Где мои силы?.. Где мое здоровье?.. Все, все истощилось в этой адской борьбе, в этих ежедневных мученьях, которые жгут и сушат меня на огне всех томлений... Мне не жаль ничего, я все бы сейчас вторично отдала на жертву любви; но вправе ли были вы жертвовать мною вашему семейству?” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchnina*, 88)

²⁵⁹ “Ты мужчина – и не умеешь защищать женщины, которая доверилась твоей чести!..” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchnina*, 89)

it as he would a ghost, instinctively and subconsciously. This knight at heart, who would not spare his life for that of the woman he loved, did not dare to take her side when, in order to more reliably attack her, they knew how to masterfully frighten him with the imaginary revolt of society's opinion against him. He was completely submissive to the fictitious power of this nonexistent court of society, this artificial and false court, which was forever calling [people] to judgement. He was always prepared to obey this mythical, but unfortunately so powerful public opinion, which even the ones who shout about it the loudest internally disbelieve.²⁶⁰

This submissiveness to public opinion and society's scrutiny led to the downfall of Boris's love for Marina. Rostopchina's narrator strongly emphasizes the idea of society's judgement as a completely social construct, one that is not natural or genuine. Had Boris ignored other people, he would not face negative consequences because the court he feared so much was fictitious. His inability to give Marina the love and attention she craved all rested upon his weakness to stand up for her. Marina ultimately fell deathly ill as a physical manifestation of her internal turmoil and grief. Even though they did not end their relationship, Marina spent her last days alone while Boris attended to his family, which aptly summarizes their relationship. Instead of fearing her death, Marina welcomed it as the end of her suffering.

²⁶⁰ “Мы уже сказали и теперь должны на том настоять, что главным, что единственным недостатком, затмевавшим блестящие качества и светлую, любящую натуру Бориса, была его несамостоятельность и слабость. Воспитанный в рабском страхе людского мнения, он боялся его, как привидения, инстинктивно и бессознательно. Этот рыцарь по душе, который не пощадил бы жизни для своей возлюбленной, не смел держать ее сторону, когда, для того чтоб вернее нападать на нее, умели искусно напугать его вымышленным восстанием против него светского мнения. Он был совершенно подчинен мнимой власти этого несуществующего, но всегда призываемого на суд и выставяемого судилища света, этого условного и ложного судилища. Он был готов всегда послушаться этого мифического, но по несчастью столь сильного общего мнения, которому не верят внутренно те самые, кто всех громче кричат о нем.” (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 102)

In the last letter Marina writes Boris on her deathbed, she urges him not to love another woman as he loved her, with a love fragmented by his attentions to his family and society. Instead, she tells him to find and marry a friend who will have his name and become one with his family. This is a very significant concept because Marina, as a woman whose own love failed her, urges Boris and the readers against such love. Marriage based on companionship and friendship is preferred to both a passionate love and a marriage based on inequality and emptiness, like Marina's union to her husband. Significantly, Rostopchina does not include Boris in the final passages of the funeral and the future. The story is not about him, but rather about the consequences of a passionate love for a fortunate woman, a woman society upheld and then shunned for the same love which provided no ill consequences for Boris. Like the scenes when Boris arrives and leaves Marina's home, Boris entered her life, insisted on her affections, and then destroyed her life with his passionate but ultimately weak love.

In addition to Marina and Boris's main love story, Rostopchina provides another failed marriage through the story of Princess Mary, a girl whose upbringing was very similar to Marina's. Unlike Marina, Mary married for love, and like Marina, she was considered a fortunate woman. The narrator explains that a tyrannical and cruel husband created hell instead of marriage for Mary, which slowly drove her insane. In the marriage, like a good and obedient wife, first Mary accepted her husband's wrath, but then tried to change his character when she realized that she could no longer live with him in such a way. When her efforts proved futile, she began losing her mind and was sent away to live in seclusion in Nice. Mary spent her entire married life in fear and anxiety, having nobody in whom to confide and seek refuge. In Nice, she tragically spends her days writing letters to her deceased mother to plead her case to God and futilely awaiting a guardian angel to save her from the marriage. When looking at both Marina

and Mary at the funeral, Marina's friend comments, "God generously gifted them with beauty and charm, they had everything to inspire happiness and pride in any of the most demanding men... and what is their fate?.. What did the men do to them, to whom the two entrusted the fate of their hearts?.. Here they are, two beauties! Two loving souls, two charming, intelligent, mannered, two happy women!.." ²⁶¹

These last lines encompass the main message of Rostopchina's novel. Men have every opportunity to be happy with their partners, whether wives or lovers, but they reject their chances. Even when they have the most wonderful women who love them and want to cherish their relationship, men poison it all. Society, the false judge of life, does not care about true happiness or the reality of a situation. The men who blindly follow society's wishes, like Boris, will inevitably destroy the ones they love, even if they do not intend the women harm. Other men, like Mary's husband, cause true harm and are capable of abuse. Women, however, cannot protect themselves and can slowly descend into madness from their helpless situation because they have no support. When husbands are not cruel, they may simply ignore their wives for their own interests, ruining any chance at true happiness in the union.

In the introduction to the 1991 publication of *The Fortunate Woman*, the scholar Andrei Ranchin explains this story as one of Rostopchina's attempts to write against the feelings and morals of contemporary society. ²⁶² Literary and critical preferences were moving away from Romanticism, and the society tale was no longer respected by critics and readers. Also, Rostopchina's story glorified an affair after placing the blame for the failed marriage on the

²⁶¹ "Бог обильно наградил их красотой и прелестью, они имели все, чтоб составить счастье и гордость любого из самых взыскательных мужчин... и какова же их участь?.. Что из них сделали те люди, которым обе поручили судьбу своего сердца?.. Вот они, две красавицы! две любящие души, две милые, умные, воспитанные, две счастливые женщины!.." (Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaia zhenshchinnina*, 119)

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 10.

husband. The censor Dmitrii Rzhevskii (1817-1868) wrote in a letter that the novel “appears dubious in the moral sense and poor in the literary sense.”²⁶³ Ranchin defends Rostopchina’s critics by emphasizing their main problem with *The Fortunate Woman* – Rostopchina romanticized Marina’s relationship with Boris and found religious support for their union, which she did not allow for the married couple.²⁶⁴

This criticism denounces the very ideas which Rostopchina’s story projected. The writer’s story speaks against conventions and directly attacks all men, whether they are lawful husbands or well-wishing lovers. The novel incorporates elements of Shepard’s “destruction of love” tale but instead of Marina’s marriage being the main hindrance to their relationship, Rostopchina shows that a man’s obedience to both the family and society’s expectations ruin their union. There were a few instances in the story in which the couple could have lived happily away from everyone, but each time Boris returned to his family out of fear of society. Rostopchina depicts a weak man who succumbed to society’s pressure and a strong woman who stood against it, directly opposing the belief of men being stronger and women being weaker. While the genre and literary conventions are that of a society tale, Rostopchina’s message is reminiscent of modern feminism, especially when she emphasizes that love and marriage might not provide true happiness for a woman and her insistence in the story that women have worth and deserve to be loved the way they wish.

Karolina Pavlova

²⁶³ “Он мне кажется сомнительным в смысле нравственном и плохим в литературном отношении” (qtd. in Rostopchina, *Shchastlivaiia zhenshchnina*, 9)

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

Many of Karolina Pavlova's works feature love and its effects on women but *The Quadrille* [Кадриль] presents a more focused treatment of love and marriage than other more famous and studied works like *A Double Life*. The novel was written in verse in 1843-1851, but not fully published until 1859. The Romantic style of literature and novels in verse were no longer popular by the time the story was published, so the work was overlooked for a long time until critics started rediscovering Pavlova's works in the last 50 years. Diana Greene points to the work's unusual features: "Pavlova's *Kadriľ's* innovative, masterly verse challenges and redefines several literary traditions— the *svetskaia povest'*, the *povest' v stikhakh*, and the *poema*— as well as the standard depiction of women in Russian literature."²⁶⁵ *The Quadrille* plays with Romantic ideas, presenting stories of four women who confess tales of their past encounters with love, and offering social commentary on society, women, and love. Barbara Heldt calls it calls this a work of "life stories of disillusionment, guilt, and helplessness" which shows that women are not the agents of their own destinies.²⁶⁶ The plot of the story begins with four women gathering and discussing their life and naturally turning to the "purpose of men and women, the fateful choice of the heart, and the burdensome disappointment."²⁶⁷ The countess declares that a woman could avoid problems of the heart if she could stay true to herself, meaning waiting for the right man to come along whose "heart is similar to theirs."²⁶⁸ To this, Liza aptly replies that waiting is a luxury for the rich, one that poorer women cannot afford. She says:

Вам и не грезилось во сне,
 Что часто дочь – у нас уплата
 Долгов отца, издержек брата
 И что избегнуть не вольна
 Она законного разврата.

²⁶⁵ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 165.

²⁶⁶ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 112.

²⁶⁷ "Мужчин и женщин назначение / и сердца выбор роковой / и тяжкое разуверенье" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 312)

²⁶⁸ "Чье сердце с нашим сходно" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 313)

Ее ли грех? Ее ль вина?..
 Быть может, искренне и свято
 Любить умела и она!

You could not even imagine in a dream
 That often in a daughter – we have a payment
 Of the father’s debt, the brother’s expenses
 And she is not free to escape
 The lawful depravity.
 Is it her sin? Is it her fault?..
 Perhaps, genuinely and holy
 Even she knew how to love!²⁶⁹

This passionate statement provides a criticism regarding a woman’s place and duty in society. Every woman, if she is not rich enough to have freedom, has a filial responsibility to help the family’s finances. Marriage for that woman is a way to serve her family, mostly men as emphasized in the poem; and she does not have the ability or the opportunity to marry for love. The speech sets the tone for the rest of the work by defining the inequality men and woman have in life. Susanne Fusso aptly writes that *The Quadrille* dismantles Romantic myths by deconstructing the standard Romantic hero and it also depicts “a new type of rational, reflective, experienced female character.”²⁷⁰

In the first account told by Nadine, the Romantic ideal clashes with reality in multiple ways. She tells about a time when she was younger and lived with her mother in the Tver’ *guberniya* [province] and a rich landowner moved to their town. The rumors of the man being “somber and severe” and walking around at night caused a spark of imagination for Nadine, picturing him to be a handsome young man with a mysterious “unforgettable sin.”²⁷¹ Her imagination also creates a sense of union and understanding with the man, and she quickly feels

²⁶⁹ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 313

²⁷⁰ Susanne Fusso, “Pavlova’s *Quadrille*: The Feminine Variant of (the End of) Romanticism,” *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) 126-127.

²⁷¹ “Незабвенный грех” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 313)

he is hers. However, Nadine was completely shocked to see that the rich landowner turned out to be a “slouching, bald, and pockmarked fat man” by the name of Andrei Il’ich’ who asked for her hand in marriage.²⁷² Hating the reality of the man, Nadine refuses Andrei Il’ich’ despite his wealth and status, until her mother falls ill and Nadine feels her obstinacy is “sinful and Godless.”²⁷³

Even after she agrees to marry the rich man she wants to take back her word because she dreams of a rich and young suitor, but fears society and her mother’s reproach. When she is in Germany, right before she is set to marry, the heroine feels that she could choose a different goal in life, that she is destined for something else, and that here in Germany her heart’s dream could become reality. In a way, Nadine’s thoughts come to fruition because a thief straight out of a romantic novel jumps through her window. He is tall, young, and handsome, but he does not act like the expected character of a novel. He comes to steal the diamonds given to Nadine from Andrei Il’ich’, which she decided to give back in exchange for the dissolution of the betrothal. Nadine exposes all her emotions and desperation, pleading for the thief to leave the diamonds because they represent a romantic potential future where she meets someone for love, but the thief steals the diamonds and leaves her to marry Andrei Il’ich’.

As Fusso discusses, in a romantic novel the dashing thief would have taken Nadine instead of the necklace and they would have left together for some romantic future. Instead, Nadine faces the reality of a strange man desperate enough for money to leave a helpless woman to her supposedly miserable future. Likewise, Pavlova further subverts expectations for the heroine because Nadine becomes very happy in her marriage. She lives “without woe and

²⁷² “Толстяк сутулый, лысый и рябой” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 316)

²⁷³ “Мне показалась грешной и безбожной моя упорность” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 317)

conflict” and appreciates that the thief stole the diamonds.²⁷⁴ When the other women ask Nadine whether she would have truly refused to marry the landowner, she tells them that she does not know because for both men and women it is easy to bravely come to a decision but harder to carry it out. Through Nadine’s story Pavlova plays with expectations and reality, showing the reader that women can be satisfied in marriages they previously did not want and that Romantic heroes do not correspond to reality.

The second story, Lize’s, adopts the themes of works like *The Queen of Spades* [Пиковая дама] (1834) by Aleksander Pushkin, by featuring a young girl acting as the servant to an older cruel family member. In this story Lize gains a voice and discusses her life from her own perspective, providing rather honest accounts of her feelings. She discusses the enmity and torment she endured while serving her aunt, all while wishing for something to save her from her life. A son of a neighbor, Aleksei, arrives from Moscow to their village at this time, with stories and accounts of a life Lize cannot imagine. She falls in love with him and begins having hopes and wishes for her future.

Что же в том? Я в нем нашла предлог
 Для любви, для счастья без меры.
 Все же мы, мечтая и любя,
 Дань свою кладем к ногам химеры,
 Все в другом мы ищем лишь себя.

What of it? I found in him a pretext
 For love, for boundless happiness.
 All of us, dreaming and loving,
 Place our tribute to the feet of the chimera,
 We all seek only ourselves in another.²⁷⁵

Pavlova focuses on the internal state of Lize as she falls in love, not with the man’s behaviors or words, but rather what their union could mean for the girl. When Lize receives an

²⁷⁴ “Без горя и раздора” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 324)

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 329.

offer to marry from a wealthy man in town she refuses, igniting her aunt's fury, but nonetheless Lize hopes for a match with Aleksei. When her aunt falls ill, Lize describes her innermost feelings of wishing her aunt's death and feeling joy when the aunt succumbs to her illness. With the death, Lize thinks "freedom awaits me ahead, a future in a union with him..." showing that her perceived happiness rests with her relative's death and her awaited inheritance.²⁷⁶ This creates a materialistic and quintessentially real view of events, straying away from Romantic sentiments. When Lize learns that her inheritance is 57,000 rubles, a sum much less than anticipated, Lize still imagines a future with Aleksei.

Мысль одна лишь наполняя властно
 Душу мне, как радостный угар,
 Что могла теперь я Алексею
 Жертвовать фортунною своею,
 Что она довольна велика,
 Чтоб, других богатств и не желая,
 Жить в довольстве. И ее брала я
 Как платеж нежданный должника.

Only one thought domineeringly filled
 My soul, like a joyful fume,
 That now I could sacrifice
 My fortune to Aleksei
 That it is large enough,
 So that, not even wishing for other riches,
 We live in content. And I took it
 Like an unexpected payment of a debtor.²⁷⁷

The first time Lize used the image of paying tribute is to describe her feelings when falling in love, willing to give something in return for happiness and love. Here again, Lize says she is ready to sacrifice her fortune for Aleksei. Through these images it seems that Lize represents the martyr and sufferer who does not know how to achieve anything in life without losing something, which aligns with the ideals of a perfect woman according to society's

²⁷⁶ "Впереди ждала меня свобода / Будущность в соединении с ним..." (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 333)

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 334.

standards. However, Pavlova undermines this idea because Aleksei feels underwhelmed and disappointed with the inherited sum, so he leaves the town and Lize for another, richer woman in Odessa. This idea perfectly falls into Shepard's society tale category of "destruction of love" because it shows the man incapable of love due to his materialism. The love of money overcomes any affection the character might have felt for Lize, which parallels the story of Erast and Liza in "Poor Liza." This potentially destructive love, however, does not destroy Pavlova's character. Lize only narrates this episode of her life to the other women, so it remains unclear what she did next or whom she ended up marrying, but her early hopes and wishes of a savior proved to be for nothing.

The third story provides a picture of the cruelty of people from the perspective of how it affects a young girl entering society. Olga tells the others how she prepared for her first ball, realizing the importance of dressing to set standards and trying to fit in.

Уже успев понять, что в свете мне чужом,
 Вещь важная наряд; что дело все не в том,
 Чтобы он дорог был и только что с иголки;
 Что выбор пояса, мантильи иль наколки
 Быть может бедствием, позором и грехом.
 Как взгляды злы порой и как улыбки колки,
 Я тяжко и вполне извела потом:
 Мне дали знать себя в салоне не одном
 И наши модницы, и наши богомолки.
 Мужчин безжалостные шуточки, женщин спесь,
 Обиду на меня вперенного лорнета,
 Злость сострадания, предательство совета, --
 Я всё перенесла, я горький кубок весь
 До капли выпила. -- Спокойно сидя здесь,
 Нам, пересозданным уж этим строгим светом,
 Конечно, говорить легко теперь об этом.
 Но помню, каково в то время было мне
 Условий общества разгадывать загадки;
 Как размышляла я, с собой наедине,
 Цветные ли надеть, иль белые перчатки?
 И помню, сколько я проплакала ночей,
 Как я, едва дыша и в страхе вечно новом,

Шла мимо чопорных салонных палачей,
 Готовых каждого зарезать острым словом!
 Поверьте, тяжкая берет порой тоска,
 Когда приходится, с душою благородной,
 Смущаться и робеть пред ветреницей модной
 И видеть с ужасом улыбку дурака.
 Примирена теперь я с обществом; жестоки
 И горьки были им мне данные уроки;
 Но не ропщу на них: они пошли мне впрок.
 Задачу трудную постигла я душою,
 Взялась я за себя, и сладила с собою,
 И переделалась от головы до ног.
 Полезней года мне иные были сутки.
 Своей насмешкою немилосердный свет
 Неловкость истребил наивной институтки:
 Ребенок ветренный исчез, -- пропал и след.
 Погибло, может быть, хорошего с ним много...
 Что ж делать? Такова была моя дорога!
 Зато являюсь спокойно я на бал,
 Вдоль строя зрителей иду теперь без страха,
 Встречаю средь толпы лишь шепоты похвал,
 Могу свести с ума иного вертопраха
 И возбуждать порой всю зависть наших зал.--

Already understanding, that in the society alien to me,
 Attire is an important thing; and it is not the point,
 That it is expensive and recently crafted;
 That the choice of belt, mantilla, or headdress
 Can be disaster, embarrassment, or sin.
 How cruel gazes are sometime and how caustic the smiles,
 I sorely and fully experienced later:
 They let me know about myself in many salons,
 Our fashionistas, and our devout women.
 The merciless jokes of men, the women's conceit,
 Insult directed at me through the lorgnettes,
 The malice of empathy, the betrayal of advice, --
 I endured it all, I drank every drop
 Of the entire bitter chalice. -- Calmly sitting here,
 For us, who have been recreated by this strict beau monde,
 Of course, it is now easy to talk about this.
 But I remember, how it was at the time for me
 To solve the riddles of the convention of society;
 How I contemplated, alone by myself,
 Whether to wear the colored gloves or white?
 And I remember, how many nights I cried through,
 How I, barely breathing and in an eternally new fear,

Walked by the scrupulous salon executioners,
 Who were prepared to stab anyone with a sharp word!
 Believe me, at times a burdensome anguish overcomes me
 When I had to, with a noble soul,
 Become embarrassed and timid before a fashionable frivolous woman
 And to see with horror the smile of a fool.
 I am now adapted to society; cruelly
 And bitterly it taught me lessons;
 But I do not complain about them: they were useful.
 I reached a difficult goal with my soul,
 I took hold and made peace with myself,
 And changed myself from head to foot.
 More useful than a year were some of those days.
 With its ridicule the ruthless society
 Destroyed the awkwardness of an innocent institute girl:
 A frivolous child vanished, -- even the trace disappeared.
 Perhaps, a lot of good died with it...
 What is to be done? Such was my path!
 Instead, I calmly appear at a ball,
 Along the line of viewers I now walk without fear,
 I meet among the crowd only whispers of praise,
 I can drive insane some frivolous person
 And at times incite the full envy of our halls. ⁻²⁷⁸

It is interesting to note that some major works of Russian literature feature the transformation of a woman from a naïve young girl to the perfect society woman, such as Aleksandr Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* [Евгений Онегин] (1825-1832). Pushkin artfully captures the young Tatiana's thoughts and emotions regarding many subjects, but not for the later period in which Tatiana transforms from an idealistic girl yearning for more from people around her than gossip and judgement, to a married woman commanding the attention and respect of her peers. Instead of focusing on that type of outcome, Rostopchina depicts the emotional trauma and turmoil of a young girl's entrée into society, which essentially forces a woman to change. This introduction to Olga's account sets the tone for the rest of her story. First, she discusses the superficiality of people in society who have specific and strict standards of dress and care little

²⁷⁸ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 339-340.

for the actual person wearing them. The key to this part of the passage is the varying direction from which criticism comes to Olga. She points to both men and women, even those who consider themselves religious, as the ones who directed insults at her and mocked her, which differs slightly from the stories like Gan's "Society's Judgement," which focused on other women as the main agents of society's cruelty. The "scrupulous salon executioners" [чопорные салонные палачи] directly cause Olga to transform from a young and naïve sixteen-year-old girl initially charmed by the splendor of high society to the perfect society woman, who dresses and acts according to the customs and inspires praise from everyone around her.

The rest of the narrative that follows recounts Olga's first ball, at which she discovered the cruelty of people and left society for a year to recreate herself. Pavlova masterfully and convincingly takes the reader through Olga's emotions, starting from her anticipation of the ball, the wonder and delight at seeing everyone's outfits, the desolation at realizing she is a stranger to everyone, and the embarrassment at her simple outfit in comparison to others. As she descends into sadness, she sees the brother of a fellow classmate, to whom she nods, breaking all decorum. In the midst of her embarrassment and regret, Olga sees the brother talking to another young man, calling her an *institutka*, which leaves the reader to assume that Olga is a student of Smolny Institute or another educational center dedicated to the raising of proper young women, and the use of the term here may have condescending implications.²⁷⁹ Thereafter, the same handsome man invites Olga to dance, and he then passionately declares his love for her, saying "I love you sorrowfully, madly, and stubbornly / and despite everything, I belong to you."²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ The term refers to young women who attended the Smolny Institute or other similar institutions, which had a strict curriculum but had very limited social interaction beyond the school, which had a damaging effect on young girls. "The *institutka* was a standing joke in Russian society, and the word became synonymous for the light-headed and ultra-naïve female" (Stites, *Women's Liberation*, 5).

²⁸⁰ "Люблю вас горестно, безумно и упрямо, / И, вопреки всему, принадлежу я вам" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 345)

И начал вновь шептать мне на ухо он страстно,
 Как с первой встречи той до нынешнего дня
 Лишь только обо мне он думал ежечасно,
 И как могла бы жизнь со мною быть прекрасна,
 Как стал бы окружать он роскошью меня;
 И что недаром нам пришлось сойтися ближе,
 Что быть должна ему я божеством земным,
 Что я его спасу, соединившись с ним;
 Что стали бы мы жить в Италии, в Париже,
 Что покорился б он всем прихотям моим...
 Я слушала. И все вы знаете ведь сами,
 Как нежной лести хмель опасен в первый раз,
 Что увереньями такими и мольбами,
 Всей этой пошлостью стереотипных фраз
 И не в семнадцать лет смутимся мы подчас.
 Я жадно слушала: он говорил так живо,
 Восторженный порыв так был ему к лицу,
 Густые волосы лежали так красиво
 Вдоль бледных щек его! -- Мазурка шла к концу.
 Взглянул он на меня с улыбкою печальной;
 И я, пока свой рев удвоили смычки,
 Чуть внятным шепотом, сквозь гул музыки бальной,
 Позволила ему просить моей руки.
 Да, признаюсь, оно хоть неправдоподобно,
 Но правда, -- сдерживать вам не к чему свой смех!
 Он очень кстати здесь, и менее вас всех
 Такой поступок я понять теперь способна;
 Но показалось тогда всё это мне
 Событием весьма естественным и лестным.

And he began to passionately whisper in my ear again,
 As if from the first meeting to this day
 He only thought about me every hour,
 And how wonderful life with me could be,
 How he would surround me with luxury;
 And that we were brought together not in vain,
 That I should be an earthly deity to him,
 That I would save him by uniting with him;
 That we would live in Italy, in Paris,
 That he would surrender to all my whims...
 I listened. And you know it all yourselves,
 How the tender intoxication of flattery is dangerous the first time,
 That with such assurances and implorations,
 With all the banality of stereotypical phrases
 That not just at seventeen we will at times get flustered.
 I listened hungrily: he talked so animatedly,

The exuberant outburst suited him so well,
 His thick hair laid so beautifully
 Along his pale cheeks! – The mazurka was ending.
 He glanced at me with a sad smile;
 And I, as the bows of violins doubled their roar,
 With a barely audible whisper, through the hum of the ballroom mazurka,
 Allowed him to ask for my hand.
 Yes, I admit, even though it is unrealistic,
 But it is true, -- to hold in your laughter is pointless!
 It is very appropriate here, and less than any of you,
 I can understand such an action now;
 But at the time all this seemed to me
 Natural and flattering even.²⁸¹

The mysterious and handsome romantic hero charms and fully captures the attention of young Olga, making her believe both his words and her own special place in society, one where she is capable of causing someone to madly fall in love with her. Despite decorum and convention, she grants him the request to ask permission for her hand in marriage. The older Olga comments on the “banality of his stereotypical phrases” [пошлость стереотипных фраз] and implies that her younger self did not identify his words as such. Her youth, naiveté, and lack of experience allowed her to fall for the man’s words and grievously break social convention. When she asks someone about the man, she learns that he is a madman who declares his love for every woman and asks them to marry him. According to Fusso, Olga’s story breaks down the Romantic hero’s rhetoric by showing that love at first glance causing someone to “love madly” is indeed madness.²⁸² Pavlova definitely subverts the mad love of romanticism, but the main villain in the story is her friend’s brother and the society that allows him to do this.

Он, усмехался, прошел. -- Минуты три
 Я не могладохнуть; глаза мои глядели
 Сквозь слезы на толпу, без помысла, без цели...
 Я понимала, -- да, он выиграл пари.
 Они потешиться девчонкой захотели:
 Ведь было некому вступить за меня!

²⁸¹ Ibid., 345-346.

²⁸² Fusso, “Pavlova’s *Quadrille*,” 122.

Тут оскорбление их не вело к дуэли,
 Тут не пугали их ни связи, ни родня!
 Я не была знатна, я не имела веса, --
 Зачем бы надо мной не подшутил повеса?

He, laughed and walked by. – About three minutes
 I could not take a breath; my eyes looked
 Through tears at the crowd, without thought, without a goal...
 I was realizing, -- yes, he won a bet.
 They wanted to amuse themselves with a girl:
 After all, there was nobody to defend me!
 Here their insult did not lead to a duel,
 Here neither connections nor family scared them!
 I was not noble-born, I did not have value, --
 Why would a rake not laugh at my expense?²⁸³

The young men sent the madman to her and then bet on whether Olga would believe him and consent to the marriage. Her inappropriate action of allowing the man to ask for her hand causes a stir among the betters and allows everyone to laugh at her and humiliate her. When she approaches a table of people, they all leave, cementing her status as now a social pariah. At this time, Pavlova provides social commentary with Olga's lament that the betters felt justified in their actions specifically because of their class difference. As she does not come from nobility, without a title or social defense, Olga can be an outlet for amusement and humiliation. Others can exclude her and laugh at her because in their eyes she does not have social value. Pavlova continues this idea further when Olga is leaving the ball and sees another woman.

Пронесся сверху шум: с ступень сходила, прямо
 Насупротив меня, в беспечной болтовне
 С тремя мужчинами, блистательная дама,
 Уже известная по разным слухам мне.
 На балах гостьею была она не редкой,
 Жизнь буйно тратила, и хуже, чем кокеткой,
 Звала ее давно всеобщая молва;
 Но свету мстить она умела фразой едкой,
 И он же колкие ее хвалил слова.
 Шла медленно она, с улыбкой торжества;
 Чернела смоль косы под золотою сеткой,

²⁸³ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 348.

Повертывалася спесиво голова;
 Средь мрака соболя белела тонкой шею
 Краса змеиная, сверкал лукавый взор.
 К ней наклонялся, молодые чичисбеи
 Шептали на ухо ей свой привычный вздор.
 Был у нее в руке букет фиалок пармских;
 Прошла она легко и гордо мимо всех,
 Им дерзко напоказ неся свой знатный грех,
 И сквозь возню карет и лошадей жандармских
 Звучал еще вдали ее веселый смех.
 Я ей глядела вслед с печальною догадкой:
 Никто б ей не дерзнул обиды нанести,
 Никто бы тешиться не смел аристократкой,
 Она, бесчестная, была у них в чести!

A noise was carried from above: walking down the steps,
 Straight across from me, in carefree chatter,
 With three men, was a glittering lady,
 Already known to me from various gossip.
 She was often a guest at balls,
 Spent life wildly, and the general crowd had called
 Her worse than a coquette for a while already;
 But she could get revenge on society with a caustic phrase,
 And it praised her acerbic words.
 She walked slowly, with a smile of celebration;
 The ebony of her hair stood out under the golden net,
 Her head turned haughtily;
 The serpentine beauty of her white thin neck gleamed white
 Among the darkness of sable, her cunning gaze flashed.
 Bending down toward her, young cicisbei²⁸⁴
 Whispered in her ear their usual nonsense.
 She held in her hands a bouquet of Parma violets;
 She walked by everyone lightly and proudly,
 Audaciously and performatively bearing her famous sin,
 And through the bustle of carriages and gendarme horses
 Her merry laugh sounded even in the distance.
 I watched her walk away with a sad conjecture:
 Nobody would dare to give offence to her,
 Nobody would venture to amuse themselves with an aristocrat,
 She, dishonorable, was honored by them!²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ The word *cicisbeo* was first coined in eighteenth-century Italy, referring to a young nobleman who acts as an official escort and lover of a married noblewoman; he had the task of living fully with another man's wife, accompanying her in all activities, including social gatherings, all done with the husband's consent. For more on this phenomenon, see *A Lady's Man: The Cicisbei, Private Morals and National Identity in Italy* by Roberto Bizzocchi.

²⁸⁵ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 349.

Olga describes an aristocratic woman, depicting her with lovers and flaunting her shameful lifestyle to everyone else. She even attributes demonic images to the woman, with her cunning gaze [лукавый взор] and the serpentine beauty of her neck [краса змеиная тонкой шее], implying the depth of evil of the woman's lifestyle. Olga fixates on her because she represents someone who could be deserving of shame and humiliation but instead of this, society holds her in esteem due to her aristocratic origins and her wealth. This is a theme that makes a subtle appearance in *A Double Life* also, but here Pavlova presents the idea explicitly. It seems that acts of love and infatuation are not viewed equally among women when they involve women with money and women without, as already stated by Lize previously in the story. This first step into society which ended so disastrously for Olga, as well as her perception of the sinful society woman, allowed her to realize the true nature of society and caused her complete transformation from a naïve child to the perfect society woman, who both receives praise and has the ability to ignore the opinions of others.

In response to the story, Nadine adds that in society, one must either become “a patient anvil or a merciless hammer.”²⁸⁶ She also adds life lessons she has learned, which include “not to abandon oneself to reverie / not to be intoxicated by a madrigal / and, understanding life from the beginning / to cross out the article of love.”²⁸⁷ According to Nadine, a woman's love can be used as a weapon against her, so she would erase it from her life. Nadine's comment encapsulates Olga's account and how the naïve affections of a young girl were turned against her. From Nadine's story the reader also understands that she does not have the wealth or status of a society

²⁸⁶ “Наковальной терпеливой / или беспощадным молотком” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 350)

²⁸⁷ “Не предаваться забытью, / Не охмелеть от мадригала / И, жизнь поняв уже с начала, / В ней зачеркнуть любви статью” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 350)

woman who could be free with her affections without fear of ostracization. In response to such declarations, the countess Polina offers her own stance, which sets the tone for her story.

Вините вскормленного с детства
 В нас самолюбья тайный грех;
 Потребность суетных утех;
 Вините жалкое кокетство,
 Нас унижающее всех.
 Обрекшись на мужчин ловушки,
 Себя ж мы ставим ни во что!
 Зачем им нас не брать в игрушки,
 Когда согласны мы на то?
 А если встретим, в самом деле,
 Высокое мы существо,--
 Не оценив его привета,
 Не разгадав в нем ничего,
 Сумеем только мы его
 Поставить против пистолета...

Blame the secret sin of vanity
 Fed to us since childhood;
 The demand of bustling comforts;
 Blame pitiful coquetry,
 That degrades us all.
 Devoting ourselves to the snares of men,
 We value ourselves as nothing!
 Why would they not take us as dolls,
 When we agree to it?
 And if we meet, truly,
 A higher being,--
 Without valuing his greeting,
 Without discerning anything in him,
 We will only be able to
 Place him before a pistol...²⁸⁸

Polina's words echo the ideas presented in "At the Tea Table" and in *A Double Life*, which blames women's upbringing for their unfulfilling lives. In this story, the values instilled in women, such as vanity and coquetry, directly cause men to treat them so poorly. This upbringing

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 352.

is also responsible for women missing true and honest men, whom they are not trained to value.

Polina then explains these thoughts with memories from when she was eighteen, which revolve around Vadim Chetskii, her thirty-year-old cousin. Polina recalls being lively, frivolous, and merry.

Вокруг меня, мне угождая,
 Поклонников вертелась стая,
 Как вокруг богатых всех невест;
 И я приобрела науку
 В награду обращать иль в муку
 Свой каждый взгляд и каждый жест.

Around me, catering to me,
 A flock of suitors revolved,
 Like around all the rich young ladies.
 And I gained the knowledge
 To turn into a reward or suffering
 Each of my glances and gestures.

Polina aligns herself with the rich ladies who have power and influence over men, a skill she learned from the others. This manipulation and coquetry gives her both confidence and arrogance. The only person to try to temper her frivolous nature is Vadim, whom she describes as quiet, gloomy, and strict. When Polina feels wronged by Vadim's disapproval of what he calls childish games, she decides to spite him by being even more coquettish with an officer while others look on and laugh at her. At what she calls a fateful ball, she sees Vadim talking to a young woman trying to get his attention, so she childishly continued her flirting with the officer, turning Vadim's attention back to herself. When Vadim asks her not to dance at the ball with the officer, Polina decides to assert herself by going against his wishes.

Но я решила, что не буду,
 Что не хочу быть так слаба,
 Чтоб беспрестанно и повсюду
 Себе в закон его причуду
 Смиренно ставить, как раба.

But I decided, that I will not,
 That I do not want to be so weak,
 To unceasingly and everywhere
 Take obediently his whims as law
 For myself, like a slave.²⁸⁹

For Polina, the act of flirting with men and playing what she calls dangerous games is an act of rebellion and assertion of her freedom from an overbearing male figure. This powerful statement presents the idea that she yearns for freedom and a chance to show her independence, but the only actions she knows are coquetry and flirting. As she has previously remarked, this is the behavior society taught her, so this is what she knows how to do. Polina blames her actions on her fun-loving nature, but Pavlova also hints with Polina's actions and suggestions of deeper feelings toward Vadim. She does everything to gain his attention and approval, though she herself is unaware of her love for him and she is not equipped to understand them or know how to show them due to her inexperience. As Polina dances with the officer and catches everyone's attention, she agrees to meet the officer the next morning for a secret rendezvous, being tempted by the "shadow of love" even though she did not "believe in the passion / of a glittering rascal" but simply "wanted to prove to herself / her freedom and rights."²⁹⁰

When she meets the officer in the morning, both feel bored with the stereotypical phrases he utters, and the glimpse of feelings caused by the party's intoxication has faded. The underwhelming meeting is followed by additional consequences of her actions of the night before. Polina watches on in horror as Vadim duels a man who had insulted Polina at the party the night before, losing his life in the process. Polina feels truly helpless when she cannot stop the duel and do nothing but watch on as someone dear to her loses his life defending her honor as

²⁸⁹ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 362.

²⁹⁰ "Манила эта тень любви... Не слишком верила я страсти / Блистательного шалуна! / Но доказать себе хотела / Свою я волю и права" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 365)

a result of her own dangerous games with men. The last lines of Polina's story are the words another person told her when she rushes to Vadim's body, "Miss, may God forgive you / he was a good man."²⁹¹ Polina's account is the only one that does not include commentary from the other women; the story simply ends with the women walking out of the room to finally attend the ball. The silence rings rather poignantly because instead of the women providing feedback, Pavlova allows the reader the opportunity to comment on the events themselves. Polina's words about women's upbringing cultivating only coquetry and frivolity seems especially important to the ending of her story, specifically the idea that this type of upbringing ensures that women will ignore sincere men and lead them to their death.

The four stories provided in Pavlova's *The Quadrille* deal with themes of love in vastly different ways. As Susanne Fusso remarks, the author plays with different tropes of Romanticism but Pavlova also goes much further than this to contrast Romantic tropes with the potential cruelty of reality and specifically how it affects women.²⁹² Nadine's story, the only one with an explicitly happy ending, depicts a young heroine wishing for a handsome and dashing young man to marry her and save her from a marriage she does not want. However, the man she thinks will rescue her turns out to be a rogue and a robber, while her fiancé provides her with the life she seeks with riches, comfort, and security. Nadine's story shows that love may come from previously unattractive options and that stereotypically romantic heroes are often negative in real life. Lize's story likewise deals with romantic expectations and disappointing reality, though hers centers on money. Reimagining the trope of a poor young girl serving her older cruel relative, Pavlova shows that money does not necessarily bring happiness and that men are not always inspired by love. Lize's hopes of a life with the man with whom she falls in love lead to

²⁹¹ "Сударыня, господь прости вам! / Он был хороший человек!" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 371)

²⁹² Fusso, "Pavlova's *Quadrille*," 122.

disappointment and heartbreak, because the reality is that men may value money over love. In both cases, the women see the men as the determiners of their fate and are left disappointed both times.

Olga's and Polina's stories both deal with the consequences of flirting at a ball – in one case to the detriment of the woman and the other to the detriment of a man. Through these stories, Pavlova shows that words and small actions, such as apparently harmless flirting can ruin both men and women because society places the highest significance on propriety and acts as the strictest judge. The difference between the two episodes is that Olga is the victim of a cruel joke, but Vadim chooses his own fate by calling for a duel. For Olga, the story mainly revolved around the falsehoods of society and the inequality of women who have money versus those who do not. Olga's story features a young girl's brief infatuation with a madman caused by the heartless young men with power around her. She becomes caught in a fantasy of a happy life just to realize this is all for the amusement of somebody else. She falls into the trap of stereotypes and empty phrases that the man whispers in her ear, providing an example of how easily men can manipulate women. Olga wishes she had the wealth and support of a richer woman so that somebody would duel for her honor. Polina's account completely twists Olga's wishes by showing that dueling for a woman's honor has real and detrimental consequences and that women with wealth also have problems with love. Polina explicitly blames society for raising women with skewed values who cannot recognize or appreciate true feelings. According to this idea, love is a distant prospect for any woman since she does not know what it truly means. Even Nadine, who has a happy marriage, does not state having love in her marriage, just living a life with woe or conflict.

Conclusion

Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova all present their ideas on love and marriage over a period of fifty years, presenting many different examples with some core concepts remaining the same. Bunina wrote against the views and practices of her contemporaries, who saw marriage as a social and economic obligation. Perhaps it is due to her childhood being spent in a relatively freer time for women in Russian history, but Bunina had the confidence to openly oppose the accepted ideas, like the ones promoted by Rousseau and Karamzin that believed inequality in a marriage is natural and expected. Bunina instead promoted the concept that love should be a beautiful lofty emotion experienced by the worthy and based on mutual interests and respect. This kind of position only became more common in Russia twenty years later with the emergence of George Sand in the 1830s and other influences from the West. However, Bunina also depicted love as truly harmful to women and not to men because men are socially stronger than women and often men are the ones to cause harm. Bunina emphasized the inherent inequality between men and women and encouraged women to abstain from love and marriage instead of succumbing to the charms of men, as seen in “The Philosophy of the Butterfly.”

In a time when people started questioning the place of women in society, women writers began confidently expressing their points of view. Teplova, despite writing and publishing in the 1830s and 1840s, followed Bunina’s model of poetry and subtle expression. In her work, love undergoes a transformation from a woman’s naïve expectations to something capable of ruining a woman’s life. In her early work, Teplova showed the emotions of young women, depicting both their hopes and disappointments in love. At the end of her career Teplova’s unfinished prose provides a shift from the idealized poetic love of her youthful work to a realistic scene of a

young woman and her fiancé in a crowded ballroom. There we find a sobering view of the underlying emotions of the woman viewing the man with a sense of disillusionment, seeing him for all his negative qualities yet still required to keep up appearances in society. The brief scene shows that marriage and love may be completely separate entities.

Gan's story "The Ideal" continues the conversation of marriage and love being inherently different. The young heroine with a poetic soul has a husband who ignores her and her interests, thereby creating an unhappy marriage. Likewise, her love interest Anatolii only provides the impression of love without any genuine feelings. Gan separates love from marriage but ultimately shows that neither can bring a woman happiness because men use both love and marriage to their gain, taking advantage of women. The writer does offer a solution that provides a woman solace in religion, rejecting the earthly for the spiritual. Notably, most of Gan's stories feature a single couple and focus on the relationships experienced by an extraordinary woman who possesses innate poetic feelings and morals, only to be disillusioned and hurt by the males she encounters.

Rostopchina, like Gan, separates love and marriage, but she extends her criticism to both and shows that her characters are not singular, but are just some of many who suffer similar fates of disappointment in marriage and love. Rostopchina's personal letter to her friend only solidifies the idea that she wrote a novel reflecting her time and the society she lived in, making her statements powerful declarations against society's treatment of women. Rostopchina does not shame her heroine for loving someone outside of her marriage, but instead blames her adultery on the husband, who like all husbands in her works, never cared for his wife and married her for the social status he attained. In *The Fortunate Woman*, men are presented as selfish and weak,

sacrificing love for the wishes of a cold and superficial society with its arbitrary rules. According to Rostopchina, women find only suffering in the hands of men.

Pavlova's *The Quadrille* gives multiple women voices and presents four different versions of love. Separately, the stories feature a woman trying to avoid a loveless marriage in the hope for a romantic love, a woman falling in love with a man who only values money, a woman who believes the delusions of a madman and falls prey to men's cruelty, and a woman who chases flirtation and ruins the life of a man who genuinely cared for her. Together, the stories directly confront Romantic expectations and show how they prove to be false in real situations. Unlike the other writers, Pavlova also presents a version of a man suffering at the hands of the woman, reversing the gender roles, and shows a woman happy in a loveless but companionable marriage. Also, all the women are firmly established in society and only reminisce about their past experiences, showing that life does not end after the scenes of failed love and passion. However, the stories once more indicate that love and marriage do not have to coincide.

All five writers provide examples of love and marriage and it seems that all women want the same thing. Mutual respect and connection on an intellectual level, in which the man both listens to his wife and takes part in her inner world, are at the center of all messages. The five women share the idea that in their stories the heroines crave to be treated as autonomous people with active and independent minds and their own desires. Women want love, but a love in which the man supports and nurtures their relationship instead of letting society come between them. It seems that ideally, women would want love and marriage to coexist, but for some that seems like an impossibility in their society. They all write against the contemporary opinion of love and marriage.

Bunina expressed the idea that love is rare and marriage should be based on equality; Teplova depicted love as harmful and showed women becoming disillusioned with their partners; Gan wrote that men only care for themselves and their interests and that women should endure marriage but look elsewhere for happiness; Rostopchina directly faulted men and cast blame on them for women's unhappiness; and Pavlova addressed the underlying problem of contemporary conventions regarding love and marriage as deceiving women by subverting Romantic expectations. The focus of these five women's works shifts from individual couples and feelings and an abstract sense of love to concrete examples of how men and broader society create an environment in which women are incapable of finding true love and happiness in marriage. Starting with Bunina, all of these writers were concerned with women's potential for happiness through love and marriage. Over time the writers became more cynical and more critical of the possibility that it can be achieved in society.

Chapter 4: Womanhood

Scholar Sibelan Forrester writes: “Thinking of nineteenth-century Russia, we may find ourselves thinking of a woman’s image, perhaps one of the memorable heroines in the great Russian novels written by men: Sonia Marmeladova from *Dostoevskii’s Crime and Punishment (Prestuplenie i nakazanie)*, Natasha Rostova from Tolstoi’s *War and Peace (Voina i mir)*, or any of the Turgenev heroines so exemplary that a special adjective was created for the type.”²⁹³ Men created and promoted their own image of a woman and a woman’s life. Judith Fetterly discusses this phenomenon of female characters: “mirrors for men, they serve to indicate the involutions of the male psyche with which literature is primarily concerned, and their characters and identities shift accordingly. They are projections, not people...”²⁹⁴ This chapter first identifies how men viewed women and then examines how the works of Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova portrayed women, their lives, and their self-identity.

The eighteenth century in the Russian Empire can be viewed as a period of discovery and exploration in terms of the social and literary sphere. Many of the works written by Russians at this time were translations of other European works or reimagined works of European authors. After Peter I’s reforms during his reign (1682-1725) and the subsequent introduction of European culture, literature, and art to Russia, Russian literature flourished. As the scholar William Edward Brown writes, “imitation characterizes Russian eighteenth-century literature not, as often used to be asserted, because it was juvenile, but because imitation of recognized classical models was one of the fundamental prescriptions of eighteenth-century literary

²⁹³ In this example Forrester is referring to the “Turgenev girls” [Тургеневские девушки]. Sibelan Forrester, “Introduction: Framing the View: Russian Women in the Long Nineteenth Century,” *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Lives and Culture* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012) 1.

²⁹⁴ Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader*, 28-29.

theory.”²⁹⁵ The century transitioned from Classicism’s focus on order, rationality, and the abstract ideal “man,” to the individual and the individual feelings as Sentimentalism came to the fore at the end of the eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ideas provide one of the best foundations for the understanding of the beliefs surrounding women at this time.

Rousseau’s words from his 1762 book *Emile, or on Education* provide many of his ideas regarding what he calls the natural tendencies of women. According to Rousseau, laws of nature govern people, and nature created women specially constituted to please man. In constitution and character, men and women are different, so Rousseau declares they should be raised and treated differently.

From this habitual restraint comes a docility which women need all their lives, since they never cease to be subjected either to a man or to the judgements of men, and they are never permitted to put themselves above these judgements. The first and most important quality of a woman is gentleness. As she is made to obey a being who is so imperfect, often so full of vices, and always so full of defects as man, she ought to learn early to endure even injustice, and to bear a husband’s wrongs without complaining. It is not for his sake, but for her own, that she ought to be gentle. The bitterness and the stubbornness of women never do anything but increase their ills and the bad behavior of their husbands. Men feel that it is not with these weapons that women ought to conquer them. Heaven did not make women ingratiating and persuasive in order that they become shrewish. It did not make them weak in order that they become imperious. It did not give them so gentle a voice in order that they utter insults. It did not give them such delicate features to be disfigured by anger. When they get upset, they forget themselves. They are

²⁹⁵ William Edward Brown, *A History of 18th-Century Russian Literature* (Ann Arbor: Ardis, 1980) 595.

often right to complain, but they are always wrong to scold. Each sex ought to keep its own tone. A husband who is too gentle can make a woman impertinent; but unless a man is a monster, the gentleness of a woman brings him around and triumphs over him sooner or later.²⁹⁶

Rousseau's words create a foundation of very powerful ideas regarding the treatment of women and their image in society. Women always have power exerted over them, first by their families, then their husbands, and they should be raised to be docile, according to the philosopher. They should also learn to suffer injustices and remain gentle despite anything that happens to them, becoming subservient to society, life, and fate. Rousseau returns to the idea of the natural woman, who seems modest and loving, and presents an unnatural woman, who displays anger and discontent. His natural woman has all the qualities of a perfect docile being, one capable of reforming men and improving their qualities with their patience and ceaseless caring nature.

The idea of women as perfect creatures designed by the heavens for love and reform of men persisted from the eighteenth century and far into the nineteenth century. One of the most significant works of this period is Nikolai Karamzin's "Poor Liza," published in 1792. The work follows the relationship between a young innocent peasant woman named Liza and a young nobleman named Erast, told from the perspective of a sentimental narrator. The "lovely and amiable"²⁹⁷ Liza, as the narrator first introduces her, serves as the perfect example of a young woman, despite being a poor peasant living in the countryside. She feels sadness and loss after the death of her father, she works hard to support her mother. "Without sparing her rare beauty,

²⁹⁶ Rousseau, *Emile*, 370.

²⁹⁷ "Любезная и прекрасная" (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4).

she worked day and night – weaving canvas, knitting stockings, picking flowers in the spring, and gathering berries in the summer,”²⁹⁸ Karamzin writes. From the first introduction of Liza, the reader forms the image of the ideal woman, as the author imagines her. Liza excels both in domestic tasks and emotions, as her caring nature motivates her to selflessly sacrifice her beauty and youth for her mother.

Liza’s perfect feminine qualities clash with Erast’s masculine nature, creating the foundation of many other contrasts in their relationship. Erast comes from a wealthy and noble family, lives in the city, presumably is highly educated. To serve as the opposite of Liza’s sacrificial nature, Erast is motivated by ego and a self-serving nature. His “kind, but weak and frivolous”²⁹⁹ heart longs for pleasure and excitement, which he finds in Liza’s innocent beauty. She falls in love with him with a blinding and passionate, yet innocent love. Erast, however, falls in love with the novelty of the experience of being with a peasant girl, and with his own image of Liza. Karamzin writes, “Erast was delighted with his shepherdess – as he called Liza – and, seeing how she loves him, appeared more lovely to himself. All the sparkling frivolities of high society seemed to him trivial in comparison to those pleasures, which fed his heart with the passionate friendship of an innocent soul. With disgust he thought about the disdainful lasciviousness, which previously fed his emotions.”³⁰⁰

The author creates ambiguity on whether Erast truly felt love for Liza, but his actions and thoughts allude more to emotions ruled by his egoism and Liza’s perception of him. He naively

²⁹⁸ “не щадя редкой красоты своей, трудилась день и ночь — ткала холсты, вязала чулки, весною рвала цветы, а летом брала ягоды” (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4)

²⁹⁹ “доброе, но слабое и ветренное” (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 7)

³⁰⁰ “Эраст восхищался своей пастушкой — так называл Лизу — и, видя, сколь она любит его, казался сам себе любезнее. Все блестящие забавы большого света представлялись ему ничтожными в сравнении с теми удовольствиями, которыми *страстная дружба* невинной души питала сердце его. С отвращением помышлял он о презрительном сладострастии, которым прежде упивались его чувства.” (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11)

imagines a future with Liza, in which they will live as brother and sister, but his dreams shatter as soon as Liza gives herself to him completely. As soon as their love turns carnal, Erast stops seeing her an “angel of purity”³⁰¹ but instead views her like any other woman. He decides to leave to serve in the military, leaving Liza behind. The narrator uses this opportunity to show the beauty of feminine love and suffering, perfectly exemplified by Liza. She maintains a strong composure in front of her mother, but inside she grieves their separation, wishes she could join Erast in the army, and weeps for him when alone. The only thing that allows Liza to feel joy, is the thought of her lover’s return.

She meets Erast in the city two months after their separation. However, there she discovers that he is already engaged to a wealthy widow. The narrator explains that while Erast briefly served in the military he spent all his time gambling and lost his inheritance. Therefore, he chooses to forsake his love for Liza and marry another for her money. Even though he chooses money over love, the narrator does not condemn Erast’s actions, but rather seems to pity the man for his choices. Liza, now realizing that the man she loves does not return her feelings, becomes distraught and decides to throw herself into the pond, thereby ending her own life. As the ultimate juxtaposition, Erast chooses the material and carnal world, but Liza chooses to reject a world without her love. As in the final lines, the narrator describes how the news of Liza’s suicide affected Erast, who felt unhappy for the rest of his life and considered himself responsible for her death. Liza’s death, in a way, awakened higher feelings of responsibility, empathy, and regret in Erast. Her pure love initially started to improve Erast’s character as he felt love and decided to reject his frivolous past, but only Liza’s death completely reforms him.

³⁰¹ “ангел непорочности” (Karamzin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 12)

This model of an idealized woman improving the morals of a sinful man continues onto many other works, spanning across the nineteenth century and further. Famous examples like Aleksandr Pushkin's Tatiana and Onegin from *Eugene Onegin*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's Sonia and Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment*, and so many more define Russian literature. The heroines represent an arguably unattainable ideal and an image of salvation for unworthy men. While works written by women tend to perpetuate accepted literary stereotypes and cultural norms, they also provide genuine and intimate glimpses of how they felt about their own lives. The same scenarios, such as the seduction by a man of a pure and innocent woman, appear in the works of women, but they often also include the writers' interpretation and emotions. Therefore, analyzing these literary works becomes a crucial aid in understanding the lives of nineteenth century women.

Anna Bunina

The works created for publication contain a carefully crafted message for the audience, and so the question of whether they encompass a writer's true emotions can be debated. Fortunately, Anna Bunina also left short works not for publication but as personal messages in other people's albums, which perhaps reveal her more genuine feelings on life. Out of this group of works, Bunina's poems to her thirteen-year-old niece present not just her ideas on life, but also genuine advice for the young girl. The two poems, titled "In the Album of my Thirteen-Year-Old Niece," [В альбом 13-тилетней моей племяннице] were written in 1819.

В замену слов моих альбом сей оставляю;
Прошу тебя и заклинаю

Всему предпочитать добро!

Ни злато, ни сребро
 Нам счастья не дадут сердечна!
 Добро одно
 На жизнь, котора скоротечна,
 Целебный бальзам льет, -
 В бедах и горести отраду подает, -
 При славе и честях надменность умеряет:
 Оно и к Небу приближает,
 И жизнь земную веселит!

Для ближних кто добра по сердцу не творит,
 Тот в мире есть мертвец непогребенный!
 Он счастья не вкушал!
 На высшу степень быв взнесенный,
 Он беден, жалок, мал!

Instead of my words I leave this album:
 I ask and beseech you
 To favor good above all else!

Not gold, not silver
 Will give us happiness of the heart!
 Good alone
 Pours the healing balm,
 Onto fleeting life, -
 In woes and bitterness it gives comfort, -
 In glory and honor it tempers arrogance:
 It also brings one closer to the Heavens,
 And makes life merrier!

He who does not create good for his closest ones from his heart,
 He is an unburied corpse in the world!
 He did not experience happiness!
 Having been raised to the highest level,
 He is poor, pitiful, and small!³⁰²

The first poem provides advice on life, and the poet strongly urges her niece to choose kindness and goodness. According to Bunina, happiness improves life, causes happiness, and gives comfort. She even presents a powerful image of an “unburied corpse” [мертвец

³⁰² Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 382.

непогребенный], referring to people who place value on other qualities and do not favor good. It is important that above all other traits, Bunina placed value in an internal state, which she believed presents “a healing balm” [Целебный бальзам] to life, brings one closer to God, and tempers arrogance. According to Bunina’s poem, being good is an active choice and not an inherent trait of a woman, which contradicts the ideas proposed by her contemporaries.

Еще простой подам тебе урок:
 Ты женщина, -- учись быть с юности покорна,
 В желаньях неупорна,
 Упорство женщины — порок,
 Упорство ей к напасти!
 Над нами всюду власти;
 Всегда мы под рукой:
 Что шаг, -- Нужна опора,
 И помощь, и покой!
 Без крова, без надзора,
 Как роза без росы,
 Мы в кратки отцветем часы!

Не будь смела, самонадежна;
 Ошибка смелым неизбежна!
 Храни душевну чистоту
 И нравов простоту:
 Изящное когда бывает многосложно?
 Противно сердцу все, что ложно!

Не будь сварлива и вздорна!
 Смиреньем женщина красна,
 Смиреньем учена,
 Смиреньем вожденна!

Желаешь ли ты быть почтенна,
 Старайся страсти укротить!
 Наружна красота поблекнет скоротечно!
 За прелести лица нас могут час любить;
 За прелести души нас любят вечно!

I will give you another simple lesson:
 You are a woman, -- learn to be obedient from youth,
 to be yielding with your wishes,
 A woman’s obstinacy is a fault,
 Obstinace leads her to misery!

Everywhere authorities stand over us;
 We are always under their power:
 If you take a step, -- support is necessary,
 And help, and peace!
 Without shelter, without supervision,
 Like a rose without dew,
 We will finish blooming quickly!

Do not be brave, independent;
 A mistake for the brave is inescapable!
 Retain the purity of your soul
 And simplicity of morals:
 When is the exquisite complex?
 Everything false is repulsive to the heart!

Do not be quarrelsome and belligerent!
 A woman is beautiful with meekness,
 Taught by meekness,
 Longed for with meekness!

Do you wish to be revered,
 Try to tame your passions!
 Outer beauty will fade swiftly!
 For the charms of the face they can love us an hour;
 For the charms of the soul they love us forever!³⁰³

Bunina's second poem to her niece moves away from universal themes applicable to all and instead features advice from one woman to another. The poem acts as a continuation of the previous "lesson" [урок], but beginning with the lines "you are a woman" [ТЫ ЖЕНЩИНА] directly speaks to her niece and emphasizes gender as significant. She advises that a woman should learn to be submissive, yielding, and rid herself of stubborn qualities. Bunina explicitly states that there are powers over women that provide support, help, and peace. The poet continues to warn her niece about what she perceives to be a women's undesired qualities, such as bravery, independence, belligerence, and obstinacy. A woman's true beauty, according to Bunina, comes from the inside and usually with a large dose of meekness and submission. Most

³⁰³ Ibid., 382

significantly, a woman should tame her passions and instead focus on keeping her soul pure and her morals simple. In this poem, it seems that a woman is only beautiful to society when she is resigned to her position in life and she respects the authority of the powers around her, whether they come from family, a husband, or other women. Bunina's last lines return to universal themes by declaring that beauty fades but a good soul will forever attract people.

The poem can be read as direct advice to a growing young woman, but there also seems to be an underlying tone of frustration. In the first stanza Bunina emphasizes the power structures surrounding women, saying "authorities stand over us" [над нами всюду власти] and women are "always under [someone's] hand" [всегда мы под рукой], which sets the context for the rest of the work. Women need support and shelter from those in power in order to thrive, and they also need to adopt the esteemed feminine qualities, like meekness and obedience. Bunina shows that others decide what qualities a woman should have and whether she is deserving of love, so women need to conform. The poem's message most likely arises from Bunina's own personal experiences. Bunina's life conflicts with the message of the poem because she chose to step outside expected roles by becoming a professional writer and rejecting prospects of marriage. She followed her passions and obstinately followed the path in life she chose for herself. Perhaps Bunina warns her niece away from such a fate specifically because she knows of the difficulties and the problems that arise with this life choice. The sentiments of both advice poems are reflected in a letter Bunina wrote to her relative as she was very ill and reflecting on her life.

It never occurred to me that a person, especially a woman, should not strive for anything other than the fulfillment of their own responsibilities. I knew well that it is necessary to restrain oneself when our unrestraint could harm someone close to us; I did not cause anyone harm and did not even know how to be malicious. With this, I thought to fulfill

all my responsibilities. At the same time I fell from one abyss, into another, from one disaster to another.³⁰⁴

The first advice poem echoes Bunina's memories of how she lived – without harming anyone and being kind. The problem with her worldview, looking back, was that she never considered that a woman should not step outside her social boundaries. She faced many difficulties in life and Bunina attributed them to her wish of becoming a professional poet and straying from her responsibilities, alluding to marriage and motherhood. However, Wendy Rosslyn speculates that Bunina's illness caused her to shift her perspective from being rebellious against the standard norms of society to being submissive to God, and by extension society. Bunina believed her illness was punishment for her life: "In 'A Sick Woman's May Walk'" Bunina speaks of illness as divine retribution, and it would have been understandable had she internalised the condemnation of unconventional women and projected it into self-punishment. Her brother described her illness as the sacrifice she had to make for the fame which she had earned as a writer and thought of her suffering as the result of her struggle with herself."³⁰⁵ Therefore, Bunina's advice to her niece to be submissive and obey authority probably stems directly from her belief that she suffered for her unconventional lifestyle.

Along with her ideas on kindness and obedience, Bunina also provides the reader with the idea that women are not perfect. The writer follows her contemporaries with the image of the ideal woman, one whose main qualities rest in her submission to society, meekness, and

³⁰⁴ "Мне никогда не приходило в голову, что человек, в особенности женщина, не должны стремиться ни к чему иному, кроме исполнения своих обязанностей. Я знала твердо, что надлежит обуздывать себя там, где необузданность наша может повредить ближнему; никому не вредила и даже не желала зла. Сим я думала исполнить все свои обязанности. Между тем падала из бездны в бездну, ввергалась из напасти в напасть." (qtd. in Mordovtsev, *Russkie zhenshchiny*, 55).

³⁰⁵ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 251.

suppression of any rebellious notions like independence and passion. However, she also subverts the image of the ideal woman because she shows that a woman must learn to *become* this ideal, instead of naturally having these qualities. Philosophers and other intellectuals in the Sentimentalist and later Romantic periods presented the image of women as naturally “perfect,” at least by their definition, and women who strayed from that ideal were considered strange and almost unnatural.

Bunina’s advice instead shows that women must actively suppress qualities within themselves in order to please those in power around them. Even though she disregarded social norms in her personal life, her works are not rebellious in theme, although, some early hints of feminism in the form of strong women briefly arise in some poems. Bunina refined this in such poems as “To the Departure of Imperial Russian Forces” [На выступление Российской-императорских войск] written in 1806.

Вспрянул от краткия дремоты,
 Исчадь зависти - раздор,
 и адски пробудя работы,
 Багровый устремил к ним взор.
 Едва взглянул уж яд питает,
 Едва ступил уж зло творит;
 Как хищный зверь, добыч алкает,
 Как хищный зверь, всегда не сыт.
 Его нектар: ручьи кровавы,
 Трапеза: горести и стон;
 Из бедства черпая забавы,
 На трупах основал свой трон .
 Тот миг погибшим в жизни числит,
 Который без злодейств протек:
 Живу ли я..? тиран сей мыслит,
 Когда слез новых не извлек.
 Быстрее пламя протекает,
 Ему подобно все палит;
 Столицы в пепел превращает,
 Искуств, художеств не щадит.
 Упали зданиев громады;

Не видно в храмах алтарей;
 Погасли теплые лампы,
 Возженные Царю царей.
 Но тигр несyt... и в думы мрачны
 Свирепу душу погрузил,
 Свои кровавы взоры, алчны
 На тихий север обратил.

Склонясь под прочный щит Беллоны,
 Не слыша бурь внутри и вне,
 Приемля кроткие законы,
 Вели жизнь россы в тишине.
 Науки чуждые сзывали;
 В искусствах, в знаниях цвели;
 Согласные стихи слагали;
 О благе внутреннем блюли.
 Подчас в забавы погружались,
 Из чаши пили золотой;
 Но звуки трубные раздались,
 Росс вяль - восстал — и всяк герой.
 Всяк жизнь свою ничем считает,
 Идет отечеству служить;
 Один к другому восклицает:
 «Не жить - иль жизнь ценой купить.
 Наш лавр: неколебимость трона,
 Бесмертье: за Россию пасть;
 Щитом быть истинны, закона,
 Тиранску обессилить власть.
 Ни дружбы, ни родства союзы,
 Ни даже пламенна любовь
 На храбрых не скрепляют узы;
 Семейству вздох - отчизне кровь».

Здесь негой сладкой воскормленной:
 Роскошныя фортуны друг,
 Забыв о благах всей вселенной,
 Что он отец, что сын супруг,
 К ним сердце затворя: «я воин,
 Подруге страстной говорит,
 Тот жизни, счастья недостоин.
 Кто о себе едином мнит.
 Хочу подпорой быть державы,
 Хочу врагам ужасен быть;
 Хочу собрав трофеи славы,
 К ногам монарха положить.
 Когда ж — сражен врага рукою,

Похвальный получу конец,
 Мой сын не будет сиротою,
 Умру - монарх ему отец».

Сто жизней лучше бы желала
 Супруга за него отдать,
 Сто раз сама б охотно пала,
 Чтоб каждый раз его спасать:
 Но благу общему внимая,
 Тоску свою умеет скрыть,
 И чувства долгом побеждая,
 Ни даже слез не смеет лить.

Здесь муж, согбенный целым веком,
 На посох облегшись, дрожит,
 Почти престав быть человеком,
 К России ревностью горит.
 Ведом сынов своих сынами,
 К ним простирает тихий глас:
 «Друзья! мой гроб отверсть судьбами,
 Но я возобновлюся в вас...

Свершите старцевы надежды;
 Клянитесь царя любить;
 Спокойно затворю я вежды,
 Клянитесь - пасть, иль, победить».

Умолк... Взор тусклый обращает
 К подпоре ветхих дней своих:
 «Клянемся, - каждый восклицает,-
 Не мыслить о себе, самих;
 Служить отечеству нелживо,
 Любовь к царю хранить в сердцах».—

Как утро Майское красиво
 При первых солнечных лучах;
 Как юные древесны лозы
 Приятны свежестью листов,
 Иль как полурасцветши розы
 Блистают посреди кустов:
 Так юноши красой блистали,
 В Палладин облекшись наряд,
 Сверкающей воинской стали
 Светлее был их ясный взгляд.
 Зарю лет шлемом прикрывая,
 Вид мужества лицу дают,
 В последни старца лобызая,
 Бестрепетно на брань текут.
 О смерть! взгляни, сколь сановиты...
 Взгляни на младость, их, красу,

На их румяные ланиты,
Взгляни - и уклони косу!

Там руки к ближним простирает
Покрытый знаками герой,
Ступил — и сердце не дерзает
Для милых биться под звездой. —
А там... но все ль дела героически
Сынов России исчислять?
Где кротость собирает войски,
Там нет желанья изменять.
Как капли быстрых вод в паденьи
Одною правятся волной:
Так тысящи в соединеньи
Одною чувствуют душой.
Как быстрый водопад стремится,
Что встретит, истребляет вмиг,
Найдя оплот, шумит – крутится,
Оплота нет — и он утих...
Так росс, в душе неустрашимый,
Зрит адской гидры алчный зев:
Летит к врагу — но пал бог мнимый,
и в агнца претворился лев.

Монарх! почто скудельны силы
Есть общая жен нежных часть?
Почто, ступя на край могилы,
Я не могу любезных спасти?
Сынов России прославляю,
Их жребий благом, счастьем чту,
В тебе доброты обожаю,
Душевных качеств красоту,
и не могу ценою жизни
Малейших польз твоих купить,
Чтоб, жертвуя собой отчизне,
Иль пасть - или счастливой быть!

Startled from its short slumber
The spawn of envy – discord,
Arousing hellish works
It turned to them its crimson gaze.
No sooner than it looks – it already feeds poison,
No sooner than it steps – it already does evil;
Like a predator, it craves a prey,
Like a predator, it is never sated.
Its nectar – bloody streams,

Its feast – sorrows and moaning.
 Drawing fun from suffering,
 It founded its throne on corpses.
 In life he counts that moment wasted
 Which passed without villainy:
 “Do I live?..” - this tyrant thinks,
 When it does not elicit new tears.
 The flame flows faster,
 It burns everything it likes;
 Turns capitals to ash,
 It does not spare arts and artistry.
 The masses of buildings have fallen,
 One cannot see the altars in temples;
 The warm icon lamps have been extinguished,
 That were burning for the Tsar of Tsars.
 But the tiger is not sated... and he plunged
 His fierce soul into thought,
 His bloody, avaricious gaze
 He turned to the peaceful north.

Bending under the sturdy shield of Bellona,
 Not hearing the gales inside and out,
 Accepting meek laws,
 The Russians led lives in peace.
 They gathered foreign knowledge;
 In arts, in scholarship they flourished;
 They composed concordant verses;
 Preserved internal good.
 At times they dove into fun,
 Drank from golden goblets;
 But the sounds of trumpets resounded,
 The Russian heard – arose – and everyone is heroes.
 Everyone considers their life nothing,
 Goes to serve the fatherland;
 One exclaims to another:
 “Not to live – or to buy life for a price.
 Our laurel: the steadfastness of the throne,
 Immortality: to fall for Russia;
 To be the shield of truth, law,
 To weaken tyrannical power.
 Not friendship, not family unions,
 Not even ardent love
 Fasten chains on the valiant;
 A sigh for the family – blood of the motherland.”

Here, fed by sweet delight:

The friend of splendid fortune,
 Forgetting about the good of the entire universe,
 That he is a father, son, husband,
 Closing his heart to them: "I am a soldier,
 He tells his passionate friend,
 He is unworthy of life, happiness,
 Who thinks solely about himself.
 I want to be the support of the state,
 I want to be terrifying to enemies;
 I want to gather the trophies of glory,
 And place them at the feet of the monarch.
 When – slain by the hand of the enemy,
 I will receive a commendable end,
 My son will not be an orphan,
 I will die – the monarch will be his father."
 The wife wishes she could
 Give a hundred lives for his,
 One hundred times she would gladly fall
 To save him every time:
 But heeding the common good,
 She knows how to conceal her anguish,
 And conquering her feelings for duty,
 She dares not shed a single tear.

Here is a husband, bent by a whole lifetime,
 Clinging to a staff, he wavers,
 Almost no longer a person,
 He burns with jealousy for Russia.
 Led by the sons of his sons,
 He raises his quiet voice to them:
 "My friends! My coffin is opened by fates,
 But I will be revived in you...
 Carry out the hopes of an old man;
 Swear to love the tsar;
 I will calmly close my eyelids,
 Swear – to fall, or to win."
 He fell silent... his dim gaze he turns
 To the pillars of his ancient days:
 "We swear, - each exclaims, -
 We do not think of ourselves;
 To serve the fatherland faithfully,
 To preserve love for the tsar in our hearts."-
 As a May morning is beautiful
 In the first few rays of sun;
 As the young vines of trees are
 Pleasant with the freshness of leaves,

Or how half blooming roses
 Shine among the bushes:
 Is how the youth shined with beauty
 Wearing the attire of a Paladin,
 Brighter than martial steel
 Their clear gaze flashed.
 Concealing with helmets the dawn of their years,
 They give their face a look of courage,
 Kissing the elder for the last time,
 Unwaveringly they move to the fight.
 O death! Look, how distinguished...
 Look at their youth, their beauty,
 At their rosy cheeks,
 Look – and turn away the scythe!

There the hero covered in sigils
 Extends his hands to his relations,
 He stepped forward – and his heart does not dare
 To beat under the star for his loved ones. –
 And there... but should I list
 All the heroic deeds of Sons of Russia?
 Where meekness gathers armies,
 There is no wish to betray.
 As the drops of fast waters falling
 Are driven in a single wave:
 That is how thousands united
 Feel as a single soul.
 As the fast waterfall rushes,
 Whatever it finds, it destroys in an instant,
 Finding a barrier, whirrs – spins,
 There is no barrier – and it quiets...
 That is how the Russian, fearless in his soul,
 Views the avaricious maws of the hellish hydra:
 He rushes to his enemies – but the false god fell,
 And the lion turned into a lamb.

Monarch! Why are weak powers
 The common lot of tender women?
 Why, stepping to the edge of the grave,
 I cannot save my loved ones?
 I glorify the sons of Russia,
 Their fate I consider a reward, happiness,
 I adore your goodness,
 The beauty of the qualities of your soul,
 And cannot buy even the smallest
 Usefulness to you with the price of my life,

So that, sacrificing myself for the nation,
I'll either fall – or be happy!³⁰⁶

The poem refers to the War of the Fourth Coalition, in which Russia fought alongside Prussia, Great Britain, and other states against the Napoleon-led Confederation of the Rhine.³⁰⁷ Bunina's poem evokes glory, nationalism, pride, and strength. The allegory of discord coming to ruin Russian peace has classical themes, elevating the grandeur of the work. Along with the imagery, Bunina adopts the style of an ode for the poem to both eternalize the monarch's achievements and glorify Russia. Wendy Rosslyn rightfully indicates that this poem "reverses conventional masculine and feminine roles" because the older man cannot fight and must stay at home while "his wife is credited with heroism and a sense of duty."³⁰⁸ In this powerful address to the monarch and armies, Bunina inserts women and gives them a voice. Instead of depicting women as wives, daughters, and mothers waiting for their loved ones to return, Bunina chooses to depict them as wishing to fight instead of the men. The wife wishes she could fight and sacrifice herself for the men going to battle but knows her duty consists of staying behind. The tension between duty and feelings implies that if women were allowed, they would willingly become soldiers. In addition, the wife holds back tears in a rather masculine manner, opposing the stereotypical weeping wife theme in epic poems. Bunina places emphasis on the last stanza of the poem, during which she questions the monarch as to why women are allotted weaker powers. Had she addressed God in this stanza, it would imply that women are naturally weaker and have no place in battle. Bunina, however, speaks to the monarch, meaning that women are in their weaker position socially and not naturally.

³⁰⁶ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 77-80.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 493.

³⁰⁸ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 107.

Bunina has a large collection of poems, but she rarely features womanhood in her works. A few poems though, most significantly “To the Departure of Imperial Russian Forces,” provide a few hints to her feelings. While Bunina suggests that women should obey society and be obedient, she also shows that a woman must learn traits such as submissiveness and meekness, implying that these are not natural traits. Bunina also passionately questions why women do not have opportunity to sacrifice themselves to save the men, the ultimate masculine duty. She never directly states that women want to physically battle enemy forces, but says she wishes women could do more than hold back their tears and wait. These early poems confirm that even in 1806 women were already questioning their opportunities.

Nadezhda Teplova

In the decades between Anna Bunina’s poems in 1810s and Nadezhda Teplova’s poems in the 1830s, it became increasingly acceptable for women to come forth with poetry as the men began turning to prose. Despite the historico-cultural changes Teplova rarely addresses social issues in her poems, just like Anna Bunina. Rather, she turns to the internal world of a female poet and provides very intimate and emotional poems that often feature feelings of sadness for life and the hope of a better world after death. Some of her works, like “Sacrifice” [Жертва] written in 1832 specifically allude to life’s limitations and constraints.

Простите вы, надежды и желанья,
 Мечты любви и песни все мои!
 Со мной одно святое упованье, —
 Безукоризненные дни.
 Простите вы, восторги вдохновенья,
 Жизнь перелетная, прости!

Но будет век в душе моей цвести
 К прекрасному благоговенью.
 Прости и ты, о счастья мечтанье!
 Виновная об нем тоска,
 И будь теперь, как позднее преданье,
 Она от сердца далека.
 Мне явственно сказала Провиденье,
 Что жертвой тяжкой, роковой,
 Запечатлеть могу я примиренье
 С землею, небом и собой!

Farewell, you hopes and wishes,
 Dreams of love and all of my songs!
 There is only one holy hope for me, —
 Irreproachable days.
 Farewell, you raptures of inspiration,
 Transitory life, farewell!
 But in my soul, for a lifetime,
 Reverence for the beautiful will flourish.
 Farewell you too, oh wish of happiness!
 The yearning for it is guilty,
 And now, let it become like a late bygone tale,
 Far away from the heart.
 Providence told me clearly,
 That as a burdensome, fateful sacrifice,
 I can seal my reconciliation
 With the earth, heavens, and myself!³⁰⁹

Whether Teplova specifically addresses her own feelings in the poem, or whether she created a distinct narrator unhappy with the world, this poem is one of many that captures such powerful negative emotions. The narrator must sacrifice her hopes, wishes, dreams, and inspiration – a particularly tough moment for a poet. She must also give up her wish of happiness, which the narrator emphasizes by separating it from the other concepts. The only clue to the reasoning behind such sacrifices is the narrator’s declaration that “Providence” [Провиденье] deemed such a life for her. The woman in the poem is not meant to be happy,

³⁰⁹ Teplova, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 30.

have dreams, or live a fulfilled life the way she wishes; she must “reconcile” [примирить] with the earthly world and sacrifice the elevated and poetic.

Teplova was very concerned about the message of this poem and argued against the proposed changes created by her editor, Mikhail Maksimovich (1804-1873). “Regarding ‘Sacrifice’ I do not know how to say this to you. Your edits are good for versification, but they distort my thoughts,” Teplova wrote.³¹⁰ In order to explain her main idea, Teplova clarified “I especially call it sin to wish for happiness and to prefer it over sacrifice, when this very happiness is connected with the loss of a better bliss; however, I do not know how to express this: my heart, my feelings speak for me.”³¹¹ Teplova first tries to defend her writing and her message but then retreats from it by referring to her emotions as the main purpose for writing. Kelly emphasizes that critics responded well to women “whose poetry can be seen as ‘feelings set down on paper,’” which may explain Teplova’s reasoning for her insistence on the poem coming from her heart.³¹² While the letter focuses on a broad dichotomy between happiness and sacrifice, the poem points specifically to the need for letting go of the elements connected to poetry – songs, inspirations, dreams. The published poem’s message rests more on the idea of sacrifice of the poetic and inspirational to be compliant to fate.

Regardless of what motivated Teplova to write the poem, “Sacrifice” conveys a strong message but does not provide a clear reason for the poet’s struggles. On the other hand, a poem

³¹⁰ “О «Жертве» я не знаю, как вам сказать. Переправки ваши хороши для стихосложения, но изменяют мои мысли” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizhn’ i poezia,” 26).

³¹¹ “В особенности я называю виною желать счастья и предпочитать его самопожертвованию, когда самое это счастье сопряжено с утратою лучшего блага; впрочем, я не знаю, как это выразить: мое сердце, мои чувствования говорят за меня” (qtd. in Vatsuro, “Zhizhn’ i poezia,” 26).

³¹² Kelly, *A History*, 43.

like “Earthly Happiness” [Земное счастье], written in 1831 provides more context to Teplova’s message.

Не говори: здесь счастье есть,
 То будет ложь, то будет лесть
 Привычным мнениям вселенной,
 Толпе холодной и надменной;
 Не говори: здесь есть покой,
 Не отравляемый тоской,
 Или безчувственностью скучной.
 Давно я к жизни равнодушна
 И не поклонница сует.
 Нет, счастья в мире этом нет!
 О, сколько пламенных желаний
 Горит в доверчивых сердцах;
 Но в эту жизнь один лишь шаг—
 И сколько слез, скорбей, страданий!
 Или томиться суждена
 Душа несносной пустотою,
 И только грустною мечтою
 Поймет, почувствует она,
 В чем ей отказано судьбою!
 И это жизнь зовут?
 Мир это счастьем называет?
 Быть может, многие, кто знает,
 Себя счастливыми найдут;
 Но их восторги, наслажденья —
 Или мечта, иль заблужденье,
 Или блестящий пустоцвет!
 Нет! счастья в мире этом нет.

Do not say: there is happiness here,
 That would be a lie, that will be flattery
 To the habitual opinions of the universe,
 To the cold and pretentious crowd;
 Do not say: there is peace here,
 That is not poisoned by yearning,
 Or by apathetic boredom.
 I have long been indifferent to life
 And I am not a fan of commotion.
 No, there is no happiness in this world!
 Oh, how many fiery desires
 Burn in trusting hearts;
 But take only a single step into this world—
 And how many tears, sorrows, and suffering!

Or is the soul destined to
 Languish with intolerable emptiness,
 And only through a sad dream
 Will it understand, feel,
 What fate has denied it!
 And this is what is called life?
 Is this what the world calls happiness?
 Maybe, who knows, many
 Will find themselves happy;
 But their raptures, pleasures —
 Are either a dream or a misconception,
 Or a glittering barren flower!
 No! there is no happiness in this world.³¹³

Teplova's poem emphasizes to the reader that earth has no happiness and the people who think it does are confused or just influenced by their wishful thinking. She once again includes the concept of "fate denying" [отказано судьбою] the narrator some aspect of a happier life. Part of the reason behind the assertions that earth has no happiness is due to the suffering and sorrow people face, almost from their first day of life. The soul of the person has gotten so used to the suffering that they do not even know what they were denied in life, at least according to the narrator. This ties into the broader idea that people do not understand true happiness and peace, and they do not know how they were fated to live. Teplova seems to suggest that people lose their true sense of purpose when they live on earth, implying that in another world they might truly be happy. The ones who create the image of happiness are the "cold and pretentious crowd" [холодная и надменная толпа], most likely referring to society, who dictates how people should live. "Earthly Happiness" only briefly mentions society but the negative context with which Teplova mentioned it clearly indicates discontent and the division between cold and dull society and people who yearn for another life.

³¹³ Teplova, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 56.

Anger and disappointment with society continues to play a large role in Teplova's "To the Beauty" [К красавице], written in 1831 and featuring concrete frustrations with the status quo.

О, не гордись своей счастливою судьбою,
 Ни пурпуром ланит, ни золотом кудрей,
 Ни юнаго лица блестящей белизною,
 Ни утонченную уборкою своей!
 Взгляни, как сонмы звезд на неб угасают.
 Как быстрая волна стремится за волной,
 Как свежие цветы цветут и увядают,
 Как радость и любовь уходят чередой.
 И блеск твоих ланит, и взоръ твой потускнеет,

И юная твоя увянет красота,
 Безмысленной толпы вниманье охладает
 И суетных забав изменит череда.

Oh, do not be proud of your happy fate,
 Nor of the purple of your cheeks, not the gold of your curls
 Nor the shining whiteness of your young face,
 Nor your delicate attire!
 Look, how the host of stars in the sky die away.
 How a quick wave rushes after another wave,
 How fresh flowers bloom and decay,
 How joy and love leave in a procession.
 And the gleam of your cheeks and your gaze will dim,

And your youthful beauty will wither,
 The attention of the senseless crowd will grow cold
 And the row of vain amusements will change.³¹⁴

The poem presents a unique message spoken directly to a young woman, someone at the height of her youth and popularity in society. Teplova gives a discouraging warning and advice to her imagined recipient. Reminiscent of Bunina's advice to her niece, Teplova's main advice is not to be proud of beauty and youth, because with time it will all fade. Unlike Bunina, Teplova does not offer the reader an alternative, such as to value inner beauty. The narrator does

³¹⁴ Ibid., 48.

emphasize the “senseless crowd” [безмысленная толпа] that only cares about “vain amusements” [суетные забавы] and acting as a cruel and apathetic judge of beauty and popularity. The young woman, according to the poem, simply provides amusement for the crowd until her beauty fades, at which time all attention will turn away from her. “To the Beauty” echoes “Earthly Happiness” with the reiteration that the crowd, or society, is cold, as well as pretentious and senseless. The poor young woman is simply its toy, and eventual victim.

To judge by her letters, it is apparent that Teplova was very concerned about the message of her poems and its clarity for the reader. Unlike other poets in the nineteenth century, Teplova never used a pseudonym or a male persona, so the voice of her poems is distinctly female. Multiple poems reference how society harms women, how women must sacrifice their inspirations and poetic gifts, and that fate is responsible for unhappiness. Along with fate, however, some works such as “Earthly Happiness” and “To the Beauty,” provide more concrete examples of society causing harm to women and turning away from those it previously deemed worthy of attention. According to Teplova, the life that she knows provides no joy or comfort for women, who have to give up their hopes, dreams, and happiness, and serve as entertainment for the disdainful crowd.

Evdokiia Rostopchina³¹⁵

Like Teplova, Evdokiia Rostopchina imbued her works with strong emotions and often feelings of resentment with the position in society into which she, and other women, had been placed.

³¹⁵ In each chapter Elena Gan will be typically discussed before Rostopchina but Gan’s story, “Society’s Judgement,” is a piece of prose published after Rostopchina’s poems, thus linking it better to Karolina Pavlova’s prose that will be examined immediately after the discussion of Gan’s story.

She often presented a powerful first-person narrator, leaving many contemporaries to assume she directly referenced herself and explicitly wrote her own thoughts. Whether Rostopchina's "I" presents herself, or a more general presence, the poems feature a female speaker, and they often feature mundane aspects of life. In this context, the tone and topic create an intimate and genuine atmosphere depicting a woman's life and its common problems. Using the poems as reflections, Rostopchina's works also provide information on how women felt about their mundane lives, including the tasks designated specifically for women, such as childrearing. Because of these poems Rostopchina gained the reputation of being too preoccupied with high society themes, and thus unworthy of serious scholarly attention as recently as the 1960s.³¹⁶ However, these poems provide extremely insightful and realistic representations of a woman's feelings, not just a poet's. Through some of her more introspective poems, Rostopchina's genuine emotions and ideas come through, such as in "Three Stages of Life" [Три поры жизни] written in 1835.

Была пора: во мне тревожное волнение,-
 Как перед пламенем в волкане гул глухой,
 Кипело день и ночь; я вся была стремление...
 Я вторила судьбе улыбкой и слезой.
 Удел таинственный мне что-то предвещало;
 Я волю замыслам, простор мечтам звала...
 Я все высокое душою понимала,
 Всему прекрасному платила дань любви, -
 Жила я *сердцем* в оны дни!

Потом была пора,- и света блеск лукавый
 Своею мишурой мой взор околдовал:
 Бал,- искуситель наш,- чарующей отравой
 Прельстил меня, завлек, весь ум мой обаял.
 Пирьы и праздники, алмазы и наряды,
 Головокружный вальс вполне владели мной;
 Я упивалася роскошной суетой;
 Я вдохновенья луч тушила без пощады
 Для света бальных свеч... я женщиной была,-
Тщеславьем женским я жила!

³¹⁶ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 97.

Но третья пора теперь мне наступила,-
 Но демон суеты из сердца изженен,
 Но светлая мечта Поэзии сменила
 Тщеславья гордого опасно-сладкий сон.
 Воскресло, ожило святое вдохновенье!..
 Дышу свободнее; дум царственный полет
 Витает в небесах,- и божий мир берет
 Себе в минутное, но полное владенье;
 Не сердцем - головой, не в грезах - наяву,
 Я *мыслию* теперь живу!

There was a time: within me a restless stirring, -
 Like dull hum in a volcano before the flame,
 It surged night and day: I was wholly ambition...
 I responded to fate with a smile and a tear.
 Something foretold me a mysterious destiny;
 I summoned freedom to my plans, expanse to my dreams...
 Everything lofty I understood with my soul,
 To everything wonderful I paid a tribute of love,
 I lived with my *heart* in those days!

Then there was a time,- and the cunning glitter of society
 Bewitched my gaze with its tinsel:
 The ball,- our tempter,- with a captivating poison
 Seduced me, enticed, enchanted my mind completely.
 Feasts and parties, diamonds and costumes,
 The head-spinning waltz wholly captured me;
 I reveled in the luxuriant commotion;
 I extinguished the beam of inspiration without mercy
 For the light of the ballroom candles... I was a woman,-
 I lived in a woman's *vanity*!

But the third stage has now begun for me,-
 But the demon of commotion was exorcised,
 But the bright vision of Poetry replaced
 The dangerously sweet dream of proud vanity.
 Holy inspiration was resurrected, revived!..
 I breathe more freely; the regal flight of meditations
 Lingers in the heavens,- and God's world takes
 It to itself in a momentary, but complete control;
 Not with the heart – but the head, not in daydreams – but in waking hours,
 I now live with the *mind*!³¹⁷

³¹⁷ Evdokiia Rostopchina, *Sochineniia E P Rostopchinois ee portretom* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia I. N. Skorokhodova, 1890), 27.

Rostopchina's narrator divides her life into three parts, ones she identifies with the heart, vanity, and the mind. In the first stage, one probably associated with youth, the narrator has not only hopes and dreams for the future but actively participates in voicing what she wishes. She uses words like "ambition" [стремление], "responded" [вторила], and "called" [звала], in order to show just how strongly at this point in time she wants destiny to provide her with "freedom" [воля] and "expanse" [простор]. Rostopchina provides a unique look at a woman who lives with her heart, as expected of women, but wishes for aspects of life not usually associated with women or marriage. The second stage of her life, most likely after the narrator entered high society, is a time of luxury and feasts, all ruled by vanity. This is the time the narrator most associates with being a woman, strongly exclaiming "I am a woman" [я женщина]. The narrator uses words like "bewitch" [околдовать], "seduce" [прельстить], "entice" [завлечь], and alludes to the ball as the serpent of Eden, tempting victims away from innocence. Most significantly, society tempts the narrator away from beams of inspiration. In the third stage, God and higher power have allowed the narrator to replace society's commotion and vanity with poetry and the poetic gift. Rostopchina emphasizes the mind as more important than the body and even the heart.

This poem provides important insight into the lives of women and the life of a poet. In the first section, the narrator yearns for freedom and expanse, believing a mysterious destiny awaits her. The narrator expresses wanting more than society allows women, who should only yearn for love, marriage, and children, so she stands apart from her peers. In the second portion, the narrator merges society with the seduction of frivolity and luxury. In order to be like the rest of her contemporaries, the narrator ignores her internal yearnings for a different life, in this instance "inspiration" [вдохновение]. This line indicates that the two spheres, society and

poetry, are incongruous as one must be suppressed for the other. The last portion of the poem continues the idea of society contending with a higher calling. The narrator explains that she has returned to a state of inspiration, which brings her closer to the heavens and God. In order to get to such a state, she had to stand apart from society once again, purging herself of vanity and the commotion of society. In “Three Stages of Life” the narrator presents the life of a woman who wanted more than society provided, but allowed herself to be entrapped by its charms, and then returned to a place outside of ballrooms, and in a larger sense society.

The themes presented in “Three Stages of Life” are also crucial to the 1839 poem “Temptation” [Искушение].

Двенадцать бьет, двенадцать бьет!..
 О, балов час блестящий, -
 Как незаметен твой приход
 Среди природы спящей!
 Как здесь, в безлюдной тишине,
 В светлице безмятежной,
 Ты прозвучал протяжно мне,
 Беззвучно, безнадежно!

Бывало, только ты пробьешь,
 Я в полном упоеньи,
 И ты мне радостно несешь
 Все света обольщенья.
 Теперь находишь ты меня
 За книгой, за работой...
 Двух люлек шорох слышу я
 С улыбкой и заботой.

И светел, сладок мой покой,
 И дома мне не тесно...
 Но ты смутил ум слабый мой
 Тревогою безвестной;
 Но ты внезапно оживил
 Мои воспоминанья,
 В безумном сердце пробудил
 Безумные желанья!

И мне представилось: теперь танцуют там,

На дальней родине, навек избранной мною...
 Рисуется в толпе наряды наших дам,
 Их ткани легкие с отделкой щегольской;
 Ярчей наследственных алмазов там блестят
 Глаза бессчетные, весельем разгоревшись;

Опередив весну, до время разогревшись,
 Там свежие цветы свой сыплют аромат...
 Красавицы летят, красавицы порхают,
 Их вальсы Ланнера и Штрауса увлекают
 Неодолимою игривостью своей...
 И все шумнее бал, и танцы все живей!

И мне все чудится!.. Но, ах! в одном мечтанье!
 Меня там нет! меня там нет!
 И может быть, мое существованье
 Давно забыл беспамятный сей свет!
 В тот час, когда меня волнует искушенье,
 Когда к утраченным утехам я стремлюсь,
 Я сердцем мнительным боюсь, -
 Что всякое о мне умолкло сожаленье...
 Что если бы теперь меж них предстала я,
 Они спросили бы, минутные друзья:
 "Кто это новое явленье?"

О, пусть сокроются навек мои мечты,
 Мое пристрастие и к обществу и к свету
 От вас, гонители невинной суеты!
 Неумолимые, вы женщине-поэту
 Велите мыслию и вдохновеньем жить,
 Живую молодость лишь песням посвятить,
 От всех блистательных игрушек отказаться,
 Всем нам врожденное надменно истребить,
 От резвых прихотей раздумьем ограждаться.
 Вам, судьи строгие, вам недоступен он,
 Ребяческий восторг на праздниках веселых!
 Вы не поймете нас, - ваш ум предубежден,
 Ваш ум привык коснеть в мышлениях тяжелых.
 Чтоб обаяние средь света находить,
 Быть надо женщиной иль юношей беспечным,
 Беспорно следовать влечениям сердечным,
 Не мудрствовать вотще, радушный смех любить...
 А я, я женщина во всем значенье слова,
 Всем женским склонностям покорна я вполне;
 Я только женщина, - гордиться тем готова,
 Я бал люблю!.. отдайте балы мне!

Midnight is ringing, midnight is ringing!..
 Oh, glittering hour of balls, -
 How imperceptible is your arrival
 Amidst the sleeping nature!
 How here, in the deserted silence,
 In the tranquil parlor,
 You sounded drawlingly to me,
 mutely, hopelessly!

There was a time, as soon as you rang,
 I was in complete raptures,
 And you joyously brought me
 All the enticements of society.
 Now you find me
 With a book, with work...
 I hear the rustle of two cribs
 With a smile and care.

And my peace is bright, sweet
 And I do not feel confined at home...
 But you disturbed my weak mind
 With your unknown alarm;
 But you suddenly revived
 My memories,
 In my senseless heart you awakened
 Senseless wishes!

And I imagined: now they are dancing there,
 In my distant homeland, forever chosen by me...
 The outfits of our women are appearing in the crowd,
 Their light fabrics with dandy trimmings;
 Shining brighter than inherited diamonds,
 Are the countless eyes, flaming up with merriment;

Ahead of spring, warmed before their time,
 Fresh flowers are pouring their aroma there...
 Beauties are flying, beauties are fluttering,
 The waltzes of Lanner and Strauss draw them on
 With their irresistible playfulness...
 And the ball is getting louder, the dancing livelier!

I am imagining everything!.. But oh! In reverie alone!
 I am not there! I am not there!
 And maybe, this forgetful society,
 Has long forgotten my existence!

In that hour, when temptation troubles me,
 When I strive for lost diversions,
 With a worrisome heart I am afraid, -
 That all the sympathy for me has fallen silent...
 That if I appeared among them now,
 They would have asked, the fleeting friends:
 "Who is this new apparition?"

Oh, let my dreams be concealed forever,
 My relish for society and the beau monde,
 From you, the persecutors of innocent commotion!
 Unappeasable, you order a woman-poet,
 To live with the mind and inspiration,
 To dedicate a lively youth solely to songs,
 To reject all glittering toys,
 To destroy arrogantly that which is the innate to all of us,
 To guard ourselves with thought against lively whimsy.
 To you, stern judges, childish delight,
 At merry holidays is inaccessible!
 You do not understand us, - your mind is prejudiced,
 Your mind is used to wallowing in deep thoughts.
 In order to find the charm in society,
 One needs to be a woman or a carefree youth,
 Unquestionably following desires of the heart,
 Not to overintellectualize in vain, to love hearty laughter...
 And I, I am a woman in all definitions of the word,
 I am completely obedient to all womanly inclinations;
 I am only a woman, - I am ready to be proud of that,
 I love balls!.. give me back the balls!³¹⁸

According to Diana Greene, many critics were scandalized by the poem and its apparent frivolity and immorality.³¹⁹ Most of the criticism centers on the narrator as a bad mother, as she fantasizes about dancing and balls, but the poem offers a very dynamic look at a woman's feelings. She looks on to her children fondly and comments on the sweetness of peace away from society. She cannot help, however, thinking wistfully about a time when she attended balls and parties. The scholar Stephanie Sandler says this poem "ironically observes that being a woman renders one helpless before this silly passion for the ball," but the poem uses the image of a

³¹⁸ Ibid., 52.

³¹⁹ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 107.

woman yearning for the ballroom to discuss a larger issue in society.³²⁰ Rostopchina directly criticizes people representing general society, who dictate how she should spend her time and try to constrain a woman. They order a woman-poet [женщина-поэт] to dedicate her life to her craft and reject everything innate, which according to the narrator means rejecting joy and frivolity. It seems that as soon as a woman receives another title, such as poet or even mother, then the woman has to take on the new identity and lose the previous one. According to the poem, and the contemporary criticism it received, someone like the narrator and Rostopchina can be a poet or a woman, or a mother and a woman, but she cannot be both. The last lines of the poem, the constant repetition of the phrase “I am a woman” [я женщина] in association with attending balls and enjoying herself, is the narrator’s attempt to reclaim her title as a woman without concern over the additional roles of mother and poet.

“Temptation,” like “Three Stages of Life,” shows the limitations and the constraints of being a woman, but the poem “Revenge” [Мечь], written in 1836, goes further and directly attacks society.

Есть злая страсть, есть чувство проклятое...
 Все земнородное им страждет и болит;
 Им сердце у людей трепещет ретивое,
 Им безсловесных кровь губительно кипить,
 Недуг, ему во исцеленье
 Чужая скорбь и токи слез чужих;
 Глад ненасытимый, в терзанье жертв своих,
 В предсмертной муке их он ищет утоленья.
 От падших Ангелов та страсть наследство есть,
 Та страсть, — ей имя *Мечь!*
 Мечь чует змей, как ненароком
 Наступит путник на него, -
 и смерть из жала своего
 Вонзит беспечному упреком
 В пыли ползущий враг его.

³²⁰ Stephanie Sandler, “Pleasure, Danger, and the Dance: Nineteenth-Century Russian Variations,” *Russia – Women – Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 251.

В груди мохнатой львицы смелой
 Бушует месть, — и перед ней
 Дрожит пришлец оторопелый,
 Тропой забредший опустелой
 К убежищу ее детей.

У львицы когти, когти злые,
 У львицы зуб, как меч стальной, -
 И вот, остыли под травой
 Густой крови следы живые...
 Пришлец погиб в глуши лесной.

Когда полуденною мезью
 Дитя Италии горит,
 Он весь вражда... он дорожит
 Своей враждой... душой и честью
 Он с нею связан, с нею слит.

Кинжал в руке его сверкает,
 Кинжалом бредит он во сне...
 Он в вражью грудь удар во тьме
 Один, — но меткий, — направляет, -
 Живущим меньше на земле!

Сыну набегов и хищений,
 Черкесу, месть уж врождена;
 Ему Коранских повелений,
 Ему Эдемских упоений
 Милей, заманчивей она.

Коня, красавицу и злато
 На шашку променяет он:
 Нещадный гнев ему вожатый,
 Ему сопутник звук булата,
 Он делу крови обречен!

В ущельях гор, в степи безбрежной,
 Скитаясь тенью день и ночь,
 Изсохнет в злобе он мятежной,
 Пока врагу булат надежный
 С плеч головы не сбросит прочь!

Все мстит!.. Но женщине безгласной, безоружной,
 Чем ей воздать обидам клеветы?..
 Что делать женщине, когда, кумир не нужный. -
 Развенчанный кумир забывчивой мечты, -

Она с подножия мгновенных поклонений
 Изменой свержена?.. Когда, без сожалений,
 Слепой досадою ничтожной суеты
 Она вдруг брошена на суд хмельных суждений,
 На смех язвительный бездушной остроты?
 Что может женщина, когда из уст порока
 Хула нечистая ей издали шипит?
 Неправду дерзкую она ли обличит?
 Она-ль унижится до пошлого упрека?..
 Нет! совесть за нее! Она везде, всегда,
 Верна самой себе, спокойна и горда!..
 Пусть на злоречие в ней сердце негодует,
 Пусть душу ей измена омрачит:
 Дух милости ей сердце уврачуеет,
 Дух мудрости ей душу освежит!
 Она презреньем наказует, -
 Она забвением карает и казнит.

There is an evil passion, there is a cursed feeling...
 It causes everything earthborn to suffer and hurt;
 It causes the fervent hearts of people to tremble,
 It causes the blood of the speechless to fatally boil,
 An affliction, its healing lies in someone else's misery
 And the streams of tears of strangers;
 An unsated hunger, it seeks satiation in
 The torment of its victims, in their antemortem anguish.
 That passion is the inheritance from fallen angels,
 That passion, — its name is Revenge!

A serpent senses revenge, as accidentally
 A traveler steps on him, -
 And in the dust his slithering enemy
 Will pierce the careless one with reproach
 With death from his stinger.

In the furry breast of a brave lioness
 Revenge riots, - and in front of her
 Trembles a terrified visitor,
 Wandering a deserted path
 To her children's sanctuary.

The lioness has claws, sinister claws,
 A lioness's tooth is like a steel sword, -
 And so, the live prints of thick blood
 Have grown cold in the grass...
 The visitor died in the forest thicket.

When the child of Italy
 Burns with midday revenge,
 He is wholly enmity... he values
 His enmity... with his soul and honor
 He is tied to it, fused to it.

His dagger flashes in his hand,
 He raves about the dagger in his sleep...
 Into the enemy's breast he directs
 A hit in the dark – one – but precise, -
 Now there are fewer living on earth!

To the son of raids and lootings,
 The Circassian, revenge is inborn;
 It is more dear, enticing to him
 Than the command of the Quran,
 Than the raptures of Eden.

A horse, a beauty, and gold
 He will exchange for a sabre:
 Merciless wrath is his guide,
 His companion is the sound of damask steel,
 He is devoted to the task of blood!

In the ravines of the mountains, in the boundless steppe,
 Roaming like a shadow night and day,
 He will wither in the restless wrath,
 Until his reliable damask steel,
 Throws an enemy's head from the shoulders!

Everything takes revenge!.. But for a voiceless, unarmed woman,
 How is she to repay the insults of slander?..
 What should a woman do, when, a useless idol. -
 The broken idol of a forgotten dream, -
 From the pedestal of transitory worship she is
 Overthrown by betrayal?.. When, without pity,
 With the blind vexation of the worthless bustle,
 She is suddenly abandoned to the court of drunken judgement,
 To the poisonous laughter of soulless wit?
 What can a woman do, when from the mouth of sin,
 Evil abuse is hissed at her from afar?
 Will she expose the insolent falsehood?
 Will she degrade herself to vulgar reproach?..
 No! Conscience supports her! She is everywhere, always,
 True to herself, calm and proud!..

Let resentment at gossip stay in her heart,
 Let betrayal cloud her soul:
 The spirit of mercy will heal her heart,
 The spirit of wisdom will refresh her soul!
 She will punish with her contempt, -
 She punishes and castigates with obliviousness.³²¹

In the poem, Rostopchina first powerfully describes revenge and then different animals and beings who have the capability to avenge any wrongdoings and insults. According to the poem, everything on the planet has the potential for revenge, except for a woman. The work presents women as harmless and innocent beings at the mercy of society. Instead of travelers and armed men, a woman's main opponent is gossip and slander, against which she cannot do anything. Rostopchina uses terms like "poisonous laughter of soulless wit" [смех язвительный бездушной остроты] and "evil abuse" [нечистая хула] to show the reader the degree of vileness and cruelty of the treatment women can face, especially when the gossip is false. One of the more tragic images presented depicts a woman who was initially idealized but then forgotten by the same people who made her an idol, so the only feeling remaining is uselessness. As she cannot take her revenge and address the slander, a woman can only stand proud and ignore the gossip with the steadfast belief in herself and her conscience.

Judging by the message of her works, for Rostopchina to be a woman means to constantly be at war with expectations of society and her own passions, being constrained by others and by propriety, and being virtually defenseless in the face of society when it inevitably turns away from certain women. Society as cold and cruel appears in the poems of Bunina and Teplova too, but Rostopchina positions these problems not as universal ones but ones unique to women through her feminine voice and incorporation of themes are most connected to women,

³²¹ Rostopchina, *Sochineniia*, 36.

such as ballrooms. The theme of a woman wrongfully being persecuted by society due to her innocence persists and intensifies in the work of many women, especially that of Elena Gan and Karolina Pavlova.

Elena Gan

In her 1840 work “Society’s Judgement” [Суд света] Gan created a narrative that portrays the many ways in which people in society can destroy a woman through jealousy, vengeance, and gossip. The story begins with a woman writer who moves to a new provincial town, where she hears the story of Vlodinskii and reads his manuscript of his past love for a woman named Zenaida. The story has a narrator that closely mirrors Gan’s own voice because the first few pages express the narrator’s struggles of being a woman writer and an officer’s wife, exactly like Gan’s own life. The narrator then describes a friend whom she meets after a long time, and through whom she learns about a recluse called Vlodinskii; after his death she learns about his life in the manuscript he left behind. In order to prepare the reader for this text, Gan’s narrator boldly writes “...I am determined to present to my readers Vlodinskii’s manuscript as a sketch of the double life of a woman, a picture of a radiant and pure soul, which shone in the opinion of people, in that treacherous mirror, which, like the kiss of Judas, flatters us to our face but prepares persecution, shame, and often even death behind our backs” (Andrew 61).³²²

This statement frames the next part of the story, which is presented as Vlodinskii’s manuscript about his life and his greatest regret. Note that Gan instantly shifts the reader’s

³²² “я решаюсь представить моим читателям рукопись Влодинского как очерк двойного бытия женщины, картину светлой и чистой души, торжественно сияющей в своем внутреннем мире, и лживого отражения ее в мнениях людей, в этом предательском зеркале, которое, как поцелуй Иуды, льстя нам в лицо, готовит гонения, позор и часто даже смерть за плечами” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 310).

attention from Vlodinskii himself to the unknown woman, who the reader understands will have a tragic ending at the hands of other people. Even though Gan points to the woman, whose name is Zenaida, as the main focus of the story, she does not appear until much later and only through other people's eyes, most especially Vlodinskii's. His manuscript begins with a reflection of his life before meeting Zenaida, describing his thoughts and feelings about life.

In this hectic life, full of alarms and dissipation... there was never time... to philosophize, to dissect people and society, to measure their mores against their theories contained within the great truths, of which there are so many in the intellectual world, - and as few followers of them in reality. In my head and in my heart there was nothing definite, nothing original... I walked blindfolded; I acted without thinking through a single one of my actions; I thought privately and in public without ever sorting out why things were one way and not another. ...I thought being ready to fight a friend, and even kill him because of a trivial misunderstanding to be proof of knightly courage and nobility. I hardly knew women at all but, thanks to the boasting of my comrades and a few French novels, I had a very unflattering view of them. In my opinion, the male was the crown of the entire visible chain of creation; I regarded woman as a secondary link in the chain, a bridge between man and the dumb creatures: she seemed to me a beautiful flower, but one that did not warrant much attention, which grew for the momentary distraction of man in his hours of leisure. As far as love was concerned I placed it no higher than a funny story someone told over champagne... (Andrew 63-64)³²³

³²³ “В этой деятельной, полной тревог и разгула жизни ... некогда было философствовать, разбирать людей и свет анатомически, поверять их нравы с теориями великих истин, которых так же много в мире умственном, как мало последователей их в сущности. В голове моей и в сердце не было ничего определенного, самобытного ... Я шел с завязанными глазами; действовал, не отдавая себе отчета ни в одном из поступков своих; мыслил про себя и вслух, никогда не разбирая, почему так, а не иначе. Принимал ... готовность подрасть с приятелем, даже убить его из пустого недоразумения,-- за доказательство рыцарской храбрости

In this initial introduction to Vlodynskii, Gan manages to touch on many ideas regarding women and society. The narrator conveys that when a person follows society and does not critically think about their actions, they fall into a pattern of expected behaviors. For example, Vlodynskii criticizes dueling, one of man's greatest tests of honor and manhood among his peers, as pointless harm and potential murder. The discussion continues on to the treatment of women, placing the two topics on similar levels as wrongs in society. Vlodynskii says he did not know women but had a negative image of them from novels and stories, which points to the problem of how the image of a woman overshadows reality. Women, according to the young Vlodynskii, should be relegated to times of leisure and nothing more. There are the qualities Gan gives Vlodynskii before what he calls his rebirth and realization that society's values are nonsensical. She leaves the reader to assume that most people think this way, even though these behaviors cause harm, and encourage people to critically think about society's norms. Gan also foreshadows Zenaida's tragic end at the hands of society and of Vlodynskii himself by allowing Vlodynskii to claim that he was just as wrong about women as he was about the honor and nobility of dueling. Both beliefs, Gan tells the reader, arise from misplaced values in society.

Vlodynskii's self-proclaimed transformation begins when he falls ill in Germany during his time in the military. While he remains bedridden among helpful strangers, he sees the figure of a woman walking the same path at dusk every day. He creates an image of who she could be and becomes obsessed with seeing her each night. "I cannot express the extent to which I became attached to my stranger," Vlodynskii writes (Andrew 68).³²⁴ "I counted the hours of night and

и благородства. С женщинами я был почти не знаком, но, благодаря самохвальству товарищей и несколькими французским романам, имел о них не весьма выгодное понятие. Мужчина был, по моему мнению, венцом всей видимой цепи творения; женщину считал я звеном второстепенным, переходом от мужчины к созданиям бессловесным: она казалась мне красивым, но не стоящим большого внимания цветком, растущим для минутного развлечения человека в часы его досугов. Что касается до любви, то я ставил ее не выше анекдота, рассказанного за бокалом шампанского..." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 312-313)

³²⁴ "Не могу высказать, как я привязался, пристрастился к моей незнакомке" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 317)

day from her departure until her return; I waited for her alone; I rejoiced in her, I mentally welcomed her and caressed her with my eyes; I thought of her and I dreamed of her in my moments of fitful sleep.”³²⁵ He also says, “I comforted myself with the richness and variety of my fantasies and, as a result, I came to love the air of mystery which surrounded my stranger, as if it were a field in which my dreams could play to their heart’s content” (Andrew 68).³²⁶ At a time when he feels completely alone and broken, Vlodinskii finds solace in his imagination, and the mysterious woman, unknowingly, becomes the subject of his fantasies. When he finally sees her face, he initially feels disappointment, “almost disillusioned,” because she is not the great beauty he imagined her to be, but with time “she seemed more attractive” and he “was ready to call her a beauty” (Andrew 68-69).³²⁷ When reality does not live up to his expectations, his imagination takes over to transform the ordinary looking woman in front of him into the beauty he pictured. Upon seeing her face, he feels like he now knows her and knows her soul, which sparks the desire to meet her.

The details and emotions Gan included when writing about Vlodinskii’s experience before ever truly getting to know Zenaida contribute to the larger conflict between women and the images projected upon them. Zenaida did absolutely nothing and did not even know his name, but Vlodinskii had already imagined who she is, became infatuated with the image, then learned about her, and promptly became disillusioned. Gan emphasized the war between expectation and reality when it pertains to women in this moment of the story. This particular

³²⁵ “От ее ухода считал я часы ночи и дня до ее вторичного появления; ее только ожидал, ею радовался, ее приветствовал мыслию и лаская глазами; о ней думал, ею грезил в минуты болезненного сна.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 317)

³²⁶ “утешался в скудности насущной жизни богатством и пестротой моих фантазий и потому полюбил таинственность, которая окружала незнакомку, как поле, где привольно разыгрывались мои мечты.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 317)

³²⁷ “почти разочаровался,” “показалась привлекательнее,” “находил ее почти красавицей” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 317-318)

image is one of a beautiful mysterious creature meant for love who comes as a solace for the man in time of need. After Vlodinskii's acute disappointment when he meets her as Frau Generalin, the officer's wife, he only meets with Zenaida regularly with the encouragement of another man. Over time, "all the fantastic visions were erased" from his memory (Andrew 72).³²⁸

The remedy of overcoming the ideal for the real, Gan suggests, centers on getting to know the person over time and truly listening to them. "I recognized her as a woman with a radiant, most wonderful soul, with a high intelligence deepened by study, with a heart that was pure, innocent and sensitive, which was easily set on fire by all that was noble, great, and virtuous, in a word, I recognized one of those rare creatures who scatter peace and happiness just by being there" (Andrew 72).³²⁹ Vlodinskii never says what he and Zenaida discussed over the course of multiple months, just that he felt transformed from within and saw the world in a new way. At this time he falls in love with Zenaida "loftily and truly," which allows him to feel "virtuous and active thoughts" (Andrew 73-74)³³⁰ His feelings for Zenaida initially seemed pure and idealized, but with the arrival of Zenaida's husband, with whom she has rather cool relations, Vlodinskii realizes his carnal feelings. Unable to resist himself, Vlodinskii declares his love for Zenaida, after which she makes him promise her to never seek her out when both return to Russia.

A year went by before Vlodinskii saw Zenaida again when he is stationed in Lithuania. He first hears about some terrible woman, and then later learns to his horror that the discussions center on Zenaida. "Ask anyone you like about her, old or young, man or woman, civilian or

³²⁸ "фантастические видения совершенно изгладилась" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 320)

³²⁹ "я узнал в ней женщину с светлой, прекраснейшей душою, с высоким умом, обогащенным познаниями, с сердцем чистым, невинным, чувствительным, легко воспламеняющимся ко всему благородному, великому и добродетельному, словом, узнал одно из тех редко встречаемых существ, которые одним приближением разливают мир и счастье вокруг себя." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 321)

³³⁰ "высоко, истинно," "мысль добродетельную и деятельную" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 321)

soldier; everyone will tell you the same thing: she is a coquette, a woman of extremely ambiguous behavior, puffed up with her own intellect, capricious, proud, self-willed....” Vlodinskii’s aunt tells him (Andrew 86).³³¹ When he tries to argue for Zenaida’s purity and innocence, he is told “this woman is an expert at turning heads of young men with her high falutin’ talk about her purity, her virtue, about her own grandeur with which she tries to cover her secret weaknesses” (Andrew 87). Vlodinskii’s aunt imparts the story’s key ideas, speaking as not only someone a part of society, but one that also feels justified to carry out judgement over others.

I know women like that, my friend, I know them: it would be pointless to talk to me about them; I’ve seen many of them in my time. I can’t stand women who deliberately go to great lengths to convince all and sundry that they’re not affected by the weaknesses of their sex, because this very fact proves the opposite; women who want to enjoy themselves, like other sinners, and at the same time have the reputation of sinlessness, to pass themselves off as beyond comprehension, whereas they are merely half-baked, who present themselves as femmes supérieures, creatures of a higher order ... If you really are a pure woman, virtuous, spotless, then you should love, as was the case in days of old in Holy Russia, you should love, my dear girl, only your husband and have relations with him alone, for you have no business at all with these young admirers of incomprehensible feminine virtue: don’t get into sweet talk with them, don’t fool around with them ... don’t inflame their imaginations with your spiritual charms because they can’t have your bodily charms: that too is coquetry, and even more dangerous, more immoral than the usual

³³¹ “Спроси о ней кого хочешь, старых и малых, мужчин и женщин, статских и военных; все скажут тебе одно: она кокетка, женщина очень двусмысленного поведения, напыщенная своим умом, прихотливая, гордая, самовольная...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 335).

kind, which tries, out of vanity, to confuse a chap's peace with the bait of physical beauty. ... This type of coquetry is the surest means of crushing a man for the rest of his life, of rendering him incapable of any lawful pleasure, of cultivating in him a revulsion for accessible sources of real, practical happiness. The poor worshipper of invisible spiritual treasures always exaggerates them in his imagination, he becomes inflamed, exalté, he grows dissatisfied with all other women and with himself: but if he were allowed to have a really good look at these treasures then it might transpire that they're not worth a brass farthing.... Believe me, my friend, there's nothing easier for a married woman with small intelligence than to play with the treasures of heart and soul, presenting herself as a matrimonial victim, which immediately arouses compassion, and she never allows these deeply touched worshippers, out of a false respect for their duties, to formulate a clear and accurate account of these inner riches, whereas you can, of course, make such a summary of the physical charms of a woman. And all this coquetry is the customary weaponry of women whose beauty is already fading or who never had any, like your Zenaida Petrovna. (Andrew 87-88)³³²

³³² “Знаю я, мой друг, женщин этого рода, знаю: не толкуй мне про них напрасно; много видела я их в свою жизнь. Я терпеть не могу женщин, которые обдуманно принимают меры к уверению всех и каждого, что они чужды слабостей своего пола, потому что одно это доказывает уже противное; которые хотят наслаждаться сердцем, подобно другим грешницам, и вместе с тем слыть за безгрешных, выдают себя за женщин непонятных, между тем как они только недопеченные, представляются *femmes superieures*, существами высшего разряда ... Если ты женщина чистая, добродетельная, безгрешная, то люби, как исстари водилось на святой Руси, люби, матушка, одного мужа и возись с одним им, а с молодыми обожателями непонятной женской добродетели тебе нет никакого дела; не пускайся в сладкие беседы с ними, не дурачь их ... не воспламеняй их воображения душевными прелестями своими за неимением прелестей телесных: это тоже кокетство, и еще опаснее, безнравственнее обыкновенного, которое старается смущать из тщеславия спокойствие человека приманкою наружной красоты. ... Этот род кокетства -- вернейшее средство убить мужчину на всю жизнь, сделать его неспособным ко всякому законному наслаждению, поселить в нем отвращение к доступным источникам настоящего практического счастья. Бедный обожатель незримых сокровищ души преувеличивает их всегда в своем воображении, воспламеняется, впадает в восторженность, становится недовольным всеми прочими женщинами и самим собою: а если бы ему позволили хорошенько разглядеть эти сокровища, то, может быть, оказалось бы, что они не стоят медной копейки. ... Поверь мне, мой друг, для замужней женщины с небольшим умом нет ничего легче, как играть сокровищами души и сердца, представляясь жертвою брака, что сейчас возбуждает сострадание, и не позволяя никогда

Gan includes much important information in this first part of the aunt's monologue by showing the flawed and cruel thoughts behind the average society woman. Her first issue with women like Zenaida is their seemingly superior mindset, which she says has no basis. According to Vlodinskii's aunt, the seeming feeling of superiority comes from their false innocence. The acceptable women are the ones who accept their own sinful nature and enjoy themselves, without pretending to be virtuous. The unacceptable women only put forth an image of purity as a form of coquetry, to gain young men's attention. This also alludes to the idea of men being incapable of distinguishing for themselves the true nature of women, as people who are easily manipulated. Additionally, the aunt briefly mentions the women playing the role of matrimonial victims to gain sympathy, implying that unhappy women in marriages do not truly exist, but rather it is an advanced form of coquetry. It appears that for Vlodinskii's aunt, someone who represents the average member of high society, women can either accept their sinful nature or pretend to be virtuous to ensnare men – a truly innocent woman who does not want men's attention or to indulge in her sinful nature does not figure into her description of women. The aunt then proceeds to move away from a generalized category of women to comment on Zenaida herself.

This woman is constantly complaining that she is misunderstood: but what is there to understand here? A woman, totally capricious, ambitious, vainglorious, a woman who desires to appear to all and sundry as more excellent than her friends, even above her own sex; a woman in an unequal struggle with her own passions, who thirsts for pleasure and artfully knocks over its cup in calculated fright as soon as any of this drink touches her lips, who uses all her resources to entice any man who stands out from the crowd in any

растроганным обожателям, из поддельного уважения к своим обязанностям, подвести ясный и верный итог этим внутренним богатствам, какой, например, вы можете подвести наружным прелестям женщины. И это такое кокетство -- обыкновенное оружие женщин, которые уже перестают быть красавицами или которым не далась красота, как твоей Зенаиде Петровне.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 335-336)

way whatsoever: by his intelligence, gifts, fame, looks, status, even craziness, if only she might appear to herself an unusual woman amidst unusual people and so that everyone should talk about her. She fools them with her suppressed grandeur, blinds them with phrases from the book she's just finished reading, makes fools of them with her inaccessible feelings, forces them to solve the riddle of themselves in transcendental spheres, inspires them with hope, amuses herself with the spectacle of their strange rapture, and, when the most recent of them thinks himself close to the goal of all these male sighs — just look! — she's already heading for the hills and dales with a new book and a new amateur of understanding incomprehensible women, who, a month later, will also end up a fool, having been told never to mention her name or seek a meeting with her... (Andrew 88-89)³³³

The aunt's perception of Zenaida is one the reader can begin to seriously evaluate based on Vlodinskii's account of her in Germany and compare to his impressions. The reader remains unaware of the exact topics of their discussions, but Vlodinskii described Zenaida as possessing a high intelligence deepened by study. The aunt sees not intelligence, but simply reading of books in order to blind her male conquests and attract them to her. In Germany, when Vlodinskii confessed his feelings, Zenaida asked him to forget about her and move on from his passions,

³³³ “Эта женщина беспрерывно жалуется, что она не понята: да что тут и понимать? Женщина, исполненная причуд, честолюбивая, тщеславная, желающая всем и всячески казаться превосходнее своих подруг, даже выше своего пола; женщина в неравной борьбе со своими страстями, которая жаждет наслаждения и искусно опрокидывает чашу его в рассчитанном испуге, лишь только напиток коснется губ ее, которая всеми средствами приманивает к себе мужчин отличающихся от толпы чем бы то ни было: умом, дарованиями, славою, красотою, знатностью, даже сумасбродством, для того чтобы самой казаться необыкновенною среди необыкновенных людей и чтобы все о ней говорили. Она их морочит своим подавленным величием, ослепляет фразами из последней прочитанной книги, дурачит недостижимыми чувствами, заставляет разгадывать себя в заоблачных пространствах, внушает им надежды, тешится зрелищем их странного восторга, и когда последний из них считает себя уже близким к цели всех мужских вздохов -- глядь!-- она уже удалется в горы и долины с новою книгою и с новым охотником понимать непонятных женщин, которого через месяц тоже оставит в дураках, приказав ему никогда не упоминать ее имени и не встречаться...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 336-337)

which presumably was due to her desire to stay virtuous in her marriage. The aunt, however, compares Zenaida's rejection of young men, such as Vlodinskii himself, as knocking away the cup of pleasure as soon as it comes too close to the lips. She calls this an unequal struggle with her own passions, meaning she wants the love and attention of men, but she does not want to succumb completely to her whims. All of this, as Vlodinskii's aunt describes it, underscores Zenaida's attempt to stand apart and even above other women. Her actions, at the base of which lies reading and rejection of male suitors, inflames the hatred of women around her. The aunt's last words to Vlodinskii, which form the center of Gan's ideas, revolve around society's judgement of outcasts like Zenaida.

This type of woman does all she can to make people talk about her, and then complains that people are talking about her! A strange demand! Everyone has the right to talk about what he sees or hears: and it is surely the business of those who give good cause for rumors about themselves to make sure that their behavior has nothing in it that is ambiguous or anything that could be interpreted to their discredit. What need has society's judgement to get into the business of trying to work out whether someone is secretly pure when the exterior is not pure? And if such women, in society's judgement, end up punished from on high for their crimes, then they only have themselves to blame. But society's judgement is rarely mistaken... ..I am society! Zenaida Petrovna has no rights which would allow her to avoid my supreme judgement, just as I would not seek to hide from the supreme judgement of Zenaida Petrovna. The matter is decided by the majority of votes. When a hundred, a thousand such "societies" as I constitute, agree with my opinion, then our verdict has been arrived at correctly and the wrongdoer must submit herself to its legitimate power. And, perhaps, my opinion is more moderate and more

charitable than many other opinions. I base it exclusively on what I have seen, but there are people who claim that they've seen much more...! (Andrew 89-90)³³⁴

Vlodinskii's aunt takes on the role of judge, and in a certain sense executioner, based on the claims of the majority. The woman feels as if it is a right to judge other people without needing to have actual evidence and she has a strong conviction that she and the rest of the judges are always correct. Zenaida already earned mistrust from society when she quoted books and rejected young men, but her biggest crime, according to society, is a relationship with Prince Svegoriskii. Having heard only a few whispers of gossip, Vlodinskii's assumptions about Zenaida's innocence turn to curiosity, and then to bitter jealousy. Despite his previous promise not to seek her out, Vlodinskii goes to Zenaida's home, where he sees Prince Svegoriskii and assumes the worst. "Zenaida's treachery seemed beyond doubt: everything spoke against her so obviously, so deafeningly! Society's judgement was vindicated..." (Andrew 95).³³⁵ Vlodinskii writes about the encounter. Disillusioned with his earlier judgement which was apparently false, angered by his current disappointment, and fueled by his jealousy, Vlodinskii suggests that he had a cheap relationship with Zenaida when he throws down a locket with her portrait onto a table where he was gambling with the Prince and others.

³³⁴ "Эта женщина делает все, что только может, чтоб о ней говорили, и потом жалуется, что о ней говорят! Странное требование! Всякий имеет право говорить о том, что видит или слышит: а это уж дело тех, которые подадут повод к молве о себе, стараться, чтобы в их поступках не было ничего двусмысленного, ничего такого, что бы могло быть перетолковано в дурную сторону. Суду света какая нужда входить в разбирательство тайной чистоты, когда наружность не чиста? И если такие женщины, по суду света, бывают наказаны свыше своих преступлений, то сами они виноваты в этом. Но суд света редко ошибается. ... Я -- тот же свет! Зенаида Петровна не имеет никакого права уклоняться от моего верховного суда, как я не уклоняюсь от верховного суда Зенаиды Петровны. Дело решается большинством голосов. Когда сто, тысяча таких светов, как я, согласны в мнении со мною, то приговор, наш состоялся правильно и виновница должна подвергнуться его законной силе. И, может быть, мое мнение еще умереннее и милостивее многих других мнений. Я основываю его единственно на том, что сама видела, а есть люди, которые утверждают, что они видели гораздо более..." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 337-338)

³³⁵ "Теперь вероломство Зенаиды казалось несомненным: все так ясно, так громко свидетельствовало против нее! Суд света оправдался..." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 338)

This moment of revenge sparks a duel, during which Vlodinskii kills the Prince, who turns out not to be the Prince, but Vsevolod, Zenaida's brother. Vlodinskii later learns that Vsevolod looked similar to the Prince and served together with him, which caused society to often confuse the two. The murder of an innocent brother also caused a chain reaction of Vsevolod's and Zenaida's father dying upon hearing the news of the duel, and then Zenaida rejecting the world and quickly withering away. By allowing society's judgement to cause doubt about someone he claimed to love, Vlodinskii caused the deaths of three innocent people. Society, however, and even Vlodinskii do not blame themselves for the deaths. Instead, society quickly forgives Vlodinskii and he writes, "at that time I forgave her everything and loved her beyond words..." and "I, in the madness of my love, have still hoped to beg, to earn by suffering a meeting with Zenaida, in order to hear the words of forgiveness from her lips" (Andrew 104).³³⁶ Zenaida's death halts these expectations of a meeting, but her final letter to him gives Vlodinskii the forgiveness he seeks.

It is important to note that until this point in the story, Zenaida did not have a voice. The story is told from Vlodinskii's perspective with his image of her, including his quotes of what she said to him. Likewise, the events of Zenaida's life are told exclusively by others and Vlodinskii himself. The letter provides the only opportunity for Zenaida to finally have a voice and address her life. In a way, the reader adopts the role of another society member because until this point the reader also has perceived Zenaida through the words and feelings of others. Previously in the story Gan provided snippets of Zenaida's life, showing her to be a truly sad woman, unhappy in her marriage, but all this was seen through Vlodinskii's eyes. He foreshadows the reality of Zenaida's life when he says: "In her view of life, in all the opinion she

³³⁶ "В ту пору я все извинял ей и любил невыразимо," "А я в безумии любви еще надеялся вымолить, выстрадать свидание с Зенаидой, чтоб услышать слова прощения из уст ее..." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 352)

expressed, one could sense a deep, constant sorrow, which cast a dark shadow on everything around her.” Vlodynskii also declared: “she liked to laugh, but, these were only flashes of an innately happy nature, which had been crushed and almost killed by what fate and circumstances had created for her.” Zenaida wrote her last letter, as she says, to “justify [herself] in the opinion of the only man who was able to understand [her]” backed by “the desire to leave [her] name spotless” for at least one person (Andrew 106).³³⁷

According to Zenaida, her early childhood was heavily influenced by her loving mother, “a young woman with a trusting, loving heart, a lively and active mind” who “saw goodness in everyone” and who developed feelings and allowed Zenaida’s intellect to blossom (Andrew 107).³³⁸ After her mother’s death when Zenaida was thirteen years of age, Zenaida began attending lessons with her brother and reading everything she could, instead of learning about the realities of society. “In our world of marionettes, so vulgar with all its refinements, my mind and heart matured under the influence of the ideas of the Golden Age,” describes Zenaida (Andrew 108).³³⁹ Her upbringing took a turn when her aunt took Zenaida’s wholly inappropriate education into her own hands. Unlike the warm mother, the aunt was “a society woman, cold, indifferent to everything, without any definite features in her character, without will, without opinions” for whom “any thought which had not passed by society’s censorship... seemed a crime” and “every original sentiment... a mortal sin” (Andrew 108)³⁴⁰. Zenaida’s expectations of the goodness in people, supported by her readings, was crushed under the realities and cruelty people showed,

³³⁷ “оправдаться в мнении единственного человека, который умел понимать меня желанием оставить имя мое незапятнанным” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 353)

³³⁸ “Молодая женщина с сердцем доверчивым, любящим, с умом живым и деятельным” “во всех видела отражение собственной доброты” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 354)

³³⁹ “В нашем кукольном свете, так грубом со всей его утонченностью, мой ум и сердце зрели под влиянием понятий золотого века; с ними созрели они и окрепли” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 355)

³⁴⁰ “светская, холодная, ко всему равнодушная, без всякой определенной черты в характере, без воли, без мнения” “Всякая мысль, не прогнанная сквозь цензуру света ... казалась ей преступлением; всякое самобытное чувство – грехом смертельным.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 355)

especially their need to find evil in the most innocent people. Her wish to be open with her emotions and find the good in others prompted Zenaida to be an outcast, mocked and belittled for her beliefs. Gan shows that in society, nothing changes over time and society's judgement always plays a major role in the acceptance or denouncement of its members. The reader also understands that society has a twisted perception of morality because someone who wanted to love and be loved, like Zenaida, became an outcast for the rest of her life.

Zenaida's story continues with her marriage to the General. When the General became Vsevolod's commanding officer, Zenaida quickly caught his attention and he proposed. Despite her aunt's protests, Zenaida rejected the General because she believed love and marriage to be inseparable. When Vsevolod committed a misdemeanor and faced punishment, the General used the opportunity to essentially coerce Zenaida into marriage, at which time she accepted. "Everything which I had held dear since I was a child was mocked by his cold reason; everything I respected as a sacred thing was represented to me in a wretched and vulgar light," Zenaida says of her marriage (Andrew 112).³⁴¹ When the same people who had once belittled her begin treating Zenaida with respect as the General's wife, she turns her back on society.

I was not, therefore, bound to society by respect, nor by fear of its judgements ... I lived under the influence of my own self-respect and the example of my mother, while I considered the opinions of others a mirage which would cool no one, would assuage no one's thirst, but would deceive only those who look on things from afar, through this false haze. Never once did a criminal thought defile me, but I did not force myself to strictly observe generally accepted habits, nor did I put on a mask before the crowd; I neither chased after its praises, nor feared its denunciations: in a word, in all my feelings and

³⁴¹ "Все, чему от детства поклонялась я, было осмеяно его холодным рассудком; все, что чтила как святость, представили мне в жалком и пошлом виде." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 359)

actions I took account only of the Supreme Judge and His representative on earth – my own conscience. (Andrew 112-113)³⁴²

Zenaida survives in society by rejecting everyone else and finding comfort in her mind and intellect, which created a very lonely life filled with sorrow because nobody truly cared to know her. Her indifference with the opinions of others incited even more hatred from those who “feel their own defects and they take their neighbor’s every superiority as a personal insult” and “can’t forgive in another even the shadow of perfection” (Andrew 116)³⁴³. “Woe to any woman ... a hundred times woe to her if, seduced by her dangerous elevation, she should glance contemptuously on the crowd which seethes contemptuously at her feet, if she does not share its games and whims and does not bow her head before its idols,”³⁴⁴ Zenaida says about women in society. As her last words, Zenaida imparts that “society’s judgement now hangs over both of us: it has broken me, a weak woman, like a fragile reed; you, oh you, a strong man, created to struggle with society, with fate, and with the passions of people, it not only justifies you but even exalts you ... it is a slave of the strong man and destroys only the weak...” (Andrew 121).³⁴⁵

³⁴² “Не связанная почтением к обществу, ни боязнью его приговоров, я жила в свете ... под влиянием собственного уважения к себе и примера моей матери, а людские мнения считала миражем, который никого не прохладит, не утолит ничьей жажды, а обманет тех только, кто смотрит на предметы издали, сквозь этот лживый пар. Никогда мысль преступная не оскверняла меня, но я не принуждала себя строго следовать общепринятым обычаям, не маскировалась перед толпой, не гналась за ее хвалами, не страшилась ее порицаний: словом, во всех чувствах и поступках я отдавала отчет только верховному судье да представителю его на земле – моей совести.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 359-360)

³⁴³ “чувствуют свои недостатки и всякое превосходство ближнего принимают за личное оскорбление” “не могут простить другому и тени совершенства” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 363)

³⁴⁴ “Горе женщине, которую обстоятельства или собственная неопытная воля возносят на пьедестал, стоящий на распутии бегущих за суетностью народов! Горе, если на ней остановится внимание людей, если к ней они обратят свое легкомыслие, ее изберут целью взоров и суждений. И горе, стократ горе ей, если, обольщенная своим опасным возвышением, она взглянет презрительно на толпу, волнующуюся у ног ее, не разделит с ней игры и прихотей и не преклонит головы перед ее кумирами!” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 364)

³⁴⁵ Суд света теперь тяготеет на нас обоих: меня, слабую женщину, он сокрушил, как ломкую тросточку; вас, о, вас, сильного мужчину, созданного бороться со светом, с роком и со страстями людей, он не только оправдает, но даже возвеличит ... Не бойтесь его!.. он раб сильного и губит только слабых...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 367)

Gan explains multiple times that Zenaida faces persecution and judgement because she has different values and morals than everyone else. She places value in education, God, and grander ideas of the Golden Age, like humanity, heroic deeds, and sacrifice. Zenaida believes in what she herself calls “masculine virtues” (Andrew 108).³⁴⁶ This means she is not only a person with differing values, but she is a woman who, from the perspective of her time, has too many masculine qualities and not enough of the feminine, which according to Vlodinskii’s aunt means indulging in sin and gossiping about others. Even Zenaida’s death is caused by her unyielding belief in her own values of refusing to justify herself to others. She calls herself a weak woman whom society executed, but her actions show her to be a strong woman with virtuous core values who died on her own terms. Vlodinskii, who turned his back on society and lived the rest of his life as a mysterious recluse, instead seems to exhibit weaker qualities. Ironically, society judged him much less harshly for his morally atrocious actions than Zenaida for the false crimes of which she was accused. In a subtle way, this shows the inherent inequality in society and that men will always be forgiven much more quickly for the gravest sins than women for the most baseless rumors.

This can perhaps be attributed to Gan’s own opinions on men and women, which were still traditionally conservative. Kelly comments that Gan follows “the traditions of sensibility in making the female characters the index of morality and emotion.”³⁴⁷ Also, Gan’s female characters provide a “heroism in adversity” and show how a woman should develop her inner world if the conditions of her life, such as marriage or love, are poor. If the external world torments a woman, she should cultivate her inner talents.³⁴⁸ Zenaida presents such a model, a

³⁴⁶ “мужеских добродетелей” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 355)

³⁴⁷ Kelly, *A History*, 113.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 111.

strong heroine who faced adversity but did not change herself for superficial society. Gan herself felt very strongly about her heroine. In a letter to the editor of *The Reader's Library* Osip Senkovskii, who often heavily edited her poems, Gan included a heartfelt plea not to modify the heroine. "If you do not like something in her, – set her aside, throw her in the fireplace, but do not force my Zinaida to be different, other than how my imagination created her. You can laugh, but it will be painful for me to see her distorted."³⁴⁹

A very important detail in the work is the lack of blame that both the narrator and perhaps in turn the reader place on the actions of Vlodinskii. The story begins with the end of his life and the self-induced suffering for his mysterious actions, allowing the reader's first feelings associated with him to be sympathy. Also, Vlodinskii's manuscript features his words of repentance and regret for his past, long before the reader even discovers what exactly he did. Also, the narrator depicts how purely Vlodinskii loved Zinaida and how with time other women made him question his love and start believing in their rumors. In this way, Gan blames the entirety of society, and not just the actions of individuals. Even Zinaida tells him, "You are blind, not a criminal; you are only a man like all men: weak and thoughtless rather than evil; you were distracted by false appearances: may God in heaven and your conscience on earth forgive you as I forgive you!"³⁵⁰ Vlodinskii's critical role in Zinaida's fate only contributed to the forces already at play against Zinaida's purity, Gan seems to show. Zinaida's own forgiveness plays a critical role in the reader's emotions and follows Gan's personal beliefs in God and the church.

³⁴⁹ "Не нравится вам что в ней, – отложите ее, бросьте ее в камин, но не заставляйте мою Зинаиду быть иной, нежели какой создало ее мое воображение. Смейтесь, но мне больно будет видеть ее переименованною" (qtd. in Arlin, *M. S. Zhukova*, 250).

³⁵⁰ "Вы слепец, а не преступник; вы только такой же человек, как все люди: более слабый и, легкомысленный, чем злой; вы увлеклись лживой наружностью: да простят вас бог на небеси и ваша совесть на земли, как я вас прощаю!" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 353)

Zenaida does not condemn Vlondinskii or the rest of society, but the reader understands the reality of society's cruelty and superficiality.

It is curious that despite the lack of the narrator's own condemnation in the text, contemporary critics condemned Vlondinskii and made him the central focus of the story's ideas. For example, in his review of Gan's works in 1843 Belinskii wrote "in the story 'Society's Judgement' a man is featured, who is capable of love in life and in death, but ultimately who does not know how to love: a wild lack of trust and animalistic jealousy for the woman he loves entice him to an unreasonable murder and forever ruin the subject of his love. This woman knew how to love – and for this she died as a victim of the one she loved."³⁵¹ Likewise, Catriona Kelly says the story "depicts a spirited and independent woman brought down by the paranoiac jealousy of an unstable and self-centered admirer."³⁵² While these statements are accurate, they do not fully convey the ideas of the story. Vlondinskii does not have any jealousy or lack of trust until society and other women convince him of Zenaida's alleged faults, something which he denies multiple times until succumbing to public opinion. It seems that Gan herself places most of the blame for the murders and Zenaida's ruin on society. If considering Zenaida the ideal woman who has the ability to transform a man's morals, society prevents the transformation.

Looking overall at "Society's Judgement," key ideas about womanhood and life emerge from the story. To be a woman, according to Gan, means to not only be constrained by marriage, but also to face society's judgement, which destroys anyone who stands apart from the prescribed values. Men will never be judged more harshly than women and can be forgiven even

³⁵¹ "В повести «Суд света» представлен мужчина, способный к любви на жизнь и на смерть, но все-таки не умеющий любить: недостаток доверенности и дикая, зверская ревность к любимой женщине увлекают его к безумному убийству и губят навсегда предмет его любви. А эта женщина умела любить — и за то погибла жертвою того, кого любила" (Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 254).

³⁵² Kelly, *A History*, 113.

if they caused the deaths of multiple people. A woman, however, can be judged without any evidence of crimes at all; she can be judged simply for having a seemingly pure soul. Those with true feelings, passions, education, and purity of heart have no place in society. Perhaps most significantly, women who believe in traditionally masculine values are considered to feel themselves above other women, therefore should be punished for their beliefs.

Karolina Pavlova

While Gan's story focuses on a single example of society wrongfully punishing an innocent woman, Karolina Pavlova chooses instead to examine male and female relationships more broadly, as well as women's constraints in society. As Barbara Heldt remarks, "Pavlova concerned herself in a primary sense with women's 'fate' – fate in quotation marks to stress the fact that if her women fail to be agents of their destiny it is not because their nature dooms them to suffering, but because the actions of men determine their fate."³⁵³ Pavlova's "At the Tea Table" [За чайным столом] written in 1859, explicitly touches on ideas regarding gender inequality but from the perspective of a man who opposes the idea. The story begins with a conversation about women's position in society at a dinner party. At twenty-five, the youngest and most passionate conversationalist named Bulanin denounces society, finding the position of women to be indecent. When the host of the dinner tries to change the topic, he continues on to say "I see no moral reason why a woman should obey her husband and bear his insults; that is the most painful kind of dependency. Why should they not be equals."³⁵⁴ When the others

³⁵³ Pavlova, *A Double Life*, xii.

³⁵⁴ Kelly, *An Anthology*, 30. All subsequent quotations from this text in this chapter will be noted by a parenthetical reference providing the page number of the quotation.

disagree with him and say that there can be no such thing as equality because men and women are too different, Bulanin blames women's perceived inferiority to men on their upbringing and education, saying "all the shortcomings of women depend on their upbringing ... we develop only the most childish proclivities in them, and then most courteously damn them as children" (Kelly 30)³⁵⁵ This turn in conversation to the upbringing of women allows the previously opposing Countess to agree with Bulanin and add her own experiences.

You must, surely, admit that the education of women is absurd in the highest degree – no, it is more than absurd; it seems designed to fly in the face of common sense. One might suppose that women, or most of them, were brought up by their worst enemies, when the conduct of those who take care of them is so strange. A woman cannot acquire wealth in the way a man can, and the law almost entirely deprives her of her patrimony; and so craving for luxury and the habit of considering wealth a necessary condition for existence are instilled in her. She cannot propose to a man; so from her very childhood spinsterhood is held up before her as a shameful misfortune; she is made incapable of independence, and taught to regard it as something indecent. A frivolous decision can make her wretched for life; so she must be schooled to frivolity and whim. A single moment of passion is enough to ruin her irrevocably; knowing that, her guardians foster in her coquetry and a proclivity for dangerous games, and remove everything that might direct her toward serious occupations. (Kelly 31-32)³⁵⁶

“Я не вижу нравственной причины, почему женщина должна слепо повиноваться, сносить обиды от мужа, самую тяжелую зависимость? Почему между ними нет никакого равенства?” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 338)

³⁵⁵ “все недостатки женщин зависят от их воспитания, что оне, при другихъ условиях, были бы, вероятно, гораздо совершеннее мужчин; но в них развивают только самые детские наклонности, и потом с вежливым презрением называют их детьми” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 339).

³⁵⁶ “признайтесь, что воспитание женщин нелепо в высшей степени, оно даже более чем нелепо, оно все как будто нарочно идет наперекор здравому смыслу. Можно бы полагать, что почти каждая женщина воспитана своим злейшим врагом, так странно о ней заботятся. Она не может приобрести богатства, как мужчина, и

The quote presents a powerful critique of the inequality of contemporary women, especially their lack of independence and flawed upbringing. Instead of halting the argument, these examples fuel it. Aleksei Petrovich, Bulanin's staunch opponent, views the Countess's speech as support for his argument that women are morally weaker than men and their upbringing shelters them from negative influences. His main idea rests on the concept of men being morally superior to women. This argument opposed the earlier sentimentalist and romantic assertions of women's innate moral superiority. In this case, Bulanin echoes his contemporaries by stating that even if women are inferior to men morally, they are undoubtedly superior in feeling and emotion. This important philosophical discussion written by Pavlova in the first few pages frames the rest of her story. Aleksei Petrovich shares a story, hoping to prove that men are superior to women even in the realm of feelings.

Aleksei Petrovich's story revolves around a young, widowed Princess Alina and Trofim Lukich Khozrevsky, a young man without money or connections who is received at all the best salons and parties. He appears meek, humble, and simple, while she relies heavily on her intellect and reason. Society views her as cold and emotionless due to the common perception of feelings being suppressed by intellect. The Princess decides to take Khozrevsky under her wing and begins inviting him over to "sit before her like a schoolboy in the presence of his teacher" (Kelly 41).³⁵⁷ Instead of seeing him as an autonomous individual, the Princess only saw her own

почти лишена законом наследства отцовского; вследствие эт ей внушают потреб- ность роскоши и привычку считать богатство не- обходимым условием существования. Она не может предложить мужчине своей руки; соображаясь с этим, ее с детства пугают незамужеством, как постыдною бедой, делают ее неспособною к самостоятельности и учат смотреть на нее, как на неприличие. Легкомысленный выбор может сде- лать ее несчастною на всю жизнь, надо же приучать к легкомысленности и капризам. Оди минутнаго увлечения довольно, чтобы погубить ее навсегда; зная это, развивают в ней кокетство и склонность играть опасностью, удаляют все, что могло бы дать ей серьезное направление" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 340).

³⁵⁷ "сидел перед ней как школьник перед учителем" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 35)

intellect reflected in him as he quietly listened to her lectures. One night, the Princess must confront her past in the form of a man named Wismer, who takes revenge for her cold behavior toward him and his friend. In the past, the Princess manipulated and controlled Wismer emotionally, not allowing him to see his dying mother before her death. Once she grew bored with Wismer, the Princess turned to his friend, which resulted in a duel between the two men and Wismer almost killing his best friend. Shaken by this confrontation, she takes the calculated step to propose to Khozrevsky in order to prove to society that she can marry a man beneath her status simply for love. As society begins praising Princess Alina for her capability to love and her romantic nature, Khozrevsky decides to reveal the truth about himself before their marriage.

Khozrevsky's story provides more powerful examples of high society's ideas on superiority and inferiority. Khozrevsky grew up poor in a *guberniya* [province] as the smartest boy in his class. He greatly disdained his schoolmates' ignorance and they, in turn, bullied him for besting them in school. Facing destitution after school, Khozrevsky received rejection after rejection for patronage from the fathers of the children he bested in school. It was not until later that someone pointed out why he would always be rejected – people who feel themselves superior, most significantly those with money and power, do not like to feel inferior, especially to those they deem unworthy. Khozrevsky then gives an example of this situation when he continues to recount his past and tells about gaining the position of a tutor to a Count. The tutor recently hired to teach the Count's child wanted to show his intellect in a debate, thereby making the Count seem inferior. "The Count, like many others, Counts and non-Counts alike, wanted to employ as a tutor for his son a man without gifts, without character and opinions, without talent or abilities. The Count wanted to be a Count in an intellectual sense as well as a social sense; he could not bear the thought that those who surrounded him might be superior, and he felt an

innate repulsion towards cleverness in others, as some people are repelled by cats or spiders” (Kelly 67).³⁵⁸ Due to this important lesson, Khozrevsky learned to hide his intellect and pretend to be simple and humble, just so he could gain patronage and those of high society would welcome him. In response to the heartfelt confession of Khozrevsky actually being smart and only pretending to be a fool, the Princess rejects Khozrevsky.

Aleksei Petrovich uses this account to show that women do not possess more emotions than men and that they, too, can be cruel. Even though he does not explicitly state this, his story also highlights his initial argument about education ruining women. He does include a “truth that ladies themselves wish to conceal,” that “no one is less inclined to feelings of equality than a woman” (Kelly 41).³⁵⁹ This justification, in Aleksei Petrovich’s opinion, provides the reason for Princess Alina’s rejection. As soon as Princess Alina realized that she is on equal terms with Khozrevsky, and he could no longer be considered inferior to her, she pushed him away. Princess Alina herself never has a voice in the story, so her true motivations for rejecting Khozrevsky remain unclear. It would be plausible to conclude that she rejected him due to his duplicity and not her own harmed feelings of superiority. The reader understands Aleksei Petrovich’s ideas very clearly, but Karolina Pavlova’s seem a little more subtle. The last lines of the story most significantly allude to Pavlova’s personal perspective because the Countess flips the scenario by asking what would have happened had the woman been in Khozrevsky’s place and the man in Princess Alina’s.

³⁵⁸ “Граф, как многие другие графы и не графы, хотел при своем сыне иметь человека без всякой даровитости, без характера и мнения, без таланта и способностей. Граф хотел быть и умственно графом; в людях, которыми окружался, он не мог выносить никакого преимущества, он имел врожденное отвращение от чужого ума, как иные от кошек или пауков.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 408-409).

³⁵⁹ “истину, которую дамы желают скрыть,” “никто меньше женщин не склонен к равенству” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 357)

The story can be read in a conventional way, that it provides an example of women acting cold and calculating, as Alexei Petrovich offers. The gender reversal, I would suggest, holds the key to understanding Pavlova's main ideas presented in "At the Tea Table." The author attributes traits to Princess Alina that are traditionally associated with men, such as cold, calculating, logical, and manipulative. The young Khozrevsky displays qualities often associated with women – meek, humble, and quiet. All his life, he pretends to be someone he is not, an uneducated fool, in order to gain acceptance from society. The narrator constantly emphasizes power dynamics in the story, pointing out that people, especially those in power, resent anyone with superior qualities like intellect and reason. In essence, the story's main characters can be viewed as a representation of how women are treated in society, with people in power constraining women's abilities in order to keep them inferior.

Diana Greene raises this argument as well in her article "Karolina Pavlova's 'At the Tea Table' and the Politics of Class and Gender," in which she suggests that the story is Pavlova's allegory for the powerful and powerless through reversed genders. Greene also views the story in terms of class differences, concluding that Pavlova suggests that "lower-class men and upper-class women suffer in similar ways" through a few examples, one of which is that both the Princess and Khozrevsky encounter ridicule when they use their intellect, which is apparently reserved for upper-class men.³⁶⁰ However, it seems that Pavlova's main concern primarily rests on society's treatment of women and less on class differences due to the argument presented initially by Bulanin.

³⁶⁰ Diana Greene, "Karolina Pavlova's 'At the Tea Table' and the Politics of Class and Gender," *The Russian Review* 53.2, (1994) 278.

Bulanin's argument about gender inequality specifically frames the rest of the story because it explicitly states that women are constrained by various factors, but most significantly their lack of proper education. When women receive an education, as in the example of Princess Alina, society condemns them for it, showing others that intelligent women are poor examples of women. Perhaps both Bulanin and Aleksei Petrovich were wrong in their argument of a woman's inherent nature being either good or bad. Instead, Pavlova presents the idea that society itself is harmful in its projection of what women should be. Pavlova suggests that women are so limited because those in power like to feel superior and fear the potential of those they deem inferior becoming their equal. They do not want wives or daughters with gifts, abilities, or independence.

Pavlova's *A Double Life*, written between 1844 and 1847, delves deeper into society's constraints on women by briefly following the life of a young woman before her marriage. To preface the ideas and messages in the work, Pavlova begins with a dedication. This dedication repeats the words "to you" and "you all" to stress her audience, who she calls the slaves of noise and commotion. These are the Psyches deprived of wings, the silent sisters of her soul. The work, as she tells them, will give them a glimpse of a sacred life in the midst of their own life of sinful deceit. The work submerges the reader into the world of high society women, showing their daily lives and their values, while also commenting on the superficiality and immorality of the entire system. The plot of *A Double Life* begins with an eighteen-year-old Cecily and her mother, Vera Vladimirovna, visiting the mother's best friend, Valitskaia. For Vera Vladimirovna, this was a place where Cecily would be safe because "she would not hear a single

light-minded word or remark.”³⁶¹ In just the first few descriptions, Pavlova strongly begins by criticizing society women.

Madame Valitsky, a very rich woman, a woman extremely stern in all her opinions and judgments, fully earned the respect of high society, for which neither the future nor the past exists. Jealously she paid her debt of virtue and morality, all the more so because she had gotten a bit of a late start. She had not thought much about such a debt for the better half of her life, but then, having been convinced of its necessity, she - one must do her justice endeavored with incredible zeal to pay the aforementioned debt and all interest which had accrued. Most likely there is no person so inexperienced as to be surprised that Vera Vladimirovna, in spite of her customary chastity and her implacable rules of conduct, was on friendly terms with Madame Valitsky. Who would think of worrying about the past youth of a woman who for ages had led the most decorous life and, moreover, who received the best society, gave magnificent balls and was always ready to do a favor for her friends? The stern world is sometimes very good - natured: according to circumstances it looks with such Christian forgiveness upon powerful people, upon prominent and wealthy women! And besides, in the aristocratic educated world everything is angled so smoothly, the sharp edges so blunted and each monstrous and rotten affair called by such decent language that every shameful thing is glossed over in such fine circumstances, effortlessly and quietly. (Pavlova 12)³⁶²

³⁶¹ Pavlova, *A Double Life*, 11. All subsequent quotations from this text in this chapter will be noted by a parenthetical reference providing the page number of the quotation.

“нельзя было услышать ни единого легкомысленного слова или намека” (Pavlova 239)

³⁶² “Валицкая, женщина очень богатая, женщина чрезвычайно строгая во всех своих мнениях и суждениях, вполне заслуживала уважение светского общества, для которого нет ни будущего, ни прошедшего. Она ревностно платила свой долг добродетели и нравственности, тем более что принялась за это несколько поздно, нимало не думав о подобной плате в течение лучшей половины своей жизни, но потом, убедясь в ее необходимости, она – надо ей отдать эту справедливость – с неимоверным усердием старалась внести

In this instance, Pavlova takes a single example of an esteemed woman, in this case Valitskaia and shows how society views her. Elena Gan described innocent women ostracized and eventually destroyed for refusing to indulge in sin, while Pavlova features a woman with a sinful past who is highly respected. Money and connections, according to Pavlova, can erase past mistakes and Christian forgiveness, in the way society uses the term, can be bought. Already the story emphasizes the inherent immorality in society, especially its ability to frame events and people according to its own ideas of morality. Valitskaia's house for Vera Vladimirovna is safe and free of anything impure, and one of the first discussions centers on amoral men, leading to the life lesson that "a virtuous wife can completely reform a flighty husband" (Pavlova 239).³⁶³ Pavlova echoes the popular idea of her contemporaries in the voices of women she portrays negatively, so her own stance on the falsehood of their ideas is implicitly provided. In this same conversation, the writer introduces one of the main problems in society.

When Valitskaia comments how Cecily "dances and amuses herself like a ten-year-old," Vera Vladimirovna says "Cécile is exactly what I wanted to make of her. Every kind of daydreaming is foreign to her. I knew how to make reason important to her and she will never occupy herself with empty infatuations." To this, Valitskaia replies, "we should always be able to read into the souls of our daughters, in order to foresee any harmful influences and keep them safe in all their childlike innocence" (Pavlova 14). "At the Tea Table" addressed what Pavlova

вышеупомянутый долг со всеми накопившимися процентами. Вероятно, нет никого довольно неопытного, чтобы удивиться тому, что Вера Владимировна, несмотря на свою всегдашнюю непорочность и на свои неумолимые правила, была в дружеских сношениях с Валицкой. Кому приходит на ум заботиться о том, какова была прошедшая молодость женщины, которая давно ведет жизнь самую пристойную и сверх того принимает лучшее общество, дает прекрасные балы и всегда готова оказать услугу своим друзьям? Строгий свет иногда так добродушен: смотря по обстоятельствам -- он глядит с таким христианским чувством снисхождения на людей сильных, на женщин знатных и богатых! И притом, в аристократическом, образованном мире все угловатое так оглажено, все резкое так притушено" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 238).³⁶³ "добродетельная жена может совершенно исправить легкомысленного мужа" (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 239).

described as an indecent education for women – one that does not provide them with any opportunities other than dependence – and *A Double Life* goes further to express the idea that women are not only constrained, but the perfect daughter is groomed by the mother so as to preserve the innocence and mentality of a child, thereby becoming the perfect woman and wife. Throughout the story, Pavlova continues to address Vera Vladimirovna's childrearing, which was so lauded by the other women.

Cecily had been educated in the fear of God and society; the Lord's commandments and the laws of propriety carried equal weight with her. To destroy either even in thought seemed to her equally impossible and inconceivable. And although, as we have seen, Vera Vladimirovna greatly respected and loved poetry, she still considered it improper for a young girl to spend too much of her time on it. She quite justly feared any development of imagination and inspiration, those eternal enemies of propriety. She molded the spiritual gifts of her daughter so carefully that Cecily, instead of dreaming of the Marquis Poza, of Egmont, of Lara and the like, could only dream of a splendid ball, a new gown, and the outdoor fête on the first of May. Vera Vladimirovna was, as we have seen, very proud of her daughter's successful upbringing, especially perhaps because it had been accomplished not without difficulty, since it took time and skill to destroy in her soul its innate thirst for delight and enthusiasm. Be that as it may, Cecily, prepared for high society, having memorized all its requirements and statutes, could never commit the slightest peccadillo, the most barely noticeable fault against them, could never forget herself for a moment, raise her voice half a tone, jump from a chair, enjoy a conversation with a man to the point where she might talk to him ten minutes longer than was proper or look to the right when she was supposed to look to the left. Now, at eighteen, she was

so used to wearing her mind in a corset that she felt it no more than the silk undergarment that she took off only at night. She had talents, of course, but measured ones, decorous ones, *les talents de société*, as the language of society so aptly calls them. She sang very nicely and sketched very nicely as well. Poetry, as we have said earlier, was known to her mostly by hearsay as something wild and incompatible with a respectable life. She knew that there were even women poets, but this was always presented to her as the most pitiable, abnormal thing, as a disastrous and dangerous illness. (Pavlova 26-27)³⁶⁴

As the perfect mother, not only does Vera Vladimirovna dictate her daughter's actions, but she also binds her mind in a "mental corset," so that Cecily cannot even think freely. In a blasphemous twist, in Cecily's upbringing society's rules are given the same weight as the rules of religion, meaning that society in essence equates itself to the divine rules of right and wrong. Instead of the biblical commandments prohibiting certain behaviors, society deems qualities like imagination, enthusiasm, delight as necessary to be completely eradicated from a young girl's

³⁶⁴ "Цецилия была воспитана в страхе бога и общества; заповеди господни и законы приличия были равновесны в ее понятиях: нарушить, даже мысленно, первые или последние казалось ей равно невозможно и невообразимо; а Вера Владимировна, хотя, как уже доказано, очень уважала и любила поэзию, но все-таки считала неприличным для молодой девушки слишком заниматься ею. Она весьма справедливо опасалась всякого развития воображения и вдохновения, этих вечных врагов приличий. Она так осторожно образовала душевные способности своей дочери, что Цецилия, вместо того чтоб мечтать о маркизе Позе, об Эгмонте, о Ларе и тому подобном, могла мечтать только о прекрасном бале, о новом наряде и о гулянье первого мая. Вера Владимировна, как уже известно, очень гордилась этим удачным воспитанием; тем более, может быть, что оно свершилось не без труда, что, вероятно, стоило времени и уменья, чтобы истребить в душе врожденную жажду восторга и увлечения; но как бы то ни было, Цецилия, готовая для высшего общества, затвердивши наизусть все его требования и уставы, никогда не могла сделать против них малейшего прегрешения, незаметнейшей ошибки, ни з каком случае не могла забыть на минуту, возвысить голос на полтона, вскочить со стула, увлечься разговором с мужчиной до того, чтобы беседовать с ним на десять минут долее, чем следовало, или взглянуть направо, когда должно было глядеть налево. И ныне она, осьмнадцатилетняя, так привыкла к своему умственному корсету, что не чувствовала его на себе более своего шелкового, который снимала только на ночь. У ней, разумеется, были и таланты, но таланты умеренные, пристойные, *des talents de société*, как называет их весьма точно язык преимущественно общественный. Она пела очень мило, и рисовала также очень мило. Поэзия, как выше сказано, была ей известна более понаслышке, как что-то дикое и несовместное с порядочным образом жизни. Она знала, что есть даже и женщины поэты; но это ей всегда было представляемо как самое жалкое, ненормальное состояние, как бедственная и опасная болезнь." (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 248-249)

mind, so she can essentially become a society shell without an individual soul or her own thoughts. Likewise, a girl's interests must coincide with those deemed proper, like sketching and singing, but they must never become a serious interest. Pavlova herself was a woman poet, so she adds how other "proper" women saw her, as a pitiable creature who has no place among the rest of the society's acceptable people.

Cecily's whole being was shaped by her mother to be the epitome of a woman, yet her upbringing leads to disastrous consequences, a clear warning from Pavlova. One of the dangers *A Double Life* warns against is men.

It was the same simple story once again, old and forever new! It was true that Dmitry was captivated with Cecily. The magnetism of others' opinions always had an astonishing effect on him. Seeing her that evening so dazzling and so surrounded, he could not fail to be satisfied with her, and far more satisfied with himself. He was one of those weak creatures who grow drunk on success. At that moment he was no longer merely calculating: he saw himself placed higher than all the rest by Cecily, higher even than Prince Victor, the arrogant object of his secret envy; and his head began to turn. Inside him there started up youth's wildness and its irresistible burst of passion, as at the height of battle, when the warrior rushes blindly forward to tear the standard from the enemy ranks at any cost. This actually resembled love. It was, perhaps, mixed with some attraction of the heart as well, but this was only that ruthless masculine feeling which, if the woman inspiring him had committed some awkwardness, had worn some ugly hairdo or unfashionable hat, could at any moment change into fierce malice. (Pavlova 62)³⁶⁵

³⁶⁵ “Это была опять та же простая, старая и вечно новая повесть! Дмитрий и в самом деле пленялся Цецилией. На него всегда удивительно действовал магнетизм чужого мнения. Видя ее в этот вечер такой

Dmitri first turns his attentions to Cecily when he is told by Valitskaia that Cecily will inherit a fortune from her aunt. Clearly, the money and what he can do with it attract him much more than Cecily herself does. Pavlova attributes many emotions to Dmitri, especially arrogance, envy, conceit, none of which inspire a true feeling of love for Cecily. Pavlova emphasizes the ephemeral nature of his affections, which she calls a ruthless masculine feeling that can easily turn to fierce malice as soon as the previously seemingly perfect woman makes even the smallest mistake. Most significantly, Pavlova calls this a typical story and Dmitri a typical man, which means most men behave this way and have the potential to destroy women. Likewise, Dmitri spends his time drinking and losing money in gambling, which others blame on Cecily for not showing him enough attention.

As Vera Vladimirovna tried to instill, “the wife is guilty for all the husband’s faults. Her duty is to know how to bind him to her and make him love virtue” (Pavlova 45).³⁶⁶ This sort of teaching cultivates in the young woman a “naiveté of female egotism” that makes her believe she not only can change a man, but that she must (Pavlova 56).³⁶⁷ Once Cecily and Dmitri are engaged, Pavlova depicts a scene of debauchery in which Dmitri drinks and parties with his friends, vowing to them that marriage cannot change him. This aspect, as well as Dmitri’s selfish attributes and lack of true emotions for Cecily, all show the reader that Cecily will have a

блистательной и окруженной, он не мог не быть довольным ею и не быть еще гораздо довольнее собой. Он был один из тех не сильных существ, которые пьянеют от успеха. В этот миг он уже не рассчитывал: он видел себя поставленным Цецилиею выше всех других, выше даже князя Виктора, спесивого предмета его тайной зависти, и голова его закружилась. В нем заиграло буйство юности и неодолимый порыв, похожий на разгар боя, когда сражающийся слепо бросается вырвать знамя из вражеских рядов во что бы то ни стало. Это действительно походило на любовь. Может быть, тут и вмешивалось некоторое сердечное влечение; но это было только то мужское, безжалостное чувство, которое, по случаю какой-нибудь неловкости со стороны женщины, его внушающей, по причине какой-нибудь некрасивой прически или не модной шляпы, готово обратиться в злобную свирепость.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 273-274)

³⁶⁶ “Во всех проступках мужа, – сказала она строгим голосом, – виновата жена. Ее долг уметь привязывать его к себе и заставить любить добродетель.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 263)

³⁶⁷ “наивность женского самолюбия” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 269)

marriage and life of disappointment. The night before her wedding, Cecily lies “like a marble effigy on a tomb” and during the wedding, she is “pale as a corpse,” which intensify the sympathy for Cecily’s fate for the reader (Pavlova 102, 109).³⁶⁸

One of Cecily’s main problems in life is her inability to understand and identify both love and truth. According to Pavlova, Vera Vladimirovna’s strict teachings shackled Cecily’s mind to the point of childish naiveté and empty thoughts. She cannot understand that Dmitri does not love her and that she in turn does not love him. After the engagement, Cecily feels as if a whole new world has been opened to her while Dmitri “did not modify the customary habits of fiancés and as innocently and goodheartedly as all of them led this ignorant, gullible soul from deception to deception, from delusion to delusion, one more consoling and charming than the other. For the lies of a watchful mother he substituted the lies of a tender lover, saving the inexorable truth for the dicta of a stern husband” (Pavlova 84).³⁶⁹ Everyone in Cecily’s life upholds the illusion of a perfect world for her, and as a result she can be easily manipulated. Valitskaia turns Dmitri’s attentions to Cecily by revealing her inheritance; she indirectly tells Cecily about Dmitri’s gambling to invoke protective feelings from her; and she arranges the marriage between the couple in order to remove Cecily as competition for a rich suitor for her daughter. Valitskaia turns Cecily into a pawn in her own game, even though she is like an aunt for Cecily. Women who destroy lives for personal gain are portrayed negatively, but the true villain in the story, and society, according to Pavlova is the mother who raises her daughter in such a constricting manner as Cecily was raised.

³⁶⁸ “как мраморная статуя гробницы,” “бледна как мертвая” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 103, 305)

³⁶⁹ “Дмитрий притом не изменял всегдашнему обычаю женихов и так же невинно и добросердечно, как они все, вел эту неведущую, легковверную душу от обмана к обману, от заблуждения к заблуждению, одно другого утешительнее и прелестнее. Ложь осторожной матери он сменял ложью нежного любовника, сберегая неумолимую правду для изречений строгого мужа” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 289).

The daughter of Eve was tasting the forbidden fruit. The young captive was breathing in free, fragrant, unfamiliar air and growing drunk on it. Vera Vladimirovna had never wished to admit such an eventuality. Those prudent, vigilant, cautious women never do. They rely totally on their maternal efforts. They are extremely consistent with their daughters. In place of the spirit they give them the letter, in place of live feeling a dead rule, in place of holy truth a preposterous lie. And they often manage through these clever, precautionary machinations to steer their daughters safely to what is called “a good match.” Then their goal is attained. Then they leave her, confused, powerless, ignorant and uncomprehending, to God’s will; and afterwards they sit down tranquilly to dinner and lie down to sleep. And this is the very same daughter whom at the age of six they could not bring themselves to leave alone in her room, lest she fall off a chair. But that was a matter of bodily injuries (blood is quite visible, physical pain is frightening), not of an obscure, mute pain of the spirit. One could be consoled if it were only bad mothers that acted like this. There are not many bad mothers. But it is the very best mothers who do it and will go on doing it forever. And all these bringers-up were young once, were brought up in the same way! Were they really so satisfied with their own lives and with themselves that they are happy to renew lies to renew the experience with their children? Is all this absurdity as long-lived as those reptiles which continue to exist after they are cut into pieces? Didn’t these poor women weep? Didn’t they blame themselves and other people? Didn’t they look for help in vain? Didn’t they feel the meaninglessness

of the support given them? Didn't they, recognize the bitter fruit of this lie? (Pavlova 58-59)³⁷⁰

According to Pavlova's novel, some of the most powerful enforcers of society's standards and constraints are mothers. Cecily knows nothing beyond what her mother has taught, so she lives in sinful deceit, without emotions, thoughts, or a real understanding of the world. The above quote describes and then questions in an almost desperate tone the unending cycle of raising girls like this. In *A Double Life* a host of women like Vera Vladimirovna, Valitskaia, and many others contribute to the constrained and false image of life. As these women were themselves raised this way, they are also bound to repeat the process. In "At the Tea Table" Pavlova described men as oppressors, but in *A Double Life* she shows that society women are just as guilty. Unlike the female characters in the story, at night the readers experience Cecily's poetic dreams and learn that she has a greater destiny than society grants her. Cecily's implied unhappy ending of marriage to a gambling husband with cold indifference toward his wife, and a future life of poverty could have been avoided had she been allowed to accept her poetic gift,

³⁷⁰ "Дочь Евы вкушала запрещенный плод; молодая пленницадохнула вольным, ароматным, Незнакомым воздухом и опьянела от него. Этого никогда не хотела предвидеть Вера Владимировна; этого никогда не предвидят эти благоразумные, предусмотрительные, осторожные женщины. Они совершенно надеются на свои материнские старания; они неимоверно последовательны с дочерьми. Вместо духа они им дают букву, вместо живого чувства -- мертвое правило, вместо святой истины -- нелепый обман; и им часто удается сквозь эти искусные, предохранительные потемки довести благополучно дочь свою до того, что называется хорошая партия. Тогда их цель достигнута; тогда они спутанную, обессиленную, неведающую и непонимающую оставляют на волю божию и потом спокойно садятся за обед и ложатся спать. И эту же дочь они, шестилетнюю, не решились оставить одну в комнате, опасаясь, чтоб она не упала со стула. Но тогда дело шло о телесных ранах: кровь бросается в глаза, физическая боль пугает; это не душевное, безвестное, немое страдание. Если б так поступали дурные матери, можно бы утешиться: дурных матерей не много. Но это делают самые добрые матери и будут делать бесконечно. И все эти воспитательницы были молоды, были так же воспитаны! Неужели они остались до того довольны своей жизнью и собою, что рады возобновить опыт на своих детях? неужели всякая нелепость так же живуча, как те гадины, которые, разрезанные на куски, продолжают существовать? Разве эти бедные женщины не плакали? не обвиняли себя и других? не искали напрасно помощи? не испытали ничтожества им данных опор? не познали горького плода этого семени лжи?.." (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 270-271).

which would have been possible if her mother raised her to truly feel and love instead of raising her to be a pretty but empty society shell.

During one of her poetic dreams, when Cecily's feelings for Dmitri grow stronger as he takes an interest in her, her nightly guide addresses the problem of her upbringing and her mother's constraints in relation to love. He claims that a woman first finds an idol to "clothe him in [her] own reveries," but her passions and feelings will be rewarded by the man, whom she calls a "slave of need" and "blind son of care," by "being bored or by joking" (Pavlova 40).³⁷¹ This image of a poetic and elevated woman being married to an unfeeling and uncaring man appears most often in Elena Gan's works, but Pavlova clarifies that this outcome of an unhappy marriage is very common and the men are at fault. Pavlova's poet offers the following advice: "You are a woman! Learn to control yourself, / Close your lips and chain your soul. / Hold back your passion and its sounds / Teach your tears not to flow. / You are a woman! Live without defenses, / Without caprice, without will, without hope" (Pavlova 40).³⁷² These lines are reminiscent of the advice poems dissuading women from pursuing a literary career and provide the same message – that a woman must control her emotions and remain defenseless on earth.

Both Dmitri and Cecily are pawns of other people; Dmitri a pawn of the more powerful and manipulative Valitskaia, and Cecily of her own mother and Valitskaia both. Dmitri, however, can live as he wishes and make decisions for himself. Cecily cannot escape her situation because, as the poet reminds her – she is a woman – her entire upbringing limits her life. As Hasty emphasizes, "Cecily's spiritual and imaginative faculties are assiduously curtailed

³⁷¹ "Рабов нужды, слепых сынов заботы" "наряди его в твои мечтанья" скучая иль шутя" (Pavlova 259).

³⁷² "Ты женщина! умеи владеть собою, / Сомкни уста и душу ты закуй! / Сдержи порыв, уйми свои ты стоны, / Свою слезу учи не кануть с вежд! / Ты -- женщина! живи без обороны, / Без прихоти, без воли, без надежд." (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 259)

and her human potential trivialized. All of existence is reduced to the notion of propriety.”³⁷³

Cecily’s life is just as restricted as her mind, something which Barbara Heldt touches upon.

“Pavlova further logistically restricts her heroine to the female quarters of this world – enclosed and protected in domestic interiors or carriages traveling from house to house or from house to church. In the rare moments when Cecily steps out onto a balcony or rides on horseback she experiences a short-lived sense of exhilaration and of control over her fate.”³⁷⁴ Every part of Cecily’s life, her education, interests, friends, love, and even mind are constrained, thus she ultimately loses contact with the genuine and poetic.

Pavlova’s works stand apart from other women’s due to a much more powerful stance against society’s treatment of women and their limitations. In “At the Tea Table” Pavlova shows through allegory how a male-dominated society exerts power over women, limiting their opportunities. Pavlova reveals that education especially constricts women through the voice of another woman. She asserts that women’s education is absurd as they are raised to value frivolity and coquetry, incapable of independence and steered away from serious occupations. These same ideas are expanded in *A Double Life*, through which Pavlova shows that mothers themselves raise their daughters in ways that restrict their intellect and opportunities. Women are the active agents of society that limit young girls.

Conclusion

When considering the works of all these female writers, the patterns of dissatisfaction and frustration with society’s treatment of women become very apparent. Female writers, by their

³⁷³ Olga Peters Hasty, “Karolina Pavlova’s *A Twofold Life*,” *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) 56.

³⁷⁴ Pavlova, *A Double Life*, xviii.

very nature, wanted a larger role in life than wife and mother. As early as the first decade of the nineteenth century, Anna Bunina's female narrator expressed the wish to have a larger, more traditionally masculine role in life. It is curious that she included the image of male fragility in her poem "To the Departure of Imperial Russian Forces" by including an older man who cannot fight, while showing a woman who yearns to be heroic. Later, both Gan and Pavlova directly call men weak, especially when men have to confront a more powerful society. Thus, the idea that Bunina subtly included in her work intensifies into a sharper criticism decades later. On the other hand, Bunina would modify the message in a poem to her niece, in which she encouraged her, and in larger sense other women, to become complacent if they want a happy life. The two periods in Bunina's life, pre-illness and post-illness, really affected her worldview. The tone of her poetry shifted from questioning why women had limited roles to encouraging a young girl not to challenge her place in society and remain obedient to powers of authority. Perhaps if Bunina never attributed her cancer to God's punishment for her writing, then she would have continued to write more vocal works about the status of women.

Nadezhda Teplova's poems written in the 1830s mostly expressed frustrations with society, its fleeting fascination toward a woman's youth, and the suffering from a lack of power in society. Women who want to follow their dreams and inspirations, according to Teplova, cannot be happy in this world because they have to renounce everything poetic for earthly pursuits. In a sense, Bunina created a division in her life of challenging gender roles, first by writing and refusing to marry and then by renouncing her previous ways to encourage people to choose obedience. Teplova too, creates a division in that women are depicted as having to sacrifice a part of themselves for some greater happiness. In addition, Teplova began to express

discontent with society's values, which ignored the inner spiritual world of a woman for superficial beauty, thereby limiting a woman's worth to her appearance and her society charms.

Rostopchina, like Teplova, expresses a dissatisfaction with society and its constraints. Her main concerns surround the limitations women have at each step of their lives. Once a woman becomes a writer or a mother, she loses her identity as a woman and must abide by the new category's rules. Young girls are raised to enjoy balls and parties, but after a certain age this behavior is deemed inappropriate because they become mothers and no longer just women. Rostopchina's wish to be someone who can be both a serious poet and a fun-loving woman provides a refreshing take on a woman's frustrations. Perhaps the only peace available to a woman is what appears in "Three Stages of Life." The narrator evaluates different time periods of a woman's life but ultimately finds true happiness in a spiritual and poetic world. Despite this example, Rostopchina seems to feel that women are the only ones in the world who are completely defenseless, especially against a ruthless and cruel society.

Like Rostopchina, Gan also included themes of women defenseless against the cruelty and gossip of society. Gan's beloved character, the intelligent, kind, and loving Zenaida endures people's cruelty and chooses to ignore everyone in favor of cultivating her inner world. She meets a tragic end at the hands of a man who claimed to love her, because he believed in the lies spread by other women. Rostopchina's later work *The Fortunate Woman* will adopt these same ideas of women who are strong enough to stand against society dying from heartbreak caused by weaker men who succumb to society's flawed worldview, which continues Pavlova's portrayal of men as weak. The women's use of death from a broken heart presents a metaphor for the destructive effects of male and societal behavior that portrays the main idea that no matter how strong a woman can be, other people, especially men, can destroy her. What is more, as Gan

shows in “Society’s Judgement,” other women contribute to a woman’s ruin by spreading lies about her innocence.

Pavlova takes these views a step further to discuss gender inequality and blame those with power for placing women in such limiting positions and restricting them from pursuing their true talents. She shows that those with power are often other women who continue the system of a superficial upbringing that mentally and socially binds young girls to a naïve and childlike state. We can see a distinct progression of ideas over these five writers’ works, ending with Pavlova’s being the most critical of society by claiming both that men purposefully keep women powerless and that other women perpetuate the broken system because they do not know how to live differently. Pavlova indicates that women’s true capabilities are unknown because they are completely restricted long before women can realize their potential.

According to all these writers, to be a woman means being constrained by marriage, men, and society’s judgement – to be ostracized for wanting to step outside the accepted roles of women. In the background of these works is society’s insistence that women are meant to be ideal and gentle tools to support their husbands and inspire goodness in them. Women poets and writers actively tried to break free from this lingering idea through their own pursuit of writing and publishing, and also by imbuing their works with highly personal and sometimes even rebellious ideas. Bunina showed that women must actively work to become what society wants of them; Teplova expressed feelings far outside the accepted realm of emotions for women; Rostopchina featured imperfect narrators that shattered the image of the perfect woman; Gan depicted society’s perfect woman who was destroyed for those qualities of perfection; and Pavlova actively and passionately insisted that society, both men and other women, limited girls

to the point of destruction. Pavlova explicitly mocked contemporary views on women, showing them to be false in her works.

When considering the writings of these authors, clear patterns of dissatisfaction and frustration with society become apparent. Female writers, by their very nature, wanted a larger role in life other than wife and mother, and their works vividly exhibit this ambition. Thanks to these women's works, modern readers can appreciate how perceptive Russian women in the nineteenth century weighed, evaluated, and ultimately condemned societal restraints that stifled their ambitions. The writing of rebellious women allows readers more than a century later a small glimpse of the emotions and thoughts women had in their time about their own lives and identities.

Chapter 5: Writer and Woman

As Russian literature and identity began forming throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, writers were also preoccupied with their own role in society as poets. Hundreds of literary works were written to create and validate a writer's role in the nation, making the theme of the poet himself one of the most crucial at the time. This chapter first examines how men viewed their status in life as poets through the works of Vasilii Zhukovskii and Aleksandr Pushkin, and then explores how Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova viewed the poetic gift and identified as women writers. As the men were concerned with establishing their preeminent role in society as prophets with divine gifts, women were creating literary identities that would allow them acceptance in the literary world as both writers and women.

As poetry expanded as a genre and more poetic voices began appearing, some consistent themes began emerging. One of the first and most prevailing ideas rests on the notion that the ability to write poetry is a gift granted by heavenly powers to the chosen few. Through the course of the eighteenth century, writers explored the concept of a poet as someone separate from the rest of society, as a prophet even, and the idea became solidified and very common in the nineteenth century. To judge by the work of the most prolific poets, one of the main concerns of the poet revolved around isolation due to his standing apart from the rest of society. Later in the century, as priorities in society shifted, the isolation theme intensified as poets began feeling disdain for "the crowd." However, even in the most emotional poems of isolation, male poets never lament their gift. Female poets, in contrast, express both despair with their gift and advise others from it. Even though the ideas expressed by all poets seem similar, there are also some striking differences in the way men and women perceived their poetic gift.

Pamela Davidson argues in her article “Simeon Polotskii and the Origins of the Russian Tradition of the Writer as Prophet” that Simeon Polotskii, the first professional poet in Russia, was the one who originally created the idea in Russia.³⁷⁵ Polotskii (1629-1680) was an Orthodox monk who recited poems in Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich’s court and created prophetic predictions. Davidson suggests that in his works he characterized a poet as both a moral teacher and a predictor of the future. This moves the poet away from the general crowd of people and onto a more elevated plane of metaphorical existence, one closer to God and heaven. In this separation, the ability to write poetry becomes a divine poetic gift, one that is accessible only for the chosen few.

Polotskii’s ideas continued to be echoed in poets over the centuries and combined with the rising fascination with antiquity through Classicism. This influence can be seen in nineteenth century poets as they adopted these ideas and aligned themselves with Greek gods and mythology. As a means to find their role in life, poets heavily emphasized their poetic gift and their unique position in society. Gavriila Derzhavin exhibits these concepts in his 1797 poem “The Gift” [Дар], but also adds a distinction between his possibilities in society.

«Вот,» сказал мне Аполлон:
«Я даю тебе ту лиру,
Коей нежный, звучный тон
Может быть приятен миру.

«Пой вельможей и царей,
Коль захочешь быть им нравен;
Лирою чрез них ты сей
Можешь быть богат и славен.

«Если ж пышность, сан, богатство —
Не по склонностям твоим,
Пой любовь, покой, приятства:

³⁷⁵ Pamela Davidson, "Simeon Polotskii and the Origins of the Russian Tradition of the Writer as Prophet," *Modern Language Review* 112.4 (2017) 917.

Будешь красотой любим».

Взял я лиру и запел,
Струны правду зазвучали:
Кто внимать мне захотел?
Лишь красавицы внимали.

Я доволен, света бог,
Даром сим твоим небесным.
Я богатым быть не мог;
Но я мил женам прелестным.

“Here,” — Apollo said to me, —
“I give you a lyre,
Whose tender, resounding tone
May be pleasant to the world”

Sing of an aristocrat and tsars,
If you want to be pleasing to them
With this lyre
You can be wealthy and famous through them.

If grandeur, rank, riches –
Are not in your disposition,
Sing love, peace, pleasantries:
You will be loved by beauty.”

I took the lyre and began to sing
The strings resounded with truth:
Who wanted to listen to me?
Only beauties listened.

I am satisfied, god of light,
With your heavenly gift.
I could not be rich;
But I am dear to lovely women.³⁷⁶

In the poem, Apollo, the Greek god of music and poetry, personally chooses the poet in order to bestow his gift, alluding to the special nature of the craft. Upon receiving his gift, the poet also gains a choice regarding how to use it; whether he will “sing” to praise tsars or to write

³⁷⁶ Gavriila Derzhavin, *Sochineniia Derzhavina* Vol. 2 (St. Petersburg: V tipografii imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1851) 68.

about beauty. Each choice has benefits and downfalls, so Derzhavin chooses beauty and poverty over fame and money. He expresses gratitude multiple times throughout the poem and only laments the idea that he cannot be rich from his craft, although he consoles himself with a reminder of his female admirers. This not only echoes the accepted sentiments regarding poetry, but additionally mirrors real concerns of his time. In the eighteenth century, the most common poetry was odes and hymns for the court, with the tsar bestowing favor and money to the preferred poets and their poems. Likewise, Russian aristocrats became benefactors to many poets, granting funds to those they liked most. While Derzhavin expresses this duality in poetry, the issue did not personally affect him, as he came from a noble family and worked closely with Catherine II for most of his life. The image of the poet's narrator choosing beauty over a social status comes from poetic imagination rather than true circumstances.

Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (1783-1852), one of the founders of Romanticism in Russia and a mentor to Alexander Pushkin, continued the poetic tradition set before him by Derzhavin and Polotskii. In a rather personal poem addressed to Ivan Ivanovich Dmitriev (1760-1837), a poet associated with Sentimentalism in Russia, Zhukovskii comforts Dmitriev, who feels replaced by younger poets. These selected passages from "To I. I. Dmitriev" [К. И. И. Дмитриеву], exemplify how highly Zhukovskii regarded Dmitriev as a poet and how he viewed the poetic gift.

Нет, не прошла, певец наш вечно юный,
Твоя пора: твой гений бодр и свеж;
Ты пробудил давно молчавши струны,
И звуки нас пленили те ж.

Нет, никогда ничтожный прах забвенья
Твоим струнам коснуться не дерзнет;
Невидимо их Гений вдохновенья,
Всегда крылатый, стережет.

(...)

И ныне то ж, певец двух поколений,
Под сединой ты третьему поешь
И нам, твоих питомцам вдохновений,
В час славы руку подаешь.

Я помню дни - магически мечтою
Был для меня тогда разубран свет -
Тогда, явясь, сорвал передо мною
Покров с поэзии поэт.

С задумчивым, безмолвным умилением
Твой голос я подслушивал тогда
И вопрошал судьбу мою с волнением:
«Наступит ли и мне череда?»

No, your time, our eternally youthful singer,
Has not passed; your genius is spry and fresh;
You have awoken the long silent strings,
And those sounds captivated us.

No, the insignificant dust of oblivion
Will not dare to touch your strings;
Invisibly, the always winged genius
Of inspiration, guards them.

(...)

And now, the same things, singer of two generations,
With grey hair you are singing to a third
And to us, the pupils of your inspirations,
You lend a hand at the hour of fame.

I remember the days – with a magical dream
Light was adorned for me then –
Then, appearing before me
The poet tore off the veil from poetry.

With a thoughtful, silent affection
I would overhear your voice then
And I asked my fate with trepidation
“Will my turn come too?”³⁷⁷

³⁷⁷ Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*. Vol. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1959) 384.

In this poem, Zhukovskii describes his reverence and awe of poetry. The poetic gift appears in the metaphor of a musical instrument whose strings are guarded by Genius, a winged creature. This image directly stems from the idea of the poetic gift being something otherworldly, something to which only a few have access. Zhukovskii implies Dmitriev was the one to introduce him to the world of poetry by “lifting the veil” and becoming a role model. According to the work, a young Zhukovskii greatly admired poetry and wanted to become one of the chosen few, a poet. Most significantly, Dmitriev lends a helping hand to those who want to be like him, so he knowingly and willingly passes on the knowledge to the younger generations. This poem shows only positive feelings toward poetry, expressing that it can and should be pursued.

As Romantic ideas spread in Russia at the turn of the century, the fascination with nature, emotions, and individualism carried over onto the image of a poet. Poets emphasized their special gift, which set them apart from others, and created a dichotomy between the masses and the poet. Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin (1799-1837) wrote the quintessential works embodying this time and significantly influenced his contemporaries and following generations of writers. His poems “Prophet” [Пророк] (1826), “Poet” [Поэт] (1827), “Poet vs Crowd” [Поэт и толпа] (1828), and “To a Poet” [Поэту] (1830) provide the best examples for understanding Romantic ideas regarding the poet and the poetic gift. The first poem “Prophet,” which was based on a passage from Isaiah 6, features a metaphorical representation of the creation of a poet, a selected individual chosen specifically for a heavenly task. The beginning and ending of the poem relay this idea.

Духовной жаждою томим,
В пустыне мрачной я влачился, —
И шестикрылый серафим

На перепутье мне явился.
 Перстами легкими как сон
 Моих зениц коснулся он.
 Отверзлись вещие зеницы,
 Как у испуганной орлицы.
 Моих ушей коснулся он, —
 И их наполнил шум и звон:
 (...)

Как труп в пустыне я лежал,
 И бога глас ко мне воззвал:
 «Восстань, пророк, и виждь, и внемли,
 Исполнись волею моей,
 И, обходя моря и земли,
 Глаголом жги сердца людей».

Tormented by spiritual thirst,
 I wandered in a dismal desert, -
 And a six-winged seraphim
 Appeared before me at a crossroad.
 With fingers as light as a dream
 He touched my eyes.
 Prophetic eyes opened
 As in a frightened eagle.
 He touched my ears, -
 And they were filled with noise and ringing:
 (...)

Like a corpse I laid in the desert,
 The voice of God called out to me:
 "Arise, prophet, and see, and heed,
 Fulfill my will.
 And, traversing seas and lands,
 Burn the hearts of people with your voice.³⁷⁸"

According to the episode Pushkin depicts here a poet may be created by a higher divine being, and he is given a specific purpose on earth. The poet was alone when a seraph appeared from the sky before him to bestow the poetic gift, which also includes prophetic powers. Once he receives the gift, the poet begins experiencing sensations and life in a completely new way, one that remains alien to the average person. Illustrated with Biblical imagery, the poet gains a

³⁷⁸ Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, edited by Boris Viktorovich Tomashevskii, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963) 338.

heavenly mission to write as the voice of heaven. This implies the poet has a duty in society to write the “truths” of life, and that he cannot stop writing, even if he so wishes. Pushkin’s poem “The Poet” builds on this image, examining the life of a poet in the mundane world as opposed to a mythical desert.

Пока не требует поэта
 К священной жертве Аполлон,
 В заботах суетного света
 Он малодушно погружен;
 Молчит его святая лира;
 Душа вкушает хладный сон,
 И меж детей ничтожных мира,
 Быть может, всех ничтожней он.

Но лишь божественный глагол
 До слуха чуткого коснется,
 Душа поэта встрепенется,
 Как пробудившийся орел.
 Тоскует он в забавах мира,
 Людской чуждается молвы,
 К ногам народного кумира
 Не клонит гордой головы;
 Бежит он, дикий и суровый,
 И звуков и смятенья полн,
 На берега пустынных волн,
 В широкошумные дубровы...

Until Apollo calls the poet
 To the holy sacrifice,
 In the worries of the mundane world
 He is faintheartedly immersed.
 His holy lyre is silent
 And his soul experiences a cold slumber,
 And among earth’s insignificant children,
 Perhaps he is most insignificant.

Yet once the divine word
 Reaches his keen ears,
 The poet’s soul will rouse
 Like an awakened eagle.
 He is bored with the world’s amusements
 He distances himself from people’s noise,
 To the feet of the national idol,

He does not bow his proud head.
 He runs, wild and severe,
 Full of sounds and agitation,
 To the banks of desolate waves,
 Into the broadly resonant groves.³⁷⁹

At the outset, the poet has not yet been called upon by Apollo, meaning he currently does not write. Due to this, he feels dissatisfied with quotidian problems and concerns. Once he receives the divine call, however, he shuns the world and mostly longs for solitude and peace he finds in nature. The only thing with the power to awaken him from his antipathy to the world will be the call to write again. This particular poem delves deeper into the separation of the mundane world with the poetic one. The poet knows he does not belong in this world, so he seeks solace in places he feels most connected to the poetic realm, in this case nature. Pushkin identifies the poet as the one to distance himself from others, not the opposite. He also emphasizes, however, that a poet is the world's most pitiable creature, at least when he does not write.

The two previous poems perfectly exemplify ideas on the identity of the poet and his concerns in life in the 1820s. That is, once the heavens choose to bestow a gift upon a person, he will no longer be part of the mundane world and will now find happiness only in his works. Pushkin does extend the idea further by adding another problem to a poet's life with the dichotomy between a poet and everyone else, whom he describes as "the crowd" in his poem "Poet vs Crowd." In the first few stanzas of this poem, before he gives the crowd a definitive voice, Pushkin synthesizes the poet's problem with society.

Поэт по лире вдохновенной
 Рукой рассеянной бряцал.
 Он пел — а хладный и надменный
 Кругом народ непосвященный

³⁷⁹ Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii*, edited by Boris Viktorovich Tomashevskii, Vol. 3 (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1963) 22.

Ему бессмысленно внимал.
И толковала чернь тупая:

«Зачем так звучно он поет?
Напрасно ухо поражая,
К какой он цели нас ведет?
О чем бренчит? чему нас учит?
Зачем сердца волнует, мучит,
Как своенравный чародей?
Как ветер, песнь его свободна,
Зато как ветер и бесплодна:
Какая польза нам от ней?»

The poet absentmindedly strummed
The inspirational lyre with his hand.
He sang, - but the cold and disdainful
Profane crowd all around him
Listened to him mindlessly.
And the stupid mob commented:

“Why does he sing so loudly?
Needlessly striking the ear,
To what goal does he lead us?
What does he clang about? What does he teach us?
Why does he excite, torment our hearts,
Like a capricious enchanter?
Like wind, his song is free
But like wind, his song is barren:
What use do we get out of it?”³⁸⁰

In depicting the ‘crowd’ in this way, Pushkin gives a voice to the rising critics of poetry.

By the end of the 1830s, Russian society began shifting its attention away from Romanticism and poetry as an art form in favor of socially aware and more critical works meant to be useful for people. Due to the shift, prose took over as the primary preferred genre in literature, and poetry became associated with the Romantic past. As previously noted, according to Pushkin, the poet cannot stop his craft once he receives the gift, even if people no longer want to hear it. The crowd, whom the narrator calls stupid and mindless, views his works as fruitless, loud, and

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 87

without use to them because they do not teach anything. This same crowd, however, still regards the poet in high esteem and wishes to learn from him.

(...)

Чернь

Нет, если ты небес избранник,
Свой дар, божественный посланник,
Во благо нам употребляй:
Сердца собратьев исправляй.
Мы малодушны, мы коварны,
Бесстыдны, злы, неблагодарны;
Мы сердцем хладные скопцы,
Клеветники, рабы, глупцы;
Гнездятся клубом в нас пороки.
Ты можешь, ближнего любя,
Давать нам смелые уроки,
А мы слушаем тебя.

(...)

Поэт

Не для житейского волненья,
Не для корысти, не для битв,
Мы рождены для вдохновенья,
Для звуков сладких и молитв.

(...)

Crowd

No, if you are the heavens' chosen one,
Your gift, oh godly messenger,
Use for our benefit:
Correct the hearts of your fellowman.
We are weak hearted, cunning,
Shameless, evil, and ungrateful;
We are cold hearted eunuchs,
Slanderers, slaves, and fools;
Defects nest in us in a heap.
You can, loving your neighbor,
Give us brave lessons,
And we will listen to you.

(...)

Poet

Not for mundane problems,
Not for profit, not for battle,
We are born for inspiration,

For sweet sounds and prayers.

The particular esteem that the crowd shows to the poet creates an interesting juxtaposition to the poet's regard for the people. The crowd does not seem to possess animosity or negative feelings for the poet, it simply asks the poet to write useful poetry, from which people can learn humanity and goodness. As a request, this does not appear unreasonable. The poet, however, declares his craft to be above earthly matters, such as war and money. These lines directly tie into the previously examined idea of the poet having a separate task in society, yet here the poet is not created to be the voice of heavens, but rather is born for inspiration, beauty, and prayer. This poem shows that even if people try to dictate themes of poetry, the poet has the power to ignore it and continue writing as he pleases. The isolation and deliberate distancing from the crowd exemplified in "The Poet" creates a feeling of superiority over society and a hateful disdain.

Two years after "Poet vs Crowd," Pushkin published the sonnet "To a Poet" as advice to other people who want to follow in his footsteps. Pushkin affirms the idea of the poet ignoring the crowd in favor of choosing to pursue his own craft, as seen in "Poet vs Crowd." The poem also reiterates Pushkin's belief in the poet's superiority over the crowd.

Поэт! Не дорожи любовью народной.
Восторженных похвал пройдет минутный шум;
Услышишь суд глупца и смех толпы холодной,
Но ты останься тверд, спокоен и угрюм.

Ты царь: живи один. Дорогою свободной
Иди, куда влечет тебя свободный ум,
Усовершенствуя плоды любимых дум,
Не требуя наград за подвиг благородный.

Они в самом тебе. Ты сам свой высший суд;
Всех строже оценить умеешь ты свой труд.
Ты им доволен ли, взыскательный художник?

Доволен? Так пускай толпа его бранит

И плюет на алтарь, где твой огонь горит,
И в детской резвости колеблет твой треножник.

Poet! Do not treasure the people's love.
The momentary noise of enraptured praises will pass;
You will hear the fool's judgement and the cold crowd's laughter,
But you remain strong, calm, and gloomy.

You are a tsar: live alone. On a free path
Walk; where your free mind leads,
Perfecting the fruits of your favorite meditations,
Not demanding rewards for your noble deed.

They are in you. You are your highest judge;
You are able to evaluate your labor most strictly.
Are you satisfied with it, fastidious artist?

Satisfied? Then let the mob berate it,
And spit upon the altar, where your fire blazes,
And in childish playfulness shake your pedestal.³⁸¹

The advice he gives other hopeful poets specifies that a poet should not attribute value to people's fleeting love, nor should he seek awards or praise from them. He should remember he is a king, so he should remain calm, firm, and somber, and he should live alone. If he likes his works, then he should ignore the crowd, described as childishly shaking and spitting upon the poet's altar. The disdain for the "cold" [холодный] and "foolish" [глупый] crowd seen in "Poet vs Crowd" carries over into this poem, but the main emphasis remains on reminding the poet of his special place in society and encouraging self-reliance. Despite being displeased with social commentary about his works, Pushkin still encourages future poets to persist with their craft without paying attention to anyone else. To him, the poet's loneliness, isolation, and negative reception are outweighed by the value of pursuing his dream.

Pushkin, like both Zhukovskii and Derzhavin before him, held a notable place in high society. Most male poets in this period were dilettantes, meaning they wrote for pleasure rather

³⁸¹ Ibid., 174.

to earn money, but had income from other jobs. For example, Derzhavin transitioned from the military service to the civil service, eventually becoming the Minister of Justice under Catherine II. Pushkin remains unique as he primarily wrote for a living. This ability for men to have careers, write poetry, and create families was unique solely to them, as women did not have such luxury. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, noble women were solely mothers and wives; any other approved pastimes were meant to be hobbies to keep them occupied. This significant historical distinction between men and women directly influences the struggles identified in poetry.

For poets Zhukovskii, Derzhavin, and Pushkin, writing poetry perfectly coincided with other life pursuits. They were both public figures and writers, setting both social and literary examples for others. Women, however, were expected to be wives and mothers above all else. As Rosslyn writes, “writing was thought inappropriate as a principle activity for women, who were not expected to display a consuming interest in anything except home and family, and were not to try to shine.”³⁸² As demonstrated, male poets were most concerned with finding their place within society, and any isolation they felt was often described as self-imposed. The three male poets discussed here served as examples for all women poets, so their ideas and themes carried over into the works of the women poets too. The primary concerns of poverty, isolation, and negative reception are echoed in the works of the women, but they also add an element specific to their experiences as female writers. Much of their concerns revolved around the tension between their poetic gift and their responsibilities and duties as women. This problem appears so prominently that some writers go as far as explicitly telling future poets not to pursue this career, which is a striking departure from Pushkin’s advice.

³⁸² Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 56.

Anna Bunina

The earliest writer under consideration, Anna Bunina, wrote a few poems that explicitly state her thoughts on the poetic gift and they directly speak to the works of her contemporary writers. Bunina began writing at the same time that the conversation in Russia about women's writing was just beginning. The scholar Judith Vowles remarked that Nikolai Karamzin advanced the idea that the ideal reader is "the woman whose naturally refined feminine taste he sought to please and whose language he sought to emulate."³⁸³ Women were the perfect readers for Karamzin, but there was a debate whether women should write. Some considered the act of writing and publishing to be inappropriate, even comparing it to prostitution. "I do not know how one can wish [to hear] the conversation of a woman who has said the best of everything she has to say in a book printed in two thousand copies; whose most tender feelings and most delicate thoughts are sold at a reasonable price in all the book shops," wrote censor Vladimir Izmailov (1773-1830) in 1804.³⁸⁴ Aleksandr Shishkov (1754-1841), the organizer of Anna Bunina's literary circle, encouraged women to write because they represented the "charming half" of the human race.

Women, this most charming half of the human race, this soul of conversations, these dear consolers, instill in us the language of kindness and politeness, the language of feeling and passion; women, I say, are those lofty inspirations which enflame our soul to song...

Industrious minds invent, write, compose expressions, and define words; women, reading

³⁸³ Judith Vowles, "The 'Feminization' of Russian Literature: Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Women Writers in Russian Literature* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1994) 39.

³⁸⁴ Quoted in Vowles, "The 'Feminization,'" 39.

them, learn purity and correctness of language; but this language, passing through their lips, becomes clearer, smoother, more pleasant, and sweeter.³⁸⁵

In this environment Bunina decided to enter the literary world and publish her own poems, even if some considered this a vulgar activity. The three key poems to understanding Bunina's message on being a poet are "To I. A. Krylov, who read my 'The Fall of Phaeton' at the 'Colloquy of Lovers of the Russian Word'" [И. А. Крылову, читавшему моего 'Фаетона' в Беседе любителей русского слова] (1811), "To Those Who Suggest That I Write Hymns" [Тем, которые предлагали мне писать гимны] (1809), and "A Conversation Between Myself and Women" [Разговор между мною и женщинами] (1811). The poem dedicated to fellow writer Ivan Krylov (1769-1844) indirectly sheds light onto a problem uniquely faced by women writers at the beginning of the nineteenth century. At this time, women just began entering the field of professional writing, so they were still not regarded with the same level of respect as their male colleagues. Anna Bunina gained acceptance as an honorary member of a prestigious literary circle, but as a woman she could not read her own poems; instead a male read her works. This practice, common to the few women participating in literary societies, appears in Bunina's "To I. A. Krylov."

Читая баснь паденья знаменита,
Улыбкой оживил ты лица всех гостей,
И честь того прешла к стране пиита.
Во мзду заслуги сей
Я лавры, сжатые тобою,
Себе надменно не присвою.
Когда б не ты ее читал,
Быть может, Фаетон вторично бы упал.

Reading the fable of the famous fall,
With your smile you enlivened the faces of every guest,
And the honor of that came to the poet's world.

³⁸⁵ William Mills Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 24.

In the reward for this merit,
 I will not haughtily appropriate.
 The laurels, clasped by you.
 If you had not read it,
 Perhaps, Phaeton would have fallen flat again.³⁸⁶

In the poem to Ivan Krylov Bunina praises him for reading her poem so well and attributes its success solely to Krylov's reading. Instead of harboring resentment or frustration at the inequality and having her voice taken away, Bunina sincerely thanks Ivan Krylov for honoring her by reading her poem to the group. Krylov held a very high position in the literary world as a premier fabulist and poet, who also founded a few prominent journals. Wendy Rosslyn remarks that "the tone of this poem suggests that Bunina was confident in her triumph and pleased to be able to credit it elsewhere to forestall accusations of arrogance" after receiving a lot of praise and recognition for the poem.³⁸⁷ While Bunina's reverence seems appropriate, her depreciation of her own poetry plays into a larger context of women in literature. Barbara Heldt suggests that "modesty was the only acceptable mode of self-preservation for a literary woman."³⁸⁸ Rosslyn expands this idea by identifying both desirable and undesirable behaviors in early nineteenth century society. "Undesirable behaviors included various forms of attracting attention and being different, including being vain, having limited means, failing to observe the social rituals, demonstrating indifference to social life, or being an oddity."³⁸⁹ Being both an oddity among women for refusing to marry and having limited means, Bunina's main socially acceptable character traits revolved around her agreeableness and modesty. In a self-deprecating and meek manner, Bunina shows that she feels unworthy of the positive reception given to her own writing by saying Krylov deserves the laurels of the poem. To conform to social

³⁸⁶ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 278.

³⁸⁷ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 189.

³⁸⁸ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 108.

³⁸⁹ Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina*, 56.

conventions, the woman poet rejects praise she deserved in order to be seen as agreeable to her male colleagues.

This same meek and submissive feeling also appears in her poem “To Those, Who Suggest That I Write Hymns.” In this work, Bunina talks directly to the people asking about her work and asking why she does not write hymns or celebratory odes popular among poets vying for recognition and patronage.

Отовсюду бедством утесненна,
 Могу ль воспеть Творца миров?
 Из дерзновенных скорби слов
 Была бы песнь та соплетенна:
 Покорность страждущих есть гимн Творцу миров.

Отовсюду бедством утесненна,
 Могу ль слагать хвалы царям?
 Идя по терновым стезям,
 Я мню, что в тернах вся вселенна:
 Народа счастье есть лучший гимн царям.

Отовсюду бедством утесненна,
 Могу ль утечи петь родства?
 Я знаю скорбь лишь сиротства,
 Быв с детства чуждыми вскормленна:
 Семейны радости есть гимн в хвалу родства.

Отовсюду бедством утесненна,
 Могу ль петь сладость нежных уз?
 С напастью утвердя союз,
 Хлад душ я ведать осужденна:
 Улыбка милых нам есть гимн для нежных уз.

Отовсюду бедством утесненна,
 Хочу блажить могильный свод:
 К нему отраден, мирен вход!
 С ним сон и тишина священна!
 Он с бедством примирит.... блажу могильный свод.

Oppressed on all sides by poverty,
 Can I praise the Creator of worlds?
 That song would be weaved
 From the impertinent words of grief:

The submissiveness of the suffering is the hymn for the Creator of worlds.

Oppressed on all sides by poverty,
 Can I create praises for tsars?
 Walking on thorny paths,
 I imagine that the entire universe is in thorns:
 The people's happiness is the best hymn for tsars.

Oppressed on all sides by poverty,
 Can I sing the delights of kinship?
 I only know the grief of orphanhood,
 Having been fed by strangers since childhood:
 Familial happiness is the hymn in praise of kinship.

Oppressed on all sides by poverty,
 Can I sing the sweetness of tender bonds?
 Having confirmed a bond with misery,
 I am sentenced to experience the coldness of souls.
 The smile of loved ones is the hymn of tender bonds.

Oppressed on all sides by poverty,
 I want to bless the burial vault:
 The passage to it is pleasant, peaceful!
 There slumber and peace are blessed!
 It will conciliate me with poverty... I bless the burial vault!³⁹⁰

In her response, Bunina chooses four categories of hymns, those praising religion, the tsar, family, and love, and discusses how she feels unqualified to create any of them. While she gives specific reasons for each, the repetition of the work emphasizes her poverty, both physical and metaphorical. As a human, she feels more lacking than other poets, so she essentially says she cannot join them fully. The only time she will find peace and equality will be in death. This particular kind of isolation and self-deprecation stemming from the awareness of her social situation rarely appears in the works of her male colleagues. In many of her poems, Bunina almost claims to feel unworthy of her poetic gift. Of course, this stems from the socially acceptable method of appearing meek and modest to avoid being called vain, but it remains

³⁹⁰ Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 119.

unclear whether the poet truly believed herself to be undeserving of being a poet or receiving praise.

As a female writer publishing original poetry, part of her experience was being in constant debt and seeking new patrons. She addresses this problem in one of her poems “A Conversation Between Myself and Women” written in 1821. The scholar Patrick Vincent emphasizes that Bunina creates a poetic conversation between herself and women, similar to other “poet versus the crowd” poems, but showing “a keen awareness of the politics of taste, dominated by male intellectuals.”³⁹¹ Her conversation creates a unique opportunity to see the tension between gender and expected roles.

Женщины

Сестрица-душенька, какая радость нам!
 Ты стихотворица! на оды, притчи, сказки
 Различны у тебя готовы краски,
 И верно, ближе ты по сердцу к похвалам.
 Мужчины ж, милая... Ах, боже упаси!
 Язык - как острый нож!
 В Париже, в Лондоне, - не только на Руси, -
 Везде равны! заладят то ж да то ж:
 Одни ругательства, - и все страдают дамы!
 Ждем мадригалов мы, - читаем эпиграммы.
 От братцев, муженьков, от батюшков, сынков
 Не жди похвальных слов.
 Давно хотелось нам своей певицы!
 Поешь ли ты? Скажи иль да, иль нет.
 (...)

Женщины

А что пропела ты в те годы?
 Признаться, русскому не все мы учены,
 А русские писанья мудрены,
 Да, правда, нет на них теперь и моды.
 (...)

Женщины

Эге! какая ахиня!

³⁹¹ Vincent, *The Romantic Poetess*, 48.

Да слова мы про нас не видим тут...
 Что пользы песни нам такие принесут?
 На что твоих скотов, комолых и с рогами?
 Не нам ходить на паству за стадами.
 Итак, певица ты зверей!
 Изрядно!.. но когда на ту ступила ногу,
 Иди в берлогу,
 Скитайся среди полей,
 И всуе не тягчи столицы.
 (...)

Я
 Подчас я подвиги мужей всепевала,
 В кровавый что вступая бой,
 За веру и царя живот скончали свой,
 И, гулом ратное сотрясши поле,
 Несла под лавром их отголе,
 Кропя слезой.
 Подчас, от горести и стонов
 Прейдя к блюстителям законов,
 Весельем полня дух,
 Под их эгидою беспечно отдыхала.
 Подчас, к пиитам я вперяя слух,
 Пред громкой лирой их колена преклоняла.
 Подчас,
 Почтением влекома,
 Я пела физика, химиста, астронома.

Женщины
 И тут ни слова нет про нас!
 Вот подлинно услуга!
 Так что же нам в тебе? На что ты нам?
 На что училась ты стихам?
 (...)

Тебе чтоб брать из своего все круга,
 А ты пустилася хвалить мужчин!
 Как будто бы похвал их стоит пол один!
 Изменница! Сама размысли зрело,
 Твое ли это дело!
 Иль нет у них хвалителей своих?
 Иль добродетелей в нас меньше, чем у них!

Я
 Все правда, милые! вы их не ниже, Но, ах!
 Мужчины, а не вы присутствуют в судах,

При авторских венках,
И слава авторска у них в руках,
А всякий сам к себе невольно ближе.

The Women
Sister dear, what joy for us!
You're a poetess! Your various paints are ready,
For odes, parables, fairytales;
And truly, in your heart you are closer to praises!
Men, my dear... Ah, God save us!
Their tongues are sharp as knives!
In Paris, London—not only in Russia,
The same everywhere! They repeat this and that:
Only profanities –and all ladies suffer!
We await madrigals, - we read epigrams.
From brothers, husbands, fathers, sons
Do not await for words of praise.
We have long wanted out own songstress!
Do you sing? Tell us, yes or no?
(...)

The Women
And what have you sung in those years?
To confess, not all of us were taught Russian,
And Russian writings are contrived,
And, truly, they are not in fashion anymore.
(...)

The Women
Aha! what nonsense!
We do not see even a word about us...
What benefits can these songs bring us?
What use to us is your livestock, hornless and horned?
It is not us who will go to pasture after the herd.
And so, you are the singer of animals!

Alright!... if that is your choice,
Go to a den,
Roam among the fields,
And do not burden the capitals in vain!
(...)

I
At times I sang achievements of men,
The ones who entered bloody battles,
For faith and for their tsar sacrificed their lives,

And having shaken the battlefields with a hum,
 I carried them from there under laurels,
 Shedding a tear.
 At times, from bitterness and moans
 I came to guardians of law,
 Filling my soul with mirth,
 I rested under their careless aegis.
 At times, directing my hearing to poets,
 I would bend my knees before their loud lyres.
 At times, being led by respect,
 I sang the physicist, chemist, astronomer.

Women

And here there is no word about us!
 Here is a genuine service!
 So what is for us in you? Why do we need you?
 For what purpose did you learn verse?
 (...)

You should take everything from your circle,
 But you set forth to praise men!
 As if only one gender is worthy of praise!
 Traitor! Think sensibly yourself,
 Is this your job?
 Or do they not have their own flatterers?
 Or do we have less virtue than they do?

I
 It is all true, my dears! you are not less, than they:
 But alas!
 Men, not you, appear in judgements,
 In authorial wreaths,
 And an author's fame is in their hands,
 And everyone is involuntarily closer to himself.³⁹²

For Bunina, the crowd of women represents an important but seldom heard voice in society, and she chooses to feature them in this poem. First, however, Bunina subtly bemoans the fact that there are no female poets through her expression of the women's joy at finally seeing someone like them. This same crowd is then mocked because they cannot speak Russian, so they do not actually know her as a poetess, they only care about their own representation in her

³⁹² Bunina, *Neopytnaia muza*, 229.

works. This was indeed a major issue in the poet's life – that her poetry was not widely disseminated specifically because it was written in Russian and her likely audience would read only read French. The same crowd, which does not read her poetry, then attempts to dictate the subjects of her works. As Bunina suggests, women are not interested in nature poetry because such poetry is not relevant to their lives, and they complain that her scope of human subjects is solely limited to men. In the end she admits that women deserve praise and are no less than the men around them, but because they do not fund her works or make up a significant amount of the reading public, she writes about men to survive.

While the work touches on some of the same ideas expressed by Pushkin, such as the tensions between reader and poet and the usefulness of poetry in society, Bunina adds an element unique to the experiences of women. Unlike with male poets, female readers place expectations on women to portray them and to give them a voice. Those same readers, however, express more concern for the subject of poems rather than their artistry and inspiration. It is interesting to note that Bunina took a rather definitive stance of depicting male literary authority as indirectly dictating the themes and subjects of her works. Indirectly, Bunina claims that she cannot write what she wishes due to the unspoken censorship she must endure as a woman writer who conforms to standards set by men. However, she subverts her message by including a footnote that states “forgive me for this jest as indulgence of the merry Muses, who love to mix business with idleness, lies with truth, and to enliven conversations with innocent playfulness.”³⁹³

With this footnote officially appearing beneath her published poem Bunina undermines the emotions and concerns expressed within it. Bunina most likely chose to portray the poem as a

³⁹³ “Да простится мне шутка сия из снисхождения к веселонравным музам, которые любят мешать дело с бездельем, ложь с истиной, и невинной резвостью увеселять беседы.”

“joke” in order to make sure she did not offend her male patrons and colleagues in the literary circle. As Sibelan Forrester emphasizes, “the women in Bunina's ‘conversation’ are not the addressees of the poem: men, who do not speak in the poem and are not confined to its frame, are identified at the poem's end as the readers and judges of literary works, including this one.”³⁹⁴ Serving as a form of self-censorship, the footnote allowed her to publish the poem without negative feedback.

Judith Vowles considers this poem a “witty commentary on the legacy of ideas about women and language bequeathed by the eighteenth century” because it directly joins the conversation men were having about women readers and women writers.³⁹⁵ Bunina spoke against those who try to dictate what she, as a woman, is expected to write and who her readers should be. “The breach between the woman poet and the ladies marks Bunina’s repudiation of Karamzinism and the ‘feminization’ of Russian culture” by her refusal to write “for the inhabitants of the ‘luxurious boudoirs of Aspazias’ and be a writer whom ladies read” and by presenting “the ladies in their most vilified form , as they appeared to satirists like Novikov and Shishkov,” while also rejecting “the Karamzinists’ ideal of the woman writer by means of her portrayal of the woman poet.”³⁹⁶

As a poet, Bunina faced many challenges and problems that were not only different from others because of her status as a woman but also for writing in a period when women’s writing was not fully accepted and living a lifestyle that contradicted social norms. “Bunina's poet emphasizes that her poetry is a work of craft in which she exercises power over her words and

³⁹⁴ Sibelan Forrester, “Placing the Author and the Poem: Interpreting the Footnote to Anna Bunina's ‘Conversation Between Myself and Women,’” *Metamorphoses: The Oberlin College Journal of Comparative Literature* 1 (1992): 38.

³⁹⁵ Vowles, “The ‘Feminization,’” 52.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

their form.”³⁹⁷ Unlike other women poets, she rejected the idea that writing should be about feelings and to help moralize men. While rejecting some conventions, Bunina also accepted those that would help her publish and become accepted by her male peers. Her poems adopted a tone of humility and directly attributed her success to others while also conceding to the fact that she cannot participate in many genres of poetry due to her inexperience. Even when she does speak against male authority over poetry, she transforms the message with a footnote calling her work the jest of her muse. Bunina’s poetry mainly features the tension between creating a strong poetic voice and conforming to literary conventions created by men, who became her patrons and editors.

Nadezhda Teplova

Writing almost twenty years after Anna Bunina published her works, Nadezhda Teplova entered the literary world to moderate success. She incorporated Romantic ideas expressed by her contemporaries. Unlike Bunina, who distanced herself from her emotions and made herself meek to the males around her, Teplova embraced and enhanced the tumultuous emotions she faced as a poet. Her poetry was known to be permeated with deep emotions and was a genuine confession of her inner life. Teplova wrote during the period in which female poets were less accepted in society than in Bunina’s time due to the rise of Romanticism with its belief that women should be decorations and poets should be prophets, which was linked with masculinity.³⁹⁸ For example, in a literary review critic Vissarion Belinskii wrote in 1835 that a

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 54.

³⁹⁸ Kelly, *A History*, 38.

woman writer is a “creature repulsive and monstrous to the highest degree.”³⁹⁹ His comments continued to reiterate this idea:

Woman should love the arts, but she should love them for pleasure, and not in order to be an artist herself. No, a woman-author can never love, nor be a wife and mother, for self-love is not in harmony with love, and only genius or elevated talent alone can be alien to petty self-love, and only in a man-artist can the egoism of self-love even have its poetry, while in woman it is repulsive. ... In a word, a woman-writer with talent is pitiful; an untalented woman-writer is ludicrous and repulsive.⁴⁰⁰

Belinskii’s opinion on women writers changed by the 1840s, but when Nadezhda Teplova began publishing poems women writers were still an oddity. Perhaps due to the contemporary literary and critical atmosphere, Teplova’s works show her yearning for another realm of poetry and art, one for which she could willingly leave the material world behind. In her mind, the poetess has too many constraints, including demands of modesty, which made poetry a dangerous gift. Her frustration with life and poetry can be seen in her 1831 poem “Consciousness” [Сознание].

Вся жизнь моя - ошибка роковая!
 Я чувствую, не тем я быть должна,
 И доля лучшая, иная
 Мне в этом мире суждена.
 Известно мне мое предназначенье:
 Должна я жить и чувствовать вполне,
 Должна ловить минуты вдохновенья,
 И с думою глубокой в тишине
 Здесь созерцать роскошную природу,
 И с первобытной чистотой,
 Не разлучаясь душой,
 Мою счастливую свободу

³⁹⁹ Quoted in Bisha, *Russian Women*, 29.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

Восторгам лучшим посвящать,
 И с пламенным воображеньем
 Одно прекрасное сближать.
 Но я высокое судьбы определенье
 Не научилась понимать.
 Вся жизнь моя - ошибка роковая!
 Бывают дни, очищена тоской,
 Я чувствую, что я совсем иная,
 И на минуту постигая
 Высокий, лучший жребий мой -
 Я чувствую свое предназначенье
 И вылиться готова вся в слезах.
 Но миг один - исчезло вдохновенье,
 И я опять ничтожный прах!..

My entire life is a fatal mistake!
 I feel that I am not meant to be this,
 And that a better destiny, a different one
 Is fated for me in this world.
 My predestination is known to me:
 I am meant to live and feel fully,
 I am meant to capture the minutes of inspiration,
 And with deep meditation in silence
 Contemplate the magnificent nature here,
 And not separating in my soul,
 From primeval purity,
 And to dedicate to the highest ecstasy
 My happy freedom
 And with a fiery imagination
 To bring together only the beautiful.
 But I have not learned to understand
 The higher designation of fate.
 My entire life is a fatal mistake!
 There are days, when I am cleansed by anguish
 I feel, that I am completely different,
 And for a minute attaining
 My higher, better lot -
 I feel my predestination
 And am prepared to pour myself out in tears.
 But in one instant- the inspiration is gone,
 I am again insignificant dust!..⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰¹ Teplova, *Stikhotvoreniia*, 53.

Теплова begins the line with the words “my entire life is a mistake of fate” [вся жизнь моя ошибка роковая] which she repeats closer to the end of the poem. She says that she feels she was destined for a different life – she should be living and feeling to the fullest potential and catch moments of inspiration, dedicating her freedom to admiration of beauty. She is tormented, however, by the fact that she gets glimpses of inspiration and feels ready to pour her soul out, but as soon as the inspiration leaves, she feels like insignificant dust. Other male poets, Pushkin especially, have commented on the poetic gift as something special, which only the chosen ones have the honor of experiencing. Теплова addresses a poet’s torment when inspiration leaves her, as others have done, but her emphasis on the concept of fatal mistake allows a slightly different view of the poetic gift that was not previously explored by her male contemporaries.

The mistake can be viewed as the tension between the poetic world and the material, which prevents her from fully realizing her art. When considering the difficulty female poets had with publishing their works, how much they depended on patrons and salon attendees, and how much disdain significant male writers expressed toward women writers, the poem’s attitude toward the poetic gift is easily understood. However, it could also be interpreted as the frustration of receiving the poetic gift as a woman, yet not being able to pursue her gift due to limitations placed on women. The first few lines especially underscore this idea, as they emphasize Теплова’s negative feelings for her current position in society and her yearning for the poetic life. As the poem expresses, Теплова’s destiny is to become a poet, but she cannot fully pursue it.

Following the deeply personal feelings she expresses in “Consciousness,” Теплова writes “Advice to maiden D...!” [Совет к дев. Д-ль] (1837), which mirrors Pushkin’s poem “To the Poet” and Bunina’s “Advice.” Like Bunina, Теплова chooses to address other women.

Брось лиру, брось, и больше не играй,
 И вдохновенные, прекрасные напевы
 Ты в глубине души заботливо скрывай:
 Поэзия - опасный дар для девы!

Мечтаешь ли на жизненном пути
 След огненный прорезать за собою;
 Иль думаешь сочувствие найти
 В толпе, окованной ничтожной суетою;

Иль юная пылает голова
 Мечтой похвал и льстивого вниманья,
 И рядишь ты, как жертву на закланье,
 Твой смелый стих в блестящие слова, -

Дитя-поэт! За славой не гонись:
 Она ничем нам сердца не согреет;
 Иль с долей счастья простишься:
 Где гордый лавр, там мирт не зеленеет!

Что девственно почувствовала ты,
 Что думою осмыслила глубоко,
 Брось изредка украдкой на листы, -
 Да не убьет завистливое око
 Твоей возвышенной мечты.

Throw away the lyre, throw it, and do not play it anymore,
 And carefully hide in the depth of your soul
 Inspiration, and splendid chants:
 Poetry is a dangerous gift for a maiden!

On life's path, do you dream
 Of carving a fiery trace behind yourself;
 Or do you think to find compassion
 In a crowd, shackled by insignificant commotion;

Or does your young mind blaze
 With a dream of praises and flattering attention,
 And you arrange your brave into dazzling words
 Like a sacrifice for slaughter,

Young poet! Do not chase after glory:
 It will not warm our hearts;
 Or say farewell to a piece of happiness:
 The myrtle never greens, where the proud laurel is!

What you innocently felt,
 What you deeply realized in meditation,
 Stealthily jot down onto the pages sometimes, -
 So that the jealous eye will not kill
 Your lofty dream.⁴⁰²

Teplova's first and most powerful lines "drop the lyre, drop it, and do not play it anymore" [Брось лиру, брось, и больше не играй] clearly express her feelings toward the poetic gift. She tells the female poet to hide inspiration within herself and not to chase fame because it will not warm the heart and will force her to part with happiness. Teplova paints an extremely sad picture depicting a hopeful and idealistic young poet whose brave verse and dazzling words are left unappreciated and ignored by the crowd, chained by insignificant earthly commotion. The key to the poem lies in Teplova stating that "poetry is a dangerous gift for a maiden" [поэзия опасный дар для девы] as she explicitly states that the victims of society and the literary world are not just poets, but women poets. Therefore, she tells women to hide their poetic inspiration. This advice seems similar to Anna Bunina's advice to her niece, whom she tells to stay obedient to the destiny approved for women and to refrain from yearning for more.

Instead of the internal frustrations Teplova depicts in "Consciousness," "Advice" focuses on the external sphere inhabited by the poet. Echoing Pushkin's disdain for the crowd with his own words, she continues the tradition of distancing the poet from an ignorant "other," one who does not understand poetry or the poetic gift. It seems that certain lines refer to publishers and critics, ones who dictate which poets earn fame and which ones remain forgotten. Any wonderful poetry a female poet creates will be underappreciated and the equivalent of a sacrifice sent to slaughter, a powerful image in itself. It is the last lines, however, that are most troubling because it seems they come from personal experience. The last image is of a "jealous eye" killing dreams

⁴⁰² Ibid., 16.

of writing. This might refer to male poets, critics or publishers, or maybe even other women envious of talent and success. This depiction of a harsh external influence helps understand Teplova's personal experience with writing, especially when paired with her poem focusing on the internal tension that writing poetry produces.

According to Catriona Kelly, the advice of adopting modest and mundane ways of recording thoughts instead of following the lyre of Apollo "was sound; pretensions to inspiration might well be received with annihilating scorn."⁴⁰³ Unlike the male poets like Pushkin and Baratynskii, who express disdain for the crowd but always take pride in their poetic gift, the women poets display conflicting emotions. When addressing herself, Teplova's narrator says her poetic gift feels like a mistake of the fates. When addressing others, the poetry emphasizes the idea that women should not publish poetry. For Teplova, the "poetic vocation is incompatible with happiness" for a woman.⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, the gift only brings negative feelings because others such as literary critics and other writers cannot appreciate it. These ideas are similar to Bunina's as both poets refer to the reception and opinions of other people when describing their craft.

Elena Gan

Elena Gan turned to prose in order to discuss the dangers of the poetic gift for a young girl. She commented in a few works about women writers, such as in "Society's Judgement" when the narrator, an authoress, arrives in the town and sparks rumors and prejudice against her months in advance to her arrival. "She is not merely a woman, but a woman writer, which is a

⁴⁰³ Kelly, *A History*, 43.

⁴⁰⁴ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 110.

special kind of creature, a capricious whim of nature or, more properly: a degenerate of the female gender. After all, there are people who are born with a bird's head and the feet of a goat, — why then can't it be that her soul, created in the image and likeness of a chameleon, will pretend to be such and such, will make a copy of herself and, what's more, will turn into a different form," one person boldly remarks about women writers.⁴⁰⁵ In Gan's work, women writers and poets exhibit the qualities of intellect and spirituality that she highly prizes, but they always stand apart from society. Her most extensive depiction of such a woman appears in her unfinished *A Futile Gift* [Напрасный дар], that she was writing when she died in 1842.⁴⁰⁶

As many of her stories, in Gan's *A Futile Gift* the lives of women "endowed with sensibility and talent, yet socially disadvantaged, are explored through the eyes of a narrator who herself is a woman of some self-confidence and independence."⁴⁰⁷ The narrator of this work accompanies a countess to Crimea, stopping by a small village in which the countess owned property. Here, the narrator sees a young woman drawn to their musical evenings, listening to the countess sing and play the fortepiano from the outside. The young woman avoids all interactions, for which many people refer to her as a ghost. The narrator only meets the young woman when the narrator loses a book outside, which the young woman picks up and reads voraciously. This is when the narrator provides the first description of Aniuta, whom everyone in the village calls mad. The narrator says that she had "symptoms of desolation" but "it was impossible not to

⁴⁰⁵ "Она не просто женщина, а женщина-писательница, то есть создание особенное, уродливая прихоть природы, или правильнее: выродок женского пола. Ведь рождаются же люди с птичьей головой и козьими ногами,— почему ж не допустить, что душа ее, созданная по образу и подобию хамелеона, прикинется такой-то, спишет с себя портрет да и обернется в другую форму" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 303-304)

⁴⁰⁶ The entire novel may be unfinished but Part I, featuring Aniuta's story, is complete so the discussion of *A Futile Gift* will feature only Part I.

⁴⁰⁷ Kelly, *A History*, 111.

recognize a woman with an elevated and noble nature.”⁴⁰⁸ Likewise, her face had “an expression of pride, suffering, and absolute submission to [her] fate.”⁴⁰⁹ When the countess asks for her doctor to examine Aniuta, he insists that she is not mad, just misunderstood.

The people who call her mad are incapable of understanding the grandeur of one idea, which like a whirlwind draws in to itself and absorbs all ideas of everyday life. They deemed her insane because the tenderness of her feelings, the delicacy of her interests, the elevation of her mind are inaccessible to their vulgar understanding. ... They took for madness the manifestation of the secret, unattainable for them, strength of her talent, and rushed – some from malice, some from zeal – to it, not suspecting that in that strength was the root of her life, the best light of her soul took to destroy it. They compelled her, the hungry one, to forsake her inspiration for a meager piece of their bread, and when the agency of her spirit, which was tightly shackled, began to internally eat away at her and burst free without her knowledge, they poisoned her life with bitter doubt in herself, convinced her, that she was mad, and truly almost drove her insane; though they pushed her right to her grave...⁴¹⁰

Both the narrator’s description of Aniuta and the doctor’s insistence that the woman has a poetic soul provide the foundation for the rest of the story. There is a distinct separation between

⁴⁰⁸ “признаки разрушения,” “нельзя было не узнать женщины с природой возвышенной и благородной” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 718)

⁴⁰⁹ “выражение гордости, страдания и безусловной покорности судьбе” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 718)

⁴¹⁰ “ее называют сумасшедшею люди, неспособные понять могущества одной идеи, которая, как водоворот, втягивает в себя и поглощает все идеи бытия. Они признали ее сумасшедшею от того, что их грубому осязанию недоступны ни нежность ее чувств, ни утонченность ее влечений, ни возвышенность ее ума. ... Они приняли за безумие проявление тайной непостижимой для них силы ее таланта, и бросились, – кто из злобы, кто из усердия, – уничтожать ее, не подозревая, что в той силе заключался корень ее жизни, лучший свет ее души. Голодную, они принудили отказаться от вдохновения за нищенский кусок их хлеба; и когда деятельность ее духа, крепко скованного, начала внутренне грызть ее и прорываться без ведома ее на волю, они отравили жизнь ее горьким сомнением в себе самой, уверили ее, будто она безумная, и в самом деле едва не свели с ума; зато толкнули прямо к могиле...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 724).

people who feel and understand poetry and the crowd of people who live mundane lives and will never comprehend it. The problem with this separation is in the antagonistic and malicious treatment of the crowd for the poet, who becomes ostracized for this talent. The novel depicts Aniuta as being unable to live life without literature and art because the narrator first meets her secretly listening to music and reading dropped books. Her mother makes the distinction that in the daytime “it is impossible to think that she was mad: she labors, works, teaches children, and understands everything, speaks well and clearly. But as soon as night comes – you will not notice how she slips away from home, wanders God knows where, returns late and then walks as if she does not see anything, says something to herself in a hushed voice, and sometimes cries and languishes so much, that my heart hurts looking at her.”⁴¹¹ Aniuta seems torn between her poetic gift and everyday life, only allowing herself to truly feel when she is alone at night. This is the preface for the rest of Aniuta’s story.

From childhood Aniuta’s own parents considered her strange because she asked questions about life and tried to understand the world. When a tutor, Heilfreund, arrived to teach Aniuta’s brother, she joined their lessons and formed a bond with him, after which he taught her sciences but not literature. “He believed that an intense development of her mental abilities would hinder the development of her feelings of the heart, which seemed to him more dangerous in her position.”⁴¹² When he saw how satisfied Aniuta was from the lessons, he believed he “managed to conquer her nature.”⁴¹³ Aniuta’s poetic inspiration, however, was “a spark that

⁴¹¹ “подумать нельзя, чтоб она была сумасшедшая: трудится, работает, учит детей, и все понимает, обо всем говорит хорошо и ясно. Но лишь настанет ночь,— не усмотришь как ускользнет из дому, бродить Бог знает где, возвращается поздно и после ходит, будто ничего не видя, что-то говорит себе вполголоса, и иногда так плачет, тоскует, что сердце надрывается, глядя на нее” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 721).

⁴¹² “Он полагал, что усиленное развитие ее умственных способностей помешает развитию в ней чувств сердечных, которые казались ему наиболее опасными в ее положении.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 730).

⁴¹³ “Он успел победить природу” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 730).

smoldered” in her soul and was waiting for the “first contact of thought in order to utter its clear and sweet song.”⁴¹⁴ Though she was receiving a good education based on sciences, her soul yearned for more, forcing Aniuta to question why life has no happiness, nourishment, or pleasure. It was not until she discovered literature that Aniuta finally felt whole.

From that point on her life seemed sweeter and more beautiful; she endured daily tasks and troubles more enthusiastically, with the arrival of twilight her dawn began; it became dark, night fell – and she flew to her sanctuary, all the cabinets melted before her and everything earthly turned to dust – and she would stop living on earth. German, French, and Russian poets alternately occupied her, at times enraptured her with delight, at times pushed her into longing, at times entertained her with glittering wit; she laughed, cried, even spoke to them with abandon and, familiarizing herself with all the secrets of poetry, at times she dared to commit to pages her own thoughts. At first she took the pencil almost without awareness, without any participation of will: something pressed her from within, something begged to come out of the heart and into the open: feelings worried her breast, meditations swarmed in her head – but her language seemed poor and weak to her, it decelerated their flight, constrained their outbursts...⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ “Искра тлела” “первого прикосновения мысли, чтоб издать свою чистую и сладкую песнь” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 731)

⁴¹⁵ “С тех пор слаще и краснее казалась ей жизнь; она бодрее сносила труды и неприятности дневные, с наступлением сумерек зажигалась ее заря; темнело, ночь, — и она летела в свой приют, все шкафы растворялись перед нею, и все земное разлеталось в прах, — она переставала жить на земле. Поэты германские, французские и русские попеременно занимали ее, то упоили восторгом, то вгоняли в тоску, то веселили блестящим остроумием; она смеялась, плакала, в забвении даже говорила с ними, и, ознакомясь со всеми тайнами стихотворения, осмеливалась порою вверять бумаге свою собственную мысль. Сперва она бралась за карандаш почти неведомо себе самой, без всякаго участия в том воли: что-то теснило ее внутри, что-то просилось из сердца к простору: ощущения волновали ее грудь, думы роились в голове,—но беден и слаб казался ей язык, он замедлял их полет, удерживал их порывы...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 748).

Gan uses the words “forbidden fruit” [запретный плод] to describe how Aniuta viewed the previously locked cabinet with books, which prompts Joe Andrew to ask, “when Anyuta eats of the Tree of Knowledge must we read her as Eve and her reading which then becomes writing as a breach of a sacred prohibition, which in turn will lead to her fall?”⁴¹⁶ The rest of the events of Aniuta’s life lead to a tragic ending that started from this temptation of reading, but it seems this was always Aniuta’s fate. The way in which Gan describes Aniuta’s introduction to poetry creates the understanding that the poetic gift naturally occurs in the chosen few. Aniuta always felt empty and unfulfilled until she discovered literature, so her yearning for the poetic realm was innate. Likewise, when she reads and writes at night, everything earthly disappears, which further creates a separation of the poetic and earthly, as well as day and night. When Aniuta begins writing, the narrator explicitly states that her actions were not planned or done through careful consideration, the poetry comes from within. Gan seems to say that the poetic gift cannot be contained, that people with this gift cannot stop themselves from writing. Poets see the world in a brighter way and appreciate life more than others, but they are also alienated from the rest of society.

Through poetry she discovered the beauty of nature and life, full of that agitation of movements and passions, which either makes the life of a person happier or more unsettled, always elevating him above the chains of all visible creatures, manifesting in him the divine principle of his spirit. People and their societies remained as before unfamiliar to Aniuta, but she befriended heroes and heroines of the utopia that poets

⁴¹⁶ Joe Andrew, *Narrative and Desire in Russian Literature, 1822-49: The Feminine and the Masculine* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1993) 135.

created in those minutes, when the earthly cold and human hostility forced them to warm their hearts under the sun of their own imagination.⁴¹⁷

Aniuta only finds solace and a real connection to the world through poetry. The narrator also creates a link between Aniuta's emotions and those of other poets, who also felt enmity and loneliness, thereby showing that Aniuta's experience in the world is not singular and she shares her fate with other poets. One such night when Aniuta is reading her own poetry, the tutor interrupts and realizes that she is a true poet [поэт]. It is notable that here Teplova uses поэт and not the gendered поэтесса. Diana Greene notes that "the very term poetess (*poetessa*) both described women poets and implied the inferiority of their poetry to that of men," thus implying "the poetess lacks objectivity, taste, genius (inventiveness, originality), and social responsibility—the cultural authority of masculinity— while suffering from an excess of subjectivity, of feelings, manifested as hysteria."⁴¹⁸ Teplova rejects the gendered word and all its stereotypes to declare Aniuta a poet in its most critically distinguished form.

After his declaration Heilfreund apologizes for trying to limit Aniuta's knowledge and tries to convince her of her true talent. He emphasizes that God gave her a gift and that she should use it. Heilfreund, who has never been to St. Petersburg, views the city and its literary world as salvation for Aniuta, a place where she can finally find acceptance, wealth, and recognition for her poetic genius. He declares that her works can be sold for profit while also helping enlighten the people and gain fame. In regard to St. Petersburg, the narrator adds

⁴¹⁷ Поэзией она узнала красоту природы и жизнь, полную той тревоги движений и страстей, которые, счастливая или смущая бытие человека, всегда возвышают его над цепью всех видимых созданий, проявляя в нем божественное начало его духа. Люди и их общества остались по прежнему незнакомыми Аняте, но она дружилась с героями и героинями утопии, которую создали поэты в минуты, когда земной холод и людская неприязненность заставляли их отогревать свое сердце на солнце своего воображения. (Gan 749)

⁴¹⁸ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 26-27.

“anyone who has not lived in the depths of the country, in complete alienation from society, does not know what magical power of attraction has this loud, vibrant, glittering beau monde for the unwilling ascetics who are buried alive in the desert.”⁴¹⁹ When Heilfreund suggests she allow him to send her poetry to St. Petersburg, where he claims people will appreciate her work, Aniuta expresses horror at such an act.

You could imagine that I would agree to sell these thoughts, these feelings, these reflections of my paradise, the best part of myself, – sell, as I sell my knitting and embroidery? Do you even know what you are demanding of me? – To open my heart and soul before the whole world, to summon the crowd and amuse it with my delights, tears, sufferings, like a performance of a puppet show for a despicable price?.. Oh, God! God! ... and in your mind such a sinful thought could be born, and your tongue could utter such an insult to me... ... And can you truly not understand that these are also my children, the life and joy of my soul? That I esteem this inspiration in myself as a gift granted to me by God for comfort and strength on earth... And for me to sell... For me to give this treasure to people for praises, for payment unworthy of it!.. And who would even value it? With what sort of rubles and kopecks will they pay me for the first free exhalation from my breast, for my first joyful tears? No, do not humiliate me with these offers.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ “кто не жил в глуши, в совершенном отчуждении от света, тот не знает, какую магическую силу притяжения имеет этот шумный, пестрый, блестящий свет для невольных отшельников, заживо погребенных в пустыне” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 760).

⁴²⁰ “Вы могли вообразить, что я соглашусь продать эти думы, эти чувства, отблески моего рая, лучшую часть себя самой,— продать, как продаю свои вязанья и вышиванья? Да знаете-ли вы, чего от меня требуете?— Открыть перед всем миром душу и сердце мое, созвать народ и тешить его их восторгами, слезами, страданиями, как представлением кукольной комедии за презренную цену?.. О, Боже! Боже! ... и в вашем уме могла родиться такая грешная мысль, и ваш язык мог произнести мне такое оскорбление... ... И неужели вы не понимаете, что это также дети мои, жизнь и отрада моей души? Что я чту в себе это вдохновение как дар, ниспосланный мне Богом в утеху и подкрепление на земле... И мне продать... мне отдать людям это

For Aniuta, the poetry feels sacred because she views it as God-given for her comfort and strength, so the suggestion to sell is an insult and the suggestion is sinful. She deems publishing her works for profit the same as exposing her heart and soul. These convictions mirror those of Gan's contemporaries who associated women writing and publishing poetry with immorality. Aniuta remains insistent on her position until her mother falls ill, and they need money for medical expenses. She allows Heilfreund to send her poetry, which she calls her "only treasure" in life [единственное сокровище] to St. Petersburg.⁴²¹ When they send Aniuta's works to the capital, she begins listening to Heilfreund's hopes for her future and dreaming of finally finding acceptance and, above all, receiving kindness.

Unfamiliar with the deceptive appearance of the beau monde and with the false titles, which are so generously lavished in it, she did not know that there is a special kind of fame, which does not glitter, does not warm, and it wholly consists of a few printed praises that are not always conscientious, of insignificant fame, of empty verbal compliments and curious gazes, more malevolent than caressing. Downtrodden from childhood, hardened by undeserved scorn of people, she linked in her soul her idea of fame with their love and friendship. She did not crave wonder, but affection, not elevation, but only equality in society, and sometimes, an amiable greeting and a reciprocal gaze to her gaze, which was full of love and desiring good.⁴²²

сокровище за похвалы, за плату, не достойную его!.. Да и кто-ж оценит? Какими рублями и копейками заплатят мне за первый вольный вздох моей груди, за первые радостные слезы мои? Нет, не унижайте меня этими предложениями" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 754).

⁴²¹ Ibid., 757.

⁴²² "Незнакомая с обманчивой наружностью света и с ложными названиями, так щедро расточаемыми в нем, она не знала, что есть особый род славы, который не блещит, не греет и весь заключается в нескольких печатных похвалах, не всегда добросовестных, в ничтожной известности, в пустых словесных комплиментах и любопытных взглядах, более недоброжелательных, чем ласкающих. От детства угнетенная, ожесточенная незаслуженным пренебрежением людей, она сроднила в душе своей мысль о славе с их любовью и дружеством. Не удивления жаждала она, а ласки, не возвышения, а только равенства в обществе,

Gan touches on important realities of the literary world and contrasts them to the young poet's naïve expectations. Teplova calls this a special type of fame, which comes from a superficial and deceitful society in the form of empty compliments and malicious curiosity. Teplova continues with biting commentary about the literary world in the capital, depicting it as uncaring and materialistic. When Heilfreund's friend passes on the poetry presumably to a literary salon, the readers are pleased, curious, and declare Aniuta "a phenomenon, genius, Russian Sappho, second Elizaveta Kul'man."⁴²³ Teplova seems to mock the typical epithets for Russian women writers, such as the "Russian Sappho" that was attributed to Bunina, among many others. The praises seem empty, and while the people want to know more about Aniuta, they do not particularly care enough to genuinely help her.

Likewise, "in regard to the publication of her poetry, Heilfreund's correspondent added that St. Petersburg book sellers will not undertake the printing on their own means" and "journalists are prepared to add the works of such a brilliant talent in their journals but they have a habit of paying for verses only to famous and already established poets."⁴²⁴ An unknown and poor woman like Aniuta has no chance of publishing her poetry, despite its quality and professionalism. The literary world appears to be just as ostracizing as Aniuta's village because it is insular and materialistic. The young poet's hopes of companionship and recognition are left unrealized and Heilfreund becomes disillusioned with the apparent myth of St. Petersburg as a literary utopia.

и, порою, добродушного привета, да ответного взора на ее исполненный любви и желания добра взор" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 759-760).

⁴²³ "Феноменом, гением, русскою Сафо, впрочем Елизаветою Кульман" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 758)

⁴²⁴ "Что-же касается до печатания ее стихотворений, то корреспондент Гейльфрейнда прибавил, что петербургские книгопродавцы не берутся издавать их на собственном иждивении" "Журналисты-же готовы поместить все произведения столь замечательного таланта в своих журналах, но они имеют обыкновение платить за стихи одним только известным и уже прославленным публикою поэтам" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 758).

When Heilfreund realizes his hopes for Aniuta's future will not come to fruition, he advises her to let go of those dreams, and this advice has similarities to the poems of advice written by Bunina and especially Teplova in "Advice to maiden D...l," in which she calls poetry a "dangerous gift" and dissuades women from publishing their works. On his deathbed, Heilfreund pleads, "try to subdue the power of your reverie... It is dangerous... Play, console yourself with poetic ideals but do not languish over the unattainable... Your pure fantasies are the children of the sky, and the heavenly is not materialized on earth. ... Do not call, do not wait in vain for perfection... you perhaps may find it – there!"⁴²⁵ These lines once again create a division between the earthly and the poetic world, but here the poetic realm is connected to the heavenly and the afterlife. Heilfreund says that the happiness and acceptance Aniuta seeks may only be found after death. According to Diana Greene, "the treatment of death as an extension of life was typical of women's, but not men's poetry" and this theme appears regularly in the works of Nadezhda Teplova.⁴²⁶ In *A Futile Gift* it seems that Aniuta will be happier after her death.

When Heilfreund dies Aniuta no longer has anyone to believe in her or her poetry. Meanwhile, her mother scolds her for reading books and being a dreamer, which she says is impractical. Her mother's wishes are realized when Aniuta is offered a position as a children's tutor for a local steward. He offers Aniuta money and medicine for her mother in return for "completely stopping [her] nightly activities, and these little poems, and the reading of books, which only disturb [your] mind."⁴²⁷ For her, this sacrifice is equivalent of taking her life, but she nonetheless acquiesces to her mother's pleading and burns all her poetry before going to work

⁴²⁵ "Старайся побороть эту силу мечтательности... Она опасна... Играй, тешься поэтическими идеалами, но не изнывай по недостижимом... Твои чистые фантазии – дети неба, а небесного не осуществить на земле. ... Не зови-же, не жди напрасно совершенства... ты найдешь его разве – там!" (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 764).

⁴²⁶ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 17.

⁴²⁷ "что совершенно оставите и ваши ночные сидения, и эти стишонки, и чтение книг, которые только расстраивают вашу голову." (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 769).

for the steward. Her earthly existence improves as she has a stable and respectable position, but away from the spiritual life she used to experience at night through literature, she becomes the “personification of a hopeless submission to fate.”⁴²⁸

The steward viewed books as something that disturbs Aniuta’s mind, but the narrator claims the opposite. “Wherever she was, in church, while teaching children, or in the parlor where people loudly talked and laughed around her, an incomprehensible uneasiness suddenly would overcome her,” her “gaze would become motionless and emotionless,” and she would stare at an object “with a complete absence of will and thought.”⁴²⁹ Without reading and writing, Aniuta loses her connection both to the earthly world around her and the spiritual world of poetry. Over time, as she does not satisfy the needs of her soul, Aniuta becomes less and less alive. The narrator directly claims that Aniuta is not mad, but that she is in the process of mentally dying. However, whenever Aniuta is alone her gaze “gradually became animated with an expression of the strongest, most ardent feeling” and her speech “radiated ringing verses from her breast.”⁴³⁰ Once the steward overhears her, he, and the rest of the town, deem Aniuta insane. The steward and Aniuta’s own mother claims that Heilfreund always knew she was mad and only fed her delusions with his praises. After such declarations Aniuta begins questioning her reality and her gift, and the narrator provides the heartbreaking aftermath of her doubts.

Her face was pale, her features motionless, as on a marble statue or on a corpse that death has not yet had time to disfigure with the seal of its icy insensibility; not an animate

⁴²⁸ “олицетворением отчаянной покорности судьбе” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 770).

⁴²⁹ “Где-б она ни находилась, в церкви, при учении детей, или в гостиной, где люди шумно разговаривали и смеялись вокруг нее, ею вдруг овладевало непонятное беспокойство,” “взор ее становился неподвижным и безчувственным;” “с совершенным отсутствием воли и мысли” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 771).

⁴³⁰ “Постепенно оживлялись выражением самого сильного, страстного чувства,” “изливались звучными стихами ее груди” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 771).

suffering, but a shadow of recent deathly torments was expressed on this pale face; and in her hair, which fell onto the face in disorder, were scattered the remains of leaves, grass, and white cherry blossoms, as on a child who hid in the bushes for a long time; in her wrinkled clothing, even torn in some places, emotionlessly having hung her head and arms, she walked alone, slowly, fearfully avoiding approaching people, not raising her eyes to the those passing by; but apparently the news of her madness has already spread among the villagers because upon meeting her they did not bow, as before, but observed her from head to toe and pointed at her to their neighbors; many even laughed surreptitiously; only women shook their heads and with sympathy repeated in their dialect: *poor woman!*⁴³¹

The previously brilliant young woman believes the criticism of the people around her and thus loses the only aspect of her life that animated and consoled her, in turn becoming what others claimed her to be – mad. Notably, only women feel sympathy toward Aniuta as she wanders in a tragic and distressed state like a corpse. In this moment she seeks comfort in a church, where she begs God not to abandon her like the others, and asking God forgiveness for dreaming of fame and earthly happiness, for which she believes God is punishing her. Lastly, she asks God to take her life because she has no more strength. This heartbreaking scene in the church ends Aniuta’s account of the past and the reader returns to the narrator and the Countess,

⁴³¹ “Лицо ее было бледно, черты неподвижны, как в мраморном изваянии, или в трупe, которого смерть не успела еще, обезобразить печатью своего ледяного безчувствия; не живое страдание, а тень только недавних, смертных мук выражалась на этом бледном лице, и в волосах, упавших на него в беспорядке, были разсеяны остатки листьев, трав и белых вишневых цветов, как у ребенка, который долго скрывался под кустами; в одежде измятой, даже местами изорванной, безчувственно опустив голову и руки, она шла одна, медленно, боязливо избегала сближения с людьми, не подымая глаз на проходящих; но, видно, весть о ее безумии разнеслась уже меж поселян, потому что, встречаясь с нею, они не кланялись, как прежде, а осматривая ее с головы до ног, указывали на нее соседям; многие даже смеялись изподтишка; только женщины качали головой и со состраданием твердили на своем наречии: *сердечная!*” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 774)

who now wish to help Aniuta recover. The Countess vows to take Aniuta to St. Petersburg, where her “outbursts of inspiration nobody will call madness” and where people “know how to value talents,” repeating Heilfreund’s earlier wishes for Aniuta.⁴³² Aniuta refuses to believe their praises and assurances that she is not mad until the doctor reveals a journal that printed Aniuta’s poem. The woman completely comes alive, as if being reunited with her own poetic gift.

“No, it is not madness... not madness and not a dream... Everything is clear, pure, and bright... I am healthy once again, happy... Yes, I have happiness, peace, glory, friends... and my poetry... my marvelous, divine gift... So give me life... I want to live... My life and my quill... my paper – they took everything from me, forced me to burn everything... But I will create again... Quickly give me my quill and life... I have happiness... I have friends... I have a gift... Quickly... quickly...” But suddenly her face stiffened, she fell on the pillows, and not with the sound of her voice but with an exhalation flew out of her breast: – “too late!”⁴³³

Teplova indicates that a true poet can only live through their connection to inspiration and their divine gift. When Aniuta doubts herself after believing the words of the uneducated masses, she begins spiritually and then physically dying. Only her own poetic gift provides enough strength to resurrect her, despite its brevity. Notably, Aniuta equates the quill to life, implying that she cannot have life without a quill. The broader implication suggests that a true poet also cannot live without writing and Aniuta is not unique in this feeling. The world becomes

⁴³² “порывы вашего вдохновения никто более не назовет безумием,” “умеют ценить таланты” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 780)

⁴³³ “Нет, не безумие... не безумие и не сон... Все ясно, чисто, светло... Я опять здорова, счастлива... Да, у меня есть счастье, спокойствие, слава, друзья... и моя поэзия... мой чудный, небесный дар... Так давайте-ж жизнь... Я хочу жить... Жизнь и мое перо... мою бумагу, – у меня все отняли, заставили все сжечь... Но я создам опять... Скорее-же перо и жизнь... У меня есть счастье... Есть друзья... Есть дар... Скорее... скорее...” Но вдруг лицо ее помертвело, она упала на подушки и не звуком голоса, а вздохом вылетело из ее груди:– “поздо!” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 781)

clear, Aniuta finds friendship, she realizes she had a true poetic gift, but this is not enough to save her. Before she dies, she thanks the Countess. “You have removed the bitter doubt from my soul, you have united me with people, your singing has given me the understanding of the choirs of celestial beings, and your kindness has strengthened my faith in the mercy of the Creator,” Aniuta expresses as she dies.⁴³⁴ The simple act of assuring Aniuta of the existence of her gift allows the young woman to find the peace and acceptance she always craved.

Joe Andrew remarks that Gan’s final work is “one of the first prose accounts in Russian of the pain, suffering and anxiety of a woman who becomes a writer.”⁴³⁵ Likewise, Catriona Kelly calls Gan “one of the few immediately post Pushkinian women writers to expand on the idea of feminine genius, most notably in her story ‘A Futile Gift.’”⁴³⁶ Gan’s depiction of Aniuta follows the notable literary tradition of the poet as having a divine talent, thus holding a special place in society that sets him apart from the rest of the ignorant crowd, as seen in works like Pushkin’s “The Prophet” and “Poet.” Even the title of the novel *A Futile Gift* provides a connection to Pushkin’s poem “A Futile Gift” written in 1828. “A futile gift, an accidental gift, / Life, why are you given to me? / Or why, with a secret fate / Are you sentenced to execution?” are the famous lines that Gan adopts, but she depicts a concrete way in which such a gift can ruin not just a poet, but a woman poet.⁴³⁷ The key passage for understanding the message to *A Futile Gift* is spoken by Heilfreund when he discovers Aniuta’s gift.

⁴³⁴ “Вы сняли горькое сомнение с души моей, вы примирили меня с людьми, ваше пение дало мне понятие о хорах небожителей, а ваша доброта укрепила во мне веру в благость Творца...” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 783)

⁴³⁵ Andrew, *Narrative and Desire*, 131.

⁴³⁶ Kelly, *A History*, 109.

⁴³⁷ “Дар напрасный, дар случайный, / Жизнь, зачем ты мне дана? / Иль зачем судьбою тайной / Ты на казнь осуждена?” (Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie*, 62).

Your gift is beautiful... but where is the calling, the goal and the reward that were appointed for it on earth? A sister in talent and in soul to these great poets, to whom you bow down, you will never share your fate with them!.. Men! How great your privileges are, how blessed your rights are! All paths of art, science, poetry, glory are open to you... A little patience, hard work, unwavering will – and you can achieve everything, while a woman, equal to you in talent and far surpassing you in feeling must vegetate in the desert, in anonymity, far from society, from all the great models, from all the means of education that her soul so craves, and all because she is a woman!.. And her gift is futile, futile are all her impulses for improvement.⁴³⁸

Heilfreund, and by extension Gan, conveys to the reader that Aniuta’s gift is equal to the great poets before her in every single way. It seems that Gan directly addresses men from her own perspective because Heilfreund says “yours” [ваши] when commenting on opportunities and blessings for men. A woman with equal talent and more elevated regarding the heart lives in obscurity, away from education, simply because of her gender. Aniuta’s gift is only futile because she is a woman. Heilfreund also emphasizes that while God gave Aniuta talent, man prevented it from flourishing. “But it is true that it is not nature that intercepts the path for a woman predestined for her from above! People, laws, societies, conditions... the most powerful have established their rights.”⁴³⁹ Gan’s works feature heroines suffering and finding peace with

⁴³⁸ “Прекрасен твой дар... но где поприще, где цель и награда, указанные ему на земле? Сестра по таланту и по душе этим великим поэтам, которым ты поклоняешься, ты никогда не сравнишься долею с ними!.. Мужчины! Как огромны ваши преимущества, как благословенны ваши права! Вам открыты все пути искусства, наук, поэзии, славы... Не много терпения, труда, непоколебимой воли – и вы можете всего достигнуть, тогда как женщина, равная вам талантами и высоко превосходящая вас сердцем, должна прозябать в пустыне, в неизвестности, далеко от света, от всех великих образцов, от всех средств к учению, которого так жаждает душа ее, от того только, что она женщина!.. И напрасен дар ее, напрасны все порывы к усовершенствованию.” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 752)

⁴³⁹ “Но, правда, ведь, не природа заслоняет женщине предназначенный ей свыше путь! Люди, законы, общества, условия... сильнее установили свои права” (Gan, *Polnoe sobranie*, 753).

God, but it seems that in *A Futile Gift* she begins questioning the social reason for gender inequality and women's suffering.

According to Joe Andrew, "love and marriage were virtually the only possible plot lines in this period [1830s-1840s], and the absence of this plot is one of the aspects of *A Futile Gift* which make it such a remarkable, innovatory work."⁴⁴⁰ Gan's sole purpose for writing this novel is the depiction of a woman writer, her conditions, and her possibilities. The poetic gift is divine and cannot be contained. Aniuta, and other poets like her, feel incomplete and almost dead without inspiration and their gift. Gan presents the idea of verses flowing from within a poet's soul, nearly unbidden. The poet knows and feels more than the average person, but the crowd does not understand and destroys the poet. Gan reimagines the prophetic poet written by males but instead gives this genius to a young woman in the countryside, creating a real setting and real scenarios to contrast the idealized vision of a poet. The crowd does not just "spit upon the altar" and "shakes [the] pedestal," as Pushkin depicts in "Poet vs the Crowd." Rather, the crowd deems a woman insane and convinces her that her talent is madness, thereby killing her in the process. Even the glittering literary world, shown as materialistic and cruel, only chases fame and will not help a true poet. In *A Futile Gift* Gan's true poet clashes with life's realities, where people do not appreciate or understand her. Writing and poetic inspiration, when in the hands of a woman, is futile because society and men prevent the poet from reaching her full potential.

Evdokiia Rostopchina

⁴⁴⁰ Andrew, *Narrative and Desire*, 9.

Evdokiia Rostopchina for a long time held arguably the most adored position among her contemporaries of the writers under consideration. From her early childhood Rostopchina was among the most notable people in the literary world due to family connections, being good friends with other poets like Mikhail Lermontov, and for hosting her own literary salon. As discussed in chapter two, Rostopchina's narrative voice embraced her femininity and the emotions traditionally associated with women, like desire and frivolity. However, she often used this femininity to discuss broader social issues and her own discontent with society and social norms. If writers of the time described Pavlova as brusque and egotistic, they described Rostopchina as the perfect society woman. Even in biographies written after her death, scholars paid more attention to her successes in high society than to her artistic craft. Rostopchina presents somewhat of an interesting contrast to the other women specifically because of her initial acceptance and high status in society. She pointedly presented herself as a woman first and a writer second, yet she often criticized conventional attitudes toward women writers. One notable poem that incorporates both her thoughts and popular contemporary views is her 1840 poem titled "How a Woman Should Write" [Как должны писать женщины].⁴⁴¹

Как я люблю читать стихи чужие,
 В них за развитием мечты певца следить.
 То соглашаться с ним, то разбирать, судить,
 и отрицать его!.. Фантазии живые,
 и думы смелые, и знойный пыль страстей,
 Все вопрошаю я с внимательным участием,
 Все испытую я; и всей душой моей
 Делю восторг певца, дружусь с его несчастьем,
 Любовью его люблю и верю ей.
 Но женские стихи особенной усладой
 Мне привлекательны; но каждый женский стих
 Волнует сердце мне, и в море дум моих
 Он отражается тоскою и отрадой.
 Но только я люблю, чтоб лучших снов своих

⁴⁴¹ Rostopchina, *Sochineniia*, 76.

Певица робкая вполне не выдавала,
 Чтоб имя призрака ее невольных грез,
 Чтоб повесть милую любви и сладких слез
 Она, стыдливая, таила и скрывала;
 Чтоб только изредка и в проблесках она
 Умела намекать о чувствах слишком нежных...
 Чтобы туманная догадок пелена
 Всегда над ропотом сомнений безнадежных,
 Всегда над песнию надежды золотой
 Вилась таинственно; чтоб эхо страсти томной
 Звучало трепетно под ризой мысли скромной;
 Чтоб сердца жар и блеск подернут был золой,
 Как лавою вулкан; чтоб глубию необъятной
 Ее заветная казалась нам мечта
 И, как для ней самой, для нас была свята;
 Чтоб речь неполная улыбкою понятной,
 Слезою теплою дополнена была;
 Чтоб внутренний порыв был скован выраженьем,
 Чтобы приличие боролось с увлеченьем
 И слово каждое чтоб мудрость стерегла.
 Да, женская душа должна в тени светиться,
 Как в урне мраморной лампы скрытой луч,
 Как в сумерки луна сквозь оболочку туч,
 И, согревая жизнь, незримая, теплиться.

How I love to read others' poems,
 To follow the development of the poet's dream in them.
 At times to agree with him, at times to analyze, judge,
 And contradict him!... His lively fantasies,
 And brave meditations, and the burning ardor of his passions,
 I question everything with attentive participation,
 I experience everything; and with my whole soul
 I share the poet's rapture, befriend his misfortune,
 I love with his love and believe it.
 But women's poems appeal to me with special delight
 But every woman's verse
 Agitates my heart, and in the sea of my thoughts
 It is reflected in anguish and consolation.
 But I would only love it if the delicate poetess
 Did not completely reveal her best dreams,
 If she, shamefully, would conceal and hide
 The name of the spirit of her unbidden reverie,
 And the story of her dear love and sweet tears;
 If she only could hint rarely and in small peeks,
 At feelings too tender...
 If the foggy shroud of guesses would mysteriously be woven

Always over the murmurs of hopeless doubts
 Always over the song of golden hopes;
 If the echo of languid passion
 Were heard quivering under the vestment of a demure thought;
 If the heat and sparkle of the heart were covered by cinders,
 Like a volcano under lava; if her sacred dream
 Appeared to us as an immeasurable depth
 And if, just as for her, her incomplete speech
 Would be sacred to us;
 If her incomplete speech would be supplemented
 By an intelligible smile and a warm tear;
 If her inner outburst would be shackled by expression,
 If propriety would fight with passion
 And if wisdom would guard every word,
 Yes, a woman's soul should shine in the shadow,
 Like the ray of a lamp hidden in a marble vessel,
 Like the moon, through the cover of clouds at twilight,
 Glimmers unseen, warming life.⁴⁴²

Rostopchina first describes her experience as a reader of poetry, who follows the thoughts of others through their poems and freely forms her opinions by dissecting and judging the verses. Then, she turns to women's poetry and tells women not to write and publish their deepest feelings and honest thoughts. However, unlike the advice of other poets, she frames her work as a reflection on personal preference. She says she loves when women "do not completely reveal her best dreams" [лучших снов своих певица робкая вполне не выдавала], shackle "their inner outbursts by expression" [внутренний порыв был скован выраженьем] and "conceal the story of her dear love and sweet tears" [повесть милую любви и сладких слез скрывала]. Rostopchina creates a contrast to the works written by Teplova, among others, who defined a "them," or an "other" portion of the reading public who would not understand the feelings a woman poet conveys and instead adopts the voice of the "other" for herself, citing propriety and wisdom as her reasons for such advice.

⁴⁴² Ibid., 76.

Rostopchina evokes a feminine vulnerability in presenting the true emotions of a woman's heart to the public. Teplova's "Advice" featured the image of a woman bringing her verses to the public like a sacrifice for slaughter, so she advises women to write their thoughts privately and keep them hidden from the public. Rostopchina too tells women poets to hide their genuine emotions and keep their soul hidden in their works, but not because of a cold and critical public. She seems to feel that a woman's voice gains value in its discretion and tact. Despite this position, however, Rostopchina herself included rather powerful personal emotions in her work, especially in the poems about the poetic gift. In one such poem, Rostopchina emulates other women writers by directly warning the reader away from the life of a woman poet due to people's jealousy over one's poetic gift and the cruel comments of society in her 1841 poem titled "To Our Future Poets" [Нашим будущим поэтам].

Не трогайте ее, - зловещей сей цевницы!..
 Она губительна... Она вам смерть дает!..
 Как семимужняя библейская вдовица,
 На избранных своих она грозу зовет!..
 Не просто, не в тиши, не мирною кончиной, -
 Но преждевременно, противника рукой -
 Поэты русские свершают жребий свой,
 Не кончив песни лебединой!..

Есть где-то дерево, на дальних островах,
 За океанами, где вечным зноем пышет
 Экватор пламенный - где в вековых лесах,
 В растеньях, в воздухе, и в бессловесных дышит
 Всесильный, острый яд: - и горе пришлецу,
 Когда под деревом он ищет, утомленный,
 И отдых и покой!! - Сном смерти усыпленный,
 Он близок к своему концу...

Он не отторгнется от места рокового,
 Не встанет... не уйдет... ему спасенья нет!..
 Убийца-дерево не выпустит живого
 Из-под ветвей своих!.. Так точно, о поэт,
 И слава хищная неверным упоеньем
 Тебя предательски издалека манит!

Но ты не соблазнишься, - беги!!, она дарит
Одним кровавым разрушением!

Смотри: - существенный, торгующий наш век,
Столь положительный, насмешливый, холодный,
Поэзии, певцам и песням их изрек,
Зевая, приговор вражды неблагородной.
Он без внимания к рассказам и мечтам,
Он не сочувствует высоким вдохновеньям, -
Но зависть знает он... и мстит своим гоненьем
Венчанным лавром головам!..

Do not touch it, - this ominous reed!...
It is fatal... It will give you death!...
Like a Biblical widow with seven husbands,
It calls the thunder on her chosen ones!...
Not simply, not in quietude, not in peaceful death, -
But prematurely, at the hands of opponents –
Russian poets complete their lot,
Without finishing their swan song!...

There is a tree somewhere, on distant islands
Past oceans, where the fiery equator blazes
With eternal heat – where in centuries old forests,
In the flora, in the air, and in the silent breathes
An almighty, pungent poison: - and woe to the traveler,
When under the tree he seeks, exhausted,
Rest and peace!! – Lulled by the slumber of death,
He is close to his end...

He will not tear himself away from the fatal place,
Will not get up... will not leave... he has no salvation!...
The killer-tree will not release a living being
From its branches!... Just like this, oh poet,
The predatory glory will betrayingly call to you
From a distance with deceptive intoxication!
But do not be seduced, - run!!, it bestows
Only bloody destruction!

Look: - our material, commercial century,
So positive, mocking, cold, while yawning
Declared the sentence of ignoble enmity
To poetry, poets, and poems.
It is without attention to stories and dreams,
It does not empathize with lofty inspirations, -
But it knows jealousy... and gets revenge with its persecution

Of heads crowned with laurel!...⁴⁴³

Rostopchina's poem features a male protagonist, and the narrator has no marked gender, so the poem does not contain a gender specific message but instead provides a universal idea applicable to all Russian poets. Rostopchina creates a metaphor of a seductive yet poisonous killer-tree [убийца-дерево] in a distant land, under which travelers seek "rest and peace" [отдых и покой]. The tree represents the dangers of pursuing the life of a poet but specific to the context of the 1840s when this poem was written. Bunina's poetry, written decades before, depicts the readers' growing concern about the benefit of poetry in everyday lives, and by the 1840s, poetry, especially that focused on feelings, was becoming unpopular in favor of radical poetry and utilitarian prose.⁴⁴⁴ Thus, society "has declared the sentence of ignoble enmity" [приговор вражды неблагородной] and does not "empathize with lofty inspirations" [сочувствует высоким вдохновеньям].

The poet may gain fame, yet inspiration will play a destructive role in his life because society no longer values poetry, but instead shows only enmity. Instead of the hopeful and positive or defiant tone Pushkin features in his poems about the destiny of the poet, or the concept of isolation and lack of appreciation that Teplova addresses, Rostopchina cites more malicious ideas like deception, revenge, and persecution as destroying a poet. As she tells women to conceal their feelings, she tells everyone – male and female – to avoid the literary world created by the "material and commercial century" [существенный, торгующий век]. The poetic gift, in her world, brings death to the poet. The poet, however, cannot walk away once he

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 85.

⁴⁴⁴ Kelly, *A History*, 44.

feels the power of the “ominous reed” [зловещая цевница] and smells the “almighty pungent poison” [всесильный острый яд] of the tree.

“To Future Poets” describes her own feelings regarding the changing times and shifting priorities in society. Despite the criticism she began receiving with a new wave of literary critics in the 1850s, Rostopchina continued to write poetry. By the time she writes “To My Critics” [Моим критикам] fifteen years after “To Future Poets” in 1856, Rostopchina’s tone turns resigned and apathetic to the critique of her contemporaries.

Я не дивлюсь и, право, не сержусь я,
 Что на меня так злобно восстают:
 Журнальною хулой скорей горжусь я,
 И клеветы мне сердца не кольнут.
 Я разошлася с новым поколеньем,
 Прочь от него идет стезя моя;
 Понятьями, душой и убежденьем
 Принадлежу другому миру я.
 Иных богов я чту и призываю
 И говорю иным я языком;
 Я им чужда, смешна,- я это знаю,
 Но не смущаюсь перед их судом.
 Я не ищу коварным наущеньем
 Сословье на сословье подстрекнуть;
 Я не хочу мистическим любленьем
 И ханжеством пред светом прихвастнуть;
 К разбойникам я не стремлюсь с объятьем,
 Разврату в дань хвалы не приношу;
 Я прах отца не шевелю проклятьем
 И пасквилей на мертвых не пишу!
 Без горечи, без ропота, без гнева
 Смотрю на жизнь, на мир и на людей...
 Зато и справа слышатся и слева
 Анафемы над головой моей!
 Сонм братьев и друзей моих далеко -
 Он опочил, окончив песнь свою.
 Немудрено, что жрицей одинокой
 У алтаря пустого я стою!

I am not surprised and, truly, I am not angry
 That they so viciously rise against me.

Of journalistic insult I am sooner proud,
 And slander will not pierce my heart.
 I have drifted from the new generation,
 My path leads away from it;
 With my ideas, soul, and convictions
 I belong to a different world.
 Different gods I revere and summon,
 And I speak a different language.
 To them I am foreign, funny, - I know this,
 But I am not embarrassed before their judgement.
 I do not seek with cunning instigation
 To incite a class on another class;
 I do not want to boast in front of society
 With mystical love and pietism;
 I do not strive toward rascals with embraces,
 I do not bring praises for debauchery as tribute
 The remains of my father I do not bother with curses
 And I do not write libel about the dead!
 Without bitterness, without discontent, without wrath
 I look at life, the world, and at people...
 But on the right and on the left are heard
 Anathemas over my head!
 The assembly of my brothers and friends is far away –
 It has rested, having finished its song.
 It is unsurprising, that as a lonely priestess
 In front of an empty altar I stand!⁴⁴⁵

Rostopchina's persistence in keeping up her writing and her description in the work about herself do show pride in her convictions and her separation from the new generation. She makes bold assertions directly addressing the people attacking her and her views. Rostopchina describes the modern generation as people who only view life with bitterness, discontent, and wrath [горечь, ропот, гнев], who create discord between classes, who elevate "rascals" [разбойник] and "debauchery" [разврат], and who curse their forefathers. Rostopchina has pride in herself and her poetic gift, so she looks down at others from her elevated position. She also takes solace in her "ideas, soul, and convictions" [понятьями, душой и убеждением] and her belonging "to a different world" [другой мир] and praying to "different gods" [иные боги]. This pride,

⁴⁴⁵ Rostopchina, *Sochineniia*, 227.

however, takes on a somber note at the end of the poem. Her last lines relay her complete desolation with the state of the literary world, using a powerful image of standing alone at an empty altar. As one of the last Romantic poets in the century, the poignant metaphor expresses her loneliness in life.

While she achieved fame in the 1830s, in the 1840s her reputation was declining, and in 1852 critics directly attacked her for refusing to conform to the new mainstream literary conventions of socially critical prose. She had increasingly religious, patriotic, and antirevolutionary beliefs, which directly contrasted with her contemporaries, and for this she was called immoral, boring, trivial, among other criticisms.⁴⁴⁶ For example, writer Nikolai Chernyshevsky wrote in 1856, “a coquette, generally speaking, can only be a woman with a dry, evil heart and an empty head. And if a woman can become a coquette, she will remain a coquette to the end of her life... Now judge whether the persona that Countess Rostopchina favors [in her poetry] belongs to the usual woman of society... She has found all her happiness only at balls... in the course of the last twelve years.”⁴⁴⁷ Instead of heeding her critics, Rostopchina instead wrote against them and found comfort in her poetic gift.

Rostopchina’s poetry provides a reflection of contemporary values in relation to poetry. She encouraged women to conceal their true feelings and use a poetic persona in their works. In this way, she tried to shield women from readers’ judgment and speculation. In a way, she presents the readers as unworthy of knowing a woman’s inner world, which provides consistency with other women poets. When addressing all poets, she advised them away from seeking fame, which she deems “predatory” [хищный], “deceptive” [неверный], and capable of “betrayal”

⁴⁴⁶ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 97.

⁴⁴⁷ Quoted in Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 99.

[предательский]. Her advice to poets is to avoid the new movements of literary convention that turned away from the poetry of inspiration. In one of her last poems, Rostopchina addresses her critics directly and expresses pride in her poetic gift and her generation of poetry despite the loneliness she feels. Rostopchina proclaims herself superior to others because of her poetic gift, which provides a contrast to Bunina's devaluation of her own craft and Teplova's advice dissuading women from publishing poetry.

Karolina Pavlova

In terms of poetic identity Karolina Pavlova is most similar to Anna Bunina. As discussed in chapter two, Pavlova tried to emphasize her identity as a poet and deemphasize her identity as a woman, distancing herself from emotions and anything else considered feminine. As Heldt describes Pavlova "repeatedly used images of the self, embedding them in a body of poetry whose varied themes and forms seem, at first reading, to disguise the fact that a female self is present in them at all."⁴⁴⁸ Kelly, however, sees an evolution in Pavlova's identity, saying, "if her earlier work often expresses suspicion of the feminine, her later work expresses a confidence in her own genius which escapes the established traditions of feminine poetry, yet embraces femininity as part of identity."⁴⁴⁹ Pavlova, like Gan's description of Aniuta, rejected the gendered title *poetessa* and referred to herself as poet [поэт]. Despite her disassociation with her gender, Pavlova was also conscious of the problem and addressed it in her letter to Ivan Panaev in 1854.

⁴⁴⁸ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 111.

⁴⁴⁹ Kelly, *A History*, 98.

Only in the last part of my letter I resolve to express what most lays heavily in my heart, that which hit a raw nerve in your criticism. I did not renounce my gender and did not overcome its weaknesses; say what you will but a woman-poet always remains more woman than poet, and the vanity of an author is always weaker than the vanity of a woman for her; tell her that you paid no attention to her verses, she will be disappointed; but tell her that she did not leave any impression on you, did not leave a memory, and she will be incomparably disappointed.⁴⁵⁰

In the letter Pavlova directly addresses the tension between being a woman and being a writer but concludes that gender will always resonate stronger with her. Pavlova was often criticized for being unfeminine, masculine, and emotionless. For example, Ivan Aksakov wrote “her sincerity of soul exists only in the form of art, all of it has gone into poetry, into verse, instead of feeling there is a sort of external exaltation. You feel that, of course, she herself does not realize that she loves no one, that for her nothing is cherished, dear, holy...”⁴⁵¹ Even when Belinskii praised her translation of Pushkin in 1839, he praised her “astonishing talent” and the translation having “concision, masculine energy, and noble simplicity.”⁴⁵² Whether in a positive or negative interpretation, critics and contemporaries often associated Pavlova with masculine traits and, contrastingly, associated her literary rival with feminine traits.

⁴⁵⁰ “Я только в конце письма своего решаюсь высказать вам, что у меня более всего лежит на сердце, то, что в вашей критике задело меня за живое. Я не отреклась от своего пола и не победила его слабостей; что ни говори, женщина-поэт всегда остается более женщиной, чем поэтом, и самолюбие авторское в ней слабее самолюбия женского; скажите ей, что вы оставили без внимания ее стихи, ей будет досадно; но скажите, что она сама не произвела на вас никакого впечатления, не оставила в вас никакого воспоминания, ей будет несравненно досаднее” (qtd. in Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 330-331).

⁴⁵¹ Quoted in Pavlova, *A Double Life*, viii-ix.

⁴⁵² “Удивительный талант,” “этой сжатости, этой мужественной энергии, благородной простоте” (Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 446).

Perhaps another reason why Pavlova received negative criticism is the insistence on her own talent and poetic genius. This insistence appeared during the Pavlovs' salon. According to the scholar Donald Loewen, these salons, which hosted famous attendees including Ivan Turgenev, Afanasii Fet, and Konstantin Aksakov, gained Pavlova considerable attention.⁴⁵³ Pavlova used these salons as a means of promoting her own poetry, for which she received a lot of criticism from her peers. These same contemporaries also critiqued the poet as being cold and brusque, with Aleksandr Nikitenko taking it a step further by saying Pavlova bored everyone “with her incessant talking and obtrusiveness,” especially because “the only topic of conversation is herself” (qtd. in Loewen 632). These types of remarks perhaps stem from Pavlova's directness and outspoken personality, which bleeds through to her poems.

Pavlova's poem “No! Not for them is your Sacred Gift” [Нет, не им твой дар священный], written in 1840 continues the themes of Teplova's “Advice” by addressing a female poet and having similar messages of advising women to stop writing. Pavlova, however, has a completely different tone than Teplova.

Нет, не им твой дар священный!
 Нет, не им твой чистый стих!
 Нет, ты с песнью вдохновенной
 Не пойдешь на рынок их!

Заглушишь ты дум отзвывы,
 И не дашь безумцам ты
 Толковать твои порывы,
 Клеветать твои мечты.

То, чем сердце трепетало,
 Сбережешь ты от людей;
 Не сорвешь ты покрывала
 С девственной души своей.

⁴⁵³ Donald Loewen, “Poetry, Perceptions and Personality: Finding Karolina Pavlova in Her Autobiographical Prose,” *The Slavic and East European Journal* 47.4 (2003): 631.

Тайну грустных вдохновений
 Не узнают никогда;
 Ты, как призрак сновидений,
 Пронесешься без следа.

Безглагольна перед светом,
 Будешь петь в тиши ночей:
 Гость ненужный в мире этом,
 Неизвестный соловей.

No, not for them, is your sacred gift!
 Not, not for them is your pure verse!
 No, with your inspired song
 You will not go to their market!

You will silence the echoes of thought,
 And you will not let the madmen
 Construe your bursts of feelings,
 Slander your dreams.

That, which made your heart tremble,
 You will spare from people;
 You will not throw off the covers
 From your maidenly soul.

The secret of your sad inspirations
 They will never discover;
 You, like the phantom of dreams,
 Will pass through without a trace.

Voiceless in the light,
 You will sing in the silence of nights:
 An unwelcome guest in this world,
 An unknown nightingale.

Pavlova's first line directly divides the woman poet from the critics, claiming that the poet's sacred gift is "not for them" [не им]. This "them" refers to the men who review and criticize the poet's "pure verse" [чистый стих] and "inspired song" [песня вдохновенная] at the "market" [рынок], which further creates a divide between the writers and reviewers. The poets are associated with the divine realm of poetry and the reviewers with the earthly and materialistic, as mundane sellers in a market. These "madmen" [безумцы] only discuss bursts of

the poet's emotion and slander the poet's dreams. It is notable that Teplova's "Advice to maiden D...I" uses the imperative form of verbs, like "hide" [скрывай] and "throw" [брось] when addressing the reader, while Pavlova uses the future tense of the verbs like to silence [заглушишь] and to sing [будешь петь]. Teplova's poem includes active command but encourages the reader to stop writing poetry, but Pavlova's poem adds the idea of inevitability that the writer will stop sharing her poetry with the masses. Because of them, the young female poet will keep hidden her inner feelings and will "not throw off the covers of her innocent soul" [не сорвешь покрывала с девственной души]. She will pass without a trace like a ghost, they will never know her inner world, and she will remain without a voice.

Unlike Teplova's almost pleading tone, Pavlova adopts Pushkin's feelings of superiority in the idea of "not for them." It sounds like the crowd does not deserve to learn of the inner world of the woman poet, which also appears similar to Rostopchina's "How Women Should Write." She says that critics who slander dreams and comment on passion without feeling are those who will never understand the secret of inspiration and will never comprehend poetry specifically because they themselves do not have the poetic gift. The last lines, in contrast to the strong stance presented in the rest of the poem, create a bleak image of an unwanted singing nightingale who sings its song at night when nobody can hear it. This image of fragility explains why the female writers try to shield women from their society and discourage the pursuit of poetry. Each of the previously mentioned women give advice to other women and their main argument rests in their attempt to protect them from the cruel and ignorant "other," whether it is the audience or critics.

Pavlova continues her line of thought in her dedication in the novella *A Double Life*, written in 1846, a story featuring Pavlova's commentary on society restricting women.

Вам этой мысли приношенье,
 Моей поэзии привет,
 Вам этот труд уединенья,
 Рабыни шума и сует.
 Вас всех, не встреченных Цецилий,
 Мой грустный вздох назвал в тиши,
 Вас всех. Психей, лишенных крылий,
 Немых сестер моей души!
 Дай Бог и вам, семье безвестной,
 Средь грешной лжи хоть сон святой,
 В неволе жизни этой тесной
 Хоть взрыв мгновенный жизни той.

To you is this thought's offering,
 The greeting of my poetry,
 To you is this work of isolation,
 You slaves of noise and commotion.
 You all, the unencountered Cecilys,
 My sad sigh called out in silence,
 All of you. Psyches, deprived of wings,
 The mute sisters of my soul!
 May God give to you, the unknown family,
 At least a sacred dream amidst the sinful lie,
 In the captivity of this restricted life
 At least a momentary burst of that life.⁴⁵⁴

The poet's dedication repeats the words "you" [вам] and "you all" [вам всем] addressing a female audience. These are the Psyches deprived of wings, the silent sisters of her soul. This implies that the following story of Cecily is not singular, that there are many women who share a similar fate, whose voices have been silenced. Other writers often dedicated their works to specific people, most often just one reader. Pavlova, however, addresses many women and thus creates a feeling of solidarity among women. The following work, as she tells them, will give them a glimpse of some other sacred life, as they live on this earth in "sinful deceit" [грешной лжи].

⁴⁵⁴ Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 231.

The women are mute, they live in sinful deceit, and they are held in captivity. These bold statements coincide with the image of her women readers being “slaves of noise and commotion” [рабыни шума и сует], who value society. These mute sisters, as Olga Peters Hasty proclaims, are those women who could not stifle gender norms and surrendered to society’s temptations, breaking the link between themselves and their poetic self.⁴⁵⁵ Hasty also notices that in her poem addressing Rostopchina, Pavlova calls her a “slave of commotion” [сует рабыня] Based on the poem dedicated to Rostopchina and her use of the same term in her dedication, Rostopchina might be one of the mute sisters to whom the poem is dedicated. Herein lies Pavlova’s basic premise that “far from being a source of freedom, a free-wheeling lifestyle prevents the woman poet from connecting with her inner self that Pavlova designates as the locus of creativity.”⁴⁵⁶ Pavlova, like other writers, creates a distinction between the poetic and earthly realm and states that as one begins valuing society and its pleasures, they begin to lose their poetic inspiration.

Comparing this dedication to the poem “No! Not for them is your sacred gift...” the similarities make it seem as though she addresses the same people. These are Psyches deprived of wings, the silenced women whom she appears to represent as anonymous nightingales in the previously mentioned poem. If in the first poem she spoke of women who should not reveal their soul and keep their poetic life hidden, the dedication describes the consequences of a life lived without access to the higher poetic world. Another intensification of the message appears in the critique of society and critics. In the first poem the poet *chooses* to keep her poetry hidden due to the critics’ cruelty and ignorance. In the dedication, Pavlova features a bolder image of society completely *depriving* such women of their poetic inspiration. In the last lines of her dedication

⁴⁵⁵ Hasty, *How Women*, 35.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

Pavlova wishes for the women to experience even a little of the higher poetic world. This positive note implies that she deems the problems and consequences of access to poetry to be outweighed by the beauty she finds in her poetic gift.

The dedication serves as a foundation for the rest of *A Double Life*. This novel's treatment of womanhood is considered in another chapter, but the novel also contains Pavlova's important ideas concerning a woman's poetic inspiration. According to Greene, in *A Double Life* Pavlova "shows that society, in order to make young women 'marriageable,' condemns them to banal, empty, soul-destroying lives strictly governed by propriety. As a result, women lose their inherent creativity and even the so-called good matches they manage to make— marriages to rich men— bring them nothing but unhappiness."⁴⁵⁷ In *A Futile Gift* Gan separated the earthly world from the poetic, designating daytime for living and working as an ordinary person and nighttime for connecting to the poetic realm and developing poetry. Pavlova also creates this division in *A Double Life* because the main plot of the story features Cecily's impending marriage in the daytime but at night Cecily's creative imagination takes hold and she enters the world of poetry. To further separate the two worlds, most of the story is written in prose but Cecily's dreams are written in verse.

Before her first poetic dream Cecily is preparing for bed and thinking of her infatuation with Dmitrii, but suddenly a strange feeling overcomes her. "But at the same time in the midst of these happy thoughts a strange and inexplicable one kept breaking through, a heavy and persistent feeling, as if she were being made to guess a riddle, find a word, remember a name and was not able to..."⁴⁵⁸ In the previous chapter there was a discussion of Cecily's "mental corset"

⁴⁵⁷ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 156.

⁴⁵⁸ Pavlova, *A Double Life*, 8. All subsequent quotations from this text in this chapter will be noted by a parenthetical reference providing the page number of the quotation.

caused by her upbringing, which made genuine feelings, emotions, poetry, and intellectual life completely foreign to her. However, this quote shows that Cecily instinctually felt that some part of her life was hidden but was attempting to reveal itself. This hidden aspect caused Cecily to dream in verse.

The first night Cecily arrives in a poetic utopia in a lush garden under the moonlight, where everything is in harmony. In this poetic realm Cecily meets *him*, someone “powerful and stern” who looks “into her soul with his soul” (Pavlova 9).⁴⁵⁹ Thus, Cecily meets her guide in the poetic realm who meets her every night to help her understand the higher world. Diana Greene calls him a “mysterious, ‘stern,’ reproachful but ‘loving’ male figure who appears in Cecilia’s dreams each night—a fitting representative of the sadistic but supposedly loving God” found in some of Pavlova’s works.⁴⁶⁰ The scholar Ginger B. Lazarus believes he can represent a “lover, father, friend, mentor, master, muse, and divine spirit” but the key to his existence rests with the poet who died just before the events of the story. he also represents a poet who died just before the events of the story begin.⁴⁶¹ Just as he died before she knew he existed, her poetic potential died before she was aware of it. The mysterious man in her dreams introduces himself on the second night, saying “I am your sadness in the tumult of a ball / I am the secret of your dream / That you could not reach with reason, / That you have understood with your heart” (Pavlova

“А между тем сквозь эту веселую мысль проглядывала беспрестанно, совсем некстати, мысль странная и неизъяснимая, чувство тягостное и неотступное, как будто бы ей должно было разгадать какую-то загадку, найти какое-то слово, вспомнить какое-то имя, которое ей не давалось...” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 236).

⁴⁵⁹ “полон строгой мочи,” “глядит он в душу ей душой” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 237).

⁴⁶⁰ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 158.

⁴⁶¹ Ginger B. Lazarus, “Living Poetry: The Mute Poet and the Double Life,” *Essays on Karolina Pavlova* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001) 88.

18)⁴⁶² The man represents the poetic inspiration that always seemed to follow Cecily but something which she herself never had the knowledge to understand.

When she asks whether this nightly world is real, the poet answers “Perhaps everything there was false, / Perhaps only here you are awake,” which questions the nature of diurnal reality for a poet and asks in which world they feel alive.⁴⁶³ For the first time, the man directly tells Cecily that her mind has been “swaddled,” preventing her from knowing the “freedom of feeling and the kingdom of thoughts.”⁴⁶⁴ He tells Cecily that her dreams allow her to get a glimpse of the poetic realm, but that which she can only see in a dream “a genius will learn while awake.”⁴⁶⁵ The poet’s description of Cecily’s life allows one to speculate that Cecily was born a poet and would have had access to her poetic gift, had her upbringing not limited her mind. Now, Cecily belongs to the “world of the blind,” so she will forget everything she learns in her dreams.⁴⁶⁶ Society’s damage on her mind irreversibly severed the connection between Cecily and the creative world.

During the third night the mysterious stranger tells Cecily about the earthly world and being a poet among the crowd. Pavlova uses conventional images of the poet standing apart from society but also she questions the purpose of poets on earth. The man addresses other poets by saying: “You drink to the dregs in vain / The bitter cup of life; / Your faith is alien to men, / They do not need your song” (Pavlova 29).⁴⁶⁷ The poetic gift, as it appears in the statement, is futile because poets suffer on earth in vain and nobody values them. The poet also questions why

⁴⁶² “Я грусть твоя средь шума бала, / Я таинство твоей мечты, / Чего умом не постигала, / Что сердцем понимала ты.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 242-243)

⁴⁶³ “Быть может, там всё было ложно, / Быть может, здесь ты наяву.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 243)

⁴⁶⁴ “спеленали ум” “Свободы чувств и царства дум” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 243)

⁴⁶⁵ “наяву узнает гений” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 243)

⁴⁶⁶ “стране слепых” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 244)

⁴⁶⁷ “Жизни горестные чаши / Пьете тщетно вы до дна: / Людям чужды веры ваши, / Ваша песнь им не нужна” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 251).

poets are sent down to earth: “But why meet these reproaches / Why perish vainly in the shadows, / Prophets without usefulness, / Whom God sends to earth today?” (Pavlova 28).⁴⁶⁸

Pavlova transforms the image of the great prophets in Romantic poetry, as in Pushkin’s “Prophet,” into a useless prophet sent to earth just to endure reproaches from the crowd. Even though the crowd does not understand his works and the poet will never receive praise, he continues to write not for society, but “so that the poet’s alleluia / will rise above earth’s murmur” (Pavlova 29).⁴⁶⁹

During the sixth night the man offers Cecily the truth on being a woman with a poetic gift. Cecily believes herself to be in love with Dmitri, so the poet explains the love she seeks in Dmitri is her “dark, mute thought” misidentifying her love because, as the poet claims, “it is in me your soul believes, / Me that you love, not him” (Pavlova 65).⁴⁷⁰ This seems to suggest that a woman with an unrealized poetic gift will always yearn for a life with feeling and inspiration, while on earth and in society she can only access this emotion in marriage. The poet also says, “thus let your fate turn out a bitter one, / the bright paradise of hopes vanish,” which indicates that Cecily can either live an earthly life or a poetic life, she cannot live both (Pavlova 65).⁴⁷¹ Cecily finds her voice only on the seventh night, which she uses to respond to the truths of life which the poet has given her previously.

Оставь меня, о строгий гений!
Ты всё печальней и мрачней;
Боюсь твоих я откровений,
Любви безжалостной твоей.

⁴⁶⁸ “Но зачем встречать упреки, / Гибнуть даром в нашей мгле, / Бесполезные пророки, / Бог вас ныне шлет земле?” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 250).

⁴⁶⁹ “Но чтоб поэта аллилуйя / Неслась над ропотом земли” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 251).

⁴⁷⁰ “думой темною, немою” “В меня ты веруешь душою, / Меня ты любишь, не его.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 276).

⁴⁷¹ “Так пусть удел свершится строгий, / Надежд исчезнет светлый рай!” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 276)

Пускай к вседневной, пошлой доле
Свою я душу приучу:
Я не хочу предвидеть боле,
Я боле ведать не хочу!

Зачем напрасно рвешь от мира
Немую узницу его
И без земного жить кумира
Земное учишь существо?⁴⁷² (287)

Leave me alone, stern spirit!
You grow sadder and gloomier;
I fear your revelations,
Your pitiless love.

Let me instruct my soul
For its daily, trivial fate:
I do not wish to foresee more,
No more do I wish to know!

Why do you tear in vain
Its mute prisoner from the world,
And teach an earthly being
To live without an earthly idol. (Pavlova 81)

In the division between the poetic world and mundane life, Cecily boldly claims that she wants to choose earthly life. She says that he “always turns [her] happiness to lies” and makes her question her life.⁴⁷³ She fears his truths and claims she no longer wants to experience her dreams [ведать] because her knowing the truth of the poetic world will hinder her life on earth. This is the first time in the poetry we have examined that a person is getting advice on the poetic gift and wishes to reject inspiration. Pavlova suggests that it is easier to live life without knowing poetic inspiration than to know a higher truth and not be able to act on it. Hasty remarks that “far from promoting escapism, Cecily's dream world now intrudes on and clouds the blissful,

⁴⁷² Ibid., 287.

⁴⁷³ “радость обращаешь в ложь” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 287)

carefully engineered ignorance of her waking hours. Her daily life comes to be seen as an escape from the truths she recognizes in her sleep.”⁴⁷⁴

After Cecily claims she does not wish to know the truth, on the eighth day Dmitri kisses her cheek, an action that can be considered a physical link to the earthly realm, but she pulls away. “Something had awakened in her and was glowing brighter than the stars of the night. Through all the mental shrouds, through all the ignorance, through all the falsehood of her life shone a gleam of heavenly truth, a sincere feeling, a revelation of the soul... a minute flowed by, perhaps unique in her earthly existence... and she quietly went back again into the room and sat down lost in thought” (Pavlova 89).⁴⁷⁵

After this moment she feels a true pull toward the other world and craves to be alone with her thoughts. That night, when she meets the poet, “Dim understanding awakened in her, / The prophetic voice filled her heart; / And, leaning into his embrace, / Suddenly her tears poured forth” (Pavlova 91).⁴⁷⁶ Cecily felt on earth a glimpse of the higher world, so when she returns to the poet that night, she has a full realization of what she cannot have on earth. She has gained a dark understanding of the world. “The time has come!... her soul is ready!...” implies she could accept the poetic gift (Pavlova 92).⁴⁷⁷ As Hasty indicates, Cecily has two options to “pursue uncritically her day-to-day life... ..or she can dedicate herself to a higher ideal that society will disdain.”⁴⁷⁸ However, Cecily is engaged to Dmitri and therefore bound to earth, so the narrator

⁴⁷⁴ Hasty, “Karolina Pavlova’s,” 60.

⁴⁷⁵ “Сквозь все умственные пелены, сквозь все незнания, сквозь всю ложь ее жизни сверкнул отблеск небесной истины, чувство искреннее, откровение душевное... протекла минута, может быть единственная в ее земном бытии... и она тихо вошла опять в комнату и села задумчиво.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 293)

⁴⁷⁶ “Темные проснулись в ней понятия, / Грудь ее наполнил вещей глас; / И она, склонясь в его объятия, / Током слез внезапно залилась.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 294)

⁴⁷⁷ “Пора пришла!.. душа готова!..” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 295)

⁴⁷⁸ Hasty, “Karolina Pavlova’s,” 61.

says she must return to earth, where she has “no heavenly protection” or “help from above” because she is “handed to fate as a slave” (Pavlova 92).⁴⁷⁹

The night before the wedding the poet bids farewell to Cecily: “Learn to live with outward grief, / Forgetting youthful dreams of Eden, / Share no more with anyone / The secret of inconsolable thought (Pavlova 103).⁴⁸⁰ Cecily will never again experience the world of inspiration and “life will mercilessly fulfill” her wish of living in the earthly realm.⁴⁸¹ Fate will “carry out to excess / its sentence over” Cecily and even though she will find some happiness in “the midst of struggles,” she will pay a “dear price” for that wealth (Pavlova 104).⁴⁸² He sends her “to her sentence / only strong in faith, / without hoping for support, / defenseless and alone.”⁴⁸³ The farewell implies that Cecily will live an unhappy life on earth and that losing her connection to the poetic world does not help her life but only makes it darker. The narrator fills the scene of her wedding with various images of death, lamenting both Cecily’s future and her loss of the poetic gift.

The final verses of the poem come directly from the woman narrator, who describes her own thoughts and feelings toward both her work and the poetic gift. Depicting the writing process as thought having lived within the poet “free and bright” and then crossing “into the outer world,” the narrator indicates that poetry arises from within, a phenomenon described by other writers as well.⁴⁸⁴ Even as she writes, it also occurs to the poet “That it's time for me to

⁴⁷⁹ “Рабой ты отдана судьбе; / Защиты нет тебе небесной, / Нет свыше помощи тебе!” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 295)

⁴⁸⁰ “Жить учишь в тревоге внешней, / Юных грез забыв Эдем, / Тайной думы безутешной / Не делишь уже ни с кем.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 302)

⁴⁸¹ “Жизнь исполнит беспощадно” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 302)

⁴⁸² “И свершит судьба в избытке / Над тобою казнь свою,” “среди борений,” “Дорогою ценной” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 303)

⁴⁸³ “Так иди ж по приговору, / Только верою сильна, / Не надеясь на опору, / Беззащитна и одна.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 303)

⁴⁸⁴ “свободна и светла” “мир внешний” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 306)

meet life differently, / That dreams are lies, words useless, / Sounds and verses [are] an empty game” (Pavlova 110).⁴⁸⁵ If she gives up poetry, the narrator wonders, will she find “meaningless peace” and will she say that “all is empty fantasy.”⁴⁸⁶ However, every time the narrator considers relinquishing her gift, “the voice of self-reproach” rings in her heart and she realizes that the poetic gift will never die (Pavlova 111).⁴⁸⁷ The last lines are: “Let me throw treasure after treasure / Into the stormy depths of the sea of life: / Blessed is he who, arguing with the storm, / Can salvage something precious for himself,” thus suggesting that those who can manage to survive society and live for themselves may achieve the best they can in life (Pavlova 111).⁴⁸⁸

As Diana Greene writes, “in a series of dreams, Pavlova’s heroine, Cecilia, a marriageable young woman in Moscow society, discovers a realm of poetry, truth, and spiritual values beyond the stifling world in which she lives. Although Cecilia seems very ordinary, the narrator shows us her thwarted poetic genius, which can only emerge in her sleep.”⁴⁸⁹ Pavlova presents a story that evaluates a poetic consciousness, its poetic value, and the consequences of it occurring in a young woman. Initially, Pavlova describes the life of a poet, his divine origin and inspiration, as well as his mixed reception in society. While the male poet may struggle with recognition, a young girl may not have the opportunity to discover and hone her poetic gift because society ruthlessly constrains her. The narrator touches on society’s perception of women poets by saying Cecily “knew that there were even women poets, but this was always presented

⁴⁸⁵ Что жизнь встречать иначе мне пора, / Что грезы -- ложь, что бесполезно слово, / Что звук и стих -- ничтожная игра. (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 306)

⁴⁸⁶ “бессмысленный покой” “всё бред пустой” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 306)

⁴⁸⁷ “глас самоупрека” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 306)

⁴⁸⁸ “Пусть брошу я, средь жизненного моря, / За кладом клад на бурной глубине дно: / Блажен и тот, кто мог, с грозой споря, / Себе спасти сокровище одно.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 306)

⁴⁸⁹ Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 157.

to her as the most pitiable, abnormal thing, as a disastrous and dangerous illness” (Pavlova 27)⁴⁹⁰

All poets feel futile, but women are rarely allowed the chance to develop their mind and skills.

In this way, *A Double Life* and Elena Gan’s *A Futile Gift* share many similarities. Two young women, Aniuta and Cecily, are born with poetic consciousness and have the ability to become poets. While Cecily is mentally constrained from her earliest childhood, Aniuta is encouraged to follow her inspiration and keep writing. Both women experience blissful moments of higher truth at night, while day is dedicated to everyday life. Pavlova’s poetic world has associations with death, as multiple people die and Cecily sees their graves in her dreams, and it appears the poet returns to this world after death. This is similar to Gan’s portrayal of death in *A Futile Gift*, which included the concept of Aniuta finally finding peace and acceptance for her gift after death. Even though Aniuta finally finds peace after death, in life she suffered at the hands of the crowd and was essentially killed for her gift. In contrast, Cecily never had the chance to experience poetic consciousness while awake on earth, and the narrator implies Cecily will have an unhappy life after marriage. Both women may have been destined to be poets but society prevented them from their happiness.

Pavlova gives a direct analysis of the causes and implications of women’s restricted lives. Society keeps women mentally constrained to be the perfect wives. Heldt aptly remarks, “the better Cecily’s real life seems to become as her marriage approaches, the greater the anguish expressed in her poetic dreams.”⁴⁹¹ The poetic gift is completely incompatible with society and its values, so the closer Cecily gets to marriage, the weaker her connection to the realm of inspiration becomes. Ginger B. Lazarus speculates that “the story of Cecilia’s experience is both

⁴⁹⁰ “Она знала, что есть даже и женщины поэты; но это ей всегда было представляемо как самое жалкое, ненормальное состояние, как бедственная и опасная болезнь.” (Pavlova, *Polnoe sobranie*, 249)

⁴⁹¹ Pavlova, *A Double Life*, xviii-xix.

a passionate endorsement of poetry's transcendent qualities and a bitter caveat to women living in a selfish, materialistic world: suppress all unfitting longings, all poetic inclinations, or expect no happiness."⁴⁹² Women cannot be both society women or writers, but as Cecily's life shows, some women are never given the chance to become writers or even allowed to understand the world.

Conclusion

When looking at the works for the five writers together, some apparent connections appear among them. At first glance, Romantic ideas on poetry unite them, yet they stand rather distinctly apart from their predecessors and contemporaries. The dominating themes for men are concerned with legitimizing the idea of the poet as prophet and establishing their superior place in society. Even when Pushkin expressed deep frustration and anger toward the reading public, he still placed the poet higher than the crowd, whom he mocked for its ignorance and demands. Themes of isolation also appear in Romantic works, but in the poems written by men, the isolation provides an escape from the mundane, without the haunting depression that underlies the works of the women. Additionally, themes like poverty take on an almost comical quality in men's poetry because men had other forms of income and status in society, whereas for women like Bunina, writing provided her sole income. For women, unlike for men, being a writer meant facing constant tension between gender limitations and gender expectations; these women yearned for recognition while being dismissed because of their gender.

⁴⁹² Lazarus, "Living Poetry," 86.

Bunina stands apart from the other women as the earliest example, and the only one who gives voice to other women around her. In “A Conversation Between Myself and Women” Bunina places women around her in opposition to herself but she still voices their expectations. The female readers do not read Russian or care about her works if they do not directly benefit them. This kind of female opposition is not seen in Teplova’s or Pavlova’s works, and that is perhaps in part because of the female literary community provided by the salons. In Bunina’s literary circle, she herself did not have a voice as the more esteemed men read her works, for which she expressed gratitude. Rather than appearing vain, Bunina chose to comply with society’s expectation of meekness, even going as far as refusing to write certain poems because she felt unworthy. For Bunina, being a writer meant limiting her scope of writing to comply with norms, praising men in order to get recognition and publish her works, yet a critical voice sometimes appeared that expressed the poet’s frustrations with literary conventions, such as in “A Conversation Between Myself and Women.”

Some of the strongest oppositions the writers faced were between themselves and male critics, a theme they heavily emphasized in their works, especially their advice poems. Teplova saturated her poetry with deep emotions and frustrations with society. Due to the tension caused by her expected social role in society as wife and mother, and her yearning to become a writer, she warns other women not to follow in her footsteps. Instead, she advises women to write their poetry in their journals and never publish, saving themselves from public scrutiny and malice. Pavlova echoes this advice yet goes further and argues that the public does not deserve to know a young woman’s inner life and poetic gift. Rostopchina adopts a more docile tone than Pavlova, but her advice to women also has the connotation that readers do not deserve to know a woman’s true feelings. As Barbara Heldt summarizes, “women poets’ words of counsel or explanation

addressed to other women are often tinged with irony, stemming from awareness that the woman writer is beyond the pale of ordinary happiness.”⁴⁹³

The longer works *A Double Life* and Elena Gan’s *A Futile Gift* provide the most striking commentary on women writers that seems to apply to the other three women as well. According to these two women, critics will never understand or praise a woman’s works, they will just slander and tear them apart. For the two women, being a writer meant facing heavy criticism and standing in opposition to male critics. The works include some universal themes, such as the concept of the poetic gift as divinely inspired, and therefore part of some women’s destinies. The women will always feel a calling from within and eventually the poetic gift will come through to the external world, but the consequences of such an action may be detrimental. Whether through strict upbringing limiting a woman’s mind, or through the ignorance of a rural crowd, the poetic inspiration will cause a woman harm or even death. The main message of the works of all five women is that the poetic gift, while divine, conflicts with society and its expectations of women. Male critics also represent an aspect of society that provides constraints on women’s writing, as this too can be seen in the works of all five writers.

A distinct progression can also be traced in the writers’ own acceptance of their poetic gift. Bunina in life followed her convictions and dedicated her entire life to her craft, even though her poetic voice expressed feelings of inferiority and reluctant acknowledgement of her gift. “A Conversation Between Myself and Women” stands apart from many of her works as it admits that she was conscious of audience and criticism, so she carefully crafted her poetic messages. Teplova and Gan accept their talents in poetry and prose, yet they do not explicitly

⁴⁹³ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 110.

challenge conventions in their works. Teplova calls her life a fatal mistake because she has the poetic gift and Gan shows that the poetic gift can be bestowed on people who can never utilize it. Pavlova and Rostopchina have bold confidence in their poetic gifts and adopt the feelings of superiority that may have been more common in male poets. Notably, Rostopchina channels these emotions when addressing a whole generation of people who stood against her, as she took pride and found solace in her poetic gift.

Writing decades apart, the women had different backgrounds and different life stories, but their poetry shared a special connection. When considering their experiences, at least those memorialized in poetry, one can find so many striking similarities. All five women struggled internally with their literary gift, but their main obstacle in their art was the audience. For all writers, the audience consisted of people who helped fund their works, but also, and perhaps of greater importance, it consisted of harsh male critics on whom their fame and reputation depended. Each woman overcame the challenges she faced to share her stories, no matter how difficult the circumstances. Moreover, each woman left advice to other women to stay away from the creative path specifically because society prevented their success. Their poetry created a lasting image of women going against accepted norms to answer the call of inspiration, despite all the obstacles they faced. As we can see in the poetry of Bunina, Teplova, Pavlova, and Rostopchina, as well as in Gan's prose, being a female writer created an intense internal struggle and they all felt pain caused by isolation, public criticism, and pursuing a passion that directly opposed society's expectations.

Conclusion

Anna Bunina, Nadezhda Teplova, Elena Gan, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova were all extraordinary women who challenged contemporary gender roles and society's limitations on women. For the last two hundred years their works have been largely forgotten as most anthologies, encyclopedias, and textbooks do not include them, but recent scholarly attention has allowed the possibility to rediscover their lives and works. Their more famous male contemporaries, such as Aleksandr Pushkin and Nikolai Karamzin, published works featuring women's lives, feelings, and thoughts. Judith Fetterly discusses this phenomenon of female characters acting as projections, not people, for the male characters while serving to indicate the involutions of the male psyche.⁴⁹⁴ In a way, rediscovering the works of women writers from the nineteenth century returns the literary voice to women and can help uncover women's emotions and opinions on their own lives, as well as the messages they wanted to convey to their readers. These voices directly respond to the shifting views of their contemporaries and try to answer the questions about women's status and role in society.

Anna Bunina started writing when women were just beginning to receive education, when women were expected to raise the morality of the nation, and when the phenomenon of original Russian literature was just beginning to form. Writers depended on literary societies and patronage in order to succeed. Frank Göpfert remarks that in Anna Bunina's time "women were still afraid of enmity and unfairness" and the literary sphere did not easily provide material support for their works, and not just for women.⁴⁹⁵ Therefore, their literary voices were restrained in order to conform to literary conventions and gain patronage. Also, the literary

⁴⁹⁴ Fetterly, *The Resisting Reader*, 28-29.

⁴⁹⁵ Göpfert, "Poniatie 'remeslo,'" 67.

community was divided about women writers. Those who opposed women appearing in print equated publishing works to sexual exposure and those in favor believed women should write about their own feelings to help moralize and feminize Russian culture.⁴⁹⁶ Despite the occasional conformity to conventions, Bunina is still considered one of the most outspoken poets of her generation.

One of Bunina's boldest statements was against contemporary views on love, promoted by Rousseau and Karamzin, that viewed women as obedient wives meant to serve and please the husbands while helping improve their moral character. Bunina, however, rejected inequality in love but instead wrote that love should be based mutual interests. In a poem like "The Philosophy of a Butterfly" Bunina also subtly included the message of freedom being preferable to marriage, a radical concept for the early nineteenth century. Her poems concerning the lives of women show her shifting ideology from questioning the laws of men in restricting women's roles to advising other women to stay compliant. Bunina's reflection of her own life brought her to the realization that life for a woman is easier if she becomes a wife and mother. Likewise, she mostly adopted a meek and modest literary voice when addressing her poetic talent, and even when she dared to depict readers and patrons as controlling in "A Conversation Between Myself and Women," she undermined her message with a footnote calling the poem a joke. Bunina's literary voice tries to conform to the standards set for her by authorities of power, but she also begins questioning the institution of marriage, literary conventions, and society.

Göpfert credits Anna Bunina as one of the few who laid the groundwork for their successors, like Nadezhda Teplova. He writes, "it is especially thanks to these poetesses and

⁴⁹⁶ Vowles, "The 'Feminization,'" 39.

writers that from the 1820s literary criticism not only ‘noticed’ women’s poetry, but it started to evaluate the poetry’s distinctiveness.”⁴⁹⁷ Nadezhda Teplova’s brief literary career mostly featured elegiacal poetry and conformed to Belinskii’s assertion that women’s poetry should be focused on feelings. As with Bunina’s works, there is a progression of ideas from early works viewing love as a sacred and elevated feeling to a darker view of love as harmful to women. Teplova’s drafts of prose also show a growing concern for marriage binding women to men they do not love. Her poetry is permeated with feelings of longing for a different life as well as resigned acquiescence to the earthly life. Teplova was very concerned with the message of her works, and her literary voice is preoccupied with the life of women, whom she advises to refrain from publishing poetry, warns about the dangers of society, and to whom she describes the life of a woman as one full of constraints and sacrifices.

Similar to the poetry of Evdokiia Rostopchina and the prose of M. Zhukovskaia or E. A. Gan [‘Zeneidy R-voi’], [Teplova] revealed to the reader the spiritual world of a modern woman, a profound world, dramatic and enclosed in itself. The fact that it was limited to the sphere of intimate experiences was an indirect reproach to society that did not admit a woman into social life. And here Teplova came in contact with the Russian women successors of George Sand – with the entire movement of social thought that was gaining momentum in Russian literature.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁷ “Именно благодаря этим поэтессам и писательницам, с двадцатых годов литературная критика не только ‘заметила’ женскую поэзию, но и стала судить об ее особенностях.” (Göpfert, “Poniatie ‘remeslo,’” 69).

⁴⁹⁸ “Подобно стихам Евдокии Ростопчиной и прозе М. Жуковой или Е. А. Ган («Зе неиды Р — вой»), она открывала читателю духовный мир современной женщины, мир глубокий, драматичный и замкнутый в самом себе. То, что он был ограничен областью интимных переживаний, было косвенным упреком обществу, не допускавшему женщину в социальную жизнь. И здесь Теплова соприкасалась с русскими последовательницами Жорж Санд — с целым течением общественной мысли, набиравшим силу в русской литературе.” (Vatsuro, “Zhizn’ i poeziiia,” 35)

Teplova addresses many poems specifically to women, dealing with subjects not typically found in the works of men, such as death of a spouse or child, and was one of the first to create works with an intimate view of the feelings of women. Elena Gan's prose presents similar concerns about the life of women and begins critically assessing the source of its problems. Joe Andrew aptly claims that "from the very first pages [Gan] published in 1837 (*The Ideal*) she had placed the difficulties encountered by the outstanding woman at the very center of her fiction."⁴⁹⁹ In Gan's works, women who are intellectual and possess an elevated soul craving genuine feeling, and who can also be viewed as writers, are ostracized for their inner purity and innocent values. Neither love nor marriage, which she separates as different entities, provide happiness for woman. In her later works, especially *A Futile Gift*, "the question is posed: is education for women actually counterproductive in that it prepares them for a world *they cannot enter*?"⁵⁰⁰ Gan's literary voice offers the conviction that there is something inherently wrong with society, beginning to identify that marriage, society, and education limit women.

Evdokiia Rostopchina was "fond of society and a salon *habituée*, was a frequent visitor in the St. Petersburg drawing rooms" and "dedicated many of her poems to this world and its members," gaining a reputation as a society woman.⁵⁰¹ She developed a feminine literary persona and depicted many scenes and themes associated with women, so even now most serious scholarship typically avoids including Rostopchina when examining women writers. However, I agree with Diana Greene when she remarks, "Rostopchina accommodated to her society's gender stereotypes in order to resist the social pressure that would have excluded her from the

⁴⁹⁹ Andrew, *Narrative and Desire*, 131.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁵⁰¹ Judith Vowles, "The Inexperienced Muse: Russian Women and Poetry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *A History of Women's Writing in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 64.

realm of literature.”⁵⁰² Rostopchina, like Bunina, conformed to many social and literary conventions, such as telling other writers to be humble and conceal their true feelings, while at the same time being vocally critical about certain aspects of a woman’s life. Similar to Gan’s society tales, Rostopchina’s stories examined society’s constraints on women but they also denounced the institution of marriage. By describing her love of ballrooms Rostopchina created a literary voice that directly questioned men and high society, asking why they dictate a woman’s role in life, define her identity, and leave her defenseless against their own attacks.

Pavlova used her literary voice to answer the questions of her predecessors, by concluding that society, especially men, purposefully limit women’s opportunities in order to keep them powerless. Women have the gifts, abilities, and talent for other roles, most significantly the role of writer, but men, society, and even their mothers purposefully constrain their intellect to keep them at the level of a child and encourage them to be frivolous and vain, for which society later condemns them. One of Pavlova’s main themes in her works is “that women can only gain freedom by renouncing the social conditioning that encourages them to remain children.”⁵⁰³ Pavlova and Rostopchina both, as writers of the 1840s and 1850s, stimulate the discussion of women’s freedom from society’s constraints, beginning to touch on the ideas of women’s liberation decades before the movement gains steam in the 1880s.

One of the first articles in Russia critically assessing the life of women and their limitations came from Nikolai Pirogov (1810-1881) in 1856 using the same language and ideas that women had already used themselves decades before him.

⁵⁰² Greene, *Reinventing Romantic Poetry*, 29.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 163.

Truly, upon entering the world a woman is less than a man and is subjected to the sad consequences of the dissonance of her basic upbringing under society's direction. She is more seldom judged able to win her daily bread for herself by her labors and to live completely independently from men. The commercial sector of society weighs less upon her. Her upbringing ordinarily turns her into a doll. It dresses her up and puts her on stage, on show for gawkers; it makes her act like a puppet on strings, manipulated by her upbringing. The strings wear away with time, and through the rents and tears in the stage curtain she begins to perceive what had been so carefully hidden from her. No wonder that the thought then comes to her of trying to walk on her own like a human being. Emancipation is the idea.⁵⁰⁴

Gan's "The Ideal" deployed the metaphor of a woman as a puppet used for decoration and entertainment in 1837, predating Pirogov's claims and concerns by almost twenty years. He also claims women's education to be limiting, which Pavlova had expressed in 1848 in *A Double Life*. "Pirogov casually suggested that the mission of women might soon become far more formidable than the pedestrian concerns of married life. In the future, some Russian women would be called from on high to perform lofty deeds of self-sacrifice," Richard Stites remarks.⁵⁰⁵ Bunina depicts women as willing and ready to sacrifice themselves in times of war fifty years before this article in 1806. Pirogov's article includes powerful language and metaphors in order to assert that women need better education and must expand their personal talents in order to be "companions and assistants of men," which still continues the position promoted by Rousseau in the eighteenth century that women live to serve and assist men.⁵⁰⁶ Through the works of

⁵⁰⁴ Quoted in Bisha, *Russian Women*, 33.

⁵⁰⁵ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement*, 32.

⁵⁰⁶ Bisha, *Russian Women*, 33.

Rostopchina and Pavlova, however, it is clear that they wanted education and freedom for the sake of the *women*, not the men around them.

When the works of the five writers are viewed in chronological order and across different themes, an evolution of common questions and concerns regarding women appears. Bunina used her voice to timidly approach the question of why social institutions, not God, restrict women, and Pavlova condemned all social institutions for the inequality that women had to endure. In the beginning, the woman's literary voice oscillates between pointing out the problems in contemporary society and encouraging the conventions of society's institutions. Likewise, Teplova and Gan view fate and Providence as the main reason as to why women suffer. In her last work *A Futile Gift*, however, Gan begins questioning this theory. Rostopchina and Pavlova do not consider fate in their depictions of social conditions, they instead blame mothers, society, and men. There is also a distinct evolution in regard to the depiction of men. Bunina and Teplova only briefly include images of men, instead preferring to write poetry of nature and emotions, respectively. Gan depicts husbands as indifferent, manipulative, or weak. Rostopchina and Pavlova not only present men as weak but also as the cause of some of the main problems for women.

This same evolution of criticism extends to the women's treatment of high society and its members. Bunina's crowd of women that questions her work shifts to a cold and indifferent crowd in Teplova's poems, and then becomes a ruthless crowd who have the power to destroy anyone, but especially innocent and defenseless women. Each sphere of life, or at least the ones considered for this project, receives a more critical treatment from the writers as time passes between Bunina's works beginning in 1806 and Pavlova's works ending in the 1860s. As more women begin gaining economic, educational, and literary opportunities, the literary voice

becomes more vocal about social problems and lack of support for women, first bringing attention to the inequality of opportunity in life and then questioning why such inequality exists. By the 1850s, a woman's literary voice directly criticizes marriage, propriety, lack of education in the entire system, and claims society purposefully keeps women from achieving their true, divinely predestined potential.

Bunina, Teplova, Gan, Rostopchina, and Pavlova wrote in a variety of genres spanning fifty years of Russian history. They provide an alternative source of messages, emotions, and ideas to the widely accepted male dominated canon – in works written about women by women. This project has a limited scope and there is much still left to discuss regarding women poets and writers in the nineteenth century that will help contribute to the understanding of the lives and concerns of women from their own perspective. The three literary concepts of love and marriage, womanhood, and identity as a woman writer were chosen for the project but themes like religion, friendship, and motherhood also often appear in the works of the five writers. Likewise, the women often feature various forms of isolation. As Heldt identifies, “women poets in Russia consistently attest to feeling alienated from their society not only as poets but also as women,” which makes it a particularly interesting concept for further evaluation.⁵⁰⁷ In addition to expanding on their themes in literature, Russian scholarship also needs further discovery and study of the lives and works of their contemporaries like Zinaida Volkonskaia, Aleksandra Fuks, Mariia Zhukova, and many more for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of women writers, their literary voice, and the messages they wished to convey.

⁵⁰⁷ Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, 106.

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