

**READING RUSSIA.  
A HISTORY OF READING  
IN MODERN RUSSIA**

**vol. 2**

**Damiano Rebecchini and Raffaella Vassena (eds.)**





di/segni





**READING RUSSIA.  
A HISTORY OF READING  
IN MODERN RUSSIA**

**Volume 2**

**Edited by Damiano Rebecchini and Raffaella Vassena**

**di/segni**

Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere

Facoltà di Studi Umanistici

Università degli Studi di Milano

**Ledizioni**

© 2020 degli autori dei contributi e dei curatori per l'intero volume  
ISBN 978-88-5526-193-7

ILLUSTRAZIONE DI COPERTINA:

I. N. Kramskoi, *Woman Reading. Portrait of Sofiiia  
Kramskaia, the Artist's Wife, not before 1866*

**n°33**

Collana sottoposta a double blind peer review  
ISSN: 2282-2097

**Grafica:**

Raúl Díaz Rosales

**Composizione:**

Ledizioni

**Disegno del logo:**

Paola Turino

STAMPATO A MILANO  
IL 20 GIUGNO 2020

[www.ledizioni.it](http://www.ledizioni.it)  
[www.ledipublishing.com](http://www.ledipublishing.com)  
[info@ledizioni.it](mailto:info@ledizioni.it)  
Via Alamanni 11 – 20141 Milano

Tutti i diritti d'autore e connessi sulla presente opera appartengono all'autore.  
L'opera per volontà dell'autore e dell'editore è rilasciata nei termini della licenza  
Creative Commons 3.0, il cui testo integrale è disponibile alla pagina web  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/it/legalcode>



### **Condirettori**

Monica Barsi e Danilo Manera

### **Comitato scientifico**

Nicoletta Brazzelli    Andrea Meregalli  
Marco Castellari    Laura Scarabelli  
Simone Cattaneo    Sara Sullam  
Raffaella Vassena    Nicoletta Vallorani  
Giovanni Iamartino

### **Comitato scientifico internazionale**

Albert Meier    Sabine Lardon  
(Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel)    (Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3)  
Luis Beltrán Almería    Aleksandr Ospovat - Александр Осповат  
(Universidad de Zaragoza)    (Высшая Школа Экономики – Москва)  
Patrick J. Parrinder  
(Emeritus, University of Reading, UK)

### **Comitato di redazione**

Elisa Alberani    Marco Canani  
Angela Andreani    Valentina Crestani  
Nataliya Stoyanova





# Table of contents

*List of abbreviations* ..... II

## PART II. THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY

*Reading and Readers of Poetry in the Golden Age, 1800-1830* ..... 13

DARIA KHITROVA

*Reading Foreign Novels, 1800-1848* ..... 57

DAMIANO REBECCHINI

*The Success of the Russian Novel, 1830s-1840s* ..... 107

DAMIANO REBECCHINI

*The Reading Audience of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* ..... 171

ABRAM REITBLAT

*O!?!?: Reading and Readers in the Silver Age, 1890s-1900s* ..... 211

JONATHAN STONE

*Early Twentieth-Century Schools of Reading Russian Poetry* ..... 241

ROMAN TIMENCHIK

*What and How Russian Students Read in School, 1840-1917* ..... 259

ROMAN LEIBOV, ALEXEY VDOVIN

*The Book and the Peasant in the Nineteenth and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century: from Illiteracy to the Religious Book to the Secular Book* ..... 317

ABRAM REITBLAT

*CASE STUDY: The Struggle to Create a Regional Public in the Early Nineteenth-Century Russian Empire: the Case of Kazanskii izvestiia* ..... 347

SUSAN SMITH-PETER

*CASE STUDY: The Gothic Novel Reader Comes to Russia* ..... 377

KATHERINE BOWERS

*CASE STUDY: Belles-Lettres and the Literary Interests of Middling Landowners. A Case Study from the Archive of the Dorozhaevo Homestead*..... 409

TATIANA GOLOVINA

*CASE STUDY: The Making of a National Poet: Publishing Pushkin, 1855-1887* ..... 443

MARCUS C. LEVITT

*CASE STUDY: Dostoevskii and His Readers, 1866-1910*..... 461

RAFFAELLA VASSENNA

*CASE STUDY: Reading the News on Tolstoi in 1908* ..... 523

RAFFAELLA VASSENNA

*Notes on contributors*..... 559

## List of abbreviations

In the notes the following will be used:

d. (dd.) *delo (dela)*

ed. khr. *edinitza khraneniia*

f. *fond*

AGE *Arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*, St. Petersburg.

GAIO *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Ivanovskoi oblasti*, Ivanovo.

GMT OR *Gosudarstvennyi Muzei im. L. N. Tolstogo, Otdel rukopisei*, Moscow.

IRLI *Institut Russkoi Literatury i iskusstva*, St. Petersburg.

l. (ll.) *list (listy)*

op. *opis'*

NA RT *Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstan*, Kazan'.

OR RGB *Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki*, Moscow.

OR RNB *Otdel Ruskopisei Rossiiskoi Natsional'noi Biblioteki*, St. Petersburg.

RA *Russian Anthology (Polnaia russkaia khrestomatiia, ili obraztsy krasnorechiia i poezii, zaimstvovannye iz luchshikh otechestvennykh pisatelei*, edited by A. Galakhov).

RGALI *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva*, Moscow.

RGIA *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv*, St. Petersburg.



READING AND READERS OF POETRY  
IN THE GOLDEN AGE, 1800-1830<sup>1</sup>

Daria Khitrova

Let me start with a comment regarding the expression “Golden Age” as used in the text and the title of this chapter. Some epochs are remembered by dates; others, by names. As a name for an epoch, the phrase “the Golden Age” and the image harbored therein sounds almost too intuitive to call for a rigorous definition. This must be one of the reasons why literary scholars often seem hesitant to use such tags as “Golden Age” to define literary periods—and not of Russian literature alone. Another good reason to be wary of applying this term is the trace of value judgement present in the phrase—as if we agreed that a hierarchy existed in the succession of literary epochs. No such well-founded concern should ever be discounted; but the name “Golden Age” can be productive—provided we agree to understand the word “golden” as a classifying rather than qualitative adjective. It should become clear from what follows that the reason I stick to this name has to do precisely with the subject of this volume—the role of readership in the literary process.

Historical epochs cannot technically be held “accountable” for their historiographic nicknames, but there is no harm in asking: when we look at people who used to produce and use poetry in early nineteenth-century Russia, what is it that casts our thoughts back to Hesiod’s and Ovid’s race of mythopoetic mortals said to have lived in harmony with nature and in agreement with each other, devoting their life to merrymaking and feasting? What do these

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is a slightly reworked excerpt from *Lyric Complicity: Poetry and Readers in the Golden Age of Russian Literature* by Daria Khitrova. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press. © 2019 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved.

two “golden” epochs—one metaphorical/real, the other literal/imagined—have in common? In neither of the worlds they describe would you find much in the way of solitude: a secluded retreat, a place to be alone. When we look at a painting entitled “The Golden Age”—for instance, by Lucas Cranach the Elder (c. 1530) or Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1862)—the first thing we notice is how crowded it is. Every figure is shown socializing with somebody or something—another human, a rabbit, a fish, or a deity. The prototypical Golden Age, much like its Russian namesake, was a busy place.

Another motif common to many depictions of the Golden Age is dance. In Cranach, its naked inhabitants encircle an apple tree in a round dance—a visual equivalent of the idea of harmony. This is not to suggest that Russian Golden Age poetry was somehow harmonious or carefree. This was, after all, an epoch in which duels and exiles decided poets’ fates. But in the wisdom of hindsight, Cranach’s round dance now looks like the Urform of networking in art. Fortuitous and trans-historical as it may at first appear, this resemblance swayed me to stick to the term “Golden Age.”

Our default idea of how literature operates—and, we tend to presume, always has—is akin to how one experiences the music performed at symphonic concerts. The orchestra and the audience are seated separately, the former playing, the latter listening; there is no trespassing the line between the two. The way in which poetry worked in the Golden Age was more like what takes place in a ballroom or on a dance floor. Here, everyone is, at least potentially, a dancer: you can try your luck and ask someone for a dance or (to jump sides) be asked for a dance and benevolently condescend. As in dance, so in poetry: here, you read, write, are written to, copy, show to others, discuss what you read, or gossip about whoever wrote it. Participation was essential. Russian literary culture of the time was, no doubt, a realm of books and journals; most poems were written in order to be printed—and many were. But a poem of note was seldom consigned to the solitude of being read alone. In the Golden Age, there was no such thing as a poem in itself. The real life of poetry began outside the book.

Like any epoch or any given moment in literary history, the Golden Age was far from monolithic. As Russian formalists show, literary history is more about fights and clashes than peaceful growth and development. Still, any efficient system has clashes and contradictions, actions and counteractions, checks and balances, wired into it. Golden Age poetry, as a network, constituted just such a system of relationships between poets, poems, and readers.

Chronologically, the Golden Age of Russian poetry falls within the space of roughly thirty years, from the 1800s to the 1830s; it would be counterproductive to tie it to more specific dates. The Golden Age did not start with a datable literary landmark; rather, it was first *imagined* by literary visionaries like Nikolai Karamzin, as Andrei Zorin shows in his chapter (See ZORIN, *A Reading Revolution?*, vol. 1). A literary movement—to invoke a mantra of

the formalists—can survive anything except its own triumph. The Golden Age of Russian poetry truly existed while it remained a project; the moment the project was realized, the age was over. As a utopia of ubiquity, the Golden Age was destined to become dystopian: the wished-for omnipresence of poetry proved to be a flood of versifying. By the mid-1820s, as many critics agreed, Russian as a poetic language had advanced to the point where writing good verses was no longer a problem—and this, in turn, turned the writing of good poems into a problem. When, for instance, the critic Petr Pletnev proposed calling his time a “Golden Age,” he added the following cautionary proviso:

In a word: here is [Zhukovskii], the first poet of our literature’s Golden Age (if every literature must indeed have its own Golden Age). He turned poetry into the easiest and, at the same time, the most difficult of arts. For every genre, beautiful poetic forms are available; everyone nowadays can write a number of light, harmonious, even powerful lines. But whom are their works going to impress, next to the sample [of works] by all our newest poets?<sup>2</sup>

Of the “golden ages” in European literatures, Russian was one of the youngest. It co-occurred with what can be called a poetry boom across Europe and North America. By “boom” I mean not a grand parade of names, from Pushkin to Hugo to Longfellow. Rather, a “boom” is when poetry expands—into streets, politics, and domestic life; a boom not only of poetry as writing but also of poetry’s readership or, to add here the oral and audial dimensions, of poetry’s audience. Russian poetic culture of the early to mid-nineteenth century shared a lot of poetry practices with European and American literatures: from a rich song culture, to album inscriptions, to occasional verses. The difference is that in Russia, the poetry boom *became* the Golden Age of national literature.

Scholars may give up using terms like “the Golden Age”; but the historical narratives of national literatures do not yield their foundational myths lightly. Every European literature we know of has its before and after, a pivotal figure like Goethe in Germany or a golden epoch—like the Elizabethan reign in England or the age of Louis XIV in France. How different scholars approach and explain the early nineteenth-century poetry boom in their national cultures depends on its place on the timeline of literary history. When Michael Cohen in the first chapter of his recent study *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America* examines occasional verses written and printed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by New England ped-

---

<sup>2</sup> P. A. Pletnev, “Pis'mo k grafine S. I. S. o russkikh poetakh,” in V. Vatsuro, S. A. Fomichev, E. O. Larionova (eds.), *Pushkin v prizhiznnoi kritike, 1820–1827* (St. Petersburg, 1996), 244.

dlers, he treats them as extra-literary phenomena.<sup>3</sup> Peddlers' verses, Cohen persistently insists, were too unrefined to be considered literature, let alone poetry. The "pure" reading of poetry (the practice that Virginia Jackson has termed "lyric reading") must, according to Cohen, be kept apart from such trans-poetic activities as copying or singing (in our terms, performance). To rely on Perry Miller's eponymous anthology, in the early nineteenth century, the Golden Age of American literature was still ahead; hence, the culture of broadsides and scrapbooks insightfully analyzed in Cohen's book appertains to "pre-literary" times. On the other hand, Corinne Legoy, pointing to the ubiquity of poetry in the daily life of early nineteenth-century France, calls for studying the social uses of poetry, without isolating "pure" poetry from occasional verses, songs, and the like.<sup>4</sup> In the French literary chronology, the poetry boom comes not *before*, as in America, but *after* the Golden Age, as a product of a mature poetic culture, not as a precursor to one.

Was it by mere chance that in Russia—unlike in France or the US—the boom of poetry and the Golden Age of literature coincided in time? It was and it was not. It was, because it is easy to see how, as times changed, the status of the Golden Age in Russia could have been assigned to the epoch of Tolstoi and Dostoevskii—as indeed, it frequently is by Western readers. (Why and how the title stayed with Pushkin and his age could be the subject of a separate study.) And it was not—because the Golden Age did not happen all by itself. It was handmade by people who saw in it the future. In 1825, surveying Russian literature of 1824—the year in which Pletnev deemed his current age a Golden one—Aleksandr Bestuzhev declared that Russia had no literature at all.<sup>5</sup> It was yet to be built. What was to be built had to be twofold, as critics tirelessly repeated from the 1790s on: writing and reading; authorship and readership, the two inseparable halves of literary life. Pletnev's essay was a desperate plea for Russian readers to take note of the Golden Age poetry that was happening right around them. The paradox inherent in idylls, and the myth of the Golden Age *is* the ultimate idyll, is that people who live in them do not know they do. As long as our Golden Age figures felt a lack, felt the need to build—to construct a future literature and its readership; to usher in, that is, the Golden Age—then the Golden Age was (invisibly) present. As soon as the Golden Age grew visible—and Pletnev's claim was but a first sign of this coming—it slipped from the present to the past, where all Golden Ages belong by definition.

\*\*\*

---

3 M. Cohen, *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia, 2015), 13–14, 17–59.

4 C. Legoy, "Le siècle de la 'métromanie': usages sociaux et politiques de la poésie dans la France de la Restauration," *Romantisme*, 140 (2008), 9–20.

5 A. Bestuzhev, "Vzgliad na russkuiu slovesnost' v techenie 1824 i nachale 1825 godov," in *Poliarnaia zvezda, izdannaia A. Bestuzhevym i K. Ryleevym*, edited by V. Arkhipov, V. Bazanov, Ia. Levkovich (Moscow, Leningrad, 1960), 488.



In late October 1822, an elegy titled “Spring” (“Vesna”) appeared in the journal *Novosti literatury* with the following editorial footnote appended to its heading: “(\*) Regretfully, this beautiful poem *on spring* has been received by us in the middle of *autumn*; but, better late than never. *Ed.*”<sup>6</sup> There is nothing like a system malfunction to highlight how systems are supposed to work. This footnote is one such telltale breakdown of a literary system, or rather, a quick attempt to patch it up. To be fully functional, a Golden Age lyric poem needed to be situationally—in our example, seasonally—anchored. This rule applied to writing and reading alike. “*On spring*” (*na vesnu*)—the phrasing used in the footnote—means “written *on the occasion* of spring.” The editor who wrote it (Aleksandr Voeikov or Vasilii Kozlov) opted for this expression despite knowing that, in this particular poem, vernal images served to set off, by contrast, its hero’s disconsolate longing for a deceased beloved. Pictures of nature, it was assumed, had to be written from nature. Likewise, it was unnatural, or so the editors felt, to read about the joys of spring as the chill of fall settles in outside one’s window. For best results, the here and now of writing a lyric poem had to be synchronized with the here and now of reading it—forming, ideally, an illusory “here and now” shared, if only for a moment, by the writer and reader of the poem.

The magic of moments like this is well captured in a letter (dated 26 August 1808) Aleksandr Turgenev sent his brother Nikolai (at the time, studying in Göttingen). The missive is layered with poignant reminiscences. Earlier that summer, writes Aleksandr, he paid a visit to their ancestral village of Turgenevo where the Turgenev brothers (the eldest of whom, Andrei, died in 1803) had spent their childhood: “I could not look at any object [in the old house] without experiencing some secret sadness, something that disquieted my soul; even the sight of our old furniture stirred me; but the strongest source of memories of our long-gone life here was the window view from the hall in which we used to have our lessons.”<sup>7</sup> It is through this window that Aleksandr Turgenev, now twenty-four, describes himself as gazing upon a sunset while reciting a poem recently inscribed in his album by Zhukovskii. Fittingly, Zhukovskii’s poem (twelve lines of which are cited in the letter) pays tribute to just such enchanting evenings: “Recall how often in the fields / did you and I see off the setting sun / ... / O bygone time, o unforgotten time!” The synchronization was perfect, attests Turgenev, both visually and in terms of mood: “Almost every line made me pause, for what it was saying was happening that very moment in reality—both before my eyes and inside my soul.”<sup>8</sup>

6 “Vesna,” *Novosti literatury*, 17 (1822), 62 (signed “R,” dated 1821); emphasis in the original. Following Mikhail Longinov’s attribution of the elegy to Batiushkov, it was included in his *Works*, but only in the “Dubia” section, since Longinov never explained his attribution and no evidence was found to support it.

7 *Arkhiv brat’iev Turgenevykh* (St. Petersburg, 1911), vol. 2, 364.

8 *Ibid.*, 365.

Atmospheric convergence was but a visible part of a larger emotional ensemble. In the eyes of the Golden Age culture, poetry's calling was to provoke a whole range of poet-cum-reader co-experiences—be they of nature, history, friendship, or love. It is such cases of emotional complicity between poems and readers that I am going to examine in this chapter. Traditionally, the privileged (if not the sole) object of literary history has been a figure holding a pen. It is relatively recently that students of literature have begun attending to the figure holding a book—a shadier and more elusive subject, not so much a picture of a reader as a silhouette. As often occurs in scholarship, the history of reading is rapidly growing into a discipline in its own right, with its own set of methodologies and compartments. This budding field has furnished literary historians with a wealth of valuable data. We have a better idea than we used to of *what* books were read in nineteenth-century Russia, and *who* it was that was reading those books.<sup>9</sup> What interests me here is *how*: what reading devices were used, and how these devices, in turn, engaged with devices of writing. In other words, rather than study reading as such, the object I examine is reading-cum-writing and reading-as-writing.

“Rock-solid knowledge”; “crystal-clear prose.” Such geological metaphors abound in our ways of describing human affairs, but few will have shaped our thinking more than the famous *iceberg* analogy, with its proverbial *tip*. It may seem tempting at first to imagine literary history as another iceberg. Indeed, literary histories do at times seem impressionistic, like a Marinist painting with majestic snow-white masterpieces gliding by. The moment we factor in what is unseen—the host of contemporary readers for whom those great books were written—the picture changes. Now, literature-as-writing, with all its shiny names and brilliant works, becomes just the tip of a murkier submerged mass that the explorer of reading must dive deep under the iceberg's waterline to study. But despite its heuristic appeal, the iceberg analogy is of little help to literary studies: it conjures a polarized literary system, the divorce of writing from reading—much as, when applied to the human mind or human culture, the iceberg-imago overdramatizes the split between conscious and unconscious processes and drives. In actual fact, as glaciology tells us, the real iceberg is not a bipolar paradigm, but a solid lump of ice; its putative duality—the above and beneath the waterline—is the observer's problem, not the iceberg's. No glaciologist would ever study the structure and migration of an iceberg's bottom in isolation from its tip; likewise, the history of reading—Golden Age reading in particular—cannot be separated from its counterpart, the history of writing.

---

<sup>9</sup> See A. I. Reitblat, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii* (Moscow, 2001); D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (eds.), *Reading in Russia: Practices of Reading and Literary Communication (1760-1930)* (Milan, 2014); H. Hoogenboom, “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers,” *Slavic Review*, 74, 3 (2015), 553-574. See also chapters by ZORIN in the first volume, and by GOLOVINA and REBECCHINI in the present volume.

In this chapter, I explore a number of reading practices peculiar to Golden Age poetry (though not necessarily confined to poetry alone). I start with relatability, participation and performance—three notions that defined the experience of reading poetry. What should become clear in the course of this discussion is that, in the Golden Age, readers of poetry rarely stopped at mere reading; instead, they would *appropriate* poetic speech, make it their own in a variety of ways—such as copying, singing, or reciting. I then move on to explore two fields adjacent to poetry in the verbal landscape of the Golden Age: the theater stage and the church service. The second half of this chapter is devoted to what I call “productive reading”—the notion that takes us beyond the dichotomy “intensive vs extensive” reading. Productive reading problematizes the all too familiar division between reading and writing as two different, if complementary activities. In the epoch under discussion, the bulk of writing evolved directly from reading; this, as I show in this chapter, was true both for those whom we retrospectively categorize as “writers” (notably, Zhukovskii) and those—for instance, petty provincial landowners—in whom we see quintessential “readers.” If, as Andrei Zorin argues in the first volume of this work, the reading revolution of the late eighteenth century taught Russian readers how to feel, the reading practices of the Golden Age encouraged them to *act*.

#### I. “THIS IS MY LIFE”: READING AS RELATING, PARTICIPATING, AND PERFORMING

Open a collection of elegies—for instance, Baratynskii’s—to the table of contents, and you will notice how many titles in it constitute one-word nouns that tag, as if on a shelf of vials, this or that situation, predicament, or emotional state a potential reader might find themselves in. Assurance, Disillusionment, Restlessness, Hopelessness, Vindication, Confession, Separation—any reader, whether in love or out of it, was welcome to pick one and walk away reassured and duly equipped.

This functionality was not confined to elegies, of course; nor was the repertoire of familiar situations limited to amatory mishaps. As his diary attests, Andrei Turgenev (Aleksandr’s elder brother), was in the habit, when attending church services, of muttering secular poems under his breath—works whose plea for universal tolerance was more in tune with his sense of piety than was the canonical liturgy:

Today, standing closer to the choir elevation [*krylos*] in the church, I began reciting with great pleasure Karam[zin’s] “Chant to Divinity” (“Pesn’ Bozhestvu”). This chant always affects me, but here, when it came to “Love!.. and when, caught by meek surprise / At the peak of their glory and triumph” etc., particu-

larly at the word “love,” I felt a quiet trepidation. I grew ecstatic, and all engulfed in this blissful state, began blessing the Bard and Poetry. Thereafter I recited silently [Karamzin’s] “To Mercy” (“K Milosti”) and [Schiller’s] “An die Freude.”<sup>10</sup>

The art of writing a poem entails the ability to relate; the art of reading, the ability to take part. Thus does Aleksei Merzliakov explain the joint machinery of reading and writing lyric poetry, elegy in particular, in his 1822 *Brief Outline of Literary Theory* (*Kratkoe nachertanie teorii iziashchnoi slovesnosti*). Relatability and participation, the critic believed, were mutually dependent.

The appeal [of an elegy] is stronger when its content relates to the reader, and it is this relatedness that defines the degree of the reader’s participation (*souchastie*). Participation is at its highest when the subject-matter of an elegy directly affects or concerns its reader, or when the situation in which the poem finds the reader is similar to the poet’s own or that of the character depicted in it.<sup>11</sup>

The term *souchastie* used in Merzliakov’s perceptive definition is broader than any equivalent I have been able to find in English. *Uchastie* in Russian covers everything from the “participation” used above to “sympathy,” “involvement,” and partaking; the prefix *so-* transforms it into a sort of co-partaking, literally “complicity.” A more accurate translation of Merzliakov’s definition would be: the power of elegy (or, for that matter, of lyric poetry at large) is proportionate to readers’ involvement or complicity in it; and the degree of that complicity, in turn, depends on how close the reader’s circumstances are to those referred to in the poem. “When alone, [Emilia] should check the silent musings and moods of her innocent soul against the beautiful work of the Poet who will expertly tell her what her heart feels but is unable to express,” an observer of polite society types (of which “Emilia” is one) wrote in the journal *Moskovskii vestnik* in 1827.<sup>12</sup> Poetry was where readers were supposed to *look up* names for emotions, as we do words in a dictionary. With time, those names settled down to form the common pool for future readers and future poets to draw from—precisely as Joseph Brodskii has it in his 1961 “In Memory of E. A. Baratynskii” (“Pamiati E. A. Baratynskogo”):

<sup>10</sup> *Arkhiv brat'iev Turgenevykh*, vol. 2, 72.

<sup>11</sup> A. Merzliakov, *Kratkoe nachertanie teorii iziashchnoi slovesnosti* (Moscow, 1822), 173-174.

<sup>12</sup> -R-, “Pismo k izdateliu,” *Moskovskii vestnik*, pt. 1, 1 (1827), 79-80.

Ну, вот и кончились года,  
 затем и прожитые вами,  
 чтоб наши чувства иногда  
 мы звали вашими словами.<sup>13</sup>

True, Merzliakov's account of what readers relate to in lyric texts includes the "character (*litso*) depicted" by the poet. This term, however, does not refer to *he-or-she* characters of the sort we encounter in fiction. Merzliakov has in mind the *I*-characters or "speakers" of verse: a mythological or historical mask to which a poem attributes what it says. Poems of this subgenre (sometimes dubbed *heroides*, after Ovid's book of the same name) were in vogue in European lyric poetry of the eighteenth century, before reappearing in the form of "dramatic monologue" in the English poetry of the nineteenth. Whether under the impetus of this fact or not, a school emerged in the framework of American New Criticism by which lyric was to be analyzed primarily by positing a "lyric speaker" hidden "behind" a poem's text, as if it were a matter of "Tell me who is speaking, and I'll tell you what the poem is about."<sup>14</sup>

Unlike this quasi-thespian, Stanislavskii-like method of analysis, the pragmatic model I propose here does not posit the speaker behind the lyric text, but *ahead* of it. Far from being predefined by who is speaking, the lyric poem undertakes a search for a reader-speaker willing (and prepared) to make the poem their own. In this perspective, such properties as relatability and performability come to the fore: how many different situations may a given poem be related to, and on how many different occasions could it be *performed*, in the broad sense of this word, that is, both enacted and applied. In the framework of the guess-who-is-speaking method, our every surmise inevitably limits the range of possible meanings. Attempting to determine the putative speaker's gender, for instance, curtails this field by half. The approach I propose takes this question off the table: even when grammatically marked, the speaker's gender is up to the user—the performer—to decide. Poets make poems that make meaning—as evidence shows, this was not quite how lyric poetry worked in the Golden Age. Here, poets made *templates* for meaning; it took a reader to make the meaning work.

Acts of speech imply an agency: a speaker. When it comes to poetry, questions as to the speaker inevitably arise; but crucial here is where we situate this speaker in mental space and time. It seems intuitive to conceive of a speaker as located *behind* the spoken, and the speech-act as having occurred *before* we read it. Axiomatic as such presumptions may appear in relation

<sup>13</sup> I. Brodskii, *Sochineniia* (St. Petersburg, 1992), vol. 1, 61. Translation: "So, the years have now passed / in which you lived precisely / so that we might sometimes name our feelings / using your words."

<sup>14</sup> See J. Culler, "Why Lyric?" *PMLA*, 123, 1 (2008), 201–206; and V. Jackson, "Who Reads Poetry?" *PMLA*, 123, 1 (2008), 181–187.

to everyday communication, they do not necessarily apply to the workings of lyric poetry. In lyric, the “speaker” is not reducible to a role, a speaker-in-the-text (whether a dramatic mask, the poet in person, or the poet’s abstracted proxy—the “lyric hero”), but is more helpfully envisioned as a function, a movable agency or *speakership* that lyric poets delegate to their future readers.

In the Golden Age poems were not only read, but used—for the sake of pragmatic strategizing. The culture of album inscriptions is a case in point. Anonymous album suitors would tamper with a recently published poem, adapting it entirely, or certain of its verses and stanzas, to serve their hidden (and obvious) agenda. Here, variability was rampant. Vladimir Gorchakov, Pushkin’s Kishinev acquaintance, complained:

More than once, in such albums, have I come across poems by Pushkin, often so monstrously deformed that it was hard to understand what they were about; but every such poem was invariably signed with his name. Thus, in 1821, in an album belonging to one poetry aficionada (*liubitel'nitsa*), I recognized [Pushkin’s] poem “To Dorida” (“Doride”) written in 1820, with the following modifications. First, [the title became] “To Her;” then: “I trust: I am loved, is it possible not to trust you; / You are kind, good-looking, thus how could you be beguiling?; / Everything is unfeigned about you: the vernal glow of your cheeks, / Charming shyness, priceless gift of the gods, / The lively snow-whiteness of your attire and shoulders / And the infantile tenderness of caressing names” (Я верю: я любим, возможно ль вам не верить; / Вы милы, хороши, так можно ль лицемерить; / Все непритворно в вас: ланит весенних жар, / Стыдливость милая, богов бесценный дар, / Уборов и плечей живая белоснежность / И ласковых имен младенческая нежность.)<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, only the final verse in the album version quoted by Gorchakov is faithful to Pushkin’s original. The changes in the other five are too consistent to attribute to a lapse in the inscriber’s memory. Take Dorida’s pleasantly casual manner of speaking—“речей небрежность”—transformed, in the album, into “плечей белоснежность,” the near-homophonous, but far more sensual “snow-whiteness of [your] shoulders.” Unlike Pushkin, his album alter-ego employs the poetic device known as “blason,” the listing of physical features comprising a woman’s beauty; even though neither bared shoulders nor glowing cheeks are ascribed to Pushkin’s original Dorida. Even more telling is the pronominal slippage. Though titled “To Dorida,”

---

<sup>15</sup> Cited from V. Gorchakov, “Vyderzhki iz dnevnika ob A. S. Pushkine,” in V. Vatsuro et al. (eds.), *Pushkin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (St. Petersburg, 1998), vol. 1, 259.

Pushkin's poem speaks of the eponymous woman in the third person; the album version, for its part, uses the third-person pronoun in the title ("To Her"), while in the text proper, *ona* becomes the second-person *vy*. Form follows function: in an album, you talk to the album owner—in this case, one can surmise, a lady known to wear white, open-shouldered dresses.

Delegating a work to a performer did not amount to relegating it. Appalled as Pushkin's friend may have been by this appropriation, Pushkin himself would have seen it coming. His *Mozart and Salieri* (*Motsart i Sal'ieri*) includes a scene showing a blind old tavern fiddler perform an aria from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, presumably out of tune. Salieri is outraged; Mozart finds it funny. Much like in music, in lyric poetry the very fact of having composed a work was tantamount to signing what may be called a "speakership disclaimer."

As speakership changed hands, so did the honor of being the speaker's treasured addressee. Mythic creatures like "Doris" or "Charis" (used to allegorize generic beauty, or to obscure reference to an actual one) were easy to hijack and reassign to a standby album-holder. But even when the real name of a person known to many happened to appear in the title or first line of a love poem—"O, you self-willed Sofia!.." ("O svoenravnaia Sofiia!..")—the verse could easily be repurposed. Poets, Pushkin included, had no qualms about resorting to this ruse. In 1821-22, Baratynskii, at the time in love with Sofia Ponomareva, wrote a number of poems to her; in 1823, his ardor cooled by Sofia's apparent inattention, Baratynskii readdressed two of them—"You are adored by far too many" ("Vy slishkom mnogimi liubimy") and "A blind devotee of beauty" ("Slepoi poklonnik krasoty")—to Annette Lutkovskaia, a niece of his regimental commander.<sup>16</sup> The second of these poems, now under the title "To L-ia" ("K L-i") appeared in Baratynskii's 1827 collection of poetry, only to lose this title, in turn, in the 1835 edition. This disappearance was due, more likely than not, to the appearance of still another flame, this one contained in wedlock. After marrying Anastasia Engel'gardt in 1826, that is, Baratynskii grew cagy about publishing his love poems, their dates and titles in particular. In the early nineteenth century, lyric poetry served as a form of relationship between people; as relationships thrived or soured, poems could textually change.

A common method of relating to a lyric text was simply to rewrite it. Rewriting, like reciting, was a form of *souchastie*, of becoming an "accomplice" or surrogate author of a lyric work. Traces of reading as rewriting are frequent in deposits of album lore, as we see in the case of an 1821 Pushkin elegy inscribed, in 1827, in an album (owner unknown):

<sup>16</sup> See A. Peskov, "Vzgliad na zhizn' i sochineniia Boratynskogo," in *Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva E. A. Boratynskogo*, edited by A. Peskov (Moscow, 1998), 21-22; V. Vatsuro, *S. D. P. Iz istorii literaturnogo byta pushkinskoi pory* (Moscow, 1989), 182-200, 259-61, 289-90.

Я пережил свои желанья,  
Я разлюбил свои мечты;  
Остались мне одни страданья –  
Плоды сердечной пустоты.

Безмолвно жребию послушный –  
Влачу страдальческий венец –  
Живу печальный, равнодушный,  
И жду: придет ли мой конец?

Так, поздним хладом пораженный,  
Как ветров слышен зимний свист,  
Один – на ветке обнаженной –  
Трепещет запоздалый лист!<sup>17</sup>

Beneath the poem, in the same hand, is written “By Aleks[andr] Pushkin,” and then “Written by (*pisala*) 6:2.” To the left of the second stanza, behind a vertical stroke, is a note: “This is my life” (*Vot moia zhizn*).<sup>18</sup>

As N.A. Tabakova who found and published this album inscription suggests, the “6:2” inscriber was a woman with the initials E. B. (E. B., the sixth and second letters; signatures in such alphanumeric code were quite common). E. B.’s comment, in turn, lends room for speculation. As a remark, *This is my life* is unexceptional. That someone should find a doleful elegy (*unylaia elegiia*) well attuned to their melancholy mood—this fact in itself was nothing special.<sup>19</sup> What *was* special was E. B.’s recording of her quasi-anonymous comment in an album—that is, making her reading experience quasi-*public*.

In the mind of the early nineteenth-century reader, writing and reading constituted one continuous, mutually segueing process. Reading begets writing: E. B., a model reader who knows Pushkin’s elegy by heart (the few minor imprecisions would seem to rule out a printed source at hand), writes it out on the page of another person’s album. Writing begets reading: now, the album’s owner, and whoever else this person might show her

---

17 Translation: “I have outlasted my desires, / Have ceased to love my dreams; / What remains for me is only suffering, / The fruit of the heart’s emptiness. // Silently obedient to my fate / I drag my martyr’s crown, / I dwell, sorrowful and aloof / And wonder if my end will come. // Thus, stricken with a tardy chill / When winter’s whistling winds are heard, / Alone on a bare bough / There trembles a belated leaf.” The album inscription is a copy of the journal version (published in *Novosti literatury* in 1823 and quoted here). I reinstated Pushkin’s punctuation and corrected one misremembered word.

18 See N. A. Tabakova, “Pushkin v al’bomakh sovremennikov,” in *Pamiati Anny Ivanovny Zhuravlevoi: Sbornik statei*, edited by G. V. Zykova, E. N. Penskaia (Moscow, 2012), 288-290.

19 As Robert Darnton has shown, projecting the read upon one’s private life was a widespread mode of reading since Rousseau; see R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre* (New York, 1984), 215-256. See also ZORIN, “A Reading Revolution?,” in volume 1.



album to, would become readers of Pushkin-plus: of Pushkin's elegy *plus* this particular reader-annotator. Placed back-to-back with Pushkin's line "I dwell, sorrowful and aloof," E. B.'s *This is my life* claims a role on Pushkin's stage. This is performing via writing.

We tend to picture reading as a passive activity, if one can say so. Asked to situate reading in Michael Fried's famous *absorption vs. theatricality* dichotomy, we would likely opt for absorption.<sup>20</sup> But the Golden Age culture was not as patient. Here, to read was to *act*—upon the thing you read, and upon its other readers. In this respect, not only writing a poem but also reading it was a performative act: *doing* things with verse. What can one do with verse? Sing it; cite; recite; rewrite; adjust it to your needs or apply it to your life.

Most such usages entailed approaching a poem not as a text set in stone, but a template for further use. Like many well-known poems of the period, "I have outlasted my desires" went on to an impressive career as a song (specifically, an "art song," *romans*). Beginning in 1831, no less than twenty composers are known to have set Pushkin's elegy to music. Through the eye of a performer—for instance, fin-de-siècle contralto Varia Panina—both Pushkin's poem and the musical score Mikhail Shishkin wrote for it in 1892 were but templates for Panina to vocalize on stage, much as, for the composer Shishkin, Pushkin's lyric was, first and foremost, a template for future lyrics. Writing *this is my life* on Pushkin's margin amounted to using his elegy as an expressive template.

In the world of letters as we are used to it today, reading and writing are two contrary, if interrelated, operations. Writers write; readers read. In our mind's eye, this is a diptych on which two profiled figures are shown facing each other: one with a pen, the other with a book. In Russia, this mental picture truly became incarnate in the 1830-40s—the epoch in which the developing book market progressively polarized writing and reading, casting writers as active producers and readers as passive consumers of literary works. But when thinking of the Golden Age, it would be more accurate to visualize the reader as a profile hunched over a book—but with a pen in her hand. In the case of E. B., this book is someone's album. For her, reading Pushkin's "I have outlasted my desires" entailed *rewriting* it for someone else to read, while at the same time using its textual margin as a proscenium on which to perform her own elegiac lament titled "This Is My Life."

## 2. CHILDREN OF THE LYRE: POETRY FOR SINGING

Early nineteenth-century poetry did not, as is sometimes believed, consist of easily identifiable occupations: those who wrote and those who read, with

---

20 M. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley, 1980).

the printer and bookseller in the middle. Books did come out, and poems did appear in periodicals; but we must be careful not to limit poetry's habitat to printed matter. Much of it lived in regions that were less accessible—less convenient for observation. One of these, as we just saw, was what Simon Franklin calls nineteenth-century Russia's "graphosphere:" the handwritten counterpart of print culture.<sup>21</sup> Albums constituted a sizable part but not the whole of it. Hand-copied poems (*spiski*) filled many a reader's notebooks and self-bound books for a variety of reasons, most famously to circulate while bypassing the censor. Another reason had to do with the cost and availability of printed books. Not every country noble could easily get hold of a book everyone was raving about, or afford to buy it when they encountered it. A culture of sharing developed, especially among the provincial nobility: two or more country estates would put up money to subscribe to a journal or buy a book that would then barnstorm through a number of villages. It was cheaper for you to write out the poem(s) you liked (occasionally, one would hand-copy a whole novel!) than keep the book itself. Doing so likewise added a certain charge of creativity. A modern-day teenager, instead of buying an album of songs, would rather go online to compile their own playlists to be stored on a handheld device. Similarly, a custom-made hand-written selection of poetry or say, favorite monologues from *Woe from Wit*, could be the pride of a reader's shelf.

In his memoir of his student days, the pedagogue and writer Nikolai Ivanitskii (1816-58) describes the (second-)hand reading habits of the typical provincial gymnasium pupil thus:

[M]any of us developed a passion for reading poems. But, lacking the means to acquire any worthy author in full (*vpolne*), we used to obtain handwritten notebooks with odes by Lomonosov and Derzhavin, some of Pushkin's long poems, Dmitriev's tales, Zhukovskii's ballads and the like; all of this was diligently re-written and most of it learned by heart. It still surprises me how, given the level of teaching at the time, such passion [for reading] could be born and developed!<sup>22</sup>

Often, however, hand-copying what you had just read seems to have been motivated not so much by thriftiness or liberal ideas as by instinct or compulsion. We have witnessed this in the case of E. B., who no doubt felt strongly about the elegy she inscribed in the album. At times, having strong feelings *against* a poem would serve as just an effective impetus to copy it. The natural scientist and writer Andrei Bolotov, who spent most of

21 S. Franklin, "Mapping the Graphosphere: Cultures of Writing in Early 19th-Century Russia (and Before)," *Kritika*, 12, 3 (2011), 531-560; see also A. I. Reitblat, "Pis'mennaia literatura v Rossii v XIX veke," in *Reading in Russia*, 79-97.

22 N. Ivanitskii, "Avtobiografiia," in *Shchukinskii sbornik* (Moscow, 1909), vol. 8, 228.

his life on his parental estate in the Tula province, kept a reading notebook titled “Magazine of Memorable and Curious Texts Circulating among the People (“Magazin dostopamiatnykh i liubopytnykh bumag, nosivshikhsia v narode).” One such text that had come to Bolotov’s attention happened to be Denis Davydov’s political fable “The Female Eagle, Ruff, and Blackcock” (“Orlitsa, turukhtan i teterev,” 1804), which blatantly satirized the assassination of Paul I, the cruelty of his rule, and the miserliness of his successor Alexander I. Davydov’s fable outraged Bolotov as “insolent, dripping with malice and venom, fit to be burned.”<sup>23</sup> To his credit, rather than commit the darn thing to flames, our Tula Savonarola hand-copied Davydov’s pasquinade into his “Magazine.”

Poetry expanded, in particular, to three areas beyond the graphosphere itself. One was the art of conversation. The tenet here was that poetic skill and the skill of conversation were two equally important manifestations of one and the same talent: the dexterous command of language. As Vera Bukharina-Annenkova tells it, Pushkin (by all accounts himself an accomplished conversationalist) could even find it unsettling when the two skill-levels did not happen to match:

I remember Pushkin’s judgement regarding Countess Evdokiia Rostopchina. He paid tribute to her poetic talent, but also said that while she wrote very well, she spoke very poorly; grew intoxicated by her own discourse and gave the impression of a Pythia on her tripod discharging inconsistent thoughts, devoid of logic, solely for the pleasure of quarreling.<sup>24</sup>

The other two areas were singing and reciting. The best thing that could happen to one’s lyric poem, claimed Ivan Dmitriev in his memoir *A Look at My Life* (*Vzgliad na moiuiu zhizn’*, 1823-25), was to be set to music. As Dmitriev recalls, his own poetic success was owed to two factors. One was that his *Fashionable Wife* (*Modnaia zhena*, 1791)—a naughty narrative in verse involving a resourceful married woman, her cuckold husband, and her young lover—became popular among young men and poets in both capitals. The second factor—the one that interests us here—was that, turned into a song (*romans*), Dmitriev’s “The Little Gray Dove Is Moaning” (“Stonet sizyi gol-ubocek,” 1792) “caught the fancy,” as he put it, “of the fair sex.”<sup>25</sup>

In Dmitriev’s epoch, if you belonged to the fair sex and a song “caught your fancy,” you needed, to indulge your affinity, a musical instrument, a songbook, and a score. Unlike the handheld-and-headset commonly used by music fans today, these antiquated pieces of equipment were designed

23 O. E. Glagoleva, *Tul’skaia knizhnaia starina* (Tula, 1992), 78.

24 Cited from I. Andronikov, *Lermontov: Issledovaniia i nakhodki* (Moscow, 1977), 186.

25 I. Dmitriev, *Vzgliad na moiuiu zhizn’* (Moscow, 1866), 69.

to *make* music rather than consume it on the run. The eponymous noble maiden in Karamzin's sentimental tale "Evgenii and Iuliia" ("Evgenii i Iuliia") spends her summers contemplating nature and winters reading philosophy and rereading letters from her beloved who had been sent to study abroad. When Evgenii returns, he brings his Iulia numerous books in French, Italian, and German, as well as volumes of printed music.

She was most skilled at playing harpsichord and singing. Klopstock's "Willkommen, [o] silberner Mond" set to music by Ritter von Gluck was a song she particularly favored. Not once could she, without her heart melting, sing the last stanza, in which Gluck so skillfully attuned the tone of music to the great poet's feelings. You, mild and gentle souls! You and you alone are able to appreciate those virtuosos, and their immortal works are dedicated to you and you alone. A single tear you shed is their greatest reward.<sup>26</sup>

From the standpoint of narratology, Iuliia's song is a classic case of foreshadowing. As eighteenth-century readers would have remembered better than we might today, the title of Klopstock's elegy (which is never mentioned; Karamzin's subtle prose evades signposting) is "Early Graves"; and a few pages later in the book, young Evgenii indeed dies—on the eve of uniting his life with Iuliia's. This explains, of course, why Iuliia's heart melted precisely when she used to sing the last stanza—the one in which Klopstock's lyric speaker addresses the mossy graves of the untimely departed: "O, wie war glücklich ich, als ich noch mit euch / Sāhe sich röthen den Tag, schimmern die Nacht!" (O, how happy was I when, together with you, / I watched the day come and the night gleam!)

Iuliia, as Karamzin would have us see her, is both a sensitive soul and a sensitive reader. Not only does she brood over early graves, anticipating, perhaps, that she may before long find herself mourning over Evgenii's, but she cannot help but weep, experiencing the beautiful encounter of great music with great verse; and, as if taking a curtain call, Klopstock and Gluck, as Karamzin imagines them, seem to come out and bow to Iuliia's tear. Singing was as highly valued a skill in a young woman as were conversing and dancing.

Lyric poetry of the Golden Age would hardly have become as popular in Russia as it was throughout the nineteenth century and beyond had it not been in collusion with Russian singers. Some poems, like Merzliakov's immensely popular "Amid the Level Vale" ("Sredi doliny rovnyia"), had been custom-written as songs; others, like Baratynskii's "Dissuasion" ("Razuverenie"), were set to music, with the lyrics' authors often forgot-

---

<sup>26</sup> *Russkaia sentimental'naia povest'*, edited by P. A. Orlov (Moscow, 1979), 91.

ten in the process. The world of singing had its own hierarchy of hit titles independent of, but not unrelated to, their purely literary fame.<sup>27</sup> To get to the bottom of these dynamics, we would need to consider vocal culture in conjunction with its commercial offshoots like songbooks or popular prints (*lubok*), which, riding the wave of songs' popularity as songs, contributed to the popularity of their poetic prototypes. Along with novels and dream-dictionaries, songbooks were Golden Age bestsellers. A truly comprehensive survey of poetry in the mirror of nineteenth-century opinion would have to examine, not one reflection, but three: a poem's *renomé* among its author's peers (the small mirror, as it were); its rating among composers and singers; and its post-vocal success—the printed spinoff of its career as a song. When one of Pushkin's 1814 juvenilia, entitled "Song (One Rainy Autumn Evening)" ["Romans (Pod vecher, osen'iu nenastnoi)"], appeared in print in 1827, it did not outshine any of Pushkin's mature, peer-acknowledged masterpieces (nor did the publisher expect it to). But once in print, "One Rainy Autumn Evening" "took off" as a song (or more precisely, several songs, considering the number of composers it attracted); suddenly the market was awash in illustrated *lubok* editions, many not even crediting the famous author. As Oleg Proskurin maintains, in the course of the nineteenth century, "One Rainy Autumn Evening" grew to be Pushkin's most popular poem—if we factor in readers from *all* social strata.<sup>28</sup>

In 1796 Dmitriev published (anonymously) a songbook furnished with this epigraph from Antoine Houdar de La Motte: "Les vers sont enfants de la lyre, / Il faut les chanter, non les lire" ("Verses are the children of the lyre, / They are supposed to be sung, not read").<sup>29</sup> Taken broadly, de La Motte's motto applies to Golden Age poetry at large. Here, a lyric poem was both a performative act and a performable script. Performance, in other words, was prewired; whether euphonic or cacophonous, a poem's phonic form dictated the manner in which it was to be pronounced.

As Yuri Tynianov showed in his study "The Ode as an Oratorical Genre" ("Oda kak oratorskii zhanr"), reliance on pronunciation took root in eighteenth-century poetics. The ode was thought of, in Tynianov's phrasing, as an utterable genre (*myslilas' proiznosimoi*), hence its literal and figurative loudness.<sup>30</sup> For example, Derzhavin's "The echo rattles across hills / Like thunder thundering upon thunders" (*Grokhochet ekho po goram, / Kak grom gremiashchii po gromam*), with its fivefold recurring *gro-gor-gre's*, five *m's* and

27 See M. Mel'ts, "Pesni i romansy na stikhi Pushkina," in *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 2 (2000), 138–158; and T. P. Hodge, *A Double Garland: Poetry and Art-Song in Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston, 2000).

28 See <http://o-proskurin.livejournal.com/49378.html> (accessed April 6, 2020).

29 [I. Dmitriev], *Karmannyi pesennik, ili Sobranie luchshikh svetskikh i prostonarodnykh pesen* (Moscow, 1796).

30 Yu. Tynianov, "Ode as an Oratorical Genre," translated by Ann Shukman, *New Literary History*, 34, 3 (2003), 565–596.

two *kho*'s, is not only magnificently onomatopoeic, but also majestically hyperbolic, for here the sight and sound of a geographically specific natural site—the Kivach Waterfall on the Suna River—carry the extra load of allegorizing the exploits of two historically specific Russian military leaders—one recently deceased, the other still alive when Derzhavin's "Waterfall" ("Vodopad") was written. Thundering is as much in the nature of the ode as in that of waterfalls. It is hard to recite Derzhavin *sotto voce*.

Tynianov is surely cogent in pointing to the importance of the oral factor in the poetics of the ode; but less so in downplaying this factor when it comes to the rest of lyric poetry. There is nothing restricting oral delivery to oration; many poems were not just read but sung, and more were also recited. When a poem like "One Rainy Autumn Evening" becomes an actual song (*romans*), we cannot, contrary to what Tynianov suggests, dismiss it as something that has gone over to music and is no longer poetry; we should instead incorporate music into the study of poetry's pragmatics. Doing so, and adding various styles and schools of poetry recitation, we soon discover that, in the Golden Age, poetry was as acutely attuned to the perspective of being voiced and listened to as its eighteenth-century odic incarnation had been. Writing your poem so that it reads well aloud, that is, was never the sole prerogative of the age of odes.

Neither is reading aloud the same thing as reading loudly. The master of thunderous onomatopoeia, Derzhavin was no less mindful of the softer end of the scale. "[P]oetry and music," he speculates in his "Discourse on Lyric Poetry" ("Rassuzhdenie o liricheskoi poezii," 1811-15), "make our hearts resonate to their gentle strings."<sup>31</sup> According to Derzhavin's treatise, a good judge of either of these two arts will always know

whether, for instance, the articulation of a verse or a tone in music becomes whistle-like when it comes to depicting a whistling and hissing snake; whether a thunderclap thunders, a water-spring murmurs, a forest bellows, a grove smiles in the verse describing the crash of the first of these; the quietly prattling (*tikho-bormochushchego*) current of the second; the gloomily doleful (*mrachno-unyloe*) howling of the third; and cheerful aftersounds of the fourth—in other words, whether every thought, every feeling, every word is clad in a corresponding sound; whether these sounds reach our hearts; whether we recognize in each of these the action or image of nature (*deistvie ili obraz estestva*).<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> G. Derzhavin, *Sochineniia Derzhavina s ob'iasnitel'nymi primechaniiami Ia. Grota* (St. Petersburg, 1864–1883), vol. 7, 570.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

The notion that lyric poems—infants of the lyre—wanted and needed to be listened to, not read, was sometimes bolstered by the mythopoetic—and metapoetic—image of the foundational poet. Derzhavin’s “Discourse” conjures two of these: the Greek bard (with a lyre) whose cultivated and euphonious language made listeners think their soul was in their ears; and Northern skalds whose sense of hearing was said to be so refined that it could capture pictures made of living light—an ability never achieved by either ancient or modern Southern peoples. “As I understand it,” Derzhavin remarks somewhat self-servingly, “[these skalds] were past masters of onomatopoeic verse.”<sup>33</sup> Poetry, like music, is the art of sound: “Therefore a poet must always be mindful that his style is clear and fluent, easily pronounceable and suitable to be set to music. The slightest roughness, the slightest murkiness burdens attention and dispels thoughts.”<sup>34</sup>

### 3. POET, PLAYER, PRIEST: POETRY IN RECITAL

In January 1820, Evgenii Baratynskii, along with his regiment, were transferred from St. Petersburg to Finland. Here he devoted the elegy “Finland” (“Finliandiia”) to what was then believed to be the glorious past of this imposing and desolate terrain: “So this is the homeland of Odin’s sons, who once / struck fear in the hearts of distant peoples.”<sup>35</sup> Strolling among “the crevices of granite rocks eternal,” the poet contemplates the oblivion that would betide his poems as it once had the skaldic songs:

Умолк призывный щит, не слышен скальда глас,  
 Воспламененный дуб угас,  
 Развевял буйный ветер торжественные клики;  
 Сыны не ведают о подвигах отцов;  
 И в дольном прахе их богов  
 Лежат низверженные лики!<sup>36</sup>

As luck would have it, Baratynskii’s commander in Finland, Staff Captain Nikolai Konshin, turned out to be a devotee of poetry, who would leave us his reminiscences on Baratynskii. It is here we learn of an early (if not

---

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Here and elsewhere I quote “Finland” as translated by Rawley Grau in Baratynsky, *A Science Not For The Earth: Selected Poems & Letters*, edited by R. Grau and I. Bernstein (Brooklyn, NY, 2015), 13.

36 Translation: “Soundless now is the shield of summons, the skaldic voice / unheard, the blazing oak tree cold, / the raging winds have carried off the solemn cries— / the sons know nothing of the fathers’ valiant deeds, / and the countenance of their gods / lie overthrown in the dust of the earth!” E. Boratynskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem* (Moscow, 2002), vol. 1 edited by A. M. Peskov, I. A. Pil’shchikov, A. R. Zaretskii, 140-141.

the first) recital of Baratynskii's "Finland" in front of company officers, which Konshin paints in glaring colors inspired, of course, by Baratynskii's "Finland."

I remember one winter evening. There was a storm outside. Attentive silence surrounded our Skald when he, enraptured, read to us in a solemn singsong voice, in a manner learned from Gnedich, taken from the Greeks, accepted by Pushkin and all the famous poets of that time—when he sang to us his *hymn to Finland*.... This was a memorable hour. One of us then remarked that the shades of Odin and his heroes had flown down to listen to this hymn and were blizzard-knocking (*stuchali metel'iu*) on our windows in greeting to the poet.<sup>37</sup>

Its flamboyant atmospherics aside, Konshin's account is a useful portrayal of a nineteenth-century recital. Despite misnaming Baratynskii's elegy a "hymn," and summoning Viking ghosts to cheer "our Skald," he does perceptively link the poet's manner of reciting to that of Pushkin, and through him, that of Nikolai Gnedich, a man of theater, translator of French tragedies, and someone who had devoted years to rendering *The Iliad* in Russian, inventing, in the process, a Russian counterpart of Homeric prosody and its supposed enunciation.

Nowadays, we read poems more often than we hear them; in the Golden Age, this was not necessarily the case. Recitations took place anywhere: at dedicated venues like Moscow University's Society of Lovers of Russian Literature and its multiple lookalikes in both capitals and other towns of Russia; in less formal gatherings like literary salons (for example, at the Olenins', where Gnedich was a permanent star), friendly drinking bouts, and household parties; in improvised locations like that remote infantry garrison in Finland, or the fortress cell (*kazemat*) in which exiled Decembrists were housed when arriving at Petrovskii Zavod, Siberia. When the exiles' wives came in their wake, "they settled with their husbands in our communal barrack, inspiring with their presence our monotonous captivity," reports Mikhail Bestuzhev. "It became our habit, when getting together in tight circles formed around this or that married couple, to read aloud literary works on less than serious subjects; this was the epoch in which poems, tales, short stories and memoirs flourished."<sup>38</sup> Recitals were thus heard in dungeons; at a dinner table or society event; on official academic and liter-

---

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in A. Peskov, *Baratynskii: Istinnnaia povest'* (Moscow, 1990), 162-163; I made use, in part, of Grau's translation of Konshin's text (Baratynsky, *A Science Not For The Earth*, 483-484).

<sup>38</sup> *Vospominaniia Bestuzhevskikh*, edited by M. Azadovskii (Moscow, Leningrad, 1951), 157-158.



ary occasions; and, we must not forget, most public literary readings of this kind used to occur on a regular basis, weekly or monthly.

The importance of aural delivery comes to the fore if we consider poetry—or for that matter, literature in general—not as a stand-alone formation, but as part of a larger verbal landscape. Within this landscape, poetry found itself flanked by two performative institutions fully dependent on oral delivery as a means to affect their respective attendees. One of these was dramatic theater, most of which in this period was in verse; the other, Russian Orthodox churches, with their extraordinary reliance on aural ambiance and vocal elocution.

The theater was not simply a place for poets to frequent as spectators; sooner or later, a poet of note would try their hand at dramatic composition themselves. The same is true of theater as a performing art. Acting in the Golden Age was not confined to the imperial theaters. Noble amateurs would showcase their thespian skills on home stages. Good acting in this period was largely about poetic diction. Schools of expressive recitation competed: Fedor Kokoshkin was known for asserting the classicist manner on professional and amateur stages in Moscow; in Petersburg, Pavel Katenin and his pupil the actress Aleksandra Kolosova vied with tragedienne Ekaterina Semenova, a pupil of Nikolai Gnedich.

Recalling the recital of “Finland” in Finland, Konshin traced Baratynskii’s style of reciting to Gnedich. Known to have coached poets and actors in declamation, Gnedich was an effusive *chtets* (elocutionist) himself. Skeptics characterized Gnedich’s “frenzied (*neistovyi*) recitals” as “chant-like, clamorous, screamy—but passionate and in accord with the meaning of the verse, which on the other hand was not something he was always able to bring out in his pupil [Semenova].”<sup>39</sup> Others sensed a method in Gnedich’s reportedly vehement presentations. Thus, Petr Pletnev attributed their power to his volume control:

Willing to make his recitals artistically expressive, Gnedich used to adjust the raising or lowering of his voice to suit the dimensions of the room he was reciting in. He also used to pre-rehearse his gestures so that they matched the meaning of a verse. Some verses were uttered in a slow singsong voice, others were barely audible. Credit where it is due: Gnedich usually attained the effect he was aiming for. Often, as you heard him recite, especially Homer’s hexameters, something began moving within you involuntarily, and your blood circulation changed.<sup>40</sup>

39 S. Aksakov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1886), vol. 3, 78.

40 I. A. Krylov *v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, edited by A. M. Gordin, M. A. Gordin (Moscow, 1982), 194-195.

The perceived importance of an effective recitation—or, for that matter, its sheer loudness—is well exemplified by the advice the clever but cynical professor of rhetoric Aleksei Merzliakov once gave his eager but talentless student Stepan Zhikharev, who had hoped to gain entrée into St. Petersburg’s literary circles with his tragedy *Artaban*. On 27 October 1806, Zhikharev’s diary records, he showed the manuscript of *Artaban* to Merzliakov, his mentor. “Galimatias, my dear man!” [Merzliakov] said bluntly. ‘But then, so what? Go ahead and read it to Petersburg literati. Recite it yourself, loudly, split their ears, and you’ll be a success.’” At first, Zhikharev’s ego was wounded, but when, half a year later, he had occasion to hear Gnedich recite his translation of book 8 of *The Iliad* “with extraordinary ardor and in strident voice,” he made the following entry: “[Merzliakov] may have had a point there. Now I think a poem can benefit from being read loudly; it was not for nothing that Gnedich was overstraining his chest over *The Iliad*.”<sup>41</sup>

The other performative institution in poetry’s vicinity was, as mentioned, the church, with its rigorous calendar of observances and wide repertoire of chants and liturgies conducted in Church Slavonic. While it was inconceivable for a churchgoer to critique these texts as texts (suggesting, say, improvements to the Lord’s Prayer), there was nothing untoward about discussing how well this or that text was sung or read at this or that church or mass. “Use feeling, logic, pauses as you read, / Do not read like a deacon at an ambo,” Famusov instructs a servant whose duties include reading aloud a to-do list for the week. Uttered on a theater stage, a line like this must have sounded like an in-joke, hinting at the Orthodox Church’s open hostility toward theatrical forms of entertainment. At the same time, as one reads Stepan Zhikharev’s diary of 1806-7, one is surprised to discover how often and readily this young theater buff attended religious services in order to experience what we would identify today—and Zhikharev himself comes close to identifying—as purely theatrical enjoyment. The diary records his frequent church visits, on weekdays, too.

Thursday, December 6 [1806]. Listened to a mass (*obednia*) in the St. Nicholas the Mariner Church, it’s their temple holyday today.... Court Archdeacon Aleksei Grigor’evich Vorzhskii, invited to serve on the occasion of the holyday, astounded me. What an unimaginable voice, and what mastery of elocution! Exact, lucid, clear; every word rolls out as a pearl, but what astonished me even more was the proper intonation he abided by as he read from the New Testament, emphasizing such words as would be better understood thereby; lowering and raising his voice in accord with the meaning of what was being said. He ranks number

---

41 S. Zhikharev, *Zapiski sovremennika*, edited by B. Eikhenbaum (Moscow, Leningrad, 1955), 259, 445-46.

five at the court church, but in terms of quality he must be the first. Senior Archdeacon Ivan Aleksandrovich has a stronger but less cultivated voice; he is as tall as Vorzhskii and even portlier than he, but his deportment is less noble, and he lacks Vorzhskii's extraordinary mastery of reading.<sup>42</sup>

If we replace, in the above, the words “church” and “archdeacon” with “stage” and “bass,” Zhikharev's diary entry could easily pass as an opera review.

However, poetic recitals differed decidedly from ecclesiastic ones in a key respect: the allocation of authority. Whether you were a gifted presenter like Vorzhskii or a second-rate one like the honorary Ivan Aleksandrovich, (divine) authority was vested not in you but the Holy Writ—the book. Conversely, poetic authority lay with a poem performed, not penned. “I do not know if you are going to like my poor verses, which shall reach you unnamed (I truly could not think of a fitting title), in so ugly a copy, and without its author present,” Konstantin Aksakov wrote from Moscow to his beloved cousin in Petersburg. “I wish this great distance that separates us were not so: I would have recited the poem for you using my face and voice to complement things unexpressed.”<sup>43</sup>

Konstantin Aksakov, indeed, is better known as an essayist than a poet, but then, even a virtuoso versifier like Vasilii Zhukovskii used to trust his ear more than he would his eye. “I always liked him,” Zhukovskii wrote to Petr Viazemskii from Bad Ems where he happened to run into Aleksei Khomiakov. “But this time, I bit into him like a hungry spider into a fly. I threw my verses at him so that he'd read them out before me. Thus am I able to detect my poems' covert flaws; when it comes to the overt ones, those I can notice and deal with on my own.”<sup>44</sup> Performability is the name of the game: for Zhukovskii, any poem was presumed imperfect until proven perfect in performance.

In a recital situation, poetry became a theater-in-miniature. Sometimes, as in the case of Gnedich's recitals or Baratynskii's reading of “Finland” to infantry officers in Finland, the theater was composed of a single poet reciting to a group. Sometimes, a group of poets took turns reading to each other. Sometimes, when poems were recited face to face or heart to heart, this was the theater of two; and sometimes recitals took the form of what twentieth-century playwright Nikolai Evreinov would call *teatr dlia sebia* (“theater for oneself”)—the kernel and ultimate form of theatricality. When in 1836 Sergei Aksakov decided to take his twenty-year-old son Konstantin from Petersburg to Moscow, the latter lost the best listener he had: his cous-

42 Ibid., 279.

43 K. Aksakov, “Pis'ma k M. G. Kartashevskoi,” edited by E. Annenkova, in *Ezhegodnik Rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo Doma na 1973 god* (Leningrad, 1976), 76.

44 “Pis'mo V. A. Zhukovskogo,” *Russkii arkhiv*, 7 (1866), 1070.

in Maria Kartashevskaiia. For want of his only gentle reader, Konstantin was left with no better option than to recite his favorite poems to himself. As we learn from a letter he sent to Maria from the road, young Aksakov found in himself an appreciative listener:

Any verse line that I uttered I experienced tenfold; any verse that was even slightly sad or melodious filled my eyes with tears. When we arrived in Novgorod this agitated state reached its apex. I attended the evening mass: the tolling bells, chanting, and simple magnificence of the cathedral made a greater impact on me than I had ever experienced in a church; never had my soul felt tenderer and more sympathetic. After dinner, alone in the hotel when my father decided for some reason to pay a visit to a pub, (*otesinka vyshel zachem-to k traktirshchiku*) I felt like reciting from Derzhavin, and this was when I really burst into tears.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. PRODUCTIVE READING

In 1810, the sentimental tale “Modest and Sofia” (“Modest i Sofiiia”) appeared in the St. Petersburg magazine *Tsvetnik*. Having lived through a series of romantic upsets, young Modest is restored to happiness at a mansion of the country squire Priamodushin and his daughter Sofia. Every night after their joyful rustic chores, Sofia, her father, and her future soulmate Modest “would gather round the fireplace and read the best among novels, laugh and cry over them, voice admiration and exchange feelings and thoughts.”<sup>46</sup>

This evening idyll was meant to tutor the reader of “Modest and Sofia” in how to read. First, to “laugh and cry” together over a novel was, as Andrei Zorin has shown, a form of emotive and cultural co-tuning. In the age of sensibility in Russia, reading was seen as a form of cross-cultural appropriation: “Reading together and co-experiencing the same works of literature secured the spread of unified emotional models across national barriers and state borders.”<sup>47</sup> Secondly, the fact that only “the best among novels”—presumably, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, *The New Heloise*, or *Clarissa*—would be admitted into homes like kindhearted Priamodushin’s sent an ethical signal. Reading solely for pleasure was considered suspicious: fiction (often disguised as non-fiction, see Zorin’s chapter in the first volume) was, indeed, only warranted by the lessons you could draw from it. Thirdly, the fact that Modest, Sofia, and her father “exchanged feelings and thoughts”

45 Aksakov, “Pis'ma k M. G. Kartashevskoi,” 75.

46 *Russkaia sentimental'naiia povest'*, 296.

47 A. Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia: Iz istorii russkoi emotsional'noi kul'tury kontsa XVIII–nachala XIX veka* (Moscow, 2016), 44. See also ZORIN, “A Reading Revolution?,” in volume 1.

about these novels tells us that proper reading was to be interventionist and dialogical.

The last of these requirements merits additional comment. Why would the author of a tale like “Modest and Sofia” encourage readers to distract themselves from the plot and engage in dialogue with each other? A plausible answer to this is found in the time-tested tradition of didactic discourse. Lessons, religious or moral, are commonly couched in dialogic terms. Questions and answers form the rhetorical backbone of any catechism—“You might ask” (*Voprosish*) and “I answer” (*Otvechaiu*). Explicitly or not, most didactic discourses engrain two agencies: the one who knows and the one who learns. Such dialogues were hardly native to religious treatises alone. The one-who-knows of Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle’s seventeenth-century bestseller *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* educates Marchioness de G—the book’s smart, fair-haired one-who-learns—about the celestial bodies above her nighttime garden in which these conversations take place. “Like Fontenelle, he builds little dramas in which a problem, political or moral, is resolved,” Konstantin Batiushkov wrote about Mikhail Murav’ev who, inspired by de Fontenelle’s 1683 *Dialogues of the Dead*—a series of transhistorical debates between ancients and moderns—came up with his own *Conversations of the Dead* (*Razgovory mertvykh*, 1790), adding a bunch of late discussants from Russia to the panel.<sup>48</sup> In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, dialogical (proto-dramatic) form was seen as a perfect match for the doctrine of *dulce et utile*, according to which entertainment had to be edifying and edification entertaining. “Truth and fiction are in some measure blended,” writes de Fontenelle in his dedication of *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*; “the union of philosophy and amusement is the chief aim of this work.”<sup>49</sup>

As a literary convention, didactic dialogues à la Lucian and de Fontenelle did not survive the eighteenth century; but the practice of enlightened conversations—now staged *about* and *between*, rather than *within* literary texts—remained in vogue throughout the Golden Age. Works of literature were debated at sittings of literary societies of every sort, and also—importantly for rural areas—at after-dark family gatherings like Priamodushin’s. Reading a book you liked could feel like talking to its author; as Batiushkov said of the late French poet Saint-Lambert—“a kind man, fun to converse with.”<sup>50</sup> Reading took readers beyond reading, beyond the graphosphere, as it were, into the semblance of live communication in absentia.

The question J. L. Austin poses in his famous book on language and pragmatics is how to do things with words. No less pressing a question is

48 K. Batiushkov, *Opyty v stikhakh i proze*, edited by I. Semenko (Moscow, 1977), 55.

49 Bernard de Fontenelle, *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds*, translated by E. Gunning (London, 1803), xiv.

50 K. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, edited by A. Zorin (Moscow, 1989), vol. 2, 177.

what things can be done with what we read. Golden Age reading practices were active, performative, and productive. The quintessential product of what I propose to call “productive reading” was always a new text—more words to read. In some cases, these were mediated applications: thoughts about, with regards to, or in the wake of what you read; in others, productive reading resulted in a straight reproduction—a new copy (usually, a copy of a copy, etc.) of what has been read or of a fragment thereof. But what entitles us to speak of these instances as one group is that, even in the case of copying, there is always a reason, a goal, and an attitude behind the act, a pledge of readerly solidarity or even an emotional expropriation or claim (“This is *my* life”). Productive reading, if only by virtue of generating texts upon texts, included more and more readers in the network. Being alone with a book was a waste of time—and of the book.

There is no better way of formulating the Golden Age philosophy of productive reading than citing a lifelong adherent and practitioner. One such exemplar would be Andrei Chikhachev, a country gentleman from Vladimir province who, together with his wife Natal’ia and her brother Iakov Chernavin (whose estate was in a neighboring village) formed a three-person reading circle, complete with a handwritten daily, which Tatiana Golovina appropriately terms “*domashniaia gazeta*” (domestic gazette)—part diary, part reading journal—to which each of the trio contributed in turn.<sup>51</sup> An avid reader, Chikhachev’s rule was to keep a copy of anything that came his way. When a handwritten copy (of a copy of a copy...) of *Woe from Wit* landed on this village squire’s desk, his immediate instinct was to write out Griboedov’s masterwork in toto. He soon realized this would be impossible: the play was long, and the manuscript had to be returned to its lender in the morning. Chikhachev was up until the small hours, copying the monologues he liked best, and, as the deadline neared, the aphorisms one could scarcely let slip away.<sup>52</sup> It was Chikhachev, that inveterate reader and compulsive copier, who in their “domestic gazette” proclaimed what can be seen, in retrospect, as the ethical and philosophical platform underpinning productive reading: “to have read a beautifully written passage, to have enjoyed it and failed to write it out is the same as having had pleasure once and then forgetting all about it. There is something perverse and unholy about such behavior.”<sup>53</sup> Copying out the thing you loved was a form of espousing it, making it your own; at the same time, it was a way of making it everyone’s. It was this dual

---

51 See T. N. Golovina, “Gazeta dlia odnogo chitatelia,” in *Potaennaia literatura* (Ivanovo, 2000), vol. 2, 26–33; K. Pickering Antonova, *An Ordinary Marriage: The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia* (Oxford, 2012), 17–19; and the in-depth study of Chikhachev’s reading habits in GOLOVINA, “Belles-Lettres and the Literary Interests of Middling Landowners,” in the present volume.

52 See T. N. Golovina, “Eshche odin spisok ‘Goria ot uma,’” in *Potaennaia literatura*, (Ivanovo, 2004), vol. 4–5, 27–33.

53 Cited *ibid.*, 31.

drive, I believe—appropriation and dissemination—that moved E. B. to inscribe “I have outlasted my desires” into an album, a medium accessible to others, while also rebranding Pushkin’s elegy as hers: “This is *my* life.”

## 5. BLUE NOTEBOOKS

In the first third of the nineteenth century, then, Russian readers did not content themselves with the role of passive recipient. Reading, as we have seen, was merely the first step in dealing with a written text. Readers’ main urge was to write. The written products of reading varied in subject and form. These could be underscorings and marginalia; notes to oneself, messages to others, or comments addressed to the author; or excerpts copied into a private notebook, a specialized album, or a handwritten tome intended for other readers. This last category, what we might call handicraft readership, was seen as the next best thing to creative writing. For instance, Aleksandr Turgenev replied thus to Viazemskii’s exhortation to write:

Just before I received your letter advising me to take up the pen, Zhukovskii ... suggested that I begin writing down [my] “Thoughts” followed by “Notes”.... I cannot commit myself to pen because to do so I need to have clarity of mind and peace in my heart.... I content myself with copying excerpts in a two-year album, which I am going to bring to you to read.<sup>54</sup>

Neither Zhukovskii nor Viazemskii would have been surprised to hear this. In this age long before it was possible for a book or poem to be a click away, a catalog (often, a *catalogue raisonné*) of excerpts from what one read (in Turgenev’s case, in the course of two years) made a welcome and useful digest to share with family and friends. Aside from its practical convenience, moreover, sharing readership was regarded as a spiritually uplifting activity. As Zorin observes of Europe at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries: “The epoch’s most frequently read works functioned as tuning forks that readers used to listen to and check if their hearts felt in unison with others”;<sup>55</sup> this felicitous metaphor is fully applicable to the social and cultural ensemble of the Russian Golden Age. The reading-in-forum performed in “Modest and Sofia,” the reading-in-network engaged in by Chikhachev and his kin in the rural province of Vladimir—these were nothing less than forms of self-perfection.

---

<sup>54</sup> *Ostafevskii arkhiv kniaziei Viazemskikh*, edited by V. I. Saitov, P. N. Sheffer (St. Petersburg, 1899), vol. 2, 65.

<sup>55</sup> Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia*, 44.

This creed is splendidly exemplified by a series of notes jotted down by Vasilii Zhukovskii in 1814. These have to do with an unusual undertaking that was at the time preoccupying Zhukovskii's mind. A believer in moral education and self-perfection, he held that common happiness could be attained—indeed, engineered—by a concerted effort on the part of community members. For Zhukovskii, community meant, first and foremost, the people he lived among—for significant stretches of time at the country mansion of Muratovo and later, for several months in 1815, in the university town of Dorpat (Tartu)—and whom he called his closest family: his half-sister Ekaterina Protasova, her daughters Masha and Sasha, and the resident family friend (eventually, Sasha's husband) Aleksandr Voeikov. “The masterplot of [Zhukovskii's] biographical myth is the search for the ideal familial unity,” Ilya Vinitsky observes in his monograph on Zhukovskii and the emotional history of nineteenth-century Russia. “The members of such an ideal family would be bound together not only by the bonds of blood, but by a spiritual affection that enabled an almost wordless understanding among them.”<sup>56</sup> It was with an eye to attaining such affection and unity that Zhukovskii devised a project for what a recent commentator has dubbed “a spiritual ensemble,” and which Zhukovskii himself used to call his “plan for happiness” (*plan shchast'ia*).<sup>57</sup>

The aspect of Zhukovskii's “plan for happiness” most significant for this discussion is the place it assigns to reading. Reading, like more or less everything in this ideal community, had to range from individual to public (to the extent “public” applies to a community of four), without ever remaining individual for long. Most evenings, Zhukovskii, Masha, Sasha, and Voeikov were to convene in the living room relating or reading out their daily reading to the group, in excerpts or in toto. This would inevitably generate an exchange of thoughts (otherwise, what was reading for?) Here is how Zhukovskii masterminds such an exchange in one of his diary entries:

To figure out how to keep us from getting bored. Subjects for conversations must be prepared beforehand. Who will read what. In a word, we will have to think each minute through, for this is when everyone wants to relax after a busy day, when everyone must rejoice. To pose questions to be resolved in conversation. To read aloud everyone's favorite fragments. Games and

---

<sup>56</sup> I. Vinitsky, *Vasily Zhukovsky's Romanticism and the Emotional History of Russia* (Evanston, 2015), 12; for an in-depth analysis of Zhukovskii's “domestic utopia” see also pages III-122, 147-152.

<sup>57</sup> *Perepiska V. A. Zhukovskogo i A. P. Elaginoi. 1813-1852*, edited by E.M. Zhiliakova (Moscow, 2009), 642; V. Zhukovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 20 tomakh*, vol. 13 edited by O. B. Lebedeva, A. S. Ianushkevich (Moscow, 2004), 62.



anecdotes should emerge as if inadvertently. To have a plan for every evening. Voeikov and I [must take care of this].<sup>58</sup>

As envisioned by Zhukovskii, these lively group discussions would be interposed with readings à part, each reader engaged in a silent conversation with what was read. Zhukovskii would be the one to suggest the books to read, at least insofar as Masha (aged twenty-one) and Sasha (nineteen) were concerned, as Zhukovskii served as tutor to both. Reading had to be productive, with a pen and pencil in hand. Zhukovskii specifies: “*For Masha: Read. Use a special sign to mark in books the passages that are your friends. Copy out the best passages. Keep your own [reading] journal.*”<sup>59</sup> Along with a personal reading journal, everyone was expected to keep a circulating notebook with excerpts and comments of potential interest to others. “A journal for everyone and notes on others’ journals, so that everyone might know what the others think of them and suggest what the others should read.”<sup>60</sup> Capping this veritable pagoda of paper was yet another, shared journal to which all would contribute their thoughts. “The journal of our life (*zhurnal nashei zhizni*); entrust Masha with [administering] it.”<sup>61</sup>

In the small world of Zhukovskii’s domestic utopia, there is no such thing as a finite or isolated act. Thoughts beget thoughts; writing grows out of reading as naturally as reading follows writing. Zhukovskii even came up with a horticultural metaphor for this—*grafting*. You were to sprout your own thoughts by reading the thoughts of others—much like a scion belonging to one plant shoots from the rootstock of another. “*Reading the moralists,*” notes Zhukovskii in his diary of September 1814. “I am definitely going to *make my engraftments (privivki)* on them, that is, select a good thought that is not mine and engraft on it several thoughts that will be mine, and so every day. Will make a collection of these thoughts for you. Every day must be marked by its own thought.”<sup>62</sup>

Making *privivki* (literally, “tie-ons”) was Zhukovskii’s way of maintaining literary and intellectual continuity over epochs and across languages and cultures—in this particular entry, with French encyclopedists and German moral philosophers like Christian Garve. In this respect, the peer-to-peer network of reading Zhukovskii envisaged for his happiness project can be seen as an attempt to, as it were, modernize domestic gardening via the grafting technique. The blue-bound notebooks Zhukovskii himself kept in 1814-15, known in the family as *sinen’kie knizhki*, appear custom-made for this. In the “*reading the moralists*” entry just cited, having set himself a read-

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 65; for clarity’s sake, I have restored the words and sentences written in shorthand in the original to their full forms.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 92.

ing agenda (read to think) and a timeline (a thought per day), Zhukovskii projects an outcome: a collection of thoughts, now all his own. Peculiar to these blue notebooks was that they purported to constitute a collection “for you.” Zhukovskii, the reader of moralists, wrote this note for Masha Protasova to read, copy and make her own engraftments on Zhukovskii’s. Blue-bound notebooks were an affair for two; in 1815, Zhukovskii instructed Masha: “I ask you to copy all this in the way the previous blue-bound notebook was copied: one page is yours, the next is mine.”<sup>63</sup>

This textual proximity meant more than an exchange of moral thoughts. For years, the two had been in love, weighing with hope and trepidation how her mother (his half-sister) would react to the possibility of their marriage. Time and again, motives of *personal* happiness steal into Zhukovskii’s plan for happiness for *all*. While the blue notebooks were, at least in principle, open to everyone in the family, cryptic signals could be exchanged between the two in the know. Thus, in notes for his own reading journal, Zhukovskii pledges that whatever he writes in verse from that moment on shall be (mentally, spiritually) devoted to Masha (*stikhi – slava ei*).<sup>64</sup>

One hardly needs to compose “a plan for happiness” if one has happy plans. The reason why Zhukovskii made his was the elder Protasova’s decision not to give him Masha’s hand, taken in early 1814. Yet, at one point after that she did consent to having Zhukovskii live under the same roof with them, but strictly as a relative. It was for this new prospect (which proved to be short-lived and profoundly unhappy) that Zhukovskii resolved to think their life through in order to make it as happy as possible under the circumstances. The happiness plan was penned in late 1814; earlier that year, after the two lost the hope of being together (save for a miracle they dreamed of until the last moment), Masha received two blue notebooks. One is blank, apart from a few excerpts from the New Testament, five mirthless maxims, and a dry flower inserted between empty pages.<sup>65</sup> The other, filled with text, begins with Zhukovskii’s comment on the first.

*June 21. Monday.* I return May to you; it is completely *empty*. What could I write in it? What need to express to my friend a state of mind (*dushi*) unworthy of her? Emptiness of heart, lack of attachment to life, a sense of fatigue—that’s all. Could I write about that? My hand refused to take a pen. In a word, a life like that was death alive.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 63; on the role of poetic “self-quotations” in Zhukovskii’s diaries and notebooks, see O. B. Lebedeva, “Printsipy romanticheskogo zhiznetvorchestva v dnevnikh V. A. Zhukovskogo,” in V. A. Zhukovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 20 tomakh*, vol. 13, 423-424.

<sup>65</sup> See the description of the notebook, quoted from Pavel Simoni, *ibid.*, 468.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 68-69.

But then, Zhukovskii continues, a sudden thought illumed his heart: can a love like theirs perish from the mere fact of them living apart? “We cannot be together. But living under the same sky—is it not like living under the same roof! *The main thing, our heart*—who is able to change it?”<sup>67</sup> The impossibility of their marrying could only empower their love, Zhukovskii fancies; it would refashion their relationship in medieval—chivalric, spiritual, disembodied—terms: “Away from you I am more with you.”<sup>68</sup> For want of the same roof, the space of their new togetherness will be the graphosphere, the cosmos of reading and writing. Several pages into the June notebook, Zhukovskii remembers he has a blank space ready, and makes the following irrationally strange request:

I added *the entire empty May*. I ask you to copy all this onto its pages, word by word, and add your own reply. This notebook will be my law. And I will rewrite for you what you will have written to me. I promise to you that all my life will be devoted to the fulfilment of these good intentions, or (to draw a bottom line) of *my love for you*.<sup>69</sup>

Zhukovskii’s proposal is not an easy one to figure out. A mentor by nature, and Masha’s former tutor, Zhukovskii may have believed in the didactic power of recopying, but there is clearly more than pedagogy to his plan. Here we might recall what Andrei Chikhachev—that avid and very productive reader from Vladimir province—claimed in his homespun “*gazette*.” To him, as to many in the Golden Age, there existed an ethical dimension to copying. Reading a book you liked without committing the passages you liked to paper was, Chikhachev believed, “perverse and unholy.” Zhukovskii’s strange proposal must have been driven by a kindred impulse. Asking Masha to rewrite by *her* hand *his* new plan for *their* future life and his new vision of their union was not, of course, a mere exercise in penmanship. It sounds more like Zhukovskii saw it as a ritual, a vow, almost a substitute for exchanging rings in church.

*Chaque texte n’est qu’un prétexte*. Attributed to French actor Jean Mounet-Sully and deployed by stage director Vsevolod Meierkhol’d in his struggle against the dictate of written plays, this slogan remains apt for our study of pragmatics of reading and writing. Here, as on a stage, what a line says hinges on who says it and to whom. Whether two identical texts will sound identical is always contingent on a situation, its participants and performers. When Zhukovskii tells Masha to hand-copy—word by word—into

---

67 Ibid., 69.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., 75.

the May notebook what he had written to her in the June one, or when he says he would rewrite for her what she will have written to him in the May notebook—we are faced with something more than just redundant re-duplication. These were not identical documents: they were texts in two different handwritings and, behind identical words, two different voices. In Zhukovskii’s fancy, the May notebook—the space of conjoined reading and writing—was to become his and Masha’s shared refuge in the face of impending separation.

## 6. READING-CUM-WRITING SPACES

No outer pressures, be these domestic of the kind that befell Zhukovskii and his Masha, or even the pressures on the part of state censorship, however draconian, could do much in the way of affecting literature—other than change its configuration in the graphosphere. “[N]ever have [writers] been so repressed as now,” Pushkin wrote to Denis Davydov in 1836, “not even in the final five years of the late emperor’s reign, when thanks to Krasovskii and Birukov, literature became handwritten.”<sup>70</sup> Being banned from print never meant being silenced. Rather, the opposite was true, as we know from the fate of *Woe from Wit*. Recopying a work by hand was part of an unofficial yet wide—countrywide—preservation and dissemination effort. Readers and writers alike took part in and took care of the constantly expanding network of *spiski*—handwritten copies of literary musts. “My [satirical] ‘In Luck’ (‘Vezet’) was never published,” recalls Ivan Dolgorukov, “but copies of it circulated in every town. Many knew some of its stanzas by heart. People would borrow [the original] from me to make *spiski*, and thus did my ‘In Luck’ fly to army quarters in Orenburg, to Odessa and Petersburg.”<sup>71</sup> The fair copy of Dolgorukov’s comedy *Durylom* went round and round until it wore out; “I had to have a ‘second edition’ hand-copied (*vtorym izdaniem perepisyvat*).”<sup>72</sup>

Productive reading was thus a form of reproduction. While it is true that person-to-person handwritten circulation came to be widely used in Russia because it allowed literary works to fly under the radar of censorship, we should take care not to gauge the then relations between the forbidden and the unpublished by the standards established much later during the age of *samizdat*.<sup>73</sup> Unlike the nameless, as-if-nonexistent Soviet censors, their fully credited Imperial predecessors would ordinarily train their sights on particular lines or stanzas, instead of banning the whole work; it was up to the author to decide whether to soften the objectionable passage, strike it

70 A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1937-59), vol. 16, 160.

71 I. Dolgorukov, *Povest' o rozhdanii moem* (St. Petersburg, 2005), vol. 2, 303.

72 *Ibid.*, 416.

73 See VON ZITZEWITZ, “Reading Samizdat,” volume 3.

entirely, or—as Pushkin used to do—replace it with a line (or whole stanza) of telltale dots. This was where rewriting and memorizing would come in. Dolgorukov’s memoir was not quite accurate in depicting the fate of his satirical verse: at one point, “In Luck” was published, but with the omission of one (anticlerical) stanza, which, to be sure, was precisely the stanza that many knew by heart and constituted the gem of every *spisok*.<sup>74</sup> Compared to manuscripts, books were valued for their durability, but were not necessarily very reliable as a source, or convenient as a vehicle of circulation. By the time the handwritten copy of *Woe from Wit* reached Chikhachev’s countryside estate in 1836, a standalone edition of the play (1833) had already been published. However, the printed and leather-bound *Woe from Wit* was known to have been heavily censored, which made it likelier to sit on your bookshelf while handwritten versions of the play continued to circulate. What to choose—a nice gold-lettered but censored volume, or a plain but authentic hand script—must have been a dilemma familiar to many a Golden Age reader. Nikolai Iazykov, for one, devised an ingenious solution. Having learned that one of his brothers had just acquired Pushkin’s freshly published *Boris Godunov*, he proposed in a letter (11 February 1831): “You have already bought *Godunov*. Here is what I am going to do. I will hand-copy the passages omitted in the printed version and bind these together with the printed text, exactly where each of them belongs. This way our library shall be adorned with the complete *Godunov*.”<sup>75</sup>

Today, a complete, print-plus-handwritten hand edition of Pushkin’s *Godunov* may seem like a freak of a book, something in the nature of a centaur. But this polygraphic monstrosity was, in a sense, part and parcel of its age. We tend to paint readers and writers as two different animals, and printing and writing as two different ways of committing words to paper. Ink marks on the margins of library books make us wince. But in fact, margins were originally meant to be marked up. In the Iazykov-ian idea of the complete *Godunov*, as in the eyes of the Golden Age culture at large, reading and writing, the written and the printed, are inalienable parts of the same literary organism. When Iazykov the reader (himself an extraordinary poet) picks up a pen to restore the printed version of Pushkin’s tragedy to its original completeness, he is no longer acting as “mere” reader—in this period, anyway, the concept of such “mereness” is scarcely admitted—but rather as a co-producer of the book; and so did Pushkin when, having acquired a copy of *The Lay of Igor’s Campaign* (*Slovo o polku Igoreve*), he interleaved its printed pages with blanks for making notes.<sup>76</sup> In each case, we witness productive reading at work.

74 V. P. Stepanov, “Neizdannnye teksty I. M. Dolgorukova,” in *XVIII vek*, edited by N. D. Kochetkova (St. Petersburg, 2002), 427.

75 N. Iazykov, “Pis’ma k rodnym,” edited by A. A. Karpov, in *Ezhegodnik Rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo doma na 1976 god* (Leningrad, 1978), 174.

76 See M. Tsiavlovskii, *Stat’i o Pushkine* (Moscow, 1962), 218.

Together with typeset pages, blank sheets sewn thus in between can be subsumed under the category that might be called *reading-cum-writing spaces*, the material base for participatory reading. Uses of such spaces could range from practical and ceremonial to imaginative. When Pushkin interleaved his *Igor* with empty pages, it was to prepare a commentated edition. Alternatively, a hybrid between a book and a notebook could serve as a platform for an emotional and intellectual exchange between writers with their characters on the one hand, and readers with their sorrows on the other. Andrei Turgenev's diary (recently reassessed by Zorin as an important source for emotion studies) gives a rare inside glimpse at such reading practices. In 1801, not long before his untimely death, Turgenev conceived of a plan, in collaboration with Zhukovskii and Merzliakov (two other members of the Friendly Literary Society), to produce a Russian translation of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. As we learn from his diary, he had two copies of *Werther*. While one of these may have served him as a source, the other, dissected and combined with spaces for writing, became a vehicle for imaginary communication between Turgenev, Goethe, and his Werther; add here Turgenev's flame Anna Sokovnina, yearnings and pinings for whom, as Zorin observes, inevitably steered Turgenev's thoughts toward Werther's letters.

It is from Andrei Turgenev's diary (and Zorin's discussion of it in the first volume) that we learn how a reader of considerable talent could conflate their personal world with the intellectual and emotional diegesis of a book. To believe the diary, Turgenev's first instinct was to expand the book he loved to make room in it for himself. "[W]ith no far-reaching aims, I had [*Werther*] rebound so that every other page was a blank insert. I was not sure what I might need it for," the diary admits.<sup>77</sup> This need, in fact, was prompted by Goethe's novel:

A quick thought crossed my mind. Werther says somewhere: *So eine wahre, warme Freude ist nicht in der Welt, als eine große Seele zu sehen, die sich gegen einen öffnet.* (It is the greatest and most genuine of pleasures to observe a great mind in sympathy with our own.<sup>78</sup>) ... Recalling this passage from *Werther*, I said to myself: in my *Werther* book I will be checking my feelings against his, making notes each time I felt as he had felt. As I thought of this I jumped out of my chair, rushed to my room and instantly wrote down the present lines.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> Cited from Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia*, 338.

<sup>78</sup> Cited from the R. D. Boylan translation in Goethe, *Novels and Tales*, (London, 1854), 297.

<sup>79</sup> Cited from Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia*, 338. For a close reading of Turgenev's entry (of which the fragment quoted here is but a minor part) see I. Vinit'skii, "Posviashchenie v poeziu," *Russian Studies*, 2, 1 (1996), 53-77.

Andrei Turgenev's project sounds similar to what his friend Zhukovskii would a few years later call "engrafting." Indeed, Turgenev used his blank pages to harvest thoughts and emotions grown out of Werther's—much like a garden for growing plants from other plants. That Werther's remark about mutual empathy of minds (or souls, *dush*, as any Russian would have translated Goethe's *Seele*) could have sent young Turgenev out of his reading chair to his writing desk is proof enough of the efficacy of productive reading. Underlying Zhukovskii's grafting metaphor and Andrei Turgenev's planned intervention into Goethe's *Werther* was the sense of performative empathy, as it were. Good readers, like good performers, grow into the book they read and the thoughts they find therein. You not only enact what you read, you let it *become* you.

The ideology of *literary becoming* also explains the Golden Age's sweeping devotion to poetic translations. Unlike translations of prose—mostly novels and non-fiction published widely with an eye toward commercial success—translations of poetry were mainly intended for poetry lovers, which in practice meant that most, if not all, of those willing to read Gray, Parny, or Bürger in Russian translation were equally (if not better) equipped to read these authors in the original, or in already-existing translations into languages they knew (usually French). Nonetheless, poetic translations not only proliferated, but were also debated as seriously as were poems written in Russian. One reason for this was that poetic translations were vested with an ethos and mission uniquely theirs. As Boris Tomashevskii says in his *Pushkin and France* (Pushkin i Frantsiia): "Their aim was not to render the original precisely, but to enrich Russian poetry with the forms that existed in a foreign language."<sup>80</sup> And, one might add, to advance Russian as a language—its stylistic repertoire and expressive toolkit.

Translating from European poetry was a way of making it one's own. After Pavel Katenin's translations from Tasso and Ariosto, his friend Nikolai Bakhtin could write: "As some of Katenin's experiments have proven, Italian octaves can be taken possession of (*prisvoeny*) by Russian versifiers."<sup>81</sup> The connotations of *prisvoeny* may verge on the downright military ("seized," "grabbed"); and the latter sense was occasionally made explicit by valiant translators. Batiushkov, much of whose time was spent on military campaigns, wrote in a letter to Gnedich: "Find enclosed, my dear friend, a little piece of poetry (*p'ieska*) that I have taken, that is, conquered (*zavoeval*) from Parny."<sup>82</sup>

Normally, conquests of this kind would be printed on the same footing with the poet's original works, sometimes marked as "translation" or "imi-

80 B. Tomashevskii, *Pushkin i Frantsiia* (Leningrad, 1960), 78.

81 Cited from Iu. Tynianov, "Arkhaisty i Pushkin," in Idem, *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow, 1969), 48.

82 K. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia v 3 tomakh*, edited by L. Maikov, V. Saitov (St. Petersburg, 1885-1887), vol. 3, 78.

tation,” sometimes not. Poetic translation was the ultimate form of productive reading, a way of conversing, across languages, with the author of the original work. A German, English, or French poem in Russian translation was seen as a reincarnation, not a replica. This attitude made poetic translations easy to transplant. When Thomas Gray’s “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard” (1751) became well known, so did the eponymous English graveyard. By the same token, the hill in the Mishenskoe village on which Zhukovskii had reportedly been strolling while composing his first (1802) reincarnation of Gray’s elegy became locally known as “Greieva elegiia.”<sup>83</sup> When, many years later, Zhukovskii visited England, he made certain to stop at the churchyard in Stoke Poges where Gray supposedly wrote his elegy and where Gray himself was definitely buried. The visit and, in all likelihood, the lines from the churchyard elegy chiseled on Gray’s tomb moved Zhukovskii to retranslate—this time in Homeric hexameters—Gray’s poem, which now, in Zhukovskii’s long memory, became associated with a whole cluster of literary facts, including the long-ago premature demise of his poet-friend Andrei Turgenev. So that readers would be aware of every text, event, and person looming behind the new translation, Zhukovskii furnished it with a moving footnote that deserves to be quoted in full:

Gray’s elegy, which I translated in 1802, was printed in *Vestnik Evropy* when it was published by Karamzin in 1802 and 1803. That was my *first published* poem. That one was dedicated to Andrei Ivanovich Turgenev. Passing Windsor in May 1839, I paid a visit to the graveyard in Stoke Poges nearby, the one that gave Gray the idea for his elegy; there I reread Gray’s beautiful poem and decided to translate it again, as close to the original as possible. It is this second translation, made almost forty years after the first one, that I dedicate to Aleksandr Ivanovich Turgenev as a sign of our mutual friendship that has lasted since then, and to the memory of his brother.<sup>84</sup>

Note that Zhukovskii refers to the 1802 “Graveyard” as a translation and as *his* poem—both in the same breath. For him the difference hardly mattered. The possible titles Zhukovskii played with in a number of early manuscripts range from “Elegy” to “An Elegy Written at a Country Graveyard. From Gray (*Iz Graia*).” This *iz*—literally, “out of,” a habitual way of attribut-

---

<sup>83</sup> O. B. Lebedeva, A. S. Ianushkevich (eds.), *Zhukovskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1999), 102.

<sup>84</sup> V. Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1960), vol. 1, 396; emphasis in original.



ing a translation in those days—posits the parent poem as a source, a root rather than a prototype of Zhukovskii's elegy.<sup>85</sup>

The ideology of conquest renders the *whose* question irrelevant. As Zhukovskii explains in a remarkably perceptive introspection we find in an 1847 letter to Gogol:

I often notice that most of my brightest thoughts are improvised when I have to express or supplement the thoughts of others. My mind, like a fire steel, must be stricken by a flint for a spark to jump off. This, in general, is characteristic of my authorial self: almost everything I create is someone else's, or apropos of something said by someone else—and, at the same time, all this is fully mine.<sup>86</sup>

## 7. CHRONOTOPES

In the footnote appended to the second translation of Gray's "Churchyard," Zhukovskii informs his readers of several things they ought to know about his present effort. First, the footnote alludes to the translation made almost forty years before; secondly, it links two dedications: that of the 1839 version to Aleksandr Turgenev; and that of the 1802 version, which Zhukovskii had dedicated to Aleksandr's elder brother Andrei. Thirdly, the footnote offers a testimonial regarding the poem's genesis, namely, that the idea of writing it occurred to Zhukovskii during his visit to the very churchyard that, almost a century before, inspired Thomas Gray to write his poem.

A peculiar trait of such testimonials is the attention they pay to the chrono-topography of the lyric. The when and where of a poem—written one quiet evening in a cemetery; on a summer day in Revel'; or while treading the grounds trod of old by Pushkin's cheerless Ovid or Baratynskii's Nordic skalds; in other words, the moments when poetry interlocked with one's existential situation—were seen as meaningful not only for a poem's author, but also for its listeners and readers. Not that these poems had to be written or even composed *en plein air*—standing by the sea or walking amid graves; but it was important that a poem's coming into being be associated with its author's *being there*. Nor were its readers or listeners expected to travel to St. Giles's Church in Stoke Poges in order to enjoy reading Zhukovskii's "Second Translation out of Gray," or climb "Gray Elegy" Hill in Mishenskoe to savor the first one—though we do recall how thrilling Staff-Captain Konshin found the Finnish blizzard raging outside the window as

<sup>85</sup> See T. Fraiman, *Tvorcheskaia strategiiia i poetika V. A. Zhukovskogo (1800-pervvaia polovina 1820-kh godov)* (Tartu, 2002), 12-35.

<sup>86</sup> Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 4, 544.

Baratynskii recited “Finland.” But on the other hand, it is easy to imagine someone transformed, by the mere fact of finding themselves in a graveyard or caught in a snowstorm, into a vocal performer of lines “out of” Pushkin or Zhukovskii. A tree is a tree and a grave is a grave: cultural landscapes are poetically isomorphic. In actual fact, outdoor or onsite reading/reciting of descriptive poetry was a consciously cultivated practice; and it easily spread to lyric poems. As Zorin summarizes the back-and-forth between reading and life-shaping: “The European public learned to love a la *The New Heloise* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, enjoy nature à la Rousseau, visit graveyards à la [Edward] Young and Gray, and seclude oneself from the world a la [Johann Georg von] Zimmerman.”<sup>87</sup>

What was true of topography was also true of the four seasons, the three divisions of the day, and every type of weather. Thus, in the already-cited letter to his brother Nikolai from their parental estate, Aleksandr Turgenev nostalgically recounts how he spent the previous evening observing a sunset from that wide-windowed room in which the Turgenev brothers used to have classes as boys; here, Turgenev recited a doleful description of a sunset from a Zhukovskii poem that suited the beautiful view and the meditative mood that view induced. Or take that editorial footnote we recall from the beginning of this chapter, in which an editor of *Novosti literatury* apologized to subscribers for printing a poem entitled “Spring” in the October issue. We might think of seasonal dishes in a menu. Indeed, why publish “Spring” at all, when verses titled “Autumn” were proliferating like mushrooms in this period: at least fifty of them, in Natalia Mazur’s estimate (not counting those printed in newspapers), appeared in the first half of the nineteenth century alone.<sup>88</sup>

Poetry takes nature personally, and so must its readers. A lyric description of a season (or tempest, sunset, waterfall) was seldom, if ever, an honest rendering of a natural phenomenon, but rather a seasonality matching or contrasting whatever human emotion a poet purported to impart to their readers; and so an out-of-season poem interfered with the cardinal tenet of the age: in order to succeed, a poem must be relatable, applicable, performance-friendly. In a word, *complicit* with the reader’s cast (and state) of mind.

The when and where of the verse depended, in part, on its place in the system of lyric genres. This makes Bakhtin’s notion of literary chronotope, originally devised to handle novelistic plots, instrumental for poetry as well. Typically, the *χρόνος* of a lyric poem came in tandem with its *τόπος*. Thus, the choice of autumn (rural rather than urban, and arboreal rather than campestral) as your *χρόνος* situated your poem in the generic range some-

<sup>87</sup> Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia*, 44.

<sup>88</sup> As discussed in her two conference papers “Effekt Archimboldo v opisatel’noi lirike: ‘Osen’ Baratynskogo” (delivered at IRLI, St. Petersburg, in 2008) and “‘Osen’ Baratynskogo: rekonstruktsiia kanona” (delivered at Tartu University in 2010).

where between doleful elegy and philosophic ode. The action of such an autumnal poem was, as a rule, a solitary ramble set in a natural landscape (Zhukovskii: “I am alone on the shore... All around me is silent”) attended by musings suited to the occasion (“Everything here involuntarily steers us toward contemplation”).<sup>89</sup>

Conversely, a lyric *τόπος* could prompt the choice of a fitting *χρόνος*. Take, for instance, Baratynskii’s elegy “Desolation” (“Zapustenie”), in which the nature and destination of a trip dictates—or so the poet claims—the one and only time to take it. “Desolation” was written in the wake of Baratynskii’s return to Mara, the paternal mansion whose once lovingly groomed garden had fallen into neglect after the death of his father, when he was only ten. Now in his thirties, the poet revisits Mara in search of lost time, but everywhere he looks, he finds but tokens of desolation: the lanes, now overgrown; the cascade, dry; the grotto and footbridge, dilapidated. Baratynskii’s elegy opens with an apostrophe addressed to the garden of his boyhood; here the poet explains why he chose this season to return:

Я посетил тебя, пленительная сень,  
 Не в дни весёлые живительного Мая,  
 Когда, зелёными ветвями помавая,  
 Манишь ты путника в свою густую тень [...]<sup>90</sup>

“Yet springtime garb was not what I was seeking here,” the poet postulates, “but memories from a time gone by.” This was why Baratynskii “delayed [his] return” (*zamedlil vozvratom*) till when “[t]he trees were standing in autumnal nakedness, / their aspect dark and uninviting.”

Upon first encounter with Golden Age poetry as a whole, the tenacity of situational chronotopes may appear inexplicable. Here is a bunch of smart and creative poets, none of whom, however, appears to have had any qualms about writing, again and again, poems about autumns and waterfalls, loves and friendships, the vagaries of fortune, and sad or happy returns to ancestral homes. As to the possible strategy behind such recurrences and repetitions, two historical explanations present themselves. The customary explanation traces this propensity to repeat to pre-romantic rhetorical culture, which privileged imitation over innovation. Writing poetry, in this framework, was understood as learning from tradition; learning, in turn, equaled matching an established model. “Describe a tempest for me; compose a eulogy to modesty; retell the fight between the Horatii and Curiatii,” was how Vladimir Pecherin recalled a university exam he took (c. late 1820s-1831) in

89 Zhukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v chetyrekh tomakh*, vol. 1, 264, 262.

90 Translation: “I paid my visit to you, captivating bower, / not in the joyful days of life-restoring Maytide, / when, beckoning with verdant branches / you lure the wanderer into your leafy shade [...]” Baratynskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 2, 301. Trans. by Rawley Grau in Baratynsky, *A Science Not for the Earth*, 147.

French.<sup>91</sup> Or consider the more adventurous task Nikolai Ozeretsovskii, professor of Russian at the Cadets Corps, assigned his students in 1795: compose a letter a wounded son might send his father from the battlefield.<sup>92</sup> This pedagogy might remind us more of exercises assigned in an acting studio than foreign language tests (to say nothing of a writing test in one's mother tongue). Foreign or native, languages and literatures were not thinkable or teachable apart. Language proficiency was measured less by your ability to chat on daily topics than to write a literary text that would live up to ancient examples.

This explanation may seem satisfactory, but it fails to account for precisely the aspects of Golden Age poetry I foreground in this chapter: its uncommon, one-off, or personalized poetic practices. How personal and familial semantics dovetailed with the commitment to the canon will be easier to fathom if, following Iurii Lotman, we factor in the unusual role of performance in this period's everyday life and culture.<sup>93</sup> Recall how quickly and readily people memorized and recited verses to each other. Society ladies sang and played music; ambitious young men made reputations declaiming monologues, in French or Russian, on domestic stages. This was a participatory culture, or, to deploy Merzliakov's definition of the lyric, a culture of complicity, *souchastie*. Whether you act as a reader; write a letter; or embroider a tea-cloth, you reproduce a preexisting model—but you also *appropriate* this model, make it your own. When a lady, alone in her room or in a social situation, took up her needle and embroidery hoop, she normally followed a pre-traced design; still, the choice of hues, of stitches to use, and, of course, of the design itself were all hers. Choosing the right design for your needlework was as creative an act as a poetic translator like Zhukovskii's choice of poem to translate. For a true translator, as for a true embroiderer, genuinely yours did not mean originally yours. When having received a postal reproof from his father for this or that act of debauchery, a young man reached for the *Newest Complete Letter-Writing Manual, or Everyone's Secretary for 1810* (*Noveishii polnyi pis'movnik, ili Vseobshchii sekretar' na 1810*) to copy model letter #44, titled "A Reply to his Father by a Repentant Son" ("Otvét ot syna k otsu, prinosiashchago razskaianie")<sup>94</sup> the resulting letter—even if rewritten verbatim—was genuinely his. What made a letter or a piece of embroidery your own was not the design but the hand; not the pattern, but the performance.

91 V. Pecherin, "Zamogil'nye zapiski," in *Russkoe obshchestvo 30-kh godov XIX v. Liudi i idei: Memuary sovremennikov*, edited by A. I. Fedosov (Moscow, 1989), 154.

92 S. Glinka, *Zapiski* (Moscow, 2004), 146.

93 See, among others, "The Decembrist in Daily Life: Everyday Behavior as a Historical-Psychological Category," in Iu. M. Lotman, B. A. Uspenskij, *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, edited by A. Shukman (Ann Arbor, 1984), 71–123; and "The Poetics of Everyday Behavior in Eighteenth-Century Russian Culture," in *The Semiotics of Russian Cultural History*, edited by A. D. Nakhimovsky, A. Stone Nakhimovsky (Ithaca, 1985), 67–94.

94 *Noveishii polnyi pis'movnik, ili Vseobshchii sekretar'* (St. Petersburg, 1810), 55.

“Any text is but a pretext”—this may sound arrogant to those who would equate theater with the *written* drama; but from the standpoint of a performer, the French actor’s *mot* becomes a self-evident truth. In the eye of the player, performing means giving life to abstract signs, be it a string of notes on a piano score or a chain of words in a play script. *Mutatis mutandis*, Mounet-Sully’s maxim can be applied to literature as well—especially when literary texts are viewed from the standpoint of their readers. When Pushkin wrote his “I have outlasted my desires,” he initially planned to put these words into the mouth of the Russian prisoner of the Caucasus as this character tells the Circassian maiden about himself. When, on second thought, Pushkin decided to publish his verse as a standalone elegy, the text underwent a change of implied performer. Elegy readers tend to project the words they read onto the poet with whom, as Merzliakov had it, they willingly enter into complicity. “This is my life”—when the unknown woman going by “E. B.” wrote this on her self-made copy of Pushkin’s elegy, this was equivalent to signing a pact of complicity with the poem. Uses of poetry, like poetry itself, allow for multiple interpretations, none of which exclude any other. E. B.’s inscription next to Pushkin’s elegy can be understood as a public lament using Pushkin’s words, or as using his words as a secret confession; but we could also interpret the phrase “This is my life” as a performative act, the act of giving life to Pushkin’s verbal score—much as a piano player gives life to Mozart’s written music; an unskilled correspondent lends their handwriting (and perhaps even their voice) to a template found in a letter-writing manual; or a skilled embroiderer follows a preprinted imitation pattern to create an inimitable headdress.

At the same time, we should not lose sight of the poetics of the commonplace. The Golden Age could only be the age of the performative because it was also the age of stable scripts and proven patterns. These were not, as we have just seen, set-pieces from which to construct an indifferently beautiful literary work. The lyric scripts and patterns that poets and readers used and recognized were grounded in very specific, carefully compartmented, reality-related situations. In this respect the poetics of commonplace was, quite literally, the poetics of common places and common times.

The act of reading a poem was, in the Golden Age, intimately connected with memorizing and reproducing it. It has been argued more than once—years ago by Jacques Derrida, more recently by Jonathan Culler—that the very idiom “to learn by heart”—*d’apprendre par coeur*—points to the centrality of the heart-image in our understanding of what poetry is.<sup>95</sup> Unreliable as etymological evidence tends generally to be, it may be worth noting here that the Russian equivalent for “memorizing by heart” is not heart-related at

---

95 J. Derrida, “Che cos’è la poesia?,” in *A Derrida Reader*, edited by P. Kamuf (New York, 1991), 230; J. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA, 2015), 130.

all. Literally, the inner form of the Russian *vyuchit' naizust'* can be rendered as “to learn by-out-of-mouth.” If indeed the process of learning a poem by heart can be construed as being a metaphor of internalization, learning it *naizust'* implies externalizing, transporting poetry from the realm of reading to that of performing.

## Select Bibliography

- Franklin S., “Mapping the Graphosphere: Cultures of Writing in Early 19th-Century Russia (and Before),” *Kritika*, 12, 3 (2011), 531–560.
- Glagoleva O. E., *Tul'skaia knizhnaia starina*, Tula, 1992.
- Golovina T. N., “Eshche odin spisok ‘Goria ot uma’,” in *Potaennnaia literatura*, Ivanovo, 2004, vol. 4-5, 27–33.
- , “Gazeta dlia odnogo chitatelia,” in *Potaennnaia literatura* (Ivanovo, 2000), vol. 2, 26–33.
- , “Russkaia iziashchnaia slovesnost' v krughe chteniia pomeshchikov srednei ruki (po arkhivnym dokumentam 1830-1840kh godov),” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 157 (2019).
- Hodge T. P., *A Double Garland: Poetry and Art-Song in Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Evanston, 2000).
- Hoogenboom H., “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers,” *Slavic Review*, 74, 3 (2015), 553–574.
- Mel'ts M., “Pesni i romansy na stikhi Pushkina,” in *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki*, 2 (St. Petersburg, 2000), 138–158.
- Petina L., “Ob al'bomnom kharaktere russkikh izdaniia pervoi poloviny XIX veka,” in *Literaturnyi byt pushkinskoi pory*, edited by N. I. Mikhailova (Moscow, 2012), 141–160.
- Pickering Antonova K., *An Ordinary Marriage: The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia* (Oxford, 2012).
- Pil'shchikov I., Peschio J., “The Proliferation of Elite Readerships and Circle Poetics in Pushkin and Baratynskii (1820s–1830s),” in M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination* (Toronto, 2011), 82–107.
- Reitblat A. I., *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii* (Moscow, 2001).
- , “Pis'mennaia literatura v Rossii v XIX veke,” in D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (eds.), *Reading in Russia: Practices of Reading and Literary Communication (1760-1930)* (Milano, 2014), 79–97.
- Tabakova N. A., “Pushkin v al'bomakh sovremennikov,” in G. V. Zykova (ed.), *Pamiati Anny Ivanovny Zhuravlevoi: Sbornik statei*, E. N. Penskaia (Moscow, 2012), 282-

96.

Todd W. M. III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA, 1986).

Vatsuro V., "Literaturnye al'bomy v sobranii Pushkinskogo doma (1750-1840-e gody)." *Ezhegodnik Rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo doma na 1977 god* (Leningrad, 1979), 3-54.

—, *S. D. P. Iz istorii literaturnogo byta pushkinskoi pory* (Moscow, 1989).

Vinitzky I., *Vasily Zhukovsky's Romanticism and the Emotional History of Russia* (Evanston, 2015).

Zorin A., *Poiavlenie geroia: Iz istorii russkoi emotsional'noi kul'tury kontsa XVIII-nachala XIX veka* (Moscow, 2016).





## READING FOREIGN NOVELS, 1800-1848

Damiano Rebecchini

In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of changes took place in the way that Russia consumed literature. The readers, the type of texts that were read, and, of course, the way people read—all of these things changed. In a society still rigidly divided into estates, these changes took place reasonably slowly, but by the middle of the century, they were already clearly visible to contemporary observers. In this chapter I will first analyze the role that foreign novels played in such changes during the first decades of the nineteenth century. I will then show how, along with the success of the Russian novel in the 1830s and 1840s, the reading of foreign novels acquired new functions for the Russian reading public.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Russian reading audience was following a trend that had begun in the 1780s but had now become more prominent.<sup>1</sup> In this period, the Russian readership increasingly began to include a broad and diverse population, ranging from small provincial landowners to civil servants, from clerks and the military to the merchant class, and the urban masses. The new readers also began to include a small but growing number of peasants.<sup>2</sup> Among the non-nobles, the vast majority of Russians were illiterate or semi-literate, but their reading skills had improved.<sup>3</sup> The degree of improvement depended on several factors: one's job,

---

1 See BAUDIN, "Reading in the times of Catherine II," vol. I. See also G. Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton, 1985), 103-109, 158-172, 184-211. For a discussion of the notion of reading public see SMITH-PETER, "The struggle to create a regional public," in the present volume.

2 Cf. A. B. Blium, "Massovoe chtenie v russkoi provintsii kontsa XVIII-pervoi chetverti XIX v.," in I. E. Barenbaum (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad, 1973), vol. I, 42-55.

3 According to Boris Mironov, "by the end of the eighteenth century the level of literacy among male peasants ranged from 1 to 12 percent (but no higher), among urban dwellers from 20 to 25 percent. Literacy was highest among the nobility (84 to 87 percent), followed by

and whether that job required reading and writing skills; their education and the position one had reached in one's civil service or military career; and, finally, one's access books.

Despite the prestige enjoyed by the French language in Russia, at the end of the eighteenth century the share of readers who read in French (notwithstanding its cultural influence) did not represent the majority of the Russian reading public.<sup>4</sup> As Gary Marker notes, in the 1790s, "there is no question that reading in French remained far less widespread among the Russian public than reading in Russian."<sup>5</sup> Outside of high society, the fact that some readers from the merchant and civil servant classes knew French did not necessarily mean that they read literary works in French.<sup>6</sup> A passive understanding of foreign languages—acquired for purpose of reading rather than conversation—was widespread among some of the members of the orthodox clergy and in the world of the wealthier merchants.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, books in foreign languages were far more expensive than Russian ones, and transactions involving them mainly occurred in the two capitals. Circulation of foreign books in the provinces was comparatively limited.<sup>8</sup>

Starting from the 1820s, several factors contributed to the expansion of the Russian reading public outside the world of the nobility.<sup>9</sup> Among these, the most significant seem to be the general improvement of Russia's eco-

---

the merchants (over 75 percent), then the *meshchanstvo* (townspeople), workers (*rabotnye*), and peasants. Among the peasantry, serfs were the least literate. Women were far less literate than men." B. N. Mironov, "The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 31, 2 (Summer, 1991), 234. The first survey conducted in Russia on the degree of literacy among the population focused on the male population of the province of Saratov in 1844. Among the non-nobles, the survey shows the following literacy rates among the various classes: 42.1% of the merchant class, 34.4% of town-dwelling domestic servants (*dvorovye liudi*), 28.7% of townspeople (*meshchane*), 5.6% of peasants working on crown lands (*udel'nye krest'iane*), 2.7% of state peasants, and lastly 1.2% of peasants belonging to landowners. Cf. I. M. Bogdanov, *Gramotnost' i obrazovanie v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii ii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1964), 20.

4 On the use of French in Russian high society, cf. D. Offord, G. Argent, V. Rjéoutski, "French and Russian in Catherine's Russia," in D. Offord, L. Ryzanova-Clark, V. Rjéoutski, G. Argent (eds.), *French and Russian in Imperial Russia. Language use Among the Russian Elite* (Edinburgh, 2015), 25-44; D. Offord, G. Argent, V. Rjéoutski, *The French Language in Russia. A Social, Political, Cultural, and Literary History* (Amsterdam, 2018), 215-261.

5 Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia*, 196.

6 As the literary critic Vissarion Belinskii writes: "in Russia there are very many people who have not read even a single French author, but who can speak and read French perfectly." V. G. Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9 vols. (Moscow, 1976-1982), vol. 2, 282.

7 On the knowledge of French among the Russian clergy and merchants at the beginning of the nineteenth century see KISLOVA, "How, Why, and What the Orthodox Clergy Read in Eighteenth-Century Russia," vol. 1; D. L. Ransel, *A Russian Merchant's Tale: The Life and Adventures of Ivan Alekseevich Tolchenov* (Bloomington, 2009), 10, 105.

8 M. N. Kufae, *Istoriia russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (Moscow, 1927), 141.

9 On the factors that contributed most to the expansion of the Russian reading public, see REBECCHINI, "The Success of the Russian novel in the 1830s and 1840s," in the present volume. See also M. Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences, 1828-1848*, PhD dissertation (Berkeley, 1999).

nomic situation, some limited social mobility, the increased spread of both school- and home-based education, and finally the greater efficiency of the book market—the last of these made possible by a significant reduction in the price of Russian books and the faster circulation of texts in general<sup>10</sup>. A significant measure of this progress was also due to the improved efficiency of the Russian postal service, which made books, newspapers, and journals more easy to access in the Russian provinces, which had previously only been marginally affected by the capitals' cultural influence.<sup>11</sup> In 1842 the literary critic Stepan Shevyrev summarized the evolution of reading in Russia as follows: "In Lomonosov's time reading was a matter of conscious effort; under Catherine the Great it became one of the luxuries of the educated class; in Karamzin's time, a requisite badge of enlightenment; with Zhukovskii and Pushkin, a social need."<sup>12</sup>

The novel was the literary genre that best met the cultural needs of this growing, new, and diverse reading public.<sup>13</sup> At the beginning of the nineteenth century, along with the fable, the novel represented the cultural product most easily understandable to readers with varying degrees of education; it was easily accessible for those who lived in the more remote provinces, and was not too expensive; and most importantly, it had become a fashionable object, a foreign novelty with a prestigious status among the Russian elite, whose cultural cachet many new readers were keen to possess. Starting from the first decades of the nineteenth century, the novel became the preferred form of literary entertainment for most Russian readers, the one in which they invested most of their time and money. It was in this period that the so-called "reader of novels" emerged, a reader who reduced his consumption of other competing textual forms, from religious literature to utilitarian publications, and who focused almost exclusively on the novel as a genre<sup>14</sup>. While not representing the majority of readers, this

<sup>10</sup> On the increase of the education in the Russian province see SMITH-PETER "The struggle to create a regional public," in the present volume. See also A. Besançon, *Éducation et société en Russie dans le second tiers du XIXe siècle* (Paris, La Haye, 1974).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Blium, "Massovoe chtenie v russkoi provintsii kontsa XVIII–pervoi chetverti XIX v.," 37-57; Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia, 135-151, 177-180*. On improvements to the Russian mail service, cf. J. Randolph, "Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire, 1700-1850," in S. Franklin, K. Bowers (eds.), *Information and Empire: Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600-1850* (Cambridge, 2017), 178-179.

<sup>12</sup> N. Barsukov, *Zhizn' i trudy M. P. Pogodina* (St. Petersburg, 1888-1910), vol. 6, 255-256.

<sup>13</sup> By the term "novel" we mean what contemporary Russian catalogues labelled "roman," i.e. fictional prose narratives published individually in one or more volumes and, in general, no shorter than 96 pages, or 3 folios. The length was indeed considered by contemporaries a distinctive feature of novels (cf. f.i. N. A. Polevoi, Ks. A. Polevoi, *Literaturnaia kritika. Stat'i i retsenzii* [Leningrad, 1990], 397; N. I. Nadezhdin, *Literaturnaia kritika. Estetika* [Moscow, 1972], 321). Following the definition of novel given by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel*, we consider eighteenth-century *lubok* prose narrations to be romances and not novels.

<sup>14</sup> See f.i. GOLOVINA, "Belles-Lettres and the literary interests of middling landowners," in the present volume.

type of reader was a new phenomenon which appeared in Russia in the first decades of the century and became fully established between the 1830s and the 1840s.

It was during this period that a radical change took place in the relationship between the consumption of foreign literary works and Russian ones<sup>15</sup>. Throughout the eighteenth century, about 943 novels were published in the whole of Russia; of these, 839 were foreign novels translated into Russian and 104 were original Russian novels.<sup>16</sup> To these one should add novels read in foreign languages that were imported from abroad or published within the borders of the Russian Empire. At the end of the eighteenth century, the success of the European Sentimental novel with the Russian public seemed to have swept away many of the prejudices against reading novels that were vented by the coryphaei of Russian classicism between the 1750s and the 1770s.<sup>17</sup> As Karamzin had stated, reading novels had become a fundamental experience for the sensitive, educated Russian man.<sup>18</sup> Russian publishers had acknowledged the public's rising interest in this genre and had started to offer them an increasing number of novels in translation. The number of European novels translated into Russian in the first thirty years of the century was ten times that of the new, original Russian novels published in that same period. According to our calculations, from 1801 to 1829, 489 novels were translated into Russian and published, compared to only 46 original Russian novels that saw publication.<sup>19</sup> Although the hegemony of the French novel had temporarily been challenged by the success of English and German novelists in the first three decades of the century, the Russian public continued to mostly read novels written by foreign authors and set in a foreign country.<sup>20</sup> The most abrupt change occurred in the 1830s. It was

15 See REBECCHINI, "The success of the Russian novel," in the present volume.

16 Cf. Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 29. See different figures in V. V. Sipovskii, *Iz istorii russkoi literatury XVIII v. Opyt statisticheskogo nabludeniia* (St. Petersburg, 1901), 30.

17 On this, cf. R. Baudin, "Normativnaia kritika i romannoe chtenie v Rossii serediny XVIII veka," in D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (eds.), *Reading in Russia. Practices of Reading and Literary Communication. 1760-1930* (Milan, 2014), 39-58.

18 See ZORIN, "A Reading revolution?" vol. 1. See also N. D. Kochetkova, *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma (Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniia)* (St. Petersburg, 1994).

19 Here we will consider only novels published as standalone first editions, not those published in journals (even if before 1834 it was quite unusual to see novels being serialized in Russian journals). By Russian novels, we mean prose narratives no shorter than 96 pages (3 printer's sheets). Our figures also consider reprints or new editions of previously published foreign novels republished between 1801 and 1830. Our estimate considered the following catalogues: *Rospis' rossiiskim knigam dlia chteniia iz biblioteki Aleksandra Smirdina, sistematicheskim poriadkom raspolozhennaia* (St. Petersburg, 1828); *Pervoe pribavlennii k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam Smirdina* (St. Petersburg, 1829); *Vtoroe pribavlennii k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam* (St. Petersburg, 1832).

20 In fact, reprints and print runs of traditional eighteenth-century Russian *lubok* romances are at variance with any assertions about the Russian reading public's ostensible preference for foreign literature: a small number of *lubok* romances had far larger print runs and far more reprints than European novels did (see below).

during this decade that the Russian public began to show a new and marked interest in Russian fiction. The ratio in fiction production became completely reversed. According to our figures, while in the first three decades of the nineteenth century only 46 original Russian novels had been published in Russia, between 1830 and 1839 as many as 166 Russian novels saw publication—as opposed to 153 European novels in translation.<sup>21</sup>

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, while the development of Russian Golden age poetry contributed to the diversification of cultured readers,<sup>22</sup> the success of the novel seemed to have the opposite effect, creating readership homogenization and cohesion. Members of different social and cultural groups often read the same novels, while their individual choices differed greatly with regard to other types of texts that they read (poetic, historical, religious, etc.).<sup>23</sup> Of course, the narrower the choice of novels (as it was in those early decades), the stronger the novel's cohesive power. As time passed, the greater and more diversified the fictional choice became, the more the novel became a form of cultural distinction.

An element that contributed to the differentiation of the Russian public during this period was the affirmation of novels by known authors, as opposed to anonymous prose works. Throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, many of the *lubok* romances were indeed released anonymously; the public knew them exclusively by their titles.<sup>24</sup> From the early decades of the nineteenth century, the author's name started to become another important element for prose works, leading to a significant change in the way novels were read. The greater importance afforded to the author presupposed that readers paid greater attention to the homogeneity of the style of the work. The novel genre began to be appreciated not only just for its entertaining function (i.e. for the type of adventure it offered to its reader), but also as an aesthetic object in and of itself: the expression of a unique individual style whose artistic identity revealed itself to the reader, work after work. Reading novels represented a cultural symbol that set the new readers apart from old consumers of *lubok* literature. It offered them the pleasure of doing something different from other readers, a pleasure they derived from consuming a product that was considered rare and precious—in terms of its unique style and price alike.

---

21 [P. I. Bystrov], *Sistematičeskii reestr russkim knigam s 1831 po 1846* (St. Petersburg, 1846). These figures do not include novels published in journals.

22 See КИТОВА, "Reading and Readers of Poetry in the Golden Age," in the present volume.

23 See D. Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: From the Tsar to the Stokers", *Slavic Review*, vol. 78, 4 (Winter, 2019), 965-985.

24 Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia, 120, 202*. In Great Britain, between 1770-1790 and at the end of the 1820s, 80% of all novels came out anonymously. On the importance of anonymous novels in the British market, see J. Raven, "Gran Bretagna, 1750-1830," in F. Moretti (ed.), *Il romanzo* (Torino, 2002), vol. 3, 321.

In this period, the novelty factor began to play an increasing role in the consumption of novels. Once a timeless form of entertainment represented by several specific *lubok* romances that were re-read generation after generation, in this period the novel increasingly changed in the eyes of the public into an ephemeral, fashionable object, a form of distinction employed by the trendiest readers in opposition to the growing cultural homogenization of society. In 1818, in his *On the Reading of Books (O chtenii knig)*, Aleksandr Labzin wrote: “in aristocratic and wealthy homes, people own books to keep up with the latest fashion [...] They change their books as often as any other fashionable commodity.”<sup>25</sup> In the case of novels, the novelty factor increasingly became a distinguishing element, one that was clearly quantified in the different subscription rates set by the circulating libraries of the time. In circulating libraries, novels were the most requested genre; the more recent the book, the more the reader had to pay.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the quick arrival of certain novels on markets (such as St. Petersburg’s Apraksin Dvor or Smolensk markets, Moscow’s Sukharev Tower, etc.) or local fairs not only made those works accessible to new groups of readers, but also accelerated the dynamism of fashions in fiction consumption.

In that period, changes in literary fashions became more rapid as the communication between the cultural centers and the peripheries increased: when the capitals perceived that the fame of an author or a work had reached both the geographical and the social periphery of literary consumption, the élite readership started to look for something new. In this sense, the improvements in internal communications within the Russian Empire—improvements largely due to the progress made in the Russian mail service between 1775 and 1825—greatly enhanced the evolution of literary consumption.<sup>27</sup> During that period, the Russian postal network connected many of the more isolated administrative centers of districts, bringing to those areas texts that could previously only reach them through fairs or peddlers. At the same time, the greater frequency of mail deliveries caused the fame of certain authors and certain novels to travel more quickly. In 1854, as many as 733 towns in the Russian Empire received deliveries of packages and letters at least once a week. Most towns got mail twice a week, and as many as 63 cities received mail 6 times a week.<sup>28</sup> All this significantly

---

25 Cited in A. Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)* (Amsterdam, New York, 2006), 37.

26 For example, in Aleksandr Smirdin’s library, in 1828, there were no fewer than 4 different rates based on the time elapsed from the publication of a work: one fee for readers who wanted a newly published book, and lower fees for those who were willing to wait one month, three months, or six months. See *Rospis’ rossiiskim knigam dlia chteniia iz biblioteki Aleksandra Smirdina* (St. Petersburg, 1828), XVII-XIX.

27 Randolph, “Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire,” 178-179.

28 *Ibid.*, 155.

increased the consumption rate of literary works and, more generally, the evolution of fashions and the dynamism of the literary system.

Thus, at the beginning of the century, reading foreign novels was to Russian readers not only a form of entertainment, but also a status symbol that set them apart from readers of old *lubok* romances. However, at a certain point, foreign novels also began to have a relevant ideological function within this system. After the great success of the Russian novel in the 1830s, the reading of foreign novels began to play an important role in the development of a stronger political consciousness among the youngest part of the Russian public. It was precisely foreign novels that, during the periods of greatest censorship in the late 1840s, allowed the most liberal ideas coming from France and England to spread more widely across Russia.<sup>29</sup> This is particularly true for foreign-language novels imported from Europe: while Russian censorship could accurately control both the production of original Russian works and those translated into Russian, it was much more difficult for the authorities to control books that came into Russia from Europe in untranslated form.

Given the importance of novelty for a genre like the novel, one strategy for describing the Russian public's reading habits in the first half of the century may be to outline the different phases of success enjoyed by the most fashionable authors and fictional genres. To this end, more difficult but no less important is the analysis of how long these books were continually read within a certain reading community, when they went out of fashion, and whether they were embraced by different reading communities.

## I. EUROPEAN NOVELS AND EUROPEAN EMOTIONS? 1800-1820

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the most familiar prose works for the Russian public were certainly *lubok* romances.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding their differences in style and content, these works were perceived by educated readers as a homogeneous corpus of romances, given the nearly uniform formal features of their editions (cheap gray paper, rough print, crude prints used for illustrations, etc.), consistently low price, and anonymous circulation. In actuality, the texts of these romances were created in different places and times, and featured settings, types of heroes, styles, and languages

29 Cf. Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 112-113; Ch. A. Ruud, *Fighting Words. Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2009), 90.

30 Cf. V. D. Kuz'mina, *Rytsarskii roman na Rusi* (Moscow, 1964); G. Schaarschmidt, "The Lubok Novels: Russia's Immortal Best Sellers," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 9, 3 (September 1982), 424-436; D. Gasperetti, *The Rise of the Russian Novel: Carnival, Stylization, and Mockery of the West* (DeKalb, 1998), 39-43; A. I. Reitblat, "Lubochnaia kniga i krest'ianskii chitatel'," in Idem, *Ob Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty* (Moscow, 2009), 146-168; A. I. Reitblat, "Lubochnaia literatura i fol'klor (k postanovke problem)," in Idem, *Ob Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty*, 357-364.

that were far from similar. Some were re-elaborations of Western or Slavic medieval texts that had been circulating in Russia for centuries and were significantly contaminated by local folk motifs. Others were re-elaborations of more recent European works, adapted for the Russian public in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Their titles suggest which elements were most attractive to their readers: *The Story of the Valiant Knight Frantsyl Ventsian and the Beautiful Queen Rentsyvena* (*Istoriia o khrabrom rytsare Frantsyle Ventsiane i o prekrasnoi korolevne Rentsyvene*), *The Story of the Famous and Strong Hero Eruslan Lazarevich, His Courage, and the Unimaginable Beauty of the Tsarina Anastasiia Vakhrameevna* (*Istoriia o slavnom i sil'nom vitiaze Eruslane Lazareviche, o ego khrabrosti, i o nevoobrazimoi krasote tsarevny Anastasii Vakhrameevny*), *The Tale of the Strong, Famous and Powerful Knight Il'ia Muromets and Nightingale the Robber* (*Skazka o sil'nom, slavnom moguchem bogatyre Il'e Muromtse i Solov'ee razboinike*), *The Fable of the Famous and Brave Hero Bova Korolevich and the Beautiful Queen Druzhevna* (*Skazka o slavnom i khrabrom vitiaze Bove Koroleviche i o prekrasnoi korolevne Druzhevne*), *Guak, or The Unshakable Fidelity* (*Guak, ili Nepreoborimaia vernost'*). Their heroes were strong and fearless warriors, gallant and loyal knights, whose virtues were proven by their constant adventures and reversals of fate. Their condition as persecuted outcasts who were often subjected to vicious atrocities sometimes made these heroes close to hagiographic literature saints. Alongside these noble heroes, whose names were sometimes exotically foreign to the Russian reader, there were heroines whose main virtue seemed to be their extraordinary beauty. A sentimental tone often predominated. Many of these stories are set in a generic fairy-tale space, but there are also exceptions, like the famous *History of the Adventures of the English Milord George and the Countess of Brandenburg Frederica-Louise* (*Povest' o priklichenii angliiskogo milorda Georga i o brandenburgskoi markgrafine Friderike Luize*), first published by Matvei Komarov in 1782.<sup>31</sup> In this work, the setting and geographical references are European (London, Turin, Venice, Toledo, Amsterdam, etc.); the narration, alongside supernatural elements typical of the magic fairy tale (the magic ring), presents realistic descriptions with erotic details. The hero is modern, English, and possesses a Protestant ethic. The psychological analysis of his character here is much more elaborate than in previous chivalric *lubok* romances. Another exception is *The story of Van'ka Kain* (*Istoriia Van'ki-Kaina*), a narrative—in some respects is based on the Picaresque tradition—about the famous eponymous Russian thief and bandit.<sup>32</sup> Originally published anonymously in the second half of

<sup>31</sup> On the work, cf. V. Shklovskii, *Matvei Komarov: zhitel' goroda Moskvyy* (Leningrad, 1929), 77-131.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Shklovskii, *Matvei Komarov*, 33-76; Ju. Streidter, *Der Schelmenroman in Russland: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Russischen Romans vor Gogol'* (Berlin, 1961), 121-156; I. R. Titunik, "Matvei Komarov's Van'ka Kain and Eighteenth-Century Russian Prose Fiction," *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 18, 4 (Winter, 1974), 351-366.



the eighteenth century, in 1779 this narrative was transformed by Matvei Komarov into a bandit novel set partly in Moscow and assimilated to the Parisian Cartouche's cycle, incorporating elements of the brigand literary tradition.<sup>33</sup> Well-read intellectuals considered these works worthless. Konstantin Batiushkov, in his "Stroll Around Moscow" ("Progulka po Moskve," 1811), said the following about the Russian booksellers who dealt in *lubok* romances on Kuznetskii Most Street:

Whoever has not been in Moscow does not know that it is possible to trade in books just as in fish, furs, vegetables, and the like, without any knowledge of literature; that person does not know that here is a factory of translations, a factory of journals, a factory of novels, and that booksellers buy learned wares, that is, translations and works, by weight, repeating to the authors: not quality, but quantity! Not style, but pages! I am afraid to look into a store, for, to our shame, I think that not one nation ever had such disgraceful literature.<sup>34</sup>

As Schaarschmidt observed, "the primary reason for the enormous popularity of this *lubok* literature [among contemporary readers], apart from its easy availability, was the fact that its content was highly entertaining, intelligible, and familiar through oral tradition."<sup>35</sup>

These romances became a sort of common literary background for the Russian reader of the early nineteenth century. Often scorned by critics, sometimes ironically invoked by the most educated readers, they actually served as a common literary canon against which the importance of the new foreign novels conspicuously stood out. The analysis of the various editions of these works tells us that, quantitatively, these romances were by far the most widely read prose works during the entire first half of the nineteenth century. No other high-flown novelty or trendy foreign author was ever able to reach the number of reprints that these titles did. From 1800 to 1850, *Guak* was reprinted nine times; the *The Fable of the Famous and Brave Hero Bova Korolevich* and *The Story of the Famous Hero Eruslan Lazarevich*—eleven (along with a variant, the *The Fable of Eruslan Lazarevich*, which was printed seven more times); *History of the Adventures of the English Milord George*—20 times; and *The Story of the Valiant Knight Frantsyl Ventsian* had as many as

---

33 Shklovskii, *Matvei Komarov*, 33-76; M. B. Pliukhanova, "Literaturnye i kul'turnye traditsii v formirovanii literaturno-istoricheskogo personazha (Van'ka Kain)," in *Tipologiia literaturnykh vzaimodeistvii. Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii. Literaturovedenie* (Tartu, 1983), 3-17.

34 K. N. Batiushkov, *Sochineniia*, 2 vols, (Moscow, 1989), vol. 1, 291.

35 G. Schaarschmidt, "The Lubok Novels: Russia's Immortal Best Sellers," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 9, 3 (September 1982), 428.

29 editions in 50 years.<sup>36</sup> If in the early decades of the century reprints were less frequent, then during the 1830s and 1840s some of these titles, such as *The Story of Frantsyl Ventsian*, were reprinted almost every year. This means that if a new, fashionable, and popular European novel was reprinted at most three or four times (i.e. with a circulation comprised between 3600 and 4800 copies), then at least 22,800 copies of a title like *The Story of Frantsyl Ventsian* were issued on the market over the course of twenty years, not counting those released in preceding decades. It is probable that the dissemination of the *lubok* romances followed a social trajectory not unlike that which it had during the second half of the eighteenth century, as described by Viktor Shklovskii: “The original reader of the *lubok* literature [...] is the nobleman, and later the officer, the civil servant, the merchant. Through house servants, townspeople (*meshchane*), and small business owners, this type of book reached the peasants.”<sup>37</sup> Although contemporary popular readers probably registered the significant differences in the style of the works in this canon, the very lack of cultural prestige associated with these works makes reading testimonies regarding *lubok* literature from this period rare. At any rate, it was by virtue of their comparison with this repertoire of anonymous works that foreign novels by renowned authors gained their mark of distinction among more high-cultured parts of the Russian public.

In his essay “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia” (“O knizhnoi torgovli i liubvi ko chteniiu v Rossii”) (1802), Nikolai Karamzin provides a revealing picture of the reasons why novels were read by the new Russian readers. He wonders: “What type of book is sold most among us? I have inquired many booksellers about this and everyone, without hesitation, answered: ‘Novels!’ It is no wonder: this type of writing undoubtedly captivates a larger portion of the public.”<sup>38</sup> Foreign sentimental novels played a significant role in widening the Russian audience in the first decades of the century. Compared to other genres commonly consumed by the more cultured public, such as historical dramas or philosophical works, this type of novel spoke in an emotional language intelligible to all, regardless of their class or level of education. Karamzin writes: “Not everyone can philosophize or take the place of the heroes of history; but everyone loves, has loved, or wants to love, and finds in the romantic hero his own self. It seems to the reader that the author speaks to him in the language of his own heart.”<sup>39</sup> Karamzin himself had contributed greatly to simplifying the language of the Russian novel and creating that simple language of the heart. He was the

---

36 Cf. A. I. Reitblat, “Russkie ‘bestsellery’ pervoi poloviny XIX veka,” in Idem, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow, 2001), 196-199.

37 Shklovskii, *Matvei Komarov*, 129.

38 N. M. Karamzin, “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” in Idem, *Selected Prose*, trans. H. M. Nebel (Evanston, 1969), 187.

39 Ibidem., 187.

author of one of the most popular and widespread Russian sentimental works (actually a long story, *povest'*, rather than a novel), *Poor Liza* (*Bednaia Liza*), which was published in 1792 and republished in 1796 in a single edition. The spread of that work among the Russian society of the time was so wide that, only seven years after its publication, *Poor Liza* was read in monasteries, among artisans, and even by peasants.<sup>40</sup> A letter by a writer of the time, Aleksei Merzliakov, who transcribed a conversation on *Poor Liza* that took place in 1799 near Moscow by the Simonov monastery between an artisan and a peasant, testifies to this. Merzliakov concluded his letter by saying: "What could be sweeter for Mr. Karamzin? [...] Peasants, artisans, monks, soldiers, they all know him, everyone loves him!"<sup>41</sup> Andrei Zorin maintains that the shared reading of the same European novels "guaranteed the spread of unified emotional patterns across social and national borders."<sup>42</sup> Although such patterns might exist broadly across the Russian reading public as a whole, one can wonder if they were uniform across different social groups. Noble readers might understand the text's emotional effects differently than novice readers, who would filter those effects through their own particular aesthetic sensibilities and interpretive canons.<sup>43</sup> The fact that sentimental novels circulated among the clergy as well as among artisans ("a monk gave us this book to read," the abovementioned artisan stated to the peasant in Merzliakov's report) certainly testifies to those readers being aware of a shared aesthetic code. Yet among readers belonging to different social circles, the interaction of those sentimental works with different literary canons and religious beliefs may have produced different emotional effects. As noted by Iurii Lotman, *Poor Liza* was actually received by those popular readers based on canons that were very different from those assumed by the author and by most of the noble readers.<sup>44</sup> The story was interpreted by the popular readers according to literary and aesthetic canons that were the most familiar to them, that is, according to the models of the *lubok* romances and according to a number of popular and religious beliefs that characterized their world—often yielding the most original and unexpected interpretive outcomes. For example, the practical-minded artisan, in retelling the story of the *Poor Liza* to the peasant, especially captured the details of the economic relations affecting the liaisons between the two sentimental protagonists of the love story, paying special attention to the exact sums of

40 Cf. Iu. M. Lotman, "Ob odnom chitatel'skom vospriiatii 'Bednoi Lizy' N.M. Karamzina (K strukture massovogo soznaniia XVIII v.)," in Idem, *Karamzin* (St. Petersburg, 1997), 616-620; Cf. A. Zorin, A. Nemzer, "Les Paradoxes de la sentimentalité," in A. Stroev, (ed.), *Livre et lecture en Russie* (Paris, 1995), 91-123.

41 Lotman, "Ob odnom chitatel'skom vospriiatii 'Bednoi Lizy,'" 617.

42 See ZORIN, "A reading revolution?," vol. 1.

43 A subtle analysis of the emotional effect of sentimental novels on the nobleman Andrei Turgeniev can be found in A. Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia. Iz istorii russkoi emotsional'noi kul'tury kontsa XVIII—nachala XIX veka* (Moscow, 2016).

44 Lotman, "Ob odnom chitatel'skom vospriiatii 'Bednoi Lizy,'" 618-620.

money exchanged by the characters in the story.<sup>45</sup> While for certain popular readers of sentimental novels these texts echoed longstanding popular and folkloric beliefs as well as canons of *lubok* romances, for the members of the clergy the same readings could rest comfortably alongside their evangelical readings and notions that they drew from Orthodox Christianity. Here, for example, is how the archpriest of Kolomna, Vasilii Mikhailovich Protopopov (1760-1810), describes his love for the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: “I love Jean-Jacques not as an antagonist of religion, but as one who has been able to touch the soul and converse with the heart of a sensitive reader (...) Send me, if you can, the *Héloïse* by the first post. It will be like an Easter egg for me.”<sup>46</sup> The fact that an archpriest could put a novel by Rousseau and a religious symbol on the same level testifies not only to a certain degree of secularization of the Russian clergy,<sup>47</sup> but also confirms the existence of a certain connection between the experience of reading novels and religious experience.<sup>48</sup>

It is worth noting that the ever-practical Karamzin, in his essay “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” made vital distinctions between the Russian readers of sentimental novels of the period. He did not speak of social differences, but rather of variances in the audience’s education. He believed that too great a difference between the complexity of the text and the reader’s cultural knowledge would have prevented the text from having the right emotional effect:

He who is captivated by a novel like *Nikanor, the Ill-Fated Nobleman* (*Zloschastnyi Nikanor*), stands somewhat beneath the author on the ladder of intellectual development, and does well in reading this novel because, without any doubt, he learns something of ideas and their expression. As soon as there is a great distance between the author and the reader, then the former cannot greatly influence the latter, however intelligent he might be. They must be a little closer to each other: one, to Jean-Jacques; the other, to *Nikanor*. [...] And he who begins with *The Ill-Fated Nobleman* often reaches as far as *Grandison*.<sup>49</sup>

This passage describes quite well the different degrees of complexity and cultural prestige that different types of sentimental novels of the time had

---

45 Cf. D. Rebecchini, “Introduction to Yuri Lotman, ‘On One Reader’s Understanding of N.M. Karamzin’s Poor Liza’: An Attempt to Conceptualize Popular Consciousness in the Eighteenth Century,” *Lingua Franca*, 2017, vol. 2 [http://www.sharpweb.org/main/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Lotman\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.sharpweb.org/main/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Lotman_Intro.pdf)

46 N. D. Kochetkova, *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 175.

47 See KISLOVA, “How, why, and what the orthodox clergy read in Eighteenth-Century Russia,” vol. I.

48 See ZORIN, “A reading revolution?,” vol I

49 Karamzin, “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” 187-188.

in the eyes of the founder of Russian Sentimentalism: the lowest level was represented by reading one of the most tearful romances in the Russian *lubok* literature, *The Unfortunate Nikanor; Or the Adventures in the Life of a Russian Nobleman N.* (*Neschastnyi Nikanor, ili prikliucheniiia zhizni rossiiskogo dvorianina N.*)—which had been circulating since the mid-1770s.<sup>50</sup> The sentimental novels by Kotzebue represented an intermediate level, the reading of a ‘fashionable’ sentimental novel, the great success of the moment among an audience attracted above all by “foreign tears,” even if its author was considered well below some established ‘classic’ authors of European sentimental novels such as *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* by Samuel Richardson (1754, translated into Russian from French in 1793-1794) or *Julie, or the New Heloise* by Jean Jacques Rousseau (*La nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761; translated into Russian partially in 1769-1792 and entirely in 1804). However, in Karamzin’s eyes, reading novels still was, for all types of readers, a good cultural investment: “I do not know what others think, but for me the important thing is that people read! Even the most mediocre novels, even those written without any talent, somehow promote culture.”<sup>51</sup> Karamzin took a broad view of culture, not only as intellectual, but also as emotional and sentimental education. And his was evidently a conviction shared by numerous other contemporaries: “The easiest and at the same time the most pleasant way in which a young man can get himself an education today (*obrazovat’ sebja*) is by reading novels. If he wants to be a loyal friend, he can learn to be one from *Lara*<sup>52</sup> and from *Olivier*<sup>53</sup>; if his heart beats with passionate love, he should nurture it as *Prince D.* does for his *Maria*<sup>54</sup>; if destiny has decided that he should fight against prejudice, then he should imitate the meek *Gustavo*,” wrote an admirer of the latest European novels.<sup>55</sup> Karamzin thus concluded in his article: “There is no doubt that the novels make both the heart and the imagination...fancifully romantic (*romanicheskimi*)! [...] A romantic heart (*romanicheskoe serdtse*) causes itself more grief than others; but, then, it loves this grief and will not give it up for the very pleasures of the egoists. In a word, it is good that our public also reads novels!”<sup>56</sup>

50 On *Neschastnyi Nikanor*, cf. T. E. Avtukhovich, “Priklucheniiia avtora i ego knigi, ili zhizn’ i sud’ba Aleksandra Nazar’eva,” in *Neschastnyi Nikanor, ili Prikluchenie zhizni rossiiskogo dvorianina N.* (St. Petersburg, 2016), 251-302.

51 Karamzin, “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” 188.

52 The main character of the novel by Jean-Pierre Florian, *Gonzalve de Cordue* (Paris, 1791), Russ. Transl. *Gonzalv Korduanskii, ili Vozvrashchennaia Grenada* (St. Petersburg, 1793).

53 The main character of the novel by Madame de Genlis, *Les Chevaliers du Cygne ou la cour de Charlemagne* (Hamburg, 1795) Russ. Transl. *Rytsari Lebedia, ili Dvor Karla Velikogo* (Moscow, 1821).

54 The main character of the novel by August Lafontaine, *Fedor und Marie oder Treue bis zum Tode* (Berlin, 1802) Russ. Transl. *Kniaz’ D. i kniazhna M. ili vernaia liubov’ po smert’ Rossiiskoe proisshestvie* (M., 1804).

55 V. Tomilin, “O romanakh”, *Blagonamerennyi*, 22, 7(1823), 15-16.

56 Karamzin, “On the Book Trade and the Love of Reading,” 190.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, the most successful sentimental novelist of the moment was, according to Karamzin, the German August Friedrich Ferdinand von Kotzebue, who lived in Russia for a long time:

Now Kotzebue is terribly fashionable—and as the Parisian booksellers at one time demanded the *Persian Letters* from every writer, so now do our booksellers demand from translators and the authors themselves Kotzebue, only Kotzebue!! A novel, a tale, good or bad—it is all the same, if on the title page there is the name of the famous Kotzebue!<sup>57</sup>

Karamzin captures here a new feature of Russia's early nineteenth-century reading public: the fame of the author had become an increasingly relevant factor in appreciation of the work.<sup>58</sup> Even in the last decades of the eighteenth century, not only the romances of *lubok* literature, but also some translations of European novels were published anonymously.<sup>59</sup> Sometimes those who published novels were not even aware of the importance of clearly distinguishing, on the title page, the original work from the translation, and there were books in which translated and original excerpts were freely mixed.<sup>60</sup> Given the intensive adaptation work carried out by many publishers and translators on their texts, readers could not always tell the difference between a foreign and a Russian work. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, however, knowledge of the author increasingly started to influence readers' purchasing choices, so publishers often emphasized the authors' names on the title page of the volume.<sup>61</sup> The appearance of authors' portraits in some novels is a clear sign of such novelists' new status.

Frequent changes in popular tastes played a significant role in the Russian public's appreciation for the novel genre. While in England and France various fictional genres quite regularly went in and out of fashion one after another over long periods of time, in Russia this process was typically concentrated in a far shorter period.<sup>62</sup> Between the 1790s and the 1820s, Russia saw a remarkable number of fictional genres come into fash-

---

57 Ibid. On Kotzebue in Russia, see P. Drews, *Die Rezeption deutscher Belletristik in Russland, 1750-1850* (München, 2007), 35-37, 261-268.

58 Cf. Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia*, 119-120, 202, 207; Iu. D. Levin (ed.), *Istoriia russkoi perevodnoi khudozhestvennoi literatury. Drevniaia Rus'. XVIII vek. Proza* (St. Petersburg, 1995), vol. 1, 222-223.

59 Cf. Levin (ed.), *Istoriia russkoi perevodnoi*, 217-220.

60 Ibid., 217-218.

61 Ibid., 222-223. At the same time, it must be noted how, as late as the first half of the nineteenth century, novels are listed by title and not by author in booksellers' catalogues.

62 As regards England, Franco Moretti has calculated that every thirty years or so (that is, in the space of one generation of readers), a new canon of novels would be formed. Cf. F. Moretti, *La letteratura vista da lontano* (Torino, 2005), 23-32.

ion: the sentimental novel, the Gothic novel, the bandit novel, the historical-moralistic novel, then the picaresque novel, and finally the historical novel à la Walter Scott. Such a rapid succession of fashions caused, on the one hand, some confusion and overlaps in the perception of contemporary readers (confusion that became even more pronounced in those readers' subsequent memoirs); on the other hand, the frequent turnover in popular tastes may have rendered increasingly superficial the audience's emotional investment in these continually emerging novelistic genres.

Among the most conservative readers and critics, these fictional genres raised new fears. Their criticism of novel-reading can basically be split into two categories: on the one hand there were those who insisted in particular on the dangerous psychological effects of novels, capable of encouraging younger readers to slavishly imitate their heroes and to adopting misguided ideas about love and life;<sup>63</sup> on the other hand, there were those who criticised novel-reading as a waste of time that distracted from more useful occupations, such as practising the sciences or the arts.<sup>64</sup> Some saw European novels as dangerous competitors of reading Russian poetry, also because, for many, those novels were more readily accessible than “the finest odes by Lomonosov and Derzhavin, than the most grandiose monologues by Ozerov, than Dmitriev's and Krylov's funniest fables;”<sup>65</sup> for others reading novels distracted young people from more pious and religious readings: “Why imitate the heroes of novels, when we have the heroes of History? Why learn humility (*krotost'*) from Lafontaine, when this virtue has been taught to us by Christ the Saviour? ...Have you ever read him?... But it's pointless asking you that: I can see from your eyes that you have never even leafed through the Bible” a contemporary wrote.<sup>66</sup>

In Russia, during the first decade of the century, the twenty-year success of the sentimental novel was challenged by the coming into fashion of the Gothic novel<sup>67</sup>. Between 1799 and 1804, one after the other, the main titles of the English Gothic romance canon were translated into Russian.<sup>68</sup> If for Russian readers the great European sentimental novelists (in addition to the popular Ducray-Duminil and Kotzebue) were writers like Richardson, Rousseau, and Goethe, for the Gothic novel in Russia Ann Radcliffe's unchallenged authority established itself immediately and virtually without competition. While European sentimental novels quickly generated the first Russian imitations—among which Karamzin's were certainly the most appreciated by the public—Russian imitations of Gothic novels were rarer and

63 See f.i. “O razlichii mnenii otnositel'no romanov, ili Belyj perepel”, *Damskij zhurnal*, 4 (1823), 129-142.

64 See f.i. V. Tomilin, “O romanakh”, *Blagonamerennyi*, 22, 7(1823), 4-18.

65 Tomilin, “O romanakh”, 8.

66 *Ibid.*, 18.

67 See BOWERS, “The Gothic Novel Reader comes to Russia,” in the present volume.

68 See V. E. Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow, 2002), 116-117.

came later. In 1806, perhaps Radcliffe's most successful year in Russia, a critic observed:

It seems that there are still no similar works in Russian; but we have a lot of translations: *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Midnight Bell*, *The Monk*, *The Italian*, *The Tomb*, *The Forest*, *Albert's Castle*, *The Living Dead* and other works by Mrs. Radcliffe have enriched our literature. I say 'enriched' because if we had not had them we would have had to read works such as *Bova Korolevich* or *Eruslan Lazarevich*, or *Polkan the Knight*... All our gratitude to the respectable English writer.<sup>69</sup>

Notice how, in addition to seeing the English Gothic novel as a replacement of the old and worn-out chivalric *lubok* romances, the critic attributed to Radcliffe a series of works that were not hers, but for obvious commercial reasons were ascribed to her by Russian publishers and translators: from *Ambrosio*, or *The Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, to *The Midnight Bell* by Francis Lethom, up to the anonymous *The Tomb* (*Grobnitsa*), translated into Russian from the French in 1802. If, for the less educated or less well-off reader, Radcliffe's novels in Russian translation were the novelty that allowed him to leave behind chivalric romances he had read time and time again, for the richer reader her novels in French translation represented an alternative to the great names of French or Russian classicism. In *War and peace* (*Voina i mir*), Tolstoy observes that, before 1812, Petersburg's high society ladies of the 1800s knew by heart "Racine, Boileau and Corneille's monologues" but "were thrilled by Radcliffe and Madame Souza's novels."<sup>70</sup> In 1811, the patriot Sergei Glinka, describing Moscow's readership, wrote with regret:

Immense libraries are full of foreign novels and there is not even a corner for Russian books! Due to some unfortunate prejudice and sense of imitation, today even those who do not know foreign languages read more willingly Radcliffe's and Genlis's novels than the works by Lomonosov, Sumarokov, and Bogdanovich and our other national authors.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Cited in V. E. Vatsuro, "'Polnochnyi Kolokol' (Iz istorii massovogo chteniia v Rossii v pervoi treti XIXv.)," in *Chtenie v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1995), 24. On the fact that Radcliffe reached her maximum popularity in 1806, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman v Rossii*, 111.

<sup>70</sup> L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 90 vols (Moscow, 1949), vol. 13, 75. On Petersburg's high society ladies, see also Pushkin: "Born with the most irritable sensitivity, they read the eloquent tragedy of Racine coldly and cry over the mediocre novels of Auguste Lafontaine." See A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 16 vols, (Moscow, Leningrad, 1949), vol. 11, 324.

<sup>71</sup> Cited in Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 113.



In the most culturally sophisticated contexts, Radcliffe's novels quickly went out of fashion. In Vadim Vatsuro's opinion, "in the 1810s, Radcliffe's name already had a precise meaning: loving her works was a sign of low cultural and even social status."<sup>72</sup> To this opinion greatly contributed numerous minor works from the European Gothic tradition that were arbitrarily attributed to Radcliffe by Russian translators and booksellers (the so-called pseudo-Radcliffiana) that made it difficult for the Russian public to distinguish between the different strands and authors of the Gothic genre.<sup>73</sup> What made Radcliffe's fame durable among readers less obsessed with novelty was her works' ability to stir stronger emotions compared to, for example, many moralistic novels from the 1810s. Thus, for example, P. I. Shalikov, a follower of Karamzin's, wrote in his memoirs:

When I was little, I loved *old* novels and even now I prefer them to those by Ducray-Duminil; I have to admit, maybe to my shame, that the abbeys, castles, towers, halls, ghosts, caves, cemeteries of the English author Radcliffe generate pleasure in me, because they scare me, and this kind of fear contains something pleasant, while many other novels contain nothing.<sup>74</sup>

The English Gothic novel stimulated in readers a variety of emotional reactions distinct from those caused by the sentimental novel: suspense, horror, anxiety, dread, and disgust were added to pity and "delicious tears"<sup>75</sup>. "Pleasant fear" was one of the reactions most often quoted by the Russian Gothic novel reader, by now accustomed to the valiant deeds of the heroes of *lubok* romances and the tearful misfortunes of characters featured in European sentimental novels.<sup>76</sup>

The situation in the provinces did not seem very different; here too, preference was mostly accorded to foreign novelists. Yet, even in the provinces, those who read Radcliffe's novels in French and those who read them in Russian represented two different audiences, even though they all belonged to the nobility. For example, in the library of Petr Alekseevich Bashmakov, a landowner from the Novgorod province, we can find not only Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, but also Lewis's *The Monk*, and Gothic novels by W. Godwin, G. Moore, C. B. Naubert, K.H. Spiess, Ch. Smith and others, all in French translation.<sup>77</sup> In the same period, Nikolai Selivanov, a Ryazan'

72 Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 114.

73 On this, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 301-311.

74 Cited in Vatsuro, "Polnochnyi Kolokol," 17.

75 See BOWERS, "The Gothic Novel Reader Comes to Russia," in the present volume

76 See f.i. M. A. Dmitriev, *Melochi iz zapasa moei pamiati* (Moscow, 1869), 48; E. A. Khvostova, *Zapiski: 1812-1841* (Leningrad, 1928), 63.

77 See M. P. Morozova, "Biblioteka dvorian Bashmakovykh-Vereshchaginykh (XVIII-nachalo XIX v)," in *XVIII vek. Sbornik* (St. Petersburg, 1993), vol. 18, 351-363.

landowner, scrupulously recorded all the works that he wanted to buy in the year 1808: nine Gothic novels in Russian translation, of which five were attributed to Radcliffe.<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, the list of subscriptions to the first Russian translation of Radcliffe's novel *The Romance of the Forest*, which was also her first novel published in Russian between 1801-1802, proves that even Moscow's high aristocracy, like the members of the Golitsyn and Golovkin families, could read not only French translations, but were also interested in Russian translations.<sup>79</sup>

Translation was an unavoidable factor in the Russian reception of these works. Monolingual readers who could not access a text's original language (French, German, English etc.) experienced its emotional effects quite differently from those reading the work in their native tongue. What did the Russian readers of these translations actually read? As shown by Vadim Vatsuro, Russian translations of Gothic novels were often bizarre conglomerates of linguistic elements and extremely heterogeneous stylistic registers.<sup>80</sup> These novels in translation were often not only presented to Russian readers with a title or author that was different from the original, but frequently contained whole summarized parts, dialogues transformed into third-person narration, and truncated chapters. They were works created by multiple translators who often had had very different kinds of training, and consequently mingled the most diverse languages and stylistic registers: bureaucratic-administrative language with rhetorical-classicist language or, in the best cases, Karamzinian style. "Heterogeneous stylistic layers," writes Vatsuro, "with different orientations, and even genetically non-synchronous ones, coexist within the same translation, forming not a uniform style, but rather a sort of literary chemical suspension" that "reflects different stages of Russian literary development."<sup>81</sup> Not infrequently, the original stylistic features of the new novels were obscured by translators who were linked to very different cultural traditions.

The memoirs of readers from the first decades of the century associate the Gothic novel with another subgenre, this time one of German origin: the bandit novel (or *Räuberroman*), which was inspired primarily by Schiller's *Robbers*.<sup>82</sup> As in the case of Gothic novels, the factor of translation played no small part in these works' Russian reception. The most

78 A. V. Selivanov, *Materialy dlia istorii roda riazanskikh Selivanovykh* (Riazan, 1915), III, 27, 32, 44-45, 47, cit. in Vatsuro, "Polnochnyi kolokol," 6-7.

79 Cf. Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 129. The same datum also emerges from the subscription lists appearing in the Russian translations of Ducray-Duminil's sentimental novels published between 1798 and 1800: in addition to a large majority of middle- and lower-rank nobles (VI-XIV class in the Table of Ranks), there were also members of the high nobility (*titulovannye osoby*) (6-9 %), as well as representatives of the merchant class (15-17%); cf. A. IU. Samarín, *Chitatel' v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XVIII veka* (Moscow, 2000), 41-44.

80 Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 71-74, 127.

81 *Ibid.*, 74.

82 See Drews, *Die Rezeption deutscher Belletristik in Russland*, 34, 36, 38, 314, 321-323.

successful work among the Russian public of the 1810s was not, in fact, the book by the famous Swiss Johann Heinrich Zschokke that started the bandit novel trend in Europe, i.e. *Aballino, the Great Bandit* (*Abällino, der große Bandit*, 1793); rather, it was the hugely popular *Rinaldo Rinaldini, Captain of the Bandits* (*Rinaldo Rinaldini, der Räuberhauptmann*, 1798) by Christian August Vulpius, published in 1798 and immediately translated into Russian in 1802-1803 with the title *Rinal'do Rinal'dini, razboinichii roman*. Thanks to this novel, and not Zschokke's, the Russian public became acquainted with a new kind of romantic hero, the figure of the "noble bandit" in constant conflict with society. If—at least for the less well-off part of the Russian public—this figure was associated with bandits like Van'ka Kain, the hero of the eponymous *lubok* romance, the more educated readers were reminded instead of the high model of Karl Moor in Schiller's *Robbers*.<sup>83</sup> Upon the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars, Vulpius attempted to create a less subversive and more patriotic bandit figure (and thereby reconcile the archetype with the values of his homeland) in his novel *The Glorious* (*Glorioso der Grosse Teufel*, 1800). However, this, translated into Russian in 1806, did not influence the Russian public very much. It was above all *Rinaldo Rinaldini* that had a strong influence on Russian readers and generated immediate and numerous imitations, mostly translations from the French or the German, such as *The Robbers Beneath the Castle of Kutan* (*Razboiniki v podzemel'e Kutanskogo zamka*, 1802), *The Robbers of the Black Forest* (*Razboiniki Chernogo lesa*, 1803) and *Rinaldo di Sargino* (*Rinaldo di Sargino oder die Geheimnisse der unterirdischen Burg*, 1805; Russian edit. *Rinal'do de Sargino, ili Tainstva podzemel'ia zamka Saragossy*, 1809). As can be inferred from such titles, elements of the bandit novel often resembled those of the Gothic novel; such elements included castles, nocturnal forests, Italian names, etc. At the same time, translations created quite a lot of confusion for readers about these works. For example, the first Russian translation of Zschokke's *Aballino* was said to be "the work of Mr Lewis, the author of *The Monk*."<sup>84</sup> The success of the bandit novel, at least among the provincial gentry, seemed to decline in the early 1840s, while the majority of popular readers continued to enjoy it consistently until the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>85</sup>

In the mid 1810s, the fortunes of the Gothic novel among the most sophisticated members of the reading public seemed to be declining, and a

83 Cf. Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 328.

84 Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 332. The Russian translation indeed came from a French translation, in turn done from the English one by Lewis, and titled *The Bravo of Venice*. But if in the English translation Lewis featured as the translator, in the French one, and consequently also in the Russian one, he had become the author.

85 Cf. N. S. Sokhanskaia, "Avtobiografiia," *Russkoe obozrenie*, 8 (1896), 466; J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature. 1861-1917* (Princeton N.J., 1985), 168-207.

new novelistic genre started to meet with its approval: the moralistic family novel. A critic recalled in 1815, “Horror and supernatural novels have now given way to family novels... No doubt the latter now interest us more than the horrors and ghosts in castles and basements, the black spirits and the night bells.”<sup>86</sup> Here, a political factor might have influenced how different types of novels went in and out of fashion. The horrors of the Napoleonic wars perhaps attenuated the Russian public’s desire to spend time amidst the horrors of Radcliffe’s castles and Gothic basements. During Napoleon’s campaigns, to enjoy stories of heroes who walked—and often overstepped—the blurred boundaries of morality and religion did not seem acceptable to many readers. Instead, those troubled years had awakened a desire among Russian readers for much more reassuring and moralistic family happiness from the ancien régime, like that promised by Madame de Genlis’s or Auguste Lafontaine’s novels, or examples of heroic virtue that remained intact despite the ordeals of history and the dangers of nature, such as those provided by Madame Cottin.<sup>87</sup> As Martyn Lyons showed, these novels, just like Ducray-Duminil’s, did not offer new models of bourgeois life but rather open nostalgia, an idealization of aristocratic life—a recurrent ideological feature in post-revolutionary French best-sellers.<sup>88</sup> And these monarchic and conservative ideals could not but be appreciated by a decidedly traditionalist public such as the Russian one. During the Napoleonic wars, these readers had particularly enjoyed novels like Cottin’s *Matilda and Malek Adel the Saracen: A Crusade Romance (Mathilde ou Memoires tirés de l’histoire des croisades*, 1805), a moralistic rather than historical novel, in which the heroine’s ideal of Christian purity clashes with the noble and passionate character of the sultan’s brother Malek-Adel;<sup>89</sup> and especially *Elisabeth; or, The exiles of Siberia (Élisabeth ou de les Exilés de Sibérie*, 1806), a heroic model of self-sacrifice and filial love, which was probably Cottin’s most popular novel in Russia, given that its translation was reprinted as many as four times between 1807 and 1824.<sup>90</sup> Yet while in France Cottin’s novels reached their peak in popularity between 1816 and 1820 and became less successful thereafter, in Russia they were republished in translation throughout the

---

86 Cit. in Vatsuro, “Polnochnyi Kolokol,” 24.

87 Pushkin also defines Cottin’s novels “family novels,” although today they are mostly classified by critics as sentimental novels as well; cf. H. Hoogenboom, “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers,” *Slavic Review*, 74, 3 (Fall 2015), 565. On Lafontaine’s novels in Russia, see Drews, *Die Rezeption deutscher Belletristik in Russland*, 35, 271-273.

88 Cf. M. Lyons, *Le triomphe du livre. Une histoire sociologique de la lecture dans la France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1987), 107-110, 113.

89 The success of Madame Cottin’s *Mathilde* in 1812 is also testified by Mikhail Zagoskin in his novel *Roslavlev, ili Russkie v 1812* (cf. M. N. Zagoskin, *Istoricheskie romany* (Moscow 1993), 276) and of course by Pushkin in *Eugene Onegin*.

90 Cf. Reitblat, “Russkie ‘bestsellery,’” 200; Hoogenboom, “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin,” 562-563.

1820s, and enjoyed great success until at least the 1840s.<sup>91</sup> A large number of Russian imitations drew from these fictional models to create works in which the Napoleonic wars were evoked above all as an opportunity to show the sentimental and patriotic effusions between two lovers separated by the conflict.<sup>92</sup>

Russian critics of the early nineteenth century often had a classicist orientation, one that greatly differed from their readers vis-à-vis their attitude toward novels. The distance between the evaluations of critics and the tastes of the public is vividly exhibited in reviews of successful novels of the time. In 1817 a critic reviewed sentimental novels by three authors much en vogue at the time (August Lafontaine, Ducray-Duminil and Madame Montolieu), and judged their works to be no less boring or soporific than many Gothic or bandit novels:

I have not read any of these three novels, but then I do not understand how anyone can read, *without any reward*, some thick novels that were commissioned in exchange for a *small sum*, as were many stories about *castles, ruins, devils or bandits*. Perhaps to overcome insomnia? But for this purpose it is much better to read verses than prose [...] Especially since novels are quite expensive, while verses may be found at any time and at no cost.<sup>93</sup>

It is interesting to notice which novels the critic considers models and compares to those by Ducray-Duminil and Lafontaine: “The novels that have done credit to their authors and that every reader can read with pleasure and to his advantage are still few: *Don Quixote, Gil Blas, The New Heloise, Grandisson, Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakesfield, Tristram Shandy* and... And I would say that’s it.”<sup>94</sup> This was, in the critic’s view, the ‘classic’ and consolidated canon of the European novel; the rest were fashionable novelties, their fame destined to last only a few seasons. Rather than explaining contemporary novels and guiding their readers, many Russian critics of the time often seemed to encourage educated readers to stay away from them. And this was due not only to differences about the aesthetic or moral values represented in those works, but also to their opposition in principle to the marketing processes of literary production and the democratization of reading. By establishing a privileged relationship with an increasingly anonymous audience, the authors of European best-sellers, it seems, were able to do without the mediation of criticism.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Lyons, *Le triomphe du livre*, 85-87; Hoogenboom, “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin,” 562-563.

<sup>92</sup> See A. Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)* (Amsterdam, New York, 2006), 226-240.

<sup>93</sup> Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 338.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

The same contemptuous attitude towards French best-sellers emerges, for example, in the opinions of the numerous Russian poets and men of letters of the time. That, for example, is how the poet Batiushkov comments on the offering of foreign book sellers in his “Stroll Around Moscow” in 1811:

We see in front of us the shops of foreign booksellers. There are many, but none is really well stocked in comparison with those in St. Petersburg. Books are expensive, the good ones are few, the ancient writers are hardly there at all, but, on the other hand, they have Madame de Genlis and Madame de Sévigné—two catechisms for young girls—and entire piles of French novels, readings worthy of the most obtusely ignorant, stupid and debauched ones.<sup>95</sup>

Similarly, sophisticated authors like Pushkin intentionally discredited the fame of these commercially successful authors such as Kotzebue, Lafontaine, Ducray-Duminil, Genlis, and Cottin, preferring to mention loftier models, such as the novels by Richardson, De Staël, or Rousseau, in their own works.<sup>96</sup>

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the 1820s, Charles-Victor D’Arlincourt’s historical novels had begun to supplant those by Madame de Genlis and Madame Cottin in the tastes of the most sophisticated public. Apollon Grigor’ev recalled

In this period, the readership was ‘delirious,’ literally delirious, for a novelist now all but forgotten, and rightly so, like the mediocre novelist Viscount of Arlincourt. His mysterious loner and melodramatic, gloomy and renegade Agobar, his foreign beloved who was cursed in the imagination of Russian male and female readers, replaced the virtuous Malek-Adhels and the sensitive Mathildes.<sup>97</sup>

In 1862, when Grigor’ev wrote his memoirs, the political climate had completely changed and the critic’s sensitivity toward the ideological value of novels was much higher than that of the readers of the 1820s. So he wrote about Arlincourt’s old novels: “Their author was one of the most obtuse reactionaries and restoration supporters imaginable, and in all his successful novels (*Le Solitaire*, *L’Étrangère*, *Le Renégat*) he conveys one feeling only: his love for dispossessed and exiled dynasties.”<sup>98</sup> Grigor’ev cleverly perceives

95 Batiushkov, *Sochineniia*, vol. 1, 291.

96 Hoogenboom, “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin,” 554, 564-567.

97 A. Grigor’ev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1988), 80.

98 *Ibid.*, 80-81.

the ideological naivety that characterized the Russian public in the early decades of the century: having just emerged from the patriotic victories against Napoleon, Russian readers seemed fascinated by Arlincourt's romantic and manneristic legitimism. At the same time, the critic noticed another aspect that made Arlincourt's novels attractive to the Russian public: their ability to speak a romantic language in a much more accessible way than Byron and his Russian imitators: "All these Solitaries, Agobars, Foreigners served to replace the remains of Byronism, but these were nonetheless more approachable by the mass of Russian readers than Byronism itself."<sup>99</sup> Especially in the second half of the 1820s, when their first Russian translations started to appear, Arlincourt's shallow novels served to satisfy that part of the Russian readership for whom Byron's poems were something hardly "digestible" or understandable, something "in front of which the mass of readers bowed mostly based on hearsay, and from a distance, as if before a darkly mysterious deity."<sup>100</sup> Thus, it was the success of Arlincourt's historical novels during the 1820s that opened the door to Russia's passion for Walter Scott's romantic novels.

Some fictional genres seemed more capable of dividing Russian novel readers along gendered lines rather than social ones. Judging by the memories of the period, for example, family novels, such as those by Cottin and Genlis, seem to have more often attracted female readers, as the women's journal *Damskii zhurnal* (*Journal for ladies*) confirms.<sup>101</sup> During the first decades of the century, women's education often laid in the hands of mothers, and they decided which books were suitable to be read by their daughters, as confirmed by Ivan Dmitriev's famous saying "the mother will tell her daughter to read his works."<sup>102</sup> Yet it is legitimate to wonder to what extent women in the countryside or in the provinces could freely choose and buy their novels. According to Karamzin, in 1802 "the rural noblewomen at the St. Macarius Fair lay in not only a supply of bonnets, but also of books."<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, Miranda Beaven Remnek has pointed out that "ac-

---

99 Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 81. On the reception of Byron in Russia, see (among others) f.i. N. Diakonova, V. Vatsuro, "No Great Mind and Generous Heart Could Avoid Byronism": Russia and Byron," in R. A. Cardwell (ed.), *The Reception of Byron in Europe* (Oxford, 2008), vol. 2, 333-351.

100 Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 81.

101 Cf. M. Beaven Remnek, "A Larger Portion of the Public.' Female Readers, Fiction, and the Periodical Press in the Reign of Nicholas I," in B. T. Norton, I. M. Gheith (eds.), *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia* (London, 2001), 29, 41.

102 I. I. Dmitriev, *K portretu M. N. Murav'eva* (1803), in I. I. Dmitriev, *Polnoe sobranie stikhotvorenii* (Leningrad, 1967), 135; N. Polevoi, "O romanakh Viktora Giugo i voobshche o noveishikh romanakh," in N. A. Polevoi, Ks. A. Polevoi, *Literaturnaia kritika. Stat'i i retsenzii, 1825-1842* (Leningrad, 1990), 134. See also C. Kelly, "Educating Tat'yana: Manners, Motherhood and Moral Education (*Vospitanie*), 1760-1840," in L. Edmondson (ed.), *Gender in Russian History and Culture* (New York, 2001), 1-28.

103 Karamzin, "On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia," 187.

cess to reading materials for women was restricted [...] girls and unmarried women are often shown obtaining reading materials through men—either by using personal libraries or by borrowing purchased materials.”<sup>104</sup> While Gothic novels were often considered dangerous for the younger girls, sentimental and family novels do not appear to have been vetoed too often by their parents or tutors.<sup>105</sup> Bandit novels, on the other hand, would appear to be more male-oriented, per evidence found in memoirs. Sometimes reading them could lead to acts of disobedience, as happened with the poet Evgenii Boratynskii, while he served in the Page Corps in 1816. As he himself confessed in 1823: “Those of us who had money took books to read from Stupin’s putrid shop, which was located next to the barracks, and what books! *The Glorious, Rinaldo Rinaldini*, brigands in every possible forest or underground! And I, to my misfortune, I was one of the most diligent readers.”<sup>106</sup>

As early as the 1830s and 1840s, these fictional genres and their characters already tended to mix and mingle in the readers’ memory, as if they were a single corpus of novels. In 1846, the journalist Faddei Bulgarin wrote in his memoirs about his visit to Kronstadt prison: “Having devoured the novels by Mrs. Radcliffe, Ducray-Duminil, and the like, I was hoping to see everywhere, with my own eyes, robbers, thinking I could find among them Roger (from Ducray-Duminil’s novel *Victor, a Child of the Forest*), Rinaldo Rinaldini (from the novel of the same name) and even Karl Moor (from Schiller’s *Robbers*).”<sup>107</sup> The complexities of the emotive reactions aroused in readers while they were reading these works tends to be minimized in those same readers’ later memoirs. Aleksandr Nikiten’ko (1804-1877), an educated Ukrainian serf of count Sheremetev, so recalls the effect that reading August Lafontaine’s and Ann Radcliffe’s novels had on him in the 1810s:

How I trembled as I penetrated into dark dungeons following Ann Radcliffe, and how inebriated I became with mushy August Lafontaine! But I gained little from this course of reading: the novels of the former caused me, for a long while afterwards, to be afraid to stay alone in a dark room, and those of the latter

---

104 Cfr. Beaven Remnek, “A Larger Portion of the Public,” 35-36. See also O. E. Glagoleva, “Imaginary World: Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750-1825),” in W. Rosslyn (ed.), *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia* (Aldershot, 2003), 129-146.

105 See BOWERS, “The Gothic Novel Reader comes to Russia,” in the present volume. See f.i. P. I. Makarov’s comment about Ann Radcliffe’s novels in *Moskovskii Merkurii*, 1803, I, 3, 218-219; Tomilin, “O romanakh”, 17. See also G. Hammarberg, “The First Russian Women’s Journals and the Construction of the Reader,” in W. Rosslyn, A. Tosi (eds.), *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825* (New York, 2007), 89.

106 Cited in Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 328.

107 *Ibid.*, 346.



made me, every time I met a woman, rush to elevate her into a pearl of creation and fall in love with her.<sup>108</sup>

More than emotions, memoirs often record the concrete effects of the novel on the reader's behavior. The critic Vissarion Belinskii (1811-1848), the son of a simple navy doctor, was likewise a childhood reader of bandit novels and Radcliffe's books. In 1847, he recalled the effects of those novels on his companions from those earlier days:

They threw themselves on these horror novels with enthusiasm and, once they were finished, saw the world not as it really was, but full of scary things, ghosts, bandits; they were not only afraid to walk the streets at night, but in the evening too they would not stay alone in their room, or travel from town to town.<sup>109</sup>

Starting from the 1830s, many of those novels ended up in the hands of the servants of the great aristocratic families. A loan register from the servants' library of the Winter Palace shows us, for example, how novels such as *Theodor* and *Susanna* by Lafontaine and *The Wife of the Bandit* by Vulpius were often requested by the servants at court in the second half of the 1830s.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, those very novels, together with the *lubok* romances, ended up in the pockets of street vendors and in the hands of readers living further away from the big cultural centers. In an empire like the Russian one, geographical factors sometimes seemed far more relevant than social factors in determining the tastes of the public. Thus, for example, Orest Somov describes, in his 1833 story *Mother and Son* (*Matiushka i synok*), the scene of the arrival of one of these street vendors to the estate in a remote province:

The landowner orders to fetch the register in which an unsteady hand had written down, with many mistakes, the books' titles [...] Then he lets the street vendor into the hall and this bearded seller of paper intelligence brings in half a dozen bags full of books and other things. The owner chooses the *Tale of Two Turks*, the *Adventures of Marquis G.*, *Sovestdral*, *Van'ka Kain*, *The Midnight Bell*, *The Cave of Death*, Kotzebue's novels and short

108 A. V. Nikitenko, *Moia povest' o samom sebe i o tom, 'chemu svidetel' v zhizni byl': Zapiski i dnevnik (1804-1877)*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1904), vol. 1, 53.

109 Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 347.

110 Cf. Arkhiv Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha (AGE), fond 1, opis' 1, 1839, ed. 39 "Kniga dlia zapisivaniia knig, vydavaemykh iz Ermitazhnoi biblioteki," l. 26, l. 39, etc. (for Lafontaine's novel *Susanna*); l. 40, l. 45, l. 75, etc. (for *The Wife of the Bandit*). On this, see Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I," 981-984.

stories, etc., etc.; to this, he sometimes adds the *Instructions for Beekeeping*, a book on equine medicine.<sup>111</sup>

The scene well describes, on the one hand, the literary dynamics of many novels (like those by Prevost, Kotzebue, or Radcliffe) which had previously sold at a high price and now ending up in the pockets of street vendors who sold them cheaply to landowners in remote regions. On the other hand, it also demonstrates the chaotic and confusing nature of Russian novel consumption in the remote areas of the empire, that “unimaginable mixture” of books read without any order or guidance, which Ivan Goncharov (1812-1891) mentioned when writing about his youthful readings in Simbirsk, in a family of merchants, and which, among the majority of the Russian public, was the rule rather than the exception.<sup>112</sup>

## 2. FROM EMOTIONAL INVESTMENT TO DETACHED ADMIRATION: THE SUCCESS OF WALTER SCOTT IN RUSSIA, 1820S

In the eyes of the Russian public, the 1820s were marked by a number of different literary phenomena. In the field of poetry, this period saw the great popularity of the arch-Romantic Byronic poem; Pushkin's early fortune should be seen within this context.<sup>113</sup> As regards foreign novels, Russian audiences of those years saw the great success of Walter Scott's historical novels. In the 1810s, a mere decade earlier, Walter Scott as a poet and (especially) novelist was known to very few people in Russia.<sup>114</sup> He became increasingly popular in France starting from the year 1816, reaching the peak of his success there between 1822 and 1827.<sup>115</sup> That success contributed to his reception by the Russian public from the early 1820s onward. It was mainly from the mid 1820s on, though, that his fame in Russia as an author of historical novels significantly increased.<sup>116</sup> And while Byron and Pushkin, with their provocative Romanticism, tended to divide the Russian audience between passionate supporters and tough opponents of the new literary movement, Walter Scott, with his moderate and conservative Romanticism, found a cohesive audience that was united in praise of his works—works which appealed to Russian readers of heterogeneous aesthetic and political orientations. In the case of Walter Scott's readers, these could be mostly

111 Cited in Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 342.

112 Cited in Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 330.

113 Cf. S. Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin* (Leningrd, 1930), 34-62.

114 Cf. Iu. D. Levin, “Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii,” in *Epokha romantizma. Iz istorii mezhdurnarodnykh svyazei russkoi literatury* (Leningrad, 1975), 7-9.

115 Cf. M. Lyons, “Walter Scott et les lecteurs du romantisme français,” in Idem, *Le triomphe du livre. Une histoire sociologique de la lecture dans la France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1987), 135.

116 Levin, “Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii,” 8.

divided into those who could read his novels in French, in Defauconpret's translations, and the rest of the public who could approach him through the not-always-flawless Russian translations done from the French starting from the mid 1820s.<sup>117</sup> As already pointed out, however, the distinction between readers of the French translations and those of the Russian ones should not be considered too rigid. Even in Walter Scott's case, there were readers reporting that they read both. Ivan I. Panaev (1812-1862), for example, wrote that, in the 1830s, he was an avid reader of Scott's novels: "I read them all in both French and Russian translation."<sup>118</sup>

Readers of Walter Scott's novels were still divided between those who read the translations as soon as they were out in keeping with fashionable novelty, those who had access to his novels only later on and read them as one reads a well-established classic, and those who approached them as young adult literature. Among the first Russian readers of his novels was Tsar Nicholas I, who had personally met the Scottish bard in Edinburgh in December 1816 during a trip to Britain. A few years later, while still a Grand Duke, Nicholas spent several weeks in the summer of 1820 reading to his young wife Aleksandra Fedorovna, who was recovering from a miscarriage, the first of Scott's novels. Per her own memoirs: "It was in the wooden Constantine Palace that I spent six sad weeks, but so well taken care of by my husband and by the Empress Mother. At the time, Walter Scott's novels were extremely popular and Nicholas read them out to me."<sup>119</sup> It was a typical family reading, performed by her husband and possibly approved personally by the Empress Mother, carried out in French at the bedside of the young Prussian Grand Duchess. Later on, Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna herself, who by then had accumulated many of his novels in her library, began to recommend and distribute those works to her Russian *fräulein*, deeming those readings suitable for the young ladies of the court.<sup>120</sup> In those same years, particularly in 1825, Karamzin described the type of family pleasure that the evening reading of Scott's novels gave him: "At nine we drink tea at the round table and from ten o'clock until eleven-thirty we read, with my wife and our two girls, Walter Scott's novels, which are innocent food for the imagination and the heart, and we always regret that the evenings are too short."<sup>121</sup>

In the early 1820s, reading Walter Scott's novels was a pleasure that not all Russian readers could afford—not only because not everyone knew

117 S. B. Davis, "From Scotland to Russia via France. Scott, Defauconpret and Gogol," *Scottish Slavonic Review*, 16 (1991), 26-27.

118 Cit. in Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 14.

119 Cf. "Imperatritsa Aleksandra Fedorovna v svoikh vospominaniiakh," *Russkaia Starina*, vol. 88, 10 (1896), 59. On the influence of Walter Scott's novels on the imperial couple, see Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace," 966-968.

120 Cf. A. O. Smirnova, *Zapiski* (St. Petersburg, 1895), vol. 1, 168.

121 Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 11.

French, but also because even the early Russian translations were quite expensive. The first Russian translations of Scott's novels were published in volume starting from 1823.<sup>122</sup> Since the translations were from the French, some writers noted that Scott's Russian novels would sound French.<sup>123</sup> But the problem for the average reader was primarily the price. In 1824, for example, Russian translations of three major titles like *Guy Mannering*, *Kenilworth* and *Old Mortality* cost, respectively, the considerable sums of 10, 15 and 20 roubles.<sup>124</sup> The greatest number of Scott translations appeared between 1827 and 1829; in these three years, as many as 16 of his novels were translated and published in volume.<sup>125</sup> His popularity seemed to follow the cadence of his books' translations. In 1824, a critic from the journal *Blagonamerennyi* (*The Well-Intentioned*) wrote, "they are all now into Scott [...] And his historical novels have obscured the glory of Genlis, who was once so popular with us."<sup>126</sup> In 1826 the *Moskovskii Telegraf* (*Moscow Telegraph*) wrote that "the passion for reading W. Scott's works, which has already reached a peak in England, France, Germany, Italy, and Sweden, will soon become a common passion here, too."<sup>127</sup> Walter Scott's popularity reached its climax at the end of the 1820s. In 1828, the *Moskovskii Telegraf* decreed Scott's triumph among Russian readers:

Walter Scott's novels have been translated into Russian slowly, badly, as it happens, and yet, thanks to all this, the piles of Radcliffe, Genlis, Ducray-Duminil, A. Lafontaine novels have finally been substituted in Russia by a new favorite. Walter Scott's novels are everywhere, everybody reads them.<sup>128</sup>

In the early 1830s, these translations started to spread from the shelves of the capital's most prestigious bookshops to the stocks of the libraries circulating in small provincial towns. As a provincial reader who took novels from a circulating library wrote in 1832, "the crude writings and annotations on the battered sheets of Walter Scott's novels are just a confirmation that today people of all ranks love reading."<sup>129</sup>

As some critics have highlighted, a vital part of the public that read Walter Scott's novels was composed of female readers.<sup>130</sup> Reading Walter Scott's novels could obtain not only as a family activity—practiced with fam-

---

122 Ibid, 16, 34.

123 Ibid., 16.

124 Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 21.

125 Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 16.

126 Ibid., 15.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid., 16-17.

129 Ibid., 17.

130 Dolinin, *Istoriia odetaia v roman*, 130-132; Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 14-15.

ily members in the intimacy of a sitting room, read aloud, read after dinner and late into the evening—but also a typically feminine one, as pointed out in Shalikov's *Damskii zhurnal*, which devoted ample space to those novels.<sup>131</sup> A 'feminine' reading: in fact, sometimes it was precisely the men who 'convinced' many young female readers that they should prefer that kind of reading to other, 'less acceptable' novels. T. P. Passek, for example, recalled how, when she was sixteen, the young Baron N. A. Korf had advised her to abandon those novels "about mysterious castles and sweet and disastrous passions" as they were a "harmful type of reading" and "among novels, to choose those by Walter Scott."<sup>132</sup> The acclaimed playwright A. A. Shakhavskoi seemed to have exerted similar pressures on his favorite pupil, the young actress L. O. Diurova, who enjoyed Russian novellas instead. He wrote: "I am very pleased that you, apparently, are now all absorbed in reading Walter Scott: this Scottish 'animal' bears no resemblance to our Russian animals that you once enjoyed so much and prevented you from exercising your mind and your soul..."<sup>133</sup>

Walter Scott's novels were an inclusive reading, one capable of attracting both high society and popular readers.<sup>134</sup> Between the 1820s and the 1830s, Walter Scott's novels were read by both the Tsar and Empress, as well as by the servants at the Winter Palace, Moscow's lower civil servants, and small provincial landowners.<sup>135</sup> As noted, Scott's novels, with their ability to integrate the *ancien régime's* old aristocratic values and the new bourgeois sense of reality—especially a clear awareness of the economic and social relations governing history—responded quite well to the mood of European audiences of the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>136</sup> On the one hand, his heroes were moved by aristocratic feelings, performed chivalrous gestures, and had a sense of humor; on the other hand, their characters had traits such as austerity, tenacity, and integrity, which were typical of the bourgeois and Protestant rather than the aristocratic ethic. Alongside these ideological elements, it was above all Scott's ability to describe nature and the uses and customs of the past that struck his contemporaries for its novelty. It is interesting to note the reaction to Walter Scott's novels by an ordinary landowner, I. I. Mukhanov, in February 1826, in a letter to a relative:

<sup>131</sup> Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 14.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 15. Shachavskoi here plays with the Scottish author's name: the Russian *skot* means 'livestock.'

<sup>134</sup> M. Lyons, "Walter Scott et les lecteurs du romantisme français," in *Idem, Le triomphe du livre. Une histoire sociologique de la lecture dans la France du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1987), 139.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Rebecchini, "Reading novels at the Winter Palace: From the Tsar to the Stokers," 967-968, 984-985; A. Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 76-77; GOLOVINA, "Belles-Lettres and the literary interests of middling landowners," in the present volume.

<sup>136</sup> As Martyn Lyons wrote, "heroic values and material values are combined in a way that makes Scott an ideal author in a reflective post-revolutionary context." See Lyons, "Walter Scott et les lecteurs du romantisme français," 118.

After lunch I went for a walk, and all the rest of the time I spent reading Walter Scott's novel *Redgauntlet*... I read it until three in the morning, and I am increasingly enthusiastic about Walter Scott. His great merit is in his poetic and picturesque descriptions of nature, his true representation of customs and traditions, his comic scenes, and his historical accuracy. In his genre, he is a genius who has shed light so far on the north of Britain.<sup>137</sup>

In its simplicity, this testimony perfectly captures the factors that most affected his contemporary readers: the picturesque descriptions of nature, very different from the dark and disturbing ones in Gothic novels; the ability to faithfully and exhaustively describe the historical context in which the events were set; the descriptions of common people's local customs and daily life (*couleur local*)—this too being a new element, absent in both Cottin's historical-moralistic novels and in the later successful historical novels by D'Arlincourt; and last but not least, a few moments of light popular comedy, generally associated with minor characters. It is likely that this type of reaction was common among many Russian readers of Walter Scott's time. What changed in these readers' reactions, vis-a-vis readers of sentimental or Gothic novels, was the matter of emotional investment. Readers felt a sort of detached admiration toward Walter Scott's books rather than a strong identification or emotional involvement.<sup>138</sup> The distant and exotic settings of Gothic or family novels, which before were intended only as a background to make the reader feel the emotions of the protagonist, had now become the focus of the reader's analytic attention. Walter Scott's novels did not prevent but on the contrary stimulated their readers' analytic skills. Franco Moretti argues that through the multiplication of "moments of pause" Scott develops a "new analytical-impersonal style" of description.<sup>139</sup> As Northrop Frye writes, while for sentimental and Gothic novels, in which "there is a sense of literature as process, pity and fear become states of mind without objects, moods which are common to the work of art and the reader," for other novelistic genres, in which "there is a strong sense of literature as an aesthetic product, there is also a sense of its detachment from the spectator."<sup>140</sup> Walter Scott's careful reconstruction of past and distant worlds made the readers of his historical novels no longer feel an emotional experience that deeply transformed their inner selves; rather, those pages now stirred

<sup>137</sup> Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 12.

<sup>138</sup> I. Ferris, "Before Our Eyes': Romantic Historical Fiction and the Apparitions of Reading," *Representations*, vol. 121, 1 (Winter 2013), 60-84. See also Lyons, "Walter Scott et les lecteurs du romantisme français," 141-142.

<sup>139</sup> F. Moretti, "Serious Century," in F. Moretti (ed.), *The Novel* (Princeton, 2006), vol. 1, 376-377.

<sup>140</sup> N. Frye, "Towards Defining an Age of Sensibility," *English Literary History*, 23 (1956), 149.

in them a sense of detached admiration that made them forget their inner selves and their present life conditions. As Ina Ferris points out, while transforming history in something to see, “Scott’s historical novel [...] encodes a novelistic reading practice marked by exteriority and a particular kind of temporal suspension.”<sup>141</sup>

Fascination at those descriptions of faraway lands and past times turned Walter Scott’s novels into a means of escape for many Russian readers, especially those who were more sensitive to the lack of freedoms that characterized Nicholas I’s reign. “In prison and on the road,” Pushkin wrote in the mid 1830s “any book is a divine gift and what book you hesitate to open returning from the English Club or before going to a ball will appear as gripping as an Arabian fairy tale, if you happen to be in a cell or a postal wagon.”<sup>142</sup> From his Mikhailovskoe confinement, Pushkin, in November 1824, asked his brother for Walter Scott’s novels which, he wrote, were “food for the soul” for him.<sup>143</sup> The young Decembrists N. I. Turgenev, A. A. Bestuzhev, and M. I. Fonvizin read Scott’s novels even in the years before the Decembrist revolt, but it was especially during the years of their imprisonment after 1825 that, from their testimonies, the “escapist” potential ensured to them by reading Walter Scott’s novels most clearly emerged.<sup>144</sup> Iurii Levin wrote that “as soon as the prisoners in the Peter and Paul Fortress could receive books, many of them started to read Walter Scott.”<sup>145</sup> The Decembrists N. V. Basargin and A. P. Beliaev recall in their memoirs how they had made an agreement with their jailers in the Peter and Paul Fortress: the latter would subscribe to all the novels by Scott and Fenimore Cooper from St. Petersburg’s French bookshop in their stead. Scott’s Highlands and Cooper’s American prairies evoked, much more than Gothic cells and castles, sufficient spaces for one’s imagination to take flight from the cells of the Peter and Paul Fortress. Decembrist A. E. Rozen also wrote about his term of imprisonment in the fortress:

I remember with pleasure that I read all the novels by Walter Scott; the hours flew so fast and I often did not realize that I did not hear the bells toll. Through Sokolov I passed those books to my other companions. Sometimes it happened that one day I would read four volumes and feel in my thoughts that I was not in the fortress, but in Kenilworth castle, or in a monastery, or in a Scottish inn, or in the palaces of Louis XI, Edward, and Eliza-

---

<sup>141</sup> Ferris, “‘Before Our Eyes’: Romantic Historical Fiction and the Apparitions of Reading,” 61.

<sup>142</sup> Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 244.

<sup>143</sup> Levin, “Prizhiznennaia slava Val’tera Skotta v Rossii,” 12.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

beth. I was grateful to that author and in the evening I awaited with joy the arrival of the morning.<sup>146</sup>

The Decembrist V. P. Ivashev brought Walter Scott's French translations to Siberia with him, while another of the conspirators, V. S. Norov, who locked up in Bobruisk fortress in December 1830, rejected the latest novels and only wanted those by Walter Scott: "I do not want new novels," he wrote, "send me only Walter Scott's, a few at a time."<sup>147</sup> This "prison reading," as it has been called, appears in some way to symbolize one of the main functions performed by Walter Scott's historical novels in Russian society immediately after the Decembrist revolt: escapism.<sup>148</sup> A similar case was that of high school students who were trying to escape a too-disciplined life and the strict control of school authorities. Ivan I. Panaev remembers how in 1827, at the age of 15, while he was studying at the noble Pension of Moscow University, he and his companions "unbeknownst to our supervisors, pretended to practice our lessons [...] Every night we met in the classroom to read Walter Scott's novels."<sup>149</sup> And a similar type of reading, collective and concealed from the authorities, was carried out by students of the Tsarskoe Selo school; these included Ia. K. Grot, A. A. Kharitonov, and A. N. Iakhontov.<sup>150</sup> Aleksandr Dolinin, underlining the escapist function played by Scott's historical novel in the Russian society of the time, noticed how it was also a favorite read for the sick.<sup>151</sup> The case of Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna confirms it, but it is also interesting to quote the testimony of a less highly placed reader, a minor translator from Moscow who, bedridden, begged his publisher to send him Walter Scott's novels: "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, be of help to my pain. I am allowed to read, but I have absolutely nothing; everything I have, I've already read ten times. I had asked for Walter Scott, and you had promised him to me: please keep your promise now, free my soul from this prison."<sup>152</sup>

Although Walter Scott's novels achieved overall success in Restoration Europe, the particularly oppressive conditions of Russian society under Nicholas I seemed to underscore the "escapist" character of his novels: they projected the reader onto a different space, far from Russia, and into a different time. The languid torpor of the feelings induced in so many readers by the best sentimental novels and the "sweet terror" and rapt excitement of Gothic and bandit novels were replaced by an underlying need to escape and a desire to roam remote and distant lands in no way reminiscent of the

---

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Dolinin, *Istoriia odetaia v roman*, 129.

<sup>149</sup> Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 14.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Dolinin, *Istoriia odetaia v roman*, 123-124.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 124.



present. The interpretation of the success of Walter Scott's novels provided by his avid reader Apollon Grigor'ev a few years later confirms it. In his memoirs, Grigor'ev emphasized, on the one hand, Walter Scott's ability to project the reader onto a setting that is "entirely secluded, completely isolated from the rest of the world," and on the other, the spontaneous and naive conservatism of the author, which was perfectly in keeping with the spirit of restoration that predominated throughout Europe: "I repeat," he wrote, "these restoration trends have a completely different character in the various European countries. [...] In Russia, these restoration tendencies were and have remained a mere aspiration to some greater purification of our popular essence."<sup>153</sup> While those novels allowed the most politically sensitive readers escape from the big Russian "prison" created by Nicholas I, at the same time, for the majority of the Russian public, Walter Scott's spontaneously conservative mentality was deeply in line with the national-patriotic and conservative spirit promoted by the government and shared by many Russian readers of the 1830s. In this sense, Walter Scott's historical novels stimulated the Russian public's interest in Russian history while simultaneously paving the way for the assimilation of the conservative state ideology that informed most Russian historical novels of the 1830s.

The extraordinarily rapid success of Walter Scott's historical novels turned their author into a mass and commercial phenomenon. Until 1827 he had not publicly admitted to being the author of those novels. Yet his identity had been known for some time, disclosed by journals all over Europe, and Russian as well as other European readers wanted to know more about that mysterious author who had regaled them with so many pleasant hours of entertainment. In newspapers and journals, information about his private life increasingly started to appear.<sup>154</sup> Readers were interested in the intimate details of his private life. They followed in the press the news about his extraordinary profits and financial meltdowns; they wanted to visit or write to him.<sup>155</sup>

At the same time, this attitude toward Walter Scott's novels—i.e. the perception of those novels as aesthetic objects representing exotic and fascinating worlds and arousing a sense of detached admiration—is linked to a phenomenon that was new to the Russian audience: the marketing of a novelistic fictional imaginary. For the first time in Russia, literary heroes were transformed into consumer products, their stories disseminated into a thousand situations and objects of Russian daily life, their names a brand. This did not apply solely to the spread of Scott's stories in theaters (e.g. in Shakhavskoi's numerous stagings since the early 1820s of plays like *Ivanhoe* or *The Return of Richard the Lionheart* [*Ivanoi, ili Vozvrashchenie Richarda l'vinogo serdtsa*] [1821],

<sup>153</sup> A. Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 78, 79-80.

<sup>154</sup> Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 24-28.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

or *The Mysterious Carlo* [*Tainstvennyi Karlo*] [1822], or *The Fate of Nigell, or All is Misfortune for a Hapless Man* [*Sud'ba Nidzhelia, ili Vse beda dlia neschastnogo*] [1824]), or staged by other authors like A. A. Zhandr, who produced *The Sea Robber* (*Morskoi razboinik*), based on *The Pirate*.<sup>156</sup> Walter Scott's characters became masks for costume parties, were mentioned in private letters to evoke familiar situations and atmospheres from novels, and became nicknames attributed to servants. The "Scottish highlander" mask or that of "Rebecca," for example, became a classic mask at many parties of the time. In 1831 a chronicler described a masquerade that took place during Easter among the nobles of the city of Penza as follows: "We all loved the splendid dress of Rebecca the Jewess taken from Walter Scott's novel; her grace and amiability has attracted many admirers."<sup>157</sup> In 1831, during Nicholas I's visit to Moscow, a party with tableaux vivants from *Ivanhoe* was organized. One of these was titled "Lady Rowen receives the young Jewess Rebecca, who brings gifts and kneels in front of her," and Rebecca was played by Princess A. D. Abamelek.<sup>158</sup> As may be noted, it was the characters from *Ivanhoe* in particular that fascinated the most highly placed Russian readers, while among the lower public, for whom the long descriptions of Scott's earlier novels were sometimes boring, the later novels such as *The Count of Paris*, which featured more action and less descriptions, were the most popular.<sup>159</sup> The settings of his novels were turned into architectural and décor styles for the high aristocracy. Nicholas I had the Peterhof Cottage built in a style inspired by Walter Scott's novels, while the governor of Crimea, Vorontsov, called on Walter Scott's architect friend who had designed the famous Abbotsford House to design his Alupka Palace.<sup>160</sup> But the fashion of novels also spread at a lower level, becoming a popular show or a consumable item. In Moscow in 1828, a certain Madame Stefani organized a circus show in which she promised to give the audience a "magical and heroic representation taken from a Scottish novel by the famous Walter Scott."<sup>161</sup> Even in Russia—as before in France—there began to appear dresses and hats made with the much sought-after tartan plaid evoked in Scott's novels: a "cape à la Walter Scott," a "Quentin Durward cape," "caps à la Rebecca," etc., while cooks invented dishes in honor of the novelist, like gélé "à la Walter Scott."<sup>162</sup> The fortune of Walter Scott among the Russian public was thus not only related to his having offered compelling stories to his readers, which carried them away from the Russian reality of the time, but also to his having

---

156 Ibid., 18-19.

157 Ibid., 20.

158 Ibid.

159 Cf. Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 79; Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: From the Tsar to the Stokers," 985.

160 Cf. R. S. Wortman, *The Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton, 1995), vol. 1, 334-336; for Vorontsov Palace, see Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 23.

161 Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," 23.

162 Dolinin, *Istoriia odetiia v roman*, 131.

created a world of characters, settings, and easily identifiable and reproducible objects with which readers loved to surround themselves.

Yet, as early as the early 1840s, with the radicalization and ideologization of a significant part of the Russian public, Walter Scott's novels and their conservative ideology soon became unpopular with the more progressive Russian youth.<sup>163</sup> In 1840, for example, Aleksei Galakhov wrote to Andrei Kraevskii: "In the Pechkin café there is often a group of twenty students [...] they do not understand French very well: it is not surprising that such pillars of culture prefer to read Dumas or Sand rather than Cooper or Walter Scott"<sup>164</sup> Dumas and Sand represented the latest aesthetic and ideological trend, the most modern and fashionable one, while Walter Scott's novels now appeared to be, to many young people, decidedly aged, boring, and intolerably conservative.<sup>165</sup> In spite of the fall in price and the improvement in translations, interest in Walter Scott's novels seemed to decrease even among the most popular readership of this period. As Apollon Grigor'ev remembers, even in the two capitals his novels struggled to find new readers: "In the mid forties in Petersburg they prepared a cheap and quite good edition of Walter Scott's works, translated from the original, but they stopped publishing it after only the fourth novel and, even those four books, as far as I know, sold very few copies."<sup>166</sup> The situation in Moscow was no different: "in the 1850s a good man in Moscow," recalls Grigor'ev, "took it upon himself to start a series of translations of Walter Scott's original works, an even cheaper series, but even worse than that published in St. Petersburg, and due to this edition he went bankrupt, it seems, precisely because it did not sell enough."<sup>167</sup> Thus, starting from the mid 1840s, Scott's novels stopped being perceived as precious bestsellers by a part of the public and began to turn, slowly but steadily, into English literary classics or children's books, and such they remained until the late Soviet period.<sup>168</sup>

### 3. DANGEROUS READING: FRENCH NOVELS AT COURT AND IN HIGH SOCIETY DURING THE 1830S AND 1840S

By the mid 1840s, novel-reading in Russia had completely changed as compared to the beginning of the century. In 1847 Belinskii wrote, "foreign novels are no longer hindering Russian ones and the reading public

<sup>163</sup> On the ideologization of the Russian reading public see REBECCHINI, "The success of the Russian novel" in the present volume

<sup>164</sup> V. I. Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov XIX v.* (Moscow, 1958), 366.

<sup>165</sup> See also Dolinin, *Istoriia odetaia v roman*, 262-272.

<sup>166</sup> Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia*, 77.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> See LEIBOV-VDOVIN, "What and how Russian pupils read in school" in the present volume. See also Dolinin, *Istoriia odetaia v roman*, 273-285, 291-296.

is already showing a marked preference for Russian novels.”<sup>169</sup> The success of Russian novelists in the 1830s and 1840s had a profound effect on the purpose of reading foreign novels in Russia. In the first two decades of the century, European novels had enabled Russian readers to come into contact not only with new literary forms but also with western emotions and behavior, identifying with them and partially transforming their own sensitivities. However, with the success of Russian novels, the reading of foreign novels began to offer readers the opportunity for comparison rather than for identification. Alongside English and French historical novels, a wealth of Russian historical novels had now become available; alongside the great English and French social and psychological novels, Russian readers were already able to read important Russian models, such as Lermontov’s *A Hero of our Time*, Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and Herzen’s *Who is to Blame?* Western novels began to be seen as a chance to observe different social and psychological dynamics compared to those being described in Russian novels. They frequently reflected behavioral values and models that were emerging in the more liberal French and English societies, which greatly contrasted with traditional Russian mores. All this was seen as a threat by the Tsarist authorities.

Since the time when western novels first made their appearance in Russia, they had been viewed with suspicion by the Russian political and literary authorities, but by the time Nicholas had become tsar, suspicions had been turned into legislative measures that had a significant impact on which authors and texts were to be made available to the reading public. The new censorship law that came into force in 1828 required censors to check “novels, tales (*povesti*), and all such works of foreign literature with much greater severity than other books, especially as regards the morality of their content.”<sup>170</sup> During the 1830s and 1840s, the authorities viewed foreign novels not so much as the “post-horses of civilization,” as Pushkin had called them, but as Trojan horses that would allow immoral behavior and subversive ideas to worm their way into Russia. Translations of foreign novels were closely monitored, and when censors overlooked aspects that might offend Russia’s traditional morals or Orthodox religion, they paid a price in person.<sup>171</sup>

The special attention that censors paid to translated foreign novels led to imported books becoming one of the main channels for spreading western habits and values. While the volumes published in Russia were effectively checked word by word, only the invoiced titles of imported books were actually screened.<sup>172</sup> And most of the foreign books that the censors prohibited from being translated into Russian circulated in their original editions:

---

169 Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 8, 344

170 *Ustav o tsenzure 1828 goda*, article § 80.

171 Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 81.

172 *Ibid.*, 90.

“There is not a single book forbidden by the censors of foreign books that we cannot easily purchase even from second-hand book sellers,” wrote the censor Nikitenko in the mid 1830s.<sup>173</sup> Booksellers were particularly busy dealing in foreign books in the major cities, especially in St. Petersburg. In the first decades of the century it was mostly booksellers of foreign origin that dealt in them (Bellizar, Gautier, etc.), but already by the 1830s Russian booksellers such as Iakov A. Isakov had begun to open European branches and import books directly from Paris. This not only helped to bring down the prices of foreign books sold in Russia, but also helped them gain exposure in book stores that were traditionally reserved for Russian literature.<sup>174</sup> If, on the one hand, the number of Russian works approved by the censors remained basically constant from the mid thirties to the end of the forties (between 900 and 1,100 titles a year),<sup>175</sup> then on the other hand, the number of volumes imported in that period increased at least fourfold. According to Charles A. Ruud, in 1828 the Foreign Censorship Committee screened 90,000 imported foreign works and by 1848 that figure had topped the 400,000 mark.<sup>176</sup> According to Belinskii, most of these imported books were French novels and plays: “French novels and vaudevilles make up the bulk of foreign books imported into Russia,” the critic wrote in 1838.<sup>177</sup>

Who were the readers of these French imports? If it is true that the late 1830s were marked by a sharp increase in the consumption of Russian novels, there was nevertheless still a part of Russian society that spoke and read mostly in French—namely the world of the court, the aristocracy, the political-financial elite, and part of the provincial nobility.<sup>178</sup> Different cultural or practical reasons lay behind these groups’ preference for reading in French: many of the elite had foreign origins, and they often came from the empire’s provinces (such as the Baltic governorates) or from other European countries, so Russian was not their native language; but even the aristocracy of Russian origin often still preferred to read foreign novels mostly in French due to the language’s longstanding cultural prestige. It is worth taking a look at the tastes and reading practices of this group of the elite who, in spite of the ever-increasing influence of the Russian critics on the public, still held sway in a vital part of the Russian society at that time.

The loan register of the library belonging to the son of Nicholas I, the heir to the throne Alexander Nikolaevich (the future Alexander II), preserved in the Winter Palace, allows us to partially reconstruct the reading habits of a

173 A. V. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik* (Moscow, 1955), vol. 1, 140.

174 Kufaev, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 114-115.

175 Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 95, 254

176 *Ibid.*, 90. Different data are reported by Mikhail Kufaev, who put imported foreign works as high as 700,000 by 1848 and 826,000 by 1849, which is roughly the same number as those published in Russia itself that same year. Cf. Kufaev, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 113.

177 Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 281.

178 Offord, Argent, Rjéoutski, *The French Language in Russia*, 195-206, 215-253.

large group of court readers, about 80 people from 1828 to 1855.<sup>179</sup> These were members of the imperial family, high court officials with their wives, ladies-in-waiting, tutors and teachers. It was a highly heterogeneous group of readers, in terms of both nationality and culture. They also took out books in German and English, but French predominated, while Russian requests were few and far between. Yet despite a wide variety of national backgrounds and reading competence, and despite the wealth of books available, the novels they requested were often the same. The heir's library was particularly well stocked with literary novelties. The genres most frequently consulted were French memoirs, contemporary novels, and vaudevilles.<sup>180</sup> Historical works were also frequently consulted, even by non-scholarly readers, whereas books of poetry were borrowed only rarely. With regard to novels, court readers focused on quite a limited number of authors and titles that seemed to go from hand to hand; they seemed to read these texts almost simultaneously. For example, between 1829 and 1834, Walter Scott's novels were requested 22 times by the most diverse readers, such as members of the imperial family, teachers, tutors and ladies-in-waiting. Between 1830 and 1832, the same reader, Madame Merder, borrowed thirteen different Walter Scott novels one after the other. Among them, Scott's most borrowed books at Nicholas's court were *Quentin Durward* and *Ivanhoe* (while the palace servants much preferred Scott's *Count Robert of Paris*). Balzac's novels were borrowed nine times in the period between 1833 and 1836. Among Balzac's novels, there was a marked interest in the cycle *Scenes from Private Life* (*Scènes de la vie privée*), in particular in *Old Goriot* (*Le père Goriot*). Only one reader borrowed Stendhal's *The Red and the Black* (*Le rouge et le noir*), while his *Promenades dans Rome* was in great demand. There was frequent interest in classical novels such as Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in French translation, Fénelon's edifying *The Adventures of Telemachus* (*Les aventures de Télémaque*) and Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, which were borrowed not only by young readers. Chateaubriand's *Atala* and *René* also aroused particular interest. His two short novels, published more than thirty years earlier, were borrowed by several members of the imperial family, from the Heir to the throne, his wife, the Grand Duchesses Mariia, Olga, and Aleksandra, as well as an intimate family friend, Madame Baranova. Interestingly, Maria Edgeworth's novel production still seemed to find appeal, as did the historical novels by Zschokke, Sismondi, and Vigny in particular. On the other hand, however, the most classic sentimentalist novels—from Richardson to Rousseau to

---

179 On this, cf. D. Rebecchini, *Lettura al Palazzo d'Inverno (1829-1855). La lettura come fatto sociale*, in A. D'Amelia (ed.), *Pietroburgo capitale della cultura russa* (Salerno, 2004), 291-334; Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: From the Tsar to the Stokers," 976-980.

180 Particularly on the reading of court memoirs, cf. D. Rebeckini, "V.A. Zhukovskii i frantsuzskie memuary pri dvore Nikolaia I (1828-1837). Kontekst chteniia i ego interpretatsiia," *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu* (Tartu, 2004), vol. 3, 229-253.

Goethe's *Werther*—seem to have completely lost their appeal among court readers in the 1830s. Of course, not only French contemporary novels were in demand alongside Walter Scott's, but they were certainly in the majority. Similar data come from the other court libraries. Between 1844 and 1847, the empress arranged for a number of books to arrive from the tsar's library, including two novels by Eugène Sue; three by Countess Dash, by Joseph Méry and by Théodor de Foudras; four by de Charles de Bernard, five novels by Frédéric Soulié, Paul Lacroix, Paul Féval and George Sand; nine Honoré de Balzac novels; and twenty by Alexandre Dumas Sr.<sup>181</sup>

What kind of reactions did these foreign novels arouse among the readers of the court of Nicholas I? Contemporary French novels by authors such as Frédéric Soulié, Eugène Sue, George Sand, Alexandre Dumas and Balzac seemed to arouse a mixture of curiosity and disquiet among readers at court. Their curiosity stemmed from the awareness that those were works that Paris, the cultural capital of Europe, had crowned with success; their disquiet was due to an uneasy feeling that such novels were proof of the moral corruption and social instability of the western world, instability that could undermine the social order on which the Russian monarchy itself rested. The court librarian assured the Parisian booksellers:

If a novel meets with the approval of people of taste, you can be sure that it will also make us happy to receive them, but even though we are part of the literary movement that has been going on in France for some years now, I can assure you that we are far from sharing this tendency to flights of fancy (*dévergondage d'esprit*) from which some of your young writers such as Soulié, Alexandre Dumas, etc. seem to suffer. We do not want these crude and cynical reflections (*élucubrations féroces*), these galvanizing books (*livres galvaniques*), such as *Angèle*, *Thérèse*, etc. Here, no more than in France, I think, healthy readers do not want to hear about them.<sup>182</sup>

But how were these novels actually read at the court of Nicholas I? Which were the most widespread reading practices and how did they influence the reception of the novels? Individual silent reading was just one of the court's reading practices, and apparently daily life at court was not favorable to it. If we compare the life of a courtier with that of an ordinary provincial nobleman, such as Andrei Chikhachev (see GOLOVINA, "Belles-Lettres and the literary interests of middling landowners," in the present volume), we soon realize that the residents at the Russian court had less leisure time and

<sup>181</sup> Cf. AGE, fond 2, opis' XIVE, d. 12.

<sup>182</sup> Letter from Gille to Warée from March 9, 1834 in AGE, fond 2, opis' XIVzh, d. 22, part 1.

fewer opportunities for solitary reading. The courtier was a man who was on duty full-time, sometimes until late at night, depending upon the service with which he was charged. The same applied to the members of the imperial family who, not unlike their servants, were forced to submit to strict court protocol. The daughter of the poet Fedor Tiutchev, Anna Tiutcheva (1829-1889), soon realized this when she arrived at court as a lady-in-waiting to Mariia Aleksandrovna, the wife of the heir to the throne. Tiutcheva was immediately struck by the endless number of ceremonies, masses, parades, celebrations, and other duties in which she was forced to participate, even during summers on the country estates. The members of the court, she wrote, “never get a chance to bury themselves in a good book, converse, or reflect [...] In the end, this mundane life in the country, when you only go back to your room to change, brings you down and makes you dull. We have no chance to read on our own or to engage in anything special.”<sup>183</sup>

Group or parlor readings with a large number of participants were one of the main forms of entertainment at the court of Nicholas I, along with theater performances and home games. Typically, these readings were held in the evening after tea, in the gold drawing room at the Winter Palace, and went on even after 11 P.M. There was a large number of consistent guests, often more than ten, including some members of the most aristocratic families, and readings were not free of interruptions, comments, and digressions. Memoirs report the readings occurring alongside *petits jeux*, *tableaux vivants*, and amateur theatricals; thus, they were considered above all to be a form of entertainment. In 1836, for example, Gogol’ was repeatedly invited to read his *The Government Inspector* (*Revizor*) at court. But more frequent were the readings of novels performed by a member of the court. The twenty-six-year-old Tiutcheva, who took part in them in the last years of Nicholas I’s reign, drew an ironic picture of them:

We meet at nine o’clock in the evening. The Empresses usually sit at the table with some old ladies, such as Princess Saltykova, Countess Baranova, Countess Tizengauzen. Count Shuvalov and Count Apraksin have been present at these evenings since they were established. The young, composed of more than mature women—namely the 45- and 35-year-old Bartenevy Mesdemoiselles, 30-year-old Mademoiselle Gudovich, Countess Tolstaia aged 30, Mademoiselle Voeikova of 30 and I, 26—sit at the children’s table. [...] We talk about the day’s weather or some other very topical matter. And then we move on to reading. Shuvalov sits down with his novel, of which neither the title nor the author anybody has ever heard, and in a monotonous,

---

<sup>183</sup> A. F. Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov. Vospominaniia. Dnevnik* (Moscow, 1928), vol. 1, 95, 166.



nasal voice, he drones on about a tangle of murders, kidnappings, poisonings, ambushes, betrayals, hangings, declarations of love, reasonings, dialogues, curses, spells, and catastrophes of all kinds, which represent the appeal of the nineteenth-century novel of intrigue.<sup>184</sup>

This form of group reading favored certain narrative forms more than others and emphasized certain stylistic features more than others. It excluded lyrical genres and sentimental prose, which required a more intimate form of reading, but also historical or philosophical prose, which required greater concentration and the possibility of more complex logical connections. Group reading favored novels with compelling plots, such as historical novels, maritime and adventure novels, serials, and even more dramatic genres, *vaudevilles*, and light plays, often read by more than one person. This type of reading was often interrupted, as Tiutcheva reported—which emphasized the fleeting effect of the novel’s plot (the murder, the poisoning, the betrayal, etc.) and the peculiarity of the situation or the immediacy of the dialogue, all at the expense of the overall idea of the work. It is in this reading context that the success of Balzac, Dumas, and Eugène Sue’s novels should be understood. In this context—an expanded social community comprised of people of different ages and with different interests—it is easier to understand the success of more democratic works like *The Mysteries of Paris* (*Les Mystères de Paris*) by Eugène Sue.<sup>185</sup> The narrative structure of the serial novel, with its interweaving plot lines that perfectly fit into each chapter and a narrative structure that perfectly distributed emotions across each installment, suited the Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna’s reading room very well, per another lady-in-waiting: “At court they greedily read *The Mysteries of Paris* and the Emperor listened to the Louve episode with tears in his eyes.”<sup>186</sup> Sue’s novel, conceived for a bourgeois audience but immediately adopted in 1848 by the Parisian proletariat as its manifesto, moved one of Europe’s most reactionary sovereigns to tears.<sup>187</sup> Nicholas’s reaction is proof of a narrative mechanism perfectly conceived by Sue that worked with any reader, regardless of nation, rank, or culture.<sup>188</sup>

184 Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov*, vol. 2, 76-77.

185 Cf. K. A. Chekalov, “Rossiiskaia ‘misterimaniia’ 1840kh godov: paradoks vospriiatiia romana Ezhen Siu.” *Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk. Seriia literaturny i iazyka*, 73, 6 (2014), 15-22.

186 A. O. Smirnova-Rosset, *Dnevnik. Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1989), 11.

187 On the rhetoric of *the Mysteries of Paris* by E. Sue and its effect on French bourgeois and proletarian readers, cf. U. Eco, “Eugène Sue: il socialismo e la consolazione,” in Idem, *Il superuomo di massa. Retorica e ideologia nel romanzo popolare* (Milan, 1998), 27-67.

188 On reader reactions to Sue’s novel in France, see Jean-Pierre Galvan, *Les mystères de Paris. Eugène Sue et ses lecteurs*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998). On Russian reactions, see fi. D. A. Drashusova, “Vospominaniia (1842-1847),” *Rossiiskii Arkhiv, novaia seria*, 2004, vol. 13, 196,

The impact of the tsar's and these court readers' reactions and opinions should not be underestimated. Nicholas's opinions were backed by real force of censorship, and were indirectly felt by all of Petersburg's high society. Tiutcheva wrote in her diary about the readings to the two Empresses:

Everywhere they will know and repeat that the two Empresses spent three nights a week, and even some mornings, for two months, listening to this awful novel [...] Here they ignore the fact that none of their gestures go unnoticed, that everything is made public, and is attributed a particular meaning.<sup>189</sup>

Unlike group parlor readings, which were exclusively for entertainment purposes, forms of more intimate reading among fewer people represented a refuge from court life. Due to the limited number of participants, these readings were better suited to the individual listeners' tastes and interests than parlor readings. Frederiks noted: "In the morning our readings were more demanding or of a scientific nature; we also read newspapers. After lunch and in the evening we read memoirs or new novels or similar things to Her Highness."<sup>190</sup> Sometimes these readings also revived models and practices of Protestant devotion.<sup>191</sup> The reading practices of the Protestant tradition entered Nicholas's court through the Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna and the tsarevna Mariia Aleksandrovna. In organizing his daily life, for example, the Prussian king Frederick William III and the queen Louise (Aleksandra Fedorovna's parents) followed cultural practices that blended some elements of lay culture and others typical of Protestant devotion: "In the morning the Queen read the newspapers, prayed with him, and read him spiritual books. [...] They had lunch at three and invited one of the princes, and Pastor Eilert was always there, also reading to him in the evening."<sup>192</sup> This form of intimate, familiar room reading suited the tsarevna, also a Protestant—even more so, seeing as she came from the small, provincial court of Hesse-Darmstadt. Mariia Aleksandrovna brought certain more bourgeois practices and cultural models to the court than the worldly and courtly ones observed by Aleksandra Fedorovna. Thus, before becoming Empress, Mariia Aleksandrovna preferred smaller, family-like group readings, often involving the heir and a limited number of ladies-in-waiting: "Every evening we meet at the tsarevna's with a small group: Mademoiselle

---

202; P. M. Kovalevskii, "Vstrechi na zhiznennom puti," in D. P. Grigorovich, *Literaturnye vospominaniia* (Leningrad, 1928), 308.

189 Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov*, vol. 2, 180-181.

190 "Iz vospominanii baronessy M.P. Frederiks," *Istoricheskii Vestnik*, vol. 71, 1 (1898), 70.

191 On the function of reading in the Protestant world, see in part I. F. Gilmont, *Riforma protestante e lettura*, in G. Cavallo, R. Chartier (eds.), *Storia della lettura nel mondo occidentale* (Bari, 1995), 243-275.

192 Smirnova-Rosset, *Dnevnik. Vospominaniia*, 238.

Granse, Princess Saltykova, Aleksandra Dolgorukaia and I. We read *Voyage autour de ma chambre* by Count de Maistre. We read in this order: first the Grand Duke, then I,” wrote Tiutcheva.<sup>193</sup> Readers often took turns in reading aloud, creating a more close-knit and familiar atmosphere in which hierarchical differences seemed to be mitigated. Here reading was no longer a service rendered to the master, but a time of intellectual communion. For this reason, Tiutcheva, so impatient with Aleksandra Fedorovna’s highly ritualized parlor readings, rejoiced in the evenings with the Tsarevna: “Last night the Empress hosted the usual dull and monotonous evening. Tonight, however, we will return to our small evening parties with the tsarevna, reading *Don Quixote*, which we enjoy so much.”<sup>194</sup>

At court and in high society, at that time, generational differences among the readers became increasingly pronounced. Readings that may have sounded scandalous for Aleksandra Fedorovna, such as George Sand’s novels, were appreciated by younger aristocrats. In 1838, Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna remarked to Aleksandra Smirnova, who was reading to her from George Sand’s *Indiana*, about a female character, “Ma chère, you understand that she loves a doctor. Even if he were as handsome as Adonis, he is still a man who prescribes purges, or an irrigation, and whom you pay ten francs for a visit!”<sup>195</sup> Smirnova comments: “What an aristocratic vision of love! Nowadays, love is blind, and even Russian ladies, after reading all of Ms. Sand’s novels, have assimilated her point of view, and they go gallivanting around Europe with Italian clerks as their lovers without feeling any pangs of conscience.”<sup>196</sup>

It was precisely via George Sand’s novels that a new model of female behavior penetrated Russian society. Her novels were widely translated, first in journals, especially in *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*The Fatherland Notes*), and later in book form.<sup>197</sup> According to Dostoevsky, by the end of the 1830s she was the most popular European novelist with the Russian public: “Not even Dickens, who made his appearance among us at the same time as George Sand, seems to have enjoyed such attention from the public. Not to mention Balzac.”<sup>198</sup> Ivan Goncharov recalls that in those years “people were constantly talking about George Sand, and as soon as her books came out, they were

193 Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov*, vol. 1, 157.

194 Tiutcheva, *Pri dvore dvukh imperatorov*, vol. 1, 128.

195 Smirnova-Rosset, *Dnevnik. Vospominaniia*, 235-236.

196 *Ibid.*

197 Twenty-nine George Sand works were translated in journals and eleven published as books. Between 1839 and 1848 *Notes of the Fatherland* published translations of three novels by Eugène Sue, six by Alexandre Dumas, seven by Charles de Bernard, eight by Dickens and fourteen by George Sand, whereas nothing by Balzac or Paul de Kock saw publication. Cfr. F. Genevray, *George Sand et ses contemporains russe. Audience, échos, réécritures* (Paris, 2000), 32-35.

198 F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols, (Leningrad, 1981), vol. 23, 33.

read, translated.”<sup>199</sup> The writer adds: “A number of women took her radical ideas about emancipation literally, putting themselves in the situation of one or the other of her literary heroines, something that would never have occurred to them if George Sand hadn’t existed.”<sup>200</sup> Despite the efforts of the censors, the Russian translations of those novels enabled these new models of behavior to reach non-aristocratic readers too.<sup>201</sup> At the end of the 1830s, passion for George Sand and emulation of “Sandian behavior” could be found among students and very young female readers from the lower social classes. Thanks to the example of George Sand’s literary heroines, certain social constraints and moral prohibitions that were imposed on the previous generation were no longer tolerated by the younger readers. For example, Proskov’ia Tatlina (1812-1854), who was the daughter of a Moscow administrator and who got married to a low-ranking officer, recalls the influence that the French writer’s novels had had on her daughters Natasha and Masha since the 1830s:

George Sand seduced Natasha. [...] Reading George Sand definitely encouraged the tendency, already evident among many young people, towards carnal love, clouding their minds to such an extent that they considered a normal, base instinct to be the loftiest ideal. I had completely fallen out with Natasha in my view of the vocation of a woman. I believed in an active love, or, to say it more simply, in a ‘useful’ love; while she had been infected with the so-called Sandian ideas. And this contagion spread to Masha too. [...] Masha began to distance herself from me, she didn’t like what I said to her. She started to run away from home and wander around town on her own. [...] The idea behind women’s emancipation is a good one: but it was achieved here in ways that could have ruined her: short hair, a man’s hat, vulgar behavior, forms of self-deception. It was clear to me that I had to take Masha away. But where the devil could we go?<sup>202</sup>

As Miranda Remnek underlines, it was precisely by imitating George Sand’s heroines that Natasha and Masha managed to stand up for their own independence against their mother’s wishes.<sup>203</sup>

---

199 I. Aizenshtok, “Frantsuzskie pisateli v otsenkakh tsarskoi tsenzury,” *Literaturne nasledstvo*, vol. 33-34 (Moscow, 1937), 807.

200 Ibid.

201 On the censors’ attitude to George Sand’s novels, cf. Aizenshtok, “Frantsuzskie pisateli v otsenkakh tsarskoi tsenzury,” 807-816; Genevray, *George Sand et ses contemporains russe*, 38-46.

202 See f.i. P. N. Tatlina, “Vospominaniia (1812-1854),” *Russkii arkhiv*, 10 (1899), 220-221.

203 Cf. Beaven Remnek, “A Larger Portion of the Public,” 43-44.

The spread of French novels in the 1830s and 1840s encouraged new attitudes towards family, work, love and religion among the Russian public. The degree of behavioral freedom achieved by French society during the reign of Louis Philippe was incomparably greater than that of Russian society. The novels of Paul de Kock, Balzac, Eugène Sue and George Sand, which described every aspect of contemporary life in France, from the fashionable life in Paris to that of the provincial towns, from the countryside to the city slums—all of this played an important role in presenting the Russian public with new types of social, romantic, and familial relationships.<sup>204</sup> In 1838 Belinskii thusly summed up the moral that the Russian reading public could take from the new French novelists:

Eugène Sue has declared that, nowadays, being good and honest means heading straight for the gallows or the execution wheel, while behaving like a coward or a murderer is a sure way of enjoying all the pleasures of this world. [...] Balzac preaches that being poor is the same as ending up alive in hell and that being happy and blessed means having bags of money and being entitled to add the preposition ‘*de*’ to your surname. Dumas has told the whole world that loving a woman means being prepared to strangle or knife her at any moment. George Sand invited humanity to go back to Nature, considering civil institutions, and especially marriage, to be the main cause of people’s misfortunes.<sup>205</sup>

Despite the cuts and prohibitions of the censors, numerous novels by these authors continued to appear in journals and in book form. When an entire volume was censored, popular demand might lead to long passages from that text to appear in journals. At the same time, the foreign novels that had been officially outlawed would still circulate through unofficial channels.<sup>206</sup> As Dostoevskii recalled, at the end of the 1830s “only novels were allowed, everything else, any idea almost, especially if it came from France, was really strictly forbidden [...] But what is important is that by then readers knew how to get everything that the authorities were trying so hard to protect them from, even from novels.”<sup>207</sup> Not only the authorities, but also the older and more conservative members of the public, believed those novels to be responsible for corrupting the younger generations, encouraging

---

204 Between 1832 and 1842 alone, no fewer than twenty-six Paul de Kock novels were translated and published in Russian, without counting the translations that came out in journals. See [I. P. Bystrov], *Sistematicheskii reestr russkim knigam s 1831 po 1846* (St. Petersburg, 1846), 231-237.

205 Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1977), vol. 2, 338-339.

206 Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 140.

207 Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 23, 32, 34.

them to adopt immoral forms of behavior, to break up marriages, or even to commit crimes. In May 1836, Nikiten'ko noted the following item of criminal news in his diary: "Pavlov, a civil servant, killed, or almost killed, the current State Councilor Aprelev while the latter was returning from church with his young bride [...] The public rose up in anger against Pavlov as a 'base murderer,' and the minister of education imposed an embargo on all French novels and tales (*povesti*), particularly on the works of Dumas, considering them the real culprits."<sup>208</sup> Soon enough those novels became one of the scapegoats for justifying many of the tensions and social contradictions that were beleaguering Russian society in the 1830s and 1840s. And when the threats of Europe's revolutions moved ever closer to Russia, the authorities' fears turned into outright panic.

1848 marked a turning point not only for the publication of Russian works, but also for translating and importing foreign novels. As early as May 1847, the Minister for Education tried to prevent any foreign novels from being published in Russian journals, but his plan failed.<sup>209</sup> In June the Minister insistently asked the St. Petersburg censors to pay closer attention to translations of foreign novels, "especially by the French writers whose names are more or less famous among the public," and he recommended checking that St. Petersburg journals "were not filled only with novels translated in full."<sup>210</sup> With regard to imported books, the Minister decided that the censors, "when allowing certain foreign novels to be imported into Russia, should also establish whether they may be translated into Russian" and ordered that "any novels barred from having a full translation should also be barred from having translated passages thereof being printed."<sup>211</sup> In 1848 it was the tsar himself who ordered the censors to make page-by-page checks not only of everything that was published in Russia, but also everything that was imported.<sup>212</sup> In April 1848, to avoid whetting the public's appetite, Russian journals were barred from publishing reviews and critical essays by foreign authors of novels and works forbidden in Russia.<sup>213</sup> At the same time, in June 1848 the tsar imposed stiffer import tariffs specifically in order to hinder the importation of novels.<sup>214</sup> From that year on, the Foreign Censorship Committee was awarded extra funds and extra personnel, there-

---

208 Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, vol. 1, 183.

209 *Ibid.*, 307

210 N. G. Patrushcheva, I. P. Fut, *Tsirkuliary tsenzurnogo vedomstva Rossiiskoi imperii. Sbornik dokumentov* (St. Petersburg, 2016), 73-74.

211 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

212 Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 90.

213 Patrushcheva, Fut, *Tsirkuliary tsenzurnogo vedomstva*, 85.

214 "His Majesty the Emperor ordered that all books imported into the Russian Empire should be subjected by Customs to a 5 silver kopeck tariff for each individual volume [...] Novels and novellas [*povesti*] are subject to an extra 5 silver kopeck tariff." Order by the Tsar of 25.6.1848 in AGE, f. 2, op. XIV a, 1848, d. 19, l. 1-10b. See also Kufaeu, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 116.

by ensuring much more accurate checks.<sup>215</sup> After similar efforts on the part of the authorities, the production of Russian novels fell dramatically in volume (from 94 to 24 titles between 1847 and 1850), and moreover, between 1849 and 1850 there was a 17% drop in everything printed in Russia.<sup>216</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

The huge consumption of European novels in Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century enabled an increasingly differentiated public to read about and partially assimilate a series of western emotional patterns and behaviors that had been shared above all among Russian and European nobles in the previous decades. Thanks to the great popularity of sentimental and Gothic novels among diverse social classes, not only the Russian aristocracy, but also small provincial landowners, clerks, merchants, domestic servants, and sometimes even craftsmen and peasant farmers learned to fall in love and suffer like western readers, to take similar pleasures in Nature and experience similar shudders when navigating an unfamiliar space. European novels thus not only helped draw Russian readers closer to the western reading public, but also contributed to the reduction of cultural barriers between Russian readers from various social classes and other cultural worlds.

The success of Walter Scott's novels during the 1820s marked a significant change in the way novels were read. If prior literary forms like sentimental or Gothic novels encouraged readers to mimic or identify with their heroes, then in reading Walter Scott, the Russian public instead began to enjoy a more escapist form of reading, one that, conversely, relied upon the distance between the world of the fictional hero and that of the reader. Rather than offering the Russian readers a powerful emotional experience that deeply transformed their inner selves, Walter Scott's novels aroused a sense of detached admiration that permitted readers to escape from their everyday drudgery into captivating long-gone and faraway worlds. At the same time, by reading Western historical novels, Russian readers learned about the past of other European nations and were thus encouraged to compare those worlds with their own and to discover their own history as well as the typical features of their own national identity. Historical novels stimulated a more analytical approach to reading than in the past, as well as a greater tendency to compare the past with the present and the western world with the Russian one. This new analytical approach was soon put into practice with French social and realistic novels too. By reading contemporary French novels—from Paul de Kock to Balzac, from Eugène Sue to

<sup>215</sup> Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 90.

<sup>216</sup> Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 116.

Dumas to George Sand—the Russian public of the 1830s and after became aware of the new social and familial dynamics that were emerging in the West and started comparing them with the Russian context. In this way, the most recent French authors promoted new values and new forms of behavior theretofore alien to Russian society, which an ever increasing number of Russian readers began to imitate.

## Select Bibliography

- Aizenshtok I., “Frantsuzskie pisateli v otsenkakh tsarskoi tsenzury,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 33-34 (Moscow, 1937), 769-858.
- Beaven Remnek M., “‘A Larger Portion of the Public.’ Female Readers, Fiction, and the Periodical Press in the Reign of Nicholas I,” in B. T. Norton, I. M. Gheith (eds.), *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia* (Durham, London: Duke University Press London, 2001), 26-51.
- Blium A. B., “Massovoe chtenie v russkoi provintsii kontsa XVIII-pervoi chetverti XIX v.,” in I. E. Barenbaum (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad: LGIK, 1973), vol. 1, 49-55.
- Chekalov K. A., “Rossiiskaia ‘misterimaniia’ 1840kh godov: paradoks vospriiatiia romana Ezhen Siu,” *Izvestiia Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk. Seriiia literatury i iazyka*, vol. 73, 6 (2014), 15-22.
- Diakonova N., Vatsuro V., “‘No Great Mind and Generous Heart Could Avoid Byronism’: Russia and Byron,” in R. A. Cardwell (ed.), *The Reception of Byron in Europe* (London, New York: Thoemmes Continuum, 2008), vol. 2, 333-351.
- Dolinin A., *Istoriia, odetaia v roman. Val’ter Skott i ego chitateli* (Moscow, 1988).
- Drews P., *Die Rezeption deutscher Belletristik in Russland, 1750-1850* (München: O. Sagner, 2007).
- Genevray F., *George Sand et ses contemporains russe. Audience, échos, réécritures* (Paris : L’Harmattan, 2000).
- Glagoleva O. E., “Imaginary World: Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750-1825),” in W. Rosslyn (ed.), *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia* (London: Routledge, 2003), 129-146.
- Hammarberg G., “The First Russian Women’s Journals and the Construction of the Reader,” in W. Rosslyn, A. Tosi (eds.), *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 83-104.
- Hoogenboom H., “Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers,” *Slavic Review*, vol. 74, 3 (Fall 2015), 553-574.
- Kochetkova N. D., *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma (Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye*



- iskaniia*) (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1994).
- Kufaev M. N., *Istoriia russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (Moscow: Nachatki znanii, 1927; 2nd edition, Moscow, Pashkov dom, 2003).
- Kuz'mina V. D., *Rytsarskii roman na Rusi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964).
- Levin Iu. D., "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," in *Epokha romantizma. Iz istorii mezhdurnarodnykh sviazei russkoi literatury* (Leningrad: Nauka 1975), 5-67.
- Rebecchini D., "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: From the Tsar to the Stokers", *Slavic Review*, vol. 78, 4 (Winter, 2019), 965-985.
- Reitblat A. I., *Ot Boyv k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow: NLO, 2009).
- Ruud Ch. A., *Fighting Words. Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2009).
- Schaarschmidt G., "The Lubok Novels: Russia's Immortal Best Sellers," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, vol. 9, 3 (September 1982), 424-436.
- Sipovskii V. V., *Iz istorii russkoi literatury XVIII v. Opyt statisticheskogo nabliudeniia* (Saint Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akad. Nauk, 1901).
- Streidter Ju., *Der Schelmenroman in Russland: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Russischen Romans vor Gogol'* (Berlin, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1961).
- Tosi A., *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2006).
- Vatsuro V. E., *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow: NLO, 2002).
- Zorin A., *Poiavlenie geroia. Iz istorii russkoi emotsional'noi kul'tury kontsa XVIII—nachala XIX veka* (Moscow: NLO, 2016).



## THE SUCCESS OF THE RUSSIAN NOVEL, 1830s-1840s

Damiano Rebecchini

Compared to other European countries, the production of original novels in Russia during the eighteenth century remained low: just slightly more than 100 such titles were published.<sup>1</sup> In the same period, translations of European novels into Russian numbered eight times as many. The ratio between original and translated novels did not change significantly for the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Between 1801 and 1829, only 46 Russian-language novels were published, as opposed to 489 translations of foreign novels.<sup>2</sup> A real boom in the publication of novels, both in the original and in translation, occurred in the 1830s when: between 1830 and 1839, as many as 319 titles were published.<sup>3</sup> It seems that, in that period, the Russian public wanted to read nothing but novels; however, the greatest novelty for those readers was the change in ratio between original Russian works and those that had been translated into Russian. For the first time in the history of Russian publishing, the production of Russian novels exceeded that of translated novels. Between 1830 and 1839, 166 Russian novels came out versus just 153 translated novels. Compared to the 1820s, the original production had increased almost tenfold. The change seems impressive, considering how slowly the Russian readership had traditionally

---

1 M. N. Kufaev, *Istoriia russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (Moscow, 1927), 29.

2 By novels, here we mean fictional narratives no shorter than 96 pages (3 printer's sheets). The estimate includes the reprints of novels published earlier, but not the eighteenth-century *lubok* romances. Our estimate considers the following repertoires: *Rospis' rossiiskim knigam dlia chteniia iz biblioteki Aleksandra Smirdina, sistematicheskim poriadkom raspolozhennaia* (St. Petersburg, 1828); *Pervoe pribavlenie k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam Smirdina* (St. Petersburg, 1829); *Vtoroe pribavlenie k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam* (St. Petersburg, 1832).

3 *Vtoroe pribavlenie k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam* (1832); *Sistematicheskii reestr russkim knigam s 1831 po 1846*, edited by M. D. Ol'khin, (St. Petersburg, 1846). These figures do not include novels published in magazines.

been in changing its cultural tastes. One wonders: what was behind these figures? What were the main factors that led to this change in the Russian public's reading habits? And what cultural and ideological consequences did this transformation have? In this chapter, after examining the conditions that favored the expansion of the Russian reading public and the success of Russian novels, we will look at the process of cultural and ideological homogenization experienced by the reading public in the 1830s. Then we will analyze the opposite processes of segmentation, ideologization, and radicalization of the reading public that took place in the 1840s.

## I. THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

The success of the Russian novel in the 1830s should be framed within a context of substantial economic expansion and greater social mobility than in previous decades. After the crisis generated by Napoleon's invasion, Russia's economy—helped by the protectionist economic policy inaugurated in 1822 by the Minister of Finance, Kankrin<sup>4</sup>—seemed to grow quickly from the 1820s on. The fragmentation of landownership, a process which had intensified between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, had led to an increase in the productivity of the land.<sup>5</sup> The number of small- and medium-sized landowners increased, and they simultaneously began to have more capital than in the past. This new capital could then be spent on cultural products and leisure needs.

Significant improvements were also made in the field of commerce. Favored by the creation of a network of stable city markets and enhanced by a system of large provincial seasonal fairs, domestic trade became more common and widespread.<sup>6</sup> These improvements benefited not only the noble class but also the lower classes. Despite limited access to credit for most of the non-noble social classes and persistent difficulties in transportation (the first paved highway was built only in 1817 and a genuine railway network only appeared in the 1850s), the 1820s and 1830s represented a period of indisputable economic growth for many classes in Russia. At the same time, thanks to the improvements made to the postal service during the reigns of Catherine II and Alexander I, printed matter in general began to

---

4 W. Pintner, "Government and Industry During the Ministry of Count Kankrin, 1823-1844," *Slavic Review*, 23 (1964), 45-62; W. L. Blackwell, *The Beginning of Russian Industrialization* (Princeton, 1968), 140-144; W. Pintner, *Russian Economic Policy Under Nicholas I* (Ithaca, 1967).

5 E. S. Korchmina, I. V. Voskoboïnikov, "Moglo li izmel'chanie pomeshchich'ikh khoziaistv v kontse XVIII – nachale XIX vv. sdelat' ikh bolee proizvoditel'nymi?," in *Rus', Rossiia. Srednevekov'e i Novoe vremja* (Moscow, 2015), vol. 4, 458-464.

6 Cf. Blackwell, *The Beginning of Russian Industrialization*, 72-95.

spread more widely throughout the empire, regularly reaching not only the provincial capitals, but also the centers of the most remote districts.<sup>7</sup>

This development favored some limited social mobility at various levels: the richest merchants aspired to the ranks and privileges of the nobility; the most enterprising among the townspeople (*meshchanstvo*) often entered the merchants' third guild;<sup>8</sup> not infrequently, the enfranchised peasants made money by trading and manufacturing, while the less dynamic part of the landed nobility tended to become impoverished due to the poor yield of serf labor.<sup>9</sup> In 1828, the Minister of Education, Prince Karl A. Liven, described the situation in these terms: "In Russia [...] a prosperous peasant can at any time become a merchant and often is both simultaneously [...]; the extent of the noble class is so boundless that at one end it touches the foot of the throne and at the other is almost lost in the peasantry."<sup>10</sup> And he concluded: "Every year many persons from the urban and peasant class enter the nobility after rising to officer rank in the military or the civil service."<sup>11</sup>

The improvement in the overall economic conditions of the country and the increase in social mobility were accompanied by a rapid increase in the population. Between 1796 and 1850, Russia's population nearly doubled, going from 36 million in 1796 to 69 million in 1850.<sup>12</sup> Rapid urbanization of the country occurred in parallel to this development. In just three decades, Moscow's population rose from 270,000 in 1811 to 349,000 in 1840; in the same period, that of St. Petersburg increased from 335,000 to 470,000.<sup>13</sup> This growth was mainly related to the development of trade and industry.<sup>14</sup> Aleksandr Pushkin portrays this new context of social mobility well: "Moscow, having lost its aristocratic luster, flourishes in other ways: its industry, heavily subsidized and protected, has definitely revived and developed with extraordinary energy. The merchants are getting rich and have begun to settle in the buildings that were given up by the nobles."<sup>15</sup> The

7 J. Randolph, "Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire, 1700-1850," in S. Franklin, K. Bowers (eds), *Information and Empire Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600-1850* (Cambridge, 2017), 178-179. See, for example, what an average 1830s landowner from Vladimir province, such as Andrei Chikhachev, wrote: "Those who live in the countryside, and never leave it, most likely tend to grow wild. How impatiently you wait, pacing, for the one who went out to the post office, and the more his bag is bulging with packets, the happier you feel." T. N. Golovina, "Golos iz publikii: chitatel'-sovremennik o Pushkine i Bulgarine," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 40 (1999), 11.

8 A. J. Rieber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 46-50.

9 E. Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb, 1997), 33, 67, 71-73.

10 *Ibid.*, 67.

11 *Ibid.*

12 W. B. Lincoln, *In the Vanguard of Reform: Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats, 1812-1861* (DeKalb, 1982), 34.

13 A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let* (Moscow, 1956), 90.

14 D. Brower, "Urbanization and Autocracy: Russian Urban Development in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *The Russian Review*, 42 (1983), 393-394.

15 A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 16 vols (Moscow, Leningrad, 1949), vol. 11, 247-248.

general improvement in the economic and living conditions of the most enterprising provincial landowners, merchants, and certain segments of the urban population generally resulted in more free time to devote to entertainment and cultural consumption.<sup>16</sup> The increased social mobility favored the spread of the literary tastes of the upper classes even among the middle and lower-middle classes. In 1823 the poet and former Minister I. I. Dmitriev, wrote: “In the old days, only the most educated among our aristocrats read Kheraskov, while today he is read by the most learned representatives of all classes: merchants, soldiers, servants, even sweet vendors.”<sup>17</sup>

The increase in education played an important role in the social expansion of Russian readers. Between 1808 and 1834, the total number of students in both state and religious schools increased by 74%.<sup>18</sup> These were not just the children of nobles, who at the end of the 1820s made up 55% of all the students in gymnasiums and religious schools, but also those of employees and civil servants (16%), of townspeople (*meshchane*) and artisans (8%), of merchants (6%), of the clergy (3%), and even of soldiers (2%) and peasants (2%).<sup>19</sup> The low percentage of those who had received a formal education within a scholastic institution (0.5% of the entire population) hides the fact that forms of home and family schooling still played quite an important role in the country’s literacy.<sup>20</sup> The increase in home education among the non-noble classes under Nicholas I should not be underestimated. In that period, the lower classes became increasingly aware that education was the most vital key to economic and social success, and forms of home education by paid teachers, mutual education by family members, and self-directed education became popular.<sup>21</sup> Although literacy increased at a much lower rate than the population growth as such, the range of social origin among those who learned to read in those decades significantly increased.<sup>22</sup> Among

---

16 Cf. M. Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences, 1828-1848*, PhD dissertation (Berkeley, 1999), 83-115. See also W. Bruce Lincoln, “The Daily Life of St. Petersburg Officials in the Mid Nineteenth Century,” *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, n.s. 8 (1975), 87-88.

17 Cited in V. V. Poznanskii, *Ocherk formirovaniia russkoi natsional'noi kul'tury. Pervaia polovina XIX veka* (Moscow, 1975), 58

18 A. G. Rashin, “Gramotnost’ i narodnoe obrazovanie v Rossii v XIX i nachale XX v.,” *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 37 (1951), 50.

19 Rashin, “Gramotnost’ i narodnoe obrazovanie,” 72; see also Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia*, 66-67.

20 Rashin, “Gramotnost’ i narodnoe obrazovanie,” 52.

21 Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia*, 66.

22 Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 92-96. According to Boris Mironov, at the beginning of nineteenth century literacy was highest among the nobility (84 to 87 percent), followed by the merchants (over 75 percent), then the *meshchanstvo* (townspeople), workers (*rabotnye*), and peasants. Literacy varied considerably among the diverse social groups making up the peasantry. Regional variations were also important. By the end of the eighteenth century the level of literacy among male peasants ranged from 1 to 12 percent, in 1847 it reached an average of 10 percent. By the end of eighteenth century literacy among urban dwellers ranged to approximately 20 percent, in 1847 it increased to 30 percent. See

non-nobles, those who were literate mostly lived in cities. In 1803, when the writer and journalist Nikolai Karamzin wrote in *On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia* (*O knizhnoi targovli i liubvi ko chteniiu v Rossii*) about the spread of reading among the lower classes that had taken place in previous decades, he was likely referring to the growing *urban* reading audience: “It is true that many nobles, even those who are well off, still do not get newspapers; but on the other hand the merchants, the burghers, now love to read them. The poorest people subscribe, and even the most illiterate want to find out *what do they write from foreign lands!*”<sup>23</sup>

As it has been convincingly shown, the expansion of the Russian readership, especially in the 1830s and 1840s, was mainly due to the spread of reading among social classes such as small provincial landowners, merchants, clerks, and, if only partly, townspeople.<sup>24</sup> This is confirmed by an attentive observer of the time, the journalist and writer Tadeusz Bułharin, known in Russia as Faddei Bulgarin. Bulgarin was on friendly terms with some of the major booksellers in St. Petersburg and, in 1826, he prepared for the government a detailed profile of the Russian reading audience that was meant to improve the use of censorship. In his report, the journalist accurately identified the categories that made up what he called the “middle class” of readers (*srednee sostoianie nashei publiki*):

In Russia, it consists of: a) well-off nobles working as civil servants, and landowners residing in the countryside; b) nobles without means, educated in state institutions; c) state officials and all those we call employees (*prikaznye*); d) rich traders, entrepreneurs, and even townspeople (*meshchane*). This middle class, which is the most numerous and mostly educates itself through readings and exchanges of ideas, constitutes the so-called Russian public. They read a lot, mostly in Russian, closely follow literary successes, and perceive the favorable or difficult course of literature.<sup>25</sup>

It is interesting that, in his description, Bulgarin divided the Russian public not so much according to social categories but to their specific level of education. Moreover, after having described the education and reading habits of the middle class and two other groups of Russian readers—the “rich and influential people” and the “scholars and writers”—he empha-

---

B. N. Mironov, “The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries,” *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 31, 2 (Summer, 1991), 234-242.

23 N. M. Karamzin, “On The Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” in N. M. Karamzin, *Selected Prose*, trans. Henry M. Nebel (Evanston, 1969), 186.

24 Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*.

25 A. I. Reitblat (ed.), *Vidok Figliarin. Pis'ma i agenturnye zapiski F. V. Bulgarina v III otdele-nie* (Moscow, 1998), 46.

sized that the passion for reading was also spreading among the lower class (*nizhnee sostoianie*) of the Russian public. This class, he wrote, “reads a lot” and “consists of small clerks (*melkie pod’iachie*), literate peasants and townspeople (*meshchane*), country priests and the clergy in general, and finally the important class of the Old Believers (*raskol’niki*).”<sup>26</sup> In general, Bulgarin’s report seems to suggest that it would be wrong to establish direct connections between reading habits and social class or estates.<sup>27</sup> A less impressionistic confirmation of Bulgarin’s observations comes from the first census on education carried out in one of the Russian governorates, Saratov, eighteen years later. According to data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in 1844 the percentage of literate people in the province of Saratov among the non-noble male population was 4%.<sup>28</sup> Within this group of literate people, the majority were merchants (42.1%), followed by domestic serfs (*dvorovnye liudi*) (34.4%), and townspeople (*meshchane*) (28.7%).<sup>29</sup> The peasants were of course a minority, but the mere fact that there were some who could read, and that they could help more illiterate peasants become acquainted with books and reading, is striking.<sup>30</sup> In that year, throughout Russia, some 90,000 students between state and appanage serfs had attended village state schools, while in 1853 their number reached 153,000.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the fact that there were serfs in the 1820s and 1830s who could not only read but even read novels and literary works, is confirmed by the lists of subscribers to some of these works.<sup>32</sup>

One thing that certainly helped enhance the success of the novel among the new Russian readers in this period was the simple fact that they had

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>27</sup> We also have testimonies of Siberian peasant readers in the first half of the nineteenth century. See A. F. Volodkovich, “Lichnye biblioteki i krug chteniia soslovnykh ‘nizov’ Sibiri (pervaia polovina XIX v.),” in *Knizhnoe delo v Sibiri (konets XVIII-nachalo XX veka)* (Novosibirsk, 1991), 29-32.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. “Sostoianie gramotnosti mezhdru kupechestvom i zhiteliam podatnogo sostoianiiia v Saratovskoi Gubernii,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva Vnutrennikh del*, 14 (1846), 525-528. Cf. A. V. Blium, “Massovoe chtenie v russkoi provintsii kontsa XVIII – pervoi chetverti XIX v.,” in I. E. Barenbaum (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad, 1973), I, 42; A. I. Reitblat, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul’ture pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow, 2001), 14.

<sup>29</sup> I. M. Bogdanov, *Gramotnost’ i obrazovanie v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii v SSSR* (Moscow, 1964), 20 (data from *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, 14 (1846), 525-528).

<sup>30</sup> Crown serfs (*udel’nye krestiane*) made up 5.6% of the non-noble literate population, while state serfs constituted 2.7%, and those who worked for local landowners 1.2%.

<sup>31</sup> P. Miliukov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul’tury. Ocherk sed’moi, Shkola i obrazovanie* (St. Petersburg, 1899) 342. A discussion of such data may likewise be found in A. Besançon, *Éducation et société en Russie dans le second tiers du XIXe siècle* (Paris, La Haye, 1974), 19-20. State serfs were subjects of the Ministry of State Property and contributed to the treasury in the form of quit-rent. Appanage serfs (or crown serfs) belonged to the royal family, to whom they paid rent and bore service obligations, and were subjects of the Ministry of the Imperial Court

<sup>32</sup> See Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 225 and V. E. Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow, 2002), 211.



easier access to books. Having enjoyed its first heyday in the last decades of the eighteenth century (i.e. during Novikov's era), book production in Russia suffered a significant setback under Paul I and, more broadly, in the first years of the nineteenth century. However, it began to grow anew during the reign of Alexander I: from 1805 to 1825, the total number of published works quadrupled.<sup>33</sup> However, the most significant changes, especially regarding the production of Russian-language works, took place during Nicholas I's reign. In particular, the 1830s saw some major improvements in the efficiency of the book market, specifically in the production and distribution of books. Thanks to lower production costs compared to Europe, and to the country's new economic dynamism, Russia's book prices dropped significantly in the 1830s even as printing press output increased and the quality of the editions improved.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, book distribution benefited from the consolidation of various institutions that promoted more consistent and ubiquitous circulation of literary works; these included provincial public libraries, circulating libraries, and thick journals (*tolstye zhurnaly*).<sup>35</sup> Structural factors, such as the greater availability of capital, better organized trade, and an improved postal service, combined with personal initiatives (like those of certain talented booksellers such as Aleksandr Smirdin) to play an important role in the spread of reading.<sup>36</sup>

Smirdin's role in these transformations should not be underestimated, as his contemporaries correctly observed.<sup>37</sup> In St. Petersburg, the young bookseller applied the same market strategies employed for popular literature, which he had mastered during his apprenticeship in Moscow, to the

33 Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 72.

34 According to Grech, in 1825 publishing in Russia cost one third of what it did in Paris; S. Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin. Literaturnye dokhody Pushkina*, (Leningrad, 1930), 21-22. On the decrease in the price of books, cf. A. Meynieux, *Pouchkine homme de lettres et la littérature professionnelle en Russie* (Paris, 1966), 481-489. On the general improvement of the quality of books, see Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 125-129.

35 Meynieux, *Pouchkine homme de lettres*, 466-518; Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 136-144; A. I. Reitblat, in *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009), 38-72. On provincial public libraries, see Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 181-185; K. I. Abramov, *Gorodskie publichnye biblioteki Rossii: Istoriia stanovleniia (1830-nachalo 1860-kh gg.)* (Moscow, 2001); S. Smith-Peter, *Imagining Russian Regions. Subnational Identity and Civil Society in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Leiden, 2017), 68-84.

36 The importance that the increase in available capital had for the development of the Russian book market has been correctly underlined by Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 144. On the improvements in the postal service, see J. Randolph, "Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire, 1700-1850," 178-179.

37 On Smirdin, see T. Grits, V. Trenin, M. Nikitin, *Slovesnost' i kommertsii (Knizhnaia lavka A. F. Smirdina)*, pod red. V. B. Shklovskogo, B. M. Eikhenbauma, (Moscow, 1929); N. P. Smirnov-Sokol'skii, *Knizhnaia lavka A. F. Smirdina* (Moscow, 1957); L. S. Kishkin, *Chestnyi, dobryi, prostodushnyi... Trudy i dni Aleksandra Filippovicha Smirdina* (Moscow, 1995).

narrower market of the so-called high literature.<sup>38</sup> Smirdin distinguished himself by stimulating the dynamism of the Russian book market in many ways, improving both its production and its distribution. First, as a publisher, he contributed significantly to lowering the prices of high literature, thus attracting large portions of new readers who were formerly used to reading mainly a limited repertoire of low-quality texts, such as calendars, psalters, books of hours, collections of songs (*pesenniki*), dreambooks (*sonniki*), and *lubok* romances.<sup>39</sup> Before his intervention, which began to affect the Russian book market in the early 1830s, high literature was prohibitively expensive. Reducing such prices considerably, Smirdin allowed many more people to buy and expand their choice of books. The greater demand and higher profits meant that he could significantly increase print runs and, consequently, his general turnover. In turn, the higher income enabled him to raise the fees he paid the authors, prompting them to write more, and in turn promoting, even among high society literati, the professionalization of belles-lettres. At the same time, by improving the quality of editions and opening a luxurious bookshop in one of St. Petersburg's most prominent neighborhoods, Smirdin increased the prestige of book ownership and of literature as such among the new readers. As an experienced bookseller, he was able to make book circulation more dynamic by increasing both the quantity of copies and the number of titles in circulation. For example, like Novikov, he also gave commission-free books to other booksellers; as a result, the books available to the public in bookshops grew in number, and their circulation grew more rapid. As recalled by a witness of the time,

In the 1830s, the release of a new novel (especially by Zagoskin) or some other work was a big event. Typically, when these novelties were published, booksellers—with the exception of Smirdin—were decidedly stingy and did not buy a sufficient number of copies: if 200 copies of a book were necessary, they ordered 10-25, and kept them hidden under the counter for *their clients*, without displaying them on the shelves for their colleagues to see. They did so, in order not to show them to their competitors, and they would not sell them to each other even at full price. This definitely curbed the trade. At times, it happened that, when a new book was published, booksellers did not buy it immediately, but only after customers repeatedly asked for it. Only then did they decide to buy a dozen, but by then the book

---

38 Grits, Trenin, Nikitin, *Slovesnost' i kommertsia*, 239-240.

39 On the reading of dreambooks in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see F. Wigzell, *Reading Russian Fortunes. Print Cultures, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765* (Cambridge, 1998), 65-87.

was selling slowly and they eventually complained that the demand was low.<sup>40</sup>

By selling books commission-free and keeping a large number of books in his shop for the benefit of his customers, Smirdin stimulated popular interest in books and the circulation of works.



1. Aleksandr Smirdin's bookshop. A detail from the cover of *Novosel'e*, vol. 2. 1834.

As one contemporary wrote following Smirdin's death, "Smirdin's greatest merit was that he lowered the price of books, considered literary works as capital, and established a solid link between literature and the book market."<sup>41</sup> As a result, the book trade under Nicholas I was characterized by "better dissemination of more copies, at lower prices, and available at a greater number of access points."<sup>42</sup>

In particular, the changes triggered by Smirdin's trade policy resulted in a great increase in the production of Russian-language books vis-à-vis foreign-language ones. In the first decade of the century, cities like Derpt (Tartu), Riga, Vilnius, Grodno (Hrodna) and Mitava (Jelgava) in the Baltic or Western provinces of the empire often saw their printing presses work more than those in St. Petersburg or Moscow, and they printed a great amount of books in languages other than Russian.<sup>43</sup> The two Russian capitals also had

<sup>40</sup> *Materialy dlia istorii russkoi knizhnoi torgovli* (St. Petersburg, 1879), 8.

<sup>41</sup> Cit. in M. V. Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh: ocherk istorii knigoizdatel'stva i knigotorgovli, 1800-1917 gody*, (Moscow, Leningrad, 1931), 75.

<sup>42</sup> Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 169.

<sup>43</sup> Kufaev, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 52-53.

printing presses that published books in French and German.<sup>44</sup> According to Miranda Remnek, in the first years of the century, books published in French and German (including magazines) represented a third of Russia's entire book production.<sup>45</sup> Just thirty years later, when Smirdin's low-price commercial strategy began to affect the market, Russian-language works (not including journals) represented about 92% of the total production.<sup>46</sup>

One of the most important factors which influenced the increased production of Russian-language texts was the larger number of orders coming from the provinces. A witness of the time who was particularly surprised by the arrival of new readers from the provinces recalled:

The book trade in St. Petersburg and Moscow in this period, i.e. between 1829-1830 and almost until 1840, was extremely lively. The bookshops were always full of customers. In addition to local buyers, there also began to appear aristocrats and senior civil servants (*liudi vysshei administratsii*) who, until then, had never picked up Russian books; in winter, large numbers of landowners came and bought large amounts of books every time.<sup>47</sup>

The same witness recalled how the best customers were not neither aristocrats nor merchants, but rather those very landowners from the provinces:

At the time, the best customers were considered to be the landowners from the province, they were those who paid better, whether they came to Petersburg in the winter or ordered books directly from the countryside. Evidently, serfdom gave them enough resources to satisfy their passion for reading. Most novellas (*povesti*), novels, and in general the so-called *belles-lettres* works were bought by landowners.<sup>48</sup>

At this point, some questions arise: how much did novels cost in the 1830s? And who could afford them? In the mid 1820s, novels produced in several volumes were rather expensive, varying between 10 and 30 rubles,

---

44 Cf. V. Rjéoutski, N. Speranskaya, "The Francophone Press in Russia: A Cultural Bridge and an Instrument of Propaganda," in D. Offord, L. Ryazanova-Clarke, V. Rjéoutski, G. Argent (eds.), *French and Russian in Imperial Russia: Language Use among the Russian Elite* (Edinburgh, 2015), I, 84-102.

45 Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 122, 448-449.

46 *Ibid.*, 122, 449. In a mere five years, from 1835 to 1840, the annual production of books in Russian went from 708 to 867 titles. Literary works, which made up most of Russia's book production, increased even more, from 185 in 1835 to 301 in 1840. See Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii*, 66-67.

47 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi trgovli i izdatel'skoi deiatel'nosti Glazunovykh za sto let 1782-1882* (St. Petersburg, 1883), 62.

48 *Ibid.*, 55.

and in exceptional cases even 50 or 100.<sup>49</sup> In 1824, the Russian translations of fashionable novels such as *Guy Mannering*, *Kenilworth* and *Old Mortality* by Walter Scott cost 10, 15, and 20 rubles respectively.<sup>50</sup> Judging from the mid-1820s catalogue of one of St. Petersburg's booksellers, the average price of novels by Ducray-Duminil was 18 rubles, those by Ann Radcliffe 14, by Kotzebue 13, by Walter Scott 11, and by Madame de Genlis and August Lafontaine 9 rubles.<sup>51</sup> As for one-volume novels, their price could range between 1 and 5 rubles.<sup>52</sup> Of course, prices could vary greatly, depending on the novelty of the work or the place where it was sold (big city or province, town bookshop, market or fair, etc.). For example, according to Belinskii, in 1829, many books cost less in Moscow than in St. Petersburg, and in the former city, 100 rubles could buy books that had a nominal price of 500 rubles.<sup>53</sup> In general, according to Ksenofont Polevoi, the St. Petersburg editions were considered finer and were decidedly more expensive: "In the end, the public began to believe that only St. Petersburg books were good. This belief was also confirmed by the opinions of the booksellers and traveling salesmen who were keener to buy St. Petersburg books and were happy to pay more for them, saying 'This is what we pay for' and pointing to the magic word 'St. Petersburg' on the title page."<sup>54</sup>

If we compare the novels' nominal prices with the income of non-noble readers, it may seem that many of these works were not accessible to this public. During this period, the average monthly salary of a civil servant was around 60-80 rubles; a ninth-class junior employee (*tituliarnyi sovetnik*) received around 30 rubles per month and, when he retired, his salary fell to 18 rubles.<sup>55</sup> With such salaries, it is not surprising that, for many, the volumes of Krylov's tales published by Smirdin, which sold for 4 rubles in 1830, were more attractive than the 14-ruble Ann Radcliffe novels. In fact, numerous testimonies confirm that those who paid the full price of a book were only a small part of its readership, and there were many ways of getting hold of novels at reduced prices: one could turn to reading libraries or markets, and it was even possible to rent books from peddlers who sold them door to door (see GOLOVINA, "Belles-Lettres and the literary interests of middling landowners," in the present volume).

---

49 Meynieux, *Pouchkine homme de lettres*, 483. Unless otherwise stated, all the prices indicated in this chapter are understood to be in assignation rubles and not in silver rubles. In 1838 one assignation ruble was worth 28.6 silver kopecks.

50 Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 19.

51 Cf. Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 452.

52 Meynieux, *Pouchkine homme de lettres*, 483.

53 Cited in Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 17.

54 N. Polevoi, *Materialy po istorii literatury i zhurnalistiki 30kh godov XIX veka* (Leningrad, 1934), 334.

55 Cf. D. I. Raskin, "Zhalovanie na gosudarstvennoi sluzhbe," in *Russkie pisateli. 1800-1917. Biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1992), vol. 2, 609 and Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 19.

The significant decrease in book prices promoted by Smirdin widened the range of readers' social origins; it encouraged even those who usually went for *lubok* literature editions, which cost a few dozens kopecks, to read contemporary Russian novels. Ownership of a novel, in the editions launched by Smirdin, thus became a symbol of cultural prestige that new readers might acquire. This also had a significant impact in reorienting the publishers' preferences with respect to certain literary genres, and thereby causing discontent among the already well-established writers. In July 1832, Pushkin wrote: "The barbarity of our literary market drives me mad. Smirdin has undertaken all kinds of commitments, he has committed himself to a large number of novels and such things, and he will not come to terms for any reason: 'tragedies do not sell,' he says, in his technical jargon."<sup>56</sup> At the same time, as Pushkin noted, the low price policy could only apply to fairy tales and novels, which already benefited from a certain degree of circulation, but certainly not to poetry: "The price is determined not by the writer, but by the bookseller. The demand for poetry is limited. Only those who can pay 5 rubles for a seat at the theater can afford it."<sup>57</sup> In 1833, 44 volumes of poetry and 28 plays were published, compared to no fewer than 124 new novels; and in the following years, the ratio increased even more in favor of novels.<sup>58</sup>

An important contributing factor to the greater diffusion of the novel at this time was the new circulating or lending libraries which, having been increasing in number since the 1830s, were now not only in capitals but also small provincial towns.<sup>59</sup> Public libraries like St. Petersburg's still played a marginal role in the spread of the novel, and the many provincial fairs and city markets (the Gostinyi Dvor and Apraksin Dvor in Petersburg, the one at Sucharevskaiia bashnia and the Smolensk market in Moscow), which often also sold used books, could not always get access the latest titles. However, private lending libraries allowed people to read the latest books—especially novels, newspapers, and magazines—without having to pay the full price of the work or even an annual subscription. The subscription prices of the circulating libraries reflect the kind of audiences that could access them. The 1828 terms of subscription to Smirdin's library reveal that an annual subscription cost 30 rubles and a monthly one cost 5 rubles; to these, one should add an extra fee if one wished to consult the magazines (20 rubles

<sup>56</sup> Letter to M. P. Pogodin of 11 July 1832, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 14, 27.

<sup>57</sup> Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 139. According to Pushkin in particular, during the 1830s, Russian poetry did not meet the interest of a large part of the female reading audience. On the reasons for this lack of interest among female readers, see A.S. Pushkin, "Otryvki iz pisem, myslei i zamechaniï," in Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, XI, 52.

<sup>58</sup> Kufaev, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 273-274.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. A. I. Reitblat, *Biblioteki dlia chteniia i ikh chitateli*, in Idem, in *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 54-72.

for a year, 3 for one month), plus a fixed deposit.<sup>60</sup> The success of circulating libraries is traditionally associated, even in Europe, with the success of the novel as a genre.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, even Smirdin's Russian contemporaries perceived the novel as one of the genres that was most frequently requested in this type of library: "Placing on the shelves as many novels as possible, and then 500 to 600 other books; advertising the library, and printing an alphabetic list of several thousand books: that is called opening a circulating library" wrote one contemporary.<sup>62</sup> In fact, when analyzing the book orders made by booksellers in the 1830s, one notices not only that they ordered more novels than any other genre, but also that the quantity of books destined for their circulating libraries significantly increased. For example, in 1831 Smirdin ordered of one of the most anticipated novels by Bulgarin, requesting as many as 300 copies for his bookshop and 50 copies for his circulating library.<sup>63</sup> That the number of copies for sale was bigger in absolute terms than that of copies to be allocated to the lending library should not mislead us in regard to the spread of the work. If sold, a copy could circulate and be read by a limited number of people in addition to the owner; but the exposure of such a private copy was minimal compared to a copy destined for a circulating library, which would pass through dozens and dozens of hands. As evidenced by a Ukrainian subscriber to Smirdin's library, A. Ia. Starozhenko, in 1832 the books he received were always extremely tattered: "They always send me books... that are so dilapidated that it is terrible to unwrap them, for fear of tearing away pages that were turned into tinder by a multitude of readers."<sup>64</sup>

Another element that consolidated the Russian book trade, setting the stage for the further spread of the novel, was the success in that period of some composite editorial formats, such as literary almanacs and thick journals (*tolstye zhurnaly*), which ensured a broader and more regular circulation of literary texts and helped consolidate trade mechanisms of literary production. The period of the greatest popularity of literary almanacs (i.e. between the mid-twenties and the mid-thirties) marked the passage of high literature from a sort of amateur circulation into a commercial system.<sup>65</sup>

---

60 The existence of this deposit raises some doubts as to the effective democratization of reading allowed by circulating libraries: Smirdin's library required the entire price of the book or 25 rubles as a deposit. It is probable, though, that in less prestigious or in provincial circulating libraries the deposit could have been lower; cf. *Rospis' rossiiskim knigam dlia chteniia iz biblioteki Aleksandra Smirdina*, I-II.

61 Cf. I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London, 1972), 47.

62 Cited in Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 179.

63 F. V. Bulgarin, *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin* (St. Petersburg, 1831), vol. 4, 327.

64 Cf. [A. Ia. Storozhenko], "Mysli Malorossiianina," *Syn otechestva*, 25, 1 (1832), 48, cited in Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 179.

65 Cf. Miranda Beaven Remnek, "Russian Literary Almanacs of the 1820s and Their Legacy," *Publishing History*, 17 (1985), 65-86; A. I. Reitblat, "Literaturnyi al'manakh 1820-1830kh gg. kak sotsiokul'turnaia forma," in *Idem, Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 70-81.

The popularity of almanacs also significantly benefited novelists and readers of novels. Almanacs helped reveal the commercial potential of literature in the new economic and social context of 1820s Russia, establishing a remuneration system for authors; at the same time, almanacs made many new readers familiar with other forms of prose, such as novellas (*povesti*), with which they often were unfamiliar and which ‘prepared’ them for the novel. The case of Aleksandr Bestuzhev (pseudonym Marlinskii) is exemplary. He was not only the publisher of one of the most successful almanacs of the time, *Poliarnaia zvezda* (*The North Star*, 1822-1823), which kickstarted the almanacs’ fashionability and became the first to pay its authors significant fees; Bestuzhev was also the author of tales (*povesti*) that achieved great success in the early thirties, paving the way for the Russian novel.

In the mid 1830s, the success of some thick journals, such as *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (*The Library for Reading*) further consolidated the book market, limiting the risks for publishers while simultaneously allowing readers easier access to the works of the most popular authors—and foremost among whom were the novelists.<sup>66</sup> While at the beginning of the nineteenth century, journal subscribers were relatively few (between 600 and 1200 on average), in the second half of the 1830s, subscribers to *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* reached somewhere between 5,000 and 7,000 in a very short time.<sup>67</sup> Thanks to the annual subscription system, these customers guaranteed publishers a secure income, which in turn allowed them to pursue contributions from the most popular authors. Thus, even those readers from the most remote provinces of the empire, who previously could only count on what was offered to them by street vendors or at local fairs, could receive a regular and guaranteed supply of texts to read, at a fixed price, and which arrived on time and offered varied and high-quality content. Smirdin, who financed and published *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, made the punctuality of its composition and the ubiquity of its distribution one of the main reasons for its success. The spread of thick journals in the provinces was guaranteed by a truly widespread postal service.<sup>68</sup> Here is how Belinskii explained, in 1835, the success of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*:

---

66 Cf. L. Ia. Ginzburg, “Biblioteka dlia chteniia v 30-kh godakh. O. I. Senkovskii,” in *Ocherki po istorii russkoi zhurnalistiki i kritiki*, vol 1: XVIII vek i pervaiia polovina XIX veka (Leningrad, 1950), vol. 2, 324-341; W. M. Todd III, “Periodicals in Literary Life of the Early Nineteenth Century,” in D. A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 1997), 53-59; A. I. Reitblat, “Tolstyi zhurnal i ego publika,” in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 38-41.

67 On the readers of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, cf. L. Ia. Ginzburg, “Biblioteka dlia chteniia v 30-kh godakh. O. I. Senkovskii,” in *Ocherki po istorii russkoi zhurnalistiki i kritiki*, vol 1: XVIII vek i pervaiia polovina XIX veka, (Leningrad, 1950), 327. On the number of readers, cf. N. I. Mordovchenko, “Zhurnalistika dvadtsatykh i tridtsatykh godov,” in *Istoriia russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 1953), vol. 6, 594, 608; M. Frazier, *Romantic Encounters. Writers, Readers and the “Library for Reading”* (Stanford, 2007), 23.

68 Cf. J. Randolph, “Communication and Obligation: The Postal System of the Russian Empire, 1700-1850,” 155.



I said that the secret of the long-lasting success of ‘Biblioteka’ consists in the fact that this magazine is a *provincial* magazine par excellence [...]. Imagine the family of a landowner from the steppes, a family that reads everything that comes their way from cover to cover. They have not had the time yet to read the last page [...], when along comes the next issue, just as full and talkative, speaking one and many languages at the same time. And what great variety indeed one finds in this magazine! The daughter reads Mr. Ershov, Mr. Gogniev and Mr. Strugovshchik’s verses, and Mr. Zagoskin, Mr. Ushakov, Mr. Panaev, Mr. Kalashnikov and Mr. Masal’skii’s *povesti*; the son, a member of the new generation, reads Timofeev’s verses and Baron Brambeus’s *povesti*. The father reads the articles on the two- or three-field rotation systems, on the various ways to fertilize the land, and the mother on how to cure tuberculosis and dye fabrics.<sup>69</sup>

Belinskii’s description deftly captures one of the fundamental features that characterized the Russian editorial system of the 1830s, when the readership rapidly expanded: an “encyclopedic inclusiveness.”<sup>70</sup> Even as a single product, almanacs, novels, and thick journals, tended to meet the diverse cultural needs of the new provincial reader. They were able to speak to the new public in “one and many languages at the same time.” As Adam Smith had shown, in restricted market situations, in order to meet his own needs, every worker must carry out a large number of tasks.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, in a tightly restricted literary market, such as that of the Russian provincial landowner, those formats had several functions.<sup>72</sup> From the point of view of an isolated and/or not particularly wealthy reader, maximum satisfaction corresponds to the consumption of only one editorial format capable of meeting multiple cultural needs. The editorial formats preferred to the general public in the 1830s were not ‘specialized’ literary forms but ‘multi-purpose’ ones. Karamzin had already noticed this back in 1803 when, reflecting on the novels of his time, he wrote: “contemporary novels are rich in all types of information. An author, having taken it upon himself to write three or four volumes, resorts to every expediency, and even to all branches of knowledge, to fill them: Now he describes some kind of American island, exhausting Büsching; now he explains the characteristics of local plants, consulting

69 V. G. Belinskii, “*Nichto o nichem, ili otchet g. izdateliu ‘Teleskopa’ za poslednee polugodie*” (1836), in Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols (Moscow, 1953-1959), vol. 2, 20.

70 Todd, “Periodicals in Literary Life of the Early Nineteenth Century,” 55.

71 See chapter 3 of *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*: “The Division of Labour is limited by the extent of the Market,” in A. Smith, *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith* (Oxford, 1979), vol. 2, 31-36.

72 On this, cf. D. Rebekkini, “Russkie istoricheskie romany v 30kh gg XIX veka,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 34 (1998), 421-426.

Bomare; thus, the reader learns both geography and natural history.”<sup>73</sup> The editorial format of the thick journal, which dominated the late 1830s, perfectly corresponded to the multiple needs of the new provincial reader.<sup>74</sup> At the same time, this editorial format could not but influence the literary genres that it incorporated, foremost among them the novel. If in the early thirties there was a real boom of multiple-volume novels, the emergence of thick journals during the mid-thirties precipitated other trends: the size of novels was reduced, certain elements of the context shrank (the geographical descriptions, the historical context, etc.), plots changed, etc.<sup>75</sup> In 1841 Belinskii wrote: “today, instead of the old, much sought-after four volumes, novels generally come out in one or two slim little books, printed in large characters, or, if they fear that they will not find any readers, they stretch them out over the pages of five or six issues of a *tolsty zhurnal*.”<sup>76</sup> An observer of the publishing market of the time noticed that the decrease in the sales of multiple-volume novels of the early 1840s “can be attributed, to some extent, to the creation and success of the monthly *tolstye zhurnaly*, which amply incorporated all kinds of literature.”<sup>77</sup>

The great success of the novel in 1830s Russia, however, was aided not only by important changes in the book market and in the Russian publishing system. New cultural and ideological factors were no less important in promoting the wide circulation of Russian novels among the Russian public. Among these, we might count Russians’ widespread developing interest in the history of their country. The events of the preceding French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic campaigns stirred in people throughout Europe a new interest in the history of their nations. Russia’s 1812 victory against Napoleon and the triumphant 1813-1815 Russian campaigns in Europe awakened—across all classes, albeit to varying degrees—a surge of patriotic pride in Russian society, a temporary refusal of foreign cultural influences, and a new curiosity for national history and the origins of their native greatness. Russian readers could only partly satisfy their interest in the most recent historical events and their need to make sense of them.<sup>78</sup> During the 1810s, memoirs on Russian history were few; they dealt mostly with the Napoleonic campaigns and were published exclusively in expensive magazines.<sup>79</sup> The commercial success of the first volumes of Nikolai Karamzin’s *History of the Russian State (Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo)*, pub-

73 Karamzin, “On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia,” 189.

74 On thick journals and their audience in the 1830s, cf. A. I. Reitblat, *Tolsty zhurnal i ego publika*, in Idem, *Ot Boya k Bal'montu*, 38-53.

75 On the decrease in the number of pages in Russian novels in the mid 1830s, cf. Kufaeu, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 274.

76 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 186.

77 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi trgovli*, 79-80.

78 A. G. Tartakovskii, *Russkaia memuaristika XVIII-pervoi poloviny XIX v.: ot rukopisi k knige* (Moscow, 1991), 135-221.

79 *Ibid.*, 186.

lished in 1818, was an important indicator not only of the public's interest in its national history, but also in the reading of prose narratives. The first eight volumes of the first edition had a considerable (for the time) print run of 3000 copies, while the then-average print run of historical works typically ranged between 300 and 1200 copies.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, despite being sold at the considerable price of 50 rubles, the first volumes of Karamzin's *History* were sold out within two months. Karamzin's prose, with its simple language and plain but compelling style, was immediately appreciated by the public. Shortly thereafter, the St. Petersburg bookseller Slenin reached an agreement with the author regarding the preparation and printing of a new, corrected edition.<sup>81</sup> Although in the following years the remaining tomes did not enjoy the same success, the news of Karamzin's earnings spread widely throughout Russian society, and set an interesting precedent in the history of the Russian publishing market. To Pushkin's eyes, it was precisely that work which initiated the "Smirdin period" of Russian literature, i.e. the successful age of Russian novels. In 1830 Pushkin wrote:

Ten years ago, a very limited number of amateurs were concerned with literature. It was a noble and delightful kind of occupation, but not a large-scale activity yet. Readers were too few. The book market was limited to some translations of foreign novels, popular booklets on the interpretation of dreams, and collections of songs. A man like Karamzin, who has had an important influence on Russian culture and has dedicated his life solely to scientific study, provided the first example of the economic benefits deriving from the literature business.<sup>82</sup>

In fact, given the prices of the first editions of his *History*—the first was 50 rubles, the second 87 rubles, while in the provinces the price of his work with its subsequent volumes could reach 100 rubles—it is evident that the book could initially circulate only among very wealthy readers.<sup>83</sup> Yet judging from the subscriptions, the work's circulation was geographically broad, reaching even remote Siberian cities such as Irkutsk and Omsk.<sup>84</sup> Only with later editions (especially the fourth edition, which was designed by Smirdin between 1833 and 1835 as an 'economic' one with a small number of notes and priced at 30 rubles) was a great increase in readership possible—even among

---

<sup>80</sup> V. P. Kozlov, *"Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo" v otsenkakh sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1989), 21.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>82</sup> A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 16 vols. (Moscow, Leningrad, 1937-1959), vol. 14, 252-253.

<sup>83</sup> Kozlov, *"Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo" v otsenkakh sovremennikov*, 27.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

non-noble readers.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, from the 1830s and especially from the 1840s onward, Russian memoirs began to embrace the entirety of Russian history more broadly, and the publication of memoirs as such became more frequent.<sup>86</sup> Russian memoirs enhanced the success of the Russian novel within the wider Russian society, making readers more acquainted with realistic narratives and war prose. Often, those who in that period read novels also read memoirs.<sup>87</sup> In the same period, history books (especially biographies of the great heroes of Russian history, like Peter the Great, Suvorov, Kutuzov, or of Napoleon) represented a not insignificant portion of the Russian book market (between 7-14%, depending on the source).<sup>88</sup> It is likely that for many of the new readers, who were used to chivalric romances with marked fantastic elements, the new Russian novels—especially the historical ones—answered the same type of interest that had led them to read memoirs and historical biographies. Reflecting on the success of historical novels in the thirties, Pushkin observed: “the images of our past, no matter how weak and unfaithful, have an inexplicable charm on our imagination, which is oppressed by the monotony of the present, the ordinary.”<sup>89</sup> For Pushkin, and other critics with him, there was but a fine line between the historical memoir and historical fiction.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, at this time, for many readers the distinction between a memoir, a historical biography, and a novel would be all but imperceptible. Novels themselves not infrequently came in the form of fictional memoirs. Thus, in 1848 Belinskii, noting the continuity between memoirs and contemporary novel, wrote: “Memoirs, when they are skillfully written, are something like the furthest edge of the novel of which they are the conclusion.”<sup>91</sup>

## 2. SUCCESSFUL RUSSIAN NOVELS OF THE 1830S AND THEIR READERS

At the end of the 1820s, coinciding with the great success of Walter Scott's novels, the Russian novel likewise began to show signs of a strong commercial potential. In 1829, Faddei Bulgarin published *Ivan Vyzhigin*, a satirical

85 Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 171.

86 Tartakovskii, *Russkaia memuaristika*, 186.

87 On the joint reading of novels and memoirs, cf. D. Rebekini, “V. A. Zhukovskii i frantsuzskie memuari pri dvore Nikolaiia I (1828-1837). Kontekst chteniia i ego interpretatsiia,” in *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu*, III (Tartu, 2004), 229-253. Cf. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 98.

88 Cf. R. N. Kleimenova, *Knizhnaia Moskva v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1991), 29-32; Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 450.

89 Cf. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 92.

90 See, for example, what O. Senkovskii writes in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 1834, vol. 2, section 5, 14-15. Also cf. *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 1834, vol. 4, sect. 2, 19; 1834, vol. 5, sect. 2, 109; 1835, vol. 13, sect. 2, 63-64.

91 V. G. Belinskii, “Vzgliad na russkuiu literaturu za 1847,” Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol 10, 316.

and picaresque novel considered to be “Russia’s first best-seller.”<sup>92</sup> At the time, Bulgarin was a journalist already well known to the Russian public, and he was especially esteemed as the author of popular feuilletons. Along with Nikolai Grech, he controlled a significant share of the news media. Not only did he, with Grech, run a reputable magazine like the *Syn otechestva* (*Son of the Fatherland*), which had merged with another important historical journal, *Severnnyi arkhiv* (*Northern Archive*); he also edited the most popular Russian newspaper, *Severnaia pchela* (*The Northern Bee*).<sup>93</sup> A few years earlier, Bulgarin journalist had realized that literature could be a very useful weapon in shaping public opinion, as he proved in his essay on censorship and the Russian public, and was rightly convinced that, at that moment, the novel could be the most effective instrument for this task. It was no accident that he had his first novel printed by Smirdin in 2000 copies (or, according to other sources, in 3000 or 4000 copies) instead of the usual 1200. The success of his first novel, which was advertised in his journal prior to its release, was immediate: all the copies were sold out in just three weeks.<sup>94</sup> His novel was republished in a second edition that very year, and the following year saw a third edition. According to Nikolai Grech, it sold 7000 copies in two years.<sup>95</sup> To many observers, it was clear that the Russian novel’s time had come.

In terms of literary genre, *Ivan Vyzhigin* looked back to the rich picaresque tradition, especially the “high” middle-class model made popular in France by Alain René Lesage.<sup>96</sup> If the Spanish founders of the genre were less known in Russia, then Lesage’s *Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane* (1715-1732) was very popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, as proven by its nine Russian editions published between 1754 and 1812.<sup>97</sup> A first attempt at the Russification of this genre was made at the beginning of the nineteenth century by Vasilii Nareznyi with his *The Russian Gil Blas, or The Adventures of Prince Gavriila Sionovich Chistiakov* (*Rossiiskii Zhilblaz, ili Pokhzhdeniia kniazia Gavriily Sionovicha Chistiakova*) (1812-1813). In his novel Nareznyi denounced, through coarse and naturalistic description, the corruption of the Russian landowners’ world and the many vices of Russian society. Nareznyi’s novel, however, had a very limited circula-

92 R. LeBlanc, *The Russianization of Gil Blas: A Study in Literary Appropriation*, (Columbus, Ohio, 1986), 146.

93 On the newspaper *Severnaia pchela*, cf. N. Schleifman, “A Russian Daily Newspaper and its New Readership: *Severnaia Pchela*, 1825-1840,” *Cahiers du Monde et Russian soviétique*, XXVIII (2), avril-juin 1987, 134.

94 A. I. Reitblat (ed.), *Vidok Figliarin. Pis'ma i agenturnye Zapiski F.V. Bulgarina v III Otdelenie* (Moscow 1998), 46-47. On the circulation of the first edition of the novel *Ivan Vyzhigin* by Bulgarin, cf. *Otechestvennye Zapiski*, 1829, n. 108, 137. Cf. *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi trgovli*, 51.

95 See Grits, Trenin, Nikitin, *Slovesnost' i kommersiia*, 227.

96 LeBlanc, *The Russianization of Gil Blas*, 145-200.

97 *Ibid.*, 42-43.

tion due to the intervention of the censorship, as a result of which it was withdrawn from the market. Nevertheless, manuscript copies circulated among a limited number of readers.<sup>98</sup> From the government's perspective, Bulgarin's first novel proposed a much more acceptable representation of Russian society than Nareznyi's work.<sup>99</sup> At the center of the novel is an orphaned, lower-class character, more resembling a naive and passive type than a fraudulent and enterprising picaro to whom a series of mishaps occur, compelling him to move across the geographic and social space of imperial Russia. In different roles he thus explores the world of provincial landowners, that of civil servants and officials, the dissolute and luxuriously gilded life of the capital's youth, the world of crime, and life among the peoples of the Steppes before finally completing his social ascent by becoming rich and discovering his aristocratic origins. Despite a certain superficiality of the characters, whose names represent the perfect reflection of their moral qualities (Vyzhigin, Nozhov, Vorovatin, etc.), the novel reflected the nature of Russian social mobility in that period quite well. In general, compared to the escapist function of Walter Scott's books, Bulgarin's novel, with its emphasis on different groups from contemporary Russian society, brought the reader back into their world and—via its satirical remarks about the ancient blueblood aristocracy—could yield ideological readings. Not by coincidence, the group of literary figures close to Pushkin, like Prince Viazemskii, reacted vehemently to the novel. As A. N. Vul'f noted in his diary: "The events in the novel are hardly compelling [...] and the description of the way of life of our aristocrats is funny; some figures here have become the incarnation of all the vices and possible defects to be found in this class, of all the abuses that happen every day."<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, others readers must have enjoyed how Bulgarin's novel shed light on the dynamics of a society where barriers and divisions between classes were becoming more flexible. At the same time, Bulgarin's novel, with its critical view of Russia's ancient hereditary aristocracy and its exaltation of the service nobility, may have garnered the sympathy of many readers possessing a connection to the public administration. In general, the success of Bulgarin's novel was so broad that the bookseller I. I. Zaikin offered Bulgarin a 30,000-ruble contract for his next novel (the author had received 2000 rubles for *Ivan Vyzhigin*).<sup>101</sup> As the magazines of the time report, Bulgarin's novel was a huge success among very diverse audiences. Nikolai Polevoi wrote in the *Moskovskii telegraf* (*The Moscow Telegraph*):

---

98 Cf. *ibid.*, 86, 145-146.

99 It is no coincidence that Nicholas I and Benkendorf proposed it as a recommended reading to the Decembrist Kornilovich who was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress. Cf. P. E. Shchegolev, "Blagorazumnye soveti iz kreposti," *Sovremennik*, vol. 2, 1913, 293.

100 Reitblat, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 102.

101 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi torgovlii*, 51.

In studies, drawing rooms, stock exchanges, in cities and in villages, throughout all of Russia, the works of Mr. Bulgarin, and especially his *Ivan Vyzhigin*, constitute an object of conversation. The enlightened and the unenlightened, the wise and the foolhardy, ladies, old men, officers, merchants, civil servants, even young girls and children are exchanging opinions about Mr. Bulgarin's literary success. Discussions on *Ivan Vyzhigin* lighten the mood of cold courtesy visits, boring sightseeing tours, random meetings between businessmen and meetings behind laden tables. [...] Mr. Bulgarin's works are being read throughout all of Russia.<sup>102</sup>

As can be seen from this description of his audience, Bulgarin's novel found favor with wide swathes of the reading public, irrespective of sex or age. Other statements made by contemporaries emphasized the broad social spectrum of those who read novels. Some critics, seeking to denigrate the author, underlined how his novel was read primarily by household servants in the antechambers of noble palaces: "his noisy fame has already flown over *the boudoirs and salons* and now resonates *in the antechambers*."<sup>103</sup> And again: "all the servants, they say, never cease to enjoy it: they tear it out of one another's hands."<sup>104</sup> Furthermore, *Ivan Vyzhigin* was also the first Russian novel to be read widely by European readers. The novel, indeed, properly publicized by Bulgarin in the French press, was soon translated into French, English, German, Italian, Polish, and other foreign languages, and achieved considerable exposure in foreign magazines.<sup>105</sup>

The name of Faddei Bulgarin, however, is linked not only to the success of the picaresque novel but also to another genre that, in the wake of Walter Scott's success, attracted the attention of a large share of the Russian public of the 1830s: the historical novel. This is the genre that in the 1830s led to what André Meynieux called a "revolution" in the tastes of the Russian public: the transition from the almost exclusive consumption of foreign novels in translation to a genuine interest in Russian novels as well.<sup>106</sup> Entranced by the descriptions of the past and of everyday life in the other European countries which they had encountered in foreign historical novels, Russian readers now grew eager to familiarize themselves with their own history and their own past. The production of novels in this period reflects the changes taking place among Russian readers. While only 46 Russian nov-

102 Cited in Reitblat, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 101.

103 Ibid.

104 Cited in V. P. Meshcheriakov, A. I. Reitblat, "Bulgarin," in *Russkie pisateli. 1800-1917. Biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow 1989), vol. 1, 350.

105 Cf. Ju. Striedter, *Der Schelmenroman in Russland: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des russischen Romans vor Gogol'* (Berlin, 1961), 213.

106 Meynieux, *Pouchkine homme de lettres*, 509.

els were published in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, in the thirties their number increased to 166.<sup>107</sup> Of those 166 Russian novels, more than half of them (93) were historical novels published in one or more volumes, while the remainder were (in order of popularity) satirical and picaresque novels, followed by sentimental and Gothic novels.<sup>108</sup> In previous decades, reading a French, German, or English novel in the original or in translation was a common practice for the Russian public, one that necessarily placed the reader in contact with an exotic setting. However, starting from the 1830s, Russian readers increasingly began to find familiar names, settings, customs, and behaviors in the novels they read, ones that belonged to their history and their world. But who were the readers of these Russian historical novels? What in these novels attracted them in particular? And what cultural and ideological impact did the reading of these novels have?

Some answers to these questions may be found by taking a quick glance at the entire repertoire of historical novels published in that period. These were usually fairly long works presented in several volumes, and they are different in many ways from the classical Russian historical novels that are most highly regarded today. Such novels had been published in collections (e.g. *Taras Bul'ba* appearing in Gogol's *Mirgorod* [1835]) or in thick journals (e.g. Puhskin's *The Captain's Daughter* [*Kapitanskaia dochka*] appearing in *Sovremennik* [*The Contemporary*] in 1836). Unlike these exemplars, the average length of Russian historical novels from that period was about 500 pages; some reached a staggering 1600 pages.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, their price was high. The first genuine Russian historical novel, *Iurii Miloslavskii* by Mikhail Zagoskin, was sold for 20 rubles in 1829.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, these novels were, at least initially, intended for wealthy readers.

While Pushkin's reputation declined in the thirties (as evidenced by the lack of commercial success of his final works) and the youngest readers were more attracted by Marlinskii's romantic tales about the Caucasus, the general public preferred Bulgarin and Zagoskin's historical novels. In 1829, i.e. the exact same year in which Bulgarin's *Ivan Vyzhigin* was published, Zagoskin also published what was acknowledged by the contemporary press as the first Russian historical novel, *Iurii Miloslavskii, or Russians in 1612* (*Iurii Miloslavskii, ili russkie v 1612*). The novel, which deals with the end of the Polish domination during the Time of Troubles and the rise of the

---

107 Our estimates consider only novels published in volume form and not in journals, which were nevertheless a minority. To distinguish novels from *povesti*, we considered only those works longer than 96 pages (3 printer's sheets). Our estimate was calculated starting from the following repertoires: *Rospis' rossiiskim knigam dlia chteniia iz biblioteki Aleksandra Smirdina* (1828); *Pervoe pribavlenie k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam Smirdina* (1829); *Vtoroe pribavlenie k Rospisi rossiiskim knigam* (1832); *Sistematicheskii reestr russkim knigam s 1831 po 1846*, edited by M. D. Ol'khin, (St. Petersburg, 1846).

108 Cf. Rebeckini, *Russkie istoricheskie romany*, 419.

109 *Ibid.*, 418.

110 For *Roslavlev*, cf. the sales ad in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, n. 33 of June 10, 1831.



Romanov monarchy, perfectly embodies the model of the historical novel à la Walter Scott. Given the audience's familiarity with this model and Zagoskin's successful interpretation of it, his first novel achieved immediate and extraordinary success. Although it had been published in 2400 copies after the first edition of 1829, it was republished in two editions the following year and again in 1832, 1838, 1841, 1846, and 1851. The novel, which was completely in line with the government's ideological position, was read at the court of Nicholas I and much appreciated there. "The Emperor sent for me," Zagoskin wrote to a friend, "and showered me with compliments."<sup>111</sup> Not only the Tsar, but also his retinue appreciated Zagoskin's novel, as the register of the servants' library at the Winter Palace testifies.<sup>112</sup> The novel appealed also to a very demanding group of aristocratic poets, like Pushkin, who wrote him a positive review, and to the poet Vasilii Zhukovskii, who read it both to the then twelve-years-old heir to the throne and to the even younger Grand Duchesses.<sup>113</sup> As evidenced by numerous testimonies, Zagoskin's historical novel was appreciated both in the capitals and in the provinces and proved to be a perfect read for families. His themes, narrative technique, and style were perfect for the collective readings held by the head of the family during quiet evenings in the living room as other members of the family of different sexes and ages listened in. After Zagoskin's great success, Russian historical novels enjoyed a boom; their prices dropped, and the social base of their public widened and grew more differentiated. Their readers began to include increasingly larger numbers of provincial residents with links not only to the world of landowners, but also traders and townspeople.

Historical novels offered Russian readers one of the easiest and most enjoyable means for familiarizing themselves with the history of their own country. Most of these novels' titles highlighted their historical nature. In addition to the commercially attractive label of "historical novel," the titles gave away other details to the readers: the historical context of the setting, the year, the kingdom or century in which it was set, etc. Sometimes the title also included another indicator of the work's historical genre, i.e. the type of historical source that inspired the novel (for example, the phrase "taken from" followed by "memoirs," "manuscripts," "documents," "legends," etc.) to guarantee its historical veracity. In most cases historical information in footnotes is so generic as to suggest that the authors were thinking of rather uncultivated readers with an extremely vague at best knowledge of the history of their country. More often, this production focused on novels

<sup>111</sup> Letter by Zagoskin to M. E. Lobanov of 9.4.1830, in A. O. Kruglyi, "M.E. Lobanov i ego otnosheniia k Gnedichu i Zagoskinu," *Istoricheskii vestnik*, avg. 1880, 697.

<sup>112</sup> Cfr. D. Rebecchini, "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: from the Tsar to the Stokers," *Slavic Review*, 78, 4 (Winter 2019), 980-985.

<sup>113</sup> P. A. Pletnev, *Dnevnik zaniatiia s det'mi Nikolaia I*, Rukopisnyi otdel IRLI, Arkhiv P. A. Pletneva. 1829-1830, fond 234, op. 1, ed. 2, l. 17 ob, l. 20 ob.

set in recent periods of Russian history. In the 1830s, the recent 1812 war against Napoleon (15 works) was by far the most represented event depicted in historical novels; it attracted an outside portion of the public's interest, as confirmed by the contemporaneous production of memoirs.<sup>114</sup> Then followed the novels about Peter the Great's era (9 titles) and about the Time of Troubles that coincided with the ascent of the reigning Romanov dynasty (9 titles).<sup>115</sup> These data suggest that a large proportion of Russian readers were concerned not so much with escaping mentally into distant and legendary times in Russian history, but rather with confronting Russia's recent past. Given the limited availability of historical works and memoirs on the market, the historical novel was one of the privileged forms through which the 1830s Russian public became aware of its past and built its national identity. With their conservative historical vision, most of these Russian works paved the way, and at a certain point, aided in the dissemination of the official ideology that Nicholas I and his Minister of Education Uvarov were trying to spread in schools through their educational policy. Zagoskin's historical novels were frequently prescribed as compulsory reading matter in schools<sup>116</sup>. In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, the public's interest in national historical novels was one of the clearest signs of the spread of nationalism—and, at the same time, one of the tools by which it could spread. As pointed out by Benedict Anderson, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, novels “provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined communities that is the nation.”<sup>117</sup> Whereas historiographic works and memoirs mostly represented the past of the monarchy and of the State elites, in historical novels the Russian public could recognize the past and the customs of the whole nation.

Russian historical novels helped not only to shape in the public a sense of its nationhood, but also to assimilate other peoples into the empire. A significant number of these historical novels (10 titles) were set across regions on the edge of the Empire—such as the Siberian steppes, the Caucasus mountains, the Western and Baltic provinces, or the Ukrainian prairies—which became part and parcel of the Russian Empire over the centuries. They were the work of authors who came from or had lived in those areas, who specialized in novels with those local settings. These included the Siberian Ivan Kalashnikov; the Ukrainian Petr Golota, the author of three histori-

---

114 On the 1830s and 1840s novels dedicated to the 1812 war see D. Rebecchini, *Il Business della storia: il 1812 e il romanzo russo della prima metà dell'Ottocento fra ideologia e mercato* (Salerno, 2016).

115 Cf. Rebeckini, “Russkie istoricheskie romany,” 421; Rebecchini, *Il Business della storia*, 210-212. Different data are reported in D. Ungurianu, *Plotting History. The Russian Historical Novel in the Imperial Age* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2007), 260.

116 See LEIBOV, VDOVIN, “What and How Russian Pupils Read in School,” in the present volume.

117 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York, 1991), 25.

cal novels on Little Russia; or Platon Zubov, the author of two historical novels set in the Caucasus. Their novels represented the crucial moments of those national communities' assimilation into the empire. While those works offered Russian readers a particular form of domestic exoticism (one not far from that offered by Scottish Highlanders to contemporary English readers), they also greatly helped make many readers from those regions, i.e. Ukrainian, Siberian or Caucasian readers, into good Russian subjects; at the same time, however, the Russian historical novel did little to make Russian readers more European. Historical novels set in Western Europe were quite rare (4 titles).

Along with Zagoskin, Bulgarin was certainly the most successful Russian novelist of the 1830s. But who exactly were his readers? The lists of subscribers to his novels give us an accurate picture of the changes among his better-off readers, that is, those who could afford to subscribe to his novels in advance. An analysis of 440 subscriptions to the first edition of *Ivan Vyzhigin* (out of the first edition's 2000 printed copies) provides us with some data. The greatest number of subscribers consisted of landowners and officials (66%).<sup>118</sup> Among the latter, there were not only senior officials, who were the majority, but also many in the lower clerical ranks of the public administration; these accounted for 25% of his readers. Although statistically insignificant, the presence of merchants (6% of all subscribers) on this list is also noteworthy.<sup>119</sup> Finally, it is worth noting that Bulgarin's novel primarily attracted a St. Petersburg audience, which represented 42% of readers who pre-ordered it. If the number of subscriptions from the provinces (52%) is not surprising, it is nevertheless interesting to observe that the author was far less popular with the Muscovite public (which accounted for only 4% of all subscriptions). Even more interesting is the analysis of how his readers evolved since the great success of his first novel. With *Dimitrii Samozvanets* he significantly increased the amount of subscribers, who reached the considerable number of 661 (out of 2400 printed copies). Among these, the number of readers from the provinces increased, reaching 58% of the total, while St. Petersburg readers fell considerably (down to 37%), while the share of Muscovite readers remained stable (5%).<sup>120</sup> Above all, there was a change in the social composition of his readers: those belonging to the officers' class decreased (from 27% to 21%), merchants and townspeople increased (from 6% to 12%), particularly in the two capitals (they made up to 15% of all St. Petersburg subscribers and up to 23% of those in Moscow). This trend was confirmed by his following novel, *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin*, a sequel to *Ivan Vyzhigin*, set during Napoleon's cam-

118 Cf. Reitblat, "F. V. Bulgarin i ego chitateli," in Idem, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 103.

119 Beaven Remnek, *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences*, 128, 234-235.

120 Cf. V. A. Pokrovskii, "Problema vozniknoveniia russkogo 'nравstvenno-satiricheskogo romana' (O genezise Ivana Vyzhigina)," *Izvestiia AN SSSR, seriia VII, otdelenie obshchestvennykh nauk*, 8 (1932), 940.

paign of 1812<sup>121</sup>. The number of subscribers to *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin* kept increasing, reaching 714 subscriptions for a total of 2245 pre-ordered copies (including those ordered by booksellers). While the proportion of subscriptions taken out by officers and soldiers remained stable (23%), his readers from the trades increased (from 6% subscribing to *Ivan Vyzhigin* to 14% to this book). Most importantly, his subscribers from the provinces rose to 63%, including those coming from remote cities of the empire, such as Omsk in Siberia, Turku in Finland, Kishinau in Bessarabia, Oshmiani in Belarus, Odessa in Ukraine, Tbilisi in Georgia, Mamadysh in Tatarstan, and even beyond the borders of the Empire, such as Bucharest in Rumania, etc.<sup>122</sup> Subscription figures reflect a sharp increase in Bulgarin's provincial readers, while in the big cities, and in Petersburg in particular, his audience (33%) expanded greatly among the merchant class, while Muscovites remained a very marginal share of Bulgarin's readership (4%). This also explains the comment offered by Pushkin, who had hoped that Bulgarin's fame was declining when it was instead merely spreading more into the provinces:

*Petr Ivanovich* made its arrival in Moscow where, apparently, it was received rather coldly. What sorcery was this? Were we really able to open our audience's eyes? Or did the dear things figure it out for themselves? Yet they seemed so made for each other, Bulgarin and the public, that it seemed that they were to live and die together.<sup>123</sup>

The lists of subscriptions to the various novels can also provide precious information on booksellers' distribution channels and their expectations for the demand in the various cities of the empire. If the majority of subscriptions to *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin* were for individuals or families, who ordered only one copy, some major booksellers of the time also made orders for large quantities of copies. Besides Smirdin, who ordered 300 copies for his Nevskii Prospekt bookshop and 50 for his lending library, large orders were made by the bookseller Ivan Petrovich Glazunov, who asked for 200 copies for his Petersburg bookshop and 100 for his Moscow bookshop (which further confirms Bulgarin's greater popularity in the Northern capital). Also in Petersburg, the bookseller Ivan Vasil'evich Slenin ordered 100 copies, and 100 copies each were ordered by the booksellers Aleksei and Leontii Sveshnikov. For Moscow's bookshops, Aleksandr Shiriaev ordered

121 D. Rebekkini, "Pervyi russkii istoricheskii roman o voine 1812 goda 'Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin' Faddeia Bulgarina i ego chitateli," in A. I. Reitblat (ed.), *F. V. Bulgarin – pisatel', zhurnal'st, teatral'nyi kritik. Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 2019), 423-442.

122 See the subscription lists in F. V. Bulgarin, *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin*, vol. 4, 295-340.

123 Letter from Pushkin to P. A. Pletnev of April 11, 1831, in Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 14, 161.

250 copies and Vasilii Loginov 200, but it is very likely that these booksellers' orders were also destined, in part, for the provinces. Smaller quantities were ordered directly by booksellers from the provinces (50 copies for Kyiv's bookshops, 25 copies respectively for the bookshops in Odessa, Tula and Kursk, 10 for those in Voronezh, Novocherkask, Saratov, etc.), while individual copies went to provincial public libraries (like Odessa's public library) or military ones (the Moscow Guard Regiment library, the Hunters Regiment library, etc.).<sup>124</sup>

The Russian historical novel achieved its moment of greatest success in the first half of the 1830s. In 1834 alone, 17 new Russian historical novels came out in 48 combined volumes, with an average of 180 pages per volume. Of course, from a stylistic point of view, this mass of fictional texts could not distinguish itself in its originality and stylistic refinement. Given the rapid expansion of the audience in that period, especially among the less educated, Russian historical novels started to draw on old fictional elements to meet the needs of their new readers. There are numerous critical articles that describe their composition as an industrial assemblyline of old stereotypes from sentimental, Gothic, bandit, and picaresque novels.<sup>125</sup> The main motif in most of the plots of these novels—two lovers separated by the conflict—is one of the most ubiquitous plots of the European novel tradition, widely exploited by the sentimental novel. The favorite locales in this type of historical novel (the road, the forest, the inn, the fortress or castle) were by then recognizable literary clichés of picaresque and Gothic novels. Despite its claims of verisimilitude, the historical novel also absorbed fantastic and supernatural elements from the Gothic novel, incorporating traditional Gothic ghosts, mysteries and prophecies. Responding to its expanding readership, the new Russian historical novel intensified its most conventional traits and increased the use of old fictional clichés. It was precisely these easily recognizable novelistic clichés that determined the public's favor and the critics' harsh reviews. Prince Vladimir Odoevskii saw in them a form of translation—from Russian, in a sense, rather than from foreign languages:

In the end, our writers came up with a nice idea. They opened Karamzin's *History*, cut out a few pages, stuck them together, and very joyfully they made three discoveries at the same time: 1) that such a work can be taken for a novel by a reader [...]; 2) that translating from Russian is much easier than translating from foreign languages; 3) that writing is not as difficult as they thought it was.<sup>126</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Bulgarin, *Petr Ivanovich Vyzhigin*, vol. 4, 295-340.

<sup>125</sup> On this, cf. Rebekkini, "Russkie istoricheskie romany," 421-428. Cf. f.i. *Vestnik Evropy*, 1828, vol. 15 (July-August 1828), 231-232.

<sup>126</sup> V. Odoevskii, "O vrazhde k prosveshcheniiu zamechaemoi v noveishei literature," *Sovremennik*, 1836, vol. 2, 207; also cf. V. Odoevskii, "Kak pishutsia u nas romany," *Sovremennik*,

This quote suggests an important link between the mass-produced foreign novels that were translated into Russian and the new mass production of original Russian historical novels. The historical novel genre prompted mass production. Acknowledging the great success of the genre, not a few authors took to producing historical novels serially: Bulgarin, Lazhechnikov, Massal'skii, I. R. Glukharev, A. I. Churovskii each published three in ten years; S. M. Liubetskii and A. A. Pavlov published four in the same period; Zotov and Zagoskin, five. The success of the genre began to decline in the second half of the 1830s with the rise of thick journals, which increasingly included historical narratives. Thus, only four years later, in 1838, the number of newly published historical novels decreased to a mere four titles. At the same time, within the new structure of the thick journals, the historical novel turned into a historical *povest'*: it lost some of its 'encyclopedic' aspects, such as the lengthy descriptions of the local color and the considerations on the historical background; and the plot lost its secondary episodes, and focused entirely on the reflections of the historical conflict on the hero's life. Both the first edition of Gogol's *Taras Bul'ba* and Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* belong to this phase.

Since the book market had been flooded with these novels in the first half of the thirties, soon even this production started to diversify itself and its authors began to grow more specialized. The first such authors, such as Zagoskin and Bulgarin, had directed their novels to the 'virgin soil' of the new readers, exploiting the ideological component of this genre and representing key periods in Russia's imperial history like 1612 and 1812. Over time, other novelists enhanced these works' entertainment component, insisting now on a bandit element, now on a Gothic aspect, now on a Sentimental facet. It was mainly the authors that targeted the popular and less educated readers who made their 'expertise' more commercially recognizable, starting with the title of their novels. This is the case of A. I. Churovskii and A. P. Protopopov, successful authors of historical novels with strong Gothic influences such as *The Witch, or Terrible Nights on the Dnieper* (*Ved'ma, ili Nochi strashnye za Dneprom*, 1834, third edition 1848) or *The Black Koshchei, or The Farm Beyond the Dnepr' by the Mountain of the Moon* (*Chernoï Kashchei, ili Zadneprovskii khutor u lunnoi gory*, 1834, third edition 1849); or S. M. Liubetskii, who masterly developed the historical-bandit genre in his *Tan'ka, the Brigandess from Rostok* (*Tan'ka, razboinitsa rostokinskaia*), a novel that, even though it had a detailed historical setting, was linked to the most compelling tradition of bandit novels such as *Vanka Kain*: it focused on the charismatic figure of a female bandit, the

---

1836, vol. 3, 48-51.

bearded and unscrupulous head of a gang of killers (1834).<sup>127</sup> Indeed, similar distinctions, made explicit to the reader through the text's very title, were fundamental for an audience that was still quite diverse both socially and culturally. As recalled by Apollon Grigor'ev, the son of a civil servant at Moscow's city council, the preceding generation often found reading Walter Scott's historical novels to be boring:

In general, the older generation of readers found it hard to tolerate the really new and dramatic narrative form of the Scottish novelist. 'As soon as he starts with his interminable dialogues,' my father used to say, 'one really gets bored to death' and he remorselessly skipped pages. The meticulous characterization that Walter Scott was always trying to achieve did not interest him. What he, like many of his contemporaries, liked the most in a novel was a compelling plot, so it was natural that he enjoyed reading the celebrated novelist only when he told of famous historical figures or, as in *Robert, Count of Paris*, when he reported various fascinating adventures.<sup>128</sup>

It was among readers like Grigor'ev's father or his colleagues, all junior clerks at the Moscow City Council, that works such as Liubetskii's *Tan'ka, the Brigandess* found their fans. Compare Grigor'ev's description of what people from that clerical world read:

Not only my father, who had received a limited but to some extent complete and encyclopedic education for his time, but also his fellow civil servants, who were half illiterate and looked like they could only care about bribes, confiscations, and taverns—they too had not only heard of Pushkin, but had also read some of his works. Of course, a small part of the time they spent away from the office and the taverns was also sometimes dedicated to reading, even after a heavy drinking session; and they used at least a small amount of the money that remained to them after their ordinary and drinking expenses to buy books, of course buying them especially at the Smolensk or Sucharevskaia bashnia markets; some of them even tried to set up their own small home library of sorts. And the craze for these purchases, completely useless in the opinion of their wives, spread specifically when the unstoppable wave of Russian historical novels began. Then even the most drunken county clerk, unable to stay sober

---

<sup>127</sup> Cf. S. [Liubets]kii, *Tan'ka razboinitsa Rastokinskaia, ili tsarskie terema, istoricheskaia povest' XVIII stoletii* (Moscow, 1834), vol. 1, 121.

<sup>128</sup> A. Grigor'ev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1988), 79.

for just one moment—he too had read a book, and had even bought it from those who went around carrying them [...]. It was *Tan'ka, the Brigandess from Rostok* who, whip in hand, looked absolutely wonderful to him, to the point that, apparently, he even bought a snuffbox with the image of the famous heroine on it.<sup>129</sup>

Rafail Zotov, another leading figure in the Russian historical novel's market of the time, addressed a slightly different range of readers: younger, less conservative, more open to European fashions and customs, and interested in a different kind of adventure. In his novels, particularly in his best-selling book *Leonid, or Some Aspects of Napoleon's Life* (*Leonid, ili Nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Napoleona*, 1832, sixth edition 1882), he represented a hero new to the Russian public: Leonid was young, handsome, athletic, brave, spoke all European languages perfectly, and was as at ease moving around European courts as he was in the alcoves of many fascinating European baronesses and actresses. In his casual dealing with various important historical figures from Napoleon to Talleyrand, and in his casual wandering through their parlors and bedrooms, Leonid allowed readers not only to feel truly European, but also to satisfy their voyeuristic desire to look into the private lives of the powerful, to exercise their “waiter's psychology” (Hegel). Not by chance, when the novel came out, it shocked many and aroused the moralistic reaction of critics, who treated it in the same way as they did Paul de Kock's ‘immoral’ novels: “Indeed, what abhorrent action has Leonid not committed?! He kidnapped his girlfriend, deserted from the Russian army, killed a commander, seduced his patroness; he is a hero only when protected by women, he is a bigamist, a spy, etc. etc.”<sup>130</sup> Zotov's novel represented one of those cases in which the opinion of critics diverged radically from that of readers, but this did not prevent it from becoming successful. From its first anonymous publication in 1832, its popular status remained firm among the Russian public throughout the nineteenth century, with at least five new editions.

During the 1830s, with the passing of time and the diversification of its offerings, the rapid development of the Russian novel genre created new distinctions, new stratifications in the public, and new communities of readers. In 1836, for example, Gogol' distinguished three categories of novels:

15-ruble novels, which are almost always large, long, massive, in 4 volumes of 300 pages each; then there are the 8- and 6-ruble novels, these likewise in four or even just two volumes. And usually these volumes are 160 pages and sometimes even less. This type of cheap novel is usually written by young people, it is

---

129 Ibid., 76-77.

130 *Moskovskii Telegraf*, 1832, vol. 18, 253.



full of romanticism, exclamation marks are never lacking, and there are many ellipses. Finally, there are the 4-to-5-ruble novels, which are typically composed of three volumes, sometimes two, but these volumes are usually no more than 60 or 90 pages.<sup>131</sup>

As pointed out by Gogol', differences in size and price also often corresponded to differences in the cultural level of their authors and readers. Gogol' wrote that shorter novels were often the work of popular authors, professional writers, who were lacking a solid culture: "It's usually people of a certain age who write them, people who are unemployed. It is our army of self-taught writers and the commander of this array is Aleksandr Anfimovich Orlov, whom our St. Petersburg journalists are so fond of ridiculing."<sup>132</sup>

Actually, starting from the 1830s, the name of Aleksandr Orlov, together with that of Fedot Kuzmichev, Ivan Gur'ianov, Nikolai Zriakhov, and some other Moscow literati had gained considerable reputation among popular readers who could not afford the longer novels and had to make do with works that cost a few kopecks.<sup>133</sup> A few months after the success of Bulgarin's first Russian novel, *Ivan Vyzhigin*, Orlov began publishing a cycle of imitations and continuations of the *Vyzhigin* cycle. Published by the talented Muscovite publisher Loginov, these proved quite successful. Soon his example was followed by Gur'ianov. Orlov alone published six such works in 1831; they had titles such as *The Genealogy of Ivan Vyzhigin, Son of Van'ka Kain (Rodoslovnaia Ivana Vyzhigina, syna Van'ki Kaina)*. These were eighty-page novellas in one or more volumes, very cheaply priced and written in a popular comic style. While Bulgarin had wanted to reconnect with the high picaresque tradition, Orlov and Gur'ianov appropriated his character to tie it to the comic-satirical tradition of *lubok* literature's rogue genre (very popular among their readers), which included works like Matvei Komarov's *Van'ka Kain*. Alongside this trend, Orlov made a name for himself in the early thirties with a series of novellas that, in a popular but rich and highly expressive language, mocked the flaws and eccentricities of the world of merchants, salesmen, and junior clerks. These works were harshly criticized, primarily by Bulgarin in *Severnaia Pchela*, which strongly influenced the tastes of the provincial public, but also by *Moskovskii Telegraf*: these were "trinkets coming from fifteenth-class booksellers," the work of a hack "from the flea market."<sup>134</sup> But among the lower urban population, Orlov's name suddenly

<sup>131</sup> Cf. N. V. Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14 vols (Moscow, 1937-1952), vol. 8, 199-200.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> A. I. Reitblat, "Moskovskaia nizovaia knizhnost'," in Idem, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 157-181; A. I. Feduta, "Kto b ni byl ty, o moi chitatel'...": problema chitatelia v literature pushkinskoi epokhi (Minsk, 2015), 234-242.

<sup>134</sup> *Syn otechestva*, 27 (1831), 60-68; *Severnaia pchela*, 46 and 201 (1831). On Bulgarin's subsequent protests cf. M. K. Lemke, *Nikolaevskie zhandarmy i literatura. 1826-1855* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 284-286.

acquired a reputation and became appreciated for the humor in his scenes, the fidelity in the description of the customs of that world, and the simplicity of his language in, for example, *Dunia the Silly Girl from Moscow*, or *The Corset is a Bit Tight* (*Duniachka, moskovskaia mezhdoumochkaia, ili Uzen'kii korsetets*) and *The Revelry of the Merchants' Sons in Mar'ina Roshcha*, or *Smash Everything! What a Hoot!* (*Razgul'e kupecheskikh synkov v mar'inoi roshche, ili Povalivai! Nashi guliaiut!*), which were reprinted several times.<sup>135</sup> As early as 1831, the poet N. M. Iazykov, who knew the author personally, wrote that Orlov “enjoyed great notoriety in taverns and in the city market (*gostinnyi dvor*).”<sup>136</sup> In 1838, replying to critics’ ironic and mocking remarks, Belinskii acknowledged Orlov’s deserved fame: “People who sometimes talk about A. A. Orlov’s novels with sarcasm are wrong: he has his own audience, who found in his works what they were looking for and needed, and within a certain literary sphere he alone, among many, has made himself a real reputation and enjoys his well-deserved authority.”<sup>137</sup> While the criticisms and reviews from the most important magazines stigmatized his name and moved him away from the most affluent and culturally demanding readers, the low price of his works would nonetheless attract a different audience who appreciated his novels more than Walter Scott’s. A contemporary observer correctly pointed out:

You are wrong, dear critics, to attack the works of Mr Orlov; if it were not for them, what would you give to read to those who, as they say, *paid coppers* for their education and can only pay kopecks, and not assignation rubles, for a book? Almanacs would do, but they are expensive; Walter Scott in Russian translation is cheap, but they don’t understand him. What, then? Mr Orlov writes for these readers in a clear manner, sells at a low price, and his books have a big advantage over *Milord Georg* and *Sovestdral*: they describe what is close and familiar to readers, what is near and contemporary<sup>138</sup>.

The popularity of Orlov, the “Russian Scarron” according to one critic, thus existed primarily for those groups of readers who were not sophisticated enough to grasp Walter Scott’s value and at the same time were tired of old *lubok* romances like *Milord Georg* and *Sovestdral*. Compared to the generally exotic and fairy-tale worlds of those cheap books, readers found in Orlov’s novels accurate and amusing descriptions of their environment.

---

135 Cf. A. I. Reitblat, “Russkie ‘bestsellery’ pervoi poloviny XIX veka,” in Idem, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 197.

136 Cf. Reitblat, “Moskovskaia nizovaia knizhnost’,” 176.

137 Ibid.

138 *Moskovskii Telegraf*, 1831, vol. 5, 106-107.

Beyond the enjoyment of recognizing their own world and laughing at its flaws, the lower-class urban readers also had another reason for appreciating Orlov's novellas: the pleasure of standing out from the crowd simply for the act of reading. It was a pleasure derived from the prestige that novels enjoyed in popular urban environments. Orlov himself wrote about this matter in his 1835 letter to the Minister of Education Uvarov, in which he complained about the censors' excessive intervention into his works:

For the upper classes, I wrote little; I have written especially for the lower and middle classes. Considering that the masses (*prostonarodie*) cannot read the Derzhavins, the Lomonosovs, and the like, I decided to take a different path. I saw that the shopkeepers, when sitting at the counter, or the laborers (*fabri-kanty*), or the artisans, when they are not occupied, spend time reading *Bova Korolevich*, *Eruslan Lazarevich*, and the like. And by doing this they keep away from those vices that arise from having nothing to do. But since everything has been read and re-read, I decided to satisfy the simpler people by publishing various stories that could serve to distract them. I saw that the tailors, the shoemakers, are happy to spend 10 kopecks on my very inexpensive books, like *Duniachka*, *the Silly Girl from Moscow*, *The Preobrazhenskii Ribbons*, *The Creased Blouse*, and the like.<sup>139</sup>

In addition to praising reading as a pastime for otherwise idle minds and hands, Orlov also noted that, in some settings, reading novels could become a form of education and stimulate in people a useful sense of pride and distinction:

I saw that the shoemaker, in his spare time, having gathered his friends around him and reading (and nearly spelling out) *The Unshakable Friendship of the Citizens of Chukhloma Kruchinin and Skudoumov*, *The Slacker at Makar Fair*, *The Broken Leg or Games for Merchants*,<sup>140</sup> begins to explain to his companions everything about these funny types, and, seeing an audience before him, he is pleased to be their reader. So, on the one hand, he tries to read slightly better, but on the other, he also instills in others the desire to learn to read. And as he goes from one level of knowledge to the next, he also tries to learn to write, but seeing that he does not understand the figures (which I had placed in the book

139 A. A. Orlov, "Pis'mo ministru narodnogo prosvescheniia S. S. Uvarovu," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 40 (1999), 187-192. See also Reitblat, "Moskovskaia nizovaia knizhnost'," 175.

140 Original titles: *Nekolebimaia družhba chukhlomskikh zhitelei Kruchinina i Skudoumova*; *Zevak na Makar'evskoi iarmonke*; *Perelomlennaia noga, ili Kupecheskie gulianki na iarmarke*.

on purpose), he also tries to study mathematics. And the same happens to his companions, who never would have thought of wanting to study. Whereas they themselves, who now also want to be called readers, with no need for a master's cane, beg him to teach them to read when not at work; and that one, seeing himself surrounded by so much respect, as if he were a master [...], gives them a pencil instead of a caning and gets down to teaching them. The cobbler's little hut [*izba*] is thus made into a classroom. So, inadvertently, culture begins to spread, and consequently, the government's objective to increase education is fulfilled.<sup>141</sup>

Reading novels helped popular readers to sharpen their reading and writing skills and, at the same time, allowed them to stand out culturally in their world, thereby encouraging others to imitate them. Reading cheap novels allowed those readers to acquire the symbolic capital they had not been able to obtain through schooling, and often impelled them to reproduce the practices of symbolic domination of the dominant world in their own world. Orlov's description is certainly apologetic, but the situation reflected in this testimony might today appear paradoxical: a low-ranking writer explains to the Minister of Education the usefulness of reading and education for the lower classes. In fact, the repressive measures that were taken by the government against such forms of literature show that the top tiers of the state by no means wished to spread culture among the lowest social classes through reading. In the cultural vision shared by Minister Uvarov and Nicholas I, the knowledge available to each of the Russian society's classes had to be strictly limited to the type of work that the subjects could carry out.<sup>142</sup> As shown by Abram Reitblat, between 1828 and 1855, "the main target and the main victim of Moscow censorship in those years were not the works by the opposition or 'high literature,' but popular books."<sup>143</sup> The cited problem with such books was not only the impropriety of their language, or the use of a sometimes vulgar lexicon, or lapses of style, or content that "offended morals and the moral sense," as per the censorship code of 1828;<sup>144</sup> rather, the government simply had a programmatically hostile attitude toward the practice of reading among the working classes and, moreover, toward novels in particular. Following this first wave of popular literature mainly aimed at an urban audience, Minister Uvarov wrote:

The passion for reading and in general for literary activity, which was previously limited to the upper classes, has now penetrated

141 Reitblat, "Moskovskaia nizovaia knizhnost'," 175-176.

142 Besançon, *Éducation et société en Russie*, 15

143 A. I. Reitblat, "Tsenzura narodnykh knig," in Idem, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii*, 182.

144 Reitblat, "Tsenzura narodnykh knig," 184.

the middle class and is widening *even* beyond these limits. In addition, regardless of the fact that this cheap literature is politically unsuitable for the people, it not only brings no benefit to their intellectual development and education but, on the contrary, will soon become an obstacle to them. Right-thinking people have openly acknowledged that this literature has proven harmful in those countries where it has spread and consolidated.<sup>145</sup>

The usually hostile attitude toward the practice of reading among the masses was, for example, what compelled Uvarov himself to intervene with the Moscow censorship committee in 1834 to forbid Orlov to publish any of his works. Although Orlov protested to the Minister, the writer had to stop publishing his works for two years.

A similar fate occurred to another of the 'stars' of the Moscow public of the 1830s and 1840s, Fedot Kuzmichev.<sup>146</sup> Unlike Orlov, he was actually a self-taught writer, a footman owned by Princess A. M. Golitsyna. Having become one of the Princess's house servants at the young age of thirteen, he was recruited to Moscow's military contingent in 1812 and sent to fight against the French. His youth notwithstanding, he took part in the battle of Borodino, in the retreat of the French from Russia, and in the German and French campaigns of 1813 and 1814, during which he traveled as far as Paris. When he was freed from serfdom in 1830, he moved to Moscow, where he began to write and publish a great number of booklets that earned him some degree of success: fairy tales and satirical stories, two books on the Russo-Turkish war of 1828-1829, collections of anecdotes, a primer, some booklets to interpret dreams, and probably his most popular work, the historical bandit novel *The Daughter-Robber, or The Lover in the Barrel. A Popular Legend from Boris Godunov's Time (Doch' razboinitsa, ili Liubovnik v bochke. Narodnoe predanie iz vremen Borisa Godunova, 1839)*, which had seven different editions during the 1840s and was as successful as *Tan'ka the Brigandess*. Unlike Orlov, who specialized in satirical descriptions of Moscow's merchants and lower classes, Kuzmichev owed his fame to his patriotic themes. In the mid-thirties he incurred the same censorship problems as Orlov, and from the late thirties onward he decided to concentrate his production on a cycle of autobiographical patriotic novellas exalting the heroic simple Russian soldier of the Napoleonic wars. He published six booklets on 1812 and the subsequent campaigns against Napoleon, all dedicated to the cy-

<sup>145</sup> Cited in A. Kotovich, *Dukhovnaia tsenzura v Rossii. (1799-1855)* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 301.

<sup>146</sup> On him, cf. D. Rebecchini, "Fedot Kuzmichev, un servo della gleba nella campagna contro Napoleone. Guerra e letteratura popolare in Russia ai tempi di Gogol," *Acme*, vol. 51, 2 (May-August 1998), 205-217, and A. I. Reitblat, "F. Kuzmichev", in *Russkie pisateli. 1800-1917. Biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1994), vol. 3, 208-209.

cle of “the Russian soldier.”<sup>147</sup> Each of these works is characterized by an extraordinary stylistic variety. Chapter after chapter, Kuzmichev employs a series of narrative techniques taken from a variety of different genres: epic fiction and romance, dramatic and epistolary narrative. The various chapters have different intonations, from those typical of the Bible to others borrowing from folk genres. In the same work, different stylistic registers and literary languages alternate between Classicism, Sentimentalism, and Romanticism, all combined into a very popular syncretism. As noted by Iurii Lotman, “in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century, it was as if mass literature represented a huge natural reserve in which unearthed animals, known to the reader only from museum models, lived and reproduced in their natural conditions.”<sup>148</sup> Kuzmichev’s works were true natural reserves of literary genres and styles from the past. In them, genres and stylistic features long dead in high literature survived in the still quite fertile and lush environment of low literature. If the Russian historical novel drew on fictional genres from previous decades (the Sentimental, Gothic, and bandit novels) to make itself more recognizable and acceptable to its new provincial readers, then these popular novellas drew on genres and stylistic features from a more distant past, from folklore to classicist epic, in order to put their uneducated popular readers in contact with the largest possible number of forms that, regardless of those forms’ obsolete status, were new to them—almost like a small library containing all the literature of the previous century. This is what contemporary writers meant when they said that the masses “paid coppers for their education”:<sup>149</sup> they only read popular fiction that cost a few kopecks and, through these hybrid forms, they came into contact with the literature of the past, which then shaped their tastes. Thus, by reading these novels, even lower-class readers—who neither attended school nor read Lomonosov or Derzhavin’s works, but instead learned to read on books worth only a few kopecks—started to gradually educate themselves and develop their literary tastes, just as Karamzin had foreseen in his 1802 commentary and as Belinskii confirmed 30 years later:

Readings must always be at the reader’s level and the reading process should always be gradual, a journey, a development: from *English Milord* one reader gets to *Ivan Vyzhigin*, and there he stops; another, having started from *Guak, or The Unshakable Fidelity* (*Guak, ili Nepreoborimaia vernost’*) and, having gone through the many *Vyzhigins*, goes as far as Walter Scott and Cooper. Let our Russian people read to their own health, may

---

<sup>147</sup> On these works, cf. Rebecchini, “Fedot Kuzmichev,” 205-217.

<sup>148</sup> Iu. M. Lotman, “Massovaia literatura kak istoriko-literaturnaia problema,” in *Idem, Izbrannye stat’i*, 3 vols (Tallin, 1993), vol. 3, 386.

<sup>149</sup> *Moskovskii Telegraf*, 1831, vol. 5, 106-107.

a lust for reading spread among them day after day! Whatever awakens or quenches this lust is fine!<sup>150</sup>

### 3. FRAGMENTATION AND IDEOLOGIZATION OF THE RUSSIAN PUBLIC IN THE 1840S: THE CASE OF LERMONTOV'S *A HERO OF OUR TIME* AND GOGOL'S *DEAD SOULS*

The 1840s saw a process of fragmentation, segmentation, and ideologization of the Russian public. While the success of the Russian historical novel led to greater cultural and ideological standardization among Russian readers during a phase of expansion of the reading audience in the 1830s, the publication of some of the most important contemporary Russian novels of the 1840s caused greater internal division among the Russian public. The distance between readers from different generations increased, and distinct interpretive communities formed, possessing different aesthetic and ideological orientations that often proved to be in conflict with each other. The difficult economic conditions into which the country quickly collapsed created fertile ground for this process.

In 1838, Russia entered a phase of economic crisis. For some years, crop production had not been good and the situation had worsened due to a prolonged drought. The monetary reform of 1839, which had further contributed to lowering the price of books, had not improved things much. Readers from the provinces, who were hit by the consequences of the economic crisis earlier and more harshly, were the ones who reduced their book orders the most. Business, for some big publishers like Smirdin, started to decrease. Overestimating the demand from Russian buyers, Smirdin had flooded the market with a large number of novels that—under the conditions of a broad financial crisis—quickly lost value. In January 1840, Gogol' captured the corresponding crisis in the book market while describing his plans for his future novel *Dead Souls*:

If I wait a year, when my new novel is ready, then I will be able to attract the attention of 4000 readers, and the people will once again rush to buy works that no one cares about now; and, in the meantime, these difficult years will pass, years of hunger and shortage of crops, which have reduced the number of buyers. The booksellers now openly say that they have no money at the moment, and that those who once bought books now put them aside to try to fix their properties that are going to ruin because of the lost crops.<sup>151</sup>

150 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 3, 83.

151 Gogol', *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 269.

In the early forties, a large number of novels which had previously been issued on the market lacked buyers and began to end up on the counters at markets on Nikol'skaia Street in Moscow, at the Apraksin market of St. Petersburg, or in baskets at provincial fairs.<sup>152</sup> In 1841, Belinskii noted how Bulgarin's novels had "silently moved to the Apraksin market, into the bags of second-hand booksellers, and into the baskets of traveling booksellers and peddlers."<sup>153</sup> The circulation of works by authors who were once famous and fashionable among lower-class readers, and the rapid circulation of news through the press, aided in the turnover of the literary establishment and caused the public to change their tastes more rapidly.

The memories of a bookseller of the time, Nikolai Ovsiannikov, who long worked as an apprentice at the popular Apraksin market, can help us reconstruct the channels through which valuable novels from the 1830s ended up in the hands of popular readers.<sup>154</sup> For example, Ovsiannikov describes the frequent visits made by the servants and lackeys of aristocratic families to the popular St. Petersburg market at the beginning of the 1840s. Loaded with books that were either stolen from their masters' libraries or given to them by their owners, the servants were the most sought-after visitors by open-air booksellers because they sold their goods at a very low price. At other times, it was the booksellers themselves who went directly to the homes of the more affluent readers, hoarding books that were already read or reputed to be of little interest in order to sell them to popular readers. At the Apraksin market, coalitions of second-hand book dealers began to form; having agreed among themselves to keep prices low, they took part in auctions of entire private libraries in order to resell the books individually. Also frequent were sweeping sales by the largest bookseller-publishers, such as Smirdin, of what was left in their warehouses or of excess printed works.

At the end of the 1830s in particular, news spread of the frequent summer trips that Smirdin made to Moscow to get rid of the works that he could not sell in the more refined northern capital. Lacking cash and not wanting to lose his prestige within the St. Petersburg market, Smirdin went to the booksellers in Moscow who, according to the testimony of one such individual, "duped him nicely."<sup>155</sup> So it happened, for example, that at the beginning of the 1840s a substantial part of his stock ended up in the hands

---

152 Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, III.

153 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 200-201. See also *Pribavlenie k Sankt Peterburgskim Vedomostiam*, 1843, n. 234, 2. In his *In the World (V liudiakh)*, Maksim Gor'kii recalls how Bulgarin's novel *Ivan Vyzhigin* was still being read out loud among the minor craftsmen of Nizhnii Novgorod in the early 1880s. Cf. M. Gor'kii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Moscow, 1951), vol. 13, 417.

154 N. G. Ovsiannikov, *Vospominaniia starogo knigoprodavtsa o peterburgskoi knizhnoi torgovle za piatidesiatiletie do 1870*, in *Materialy dlia istorii russkoi knizhnoi torgovli* (St. Petersburg, 1879), 46-52.

155 Ovsiannikov, *Vospominaniia starogo knigoprodavtsa*, 14.



of one of the greatest Muscovite booksellers of *lubok* literature, Loginov.<sup>156</sup> Per *Severnaia Pchela*, “the late Loginov was the last resort for the Petersburg and Muscovite booksellers. [...] If a book did not sell, they immediately took it to Moscow, to Loginov, and he bought all the copies, mostly by weight, and scattered them all over Russia, accompanied by pompous ads that he had his writers compose.”<sup>157</sup> Indeed, Loginov ran a contingent of about 500 street vendors who traveled through towns and villages in the provinces with books that no longer sold in the capitals.<sup>158</sup> Thus, in the late 1830s and early 1840s, a large number of high literature books reached the readers from the lowest classes or those who lived on the outskirts of the Russian Empire.

In the early 1840s, in order to settle his debts, Smirdin himself resorted to some creative marketing methods that contributed to the broadening of the social base of the Russian readers. Very famous, for example, were the lotteries that he organized (following the example of French booksellers) to get rid of a large share of his stock of books, amounting in total to some 700,000 rubles. Between 1843 and 1844, Smirdin sold about 34,000 lottery tickets for the price of one ruble, each ticket corresponding to some books as well as the chance to win a big cash prize.<sup>159</sup> Smirdin’s lotteries achieved, in Ovsiannikov’s opinion, some remarkable success even among those who were not traditionally attracted to the type of books in which the great book-seller-publisher dealt:

They were immensely beneficial to the book commerce and market, because if someone who, let’s say, had never read a book won a book and then read it and by chance got passionate about it, he would then become a new avid reader and a possible buyer of other books. Thus, trade was stimulated by the fall in prices caused by the books that were won and immediately re-sold, and by the low prices with which they tried to enlist, so to speak, new readers and buyers.<sup>160</sup>

It was precisely in that period, in the first half of the 1840s, that a number of important publishers were forced either to radically transform their businesses or to close them down. For example, due to the crisis at the beginning of the 1840s, the Glazunov booksellers could hardly sell the last

---

156 The rest of Smirdin’s stock was sold partly to second-hand booksellers who supplied provincial fairs, and partly to the St. Petersburg bookseller Ol’chin. Cf. Grits, Trenin, Nikitin, *Slovesnost’ i kommersiia*, 349-350.

157 *Severnaia pchela* of 15 February 1847, n. 36, 1.

158 *Ibidem*. See the memories of one of these street vendors in N. I. Sveshnikov, *Vospominaniia propashchego cheloveka* (Moscow, 1996).

159 On Smirdin’s book lotteries, cf. Grits, Trenin, Nikitin, *Slovesnost’ i kommersiia*, 353-355 and Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii*, 74.

160 Ovsiannikov, *Vospominaniia starogo knigoprodavtsa*, 15.

volumes of the new posthumous edition of Pushkin's works.<sup>161</sup> In general, during that period, the Glazunovs were forced to reduce their investments in literary works and focused mainly on the production and sale of manuals, which were less subject to market fluctuations, given that they were mostly ordered by state institutions.<sup>162</sup> Starting from the mid forties, other publishers, such as Korablev and Siriakov, decided to specialize in religious literature.<sup>163</sup> In 1845, Smirdin was forced to close his large bookshop with a reading room on the Nevskii Prospekt and, beginning in 1847, he devoted himself exclusively to publishing. With the publication of the *Complete Collection of Works by Russian Authors* (*Polnoe sobranie sochinenii russkikh avtorov*), a colossal work that came out in 70 volumes between 1846 and 1856, Smirdin tried to recover from his debts by publishing, at a very low price (1 ruble per volume), the complete works of 35 Russian authors, many of which were unobtainable or otherwise never collected before. Yet the project did not have the desired success, and the bookseller closed down his business in 1856, deep in debt.<sup>164</sup> A new bookseller-publisher named M.D. Ol'khin started his business in 1842 with a large amount of capital (he was one of Smirdin's creditors and had inherited part of his stock), but went bankrupt in just 6 years.<sup>165</sup>

According to the testimony of one of the Glazunov booksellers, the decrease in sales of novels published in volume form at the beginning of the 1840s was due above all "to the success of the monthly thick journals."<sup>166</sup> Since they sold their subscriptions in advance, monthly journals (as Osip Senkovskii's *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* had shown) guaranteed publishers lower costs and much more consistent revenues than those offered by the retail sale of works in volume form. Published in magazines, divided into blocks of chapters that came out month after month, Russian novels underwent a noticeable formal change. In 1841, Belinskii described the nature of the evolution recently undergone by the Russian novel: "Current novels, instead of the old much-missed four volumes, are now usually either published in two large-font thin little volumes or, fearing that they might not attract enough readers, spread across the pages of five or six issues of a thick journal."<sup>167</sup> In the mid-forties, Bulgarin recorded the decline of the multiple-volume novel and the increasing dominance of the journal: "Booksellers everywhere now say that working hard is no longer worth it, because nothing else circulates except journals and, if you jot down a *povest'* or a novel, these always end

161 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi torgovli*, 71. See also Gessen, *Knigoizdatel 'Aleksandr Pushkin*, 146.

162 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi torgovli*, 81.

163 Ovsiannikov, *Vospominaniia starogo knigoprodavtsa*, 30-32

164 On the reasons for Smirdin's bankruptcy, see Kishkin, *Chestnyi, dobryi, prostodushnyi*, 68-78.

165 Ovsiannikov, *Vospominaniia starogo knigoprodavtsa*, 33-34.

166 *Kratkii obzor knizhnoi torgovli*, 79-80.

167 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 186.

up in journals.”<sup>168</sup> From that moment on throughout the nineteenth century, Russian novels were read initially—and primarily—in thick journals rather than in single editions. The practice of reading novels thus acquired two separate but parallel modalities. One type of novel reading, based on monthly magazines, was fragmented and spread out in time, full of anticipation and particularly interested in the details of the work. The other type, carried out through single editions or collections of novels, was more consistent and faster, and was perhaps less focused on individual details but still able to better grasp the overall idea of the work.

The publication of novels in thick journals had the advantage of allowing readers to track down the authors that they had particularly loved in the past and who were more in line with their aesthetic and ideological orientations. Thanks to the mediation of the editors, readers began to have the opportunity to participate more actively in literary life and began to influence the production of novels more directly. It was in this period, indeed, that the most dynamic readers, even those from the most remote provinces, became active and began to pick up their pens and write to magazines, expressing opinions and commenting on what they read. More and more frequently, it was no longer the author who proposed his novel to the publisher, as it used to happen in Smirdin’s days; rather, it was the journal editor who chose the authors that he knew would be more appreciated by his audience. This practice created a deep rift within the Russian public. Thanks to their greater interaction with their readers, journals ended up segmenting the audience into communities that shared the same favorite authors and critics, and indeed, the same reactions to novels.<sup>169</sup> Belinskii underlines how important the role of magazines was in this process: “Some journals survive thanks to a high number of subscribers and their different positions divide the audience into different literary groups”.<sup>170</sup> As recalled by A. D. Galakhov, magazines contributed to dividing the public: “Frequently, they were the ones who fueled the controversy since, even then, readers were divided into literary parties that had varied positions on orientations, contents, and other aspects of the production of the periodical press”.<sup>171</sup> In 1841, I. Panaev wrote in *Otechestvennye zapiski* that “it is known that Russian literature [...] is divided into several *parties* (*partii*); therefore, as a consequence, the reading audience is also dividing into parties.”<sup>172</sup> For the first time, Russian readers began to form “parties.”

168 *Severnaia pchela*, 19 February 1844, n. 39, 1 cited in A. I. Reitblat, “Tolsty zhurnal i ego publika,” *Idem, Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 38.

169 V. I. Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov XIX v.* (Moscow, 1958), 319.

170 *Ibid.*, p. 320.

171 A. D. Galakhov, *Zapiski cheloveka* (Moscow, 1999), 185.

172 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 319.

The economic crisis at the end of the 1830s also fueled the growing discontent of provincial landowners. At the same time, the political and social demands made by urban groups—especially students, teachers, young intellectuals—became more evident. The clash of the interests of these two groups—the landowners and the urban intelligentsia—created some fertile ground for further divisions among the Russian public. The new generation of readers in particular did not see their new interests or their ideals and aspirations recognized at all in the magazines and newspapers circulating at that time. *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, which at the beginning of the 1840s was still the most widespread magazine, continued catering mostly to an old provincial public, one that was conservative and not very demanding from the aesthetic point of view. During that decade, it quickly lost readers (from 7000 subscribers from 1837, to 3000 in 1847, down to 2100 in 1849);<sup>173</sup> *Syn otechestva* (*The Son of the Fatherland*) kept publishing historical and travel memoirs and historiographical works on past military glories, mainly entertaining the current military, retired officers, and older public officials; Pletnev's refined *Sovremennik* kept away from controversies and found its scanty readership among an older and more select public from St. Petersburg, one more nostalgic for Pushkinian times; Mikhail Pogodin's conservative *Moskvitianin* (*The Muscovite*), which had just over 300 subscribers in 1845, and the reactionary *Maiak* (*The Lighthouse*) mostly attracted the sympathies of readers attracted to patriotic and nationalistic ideals.<sup>174</sup> The new generations of readers who looked to Europe as a model—and were, moreover no longer satisfied with the official patriotism of many historical novels and conservative magazines—sought a new voice, and the journals that sought to provide that voice were, for example, *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*), overseen by Andrei A. Kraevskii and (starting in 1847) the new *Sovremennik* edited by Nekrasov and Panaev. Thanks to Belinskii's help and Kraevskii's skills, *Otechestvennye zapiski* emerged as the definitive journal for most progressive Russian readers between 1839 and 1846. In a few years, the magazine went from 1250 subscribers in 1839 to 3000 in 1843, and reached 4000 subscriptions in 1847.<sup>175</sup> According to Prince Viazemskii's estimates, 4000 or 5000 subscriptions at the time meant an audience of almost 100,000 readers, taking into account that it was precisely at that historical moment that collective readings (especially in urban areas) intensified and spread far beyond the aristocratic salons.<sup>176</sup>

173 Ch. A. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2009), 96. For an overview of the journals from the 1840s, cf. R. L. Belknap, "Survey of Russian Journals, 1840-1880," in D. A. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 1997), 91-101.

174 Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 80.

175 In the same period in France, where there was a larger number of magazines, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* had 2500 subscriptions in 1848. Cf. Ruud, *Fighting Words*, 95, 278.

176 Cf. M. I. Gille'son, P. A. Viazemskii: *zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Leningrad, 1969), 324. The figure should not be taken literally, and may appear excessive, but it indicates a ratio of 20

The most passionate readers of *Otechestvennyye zapiski* were mostly students, gymnasium teachers, and professors, but there were, of course, also progressive landowners, young officers, officials and employees with liberal ideas.<sup>177</sup> In the city, the journal's issues were easily accessible not only via circulating libraries, but they could also be found in in cafés, pastry shops and taverns.<sup>178</sup> The students represented a vital category among the readers of *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, as they were the most enthusiastic and, apparently, the least critical. "There's an article by Belinskii!" wrote Herzen in *My Past and Thoughts* (*Byloe i dumy*), "and to this call the students ran into the libraries, the coffee rooms, threw themselves on the thick volume of *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, snatched it from each other's hands, read it until it was reduced to dust, until they removed its pages and, as a result, two or three authorities and old beliefs would disappear, as if they had never been."<sup>179</sup> Belinskii, the leading critic of *Otechestvennyye zapiski*, enjoyed enormous popularity with the youth, which only further exacerbated divisions among the Russian public. As Aleksandr Kul'chitskii wrote in September 1840 from the faraway Ukrainian town of Khar'kiv, Belinskii's articles provoked strong reactions that divided the provincial reading public: "You have the particular skill," he wrote to Belinskii himself, "to make yourself as many friends as you make yourself real enemies."<sup>180</sup> The role of the literary critic became increasingly important in guiding the public's opinion and in influencing their preferences with regard to the most fashionable novels one could read. Among the young, literary criticism and the bibliographic chronicle were the first section to be read, even before the literary section, and they heavily influenced the way in which certain novels were interpreted.<sup>181</sup> Thanks to the mediating role of magazines, the reading of novels became a practice that was increasingly prepared and ideologically directed by critics. It was Belinskii's articles from the early 1840s that eclipsed Bulgarin's fame as a novelist and diverted many young readers toward new novels such as *A Hero of our Time* (*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1840) by Mikhail Lermontov and *Dead Souls* (*Priklucheniia Chichikova, ili Mertvye dushi*, 1842) by Nikolai Gogol'.<sup>182</sup> "Journalism, in our time, is everything," wrote

---

readers to each subscription, which in several cases, as with subscriptions taken out to circulating libraries or literary cafes, might be a realistic estimate. On the ratio of subscriptions to readers, see also the estimates of Reitblat, "Tolsty zhurnal i ego publika," 47-48. On group reading in urban areas, see A. S. Pavlova, "Chitalel' moskovskogo universiteta pervoi poloviny XIX v.," in I. E. Barenbuam (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, vol. 1 (Leningrad, 1973), 58-76.

177 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennyye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 305.

178 Cf. Pavlova, "Chitalel' moskovskogo universiteta," 62.

179 Cit. in Kuleshov, *Otechestvennyye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 305.

180 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennyye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 320-321.

181 Galakhov, *Zapiski cheloveka*, 155.

182 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 5, 200-201.

Belinskii in 1840, “the journal is a pulpit, and who can be angry at this?”<sup>183</sup> The secularization and ideologization of the Russian public in the 1840s occurred mainly through the reading of thick journals such as *Otechestvennye zapiski* and *Sovremennik*.

The publication of Lermontov’s and Gogol’s novels played a significant role not only in stimulating but even in shaping the segmentation of the Russian public. The stylistic originality and the interpretative openness of these two novels made it possible to delineate and emphasize cultural and ideological differences of which the public only then became conscious. The deeply ambiguous nature of these two novels allowed readers to project onto them very different aesthetic and ideological positions. In particular, a novel like *A Hero of our Time*, with its complex narrative and ideological structure, created a profound generational rift in the Russian public and increased the distance between readers of different ages. If the Caucasian and military settings were easily recognizable by the reader of the 1830s, who often tended to compare them to Marlinskii’s Caucasian novellas or to historical novels, the fragmentary narrative structure of the work often left the more traditional readers confused. For older readers or those coming from the more remote provinces who were used to Marlinskii’s pompous style, Lermontov’s novel appeared excessively simple, almost basic. A reader from Irkutsk, where Marlinskii’s style was still in vogue, stated that “it is a good novel, but it is written too simply.”<sup>184</sup>

The title of Lermontov’s novel, *A Hero of Our Time*, significantly increased the gap between younger and older Russian readers. The older generation of readers, who were accustomed to the simple and noble heroes of Russian historical novels, expected a model to imitate and were disappointed and irritated by Pechorin; the younger ones, on the other hand, found him to be a complex and fascinating character with whom they could identify. Significant differences are reflected, for example, in the opinions of four readers of different ages: the Grand Duchess Mariia Pavlovna (1786-1859), Tsar Nicholas I (1796-1855), the tsar’s second son Konstantin Nikolaevich (1827-1892) and a student at the University of Kazan’, Aleksandr I. Artem’ev (1820-1873). Of course, the differences in their opinions about Lermontov’s novel are not reducible to a simple generational difference; however, this factor seems to be highly influential, crucially conditioning their horizon of expectation and the literary tastes that then matured over time.

After appreciating the first part of Lermontov’s novel, Nicholas (then 44 years old) was greatly disappointed by the second part, which the tsar interpreted by comparison with the romantic French novels so popular with

---

183 April 16, 1840 letter from Belinskii to Botkin in Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 505, and February 19, 1840 letter to Botkin in Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, 453.

184 V. I. Vagin, “40-e goda v Irkutsk,” in *Literaturnyi sbornik. Sobranie nauchnykh i literaturnykh statei o Sibiri i Aziatskom vostoke* (St. Petersburg, 1885), 265.

the new generations, such as *La confession d'un enfant du siècle* by Alfred de Musset. He wrote to his wife in June 1840:

I have finished reading *Hero* and find the second part repugnant, perfectly worthy of being in vogue. It is the same emphatic representation of those despicable and implausible characters populating contemporary foreign novels. Such novels ruin morals and harden the character [...] They have a deplorable effect, because in the end you get used to thinking that the whole world is made up of people like that, people who only perform the apparently best deeds with the basest and vilest intentions. And what can that lead to? Hate and scorn for the human race!<sup>185</sup>

And he added that the novel's hero should have been the old pragmatic and loyal captain Maksim Maksimych rather than young Pechorin, who was cynical and disillusioned. "When I started reading this work, I rejoiced and hoped that he could possibly be the hero of our time," he wrote, and yet "Mr. Lermontov proved unable to represent this noble and simple character; he replaced him with poor, very unattractive personalities, which should have been left aside (even if they do indeed exist) so as not to cause irritation".<sup>186</sup> The tsar, like many older readers who observed a reading paradigm typical of Pushkin's era, saw in the novel's hero above all a self-portrait of the author: "I am convinced that it is a miserable book that bears witness to the great corruption of his author," he wrote to his wife, determined to send its author back to the Caucasus.<sup>187</sup>

A similar reaction to Lermontov's novel is expressed by the tsar's sister, the grand duchess Mariia Pavlovna, ten years his senior (then 54 years old) in a letter that she sent to the empress in 1840. Like the tsar, Mariia Pavlovna likewise established a strong link between the novel genre and explicit moral content that could easily be deciphered by the reader. Mariia Pavlovna wrote:

Lermontov's novel shows the signs of his talent and also of his art, but, even if one cannot expect works of this kind to be a treatise on morality, it is still to be hoped that in them one might find a pattern of thought or intent that can lead the reader to certain precise conclusions. In Lermontov's novel you find nothing but the tendency and the need to conduct a complicated game aimed at dominating, coming out on top, thanks to a particular indiffer-

185 E. Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova*, 2nd edition (Moscow, 1986), 63-64.

186 Ibid. See also B. M. Eikhenbaum, "Nikolai I o Lermontove," in Idem, *O proze. Sbornik statei* (Leningrad, 1969), 425.

187 Ibid.

ence of the soul that makes any kind of relationship impossible and which, in the sentimental sphere, often leads to betrayal.<sup>188</sup>

The grand duchess tends to link those characteristics of Lermontov's hero not so much to the influence of contemporary French novels as the tsar did, but rather to the influence of Goethe's *Faust*. Thus, for example, the grand duchess explained the character of Pechorin to herself as follows:

The author has taken it from Goethe's Mephistopheles, but with the great difference that in *Faust* the devil is only deployed to help Faust to overcome the phases of his desires, and he remains a secondary character, even if he is given an important role. Lermontov's hero, on the other hand, is the main character and, considering that the means that he uses are his own means and come from him, it is not possible to approve of them.<sup>189</sup>

We find very different reactions between two readers of the following generation, the tsar's son Konstantin Nikolaevich, who read *A Hero of Our Time* when he was eighteen, and the university student Aleksandr I. Artem'ev, who read it at the age of twenty. Konstantin Nikolaevich read the novel after having enjoyed some of Lermontov's poems set in the Caucasus. The grand duke was really taken by the novel and it was seen as a typical expression of romantic literature set in that region. Konstantin Nikolaevich wrote in his diary:

I have read Lermontov's famous novel *A Hero of Our Time*. It contains wonderful descriptions of the Caucasus, as do all his works, and the story itself is interesting, but the truth of the portrait of the hero and the link between his religious nature and that odious worldly indifference (*eta sviaz' religioznosti s etoi gnusnoi svetskoiu kholodnostiiu*) is disgusting. All in all, however, I found it enthralling, because this is the Caucasus<sup>190</sup>.

Despite the fact that the grand duke found certain sides of Pecorin's character repugnant, he cannot deny, as his father had done, that his is a real character and one that exercises a certain fascination on him.

A similar passion for Lermontov's hero, although expressed in different terms, can be found in the letter that the student Artem'ev, studying at the University of Kazan', sent to the editorial staff of the journal *Otechestvennye zapiski*. Artem'ev was the son of a Kazan' alcohol sales controller and stud-

188 Gershtein, *Sud'ba Lermontova*, 73.

189 Ibid.

190 Cited in A. Sidorova, *Obrazovat' v detiakh um, serdtse i dushu.* "Vospitanie velikikh kniazei v sem'iakh imperatorov Nikolaia I i Aleksandra II (Moscow, 2019), 179.



ied at the university at the expense of the state. As he writes in his confession-letter to the editorial staff, he had loved Marlinskii's stories as a boy, and later admired Polevoi and his *Moskovskii Telegraf*, the publication that had brought to Russia a good part of the new European literary movements and trends; most recently, he had become a passionate reader of *Otechestvennye zapiski*. His reaction to Lermontov's novel bears clear traces of the opinion that Belinskii had just expressed on the pages of the magazine.<sup>191</sup> In his letter, Artem'ev, speaking of Lermontov's book, sides with this magazine against the opinion of the conservative journal *Maiak* (*The Lighthouse*), which had criticized the work:

For what reason do those people not want to recognize that *A Hero of our Time* is a beautiful book, a work of art? Perhaps for the fact that Lermontov, who we can say (or rather we have to say) is the only true representative of our literature, did not put in his book some sentences from a primer, he did not say that *vice is hateful and virtue is praiseworthy!* But should we really spend all our life with a schoolmaster's cane in our hand?! The *Lighthouse* guardians are afraid that we, once we read Lermontov's book, become heroes of our time like Pechorin. And who are we supposed to be, Maksim Maksimych? It seems to me that we need to follow our time, rather than stay behind it. *A Hero of our Time*, at least for me, is much more of a moral work, even if it does not include very long religious prayers [...] I prefer to resemble Pechorin rather than to start praying somewhere in the street and be called a Bible-thumper; I would not really like to resemble the Pharisees from the Gospel... This is what I think of *A Hero of our Time*.<sup>192</sup>

One first notes in the young student's opinion a decisive rejection of the moralistic, almost classicist conception of literature that had influenced the tsar's and grand duchess's judgment. In Artem'ev's eyes, that Lermontov's protagonist lacked ideal traits did not necessarily make him an immoral hero. His opinion is the result of a radical renegotiation of the values that had been offered to his generation by institutions such as state school ("the master's cane") and the Orthodox church ("Bible-thumper"), which are now completely dismissed in favor of the new values proposed by contemporary literature. It was precisely the rejection of religious and school values, perceived by the student as no longer appropriate to his time ("we must follow our time"), that allowed Artem'ev to identify himself with Lermontov's hero. Although no explicitly anti-religious attitudes were expressed in the nov-

<sup>191</sup> See in particular his review in *Notes of the Fatherland* of July 1840 (NN. 6-7), especially where the critic writes about how many blamed Lermontov for the novel's absence of "moral judgments" (Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 4, 235).

<sup>192</sup> Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 44-45.

el, Lermontov's hero clearly offered this young reader behaviors, gestures, and psychological and intellectual attitudes in which he recognized himself, and which he felt were contemporary—even if he still expressed them in the evangelical language that he had learned from his traditional world and from which he was trying to free himself.

The fact that reactions like the tsar's were not an isolated case, but rather a tendency shared by many old generation readers, is confirmed by Lermontov's own reaction to the very first responses of the public to his novel. In general, the novel was greatly successful with readers. After the appearance of three of the novel's episodes in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* ("Bela" in No. 3 of 1839, "The Fatalist" in No. 11 of 1839, and "Taman" in No. 2 of 1840), the first complete edition in volume form, issued in 1000 copies in the spring of 1840 at the very low price of 2 silver rubles (about 7 assignation rubles), sold out.<sup>193</sup> In the following few years, two more editions of 1400 and 1200 copies each followed and were sold at the same price.<sup>194</sup> If having read the discrete episodes published in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* prevented readers from expressing their overall opinion on the elusive character of the hero, the publication of the entire work in volume form in May 1840 immediately aroused a great deal of criticism from readers. In the preface to the second edition of 1841, published one year later, the author himself strongly reacted to his readers' initial, intense protests: "Many of its readers have been dreadfully, and in all seriousness, shocked to find such an immoral man as Pechorin set before them as an example. Others have observed, with much acumen, that the author has painted his own portrait and those of his acquaintances! . . . What a stale and wretched jest!"<sup>195</sup> In his preface, Lermontov, employing a caustic irony, scolded the first reactions of the Russian public to his novel, attributing his readers' mistaken reactions to their poor literary education: "The public of this country is so youthful, not to say simple-minded, that it cannot understand the meaning of a fable unless the moral is set forth at the end. Unable to see a joke, insensible to irony, it has, in a word, been badly brought up."<sup>196</sup> And, speaking of the positive, completely idealized heroes such as those who appeared in Russian historical novels, he concludes: "People have been surfeited with sweetmeats and their digestion has been ruined: bitter medicines, sharp truths, are therefore necessary."<sup>197</sup> Focusing on the features of what was, in his eyes, a hero

193 Cf. A. S. Bodrova, "K istorii posmertnykh izdaniy Lermontova: Slovesnost', kommersiia i institut avtorskogo prava v nachale 1840-kh godov," *Russkaia literatura*, 3 (2014), 49.

194 However, a note by Kraevskii in 1844 suggests that not all the copies were immediately sold; only the first run was. Out of the 3600 copies comprising the three editions printed between 1840 and 1842, 2088 copies were sold immediately, while some of the other copies were either given away or lost. In April 1844, 1090 copies remained unsold. Cf. V. Manuilov, "Lermontov i Kraevskii," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 40-41 (Moscow, 1948), 384.

195 M. Iu. Lermontov, *A Hero of our Time*, translated by J. H. Wisdom, M. Murray (New York, 1916), 334.

196 *Ibid.*, 333.

197 *Ibid.*, 335.

of his time—heroic in a decidedly ambiguous and ironic way—Lermontov not only opened the door to his readers' most divergent interpretations about what a "hero" should be like, but truly divided readers of different generations, putting them on opposite sides of an interpretive line, arguing about what "our time" was supposed to be. Starting with Lermontov's novel, readers' different reactions to contemporary Russian novels increasingly tended to distinguish themselves according to generational rather than social criteria.

No less divisive were the reactions of the Russian public to Gogol's *Dead Souls*. If Lermontov's novel had seemed to many a portrait of the youth of the time (i.e. an important part of the new public), attractive to some readers and repulsive to others, *Dead Souls* initially appeared as a merciless caricature that targeted the largest share of the Russian reading public of the 1830s: the small landowners from the provinces. Readers' reactions were not long in coming. Unlike Lermontov, Gogol' had decided not to publish parts of his novel in the magazines, but rather to publish it all at once as a book, so that the whole work would make a greater impression on the public. The novel, printed in 2500 copies, was an immediate success despite the very high price of 10 silver rubles and 50 kopeks (about 37 assignation rubles) at which it was sold at when it arrived in bookshops in May 1842. A month after the release of the novel, an official source reported that "despite the, as they say, gloomy times for the book trade, Gogol's work is selling out. The booksellers, who already had great expectations, never cease to be amazed at the speed at which they are selling *The Adventures of Chichikov*."<sup>198</sup> A few months later, in September 1842, Belinskii wrote in *Otechestvennye zapiski*: "Soon it will no longer be possible to find '*Dead Souls*' in any of our bookshops, even though it has been printed in a large number of copies."<sup>199</sup> In February of the following year, the copies had already sold out and a new edition was being prepared; however, it only came out in 1846, with a circulation of another 2400 copies, which also sold out as early as the beginning of 1847.<sup>200</sup> Right from the start, the novel provoked strong reactions. Konstantin Aksakov wrote:

The writers, the journalists, the booksellers, the individual readers all say that we haven't had such movement for a long time as we now have with *Dead Souls*. Truly not a single person has remained indifferent; the book has touched everyone, aroused everyone, and everyone says his piece. Praise and abuse resound from all sides, and there is plenty of each, but also a complete absence of indifference.<sup>201</sup>

198 Cited in Iu. Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi. "Mertvye dushi": pisatel', kritika, chitatel'* (Moscow, 1984), 124.

199 Ibid., 125.

200 S. Gessen, *Knigoizdatel' Aleksandr Pushkin*, 145-146.

201 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 125.

The novel touched more than one nerve with the Russian public and had caused them to take an explicit position on the work. In 1841, Panaev asked from the pages of *Otechestvennye zapiski*: “And you, my benevolent reader, to which party do you belong?”<sup>202</sup> Upon the publication of *Dead Souls*, one individual noted that “without this book it would be impossible to presuppose the variety of opinions that has now arisen in society.”<sup>203</sup> In order to describe said variety of readers’ reactions to Gogol’s novel, contemporaries often resorted to a complex classification of the audience of *Dead Souls*. Sergei Aksakov insisted on the differences in its readers’ literary culture:

It is possible to divide the audience of the *Dead Souls* into three groups. The first, which includes the educated youth and all those who are able to understand the high value of Gogol’, welcomed him with enthusiasm. The second group is composed of people who, as it were, found themselves perplexed, and who, accustomed to having fun with Gogol’s works, all of a sudden were not able to understand the profound and serious meaning of his poem. The third group of readers got angry with Gogol’: they recognized themselves in various figures in the poem and with determination they set out to defend the whole of Russia whom he had offended.<sup>204</sup>

As was already the case with Lermontov’s novel, here too the generational factor played a fundamental role, as noted by N. Ia. Prokopovich: “All the young generation had gone crazy for *Dead Souls*.”<sup>205</sup> The very plot structure of the novel, made up of episodes feebly linked by the journey of the protagonist, Chichikov, favored collective readings among the young, in small groups of two or three companions or whole classes of students, per the recollection of V.V. Stasov, then a student at the Institute of Jurisprudence in St. Petersburg:

This book came to us in the late summer of 1842, when we were just back from our holidays. Courses had not yet started. And so we spent our time in the way that we liked the most: reading *Dead Souls* in one breath, all together, huddled up in one big group, to put an end to the quarrels as to whose turn it was to read it... And in this way, over the course of a few days, we read and re-read this great, extraordinarily original, unique, national,

---

202 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 319.

203 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 126.

204 *Ibid.*, 126-127.

205 *Ibid.*, 127.

and brilliant work of art. We were drunk with enthusiasm and amazement.<sup>206</sup>

This collective type of reading, in large groups of students, tended to radicalize judgments and to cancel, or silence, the more moderate perplexities or reactions.

If the originality of Gogol's style and vision of the novel had left young readers decidedly enthusiastic, many other readers, especially those who had been brought up on novelistic models from previous decades, were left puzzled and disoriented. A reader from the province of Khar'kiv, the landowner Konsantin I. Markov, wrote to Gogol' about the reactions of readers from his region: "Your poem has caught our audience by surprise and here we do not yet realize what kind of work yours is. It's not bad, many think, but how strange it is, they add."<sup>207</sup> The title and the narrative structure could be linked back to the picaresque novel or to the adventure novel, but on the title page the author clearly stated that it was a narrative poem. Those provincial readers who read the novel expecting adventures similar to those of Bulgarin's Russian picaros were no less disappointed than those city readers who read it thinking of the light and risqué adventures of Paul De Kock's French heroes.<sup>208</sup> The models against which most of the contemporary audience measured the adventures of Chichikov were Bulgarin's and Paul De Kock's characters. To Konstantin Aksakov, who told the author of the readers' perplexities about "the absence of an anecdotal external link," Gogol' replied without surprise: "Poor reader, he greedily took a book in his hands to read it as if it were a compelling novel that could distract him, but then, tired, he had to lower his hands and head, finding nothing but boredom in it, which he had not foreseen at all."<sup>209</sup> And, again, the following year, Gogol' wrote: "What fault of mine is it, if the public has a stupid head and in its eyes I am the same as Paul de Kock: Paul de Kock writes a novel a year, they say, and so why should I not do that too? After all, it's a novel; I called it a poem just for a joke."<sup>210</sup> *Dead Souls* not only lacked a hero like those to whom its readers were accustomed (a lucky picaro, a trendy dandy, or a tragic romantic hero), but all the other characters in the novel also tended to merge with the landscape, to be transformed into objects, immobilized caricatures—while, at the same time, the landscape was animated and anthropomorphized in a total blurring of the boundaries between the animate and the inanimate, between the tiny and the majestic. Unlike the

206 Ibid. About Dostoevskii's testimony, cf. F. M. Dostoevskii, *Ob iskusstve* (Moscow, 1973), 297.

207 Cf. V. I. Shenrok, *Materialy dlia biografii Gogolia* (Moscow, 1897), vol. 4, 551.

208 Regarding this, readers were influenced by two famous critics of the time: Gogol's novel was compared to Paul de Kock's novels by both F. V. Bulgarin, who, in *Severnaia Pchela* defined it a "work à la Paul De Kock," and by O. I. Senkovskii in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*. See *Severnaia pchela*, 1842, No. 279 and 1843, No. 18; *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 1842, sect. 8, 51-53.

209 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 132.

210 Ibid., 133.

provocative fragmentariness of Lermontov's novel, Gogol's work surprised its readers with its tragicomic indefiniteness and the complete break in its proportions. Not a few readers, prompted by the most hostile critics, found that the novel only contained descriptions of the lowest and most vulgar aspects of life in the Russian provinces, and paid specific attention to vulgar details of everyday life that were absent in previous literature. It all seemed to them in bad taste and unacceptable for a work of art: "How impatiently I had waited for *Dead Souls*, and what is the result? Apart from a lot of filth, there is nothing good in it. Did you read the analysis made by Senkovskii?" wrote a female reader, prompted by a review in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*.<sup>211</sup> According to a witness of the time, the readers' sensitivity towards the low and vulgar aspects of everyday life (*poshlost'*) in Gogol's meticulous descriptions of the servant Petrushka, for example, was inversely proportional to the reader's social position: "All those who have personally known the dirt and the smell, and not just by hearsay, are very indignant about Petrushka, even though they say *Dead Souls* is a really fun thing. In high places, [...] readers have noticed neither the dirt nor the stink and they have all gone crazy about your poem," wrote Prokopovich to the author.<sup>212</sup>

Gogol's novel produced a very different effect among those who listened to some chapters read aloud by the author in St. Petersburg's salons and other high places, where they were enchanted by the magical power of Gogol's hypnotic sentences, and those who silently read it in some corner of the provinces and could evaluate the work as a whole, better noticing the lack of homogeneity in the style. As William Mills Todd writes, in St. Petersburg's salons, "the orally delivered text seems to have invited a spirit of cooperation from its listeners, a willingness to accept as natural and to overlook or tolerate the comic strangeness, contradictions, and discontinuities of *Dead Souls*."<sup>213</sup> Among the Muscovite public, which was traditionally more conservative, the novel was sometimes considered insignificant, and sometimes indecorous: "F.I. Vas'kov said that the jokes in the novel are trivial and indecent," wrote Sergei Aksakov to the author, "and that it is not becoming for a lady to read it in full."<sup>214</sup> Certain descriptions of the most intimate details of the existence of servants and coachmen appeared decidedly unsuitable for a female audience. A Moscow actress like Praskov'ia Ivanovna Orlova, for example, could not avoid blushing when reading aloud about the smell that Petrushka emanated.<sup>215</sup> Other readers felt offended by the too-familiar tone with which the narrator addressed his reader: "There is somebody who was offended by the following words: '*Let's now look at*

---

211 Ibid., 130.

212 Ibid., 132.

213 W. M. Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* (Cambridge, MA, London, 1986) 175.

214 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 131.

215 P. I. Orlova-Savina, *Avtobiografia* (Moscow, 1994), 183.

*what our friend is doing*? ‘And who would this friend be?’ he said, ‘Selifan or a tavern waiter?!’ ‘How are people like these supposed to be my friends?!’<sup>216</sup> For those who educated young people, *Dead Souls* was an inappropriate reading, especially due to the vulgarity of the world that it described, as well as its improper and sometimes indecent language:

A respectable youth educator said that we must avoid picking up *Dead Souls* because we would get dirty; all that’s inside that book you can find at the market... A colonel advised [...] to change one’s opinion about the novel so as not to run the risk of losing one’s place in the Pages’ corps, lest the rumor reach the general, who is someone who knows all of Derzhavin by heart...<sup>217</sup>

In the unsophisticated salons of the remote Siberian town of Irkutsk, where, per one witness, “the notion of high style dominated and Marlinskii’s high-sounding language (*treskuchii iazyk*) was considered the ultimate in style,” Gogol’s novel was regarded as “a silly thing, ‘enormously vulgar.’”<sup>218</sup> Here the local readers seemed to admire especially Gogol’s lyrical digressions: “They appreciated only the lyrical passages, like ‘Whither, then, are you speeding, O Russia of mine?’ and things like that.”<sup>219</sup> The reader from Irkutsk emphasizes how Gogol’ until then had been considered above all a comic author, not a high-level author: “In general Gogol’ did not have the reputation of being an excellent writer, although his first stories were considered very funny.”<sup>220</sup>

But the heated reactions among the readers of *Dead Souls* were provoked not only by their different aesthetic positions on the work’s ambiguous narrative form (sometimes markedly oral and colloquial, sometimes abruptly emphatic), or on the hybrid structure of the genre (between the picaresque novel and the poem), or on the absence of a true hero with distinctive features (one either positive or negative), or on descriptions of details that were considered too vulgar. It was also the encounter between that ambiguous textual structure, which parodied and played with the dominant ideology, and a tense and restless socio-political context that generated such opposed and violent reactions among the Russian public. The novel came out just when the finance minister Kankrin was preparing a monetary reform that was to significantly impact the interests of landowners. Moreover, two months before the publication of Gogol’s novel, the Russian government had been promoting a timid and partial reform of serfdom (*Polozhenie ob obiazannykh krest’ianakh*).<sup>221</sup> In

216 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 131-132.

217 Ibid., 131.

218 Vagin, “40-e goda v Irkutske,” 265.

219 Ibid..

220 Ibid.

221 Cf. D. Field, *The End of the Serfdom. Nobility and Bureaucracy in Russia, 1855-1861* (Cambridge, London, 1976), 59.

March 1842, Nicholas I had given a speech at the Council of State in which he recognized that serfdom was “an evil” and that in the future it would have to change, but he had only given some general guidelines for such changes and had vaguely left their practical realization up to the goodwill of the owners.<sup>222</sup> The tsar had talked about the reform in terms so general and vague that it irritated both the progressives and the conservatives. Above all, he had fostered the fears of many landowners, who saw the legal basis for their livelihood and welfare threatened. The mere existence of this possibility had stirred many owners, as the head of the III section wrote in his report to the tsar: “A large part of the landowners have regretfully seen in this law a first step of the government towards further provisions that will end up depriving them of their property, by freeing peasants from the condition of serfdom.”<sup>223</sup> Thus Gogol’s novel came out in an environment of social tension and great political expectation. As Dostoevskii wrote, the youth at the time “all seemed to be taken with something, they were all waiting for something.”<sup>224</sup> To the noble educated readers—and not only those with a Westernizer orientation but also those who were drawn to Slavophile ideals—the novel seemed to represent an answer to the unrealistic reformist intentions of the government. One reader wrote: “Gogol’ deserves great recognition because he has really shown the substance of things and can tame the arrogance of our reformers from the capital.”<sup>225</sup> The grotesque caricatures of the landowners that featured in the novel, underlining their ignorance, their isolation, and the brutality of their landownership, personally irritated numerous readers from that social class: “From every corner of Russia, Gogol’ hears that landowners are insulting him harshly; this is clear proof that his portraits are faithful and that the originals have been correctly spotted! [...] Many before have described the daily life of the Russian nobility, but no one has infuriated them like this.”<sup>226</sup> Unlike Lermontov’s novel, which questioned the identity and individual values of the contemporary city reader, Gogol’s novel needled the readers from the provinces by raising doubts about their real social position. After years of reading edifying patriotic historical novels, Gogol’s book, with its merciless depiction of Russia’s provincial society, caused those readers to recognize themselves in its caricature-like portraits, provoking their indignant reactions. Konstantin Aksakov reported to the author: “Many landowners are seriously angry and consider you their mortal, personal enemy.”<sup>227</sup> He concluded: “All the various Chichikovs and Nozdrevs of the higher or lower level are rising up. The vari-

---

222 Cf. Nikolai I, “Rech’ v zasedanii Gosudarstvennogo Soveta 30 marta 1842,” in Filin M.D. (ed.), *Imperator Nikolai I* (Moscow, 2002), 243-245.

223 E. I. Shcherbakova, M. V. Sidorova (eds.), *Rossiiia pod nadzorom. Otchety III otdeleniia, 1827-1869* (Moscow, 2006), 293.

224 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 127.

225 *Ibid.*, 128.

226 *Ibid.*, 129.

227 Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, 165.



ous Manilovs and above all the Korobochkas, they attack Gogol' with childish ingenuity".<sup>228</sup> Provincial officials had violent reactions, as one firsthand witness reported to Gogol': "Here I have squabbled with Bulgakov, the governor of Siberia, who is so reminiscent of *Dead Souls*; apparently he must have recognized himself in some scam or other, the scoundrel."<sup>229</sup> But even in St. Petersburg's salons, which generally welcomed Gogol's novel, there were also those who, like Count F.I. Tolstoy, saw in the novel an offense to the honor of the whole homeland and held that Gogol' was "an enemy of Russia" and that it was necessary "to send him to Siberia with his feet in irons."<sup>230</sup> These reactions alone demonstrate that, when read in its totality, the novel tended to take on a broad symbolic value: it was interpreted not only as a caricature of the Russian landownership or of the provincial society, but as a work that called into question the destiny of all of Russia.

In this case, too, the title played a significant role in inspiring divergent interpretations of the work itself. No less ambiguous than the title of *A Hero of our Time*, the title chosen by Gogol' for his novel encouraged readers to create, according to their social orientations and positions, the most diverse interpretations. The ambiguity of the title was accentuated by the cover that Gogol' had personally drawn and had had lithographed for the first edition of his novel, and which he only slightly modified for the 1846 second edition of the novel.<sup>231</sup> His contemporaries considered that cover as beautiful as it was eccentric; it undoubtedly attracted the reader's attention. The title imposed on the author by the censors, "The Adventures of Chichikov," which evoked the tradition of the picaresque novel, was printed much higher up on the page than was usual at the time, and in letters so small as to appear decidedly marginal.

---

228 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 145.

229 Ibid., 129.

230 Ibid.

231 On the cover designed by Gogol', see the observations of N. Tikhonravov in N. V. Gogol', *Sochineniia*, izd. 10e (Moscow, 1889), vol. 3, 477, and E. A. Smirnova, *Poema Gogolia "Mertvye dushi"* (Leningrad, 1987), 76-78.



2. N.V. Gogol', Book cover for *Dead Souls* (1842)

The reader's attention was diverted from the title by a whole series of curious little scenes and details of gentry daily life in the provinces. These drew the reader's gaze away from the top edge of the cover and towards the central part: the image of a horse-drawn carriage riding by, a multitude of bottles of champagne, glasses of various shapes, rich dishes, and other convivial objects. In the central part of the cover, much bigger than the official title, in a font twice as large, there appeared the ambiguous and sacrilegious oxymoron that Gogol' had chosen as the title of his work, and which the censors had turned into the subtitle: *Dead Souls*. This inscription was surrounded and emphasized by a thick baroque frame strewn with skulls, with a sketch of the profile of three skeletons. This frame had the primary function of clearly highlighting the allegorical substance of the work for the reader. Visually, the connection between the convivial life of Russia's provincial nobility and the inscription "Dead Souls" decorated with skeletons and skulls was immediate for the reader: they—and not the peasants—were the "Dead Souls." Thus, for many readers, the logical connection between the concept of "Dead Souls" and the corrupt owners described in the first chapters became much stronger than that with the deceased peasants whom Chichikov tries to buy. The inverse ratio of magnitude between the title and the subtitle, the former provided in a very small font and the latter in a much larger one, had been reproduced on the frontispiece of the work. It was no

coincidence that readers who referred to the novel by the title imposed on it by the censors were few: everyone knew it as *Dead Souls*. But from a graphic point of view, the cover gave even more credence to the work's self-identified genre. The word "poem" stood out at the center of the page, in white against a black background, in characters truly gigantic for the time, decorated with a frame supported by two baroque mascarons and a lyre. It was this word that suggested to the Russian reader the epic-national value of the story. The cover itself, therefore, with its three-part structure, suggested to the reader multiple possible and opposed readings of the work: a satirical-realistic reading, an allegorical-religious reading, and an epic-national reading. As noted by a contemporary, there were those who saw the subtitle of the work as a fun joke devised by Gogol', and there were those who took it seriously: "Some say that *Dead Souls* is an epic, that they understand the meaning of this title, others see in it a joke."<sup>232</sup>

In addition to the title and the cover, the narrator's increasingly emphatic digressions likewise invited the contemporary reader to attribute to the work an ever-broader symbolic and allegorical meaning. To many, the novel appeared as a judgment—almost a divine judgment—on the fate of Russia. A final verdict, however, had not at all been clearly pronounced by the author. In July 1842, Herzen wrote the following in his diary about the debates surrounding *Dead Souls*: "The Slavophiles and the anti-Slavophiles have split into parties. The former say that it is the apotheosis of Rus', it is our 'Iliad,' and they praise the novel accordingly; the others are furious, they say that in that novel there is an anathema of Rus' and for this they throw themselves against it. Similarly, the anti-Slavophiles are also split."<sup>233</sup> The fact that many among the public knew that it was only the beginning of an intended trilogy further increased the possible interpretations of the novel's meaning.<sup>234</sup>

The public's first reactions to and variable criticisms of *Dead Souls* gave rise to a series of opposing interpretative models that, like an invisible trace, profoundly influenced the public's subsequent opinions of other Russian novels that would be published in the following decades. Once the Russian public became aware, thanks to *Dead Souls*, of the profoundly political nature of the contemporary Russian novel, it could no longer pretend not to see it. For decades, Russian readers continued to read novels as if they were political treatises, driven by titles like *Who is to Blame?* by Alexander Herzen, *What is to Be Done?* by Nikolai Chernyshevskii, etc. Moreover, thanks to the work's intrinsic artistic and ideological ambiguity (it was sometimes interpreted as a realistic work and an accusation, sometimes as a fantastic and grotesque work), Gogol's novel continued to exert its divisive power on the Russian public far beyond its own era, throughout the twentieth century,

232 Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, 165.

233 Mann, *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi*, 135.

234 Cf. the opinion of the landowner from the Khar'kiv governorate Konstantin Ivanovich Markov in Shenrok, *Materialy dlia biografii Gogolia* (Moscow, 1897), vol. 4, 551.

creating continuous contrapositions between those readers that emphasized its political nature and those that exalted its fantastic mastery.<sup>235</sup>

In these years, famous critics such as Belinskii quickly dispatched old literary heroes and proclaimed new one like Lermontov and Gogol', destroyed old idols and imposed new ones—and all of this accelerated not only the transformations of the reading public's literary tastes but also, given the ideologization of reading itself, the evolution of Russia's contemporary political conscience. Just four years after the publication of *A Hero of our Time*, Belinskii wrote: "One cannot fail to be surprised at the speed at which Russian society is moving forward [...]. *A Hero of our Time* was the new *Onegin*; four years have passed and Pechorin is no longer a current ideal."<sup>236</sup> Five years after the publication of *Dead Souls*, in 1847, when the *Selected Passages from Correspondence with Friends* (*Vybrannye mesta iz perezpiski s druz'iami*) was published, the critic had already begun to destroy Gogol's literary and ideological heritage.

The de-legitimization of the old literary heroes and the imposition of new forms of politicized reading did not escape the authorities' notice. In February 1848, while reporting to the tsar on the behavior of a young soldier, A. F. Orlov, the head of the gendarmes, clearly underlined how the reading of literary works was becoming more and more a political fact for young people:

Second Lieutenant Bannikov in his testimony explained that, having developed, thanks to *Otechestvennye zapiski*, a total lack of respect for our old men of letters, he went from that to disrespecting everything that is respected by others, including the authorities, our current order of things, and even the person of Your Majesty.<sup>237</sup>

Starting from the reactions of the public to *Dead Souls* during the 1840s, interactions between the public and the novelists became more intimate than in the previous decade. In his introduction to the 1846 second edition of his novel, Gogol' addressed his readers' indignant and offended reactions, inviting his readers to collaborate with him. He asked them to send him their notes and detailed reports on their reading of the work, to compare the events of the fictional characters with their personal experiences; he even begged them to suggest possible developments for the stories of his heroes. In his introduction, Gogol' wrote that the reader had to "carefully observe all the figures that I represented in my book and tell me how that figure should behave in this or that situation; what, judging from the beginning, would happen afterwards to that character; what new circumstances

235 Cf. Todd, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin*, 167.

236 Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 7, 447.

237 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 310.

he may come across, and what should be added with respect to what I have already written.”<sup>238</sup> He added: “I would like to keep this in mind when there is a new edition of my novel, which will thus appear in a new and better version.”<sup>239</sup> Aware of having created divisions and oppositions among the public, and of having failed to create an epic work in which everyone could recognize himself, Gogol’ aspired to a process of collective creation in the sequel, and hoped that he would manage to bring his readers together.<sup>240</sup> Forms of collaboration like the one advocated by Gogol’ were certainly an exception, yet in this period the public increasingly began not only to send its reviews to the editors of journals, but also to propose their own amateur works.<sup>241</sup> Marshaling their opinions and their preferences, readers substantially influenced the choice of authors and works to be published.<sup>242</sup> For example, in March 1844, a reader from Porech’e, a village west of Moscow, wrote to the editorial staff of *Otechestvennye zapiski* a mistake-ridden letter in which, on behalf of 30 more subscribers from the area, he harshly criticized *The Living Dead* (*Zhivoi mertvets*), a work by Prince Odоеvskii: “How could you decide to publish such vulgarity in the best Russian journal?! Is it possible that it is only out of respect for his princely title?” As can be seen, political and social sensitivity played a major role in the judgment of this uncultivated provincial reader: “Is it possible that his crest with a crown has moved your indulgence to such an extent as to seriously damage your journal? Here we have so many unworthy princely highnesses, who like geese trace their lineage back to the Romans, and many of them cackle, speak and write exactly like those birds.”<sup>243</sup> The reader concluded the letter in a threatening way: “I know more than 30 people subscribed to your journal who believe that this work is exactly as I told you, and they say that if you send us these works again the magazine will not be worth anything and they will not subscribe to it anymore, and that amounts to more than a thousand and five hundred rubles. And I do not know how many of those that I do not know personally also believe the same.”<sup>244</sup> The weight of the public’s opinion had become more and more perceptible, despite the ever-growing physical distance between readers and authors. In February 1847, the journalist Galakhov wrote to Kraevskii: “I think sometimes one should not trust too much one’s opinion about a novel, and one has to pay more attention to the criticism of the majority of readers. I give you some examples. You had,

238 Gogol’, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 6, 589.

239 Ibid.

240 D. Fanger, “Gogol and His Reader,” in W. M. Todd III (ed.), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914*, (Stanford, 1978), 90.

241 Kuleshov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 366, note 35.

242 Kraevskii stated that from 1839 on, *Notes of the Fatherland’s* editors had been flooded with literary works and materials sent by readers; cf. Kulesov, *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov*, 366.

243 Ibid.

244 Ibid., 317-318.

and still have, a good opinion of Dostoevskii's *Mr. Prokharchin*, and yet all the Muscovite readers (both the educated and the uneducated) have loudly protested against this work."<sup>245</sup> Amazed by the sea of letters that the editors received from an increasingly active public—one that no longer read only passively but also wrote to criticize or approve—Odoevskii himself decided to write an article in 1843 describing this new phenomenon. He wrote: "The editors of *Otechestvennyye zapiski* and *Literaturnaia gazeta* (*The Literary Gazette*) no longer know which way to turn for the amount of letters they receive from various provinces: a collection of these letters could make up a curious chapter in the history of our literature, and we are ready to share them with anyone who would like to give a public lecture on this topic."<sup>246</sup> The awareness of the active role played by readers in the literary process was not only increasing among the public; critics were also becoming aware of how the ideologization of readers (i.e. developments that could be traced to their journals) were for the first time aided by the formation of a public sphere in Russia. The magazines represented interpretive communities composed of individuals who shared interests, skills, and often a similar language, aesthetic, and/or ideological orientation. The oft-conflicting interactions between these communities represented the first initial formation of public opinion. In 1847, Belinskii wrote: "Russian criticism now rests on a more solid foundation: now it is no longer to be found only in magazines, but also among the public."<sup>247</sup> And he went on: "Education and culture have openly spread not only among the middle class, and with this I mean the so-called people of various ranks (*raznochintsy*), but also among the lower classes: now, at least, it is no longer rare to find educated and even cultured people among the merchants or the townspeople (*meshchane*) [...]. It cannot be said in any way that today in Russia there is no civil society and even that there is no public opinion."<sup>248</sup>

Naturally, this process of democratization and mobilization of public opinion, which shifted the location of contemporary debates from aristocratic salons to the pages of the magazines, was but an initial stage in the formation of Russia's public sphere.<sup>249</sup> Despite censorship of translations, the reading of foreign novels (such as those by George Sand) impacted ongoing challenges to traditional Russian values and caused the adoption of new behavioral patterns no less than debates in Russian magazines did. French novels often communicated their sociopolitical intentions much more explicitly and effectively than was permissible in Russian novels and

---

245 Ibid., 316.

246 Ibid., 308.

247 Ibid., 307.

248 Ibid., 307-308.

249 L. McReynolds, *The News under Russia's old Regime. The Development of a Mass Circulation Press* (Princeton, 1991), 6-7.

criticism alike<sup>250</sup>. Russian novelists and critics were often forced to speak to their audiences ambiguously, counting on the fact that their readers “had learned to read between the lines.”<sup>251</sup> Yet this modality of reading “between the lines” had been typical of the progressive aristocratic culture of poetry during the Pushkin era, and it was once more being observed by young readers from various classes; these conditions allowed for the widespread ideologization of literature in a time of strict censorship. Concerned by these developments, the Russian government tried to intervene with what few means it had available: by increasing import taxes on foreign novels and stiffening internal censorship on Russian ones. As early as May 1847, the Minister of Education advised the St. Petersburg censorship committee that “for some time, Russian works such as tales (*povesti*) and novels have been full of attacks against state officials, presenting this class in the most infamous and ridiculous manner possible,” and urged all the censors to make sure that “such descriptions did not exceed the limits of dignity and taste.” Simultaneously, the printing of Russian novels was permitted “only when the censors are convinced of the purity of the author’s intentions.”<sup>252</sup> After 1848, censorship became even more oppressive, with obvious repercussions for the number of novels produced. Forms of ideologized reading shifted to texts from other genres, especially to the physiological sketch, which privileged a more allusive and less direct type of language, while Russian production of novels dropped dramatically. While in 1847 94 Russian novels were published, only one year later, in 1848, the number fell sharply to 42 titles, rising slightly to 51 in 1849, only to decrease to 24 in 1850.<sup>253</sup> Yet the polarization of the Russian public and the ideologization of reading had already begun, and these tendencies emerged with renewed force in the mid fifties at the beginning of Alexander II’s period of reforms, which granted greater freedom of the press.

## CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, in the 1830s, the success of the Russian novel occurred in a context of general expansion of the reading audience, which was aided by the general decrease of book prices and books’ faster circulation. Thanks to the greater development of the book market, the Russian production of novels became increasingly more differentiated, both in terms of prices and sub-genres, in an attempt to satisfy the increasingly wide readership. During this period, the largest share of the Russian public—made up

250 See REBECCHINI, “Reading Foreign Novels,” in the present volume.

251 Galakhov, *Zapiski cheloveka*, 148.

252 N. G. Patrusheva, I. P. Fut, *Tsirkuliary tsenzurnogo vedomstva Rossiiskoi imperii. Sbornik dokumentov* (St. Petersburg, 2016), 74.

253 Kufaeв, *Istoriia russkoi knigi*, 116.

mainly of small owners from the provinces but also including a growing number of merchants, city clerks and townspeople—changed its reading preferences: rather than the occasional consumption of a limited repertoire of old *lubok* romances, religious texts, and cheap entertainment books, they now turned mostly to novels, both foreign and Russian alike. The Russian historical novel in particular—the most widespread genre of the 1830s—not only managed to satisfy the curiosity and interests of readers of different ages and social classes, but also contributed to a greater ideological and cultural homogenization and standardization of the Russian public. It was mostly thanks to Russian historical novels that the different members of the Russian reading public discovered their history, a past in which they could recognize themselves. The set of historical stereotypes that these novels spread among their readers contributed significantly to the conceptual foundation of the Russian public's burgeoning national identity.

At the beginning of the 1840s, a serious economic crisis exacerbated living conditions, especially in the provinces. Divisions among the public re-emerged, but now they formed differently than they had in the past. Social distinctions decreased, while divisions between readers belonging to distinct generations increased. Readers of the same age but coming from different social groups more often agreed in matters of shared taste and ideological orientation. The success of two Russian novels—Lermontov's *A Hero of our Time* and Gogol's *Dead Souls*, markedly ambiguous both formally and ideologically—accentuated aesthetic and ideological oppositions among the reading public, oppositions that were virtual non-factors in the previous decade. At the same time, the affirmation of the thick journals, in which the new novels increasingly appeared, accelerated this process of segmentation, ideologization, and radicalization of public opinion—processes that had begun in the early 1840s but expressed themselves more vigorously during the era of major reforms.

## Select bibliography

- Abramov K. I., *Gorodskie publichnye biblioteki Rossii: Istoriiia stanovleniia (1830–nachalo 1860-kh gg.)* (Moscow: Pashkov dom, 2001).
- Beaven Remnek M., *The Expansion of Russian Reading Audiences, 1828-1848*, PhD dissertation (Berkeley CA, 1999).
- Besançon A., *Éducation et société en Russie dans le second tiers du XIXe siècle* (Paris: La Haye, 1974).



- Blium A. V., "Massovoe chtenie v russkoi provintsii kontsa XVIII – pervoi chetverti XIX v.," in I. E. Barenbaum (ed.), *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad: LGIK, 1973).
- Frazier M., *Romantic Encounters. Writers, Readers and the "Library for Reading,"* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007).
- Grits T., Trenin V., Nikitin M., *Slovesnost' i kommertsiiia* (*Knizhnaia lavka A.F. Smirdina*), pod red. V.B. Shklovskogo, B.M. Eikhenbaum (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929).
- Kishkin L.S., *Chestnyi, dobryi, prostodushnyi... Trudy i dni Aleksandra Filippovicha Smirdina* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1995).
- Kleimenova R. N., *Knizhnaia Moskva v pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991).
- Kozlov V. P., "Istoriia Gosudarstva Rossiiskogo" v otsenkakh sovremennikov (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).
- Kratkii obzor knizhnoi trgovli i izdatel'skoi deiatel'nosti Glazunovykh za sto let 1782-1882* (Saint Petersburg: Tip. Glazunova, 1883).
- Kufaev M. N., *Istoriia russkoi knigi v XIX veke* (Moscow: Nachatki znaniia, 1927; 2nd edition, Moscow, Pashkov dom, 2003).
- Kuleshov V. I., *Otechestvennye zapiski i literatura 40kh godov XIX v.* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo universiteta, 1958).
- Mann Iu., *V poiskakh zhivoi dushi. "Mertvye dushi": pisatel', kritika, chitatel'* (Moscow: Kniga, 1984).
- Martinsen D. A. (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
- Materialy dlia istorii russkoi knizhnoi trgovli* (Saint Petersburg: Tip. I. I. Glazunova, 1879).
- McReynolds L., *The News under Russia's Old Regime. The Development of a Mass Circulation Press* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- Meynieux A., *Pouchkine, homme de lettres et la littérature professionnelle en Russie* (Paris : F. Paillart, 1966).
- Muratov M. V., *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh: ocherk istorii knigoizdatel'stva i knigotorgovli, 1800-1917 gody* (Moscow, Leningrad: Ogiz. Gos. Sots. Ekon. Izdatel'stvo, 1931).
- Rebecchini D., "Reading Novels at the Winter Palace under Nicholas I: From the Tsar to the Stokers", *Slavic Review*, vol. 78, 4 (Winter 2019), 965-985.
- Rebikkini D., "Russkie istoricheskie romany v 30kh gg XIX veka," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 34 (1998), 416-433.
- Reitblat A. I., *Ot Boyv k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow: NLO, 2009).
- , *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow: NLO 2001).
- Ruud Ch. A., *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

- Smirnov-Sokol'skii N. P., *Knizhnaia lavka A.F. Smirdina* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Vses. Knizhnoi Palaty, 1957).
- Schleifman N., "A Russian Daily Newspaper and its New Readership: Severnaia pchela, 1825-1840," *Cahiers du Monde et Russian soviétique*, 28 (2) (avril-juin 1987).
- Todd W. M., *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin* (Cambridge, Mass., London: Harvard University Press, 1986).
- Volodkovich A. F., "Lichnye biblioteki i krug chteniia soslovykh 'nizov' Sibiri (pervaia polovina XIX v.)," in *Knizhnoe delo v Sibiri (konets XVIII-nachalo XX veka)* (Novosibirsk: GPNTB, 1991), 28-49.

## THE READING AUDIENCE OF THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Abram Reitblat

In the first half of the nineteenth century, only a small part of Russia's population was able to read, and for every reader there were at least twenty non-readers. In fact, readers represented only a very narrow section of the population. The social process that most factored into the growth of reading was the population's gradual transition from a traditional, rural way of life to a modern, urban one. Historical experience shows that in Russia (as in other countries), books and reading were attributes of town-dwellers' lives. The dominant social structures in the feudal village—which observed traditional patterns of behaviour and fixed courses of action in various life situations—were closely related to oral communication. Only in a city that offered many conflicting patterns of behaviour was there a need for the printed word as a universal intermediary.

The processes of modernization initiated by the reforms of Peter I found expression not only in the growth of cities, but also in the breakdown of the isolation of the villages and the slow penetration of urban culture into them. However, in the first half of the nineteenth century these processes were very slow, and social structures and social relations did not change significantly. The estate-based nature of society also left its imprint on the spread of distribution of reading. Although Peter I's reforms somewhat eased social dynamics by weakening inter-estate partitions, they also significantly increased the culture gap between the nobility and other estates. Drawn into these processes of transformation, the nobility intensively absorbed Western culture—including one of its foremost elements, the book. By the first half of the nineteenth century, reading was already an indispensable component of the noble way of life (with the exception of the lowest stratum

of the nobility). In the estates that joined the modernisation process significantly later (merchants, urban commoners [*meshchane*], and domestic serfs), one could often find active readers. However, if their absolute number was quite high (it is characteristic that ‘lowbrow’ literature was regularly reprinted in large editions), they represented only a small portion of these strata. Here, the level of literacy was generally low, and the act of reading itself was often met with disapproval; it was treated as an activity appropriate for only representatives of other estates.<sup>1</sup>

Peasant farmers, who made up the vast majority of the population, were not affected to the reforms, and were mostly unable to read (if you do not take into account the Old Believers). Not only the habit of reading, but also its technical requisite—literacy—remained limited in this environment.<sup>2</sup>

The reforms of 1860-1870s (the emancipation of the serfs, the introduction of public trials, universal military service, and local government [*zemstvos*]) paved the way for Russia’s capitalist development and, as a result, created the need for more and more people capable of reading. This consequence arose from two primary factors. One might be called utilitarian: as they moved from patriarchal domestic and economic ties to a commodity-driven economy and formal legal relations, significant portions of the population needed to know laws and existing rules, to constantly become acquainted with new state decrees, to be aware of trade and economic information. Additionally, in the spheres of politics, economy and culture, more and more literate, educated people were required for the management of the country. If in a village—where the economy was conducted in the old manner and the work was performed manually—a significant part of the population could do without reading, then in the city, the main spheres of life during this period were increasingly inextricably linked with it. Moreover, close contact with representatives of privileged estates in the city often led others to adopt their patterns of behaviour, including habits of reading.<sup>3</sup>

However, ideological factors also played an equally important role in the spread of reading: the breakdown of previously existing social relations led to the destruction of the old view of the world, and people sought to construct a new worldview adequate to their newfound way of life. This fact also stimulated the transition to the printed word. Although the majority of the population during the second half of the nineteenth century did not read

---

1 See: “Sostoianie gramotnosti mezhdū kupechestvom i zhiteliami podatnogo sostoiianii v Saratovskoi gub.,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva vnutrennikh del*, 14 (1846), 525-528, and memoirs: I. K. Zaitsev, “Vospominaniia starogo uchitelii,” *Russkaia starina*, 6 (1887), 665; L. Checherskii [L. M. Korkhov], “Iz shkol’nykh vospominanii krest’ianina,” *Neva*, 7 (1911), 597-598.

2 For more information, see REITBLAT, “The Book and the Peasant in the Nineteenth and the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” in the present volume.

3 See details: J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), 3-34.

either books or periodicals, printed publications were highly significant for the reading minority. The book was considered to be a guide to life, capable of helping in spiritual and moral self-improvement.

Another substantial social factor in the spread of reading—one especially relevant to the reforms of the 1860s—was the contemporary political struggle, and particularly elite social groups' efforts to involve the wider population in reading.

In regards to the historical destiny of the printed word in Russia it is generally characteristic that, unlike in Western countries (Germany, England, France, etc), where both book printing, periodicals, and libraries arose in a "natural" way, satisfying the needs of the population, here, to a large extent, it was introduced from above—by the government (it is no accident that for a long time there was only state printing), the church, and later by other social institutions and groups. This process especially intensified in the post-reform period.

On the eve of the 1860s reforms, the existing proportion of the Russian reading public was not large. There is no exact information on these numbers, but there are data that allow for approximations. According to the calculations of A. G. Rashin, who summarised the results of a number of regional surveys, the literacy rate among rural residents in the second half of the 1860s stood at about 5%, and among townspeople in the first half of the 1870s—more than one third.<sup>4</sup> Since the rural population accounted for nine-tenths of the country's total population, it can be assumed that in the late 1860s and early 1870s, approximately 8% of the country (that is, about 10 million people) was literate.

However, in practice, a significantly smaller part of the population turned specifically to books and periodicals. In the village, as evidenced by numerous memoir sources, the tradition of reading books was almost absent,<sup>5</sup> and it was weak among those in the merchant and urban commoner estates.<sup>6</sup>

4 A. G. Rashin, "Gramotnost' i narodnoe obrazovanie v Rossii v XIX v. i nachale XX v.," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 37 (1951), 32, 38.

5 See: *Materialy dlia statistiki Kostromskoi gubernii* (Kostroma, 1870), Vyp. 1; N. Bogolepov, "Statisticheskie svedeniia o gramotnosti krest'ianskogo naseleniia Moskovskoi gubernii po podvornoii perepisi 1869 i 1883 gg.," *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Moskovskoi gubernii za 1895 g.* (Moscow, 1896), Prilozheniia, 1; M. E. Nikolaev, "Moi vospominaniia," *Vospominaniia russkikh krest'ian XVIII – pervoi poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow, 2006), 665; P. Sumarokov, "Khoziaistvennyi etnograficheskii ocherk Kashirskogo uезда," *Sel'skoe khoziaistvo*, 8 (1860), otd. 6, 63; V. M. *Neskol'ko slov o sel'skikh chital'niakh* (Moscow, 1866), 3; S. A. An-skii [Sh. Z. Rappoport], *Ocherki narodnoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1894), 33.

6 See: "O sredstvakh chteniia v Moskve i o moskovskoi lubochnoi literature," *Knizhnyi vestnik*, 3/6 (1860), 36; M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, "Nasha obshchestvennaia zhizn'," *Sobranie sochinenii*, (Moscow, 1968), vol. 6, 282; S. F. Librovich, "Za kulisami knizhnogo dela v Rossii," *Rossiiskaia bibliografiia*, 25 (1879), 103; T. Nikitin, "Povest' o moem samouchnom zaniatii naukoii gramote," *Morskoi sbornik*, 5 (1862), 5-6; I. M. Krasnoperov, *Zapiski raznochintsia* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1929), 11; V. M. Maksimov, "Avtobiograficheskie zapiski," *Golos minuvshago*, 4 (1913), 148.

The overwhelming majority of those in possession of literacy used it in everyday life, but such individuals were not habitual readers of books or periodicals. In general, according to our estimates, the readership of the country did not exceed 1 million people by the beginning of the 1860s. It is important to emphasise that these circumstances were not homogeneous, and remained inflected by the rigid estate structure of the time: different estates varied significantly in their way of life and relation to print culture. Such differences were also largely maintained by the estate-driven nature of education. Institutions of higher education (universities) and secondary education (gymnasiums) were closely connected and separated from those of primary, elementary education. As a result, in the circle of their knowledge and interests, the overall reading audience was divided into quite different layers. Writing in 1862, the censor F. F. Veselago characterised the reading public in the following way: “Our reading public can be rather definitively divided into three main groups. The first is made up of people who are modern, seriously educated, who in their educational development stand on par with the developments of their European peers and have knowledge of foreign languages. In the second, there are people who possess a more or less complete academic education, and who, from their own reading of others’ words, remain aware of modern ideas in but a fragmentary way. The third group is motivated to read merely in order to pass the time in a pleasant and useful manner; this includes the less developed layer of the so-called noble estate, nearly all of the merchant estate, and all the literate common people.”<sup>7</sup> Although Veselago is perhaps biased and slightly unfair in assessing the reading needs of merchants, peasants, and workers, his instinctive stratification of the Russian reading public is more or less correct. Indeed, in this period and later, until the end of the nineteenth century, the reading audience consisted of three such classes—and distinctions between groups *within* these reading classes likewise became more pronounced.

According to the estimates of V. R. Leykina-Svirskaiia, there were about 20,000 people in Russia with a higher education by the beginning of the 1860s. We should also take into account university students (just over 5,000 in 1861);<sup>8</sup> women, who often received a good home education; some graduates of gymnasiums, who supplemented their knowledge with independent reading; and so on. Overall, the first group defined by Veselago (“seriously educated”) included, according to our estimates, no more than 30-40,000 people.

It is much more difficult to determine the size of the other groups. According to our calculations, about 100,000 people had a secondary education in these years (or at least had been enrolled in the lower levels of sec-

<sup>7</sup> *Mneniia raznykh lits o preobrazovanii tsenzury* (St. Petersburg, 1862), 21.

<sup>8</sup> V. R. Leikina-Svirskaiia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971), 70.

ondary school). In addition, data from 1865 indicates that around 26,800 people studied in gymnasiums and grammar schools at that time.<sup>9</sup> If we also take into account those who received a home education, and self-taught people who read a great deal, then the second group designated by Veselago could number around 200-250,000 people.

Our estimates regarding the size of the third group have an even more vague and provisional character. Data on the number of primary school graduates are not available, and information on literacy rates provides little in this regard, since only a small part of those who were literate in the merchant, urban commoner, and, especially peasant estates read systematically. Relying only on indirect data and, above all, information about publications that were distributed exclusively among such readers, we might assume that their number reached 500-600,000.

By the end of the period under discussion, the number of educated members of the public had grown substantially. According to calculations by V. R. Leikina-Svirskaia, by the end of the nineteenth century, about 85,000 people had been educated in higher educational institutions that served the civilian population.<sup>10</sup> In addition, according to the census, in 1897 there were more than one million students in secondary school (graduated and those not yet graduated), not counting those enrolled in post-secondary institutions (around 200,000).<sup>11</sup> The number of college students—which represented the main reading group—had grown exponentially. In 1880, 8,200 students were studying at universities and 181,700 boys and girls were enrolled in secondary schools.<sup>12</sup> By the end of the century, the number of college students had increased to 15,200 (in all types of higher education institutions), and secondary school students—to 220,000.<sup>13</sup>

However, the increase in readership in the lower stratum was much more significant, which was due to a number of factors. First of all, it should be noted that the population of cities rapidly increased in European Russia between the years 1863-1897. It almost doubled (from 6.1 million to 12.1 million),<sup>14</sup> while the rural population increased only by a factor of 1.5. Even more important for the fate of the book was the strengthening of contact between the peasants and the city.

The opening of peasant-focused schools likewise stimulated that demographic's interest in reading; they helped to increase peasants' literacy rates

---

9 Sh. I. Ganelin, *Ocherki po istorii srednei shkoly v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Leningrad; Moscow, 1950), 84.

10 Leikina-Svirskaia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii*, 70.

11 *Ibid.*, 51–52.

12 *Universitety i srednie uchebnye zavedeniia 50-ti gubernii Evropeiskoi Rossii i 10-ti Privisljanskikh, po perepisi 20-go marta 1880 g.* (St. Petersburg, 1883), 3, 19, 225.

13 Leikina-Svirskaia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii*, 51, 55, 56.

14 A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1813--1913): Statisticheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1956), 87.

substantially, and moreover, changed their attitudes to literacy and reading as well.

In the late nineteenth century the structure of the reading public can be visualized as a pyramid in which the top layer is occupied by “educated readers,” the base by popular readers, and the layers between them—by the “average” readers. The growth in readership is indirectly evidenced by a concurrent increase in the number and circulation of periodicals, as will be discussed in more detail below. In the last fifteen years of the nineteenth century, the total circulation of books published in Russian grew threefold (from 18.5 million copies in 1887 to 56.3 million copies in 1901).<sup>15</sup> A network for the book trade formed throughout the country between the 1860 and 1890s; one could find bookshops not only in the principal provincial cities, but also in county towns. If in 1868 there were 568 bookselling establishments in Russia,<sup>16</sup> then in 1883, there were 1,377, and in 1893—1,725.<sup>17</sup>

Information on the number of members of public libraries can guide our assessment of the rate at which the reading public grew—particularly its middle strata. Indeed, it should be borne in mind that a significant portion of materially wealthy readers (the upper and middle ranks of the nobility and officials) turned primarily to journals and newspapers obtained through subscriptions, as well as home libraries, for their personal reading. These groups—which were not generally burdened by worries about money—acquired every book they were interested in, and subscribed to whichever periodicals they deemed necessary. Moreover, we should also keep in mind that some lower-class readers were cut off from the use of libraries; they lacked the money to pay for library services and faced other restrictions on their ability to acquire books. Some of these restrictions were of a governmental nature, such as the 1884 withdrawal of a large number of books and journals of an oppositional character from the public collections, mandate that “people’s libraries” include certain books only in a special catalogue. Other restrictions—such as the exclusion of lowbrow and *lubok* literature from public libraries—were prompted by decisions of influential educators.

The most common and popular type of libraries, which played a huge role in providing the nineteenth-century urban population with books, were circulating libraries (*biblioteki dlia chteniia*). These were institutions with a permanent book collection that, in exchange for a fee (contributed in advance either for the year, six months, three months, a month, or even a day) and a deposit for the cost of the book, made their holdings available for public consumption. They differed from state, municipal, and “people’s libraries” in that their aims were not primarily education and enlightenment,

---

15 A. V. Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1931), 203.

16 *Voenno-statisticheskii sbornik*, 4 (1871), 898.

17 Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii*, 153.



the dissemination of knowledge, or the advancement of culture, and so on, but instead merely meeting the needs of readers.

The rapid growth in the number of circulating libraries and the corresponding growth of their audience began in the 1860s. From that time they became a permanent component of the urban way of life, and were vital to the life of not only the province capitals, but also many county towns.

It appears that the urban readers were satisfied with the collections made available to them. After all, the library owner was interested in attracting as many readers as possible, and tried to purchase publications that interested the subscribers. Moreover, these libraries shifted their acquisition profile in accordance with the changing tastes and interests of the audience. Therefore, until the mid 1850s, these circulating libraries (especially far from the capitals) primarily acquired fiction designed for easy reading. In the mid-1850s in Kazan', the I. A. Sakharov library was immensely popular: "... most of the landowners were subscribed to it. The books were mostly translated and, of course, in the foreground stood the then-leading figures of French literature: Eugène Sue, Balzac, Alexander Dumas, Georges Sand, and so on."<sup>18</sup> P. D. Boborykin recalled that in Nizhny Novgorod in the early 1850s, he and other senior gymnasium students devoured novels of domestic and foreign authors "... In large quantities, borrowing them for [...] tiny amounts of pocket money from a paid library of S.P. Meledin."<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1860s, when the politicisation of public consciousness sharply increased, natural-scientific and socio-political books became popular and even fashionable. In 1862, P. A. Kropotkin wrote of a circulating library in Irkutsk: "...most of the people read only journals, and others—fiction and a few historical books; moreover, now [...] they are beginning to demand some serious books, likewise mainly related to the popularly described branches of the natural sciences."<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, in the circulating libraries, the proportion of such publications increased substantially.

It should be noted that in a specific Russian political and cultural context, circulating libraries—despite being a commercial enterprise—often functioned not as commercial, but as educational and even revolutionary institutions. Such circumstances were connected to the difficulty of opening other types of libraries, and the opportunity to include in collections those publications that were prohibited from circulation in state-created libraries, as well as with the unprestigious "indecent" of trading-associated activities and, inversely, the high prestige associated with educational activities. In the 1860s there were a number of libraries that pursued revolutionary and propagandistic aims, disseminating oppositional and even illegal literature (these included the N. A. Serno-Solov'evich Library in Petersburg, the A. A.

18 A. Ovsiannikov, "Iz vospominanii starogo pedagoga," *Russkaia starina*, 5 (1899), 423.

19 P. D. Boborykin, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1965), vol. 1, 47.

20 P. A. Kropotkin, *Dnevnik* (Moscow; Petrograd, 1923), 46.

Krasovskii Library in Viatka, the A. I. Ikonnikov Library in Perm, the M. P. Shestunov Library in Irkutsk, and so on.) Libraries oriented purely around educational matters were more widely disseminated in those years, and included: the V. K. Makalinskaia Library, the P. P. Semennikov Library, the L. G. Rubakin Library in Petersburg, the I. A. Shidlovskii Library in Kazan', and so on. In addition to those mentioned, the well-known Moscow libraries which had extensive book collections enjoyed wide popularity. These included the N. N. Ulitin Library, the A. F. Cherenin Library, the A. F. Ushakov Library, the M. A. Viv'en Library; the L. D. Kashkin Library in Tver, the P. N. Anosov Library in Voronezh, the M. A. Fronstein Library in Rostov-on-Don, the E. P. Raspopov Library in Odessa, the V. M. Istomin Library in Warsaw, the P. I. Makushin Library in Tomsk, and others.<sup>21</sup>

Some idea of the rate at which the number of circulating libraries grew is provided by records in Moscow. (It is worth noting that data exists only for libraries with collections of Russian-language books.) In 1851 there were two, in 1866—nine, in 1880—thirty-two, and in 1900—forty.<sup>22</sup> In 1882, the total number of circulating libraries in the country amounted to about 350.<sup>23</sup>

Information about the composition of these circulating libraries' collections helps us to characterise their overall activity. We analysed the printed catalogues of circulating libraries over one of the periods of their existence. The sample includes all the circulating libraries' catalogues printed between 1879-1881 that are held in the collection of the Russian State Library (numbering thirty-one in total). The analysis showed that a collection usually consisted of 2-3,000 book titles, and fiction accounted for 60-70% of the holdings. However, in some metropolitan libraries, the size of the collection sharply exceeded average levels, and in some provincial libraries the collection was much smaller. A significant place in the collections was occupied by journals. As a rule, no fewer than 10 journals, primarily thick, universal monthly journals (*Otechestvennye zapiski* [Fatherland Notes], *Delo* [Work], *Vestnik Evropy* [Messenger of Europe], *Russkii vestnik* [The Russian Herald], *Russkaia mysl'* [Russian Thought], and so on) were subscribed to.

The catalogues suggest the integrity and thoughtfulness at work in the selection of books, and indicate a fairly comprehensive program of acquisitions in selected areas. There appear to be frequent concurrences in composition across the many collections, a circumstance which undoubtedly

---

21 Catalogues of a significant part of circulating libraries in 1850-1870s are taken into account in bibliographic indexes: *Knigotorgovye katalogi 50-70 gg. XIX veka* (Moscow, 1978); *Knigotorgovye katalogi 60-70 gg. XIX veka* (Moscow, 1980).

22 See: M. Zakharov, *Ukazatel' Moskv, 2 vols.* (Moscow, 1851), vol. 1, 199; [A. F. Cherenin], *Sbornik svedenii po knizhno-literaturnomu delu za 1866 god* (Moscow, 1867), 121-123; *Adres-kalendar' raznykh uchrezhdenii g. Moskv na 1880 god* (Moscow, 1880), 1006-1008; *Vsia Moskva* (Moscow, 1900), 955-956.

23 Calculations are made by: *Spisok zavedeniiam knizhnoi torgovli, bibliotekam dlia chteniia i muzykal'nym magazinam, nakhodiashchimsia v guberniakh* (St. Petersburg, 1882); *Pamiatnaia knizhka [Peterburga] na 1882 god* (Sankt- Peterburg, 1881), 77.

reflects their administrators' consideration of reader tastes and an orientation towards popular works. A number of books (and not only classics) were present in all or almost all the libraries. According to the catalogues from the abovementioned years, circulating libraries saw these contemporary writers in the greatest demand: Lev Tolstoi, Turgenev, Boborykin, Dostoevskii, Krestovskii, Scheller-Mikhailov, Meshcherskii, Saltykov-Shchedrin, Leikin, Grigorovich and Leskov. Foreign literature was also held in these collections. In all libraries there were books by such foreign prose writers as Auerbach, Balzac, Berthet, Belot, Beecher Stowe, Born, Bret Harte, Bulwer-Lytton, Boisgobey, Verne, Gaboriau, Gerstäcker, Dickens, Daudet, Dumas, George Sand, Cobb (J. Lermina), Collins, A. Leo, E. Marlitt, X. de Montépin, Paul de Kock, Ponson du Terrail, Sue, Trollope, Féval, Erckmann-Chatrion, Spielhagen and Aimard. Moreover, there were quite often 15-20 different works by one particular writer in a single library.

It should be noted that these libraries also held quite a high proportion of literature in their collections related to natural science, philosophy, and history. The works of widely distributed authors at the time, such as Buckle, N. I. Kostomarov, J. Mill, Mordovtsev, Proudhon, Smiles, S. M. Solov'ev, Taine, Shashkov, F. Schlosser (of the humanities), Brehm, Huxley, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Darwin, Moleschott, Tyndall, Faraday, and Flammarion (of the natural sciences) were available in almost every library. Even the first volume of Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* was held in almost two-thirds of the libraries.

The core of the circulating libraries' public was comprised of officials, students of various levels, employees of private enterprises and shops, officers, and persons of "freelance professions." For example, after the opening of the I.A. Shidlovskii library in Kazan', it was stated that "students, officials, clergy, officers, and clerks rushed, you might say, to the library [...] and the books flew off the shelves like hot cakes."<sup>24</sup>

Statistics on the total magnitude of the circulating library audience are not available; however, based on calculations, one can get an idea of its approximate size. In the 1860s, during a period of sharp growth in the readership, in a good city library, there were usually 150-300 subscribers.<sup>25</sup> Given the fact that, by the 1880s, the number of readers in the cities had increased, and a significant number of new libraries had been opened in small towns and even villages, we might presume that the average number of subscribers of a more provincial town library was approximately 100. (In the capitals this number reached around 300, yet in the smaller town it could be significantly lower; for example, in the towns of the Chernigov province

<sup>24</sup> N. A[gafonov], "Vospominanie ob I. A. Shidlovskom i ego biblioteke" in *Zavolzhskaiia vifliofika* (Kazan', 1887. Vypusk 1), 30.

<sup>25</sup> See: *Knizhnyi vestnik*, 22 (1860), 256; I. S. Nikitin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1975), vol. 2, 388; Ia. Khotiakov, "A. A. Krasovskii i ego biblioteka dlia chteniia," *Bibliotekar'*, 5 (1955), 38 et al.

even at the end of the nineteenth century, there were 20-30 subscribers).<sup>26</sup> According to our calculations, a library with subscribers numbering fewer than 50 brought practically no income to the owner: if they spent money on journal subscriptions and purchase of new books, it became unprofitable. If we accept these assumptions based on available data, then in 1882 (when, as indicated, 350 circulating libraries for reading were in existence) there were likely around 35,000 subscribers and more than 100,000 people making use of their collections.<sup>27</sup>

In the 1860s, readers borrowed mostly fiction and journals (which were frequently borrowed precisely for the fiction that they contained) from circulating libraries. So, in 1860, in one of the largest Moscow libraries, fiction amounted to 43.5% of books, and journals amounted to 43.2%, and books related to all other types comprised only 13.3%.<sup>28</sup> This situation remain unchanged even by the end of the nineteenth century. The famous library sciences researcher N. A. Rubakin noted that “the largest percentage of issued books are accounted for by translated novels—they occupy the first place in the collection. In second place, in terms of the quantity of requests, are Russian novels, summarily followed by: journals and periodicals, textbooks and manuals, essays on history, books on natural science and geography, and finally books on the social sciences.”<sup>29</sup>

The number of public libraries (of all types) grew rapidly. In 1856, according to a report by the Minister of Public Education, there were 49 libraries open for use by the Russian population<sup>30</sup>. Since the number of subscribers was then small (no more than 200-300 per library), we can assume that throughout the whole country their number did not exceed 10-15,000. In 1882, according to incomplete official records (without Moscow, Petersburg, and a number of provinces), there were 517 public and private libraries in the country. Given that Moscow and Petersburg combined contained more than 60 libraries, the total number of libraries would have approached six hundred nationally.<sup>31</sup> In 1910, approximately 1.5 million readers were recorded in the city’s libraries in Russia (according to incomplete data, the total number of readers at that time would be 2.6 million).<sup>32</sup> Since the ur-

26 A. A. Rusov, *Opisanie Chernigovskoi gubernii*, 2 vols. (Chernigov, 1899), vol. 2, 142.

27 So estimated the proportion between subscribers and users of the circulating library N. A. Rubakin. See: N. A. Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike* (St. Petersburg, 1895), 87.

28 Calculated by: A. Cherenin, “Biblioteka A. F. Cherenina v 1860 godu,” *Knizhnyy vestnik*, 6 (1861), 99.

29 N. A. Rubakin, “Chastnye biblioteki i vneklassnoe chtenie uchashchikhsia,” *Zhenskoe obrazovanie*, 6/7 (1889), 405.

30 Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike*, 41.

31 Calculated by: *Polnyi alfavitnyi ukazatel' vseh knizhnykh magazinov, bibliotek dlia chteniia i muzykal'nykh magazinov, nakhodiashchikhsia v guberniakh Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow, 1882); *Adres-kalendar' raznykh uchrezhdenii g. Moskvy na 1880 god* (Moscow, 1880), 1006-1008; *Peterburgskaia pamiatnaia knizhka* (Sankt- Peterburg, 1881), 77.

32 Calculated by: *Goroda Rossii v 1910 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1914).

ban population of Russia was 23.3 million in 1913,<sup>33</sup> the coverage of library services was thus slightly more than 11%. Rural libraries in 1909-1911 were used by 2.9% of the total rural population,<sup>34</sup> that is, by about 3 million people. Thus, in Russia in the early 1910s, the scope or coverage of library services (taking into account libraries of all types) was 3-4%. This figure gives the lower threshold of the readership's size, since only more or less regular readers were recorded in the library. The reading audience as a whole was, naturally, larger. Its total number by the end of the nineteenth century can be estimated at 8-9 million people (that is, 6-7% of the population). M. D. Afanas'ev came to a similar conclusion: in his opinion, readers of books in Russia at the end of the nineteenth/ beginning of the twentieth century accounted for 4-6% of the population.<sup>35</sup>

In Russia there were about 200,000 libraries of different types in the pre-revolutionary years, and the overwhelming majority of them were educational.<sup>36</sup>

The growth in readership was mainly due to those cultural strata that had been theretofore poorly acquainted with the printed word. Let us turn to the accounts of N. A. Rubakin, who noted that:

the literary currents in all of reading Russia are rolling [...] wave after wave. Almost a hundred years have passed since the wave of pseudo-classicism swept over the foremost readers, seventy years ago Karamzin's wave of Sentimentalism swept over us, then Zhukovskii's Romanticism, and so on and so forth, but somewhere in the bowels of the provinces, these waves are rolling to this day, moving around in circles, washing over more and more people and giving way to the next wave. It's no wonder that wherever the wave of the eighteenth century is still rolling, works that represent the end of the nineteenth century do not receive attention or meet endorsement.<sup>37</sup>

---

33 See: A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811-1913)* (Moscow, 1956), 88.

34 See: E. N. Medynskii, *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie, ego znachenie, organizatsiia i tekhnika* (Moscow, 1919), 132.

35 M. D. Afanas'ev, *Problemy rasprostranennosti chteniia v sel'skoi srede: Dissertatsiia na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata pedagogicheskikh nauk* (Moscow, 1979), 44

36 See: M. Iu. Matveev, *Rossiiskie biblioteki vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX veka* (St. Petersburg, 2014), 276. The monograph by M. Iu. Matveev contains a detailed description of different types of Russian libraries: public, popular, scientific, military, spiritual, etc. For library readers, see also: L. V. Glukhova, O. S. Libova, *Biblioteki i chitateli St. Peterburgskoi gubernii na rubezhe XIX – nachala XX veka* (St. Petersburg, 2015); A. E. Perebeinos, V. S. Tolstikov, "Obshchestvennye biblioteki v povsednevnoi zhizni gorodskogo naseleniia Uralskogo kraia (vtoraia polovina XIX - nachalo XX veka)," *Vestnik Cheliabinskoi Gosudarstvennoi akademii kul'tury i iskusstv*, 4 (2011), 15-18.

37 Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike*, 17-18.

This observation reflects the inescapable stratification of Russian culture and literature—and, accordingly, the Russian readership.

Such a phenomenon is not surprising. As a consequence of the heterogeneous economic forces that structured society (and consequently structured culture as well), the Russian populace straddled broad socio-cultural spectrums: practitioners of traditional agriculture existed alongside workers in the modern manufacturing industry; illiterate peasants existed alongside highly educated scientists, writers, and engineers. Therefore, a certain reading group might be in the midst of a cultural “stage” that the most “advanced” sections of the population had long ago passed through (in, say, the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries).

It is generally accepted that there was a singular literature in Russia in which there existed qualitatively different levels—first-class writers, second and third-class writers, graphomaniac writers, and so on. Accordingly, readers are divided into: highly cultured connoisseurs, “average,” “undeveloped,” etc. We would suggest a somewhat alternative vision of Russian literature, or, more precisely, an image of several simultaneously existing literatures. In Russia of the last third of the nineteenth century, we can provisionally distinguish the following types of literature: the literature of thick journals, the literature of thin journals, the literature of newspapers, *lubok* literature, “literature for the people,” and children’s books. Each of them had their own poetics, their own authors, and ways of bringing the texts to the public—that is, their readers.

Reading sharply intensified with the reforms of the 1860s (or more precisely, during the very period of their preparation). According to N. V. Shelgunov, “in the sixties an unexpectedly absolutely new, unprecedented reader with public feelings, public thoughts and interests, who wanted to think about public affairs, who wanted to learn and to know, was created by some miracle.”<sup>38</sup> In many ways, attitudes towards reading changed in those years. If in earlier times, many readers used books and journals to escape from surrounding reality and find solace in entertainment, now they turned to books in order to better choose their path in life and seek for instruction for everyday living. The place of the printed word in Russian society of the late 1850s to early 1860s is vividly illustrated by the curious fact that “the guard officers who looked after [...] the ballerina brought her the works of Belinskii, who at that time was a must-read—or, at the very least, one had to give the appearance of having read him.”<sup>39</sup>

Among the “educated” public, the most active readers were those most affected by the social transformations taking place throughout the country, those who experienced the transformations most acutely because of their

---

<sup>38</sup> N. V. Shelgunov, “Vospominaniia,” in N. V. Shelgunov, L. P. Shelgunova, M. L. Mikhailov, 2 vols. *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1967), vol. 1, 113.

<sup>39</sup> V. A. Krylov, *Prozaicheskie sochineniia*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1908), vol. 1, xiv.

unequal place in the social hierarchy—but who, as a rule, were not involved in specific practical activities. They regularly read thick journals, newspapers, and were up to speed with new literary developments and the critical responses to them.

Thick journals occupied pride of place for the educated readers of late nineteenth-century Russian society. Journals' preeminence over the book format proved decisive from the middle of the 1830s on, following the great success of the journal *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (*The Library for Reading*). By the mid 1840s, the thick journal's key position in the sphere of literature had become obvious.

From that time until about the beginning of the 1890s, most literary and journalistic works (at least by domestic authors) were initially printed in journals and only later (and even then not always) published in separate editions. Contemporaries noted that "Russian fiction is concentrated in journals, in which everything that is more or less deserving of attention is placed. Separate publications represent either works that have already been published in the journals, or rejected by all the periodical publications."<sup>40</sup>

The "journalisation" of Russian literature can be explained by the following reasons. With rising education levels across the population and the lower estates' adoptions of cultural patterns from the nobility, reading became a way of life among broader strata—primarily provincial landowners and officials. However, such individuals were scattered across their estates and numerous provincial cities and county towns. Given that readers were spread across vast expanses of the country, traditional channels of book distribution (the book trade and libraries) turned out to be ineffective. The delivery of printed publications to remote places through the post proved to be a much better solution, as this was a precisely functioning institution not private, but public in nature. Thus, one task that the journal solved was the communication between writers and readers.

In addition, journals united their readers. At first, it was simply a community of "cultural," "educated," "enlightened" people, but from the beginning of the 1860s, journals began to consolidate this or that group (radicals, liberals, conservatives, and so on) within the framework of a literary community. In conditions of underdeveloped political life, a journal could contribute to the formation of public opinion on topical issues. It almost always defended this or that set of ideas, opinions, and theories. A journal's orientation was primarily governed by its socio-political program; its literary and aesthetic views were of secondary importance. Regular reading of a certain journal meant that usually a reader found a social or cultural group with which they identified.

To understand the success of the journal as an institution, one should also take into account the fact that books in Russia were relatively expensive.

---

40 "Ot redaktsii," *Russkaia mysl'*, 1 (1885), annex after page 170.

As a rule, a reader did not want to risk money acquiring a book that was unknown to them. It was much more convenient to choose a journal based on the reader's previous experience, and to turn exclusively to that journal in the future, entrusting the editorial board to select worthy works for reading.

The journal *singled out* the most important texts for its readers from all the richness and diversity of modern culture, *brought them into the system* and *offered them* to the reader. By collecting works of various authors and linking them in a certain way, the editorial team created a new macro-text, one determined by the previously identified aims and structure of the journal.

Since the early 1860s, a characteristic feature of journals' existence was the constant polemic between them. Although quite often aesthetic or everyday issues were a pretext for disputes, more often than that there was hidden struggle, one not so much literary as ideological.<sup>41</sup>

Journal publications were addressed to readers of a relatively high educational level, to those who were, in basic terms, familiar with domestic and foreign history, geography, the political system, and so on. They were also aimed at those who placed high importance upon the printed word—who consulted it in their search for self-determination and were nevertheless possibly limited in their access to books. At the same time, the reader's preference for the journal over the book perhaps meant that they considered themselves not competent enough to choose from the stream of numerous, separately published works suitable for them and which might correspond to their deeper requests. This reader did not (or could not) read a large number of varied books and was often satisfied with compilations, paraphrasings, reviews, and so on. The journal reader was generally loath to trust one particular individual (who thought an author personally responsible for their book), and it was important for this type of reader that a journal publication was ratified by an entire group.

The observations of O. V. Milchevskii in the mid 1860s showed that the main readers of journals were: "higher officialdom, a wealthier, non-serving nobility, young teachers and students; many more journals are read by official's wives, more, at least, than husbands," and at that very rich people, libraries, or higher and secondary schools subscribed to them.<sup>42</sup>

Several thousand people were subscribed to each journal. In order for the journal to stay in business, it was necessary to have at least 2-3,000 subscribers, and successful journals garnered in different periods from 6-15,000 subscribers: in 1860, *Sovremennik* (*The Contemporary*) had 6,600 subscribers; in 1880, *Otechestvennye zapiski* had 8,100; and in 1887 *Russkaia mysl'* had 10,000). According to our calculations (conducted according to data contained in research on the history of the press, memoirs, correspondence,

41 About thick journals in the second half of the XIX century see also: D. A. Martinsen (Ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 1997), 91-116, 171-196.

42 O. M-skii [Mil'chevskii], "Nasha zhurnalistika i publika," *Knizhnyi vestnik*, 3 (1864), 254.



journal archives, and so on), overall, the aggregate circulation of all journals numbered at 30,000 in 1860, 40,000 in 1880 and 90,000 in 1900. Given that the a journal was usually read not only by the subscriber himself, but also by their family members, as well as friends and acquaintances, and that several hundred copies of the journal's circulation went to libraries where they saw intensive use, it should be clear that the readership of journals was approximately 10 times larger than their circulation indicated. As previously stated, most readers of journals lived outside the capitals. For example, in 1859, the provinces accounted for two-thirds of the subscriptions for *The Contemporary*.<sup>43</sup>

We can distinguish three main readership groups of the “educated” public: scholars and writers, students, and landowners. All of them had a relatively large amount of free time and wide access to printed publications.

For writers, journalists and scholars, reading had always been an important aspect of their professional work, but now they had a need to be familiar with a much wider range of sources—to participate in the political and ideological struggle of their time. However these were people with a worldview that had already been formed, capable of a critical attitude to published articles and works of art.

The most avid readers in the second half of the nineteenth century were young people (students of universities, gymnasiums, and seminaries), which was determined by their intensive search for their place in life (See LEIBOV, VDOVIN, “What and How Russian Pupils Read in School,” in the present volume).<sup>44</sup> They preferred mostly radical journals, and the articles of N. A. Dobroliubov, N. G. Chernyshevskii and D. I. Pisarev tended to interest them most of all.

Such readers’ memoirs of this time vividly portray the journal as a source of revelation, the only true leader on the path of life:

The idol and god of the gymnasium students in the mid-60s of the last century was D. I. Pisarev. We were beside ourselves when we read his articles. His thoughts were perceived with reverence, like the gospel, as something indisputable, like a sacred covenant. I remember with what eager impatience we expected

43 See also: V. V. Karpova, “Chtenie tolstykh zhurnalov v Rossii v kontse XIX veka,” *Tsarskosel'skie chteniia*, 16 (2012), v. 3, 26-30.

44 Rich material about the reading of the *raznochinnymi* (*raznochinets*—an educated person of non-aristocratic descent in Russia) youth of the second half of the 1850s and early 1860's is summarized in a series of articles by I. E. Barenbaum: “‘Kruzhkovoe’ chtenie raznochinnoi molodezhi vtoroi poloviny 50-kh—nachala 60-kh godov XIX v.,” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 1 (1973), 77-92; “Iz istorii chteniia raznochinno-demokraticeskoi molodezhi vtoroi poloviny 50-kh-nachala 60-kh gg. XIX v.,” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 2 (1976), 29-44; “Raznochinno-demokraticeskii chitatel' v gody demokraticeskogo pod"ema (vtoraia polovina 50-kh-nachala 60-kh godov XIX v.): (K kharakteristike individual'nogo chteniia),” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 3 (1979), 23-35.

the release of the then extremely popular journal *Russkoe slovo* (*Russian Word*) and with what greed we devoured the new issue if an article by Pisarev appeared in it (and his articles appeared in almost every issue).

(from the Kherson Gymnasium mid-1860s)<sup>45</sup>

I had the opportunity to get my hands on the journal *Sovremennik*. The copies of this—the best journal of that time—were lent to me for a short period, so I had to sit through the night reading. Articles from *The Contemporary* from the late 50s and early 60s made extremely strong impressions on young people who thirsted for knowledge.

(from the Vladimir Seminary in the first half of the 1860s)<sup>46</sup>

Even the students from the capitals, who had extensive libraries available to them and listened to the lectures of the best professors and were in circles of like-minded people, read the journals just as enthusiastically. V. P. Ostrogorskii, who studied at the University of Petersburg in the first half of the 1860s, recalled:

The journals of the time were of great importance to me and my comrades. Especially those of them that combined almost all the best literary forces. Presenting both the richest material for reading critical and sociopolitical ideas, not to mention works by the most talented fiction writers (Turgenev, Nekrasov, M. I. Mikhailov, Pleshcheev, and others), they encouraged a fervent attitude towards public issues, presented ruthless satirical scourging of all that was contrary to the idea of progress, and tried to cast a shadow over the good reforms of the new reign. [...] At that time, critical and academic articles (by Chernyshevskii and Dobroliubov) quite often appeared in journals, and were in great demand.<sup>47</sup>

With the decline of social activism in the 1870s and 1880s, most readers' developed a calmer attitude towards journals, but radical young people continued to read with rapt attention the journals that were close to their viewpoints—*Trud* and, especially, *Otechestvennye zapiski*.<sup>48</sup>

45 S. L. Chudnovskii, *Iz davnikh let* (Moscow, 1934), 8.

46 I. I. Arkhangel'skii, "Vospominaniia studenta," *Trudy Vladimirskoi uchenoi arkhivnoi komissii*, 5 (1903), 175.

47 V. Ostrogorskii, *Iz istorii moego uchitel'stva* (St. Petersburg, 1914), 99.

48 About readers of *Otechestvennye zapiski* see: R. J. Ware, "A Russian journal and its public: *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1868-1884," *Oxford Slavonic papers. New series*, 14 (1981), 121-146.

A significant place in the reading lists of students in the 1860s was occupied by émigré literature—primarily the publications of Aleksander Herzen.<sup>49</sup> At Petersburg University, according to the recollections of one of the students,

...we read with avid attention, having gathered in a circle at someone's place to read the work published by Herzen in London—in *Kolokol* [*The Bell*] and *Poliarnaia zvezda* [*The Polar Star*], discussing and commenting on our understanding of any article in these journals, admiring both the remarkable stylistics and language of their author-emigrant and their content, always inspired by the ardent desire for freedom and progressive reforms for Russia.<sup>50</sup>

At Moscow University, “in classrooms *Kolokol*, *Poliarnaia zvezda*, *The Future of the Christian Religion* by Feuerbach, *Force and Matter* by Büchner and other works were openly read.”<sup>51</sup> In military schools, classes were “divided into Herzenists and anti-Herzenists”<sup>52</sup> in the Petersburg Cadet Corps; during classes, students read *Kolokol* and *Poliarnaia zvezda* as well as the books of émigré authors I. G. Golovin and P. V. Dolgorukov with their teacher.<sup>53</sup>

Later, illegal and forbidden political literature began to occupy an important place in the reading choices of youth. For example, during the period of the rise of the *Narodnik* political movement (1873), “studies at universities were abandoned, [the students] tried to absorb as much knowledge as possible in the spring, when they expected to excite the people for propaganda purposes. They read *Anarchy* (*Anarkhiia*) by Bakunin, the journal *Vpered* (*Forward*), the writings of Chernyshevskii, Khudekov, Flerovskii, Lavrov, and others.”<sup>54</sup>

Young students also actively read and discussed philosophical and sociological literature (Feuerbach, Strauss, Stirner, Carlyle, Vogt, Moleschott, Büchner, Comte, Spencer) and socio-political literature (Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Buckle). A significant place in reading belonged to natural science publications (Darwin, Tyndall, Huxley and so on), but these authors

49 On reading the publications of A. I. Herzen in Russia see: B. S. Ginzburg, “Rasprostranenie izdaniia Vol'noi russkoi tipografii v kontse 1850-kh-nachale 1860-kh gg.” in *Revoliutsionnaia situatsiia v Rossii v 1859-1861 gg.* (Moscow, 1962), 336-360; B. S. Ginzburg, “Otnoshenie chitatel'skikh krugov Rossii k stat'iam ‘Kolokola’ (1857-1861 gg.),” in *Revoliutsionnaia situatsiia v Rossii, 1859-1861 gg.* (Moscow, 1963), 306-337.

50 A. Egorov, *Stranitsy iz prozhitogo*, 2 vols. (Odessa, 1913), vol. 1, 91.

51 N. Popov, “Epokha uvlechenii,” *Nabliudatel'*, 1 (1895), 357.

52 V. P. Meshcherskii, *Moi vospominaniia*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1897), vol. 1, 21.

53 See: M. Iu. Ashenbrenner, *Voennaia organizatsiia Narodnoi voli* (Moscow, 1924), 5-6.

54 N. K. Bukh, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1928), 52.

interested readers not by virtue of purely scientific content, but rather by virtue of their worldview: they became guides for a materialistic, as opposed to a religious, world outlook. In the book, readers sought arguments in favor of the already formed “realistic” worldview, the main features of which were materialism and atheism in philosophy, radicalism in politics, and “rational egoism” in ethics. A few books considered authoritative were perceived as a source of scientifically proven truth.

Young people entered the temple of science with a preconceived attitude and expected that they would receive into their hands a new catechism, the basic dogmas of which had been already predetermined. They needed only to be formalized and backed up with citations [...] Crowds of young and sometimes mature people, for whom the world’s scientists were oracles of wisdom, could merely read these ‘sacred’ books on a superficial level, or not even *read* them, but be content with their retelling; they could also draw very arbitrary conclusions from reading; could say something on behalf of the oracle that which never occurred to him; could, at long last, throw out all other ideas save those of the chosen book, not wanting to know anything that might contradict this book [...].<sup>55</sup>

Many youth read contemporary fiction too. This was, to a certain extent, a consequence of radical changes, in the early 1860s, to how literature was taught. As a result of such changes,

...the choice of works for school study expanded, contemporary questions could enter the school, along with real problems pertaining to current struggles; literature could be a means of critical analysis of the oppressive social order of the past and present; students’ activity and their consciousness of their educational process expanded [...] Demands for meaningfulness in educational materials, for their relevance to life, were established.<sup>56</sup>

However, a utilitarian approach to fiction (largely influenced by D. I. Pisarev) often led the youth to pass over the works of I. S. Turgenev, F. M. Dostoevskii, L. N. Tolstoi—complex, ambiguous, and written at a high artistic level—in favor of didactic and one-dimensional novels created in a “progressive” spirit, such as the novels by N. F. Bazhin and A. K. Sheller-Mikhailov.

55 N. Kotliarevskii, *Kanun osvobozhdeniia* (Petrograd, 1916), 455, 459.

56 A. Skaftymov, “Prepodavanie literatury v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole: (Sorokovyie i sheshtidesiatye gody),” *Uchenye zapiski Saratovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta*, 3 (1938), 229.

Another leading group of readers for the 1860-1870 period came from the major and middling local nobility. This group was represented, as a rule, by the older generation. Readers from this social sphere placed a high premium on reading fiction. And in fact, their preferences were to a great extent met by the leading Russian prose writers of the 1850s-1860s. The group's reading habits are quite easy to imagine: first of all, they read journals such as *Sovremennik*, *Russkii vestnik*, *Otechestvennye zapiski*, and *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, which published works of fiction, journalism and literary criticism, all of which were to become well-known and subsequently afforded the status of literary classics.

Among government officials, readers with developed literary interests were few. A. S. Suvorin, who was well acquainted with various major officials, described this stratum as follows:

Russian people of higher education do not read anything; having entered the service, after a certain amount of time, a Russian person turns out to be ignorant, for he considers himself to be educated, and others consider him so, but he has vague notions, for his former education is never updated and developed by reading; if the topic turns to scientific subjects he will begin to speak nonsense, for he worships the old gods; if he reads at all, he offers praise at random, admires and criticizes without sense, and with the air of a connoisseur all the while; this is especially so if he has managed to get into the service of the major ranks. Teachers are not an exception to this. There is no time for them to read.<sup>57</sup>

During the post-reform period, the ranks of another reading group—the provincial intelligentsia—was growing sharply. Many of these individuals were *zemstvo* employees—teachers, doctors, statisticians and so on. For them, the book was an extremely significant means of overcoming cultural isolation and the opportunity to feel a sense of community with other representatives of this intelligentsia.

In the context of the rapid growth and diversification in readership during the post-reform period, we can identify a considerable “intermediate” layer of the readership, consisting of “semi-educated” readers who had already outgrown the *lubok* book but lacked sufficient preparation for understanding publications found in the thick journals (and the books of that level of literature). The education received by its representatives can be called—rather conditionally—partial and restricted to the secondary school context (county school, lower theological school, seminary, several classes at a gymnasium, and so on). In terms of their social status, these were, as

---

57 A. S. Suvorin, *Dnevnik* (Moscow; Petrograd, 1923), 336.

a rule, petty officials, less wealthy landlords, village priests, merchants, and urban commoners. According to an observer of that time, “reading, (which our businessman previously considered an idle act; the merchant and urban commoner—an inappropriate way to spend one’s time; and the clergy—an unworthy occupation) is, little by little, beginning to acquire attractiveness.”<sup>58</sup>

If in the beginning of the nineteenth century these social groups had not taken to reading, then by the middle of the century regular reading became the norm for them. In a historical moment of rapid social changes, representatives of this readership strove to comprehend their place within the framework of the social whole. After receiving a formal education, they were accustomed to looking for answers to emerging questions in a book, but due to their brief training, they had not yet fully assimilated a “scientific” picture of the world, and their outlook was fragmentary, retaining many elements and traditional, commonplace ideas. Hence, on the one hand, a desire to obtain a variety of information, and on the other, a craving not for the systematic ordering of this knowledge, but rather for the sensationalism, interest, and attractiveness offered by the information itself. The needs of such readers were best answered by the illustrated weekly. A thick journal was too complex for readers of the intermediate layer, and the problems discussed in these journals were not compelling. Although the first illustrated weekly appeared in Russia at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a rapid increase in their number can be observed only in the last third (in 1860, 5 publications; in 1880, 18; in 1890, 29; in 1900, 41).<sup>59</sup> The most widespread type of illustrated journal during this period was the universal weekly “for family reading,” combining text and illustrations (portraits, landscapes, reproductions of paintings, and so on).

The first such journal, *Vsemirnaia illustratsiia* (*World Illustration*), was published from 1869 on, and in 1877 there were already seven such publications (*Vsemirnaia illustratsiia*, *Zhivopisnoe obozrenie* [*Picture Review*], *Illustrirovannaia nedelia* [*The Illustrated Week*], *Krugozor* [*Outlook*], *Niva* [*Field*], *Pchela* [*The Bee*], *Severnaia zvezda* [*The Northern Star*], all published in Petersburg). As a result, the total audience of illustrated journals at the end of the 1870s was approximately 100,000 subscribers, and in the beginning of twentieth century—about 500,000. It was the illustrated journals that played an important role for this reader group in inculcating the skills of reading culture, familiarising them with fiction and modern scientific knowledge, and acquainting them with the fine arts.

In the 1890s it was noted that “...cheap illustrated periodical publications are dispersed among the relatively poor population, and they are content to read them instead of the *lubok* publications”.<sup>60</sup> Attentive observers turned

58 S. Mikhno [V. Farmakovskii], “Pis'mo iz Viatki,” *Russkii dnevnik*, 99 (1859).

59 A. S. Voronkevich, “Russkie illiustrirovannye ezhenedel'niki v XIX veke,” *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Ser. 10. Zhurnalistika*, 1 (1984), 33.

60 “Lubochnye ili narodnye kartinki,” *Knizhnyi vestnik*, 6/7 (1891), 266.

their attention to the fact that for many “...the main reason for subscription [to illustrated journals] is to imitate others, the desire to become [...] on par with the educated”<sup>61</sup> (Tobolsk Province, 1889). “Merchants and their family do not read journals, but take out subscriptions for the sake of bonus materials [free oleographic pictures attached to the journal], and to seem more fashionable, so as not to lag behind others”; this is particularly the case for children and wives. However, they did not *truly* read either: “...all reading ends with looking at the pictures and reading what’s under the pictures. Sometimes the master of the house will also look at the pictures, and if they are interesting to him, he takes an edition, flips through it, and orders it to be taken care of and protected”<sup>62</sup> (Riazan Province, 1891). Nevertheless, the need for regular reading of journals gradually developed even among these subscribers.

The reading audience considered here was likewise differentiated—both “vertically,” according to the cultural horizon and income level, and “horizontally,” by belonging to a particular region, profession, and so on. Accordingly, each illustrated journal sought to focus on its “own” reader, which found expression in the contents and price of the journal. Out of the weekly journals of the 1880s, *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia* had an annual subscription (with postage) of 12 rubles, and *Zhivopisnoe obozrenie* cost 8 rubles; both were designed for more well-off and cultivated readers (middle officials, rich merchants), while *Niva* (at a cost of 6 rubles) was for the petty bourgeoisie and the provincial intelligentsia. The 1883-1885 archive of the cheapest (4 rubles) illustrated journal *Rodina* (*Homeland*) shows that its subscribers consisted of small provincial officials, priests, military men in low ranks, as well as teachers and peasants.<sup>63</sup> In the late 1880s, the daughter of a merchant from the Siberian city of Surgut admired the “lovely” novels in *Rodina*.<sup>64</sup> A peasant from the Riazan province wrote in the early 1890s: “I have been receiving the journal-newspaper *Rodina* for four years already, and I find that this is the most ‘peasant-oriented’ journal both in price and content and in the abundance of material it contains.”<sup>65</sup> According to one of the peasants, they preferred the journal *Rodina* to all others because it “...presents stories that are more suitable to life and more understandable.”<sup>66</sup> However, on the whole, only an insignificant part of the peasants read this type of illustrated journals. In the Voronezh province, for example, only

---

61 Department of manuscripts of the Russian state library (Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki -- OR RGB), f. 358, k. 5, d. 21, l. 94 ob.

62 Ibid., d. 18, l. 23 ob., 25.

63 Institute of Russian literature (Institut russkoi literatury – IRLI), f. 583, d. 56, 58.

64 OR RGB, f. 358, k. 5, d. 21, l. 95.

65 Ibid., d. 15, l. 9 ob.

66 L. Lichkov, “Kak i chto chitaet narod v vostochnoi Sibiri,” *Russkaia mysl'*, 2 (1896), 36.

0.1% of the peasant population identified themselves as readers of *Rodina* and *Niva*.<sup>67</sup>

However, despite this fact, there was no rigid estate affiliation of journals. An observer noted (in 1891) that in the big trading village of the Riazan province, *Niva* was the most widely distributed: "...gentlemen [i.e. nobles and officials; A. R.], merchants and priests, and wealthier urban commoners receive it."<sup>68</sup> A peasant from the Viatka province (early 1890s) reported: "...the clergy have subscriptions for the journal *Niva* (I believe joint ones), and newest edition of *Niva* is passed from the priest to the deacon, and then to the sextons [...] moreover, mostly female relatives of clergy read this journal, because in *Niva* there is an appendix, 'Paris Fashions,' which serves as a guide for all the ladies of the rural intelligentsia."<sup>69</sup> *Niva* was much more "solid" and "cultural" than *Rodina*, and also penetrated into the working and peasant spheres, albeit on a smaller scale.<sup>70</sup>

In such a competitive market for readers, each illustrated weekly either soon ceased to be published, or found its audience within those readers' preexisting preference for a type of publication that most responded to their spiritual needs. As a result, the weeklies formed a system that encompassed the "average" readership as a whole. Editors and publishers of illustrated journals (often these functions were combined in one person) understood the specifics of their publication's audience. This was facilitated by subscription receipts, which indicated the social status of subscribers, as well as numerous letters to the editorial office in which readers evaluated the journal's content and expressed wishes for its future.

Unlike thick journals containing only printed text, illustrated journals combined text with image. Clear and easy accessibility was ensured by the fact that the image was given equal footing with the printed text. Images (icons, *lubok* prints, and so on) were by that time widely distributed among the common folk, but the printed word was a relatively recent innovation in their media consumption. That is why a hybrid form such as an illustrated journal, based on a combination of image and text, was needed. Illustrations, which had greater visibility and familiarity, made it easier for people who had only recently developed the habit of reading to understand the text.

The clarity and cheapness of the illustrated journal were complemented by its universality. In the opinion of E. A. Dinershtein, the success of *Niva* was "...related to its skillful combination of different and diverse materials,

---

67 Calculated by: I. Voronov, *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniiu v voronezhskoi gubernii* (Voronezh, 1899), 103.

68 OR RGB, f. 358, k. 5, d. 18, l. 23 ob.

69 Ibid., d. 13, l. 38 ob., 39.

70 See: *Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii po nachal'nomu obrazovaniiu v Orlovskoi gubernii za 1900-1901 uchebnyi god* (Orel, 1902), 109; *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god* (Poltava, 1903), 127; E. A. Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei: A. F. Marks (Moscow, 1986), 42-43.



which in aggregate could serve the whole of a family's reading. Therefore, all [...] content categories were equivalent and formed in terms of holistic perception."<sup>71</sup> Here one could find an image and description of the phenomena of modern domestic and foreign policy, science, culture and art; "remarkable places" and historical events; famous people; paintings and sculptures; distant countries and their people; and more. The most important component of the journal was its literary works—novels, stories, essays, and poems. We will quote a typical letter from a subscriber to the editor: "There are many who desire there to be more fictional works in *Rodina*, even translated ones—because in the provinces [...] they are very much eager for novels."<sup>72</sup>

Even as such publications favored more and more modern material, they nevertheless retained meaning and integrity by maintaining a focus on historical topics. History, especially embodied in an aesthetic and therefore integral and meaningful form (novels, images of architectural monuments), served as a reference point and a measure in assessing a fragmented and contradictory modernity. This fact explains why the historical novel was consistently an indispensable component of the annual subscription of any illustrated journal: publishers sought to secure the constant cooperation of one or another popular historical novelist, such as V. S. Solov'ev, E. A. Salias, P. N. Polevoi, M. N. Volkonskii, and others in this category. The key place of the historical novel in the illustrated journal clearly demonstrates the difference in the interests of its readers and those of the thick journals, which were dominated by "social problem" novels with modern themes.

The materials of a journal were "linked"—both within the a single edition and within the annual set, since the editions were designed to be collected and stored long after their appearance. At the end of the year, for an additional fee, editors often offered subscribers the opportunity to receive a bound annual (or semi-annual) set. Collected journals turned into thick folios, which, due to the universality of the content, became something like an original chronicle, book for reading, and encyclopedia all at once.

The role of universal illustrated journals in the culture of that time was neither singular nor simple. On the one hand, in the context of intensive social and cultural development, when both the conditions of everyday life and popular views were changing with extraordinary rapidity, the illustrated journal, with its appeal to the family, the historical past, and religious moral norms, served the purposes of cultural stabilisation, mitigating and reconciling (in the consciousness of readers) the contradictions present in modern culture. However, at the same time the illustrated journal also helped the reader to find a new support system: the world of science and culture. Thanks to certain components of its content (popular science ma-

---

<sup>71</sup> Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei, 50.

<sup>72</sup> IRLI, f. 583, d. 58, l. 169.

terials, sometimes articles, stories and novels of social-critical orientation), and, more importantly, its form (printed text, albeit in combination with the image), which contributed to the growth of the analytic capabilities and rationality of readers' consciousness, the illustrated journal was itself a conductor of modernity in culture. By turning viewers into readers and random readers to regular readers, the printed journal contributed to the emergence of a mass readership in Russia, and, thereby, accelerated of the processes of social and cultural development.

A characteristic phenomenon of the type of publishing described here was the publication of books in the form of a free supplement to the journal (from the 1880s on). Soon, in a number of publications, such add-ons began appearing on a monthly basis and become an effective means of distributing books (as well as journals themselves) in mass print runs. For example, in 1887, after A. A. Caspari became the publisher of *Rodina* and began supplementing it with *A Collection of Novels, Novellas and Stories (Sobranie romanov, povestei i rasskazov)* and other additional materials on a monthly basis, the circulation of the journal began to grow rapidly and reached a total of 120,000 copies.

In fact, the cost of the book was included in the subscription fee, even though psychologically the subscriber considered the book to be free, a simple bonus to the paid periodical. Thus, the subscriber received a cheap book that corresponded to their requests. The journal, having sharply increased its circulation thanks to its additional subscribers, while simultaneously electing to not spend money on advertising, storage, and retail space, could reduce the overall production cost and, as a consequence, the book's price of sale. As a result, the subscriber of the journal *Rodina* received could receive, in addition to the journals themselves and other numerous supplements, twelve books for 4 roubles—an expense similar to what they would find in traditional retail, where books were typically not less than half a rouble apiece. Given that the circulation of a fiction book was then usually 1,200 or 2,400 copies, and the circulation of *Rodina* (and, therefore, the books published and distributed in accompaniment to it) reached 120,000, one can imagine how much wider the readership was of “free supplements” in comparison with the usual publications.

Moreover, the content of the supplement could differ quite significantly, since the editors of the journals were guided by the needs of the subscribers. For example, taking into account the low cultural demands of its readers, the editorial board of *Rodina* sought to capitalize on popular genres by including books written by third-rate authors successful with mass audiences. The annual set usually included historical writers (A.V. Arsen'ev, P. N. Polevoi, A. A. Sokolov), “crime” writers (K. V. Nazar'eva, A. I. Krasnitskii, I. N. Ponomarev), and writers of romantic-melodramatic novels (E. O. Dubrovina, E. I. Zarina, F. V. Dombrovskii). In the case of *Niva*, among

whose readers could be counted many provincial members of the intelligentsia, annual supplements included classics both foreign and domestic (Lermontov, Gogol', Turgenev, Dostoevskii, Goncharov, Fet and others), as well as well-known contemporary writers (Chekhov, Bunin, Korolenko, Boborykin, Leonid Andreev, and others). As evidenced by numerous recollections, these sets of works, published as supplements to *Niva*, formed the basis of many provincial home libraries. In the late nineteenth-early twentieth century, at least 5 million such copies were distributed annually as supplements to illustrated journals; that is, they represented at that time one of the main channels for distributing books.

Those readers of the “average” cultural level differed quite sharply in their life interests. For example, in 1860, the number of priests had reached an impressive figure—113,800 people.<sup>73</sup> Contemporaries testified that among members of this group interest in reading meaningfully increased during the early 1860s: “...at the present time our parochial clergy, including those in rural areas, have strongly indicated that they want to read, and to read various other types of spiritual content [i.e. things apart from liturgical texts – A.R.]; indeed, they are not isolating themselves from those books that we call secular [...] our priests, especially in recent years, have themselves come to represent a significant number of those who buy and write spiritual books and journals.”<sup>74</sup> Such individuals read special “spiritual” journals (*Palomnik* [*Pilgrim*], *Rukovodstvo dlia sel'skikh pastyrei* [*Guide for Rural Shepherds*], *Kormchii* [*Helmsman*]), as well as secular illustrated journals (*Niva*, *Rodina*), plus cheap newspapers (*Svet* [*Light*], *Syn otechestva* [*Son of the Fatherland*]).

Similarly, the number of readers among low-ranking officers, poor landowners, and petty officials grew. They often held subscriptions for the newspapers *Svet* and *Syn otechestva*, the illustrated magazines *Niva*, *Rodina*, *Zhivopisnoe obozrenie*, *Voskresen'e* (*Sunday*), *Illiustrirovannyi mir* (*Illustrated World*), and so on, many of which usually had supplements in the form of novels written by modern “mass” or popular authors.

In the 1880s, a sharp increase in levels of “average” readership was recognised as literature’s “invasion of the street.” Indeed, circulations of illustrated journals and newspapers, which read primarily by this subsection of the readership, grew rapidly—sometimes by hundreds of thousands. For example, in 1887, 485 residents of the Ufa province subscribed to *Niva* and 406 to the newspaper *Svet*. In third place (258) was the newspaper *Sel'skii vestnik* (*The Rural Herald*); in this case, a free copies were sent to the parish boards. Next came *Zhivopisnoe obozrenie* (182), then *Voskresen'e* (132), *Syn otechestva* (118), and so on. Thick journals were subscribed to in a much smaller number: *Russkaia mysl'*—35 copies, *Vestnik Evropy*—31 copies, *Severnyi vestnik* (*The Northern Herald*)—23 copies, *Nabliudatel'* (*The*

73 See Ia. E. Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii za 400 let* (Moscow, 1973), 80.

74 Quoted from *Voskresnoe chtenie*, 10 (1861/62), 270-271.

*Observer*)—13 copies. The total number of copies of illustrated journals received in the province was more than six times greater than the number of thick monthly journals.<sup>75</sup>

The largest, most rapidly increasing reader group in the last third of the nineteenth century was composed of the lower estates. We have already spoken about the sharp gap between the primary and secondary schools in pre-revolutionary Russia. But since the primary school developed at a faster rate than the secondary one in the post-reform period, a large number of literate but uneducated readers were created as a result. Both in their life experience and in the nature of their knowledge (they possessed insignificant information on history and geography, but had the ability to read, write, and count) they were not ready to accept the literature of the “educated” readership. In the cities, the main material for reading available to this group was the city newspaper. Newspapers sharply expanded their audience in general in the second half of the nineteenth century. Having appeared in Russia in the eighteenth century, the newspaper only habitual reading for officials and provincial landowners in the first half of the nineteenth century. But then newspapers were, as a rule, official or semi-official, and their total audience did not exceed 30-40,000 readers—even by the middle of the nineteenth century. In the post-reform period, the rapid development of the newspaper business began, which was reflected in the growing number of publications and their corresponding growth in total circulation. According to our approximate calculations (only literary and general “unprofiled” newspapers were taken into account, and they had to be published at least once a week), this process proceeded at the following rates:

	Year			
	1840	1860	1880	1900
Number of newspapers	51	67	123	204
Total circulation, (in thousands of copies)	25	65	300	900

In 1913, there were 856 total Russian newspapers, and their combined circulation reached 2.7 million.<sup>76</sup>

In the late 1870s, M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote: “The physiognomy of our literature has changed significantly over the past fifteen years. [...] The importance of large (monthly) journals has fallen, and in their place, as leaders of public opinion, daily newspapers have appeared.”<sup>77</sup>

75 See *Pamiatnaia knizhka Ufimskoi gubernii 1889 goda* (Ufa, 1889), 76-78.

76 See: B. I. Esin, *Russkaia dorevoliutsionnaia gazeta* (Moscow, 1971), 74.

77 M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 20 vols. (Moscow, 1972), vol. 13, 628.

At that time, newspapers did not simply grow sharply in number. They were also increasingly differentiated from one another in various categories: ideology, place of publication (i.e. metropolitan or provincial), and audience (this or that social stratum)—all of which reflected the corresponding process of sociocultural differentiation at work in Russian society itself.

A specific type of literature was quickly developed for readers from the lower strata (it had existed before, only in much smaller quantities), and that literature gradually became further differentiated, catering to different “sub-layers” of this reading group.

In the 1860-1870s merchants and petty officials joined in the regular reading of newspapers, and in the 1880s, newspapers also became the property of the urban lower classes (clerks, servants, some workers). If the newspaper represented merely one of the reading options for other groups of the urban population (along with the journal and the book), then for urban lower classes, the newspaper often represented the *only* type of reading in which they engaged.

In the late 1850s/early 1860s, so-called “street leaflets” emerged, catering to the low-level urban reader, and in the first post-reform years the so-called “small press” publications began to appear: *Peterburgskii listok* (*The Petersburg Leaflet*) in 1864, *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (*The Petersburg Gazette*) in 1867, and *Sovremennye izvestiia* (*Modern News*) in Moscow in 1867. The 1880s saw additional periodicals of this type come into being; for example, *Moskovskii listok* (*The Moscow Leaflet*) began publication in 1881, and Moscow’s *Novosti dnia* (*News of the Day*) began publication in 1883. By this time, the level of literacy among urban lower-class citizens—which consisted in a large part of peasants who had migrated from villages, and whose childhood and adolescence had fallen in post-reform time—had increased significantly.

“Small press” print was much cheaper than traditional publication: in 1880 an annual subscription to a grassroots newspaper cost 8-9 roubles, while a newspaper for the educated public cost twice as much, typically between 15 and 17 rubles. “Small press” publications more closely corresponded to the needs of grassroots readers not only in terms of price, but also their nature of the presentation content, given that such readers either did not read at all previously, had been content with rumors and urban folklore, or at most consumed *lubok* literature. The readership of the “small press” consisted of those substrata of the urban population which occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder: small merchants and officials, clerks, servants, artisans, and literate workers. S. S. Okreits, who worked for *Peterburgskii listok*, noted that “ninety-nine percent of the readers of *Listok* are visitors to pubs and third-rate taverns, shop assistants, craftsmen and small traders.”<sup>78</sup> Another memoirist recalled that the newspaper

---

78 S. S. Okreits, “Literaturnye vstrechi i znakomstva,” *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 6 (1916), 630.

*Moskovskii listok* “immediately won the sympathy of lackeys, chambermaids, coachmen, laundresses, cooks, shopkeepers, small craftsmen, middle-class merchants, and so on.”<sup>79</sup> Newspaper materials were often read aloud for illiterate or semi-literate listeners. In his story *In People (V liudiakh)*, Maksim Gor’kii gives a description of the reading of the newspaper *Moskovskii listok* for audience members who “listen attentively, with some kind of reverent greed, exclaiming ‘aah’ at intervals, and who are amazed at the villainy of the characters...”<sup>80</sup> Often, such readings were held in taverns. According to the recollections of one worker, there “there were not many who could read. These readings of the newspaper were only held occasionally, but still it was very satisfying.” Readers were divided into two camps: some demanded to see in the newspaper whether a fire had occurred, whether a horse might have been taken away from a peasant at a market, or whether there was an outbreak of disease. Others were eager to read the *feuilleton* (referring to a novel printed in parts with sequels).<sup>81</sup>

This type of low-level paper provided a functional equivalent to rumours and folklore, acclimated its audience to the practice of regular reading, and pulled it into the sphere of the printed word’s influence. At the same time, like a thick or thin journal, it modeled its readers’ image of the world. Many of them had recently come to the city from the village or were childhood natives of the village. Torn from the traditional way of life and ushered into the life of a large city, they experienced considerable stresses while altering their worldview to this new reality. The urban way of life called into question the patterns of behaviour they had once learned in the village. It demanded not blind submission to tradition, but independent decision-making based on the diversity of social and cultural opportunities available. The printed word had the task of introducing to and reinforcing in these readers’ consciousness new values and norms, but also behavioural regulations as such. Thus, the motivation for enrichment inherent in the urban way of life was tempered by knowledge of possible violations of the legal and moral order; hence the interest in the criminal chronicle and sensational novel, which demonstrated the consequences of the “wrong,” “illegal” way to success.

The world of readers’ interests was determined by what they saw and heard during their own lives; their chosen reading focused on vital issues familiar to them from work and life. This world was limited in space (foreign news in the “small press” was represented minimally or not at all, while specific city-wide news dominated, as suggested by the periodicals’ named [*Peterburgskii listok*, *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, *Moskovskii listok*]) and limited in time, giving priority to a particular conceptualization of modernity—one understood as a momentary flash in the pan. This was not contradicted

79 B. A. Shchetinin, “Khoziain Moskvy,” *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 5/6 (1917), 455.

80 M. Gor’kii, *Detstvo. V liudiakh. Moi universitety* (Moscow, 1975), 285.

81 S. Reshetov, *K novoi zhizni* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1926), 8.

by the fact that an important component of the grassroots newspapers—especially those in Moscow—was the historical novel, since the published works of this genre were actually projections of current issues. These texts discussed current problems (the search for historical roots and a national identity, autocracy as the basis of the Russian state, and so on), and the motives for the characters' actions and the nature of their consciousness were equated with modern ones. Furthermore, the protracted publication time of the serialized novel, as well as the place they were printed—the daily newspaper—“inserted” history into the present, making it seem as if the events described within the novel were happening here and now.

All the material in the “small press” was presented in such a way as to pique the readers' curiosity and make the content accessible; the reader would begin to read, and continue without stopping, and understand the text. In a number of respects, the “small press” occupied an intermediate place between oral literature and the press in the proper sense of the word. These “low” newspapers were subscribed to and kept in taverns, that is, places where people gathered, had conversations, and exchanged rumours. As stated, often “small press” papers were read out loud there (or in other places where the “folk” gathered). The newspaper itself “spread” scandalous information, often capturing rumours that were already in circulation. The orientation of newspaper fiction to speech genres (for example, “scenes” with dialogue) and the aesthetics of historical folklore (novels and stories about noble robbers) are also noteworthy phenomena here.

By “issuing” readers an integrated image of the world, the newspaper “equalised” various genres; in a sense, it erased the line between literary and non-literary genres. On the one hand, facts and incidents connected to scandals, crime news, performances (primarily theatrical), comedic occurrences—all of which were drawn from contemporary events—were described via a narrativized sketch that “fictionalized” such content. On the other hand, the fiction in the newspaper was certainly of a documentary nature, since such genres as “from everyday life” and sensational novels written on the basis of real events prevailed. Moreover, there were historical novels about events that had really happened, and sketches created *as if* they were “copied from nature.” Quite often they were a processed record of what the writer had heard. And finally, such a key genre as the feuilleton, where the events of the day were discussed in an easy and jocular manner (often with the inclusion of poems) straddled the border between fiction and non-fiction.

A key component of the grassroots newspaper was the novel, most often adventurous and sensational in nature. In the beginning (from 1870 in *Peterburgskii listok* and *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, plus later in the Moscow *Novosti dnia*), translations of French novels were published from issue to issue (X. de Montépin, F. du Boisgobey, A. Bouvier, A. Belot, etc.), creat-

ed in the framework of the tradition begun by *The Mysteries of Paris* by E. Sue. Already in the 1880s, domestic samples of this genre (novels by F. K. Ivanov, I. N. Ponomarev, A. A. Sokolov, A. I. Sokolova, G. A. Khrushchev-Sokolnikov, A. N. Tsekhovich, A. V. Ewald and so on) began to appear; in the 1890s, they almost ousted the foreign ones from the newspaper pages. Most often these were “criminal novels” or “novels from modern life,” which usually meant exposés of the “ulcers” and “vices” of a large city. The “criminal novel” was in many respects similar in its problems and generic structure to the detective story; however, it focused more on the causes and consequences of the crime, and not on the course of its disclosure. In Moscow newspapers, and especially in *Moskovskii listok*, which did not include any translations at all, a large number of novels “from everyday life” (with melodramatic structure) and historical novels were also printed.

The novels were located at the bottom of the newspaper page, in the feuilleton section, so they were often called feuilletons themselves. In these typical memoirs of a worker, who in 1900 was a pupil in an icon-painting studio, it is recalled that:

...the owner had a special predilection for *Moskovskii listok* for the sake of the feuilletons printed in it, such as *Storm in Still Waters* [*Buria v stoiachikh vodakh*] [A. Pazukhin] or *The Robber Karmeliuk* [*Razboinik Karmeliuk*] [M.P. Staritskii]. The owner was also interested in the war in China. I read him the newspapers every day...<sup>82</sup>

An important place in the literary section of the newspaper was occupied by “scenes from nature” and humorous stories. As a rule, both genres concerned a ridiculous anecdote regarding the life of merchants or urban commoners. The story was conducted in a fairly soft, kind-hearted manner, ridiculing the stock characters of this environment that were fixed in the mass consciousness. At the same time, the author (and the reader) viewed the situation as if from above, having risen above it—that is, free of the described characters’ shortcomings. Hundreds of such works were written by each of the humourists of the “small press”: N. A. Leikin, I. I. Miasnitskii, A. M. Pazukhin, D. D. Togolskii, etc. Poems, mostly humorous (by L. I. Palmin, L. G. Grave, A. F. Ivanov, S. F. Ryskin, S. Ia. Ukolov) were also constantly printed on the pages of newspapers. In general, the brunt of the literary section of the newspaper had a joking tone—it was dominated by a mockery of almost everything that came to the attention of the authors.

It is also worth looking at newspaper reportage devoted to such topics as murder and robbery, litigation, fires and natural disasters, fairs, and any other events related to everyday life. To name one example, N. I. Pastukhov,

---

82 S. Leningradskii, *Ot zemli na zavod i s zavoda na zemliu* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1927), 10.



the creator of *Moskovskii listok*, became famous for his “fire” reports, and later kept a special reporter on hand for the description of fires in the newspaper. Famous reporters were V. A. Giliarovskii, who worked for *Moskovskii listok* for many years, and N. N. Zhivotov.

The remaining space in the newspaper was taken up by additional information about city life, government reports, correspondence from other cities, theatre reviews, letters to the editorial office and announcements. With these kinds of contributions accounted for, our outline of the newspaper genre’s content is more or less complete.

According to the observations of A. P. Chudakov, who analysed in detail the nature of this type of literature and the work of its main representatives,

... If in the 1860s, the first decade of the existence of mass Russian journals, the boundary between ‘small’ and ‘big press’ was unclear, and many authors cooperated with both types of publications, then gradually the difference became more pronounced. The ‘small’ press got its own ‘story’ and novellas based on high society, its sketches acquired specialized genre features, which had not previously been catered for in the journals *Sovremennik*, *Russkoe slovo*, *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*—the publications in which they had begun; the newspapers had created the canons of a special newspaper novel.<sup>83</sup>

One more important part of the reading public, and the *lubok* literature that satisfied its intellectual demands, is discussed in our article on peasant reading in this volume.

It should be noted that along with the government-controlled channels of text distribution described above, in the second half of the nineteenth century, there were parallel publications of handwritten literature,<sup>84</sup> editions of foreign “free” press and domestic illegal publications that complemented them in genre and thematic respects.

Due to the nature of handwritten literature—a significant part of which was not approved by the state (for political and moral reasons), it is rather difficult to estimate the extent of its distribution.

A sharp impetus to the spread of manuscripts containing oppositional literature was the defeat of Russia in the Crimean War. According to the testimony of the anonymous author of the article “A Note on Handwritten

83 A. P. Chudakov, *Mir Chekhova* (Moscow, 1986), 55. On the genres of small press, see *ibid.*, 69–94.

84 See: S. Reiser, “Vol’naia russkaia poeziia vtoroi poloviny XIX veka” in *Vol’naia russkaia poeziia vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Leningrad, 1959), 5–41; A. Reitblat, “Pis’mennaia literatura v Rossii v XIX veke, ee sotsiokul’turnye funktsii i chitateli” in D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (eds.) *Reading in Russia: Practices of Reading and Literary Communication, 1760–1930* (Milano, 2014), 79–98.

Literature” (“Zapiska o pis'mennoi literature,” 1856), “handwritten literature has appeared in society; it has eluded the censorship and is unknown to the government. Articles of all types of content are passed from hand to hand, are copied (also by hand) in considerable numbers, are transported from the capitals to the provinces and from the provinces to the capitals [...] almost all the educated class in Russia participate in the dissemination of handwritten articles [...] [the manuscript] is transmitted to others, and they talk about it almost in public, without any fear.”<sup>85</sup> An example of these observations can be found in the reminiscences of P. D. Boborykin, who wrote that when, at the end of the 1850s, he learned about the student unrest in the University of Kazan', he sent a comrade a message on this subject, a message which contained a description of a number of professors. “This message,” he wrote, “...had a sensational success, was dispersed in a multitude of pages, and I met Kazan' locals twenty, thirty years later who almost remembered it by heart.”<sup>86</sup>

Memoirs of state and public figures, which contained information about what was the hidden from the eyes of the public sides of political life and about the personalities of monarchs, were widely copied and distributed (for example, those by I. V. Lopukhin, Catherine II and Countess E. R. Dashkova).

Pornographic and erotic works should also be mentioned here. Collections of works by I. Barkov and his imitators were widely distributed and read.<sup>87</sup> Apparently, the scale of their distribution, especially in an exclusively male environment (i.e. in educational institutions or the army), was very large. Here, for example, are the memoirs from a student of the 5<sup>th</sup> St. Petersburg grammar schools in 1881:

Due to the extremely diverse composition of the students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, pornography made its first appearance. Among the students were the so-called “book-lovers,” whose satchels were full of textbooks and notebooks, and half obscene literary works and pornographic cards, which such students apparently had due to domestic neglect. These items were all free of charge and very willingly provided during lessons to those interested.<sup>88</sup>

True, with the creation of the Russian foreign press, the situation changed, and many texts (primarily those of a political nature) that were previously

---

85 “Zapiska o pis'mennoi literature,” *Golosa iz Rossii* (London, 1856), 38, 40, 42.

86 P. D. Boborykin, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1965), vol. 1, 182.

87 See: N. Sapov [S. I. Panov], “‘Barkov dovolen budet mnoi!': O massovoi barkoviane XIX veka” in N. S. Sapov (Ed.) *Pod imenem Barkova: eroticheskaia poeziia XVIII–nachala XX veka* (Moscow, 1994), 5-20; A. M. Ranchin, N. S. Sapov (Ed.) *Stikhi ne dlia dam: russkaia netsenzurnaiia poeziia vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow, 1994).

88 V. P. Semenov-Tian-Shanskii, *To, chto proshlo* (Moscow, 2009), vol. 1, 168.

distributed in handwritten copies now began to circulate in print. In 1853 in London there was A. I. Herzen's Free Russian book printing house (in addition to individual publications, the yearbooks *The Polar Star* [1855-1862], the collections *Voices from Russia* [*Golosa iz Rossii*] [1856-1860], and the newspaper *The Bell* [1857-1867]). Later, books and periodicals began to appear in Germany and France. According to the *Union Catalogue of the Russian Illegal and Prohibited Press of the nineteenth Century*, more than 60 periodicals were published abroad in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>89</sup> Books printed abroad were also brought to Russia by persons traveling overseas.

In Russia, the agitational and propagandistic publications of The People's Will (*Narodnaia volia*) movement and later the Marxists, came out illegally, but such tendentious works by Tolstoi as *What is My Faith?*, *Confession*, and others were also published.

Along with the abovementioned reader groups at the end of the nineteenth century, there were two additional reader groups, at that time not numerous, that became widespread in the early twentieth century.

One of them was the gradually developing working-class readership. Its development was connected both with the growth of the number of workers (which, in the large-scale industrial sector of European Russia, expanded from 706,000 in 1865 to 1,432,000 in 1890),<sup>90</sup> and with their professionalisation, which caused their gradual separation from village life and their assimilation into urban culture. In the late nineteenth early twentieth centuries, hereditary workers accounted for a small part of the total number, while natives of the village or seasonal workers predominated.<sup>91</sup> This seasonal work helped unify the reading habits of the workers and the reading habits of the peasants. Unfortunately, there is very little empirical data on the reading habits of workers, since their reading has not been studied in detail. Some evidence demonstrates that here too, reading was not widespread: according to a worker's memoirs about life in Petersburg at the beginning of the twentieth century, "books, newspapers, and journals rarely appeared in working families at that time"<sup>92</sup>; another memoirist similarly testified that the workers "did not subscribe to newspapers, did not read books, and one could rarely find a printed word in the house".<sup>93</sup> However, under favorable conditions, i.e. with free time and a free library, workers quickly joined in reading activities. A statistical survey by P. M. Shestakov, conducted in the late nineteenth century at the Moscow cotton printing fac-

89 See: *Svodnyi katalog russkoi nelegal'noi i zapreshchennoi pechati XIX veka: knigi i periodicheskie izdaniia*, III vols. (Moscow, 1981—1982).

90 V. I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 55 vols. (Moscow, 1967), vol. 3, 498.

91 See: R. E. Johnson, *Peasant and Proletarian: the Working Class of Moscow in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1979).

92 P. P. Aleksandrov, *Za Narvskoi zastavoi: Vospominaniia starogo rabochego* (Leningrad, 1963), 18.

93 M. Zhabko, *Iz dalekogo proshlogo: Vospominaniia starogo rabochego* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1930), 29.

tory (whose owners pursued a “philanthropic” policy, opening a school, a library, a theatre for workers, etc.), showed that 42% of the working men there were readers.<sup>94</sup> In Ivanovo-Voznesensk, the centre of the textile industry in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth/beginning of the twentieth century, where there were five library reading rooms “for the people,” including two located in factories, 83% of workers under the age of 25 were readers, and in general, 10% of literate workers read books.<sup>95</sup>

The observations of S. An-skii and several other researchers showed that in some aspects, workers’ attitudes towards reading—and consequently their readerly tastes—differed from those of peasants.<sup>96</sup> The way of life of the workers was different, their level of education was higher; in addition, they lived in a city where the network for obtaining books and information about books was much broader. N. A. Rubakin characterised these differences as follows:

The tension in factory life is more evenly distributed throughout the year than in the village one: the former requires more mobility, it is less conservative; it is incomparably more saturated with the spirit of urban “civilisation,” with all its sides—both dark and light. At the factory, the time of the year has a much less pronounced effect on the reading of books: in the village, one does not read during the summer working period; the factory workers read in summer, after the end of work, and after the “clock out whistle” often pick up a book. During work, a peasant man is not up to reading; yet a factory worker can often be seen with a book at his workplace.<sup>97</sup>

Reader-workers seemed to have much less interest in religious literature,<sup>98</sup> reacted unenthusiastically to fairytales and chivalric narratives, such as those extremely popular in the peasant milieu (e.g. *Milord Georg* by M. Komarov), and were much more interested—in comparison with the peasants—in reading novels devoid of fantasy elements like adventure and criminal plots.<sup>99</sup> They also did not read thin pamphlets, like rural residents did, but turned to larger volumes, and often even to very thick books.

---

94 Rasschitano po: P. M. Shestakov, *Rabochie na manufakture t-va “Emil’ Tsindel” v Moskve* (Moscow, 1900), 61–71.

95 See: V. Dadonov, “Russkii Manchester,” *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 12 (1900), 50–52.

96 About these differences, see: J. Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era” in W. M. Todd (Ed.) *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, 1978), 140–149.

97 Rubakin. *Etiudy o russkoi chitayushchei publike*, 193.

98 For example, in the library for the workers at the Ramenskoe factory in 1901, fiction was preferred by 54.8% of workers, and religious literature—only 12%. See *Narodnaia biblioteka pri Ramenskoi manufakture. Katalog knig i obzor deiatel’nosti biblioteki po 1 ianvaria 1902 goda* (Bronnitsy, 1902), 14.

99 See: S. An-skii [Sh. A. Rappoport], *Narod i kniga* (Moscow, 1913).

There were three categories of worker-readers. One was made up of aficionados of urban lower-class literature: adventure, criminal, historical, and melodramatic novels, with which they had become acquainted on the pages of the “lowbrow” city press—the newspapers *Peterburgskii listok* and *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, or *Moskovskii listok* and *Novosti dnia*, as well as monthly additions to the illustrated magazine *Rodina* and the newspaper *Svet*.<sup>100</sup> It was expensive to buy books, and periodicals were much cheaper; moreover, the newspaper could be read free of charge in taverns.<sup>101</sup>

And if the village reader had a fairly homogeneous selection of popular or educational books published specifically for him, then in a city where the repertoire of published books was much wider, the range of books available to read was quite random. One of the St. Petersburg workers recalled that “...everything printed that came to hand I read. Often it happened that you read some little book, you could not understand anything in it, but there was nobody to ask. Later I began to buy books at the Aleksandrovskii market, but there was a lot of junk there.”<sup>102</sup> Another worker “...read everything that came to hand: old calendars, song books, dream books, the lives of saints...”<sup>103</sup>

The group of worker-readers oriented towards intelligent reading was substantially smaller. Nevertheless, N. A. Rubakin wrote in 1895 that “a type of fully intelligent man among the factory workers, especially in recent years, has now been determined quite clearly”.<sup>104</sup> The observer of that time estimated that the percentage of such persons in the working environment was 1-3%, and wrote that,

...for all the elementary nature of their school preparation, once they became addicted to reading, they sometimes achieved surprising results. Unsatisfied with fiction, they devour books of historical, economic, and philosophical content. Many of them are well known, and not only by name: Darwin, Tyndall, Byron, Mill, Gladstone, Bismarck, and dozens of other great European names, not to mention all the major Russian writers and fig-

---

100 See the memoirs of workers: A. Frolov, *Probuzhdenie: Vospominaniia riadovogo rabochego*, 2 vols. (Khar'kov, 1923), vol. 1, 25, 29-31, 55; A. M. Buyko, *Put' rabochego* (Moscow, 1934), 16; F. N. Samoilov, *Po sledam minushnego* (Moscow, 1940), 32; P. P. Aleksandrov, *Za Kirovskoi zastavoi*, 22; D. I. Grazkin, *Za temnoi noch'iu den' vstavai* (Moscow, 1975), 74; see also: V. Dadonov, “Russkii Manchester,” 53; M. i O., “Fakty i tsify iz perepisi S.-Peterburga v 1900 godu,” *Russkaia mysl'*, 2 (1902), 76, 83-84.

101 See: S. Reshetov, *K novoi zhizni*, 7-10

102 Ia. Mikhailov, *Iz zhizni rabochego* (Leningrad, 1925), 6.

103 D. I. Grazkin, *Za temnoi noch'iu den' vstavai*, 16.

104 Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike*, 192.

ures. Believing in science and understanding what a great service knowledge can serve, they literally crave enlightenment...<sup>105</sup>

Similar readers used factory libraries or city reading rooms “for the people,” and less often ordinary city libraries. They also bought books and exchanged them.

Some of the representatives of this group—specifically, those with political interests—primarily read political and economic works, and in the search of the latter they often used underground party libraries. A certain place in their reading was also occupied by underground propaganda literature (*The Speech of Peter Alekseev* [*Rech’ Petra Alekseeva*], *Cunning Mechanics* [*Khitraia mekhanika*] by V. E. Varzar, *King Hunger* [*Tsar’-Golod*] by A. N. Bakh, *Spiders and Flies* by V. Liebknecht). In the 1860-1870s, instances of such publications being read were relatively rare,<sup>106</sup> but by the end of the century, with the development of the labor movement, a considerable number of workers had read them. An observer wrote that such workers

...often came across more or less serious books. [...] They often happened to meet Lange’s *Working Question*, Lippert’s *History of Culture*, *The Eight-Hour Day* by Webb and Cox, and even Marx’s *Das Kapital* [...] not everyone is able to understand everything they read, but all the same, they read with great desire [...]. Along with this, the reading of illegal literature flourished.<sup>107</sup>

And in the realm of fictional literature, representatives of this reading group chose works that motivated people to fight against injustice and social protest: the novels *The Gadfly* by E. L. Voinich, *Spartacus* by R. Giovagnoli, *What is to Be Done?* (*Chto delat’?*) by N. G. Chernyshevskii, *One Man in the Field is Not a Warrior* by F. Spielhagen, *Germinal* and *Labour* by E. Zola, *The Struggle for Rights* by K.-E. Franzos, *Emma* by I. B. Schweitzer and so on.

It should also be noted that in the mid 1890s, a new group of readers appeared, one purely elite in its nature that focused on Decadence and Symbolism (see STONE, “O!?!?!: Reading and Readers in the Silver Age, 1890s-1900s” in the present volume). The attitude toward literature of its representatives was depoliticised and aestheticised; they expected the book not to teach, but to provide enjoyment; not to address social problems, but to analyse the feelings and experiences of the individual. In this environment, writers such as D. Merezhkovskii, K. Balmont, Z. Gippius, F. Sologub and N. Minskii rose to fame.

105 F. P. Pavlov, *Za desiat’ let praktiki: (Otryvki vospominanii, vpechatlenii i nablyudeni iz fabrichnoi zhizni)* (Moscow, 1901), 76.

106 See: O. D. Sokolov, *Na zare rabocheho dvizheniia v Rossii* (Moscow, 1978), 74-142.

107 P. Timofeev, *Chem zhivet zavodskoi rabochii* (St. Petersburg, 1906), 6.

With the growth of the Russian readership and its concurrent stratification, readers' preferences became more diverse. As a result, the book industry's repertoire of titles rapidly increased: in total (including texts in foreign languages) the titles annually published in Russia were 1,239 in 1855, 2,085 in 1860, 7,366 in 1887 and 11,548 in 1895.<sup>108</sup>

Even this brief review that we have conducted demonstrates the presence a large number of distinct reader audiences in Russia of the second half of the nineteenth century. These audiences differed significantly from each other in terms of attitude to the book, level of knowledge, and range of interests; they ranged from fans of *lubok* books to elitist, sophisticated connoisseurs of literature with a taste for the Decadent movement.

In conclusion, we wish to emphasise that the provided data on the presence of a large number of distinct reader audiences in Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century by no means indicate that reading had become a pervasive phenomenon by the end of the period under consideration. According to estimates by N. A. Rubakin, even among representatives of privileged classes, no more than one-fifth of the population held membership to libraries in the first half of the 1890s.<sup>109</sup>

Thus, while reading indeed passed from the category of a rare practice to a not infrequent phenomenon, it would be a stretch of the imagination to claim that it came to represent an urgent need for the majority of the population. By the mid 1890s Rubakin also stated that "there are few such people who feel the need for constant communication with a book [...]. A regular reader who presents a general need for the book in the Russian Empire is an isolated phenomenon, but not a mass one."<sup>110</sup>

However, the cultural mechanisms of the spread of reading, and the corresponding organisational forms (the school system, grass-roots newspapers, illustrated journals, cheap "books for the people," and "people's libraries") were clearly present. Later (partially at the beginning of the twentieth century, then finally in the years of Soviet power [see DOBRENKO-REITBLAT, "The Readers' Milieu in 1917-1920s" in vol. 3]), reading expanded on the foundation created in the second half of the nineteenth century, transforming Russia from a country of the unread into a country of almost universal reading.

---

108 A. V. Muratov, *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh*, 201, 203.

109 Rubakin. *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike*, 85.

110 *Ibid.*, 84.

## Select bibliography

- An-skii, S. [Rappoport, Sh.Z.], *Ocherki narodnoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1894).
- , *Narod i kniga* (Moscow, 1913).
- Barenbaum, I. E., “Iz istorii chteniia raznochinno-demokraticeskoi molodezhi vtoroi poloviny 50-kh – nachala 60-kh gg. XIX v.,” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 2 (1976), 29-44.
- , “‘Kruzhkovoe’ chtenie raznochinnoi molodezhi vtoroi poloviny 50-kh – nachala 60-kh godov XIX v.,” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 1 (1973), 77-92.
- , “Raznochinno-demokraticeskii chitatel’ v gody demokraticeskogo pod’ema (vtoraia polovina 50-kh – nachalo 60-kh godov XIX v.): (K kharakteristike individual’nogo chteniia),” *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia*, 3 (1979), 23-35.
- Brooks, J., “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era” in W.M. Todd (Ed.) *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia* (Stanford, 1978), 140-149.
- , *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), 3-34.
- Dinershtein, E. A., “Fabrikant” chitatelei: A.F. Marks (Moscow, 1986).
- Esin, B. I., *Russkaia dorevoliutsionnaia gazeta* (Moscow, 1971).
- Ganelin, Sh. I., *Ocherki po istorii srednei shkoly v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Leningrad; Moscow, 1950).
- Ginzburg, B. S., “Otnoshenie chitatel’skikh krugov Rossii k stat’iam ‘Kolokola’ (1857—1861 gg.) in *Revoliutsionnaia situatsiia v Rossii, 1859—1861 gg.* (Moscow, 1963), 306-337.
- Glukhova, L. V., Libova, O. S., *Biblioteki i chitateli Sankt-Peterburgskoi gubernii na rubezhe XIX – nachala XX veka* (St. Petersburg, 2015).
- Johnson, R. E., *Peasant and Proletarian: the Working Class of Moscow in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Leicester, 1979).
- Leikina-Svirskaiia, V.R., *Intelligentsiia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971).
- Lichkov, L., “Kak i chto chitaet narod v Vostochnoi Sibiri,” *Russkaia mysl’*, 2 (1896).
- Martinsen, D. A. (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 1997).
- Matveev, M. Iu., *Rossiiskie biblioteki vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX veka* (St. Petersburg, 2014).
- Medynskii, E. N., *Vneshkol’noe obrazovanie, ego znachenie, organizatsiia i tekhnika* (Moscow, 1919).
- Mneniia raznykh lits o preobrazovanii tsenzury* (St. Petersburg, 1862).
- Muratov, A. V., *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX i XX vekakh* (Moscow; Leningrad, 1931).
- “O sredstvakh chteniia v Moskve i o moskovskoi lubochnoi literature,” *Knizhnyi vestnik*, 3/6 (1860).
- Perebeinos, A. E., Tolstikov, V. S., “Obshchestvennye biblioteki v povsednevnoi zhizni gorodskogo naseleniia Urala (vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX veka),” *Vestnik Cheliabinskoi Gosudarstvennoi akademii kul’tury i iskusstv*, 4 (2011).
- Polnyi alfavitnyi ukazatel’ vseh knizhnykh magazinov, bibliotek dlia chteniia i*



- muzykal'nykh magazinov, nakhodiashchikhsia v guberniiakh Rossiiskoi imperii* (Moscow, 1882).
- Rashin, A. G., "Gramotnost' i narodnoe obrazovanie v Rossii v XIX v. i nachale XX v.," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 37 (1951)
- , *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1813--1913): Statisticheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1956).
- Reitblat, A., *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (M., 2009).
- , "Pis'mennaia literatura v Rossii v XIX veke, ee sotsiokul'turnye funktsii i chitateli" in D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (Ed.) *Reading in Russia: Practices of Reading and Literary Communication, 1760—1930* (Milano, 2014), 79-98.
- Rubakin, N. A., *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike* (St. Petersburg, 1895).
- Skaftymov, A., "Prepodavanie literatury v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole (Sorokovye i shestidesiatye gody)," *Uchenye zapiski Saratovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta*, 3 (1938).
- Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god* (Poltava, 1903).
- Vodarskii, Ia. E., *Naselenie Rossii za 400 let* (Moscow, 1973).
- Voronov, I., *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniiu v Voronezhskoi gubernii* (Voronezh, 1899).
- Ware, R. J., "A Russian journal and its public: Otechestvennye zapiski, 1868—1884," *Oxford Slavonic papers. New series*, 14 (1981), 121-146.



O!?!?: READING AND READERS  
IN THE SILVER AGE, 1890S-1900S

Jonathan Stone

The end of 1903 finds me in Moscow. I am in my second year of studying literature at university... The journals *World of Art* and *New Path* were my paths to a new world. I am becoming a 'Decadent.' I arrive for morning tea with a book and sit for a while, oblivious, as the tea grows cold. My aunt worriedly watches the clock.

"Isn't it time for you to go to class?"

I get up, ride to the Ilinskii Gates, and from there head on foot to Mokhovaia street. Not to the University, but a little farther: to the Rumiantsev Library. I read and read without stopping - Decadents, both Russian and foreign. Over lunch, my aunt is concerned:

"You've become absent minded."<sup>1</sup>

Boris Sadovskoi's memory of turn-of-the-century Moscow literary culture captures the newness and excitement of the moment. His discovery of emerging literary forms and his total immersion in them—to the point of obliviousness and distraction—exemplify the type of reader with whom the new aesthetic and literary modes of this period resonated most strongly. This chapter will examine the shifting nature of reading at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Sadovskoi, a reader enthralled with Decadence from morning to night, is at once commonplace and rare in a period marked by a growing stratification in the reading public.

---

1 B. A Sadovskoi, R. L. Shcherbakov, "Vesy (vospominaniia sotrudnika)," *Minushee*, 13 (1993), 16-17.

The concept of the ordinary reader as a passive receptacle for the author's social or ethical ideologies, the practice of being a neutral reader, waned in the face of modernism. Writers engaged and confronted readers in new ways as literary forms became more complex and their content frequently veered into the overtly subjective and dwelled on markedly interior states and private allusions. The reader best suited to the new trends in literature, beginning in the mid 1890s, took an active role in deciphering the text and entering into the author's aesthetic and epistemological worldview. Molly Travis has articulated the novelty of reading in the age of modernism in terms of the framework necessary for the reader to comprehend a text, and "the difficulty of experimental works and the ascendance of academic criticism, which made solitary reading impossible, resulted in reading that was mediated at every turn."<sup>2</sup> Only with proper instruction and guidance can the reader be expected to make sense of a literature that builds insularity and inaccessibility into its aesthetic and formal identity. Some sections of the audience embraced this new approach to reading, while others rebuked the modernists and resisted the collaborative and mediated nature of reading their work. The start of the Silver Age with the development of Symbolism in Russia in the 1890s opened a breach in the reading public. In the decades that followed, works that partook of the new artistic trends associated with modernism and the avant-garde expanded this rift, as was reflected in the ways books were produced and consumed in turn-of-the-century Russia.

Despite its many points of continuity with previous periods, the 1890s heralded a sea change in aesthetic culture. This new era of modernism would come to be called the "Silver Age" of Russian literature and the arts. This retrospective designation grouped a host of writers, poets, artists, religious thinkers, philosophers, and literary critics as emblems of the transformations underway between 1890 and 1917.<sup>3</sup> While somewhat arbitrary in its name and amorphous in its purview, the notion of the Silver age does capture the sense of aesthetic and philosophical revitalization and renaissance that marked the period. The idea of the Silver Age serves as an imperfect umbrella notion for all of the new and more modern art produced in the span of about three decades. As John Bowlt notes, "there was something unique and unrepeatable about the Russian Silver Age. It acknowledged the new art and science of the West, but tailored them to local exigencies."<sup>4</sup> Starting in the 1890s with the first glimmers of movement

---

2 M. A. Travis, *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century* (Carbondale, 1998), 19.

3 The term was popularized (and arguably coined) by Sergei Makovskii in 1962. It has been explored and problematized by Omri Ronen. See O. Ronen, *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam, 1997) and *Serebrianyi vek kak umysel i vymysel* (Moscow, 2000); S. Makovskii, *Na parnase serebriianogo veka* (Munich, 1962); J. E. Bowlt, *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900-1920: Art, Life & Culture of the Russian Silver Age* (New York, 2008).

4 Bowlt, *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900-1920*, 11.

away from the nineteenth-century tenets of realism and civic poetry, the Silver Age would arguably run until the chaos of the revolution and waves of emigration irreversibly altered the artistic landscape around 1920. Within this period, Russian literature experienced Symbolism, Decadence, neo-Realism, Acmeism, Futurism, Imagism, and the avant-garde. To a degree, it has functioned as a distinctly Russian synonym for modernism. Ronen challenges this approach by noting the expressly retrospective origins of the concept of the Silver Age. He emphasizes its abstraction as a term of nostalgia imaginatively applied to a historical period. This is the “fallacy” of the idea which, for Ronen, allows it to masquerade as a meaningful concept without shedding its arbitrariness. While the term Silver Age connotes a shifting terrain with hazy boundaries, it nevertheless reflects a productive strategy for characterizing the changes afoot at the turn of the century. The constellation of innovative forms, novel subject matter, and new venues of publication that the readers encountered at the turn of the century are all encompassed in the idea of the Silver Age.

Demands for a paradigmatic shift in all aspects of Russian cultural production became increasingly resounding in the early 1890s. Russian modernists pointed to the decline of the novel and the potential for new literary forms as an opening in the artistic landscape of the era.<sup>5</sup> Their work was packaged and presented to the reader in the intentionally vague term “the new art.” The fairly sudden appearance of new aesthetic forms introduced a sweeping shift in the dynamics of publishing and reading. This chapter will focus on reading in the first part of the Silver Age, the opening moments of Russian modernism. While many of the traits of the Russian reading public of the 1890s-1900s remained unchanged from earlier times, I will examine the ways it began to diverge. Building on the foundation of the dramatic spread of literacy and availability of books and journals discussed by Abram Reitblat in the previous chapter, Russian modernists could engage with a growing sphere of the reading public (REITBLAT, “The Reading Audience of the Second half of Nineteenth Century,” in the present volume). This offered significant opportunities while also presenting distinct challenges for establishing a modernist readership. This context aligns with Russia’s reception of the broader trends of modernism spreading throughout world literature at the time while also demonstrating how the reading practices of the Silver Age would impact the development of a Russian reading public into the twentieth century.

---

5 Pivotal statements on early Russian modernism by Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, Nikolai Minskii, Ivan Konevskoi, Valerii Briusov, and Sergei Diaghilev can be found in: Iu. K. Gerasimov, E. I. Goncharova (eds.), *Literaturnye manifesty i deklaratsii russkogo modernizma* (St. Petersburg, 2017); N. A. Bogomolov, (ed.), *Kritika russkogo simvolizma* (Moscow, 2002); with English translations in *The Russian Symbolists: An Anthology of Critical and Theoretical Writings*, edited and translated by R. Peterson (Ann Arbor, 1986).

By the end of the nineteenth century, books had become plentiful in Russia. The convergence of rapid technological developments in printing presses, paper making, and typesetting resulted in the capacity to make books quickly and inexpensively. Large publishing houses could produce vast numbers of literary and popular books a year in print runs in the tens (and even hundreds) of thousands. And for the price of a pocket watch, aspiring writers could have several hundred copies of a book printed at typographies proliferating Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>6</sup> The choices that confronted a patron of the bookstalls ranged from inexpensive editions of popular novelists—Tolstoi, Gogol, Goncharov, and Saltykov-Shchedrin ranked among the most frequently published (and republished) authors of the time—to small editions of newly translated western authors (such as Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Nietzsche) as well as their Russian emulators. The powerhouse publishing firms of Marks, Sytin, Suvorin, and Wolf coexisted with modernist journals and practically self-published collections of prose and poetry.<sup>7</sup> The variety of books reflected an ongoing shift in readership.

A large majority of late nineteenth-century books and readers were hold-overs from the age of realism and the zenith of the thick novel. As noted by Damiano Rebecchini and Reitblat in previous chapters, many readers held fast to their expectations of social and civic engagement in literary works, typically expressed through the tenets of mimesis and psychological acuity. Readers raised on the prose traditions of the 1860s and 1870s could continue to find works that satisfied their tastes and resonated with their reading strategies in the 1890s and early 1900s. Chekhov, Bunin, Gorkii, and Andreev were the direct descendants of Turgenev, Chernyshevskii, and Dostoevskii. The significant role of thick journals and their influential literary critics well into the twentieth century also contributed to the sense of stability between the mid nineteenth century and the turn of the century. As will be discussed, the space of the thick journal, once the domain of the socially engaged critic and vehicle for the serialization of nearly every major nineteenth-century novel, also helped spread modernism. By the end of the 1890s, the modernist journal had also appeared and would co-exist with the thick journals as the primary space for reading in Russia. Proponents of the new art found a haven with the foundation of *Mir iskusstva* (*The World of Art*, 1899-1904), a journal intent on serving a limited sphere of the intelligentsia receptive to modernism's call for an aesthetic reevaluation. In the evolution of publishing modernism, the transition from *Severnyi vestnik* (*The Northern Herald*) to *Mir iskusstva* may appear rather smooth and natural. A linear explanation of this key moment in the history of Russian Symbolism

---

6 Valerii Briusov's plan to finance publishing the third issue of the modernist booklets *Russian Symbolists* in 1895 was to pawn his gold pocket watch. Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka (RGB), f. 386, k. 1, ed. khr. 13, l. 11.

7 For an informed overview of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century book industry in Russia, see I. I. Frolova, *Kniga v Rossii, 1895-1917* (St. Petersburg, 2008).

would highlight *Severnyi vestnik's* final issue as No. 10-12 of 1898 and *Mir iskusstva's* opening with issue No. 1-2 of 1899. The Symbolist contributors to the literary sections of both periodicals furthers this impression of continuity. Yet such a view of *Mir iskusstva* as the direct successor of *Severnyi vestnik* devalues the uniqueness of the new journal in Russian culture. The advent of a journal expressly aimed at a reader accepting of a new artistic worldview is a significant shift in the promulgation of Symbolism. Any notion of a seamless handoff of Symbolism between *Severnyi vestnik* and *Mir iskusstva* is muddled by the practical complexities of the situation—issue 1898 No. 10-12 of *Severnyi vestnik* did not appear until April of 1899 while *Mir iskusstva* issue No. 1-2 of 1899 was available on November 10, 1898. The ensuing six months of coexistence allow for a dramatic comparison of the dying thick journal and the infant modernist journal, as if side by side on the shelves of the Petersburg bookstalls. This chapter exploits the variety and potential such a scenario offered to the Russian reader and the notable transition it represented in the history of reading in Russia as the twentieth century approached.

#### I. ENCOUNTERING THE READERS OF MODERNISM

The first moderns are innovators and discoverers: from Darwin to Freud to de Saussure to Woolf. These drivers of modernity had something novel to offer—new perspectives, new forms. They shifted the perspective with which we viewed the world. On their face, the tenor of many of these changes is positive with an emphasis on progress, increased knowledge, and optimistic development. And yet, the artistic and literary expressions of modernism bend towards negative and pessimistic worldviews. The common root of both the hopeful and the grim sides of modernism can be found in a moment of crisis. The fearful and anxiety-inducing undertones of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century generated the fragmentation, ambivalence, and insularity of modernism. Literature of this period has to be read through the lens of a crisis of epistemology. The capacity of the arts, science, and philosophy to help humans navigate the surrounding world was being undermined. The previously reliable notions of mimesis and the absolute no longer held true for many in *fin-de-siècle* society. Any claim for a universal reader or objective understanding of a text was undone by the sense of instability and incomprehensibility that infiltrated the modern consciousness. This crisis impacted all levels of literary production and reception. Modernism has been presented as a sudden series of upheavals and dislocations, of social and cultural cataclysms brought about by Nietzsche's

call for a transvaluation of all values.<sup>8</sup> For the modernists, reading was not an isolated act. It required a complex network of other readers and thrived on tautological relationships. Modernist writers' identities were bound to the figure of the reader and their aesthetics required a blurring of the distinction between author and audience.

For nascent Russian modernism, starting in the early 1890s writing and reading were both linked to the concept of a coterie. A connection can be established between the ways in which the dynamics of readership shifted and the growing sense of instability and crisis that marked modernity. A spate of responses to the publication of *Russian Symbolists* (*Russkie simvolisty*), one of Russia's first forays into modernism in 1894-95, reveals the state of the Russian reading public at the dawn of the Silver Age.

In October of 1895, Valerii Briusov received a letter from three poets.

Deeply Respected!  
Valerii Iakovlevich!

Pierced by feelings of deep respect for your poetic creations and completely sharing your fascination with symbolism, we, Messrs. younger brothers ask you to find a place for the enclosed poem—the fruit of the shared labor of 2 symbolists and 1 symbolistka—in one of the forthcoming issues of *Russian Symbolists*.

With deep respect,

Mimosa-Orchid Chrysanthemum  
Polar Orange Scorpion  
Sourly Luminous Chameleon<sup>9</sup>

Since his literary debut the previous year, Briusov had quickly gained notoriety as a lightning rod for the public's sentiments toward modernism. As the central poet, organizer, and publisher of these early examples of Russian modernism, Briusov embodied all of the newness of the movement. He was keenly aware of the need to cultivate a reader amenable to the new forms and new ideas entering Russian literature. He asked readers to contact him directly, even printing his home address and visiting hours on the last two issues of *Russian Symbolists*. In tracking several examples of that contact, we

---

<sup>8</sup> See A. Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca, 1990), 8-49; D. Albright, *Putting Modernism Together: Literature, Music, and Painting 1872-1927* (Baltimore, 2015), 1-6; M. Bradbury, J. McFarlane (eds.), *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature, 1890-1930* (London, 1976).

<sup>9</sup> Oct. 22, 1895 letter with poems from Valerii Briusov archive, RGB, f. 386, k. 110, ed. kh. 47, l. 1



can gain a sense of the literary landscape in the 1890s and into the turn of the century. It incorporated the changes of modernism into a mode of publishing and reading that was undergoing a parallel shift from traditional to novel. The range of responses to modernist works demonstrates the various attitudes of the reading public toward modernism. But they also highlight the strategies employed by Russian readers to consume a steadily growing number of modernist publications.

The excitement and aspirational qualities of the new art were captured in a letter Briusov received in 1894, following the first issue of *Russian Symbolists*. Addressed to “Vladimir Aleksandrovich Maslov” (the purported editor of the volume and one of Briusov’s numerous pseudonyms), the letter oozes with admiration.

Dear Sir, Vladimir Aleksandrovich

I have read the first issue of “Russian Symbolists” and cannot express how deeply I was touched by these poems, full of amazing mysterious meaning. I decided to present my poor work for your judgment in order also to have the privilege of being counted among the authors of the second issue. Please be so kind to inform me if my work has been accepted, although I readily admit that it is not worthy of being counted with the magisterial poems of Messrs. Briusov and Miropolskii.

Respectfully, your servant

VL<sup>10</sup>

“VL” is the model of a sympathetic reader. He read the book, was influenced significantly enough to emulate its works, and established contact with its authors in the hopes of joining their enterprise. He was “touched” by the experience of reading these poems and then prompted to internalize the aesthetic by modeling it. For “VL” reading Symbolism became an initiation into modernism and caused him to self identify as a Symbolist. This is one extreme in the responses and approaches to Symbolism prompted by Briusov’s invitation to his readers.

The personal and private nature of “VL”’s interaction with Symbolism is in clear juxtaposition to that of the literary critic. While some critics welcomed the new art, most were demonstrably hostile to it. The tenor of such responses can be felt in one of the earliest reviews of *Russian Symbolists* from March 1894.

---

<sup>10</sup> 1894 letter from “VL” with poems for the second issue of *Russian Symbolists* from Valerii Briusov archive, RGB, f. 386, k. 110, ed. kh. 53.

Reading several of these works, I chuckled until tears, truly felt a yawn, stretched out and closed my eyes in a state of distressing hypnosis. [...] The cause of these bursts of laughter was Mr. Briusov (not the calendar). Mr. Briusov (not the calendar) sings: “golden fairies [...] of deceptive stars.” For those who love literary curiosities like the poetry of Zvonarev, and who don’t mind shedding a tear in healthy laughter, the works of the Moscow Symbolists [...] naturally offer invaluable pleasure.

Ivan the Fool<sup>11</sup>

“Ivan the Fool”’s blatant mockery (with the repeated reminder that the author is not the same Briusov as that of the eighteenth-century farmers’ almanac with that name) amplifies the fundamental and intentional misreading of modernism. The dominant response is confusion and laughter. These are curiosities that serve to baffle and amuse the reader, but are not meant to be taken seriously. “Ivan the Fool”’s reading strategy was to make fun of these works and question their position as art or literature. The journal editors, who shaped the Russian literary landscape of the last half of the nineteenth century, “permitted only mocking caricatures, talentless works, which they called Decadent, in order to convince the public that that is the whole of the new European art.”<sup>12</sup> Taking these works literally, dismissing them as nothing more than incomprehensible and ridiculous, and devaluing their aesthetic worth were facets of a hostile readership that resisted modernism and held fast to the old ways and contexts for reading literature.<sup>13</sup>

Each of these three reactions to *Russian Symbolists* are examples of the spectrum into which reading strategies of modernism can fall. They are responses to the changes underfoot and reveal the enthusiasm, skepticism, and derision that greeted the new art. Readers vociferously expressed their opinions about modernism. “LV” recorded his admiration for it and transformed the process of reading modernism into a strategy for joining the movement and incorporating it into his own identity. He sought to be part of its coterie. “Ivan the Fool” acknowledged little value in it and made it into the fodder of a joke. He adamantly refused to understand modernism

<sup>11</sup> “Malenk’ii fel’eton. Moskovskie simvolisty,” *Novoe vremia*, no. 6476, 10 March 1894.

<sup>12</sup> A. I. Reitblat, “Simvolisty, ikh izdateli i chitateli,” in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal’montu* (Moscow, 2009), 309 (quoting Maksimilian Voloshin from 1901). As Leonard Diepeveen notes, “a blunt understanding of mimesis was central to public understandings of art, and works that seemed to contest its place led people to wonder if in fact these works still could be *art*.” L. Diepeveen (ed.), *Mock Modernism: An Anthology of Parodies, Travesties, Frauds, 1910-1935* (Toronto, 2014), 5.

<sup>13</sup> See J. Stone, “The Literal Symbolist: Solov’ev, Briusov, and the Reader of Early Russian Symbolism,” *The Russian Review*, 67, 3 (2008), 373-386.

and, by treating it no differently than the literature of the age of realism, modeled a hostile and dismissive reader. And the two Symbolists and one Symbolistka who sent their work to Briusov occupy a more indeterminate place. They both mock and applaud Symbolism; they have taken its style and form to heart, but also desire to parody that style and form. Between admiration and dismissal, their response is a blend of fascination and uncertainty. These three pseudonymous readers with their assumed and put-on identities, stand in for a much broader category of reader and a distinct approach to literature of the Silver Age. This chapter will examine all three modes of reading more closely. The modernists were aware of the stratified reading public for their work and had experienced enthusiastic support, tepid acceptance often marked with confusion, and outright hostility. This range of responses, which appeared quickly and simultaneously, could manifest itself as a muddled cacophony. The task of determining which camp the reader fell into was not always straightforward. Briusov's only recorded reply to his Chrysanthemum, Scorpion, Chameleon admirers as scrawled on the back of their note was a large puzzled response in red editor's grease pencil: O!?!?!.

My primary approach comes through Robert Darton's concept of a communications circuit—networks of authors, editors, publishers, booksellers, and readers.<sup>14</sup> Reading and reception are at the heart of this circuit and the tautological relationships that fuel it. The responses elicited by the early Symbolist publications draw out the centrality of reading for such abstract topics as the conceptual history of Russian modernism to such concrete elements of literary production as the journals and books they printed. By merging the tangible and the intangible, the communications circuit offers a more holistic understanding of how modernism was created and received. It is an understanding that hinges upon multiple acts of reading and a reformulation of reading strategies. The shift in periodical culture from the widely circulating anthological approach of thick journals to the niche production of little magazines tracks these changes in audience and permeates the communications circuit. Each of these roles is repurposed with the end goal of establishing the types of coterie and elite, like-minded readership that were part of modernism. The distinction between hostile and sympathetic readers became increasingly relevant. The knee-jerk reaction of many newspaper and journal critics was to dismiss or mock modernism. These ranged from the respectable (such as Nikolai Mikhailovskii, Viktor Burenin, Vladimir Solov'ev, and Aleksandr Amfiteatrov) to the ridiculous (Ivan the Fool). Nevertheless, some critics did take a more measured approach to the new art. One such figure was Akim Volynskii, the literary critic for *Severnnyi vestnik*. By considering more closely his reading of Symbolism in the 1890s

---

<sup>14</sup> R. Darnon, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York, 1990), 107.

we get a glimpse of the ways modernism could be presented and explained to a large portion of the Russian reading public.

## 2. THREE APPROACHES TO READING MODERNISM

Despite a readership unequipped to understand the basic precepts and vocabulary of this new aesthetic, the venerable thick journals of the previous generation were precisely the space where the foundation was laid for the appearance of Symbolism in Russia. In the course of their engagement with literature in its broadest social and ideological contexts, the thick journal literary critics had a hand in introducing a mass audience to the language in which this literature was to be discussed and comprehended. The arena in which literary critics wrote about Symbolism was an institution particular to the Russian nineteenth century. From the 1840s until the end of the century, the thick journals were the epicenter of cultural life in both Russia's cities and provinces. More than just noting significant historical, political, and cultural events in Russian life, the thick journals proved to be the instruments responsible for driving the country's literary process and instructing its intellectuals. As Robert Maguire notes, they are the "oases wherein a culture developed" and "the vague rhythms of society swelled into the steady throb of great issues." Most significantly, "the thick journals did not merely record society, but helped give it definition, direction, and flavor."<sup>15</sup> With all of Russia's intellectual resources focused in such a narrow outlet, the introduction of literary novelties had to be accomplished within the forum of the thick journal. The thick journals of the 1890s are the indispensable starting points for the public's growing awareness of new art and the sounding boards for the reception of modernism. This powerful portal was controlled by a singularly influential figure—the literary critic. The journal's critical voice was responsible for not only articulating its stance on literature, but also imbuing the journal as a whole with a readily identifiable tone and ideological worldview. In attempting to unify the highly stratified and codified sections of the thick journal, the critic assumed the role of an intermediary who imposed a distinct and consistent stamp onto the entirety of the journal's contents and shaped how they were read.

In the years when early Symbolism still found a haven in *Severnyi vestnik*, Volynskii was seen alternately as a primary theoretician and proponent of Symbolism and its most dangerous enemy. In 1898, near the end of *Severnyi vestnik*'s existence, Nikolai Minskii (the journal's one time secretary) wrote,

The course of *Severnyi vestnik* consisted, really, of two courses moving parallel to one another but never merging. First, Volyn-

---

<sup>15</sup> R. Maguire, *Red Virgin Soil: Soviet Literature in the 1920s* (Princeton, 1968), 37.

skii contributed to the journal's tone with his sharply polemical articles about the [18]60s. And second, it was a shelter for the group of symbolist writers... The reading public and even the critics often confused these two courses and imagined that Volynskii was a theoretician of Russian Symbolism. That isn't true. Using that same book of Kant with which he abused Belinskii and Chernyshevskii, Volynskii now intends to destroy Nietzsche and all his followers. Volynskii's long articles about Leonardo Da Vinci are none other than a landmine triggered from afar which will blow contemporary Symbolism to bits.<sup>16</sup>

The small gap between *Severnii vestnik's* aesthetics and Symbolism's reveals much about the movement's place, natural yet slightly forced, in the only thick journal in which it felt at home. For many early Symbolists, this journal, which simultaneously fostered and ridiculed their aspirations, was an indispensable stage in developing their public personae. It instilled in them an appreciation for a reading public who shared their artistic inclinations and helped demonstrate the difficulties of printing their work in widely circulating journals. The Symbolists' literary and theoretical horizons, the very way they envisioned and articulated their project, were shaped by Volynskii's approbations and attacks. Yet *Severnii vestnik* itself was never other than a nineteenth-century thick journal and thus always remained inherently inhospitable to the Symbolists. While Volynskii achieves a degree of mediation between the two, he inevitably falls back on the journal's default position of hostility and incomprehension of Symbolism.

As a space for modeling reading strategies, *Severnii vestnik* could accommodate the full range of responses provoked by the new art. Its grounding in the traditions of the nineteenth-century novel invite a readership accustomed to the tenets of realism. They "delighted in Russian classical literature as a literature of high morality, eternal questions, and heightened consciousness that explored society at all levels."<sup>17</sup> The thick journal was designed to promote reading for content and prioritized the social and prescribed facets of reading. This called for a degree of consensus and uniformity in the reception and interpretation of a literary text. The community of readers towards which these elements of *Severnii vestnik* were directed were openly hostile and mystified by modernism. Jeffrey Brooks elucidates the incompatibility of the realist and modernist readers.

For the modernists to win general acceptance among educated Russians, a new type of reader had to appear, a reader less

<sup>16</sup> A. Volynskii, "Literatura i iskusstvo," in *Novosti i birzhevaia gazeta*, Dec. 31, 1898.

<sup>17</sup> J. Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era," in W. M. Todd (ed.), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford, 1978), 106.

concerned with morality and mimesis than with the personal aesthetic enjoyment of a literary work. The kind of reading public the new literature demanded, and eventually succeeded in getting, resembled the one that developed in all the major industrialized Western societies, a depoliticized public concerned with personal appreciation and personal questions, a public with a very different attitude toward literature and culture than that of the culturist intellectuals of nineteenth-century Russia.<sup>18</sup>

*Severnii vestnik* voiced an awareness of the shift underway on its very pages with some of its more prominent contributors serving as the vanguard. Even a journal immersed in a form and content developed around the nineteenth-century norms of publishing and marketing realism acknowledged the emergence of a new approach to literature. As Volynskii wrote in 1895,

Art is living through an epoch of transition. It has not yet torn itself from antiquated, vulgarly realistic traditions, but already forebodes the poetic ecstasy of the future when the new ideal beauty finds for itself a perfect expression. It produces various confused, foggy, and muddled works.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, *Severnii vestnik* did invite readers drawn to the new art. Its audience was not wholly hostile to Symbolism, but consisted of a subset of readers willing to break with the tenets of realism. It provided a venue for readers willing to accept the subjectivity and muddle of modernism. It was a vivid example of an aesthetic culture in transition and a stark juxtaposition of the varied reading strategies required to engage with twentieth-century literary innovations.

The newly emerging literary forms did not fall into the traditional purview of a thick journal. Their publication and discussion on the pages of *Severnii vestnik* were the result of a rather arbitrary and happenstance moment in the journal's history. In 1891 a lawsuit between *Severnii vestnik*'s shareholders was decided and the twenty-four year old Liubov Gurevich was awarded control of the journal.<sup>20</sup> With her came Volynskii's dominance over the journal's literary and ideological leanings. Yet their combined force did not result in a complete overhaul of the journal's format. The result was a typical thick journal with the mass attraction of domestic news and provincial chronicles schizophrenically intermixed with the writings of

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>19</sup> A. Volynskii, *Bor'ba za idealizm* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 410.

<sup>20</sup> See S. Rabinowitz, "No Room of Her Own: The Early Life and Career of Liubov Gurevich," *The Russian Review*, 57, 2 (1998); S. Rabinowitz, "Northern Herald: from traditional thick journal to forerunner of the avant-garde," in D. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, 1987).

Volynskii and the Symbolists, the appeal of which was limited to a small circle. With his widely read journal and critical legitimacy, Volynskii was in an ideal position to establish himself at the head of the burgeoning Russian Symbolists. Through his association with a thick journal, Volynskii occupies a position that allows him to promote the new aesthetics while not overly associating himself with its literature. This ability to be at once a friend and foe of Symbolism, to embrace the idea of Symbolism while finding fault in its practitioners and their writings, empowers Volynskii to act as Russian Symbolism's intermediary to the literary world without forsaking his own distinct ideological stance and view of literature's purpose. During Russian Symbolism's early stage, in which its poets and theorists relied on existing literary institutions to express themselves, Volynskii's ability to force their writings into the codified and rigid framework of the thick journal proved highly useful in propagating their aesthetics and defining modernism to its Russian readers.

Volynskii disagreed with many aspects of Symbolist poetics, but this did not prevent him from writing, for *Severnnyi vestnik*, general theoretical pronouncements that read very much like programmatic statements declaring the need for Russian Symbolism. His November 1895 combined review of Briusov's *Chefs d'oeuvre* and the third volume of *Russian Symbolists* opens with harsh words for Briusov and his group of Symbolists.

We have already noted several manifestations from the realm of the poetry of the newest type—among those are the two collections of poetry belonging to the Russian imitators of European Symbolism. [...] In the face of a scarcity of talent, these young writers, appearing before the public with vast pretensions, cannot win for themselves a single compassionate voice in the press.<sup>21</sup>

Volynskii was clearly not an advocate of the poets calling themselves Symbolists. But he did acknowledge the need for a new perception of poetry. The fluidity with which Volynskii shifts from the language of invective and attack to that of aspiration and ambition for a new type of Russian literature is a remarkable show of the uneasy place of Symbolism in *Severnnyi vestnik*. A compassionate voice, Volynskii served as a complement to the hostile and derisive critics. He could read the new art with a more sympathetic eye and appreciate aspects of its potential for literary innovation and progress. It was an outsider's reading of Symbolism, but still one with a notable consideration of modernism. Volynskii shows how a space such as *Severnnyi vestnik* could bridge the gap between readers reluctant to part with the certainty and aspirations towards universal comprehension that marked

---

<sup>21</sup> A. Volynskii, *Bor'ba za idealizm* (St. Petersburg, 1900), 410.

their experience with nineteenth-century Russian literature and those on the side of modernism's lofty ephemerality and champions of its ambiguity. The third category of reading, that of the fellow traveller of the new art, intrigued by its potential yet still not part of its network of readers, is represented by Volynskii himself. In a way, he partook of the participatory nature of modernism and served as a reader and interlocutor willing to engage with its novelty and probe the paradigm it introduced. With one foot in the nineteenth century and one in the twentieth, part realist and part idealist, Volynskii modeled the reader attempting to transition between two fundamentally incompatible modes of interacting with literature.

### 3. THE GROUP DYNAMICS OF READING MODERNISM

While the previous section highlighted the moments of overlap between modernism and realism and their potential for shared readers and venues, modernism nevertheless remains a radical rupture from all aspects of preceding social norms and literary traditions. This included the acts of writing and reading since "literary modernism developed in small coterie of like-minded artists and their hangers-on who were acutely conscious of their difference from everyday society."<sup>22</sup> The reader cultivated by the Russian Symbolists in the 1890s was not part of the broad and anonymous reading public of the thick journal culture, but a more insular and initiated co-participant in modernism, a reader who would exemplify the twentieth-century practices described by Roman Timenchik in the following chapter (TIMENCHIK, "Early Twentieth-Century Schools of Reading Russian Poetry," in the present volume). A particular type of perceptiveness and openness to modernism became salient features of the ideal reader of the new art. One of European modernism's first scandals illustrates the centrality of the right type of encounter with literature. The mid nineteenth-century French reader of modernism was called on to navigate its books with particular acumen and intentionality.

The sensation over the publication of Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1857 fixated on six poems with particularly erotic connotations. In the ensuing trial, Baudelaire defended the book in its totality and asserted that single poems must not be read outside of the context of the work as a whole. Baudelaire pinpointed the meaning of his poetry as residing in the overarching structure of the book. The mechanism for generating that meaning came through the reader's active navigation of the contextual, associative, and material bonds that linked these poems. The term that came to describe this appreciation for the totality of the book and its capacity to elevate the aesthetic and moral import of all of its contents was "secret architecture."

---

22 J. X. Cooper, *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge, 2004), 1-2.



This notion captures the premium placed on coherence and unity in the modernist approach to the book.<sup>23</sup> In the modernist era, the book emerged as a vehicle for the transmission of a host of aesthetic, philosophical, and epistemological reevaluations that encompassed not only those producing such books but also those reading them. The subtlety of this perspectival shift in considering the role of the book is evident in the “secrecy” of this form, in the superimposition of its innovativeness onto extant material structures and their networks of publication. Baudelaire valued the hybridity of *Les Fleurs du mal* as a book that was at once familiar and yet representative of the book’s potential to convey a complete and novel worldview. When brought to trial for it, he relied on such a combination to justify it in its totality as an object imbued with artistic unity and moral worth.

The structure of the original edition was not maintained in its subsequent publications. The glimmer of unity and intentionality that had accompanied Baudelaire’s original conception of the work was obscured. The idea was revived in 1896 when Aleksandr Urusov published a detailed account of the organization of the 1857 *Les Fleurs du mal* as well as a reminder of Baudelaire’s original desire for the book to be read as a unified whole. Urusov, who was close to the Symbolist poet Konstantin Bal’mont and thus had a direct connection to Briusov, reinserted the role of the book as a single entity, a coordinated construct, into the appreciation of French modernism. At this same moment, Briusov was becoming discontent with the models for making books of poetry and searched for an alternative to the available mechanisms for publishing the Russian Symbolists. The attention the Symbolists would pay to the “secret architecture” of their books reflected a growing concern with fashioning the proper readers of Symbolism and utilizing the book, as a material object, to guide and instruct them.

The concept of imbuing a work with a secret architecture captures a new facet of reading in the Silver Age. A fundamental stumbling block for early Russian modernists were the twin problems of visibility and identity, “their readers didn’t even recognize them as Symbolists.”<sup>24</sup> To combat this anonymity and foster an audience that the Russian Symbolists went out of their way to invite interaction with their readership. They envisioned their art as a coterie of aesthetically likeminded readers. This is an echo of the community-building required of earlier phases in introducing new forms and new technologies to Russian readers—episodes discussed in these volumes by Bella Grigoryan (GRIGORYAN, “The Depiction of Readers and Publics in Russian Periodicals,” vol. 1) and Susan Smith-Peter (SMITH-PETER, “The Struggle to Create a Regional Public in the Early Nineteenth Century Russian Empire,” in the present volume). They utilized new, dis-

23 See A. Sigrídur Arnar, *The Book as Instrument: Stéphane Mallarmé, The Artist’s Book, And The Transformation of Print Culture* (Chicago, 2011); J. Lawler, *Poetry and Moral Dialectic: Baudelaire’s “Secret Architecture”* (Madison, New Jersey, 1997)

24 Reitblat, “Simvolisty, ikh izdateli i chitateli,” 308.

tinctly modernist, venues of publication to solicit members for these insular circles. But that model requires a gatekeeper, an arbiter of what did and did not qualify as Symbolism. This became particularly critical with the growing tendency to mock the new art through parodic renderings of Symbolism and Decadence. The trick of distinguishing genuine from parodic was not always intuitive. There was a widespread impulse to mock or misread modernism. For those producing the new art, it became paramount to account for two distinct types of reader. The insular circles of readers who were drawn to Symbolism's mystifications or Decadence's pronounced carnality functioned as a sympathetic coterie for new modernist writers. These responses were less visible to the general reading public than those of the other type of reader—the hostile audiences who dismissed or challenged modernism. The growing discrepancy in edition sizes and circulation range worked to widen the gap between reader who could access and participate in modernist circles and those who experienced it from afar and typically through the mediation of newspaper and journal critics.

Symbolism's operative principle of a coterie impacted how literature was both produced and consumed. As Lytle Shaw proposes, coterie writing “depends upon a small and implicitly undemocratic model of audience, a model in which particularity has hijacked the universality ‘we’ all know and want.”<sup>25</sup> The Russian poets of the turn of the century promoted a relationship with the reader that depended on a high degree of mutual comprehension and artistic similarity. As the editors of the Symbolist almanac *Northern Flowers* (*Severnnye tsvety*) announced in 1903,

Our third almanac differs, in certain respects, from the first two. It is more “single-voiced,” more homogenous in terms of its inner content. It includes a host of new names and some of our previous companions are absent. We're happy to have these new ones. They possess a new youth, a new vitality, strength! And we have no time to be sorry for those left behind. There was a time when we waited for them, gave them the chance to catch up. But it's now time for us to go again. Our gazes are again directed forward, to the future, and we can no longer see who is behind us.<sup>26</sup>

This overt statement of editorial policy delineates the criteria for membership in the group of Russian Symbolists and goes hand in hand with the stratification of modernism's audience. Modernists embraced the turn away from universality and trumpeted the inaccessibility inherent to such a poetics. They actively avoided universality, although not without offering an alternative means to access their art. The very markers of insularity that the

---

<sup>25</sup> L. Shaw, *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of Coterie* (Iowa City, 2006), 4-5.

<sup>26</sup> “Severnnye tsvety (1903),” in *Severnnye cvety I-V* (Munich, 1972), v.

hostile critics derided as part of the book's moribund nature were meant to serve as signposts of its potential for productively establishing a forum for the new art. In order to realize this potential, those producing Symbolism had to create a distinctly Symbolist reader.

The categories of readership that we have been examining thus far fall into two camps. The hostile, outsider, non-Symbolist readers echo the dismissive sentiments of Irina Arkadina, the heroine of Chekhov's 1896 play *The Seagull* (*Chaika*): "As a joke I am prepared to listen to raving, but here we have claims to new forms, to a new age in art."<sup>27</sup> Her son's foray into the new art provokes heckling and mockery in such an unprepared and unsympathetic audience. This frustrating and negative encounter between modernist and reader was a cautionary tale that illustrated the chasm between the two groups. This sense of distance was a persistent problem for all modernist authors who, like James Joyce in the early twentieth century, had to contend with "the gap between the reader implied by the text of *Ulysses* and the actual/historical reader of 1920 trained in the conventions of nineteenth-century realism."<sup>28</sup> As a response to the reality of the late nineteenth-century readership, the modernists sought to counteract the asymmetrical relationship between reader and text by actively forming their audience. Utilizing the potential of the blank space of the text as a space for crafting a reader, twentieth-century writers could retrain them as fellow modernists versed in a new mindset and equipped with the skills of deciphering the new art.<sup>29</sup>

Symbolist poets wrote for Symbolist readers—sympathetic, likeminded members of their coterie. These were readers who could navigate the secret architecture of the new art were imbued with an innate understanding of a Symbolist worldview. Sergei Gindin describes the lay of the land in the age of early modernism, "As soon as the language of poetry was obligated to reflect a new reality, its semantic and expressive power, the very principles of the representation of reality, had to to change."<sup>30</sup> This is accomplished through "readerly co-creation" (*chitatel'skoe sotvorchestvo*), a facet of modernism that can also be seen in its dialogic nature—a key component of Oleg Lekmanov's approach to twentieth-century Russian literature.<sup>31</sup> In modern-

27 A. Chekhov, *The Seagull*, in Idem, *Plays*, transl. P. Carson (London, 2002), 94.

28 Travis, *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century*, 23.

29 Wolfgang Iser has developed the concepts of blank spaces and the asymmetry between reader and text in the context of his work on implied readership. W. Iser, *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore, 1978), 163-179. Jaques Leenhardt also uses the language of disjuncture in singling out modernism's "gap between productive and receptive codes" that has resulted in the "formation of a new reading public." J. Leenhardt, "Toward a Sociology of Reading," in S. R. Suleiman, I. Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text* (Princeton, 1980), 207.

30 S. I. Gindin, "Programma poetiki novogo veka (o teoreticheskikh poiskakh V. Ia. Briusova v 1890-e gody)," in *Serebrianyi vek v Rossii* (Moscow, 1993), 90-91.

31 O. Lekmanov, "Chetyre zametki k postroeniiu "chitatel'skoi" istorii literatury," in *Samoe glavnoe: O russkoi literature XX veka* (Moscow, 2017).

ism, the reader no longer occupies a passive position and must attentively and creatively participate in its production. This shift is a necessary component of modernism's novelty since, "if a difficult work later becomes intelligible it is because new ways of reading have been developed in order to meet what is the fundamental demand of the system: the demand for sense."<sup>32</sup> Modernist works were ineffective in respect to the hostile and uninitiated audiences since they failed to make sense. Only those willing to understand these new works, Culler's "competent" reader, had access to them and that only as a result of the "new ways of reading" in which they were engaged—readably co-creation.

Readerly co-creation is another expression of the insular and tautological qualities of modernist reading culture. It is founded on the belief that like-mindedness is an essential quality in modernist readers. The reader should have a predisposition towards Symbolism in order to read Symbolism. The modernist poet and the modernist reader should share an aesthetic and epistemological outlook. The type of reader who responded to Briusov's invitation to contribute and participate in the Symbolist project was precisely that who embraced the concept of readerly co-creation. This category could make an easy transition from reading Symbolism to writing Symbolism and shows how intertwined those two identities could become. These qualities also demonstrate the essence of early modernism's elitism and inaccessibility. As the new art, Symbolism called for a change in the very act of reading. "In pursuing the 'new,' especially through experimentation with narrative and poetic forms and conventions, modernist writers inevitably defamiliarized the common reader. Many of them therefore wrote first for themselves and then, at most, for small coteries of kindred spirits."<sup>33</sup> The ideal Symbolist comprehends and emulates the coded language and secret forms of the new art. They are the addressees of Briusov's 1904 manifesto on Symbolism, which served as the opening article of the first issue of the Russian Symbolist journal *Vesy (Libra)*: "Keys to the Mysteries." Only a fellow Symbolist could make use of these keys which were meant to facilitate both reading and writing Symbolism. The identity of the movement itself was contingent on a shared epistemology and aesthetics. Symbolism is an orchestrated set of interactions motivated by the reciprocal nature of the symbol. As Anne Carson notes, "The English word "symbol" is the Greek word *symbolon* which means, in the ancient world, one half of a knucklebone carried as a token of identity to someone who has the other half. Together the two halves compose one meaning. In the words of Aristophanes (in

---

<sup>32</sup> J. Culler, "Literary Competence," in J. P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism*, (Baltimore, 1980), 111.

<sup>33</sup> T. Avery, P. Brantlinger, "Reading and Modernism: 'Mind Hungers' Common and Uncommon," in D. Bradshaw (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Oxford, 2003), 249.

Plato's *Symposium*): 'Each one of us is but the *symbolon* of a human being and each pursues a never ending search for the *symbolon* of himself.'<sup>34</sup>

Consequently, the ideal Symbolist reader collapsed the distinction between artistic producer and artistic consumer. The Symbolists' place in the late nineteenth century aligned them with a moment of rejection and reevaluation in terms of both the market/audience for their works as well as the underpinning aesthetic tendencies of their art. As a "symbolic good," Symbolism turned away from the "field of large-scale cultural production" and took root in the alternate "field of restricted production." The former is broadly directed at the whole of the reading public (including the "non-producers of cultural goods") while the latter is meant exclusively for "a public of producers of cultural goods" who function as both "clients and competitors."<sup>35</sup> By so intentionally isolating their literary production from the mass market, the modernists could fairly blatantly disregard the majority of the reading public. The interactions they cultivated with readers took on an instructional quality. A crucial function of being a Symbolist and writing Symbolism was to educate and guide the reader.<sup>36</sup> The cooperative and interactive nature of reading these new works created a palpable divide in categories of readership.

Readers with an inherent connection to modernism, with an inclination to self identify as modernists and simultaneously produce and consume it, were set apart from the passive and unengaged readers. The constellation of terms used to describe this distinction—coterie, insularity, likemindedness, tautological relationships, readerly co-creation, secrets and mysteries—all point towards a degree of blurring between the roles of author and reader. In its essence, the practice of reading the new art of the 1890s was built on a degree of contact and familiarity between the two that emphasized collective modes of artistic production over individual reading experiences. By picking up a Symbolist book, readers entered into a network of interactions that caused dynamic shifts in their identities. They adopted the role of Symbolists as readers, interlocutors, and creators of Symbolism. The epithet equally and simultaneously encompassed all of those roles and served to cultivate a collective identity for the Symbolists. Reading modernism pulled one into a group dynamic and was a primary entry point for becoming a modernist.

These fundamental shifts in the way literature was read at the turn of the century bring the issue of accessibility to the forefront. Understood both literally as the availability of modernist writing and figuratively as the comprehensibility of modernism, accessibility significantly shaped its

34 A. Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet* (Princeton, 1986), 75.

35 P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York, 1993), 115.

36 "One of the hallmarks of literary modernism was its preoccupation with teaching readers." Travis, *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century*, 19.

readership. The early modernist reader was able to obtain the relatively few books and journals that printed modernism, despite their small print runs, concentration in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and confinement to expressly modernist publishing houses. The relative obscurity and physical unavailability of these publications made them less accessible to a broad readership. Compounding this barrier to establishing a wide and diffuse reading public was the issue of modernism's perceived nonsensicality. Its prioritization of hints and nuances over concrete images alienated many who expected descriptive precision and clarity in literature. Thus doubly inaccessible, Symbolism was not the reading material of choice for much of Russia's literate public.

#### 4. UN-MODERNIST READERS

The literary critic Nikolai Mikhailovskii indicated the centrality of the salon and offered a somewhat disgruntled view of the position in which it placed the reader: "Mallarmé presents himself as the center of a certain circle (*kruzhok*) and primarily concerns himself with interlocutors and not readers."<sup>37</sup> This lack of concern with readers in favor of the immediacy and ephemerality of interlocutors is a potentially alienating and even confrontational gesture. This chapter has argued that reframing the notion of the interlocutor and building a notion of readership around the limited and insular groupings of the coterie were a defining feature in the development of modernism. Consequently, a large portion of readers were not included in these circles. Russians who read Symbolism from such an outside perspective were prone to feel mystified and hostile toward this novel and intentionally inaccessible experience. However, only those aware of the existence of modernism, chiefly the educated intellectuals, experienced this alienation. As with all of the types of Silver Age reader on which I have focused, the category of hostile reader presupposes an engagement with the new art. A fourth, and vast, section of the Russian reading public were those wholly uninterested in, or even unaware of, modernism. Thus while a sea change in literary production and reception was well underway by the turn of the century, the reading habits and strategies employed by the fastest growing segments of the Russian public had more in common with the eighteenth century than the twentieth.

Both Abram Reitblat and Jeffrey Brooks have extensively charted the growth in literacy and book production in the late nineteenth and early

---

<sup>37</sup> N. K. Mikhailovskii, "Optimisticheskii i pessimisticheskii ton. Maks Nordau o vyrozhdenii. Dekadenty, simvolisty, magi i proch. (1893)," in Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1909), 501.

twentieth centuries.<sup>38</sup> A significant element of that increase was the tremendous boom in reading among workers and peasants. While the circulation numbers of journals and edition sizes of books directed towards educated readers remained relatively flat during this period, the amount of reading material available for the “lower” and “middle” strata saw a notable increase.<sup>39</sup> The presence of the mass reader on the literary landscape impacted the types of works produced, the popularity of certain authors, and the dominant literary forms of the time. Inexpensive newspapers (such as “The Kopeck Daily”), illustrated journals, and free literary inserts ruled the day and the most widely read writers of the early 1900s were mainly the nineteenth-century stalwarts reprinted in these formats.<sup>40</sup> These are trends that exploded in the 1890s and early 1900s, with the dramatic increase in overall literacy in Russia, but do not note a major shift in what or how Russians read. It is in fact the culmination of reforms and developments that had begun in the 1860s and ushered in new social, political, and economic possibilities that became increasingly realizable during the second half of the nineteenth century and would continue well into the twentieth century in the form of Soviet campaigns for literacy and their reframing of the nineteenth-century canon. At the height of Russia’s brief period of capitalism in the final decades of the 1800s, catering to the mass reader was a profitable occupation. Publishers such as Ivan Sytin, Aleksei Suvorin, and Adolf Marks were influential businessmen and accomplished entrepreneurs.<sup>41</sup> They equated popularity and profitability with literary significance, and the size of an edition (which is to say the number of readers to whom a work appealed) was the primary marker of a book’s value. The modernists, who relied on patrons and not publisher-entrepreneurs to support their works, had a radically different means of evaluating their work and judging the success and popularity of their art, a system that diverged from questions of profit and edition size.<sup>42</sup> For the mass reader, the eccentricities of modernism were far less appealing (or noticeable) than the bandits and detectives that filled the pages of popular fiction.

38 J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, N.J., 1985) and A. I. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow, 2009).

39 Reitblat, “Chitatel'skaia auditoriia v nachale XX veka,” 279.

40 Brooks gives a thorough discussion of the popular formats of the turn of the century in Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*, 109-165. Using library data, Reitblat has compiled a table of the relative popularity of various writers at key moments in the late nineteenth century. Topping his list for 1900-01 are Tolstoi, Dostoevskii, Pushkin, Lermontov, Nekrasov, and Turgeniev, all of whom had been dead for at least two decades (except Tolstoi who rejected his identity as a novelist in the 1880s). Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 82.

41 See Ch. A. Ruud, *Russian Entrepreneur: Publisher Ivan Sytin of Moscow* (Montreal, 1990); E. A. Dinershtein, A. S. Suvorin: *chelovek, sdelaushii kareru* (Moscow, 1998).

42 For a discussion of the Symbolists' efforts to reframe the notion of artistic value, see J. Stone, *The Institutions of Russian Modernism: Conceptualizing, Publishing, and Reading Symbolism* (Evanston, 2017), 17-18.

The ubiquitous, inexpensive, plot driven works that demanded the mass reader's attention were a close relative of the prints and chapbooks derived from the woodcut prints (*lubki*) that could be found in most peasant and merchant homes.<sup>43</sup> As these works wended their way into fiction, they contributed to the "craze" for popular genres such as the detective novel and bandit tale.<sup>44</sup> With their roots in the visual and folk forms of the broadside, these publications were directed towards a very different sort of reader than the modernist journal and book. The intended audience for modernism diverged significantly from that of the Russian Pinkerton. The didactic and interactive components of reading modernism were absent from the strategies and skills of engaging with the detective novel. Popular fiction's artistic and economic drive to reach as wide of an audience as possible distinguished it from the ways Symbolism cultivated its readership. Yet the Russian modernists were not immune from the appeal of attracting a larger segment of the reading public. By the time modernism entered its second decade in Russia, around 1905, it had begun to assimilate some of the thematic and stylistic elements of the detective novel and gravitate towards more widely circulating venues.<sup>45</sup> While not refuting the need for readerly co-creation or disavowing the core of their identity as a coterie, the modernists did account for a growing audience for their works and a more centralized position in the field of cultural production.

## 5. CHANNELING THE MODERNIST RIOT

While Russian modernism's initial years were devoted to creating a reader suited to comprehending the new art, its second decade saw the divergent pull of efforts to increase its isolation from the mass readership and more fully integrate it into print culture of the early twentieth century. The years 1900-1910 saw an explosion in modernist publications and visibility. The two most prominent modernist publishing houses—Skorpion (1899-1916) and Grif (1904-1915)—would produce nearly 200 books by the 1917 revolution.<sup>46</sup> Three high profile journals—*Mir iskusstva* (1899-1904), *Vesy (Libra)* (1904-1909), and *Zolotoe runo (The Golden Fleece)* (1905-1909)—would supply the reading public with a mixture of poetry, prose, criticism, reviews, and visual arts. The sources of modernism were increasingly plentiful and

43 Brooks places the *lubok* and its derivatives in a primary place in the development of popular literature well into the twentieth century. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*, 59-108.

44 See B. Dralyuk, *Western Fiction Goes East: The Russian Pinkerton Craze, 1907-1934* (Leiden, 2012); Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917*, 109-213; A. I. Reitblat, "Detektivnaia literatura i russkii chitatel'," in Idem, *Ot Boyv k Bal'montu* (Moscow, 2009), 294-306.

45 Dralyuk, *Western Fiction Goes East: The Russian Pinkerton Craze, 1907-1934*, 49-62.

46 Frolova, *Kniga v Rossii, 1895-1917*, 256-265.



varied in the first decade of the twentieth century. The wealth of material examples of the new art allowed for a more concerted effort to guide and instruct the reader's attempts to comprehend it. The critic A. V. Amfiteatrov made the following observation about *Vesy* in a letter of July 9, 1909 to Briusov.

The role of editor of such a journal seems to me devilishly hard, for you can't survive with just an uprising of literary eccentricities; the time for this has passed, and to support an uprising as a logical system and form an academy out of it, as you were able to do, requires, in addition to talent, an extremely well-rounded education, both general and specialized.<sup>47</sup>

The notion of a Symbolist academy shows the growing prerogative for structure and accessibility. The varied aesthetic and material culture appended to modernism in this period—book catalogs, advertisements, critical explications of Symbolism, and book reviews—helped to combat the insularity and incomprehensibility that was part of modernism's initial Russian appearance. Moving from the coterie to the academy allowed readers a more passive and anonymous encounter with modernism. With multiple points of entry into the new art and overt explanations and guidance to its meaning, the public could learn to read Symbolism without becoming Symbolists themselves. The writers' steadily growing interest in this new didactic and relatively welcoming and democratic quality could be seen in the emergence of manifesto-like publications throughout the 1900s. Andrei Bely's 1902 "Forms of Art" (*Formy iskusstva*), Briusov's 1904 "Keys to the Mysteries," Viacheslav Ivanov's 1908 "Two Currents in Contemporary Symbolism" (*Dve stikhii v sovremennom simvolizme*), and Aleksandr Blok's 1910 "On the Current State of Russian Symbolism" (*O sovremennom sostoianii russkogo simvolizma*) all supply a framework and commentary to help readers situate themselves into modernism's literary landscape.

I have argued elsewhere for a dramatic shift in the interaction between modernists and their Russian readers that occurred around 1910. This concept, best described as biographical Symbolism, placed the new art in a more open and accessible framework that invited a wider audience.<sup>48</sup> This more expansive approach to presenting Symbolism to its readers aligns with the general trajectory of modernism to become more fully integrated into the public sphere and mass culture. Mark Morrisson posits one of modernism's fundamental traits as its "appropriating some of the institutions

47 Quoted in A. V. Lavrov, D. E. Maksimov, "Vesy," in B. A. Bialik, V. A. Keldysh, V. R. Shcherbina (eds.) *Literaturnyi protsess i russkaia zhurnalistika kontsa XIX-nachala XX veka. 1890-1904. Burzhuzno-liberal'nye i modernistskie izdaniia* (Moscow, 1982), 131.

48 Stone, *The Institutions of Russian Modernism: Conceptualizing, Publishing, and Reading Symbolism*, 203-240.

of the newly emerging mass publishing world to create counterpublicity, counterpublic spheres whose ultimate aim was to influence the dominant public sphere.”<sup>49</sup> In Russia, this act of appropriation required new partnerships. The Russian Symbolists pursued alliances with other authors and different publishers that helped them to retain their identity as modernists while reaching new readers. They could still inhabit the insular confines of a journal crafted in the model of modernism and they could still distinguish the public sphere they inhabited and readership they attracted from the general reader, but they would do so in a context that was accessible to those outside of their coterie.

The most prominent early example of this co-mingling of Russian modernism and the broader reading public of the beginning of the twentieth century was the literary almanac *Shipovnik*. Founded in 1907, *Shipovnik* boasted a roster of contributors that included both major Symbolists (Blok, Bely, Briusov, Bal'mont, and Sologub) and the neo-realists continuing and developing the prose traditions of the nineteenth century (including Bunin, Andreev, and Prishvin).<sup>50</sup> With print runs exceeding 30,000 copies, *Shipovnik* relied on broad appeal and commercial viability. It was able to accommodate all three types of reader discussed above. The devoted Symbolist-reader could continue to be immersed in the intricate networks of modernism, the skeptical reader could partake of small doses of the new art in the mixed company of contemporary realists, and the hostile reader could experience the immediate juxtaposition of modernist and non-modernist works. All of these reading practices occurred in a space of publication that was designed for the mass audience of the general public rather than the restricted readership cultivated by the Symbolists. Modernism's position in the broader literary landscape of the early 1900s and its placement in front of a large and undifferentiated spectrum of readers was a significant facet of its evolution and also a harbinger of the crisis that would come to severely undermine its aesthetic identity.

## 6. A CRISIS OF SYMBOLISM, A CRISIS OF READERSHIP

The crisis of Symbolism arrived on several fronts, but one of the first salvos was directed at the very language that made modernism difficult for the

49 M. S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison, 2001), 11. Ekaterina Volzhenina also notes the simultaneity of an industrialized mass market and the development of Russian modernism and seeks to link the two. E. V. Volzhenina, *Zhiznetvorchestvo grubyykh gunnov ili Modernizm – massam* (Moscow, 2018).

50 See Iu. Romaikina, *Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi al'manakh izdatel'stva 'Shipovnik' (1907-1917): tip izdaniia, intregiruiushchii kontekst* (Saratov, 2016); E. A. Dinershtein, *Simiiaia ptitsa Zinoviiia Grzhebina*, (Moscow, 2014); Frolova, *Kniga v Rossii, 1895-1917, 164-172*.

uninitiated reader. Mikhail Kuzmin was well aware of the extent of modernism's networks of publication. He contributed to many of its ventures from the almanacs *Northern Flowers* to the journal *Vesy* to publishing books of both prose and poetry under sign of *Skorpion*. The notion of interlinkages and a well-wrought and organized volume of poetry is conspicuously incorporated into Kuzmin's first book of verse, *Nets (Seti)*, which appeared in 1908 with *Skorpion*. It was therefore from within that Kuzmin launched his assault on Symbolist insularity. His article "On Beautiful Clarity" ("O prekrasnoi iasnosti") from the January 1910 issue of *Apollon*, takes aim squarely at the secret architecture and carefully fashioned reader that had been the driving forces of Symbolism. The intersection of its material and aesthetic culture, embodied in the notion of the distinctly Symbolist reader, was at odds with Kuzmin's proposed movement—"Clearism" (*klarizm*). His rallying cry was for a simplification of contemporary Russian literature with an eye on universality and comprehensibility. "I beg of you, be logical (forgive me this heartfelt exclamation!), logical in thought, in construction, and in syntax." His plea for infusing logic into the culture of Russian modernism placed its creators in the role of "artful architects." Kuzmin made these pronouncements from within the ranks of Symbolism, whispering into the ear of his "dear friend" that he should make his chaos "transparent and orderly."<sup>51</sup> The critiques he offered of Symbolism unquestionably resonated with the more hostile responses of its unsympathetic readers that had accompanied Symbolism since its inception. However Kuzmin speaks as an insider, a Symbolist poet who has proven to be a capable Symbolist reader of modernism's output in the first decade of the twentieth century. His concerns are thus not a regurgitation of the complaints of the non-Symbolist reader, but rather the articulation of a more deeply rooted call for Symbolism to engage with that very same non-Symbolist reader.

Kuzmin's article is not an assault on modernism from one who has turned away from its particular worldview. It is the manifestation of a sentiment that had been welling up from within Symbolist circles over the previous years. The notion of competency was a driving element of my evaluation of modernism's conceptual development, and one that was central to the modernists' own approach to their art. A competent reader had to be taught and informed how to make sense of and interpret a modernist book—a project that had engaged the modernists since the reading public first encountered their *Russian Symbolists* in 1894. In this earlier period, competency was equated with the exclusive notions of "likeminded" and "Symbolist" readers. These were real categories of readership that distinguished those capable of actively co-creating a Symbolist work from the general reading public. This distinction waned by 1910 and anyone could become a competent reader of modernism. This change in the criteria for

---

51 M. Kuzmin, "O prekrasnoi iasnosti," *Apollon*, 4 (1910), 6,10.

being a proper reader of modernism coincided with the crisis of its earliest group manifestation in Russia—Russian Symbolism was being fractured both from without and within.<sup>52</sup> A distrust of Symbolism as an aesthetic capable of supplying an sensible description of the modern world increasingly pervaded Russian literary culture around 1910. This included a renewed interest in making art more comprehensible to all readers.

The wave of Russian modernists who gained prominence as Symbolism declined were dubbed Acmeists. They sought refuge under the sign of Apollo, the emblem of clarity and order. Their art promoted “a renewed Classical, Alexandrine culture which countered the radical trends of the ‘new barbarians’ in Moscow and St. Petersburg.” The Acmeists did not have to train their readers since their writing “favor[ed] lucidity of meaning and constancy of structure.”<sup>53</sup> This renewed interest in a universal reader signaled a shift in Russian modernism’s understanding of its place in the public sphere. Modernist writers could no longer presume the close bonds of the coterie and insider knowledge of an insular circle of author-readers. The reading public was still stratified by class and education, but the divisions among those reading modernism were less glaring than at its outset. The new art had come to accommodate the mass reader and accept a broader and less differentiated audience. Even the earliest Symbolists were implicated in this shift, as a 1912 advertisement for cognac featuring a poem in the style of Merezhkovskii (*pod Merezhkovskogo*) attests.<sup>54</sup>

After 1910, towards the final decade of the Silver Age, popular culture had expanded to incorporate the authors and themes associated with modernism. In order for it to do so, the initial incomprehensibility and inaccessibility of Symbolism had to be “overcome.”<sup>55</sup> This called for a reader who was neither automatically sympathetic nor hostile, but instead attentive. Zhirmunskii notes that the intimate scenes of Akhmatova’s poetry are constructed through finely wrought details rather than the assumption of a close circle of familiar readers. This return to a more anonymous and passive audience, one akin to the nineteenth century, is in part a reflection of the growing sphere of readers interested in modernism. Yet despite this call for clarity (and the Soviet mandate for all literary production to demonstrate “truthfulness and historical concreteness” later in the century<sup>56</sup>), the impact of modernism on the Russian reader must not be discounted. The encoun-

---

52 On the crisis of Symbolism, see Irene Masing-Delic, “The Symbolist Crisis Revisited: Blok’s View,” in J. Douglas Clayton (ed.), *Issues in Russian Literature Before 1917* (Columbus, Ohio, 1989).

53 Bowlt, *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900-1920*, 299-300.

54 O. Lekmanov, “Shustovskii spotykach, Miunkhenskoe pivo i D. S. Merezhkovskii,” *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* 30, 2 (1998).

55 Viktor Zhirmunskii’s 1916 discussion of post-Symbolist poets was titled “Those Whose Have Overcome Symbolism.” V. M. Zhirmunskii, “Preodolevshie simvolizm (1916),” in Idem, *Teoriia literatury. Poetika. Stilistika* (Leningrad, 1977).

56 A. Zhdanov, *Essays on Literature, Philosophy, and Music* (New York, 1950), 12.

ter with modernism was transformative. As the French Symbolist Rachilde wrote in her 1900 novel *The Juggler*,

I remember that one of my friends, a great lover of new poetry, used to say to me: ‘Between ourselves, I’ll admit I don’t understand a thing of what those poets write... only, after the symbolists, I can no longer read the others, it seems to me they are the ones who make grammar mistakes!’<sup>57</sup>

The indelible mark left by reading modernism reflected the fundamental changes in how perception was understood in the early years of the twentieth century. In a decade where the likes of Einstein, Freud, and de Saussure smashed notions of objectivity and the absolute in the realms of science, psychology, and linguistics, art and literature also demanded a new perspective. The readers of Symbolism, the viewers of Cubism, the audience of Stravinskii all employed new strategies for understanding an aesthetic that did not readily give way to comprehension. Silver Age Russian readers stepped into a literary landscape that shaped and articulated their identities while allying them with the riotous forces of modernism.

## Select Bibliography

- Albright D., *Putting Modernism Together: Literature, Music, and Painting 1872-1927* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 2015.
- Avery T., Brantlinger P., “Reading and Modernism: ‘Mind Hungers’ Common and Uncommon,” in D. Bradshaw (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).
- Bornstein G., *Material Modernism: The Politics of the Page* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- Bourdieu P., *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
- Bowlit J. E., *Moscow & St. Petersburg 1900-1920: Art, Life & Culture of the Russian Silver Age* (New York: Vendome Press, 2008).
- Brooks J., “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” in W. M. Todd (ed.), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1978).
- , *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton:

---

<sup>57</sup> Rachilde, *The Juggler*, trans. M. Hawthorne (New Brunswick, 1990), 95.

- Princeton University Press, 1985).
- Cooper J. X., *Modernism and the Culture of Market Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- Culler J., "Literary Competence," in J. P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
- Darnton R., *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: Norton, 1990).
- Diepeveen L. (ed.), *Mock Modernism: An Anthology of Parodies, Travesties, Frauds, 1910-1935* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
- Dinershtein E. A., *A.S. Suvorin : chelovek, sdelavshii kareru* (Moscow, Rosspen, 1998).
- , *Siniia ptitsa Zinoviia Grzhebina* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2014).
- Dralyuk B., *Western Fiction Goes East: The Russian Pinkerton Craze, 1907-1934* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).
- Frolova I. I., *Kniga v Rossii, 1895-1917* (St. Petersburg: Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka, 2008).
- Gindin S. I., "Programma poetiki novogo veka (o teoreticheskikh poiskakh V.Ia. Briusova v 1890-e gody)," in *Serebrianyi vek v Rossii* (Moscow: Radiks, 1993).
- Iser W., *The Act of Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978).
- Lavrov A.V., Maksimov D.E., "Vesy," in B. A. Bialik, V. A. Keldysh, V. R. Shcherbina (eds.), *Literaturnyi protsess i russkaia zhurnalistika kontsa XIX-nachala XX veka. 1890-1904. Burzhuazno-liberal'nye i modernistskie izdaniia* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982).
- Leenhardt J., "Toward a Sociology of Reading," in S. R. Suleiman, I. Crosman, *The Reader in the Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- Lekmanov O., "Chetyre zametki k postroeniiu "chitatel'skoi" istorii literatury," in *Samoe glavnoe: O russkoi literature XX veka* (Moscow: Rosebud, 2017).
- Morrisson M. S., *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception, 1905-1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001).
- Rabinowitz S., "No Room of Her Own: The Early Life and Career of Liubov Gurevich," in *The Russian Review*, 57, no. 2 (1998).
- , "Northern Herald: from traditional thick journal to forerunner of the avant-garde," in D. Martinsen (ed.), *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).
- Reitblat A. I., "Chitatel'skaia auditoriia v nachale XX veka," in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009).
- , "Detektivnaia literatura i russkii chitatel'," in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow, Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009).
- , *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009).
- , "Simvolisty, ikh izdateli i chitateli," in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2009).
- Romaikina Iu., *Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi al'manakh izdatel'stva "Shipovnik" (1907-1917): tip izdaniia, intregiruiushchii kontekst* (Saratov: Saratov State University, 2016).
- Ronen O., *The Fallacy of the Silver Age in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature* (The

- Netherlands, Harwood, 1997).
- , *Serebrianyi vek kak umysel i vymysel* (Moscow, OGI, 2000).
- Ruud Ch. A., *Russian Entrepreneur: Publisher Ivan Sytin of Moscow* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990).
- Shaw L., *Frank O'Hara: The Poetics of Coterie* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006).
- Southworth H. (ed.), *Leonard & Virginia Woolf: The Hogarth Press and the Networks of Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).
- Stone J., *The Institutions of Russian Modernism: Conceptualizing, Publishing, and Reading Symbolism* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017).
- , "The Literal Symbolist: Solov'ev, Briusov, and the Reader of Early Russian Symbolism," *The Russian Review*, 67, no. 3 (2008), 373-86.
- Travis M. A., *Reading Cultures: The Construction of Readers in the Twentieth Century* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998).
- Volzhenina E. V., *Zhiznetvorchestvo grubyykh gunnov ili Modernizm – massam* (Moscow: AIRO-XXI, 2018).
- .





## EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCHOOLS OF READING RUSSIAN POETRY

Roman Timenchik

I wish to avoid the truism that the history of literature consists of the history of readers as much as the history of writers does; or, in other words, that the history of literature consists of the history of a past dialogue between speakers and listeners. If this is a paradox, then, at least in the Russian tradition, this paradox is already a century old,<sup>1</sup> and we should thus proceed directly to the question of how to study the historical reader, that is, the one to whom writers once addressed themselves. For even if they dared to dream of writing for a future audience, ‘a reader in posterity’ (per Evgenii Baratynskii), as their ideal reader, then they imagined these readers in the image and likeness of the best of today’s readers, or at least in the image and likeness of themselves—that is, a double of the author.<sup>2</sup>

Readers might be subdivided into various types, starting with their demographic features:

---

1 “To prove now, that the history of literature is not only the history of writers, but also the history of readers [...] means to belabor the obvious.” A. I. Beletskii, “Ob odnoi iz ocherednykh zadach istoriko-literaturnoi nauki” (1922), in Idem, *Izbrannye trudy po teorii literatury* (Moscow, 1964), 26.

2 In one of his final poems, Innokentii Annenskii warily speculated as to the sympathetic readers he would have in the future: “Пусть только бы в круженье бытия / Не вышло так, что этот дух влюбленный, / Мой брат и маг не оказался я / В ничтожестве слегка лишь подновленный.” (If only, in the whirlwind of existence, / It won’t turn out that this enamored spirit, / My brother, my mage—turns out be *me*, / Restored, yet simply passed into nothingness.) I. F. Annenskii, “To Another” (“Drugomu”), in Idem, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad, 1988), 114.

*Gender:*

In Ivan Bunin's *The Life of Arsen'ev*, the main character says to Lika, "You, it seems, read only in order to find something of yourself and me in the text. But then, all women read like that."<sup>3</sup>

*Nationality:*

For example, I have already had the opportunity to write about Russian-Jewish readers who read works with Jewish themes somewhat differently, and sometimes in a manner diametrically opposed (if one can use such an expression) to that of ethnically Russian readers.<sup>4</sup>

*Age:*

This is highly significant for a certain set of Russian poets. One critic of the 1960s wrote: "Youthful readers will fall under the spell of Gumilev's poems, become enthralled by them; in time, these charms will dissipate, even if one or two poems stay with them their whole lives."<sup>5</sup>

*Address:*

For example, in 1918 a resident of Petersburg (Iurii Nikol'skii), having dropped in on Moscow, tells his fellow Petersburger (Elena Malkina), "They're interested in Bal'mont and Briusov, know nothing of Gumilev, and don't even deign to read Akhmatova."<sup>6</sup>

In accordance with gender, age, geographical (perhaps), and professional affiliations, a reader variously singles out the 'best parts' in a text—and, most interestingly, does so in accordance with which 'party of readers' to which they belong.

The final demographic point, (*Literary*) *Party Membership*:

The study of the historical reader, as in the traditional reconstruction of the writer's literary process, should begin with the isolation of 'tendencies' and 'schools.' As Boris Tomashevskii noted,

---

3 I. A. Bunin, *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow, 2003), 291.

4 I.e. Identifying [oneself] with Jewish characters who are frequently marginalized and sometimes negatively framed. See R. D. Timenchik, "Zabytaia stat'ia L'va Vygotskogo," *Dvadtsat' dva*, 96 (1995), 209-217; R. D. Timenchik, *Angely. Liudi. Veshchi: v oreole stikhov i druzei* (Moscow, Jerusalem, 2016), 775. Cf I. Kleiman: "The Russian-Jewish reader, having offered a new key to the reading of Russian literature, resembles the Russian-Jewish school of writing ('Are there Jewish stories in Russian literature? A depiction of Jewish life within it? Who among the Jewish readers, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, has not asked themselves such a question!)" cited in R. D. Timenchik, "Russkaia literatura XX v.," in *Kratkaia evreiskaia entsiklopediia v 11 t.* (Jerusalem, 1996), vol. 7, 506.

5 Iu. Bol'shukhin, "V vysokom vorotnichke." *Novoe russkoe slovo*, August 11, 1963.

6 R. D. Timenchik, *Istoriia kul'ta Gumileva* (Moscow, 2018), VI, 22.

The reading environment is itself heterogeneous, and a shift in tastes [...] proceeds through a path of conflict, victories, and defeats of writerly groupings, of schools among readers (after a fashion) that partially reflect, in their collapse into camps, the battle of different literary schools, and at times even of group formations independent from the parties currently operating on Mount Parnassus.<sup>7</sup>

Let us continue and treat this working metaphor literally. How did register with a given school proceed one hundred years ago?

Purchasing a poet's book did not in and of itself signify entrance into a school. Although if we are speaking about the cult of a poet, then the fact of owning and displaying their books (even if they were not read) obtains as one of the ways of registering oneself in a particular school. One Russian poet of the 1910s, having relocated to America, recalled a certain Petersburg reader whose living room was decorated with English-language editions of Edgar Allan Poe, even though the owner did not read English at all.<sup>8</sup>

It was through the example of Edgar Allan Poe that the cult of the modern poet was for the first time recognized and described—specifically in 1902, in the work of Eugene Didier, who described what he called 'the Poe cult.' This research cataloged the quantitative markers of idolatry: the number of visits to the poet's grave, the price his manuscripts fetched at auctions, etc.<sup>9</sup>

We repeat: purchasing a book does not represent a vow of fealty to a school. But giving it pride of place on the shelf, selecting its worthy neighbors on that shelf, limiting access to it or, on the other hand, readily lending it out, placing it in a fancy binding, assembling your own collection of a certain author's books, or giving someone a book and noting the significance of this choice out loud or via an inscription: these already represent an oath of sorts. Finally, entry into a school of readers might be noted by markings in the book, or bookmarks, or inserting a page with a torn-out book review or even written-out quotations from one.

It follows that those who will be studying the history of twentieth-century schools of readers should task themselves with browsing through and sniffing out all the issued publications—in public as well as in private libraries, to the degree that they are accessible—of the poet under consideration in order to locate readers' marginalia, bookmarks, dog-eared pages, pressed flowers and pine needles, and as Pushkin stated, "the traces / where fingernails had sharply pressed."<sup>10</sup>

7 B. V. Tomashevskii, "Pushkin—chitatel' frantsuzskikh poetov," in *Pushkinskii sbornik pamiati prof. S. A. Vengerova* (Moscow-Petersburg, 1922), 211-212.

8 M. Moravsky, "Books and Those Who Make Them," *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1919, 627.

9 E. L. Didier, "The Poe Cult," *Bookman: A Magazine of Literature and Life*, December 1902, 336-339.

10 A. Pushkin, *Eugene Onegin*, trans. J. Falen (Carbondale, IL, 1990), 177.

Furthermore, the rules of book veneration presuppose special conditions for reading (time, place), whether it be on a table under a lamp with a green lampshade, or in a garden, or at the shore of a body of water (such a female reader is prescribed by Evgenii Lancere's frontispiece to Akhmatova's collection *Evening* [*Vecher*]), renewing the genre of the sentimental stroll with a book,<sup>11</sup> or at the outer limits of proximity to 'nature' in a zoological garden.<sup>12</sup> One of Tiutchev's relatives recalled a stroll with a book:

In the days of my youth I once encountered our neighbor, who was forever wandering among the fields, leas, and groves, and who would go on to become the poet Nikolai Gumilev. In his hands, as always, was a small volume of Tiutchev. "Kolia, why are you dragging that book around? You already know it by heart!" — "Dear friend," — he answered, stretching out each word, — "what if I suddenly forget and, God forbid, distort his words; that would be sacrilege."<sup>13</sup>

And, conversely, certain taboos existed (such as Mandel'shtam's odd American girl of twenty "[reading] Faust on the train."<sup>14</sup>

And in an inscription to Gumilev, Blok addressed the poet as "one whom I read not only in the daytime, when I don't understand his lines, but also during the night, when I understand."<sup>15</sup>

We will avail ourselves of this *rondeau* of an unknown "standard" poet of the 1910s:

Так хорошо в уютном кабинете,  
Взяв с полки Блока, Брюсова иль "Сети"  
Любимого поэта Кузмина,  
Забывать, что ночь ненастна и темна  
И жалобно осенний воет ветер.

При электричества спокойном свете

<sup>11</sup> "The book becomes a favored companion on a solitary walk. Reading in the bosom of nature, in a picturesque place acquires a particular charm in the eyes of a 'sentimental' person." N. D. Kochetkova, *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma (Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniia)* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 160.

<sup>12</sup> In "A Downpour of Light" ("Svetovoi liven"), Marina Tsvetaeva says of Pasternak's collection *My Sister, Life*: "I carry it with me round all the spaces of Berlin: the classic Linden, the magical Underground (no accidents, while it's in my hands!), I've been taking it to the Zoo (to get acquainted)," in M. Tsvetaeva, *Art in the Light of Conscience: Eight Essays on Poetry*, trans. A. Livingstone (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 21.

<sup>13</sup> F. I., Tiutchev, *Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia*, introductory article of V. V. Tiutchev (New York, 1952), viii.

<sup>14</sup> O. E. Mandel'shtam, "The American Girl" ("Amerikanka") in Idem, *Osip Mandel'shtam's Stone*, trans. R. Tracey (Princeton, 1981), 149.

<sup>15</sup> *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, XCII, bk. 3 (Moscow, 1982), 56.

Сидеть в привычном кресле у окна  
И от стихов пьянеть, как от вина,  
Так хорошо.

Невольно вспомнив о минувшем лете,  
Воспеть любовь в рондо иль в триолете  
(Лишь вдохновения прильет волна)  
И слушать, как струится тишина,  
Вам посвящая втайне строчки эти,  
Так хорошо.<sup>16</sup>

The ritual of reading Akhmatova, for example, is described in one poem from 1921:

На столике томик Ахматовой  
Грустит в простом переплете;  
Томный вечер – печальный и матовый,  
Как опал в позолоте.

Скоро звезд золотые фонарики  
В небе кто-то развесит;  
Уж за темной позолотой Москва-реки  
Поднимается месяц. <...>

Свежий ветер, прохладой охватывая,  
Налетел в легкокрылой одежде,  
Над любимую книгой Ахматовой  
Я грущу о исчезнувшем «прежде».<sup>17</sup>

Whether the historian of literature, in order to reconstruct the dialogue between author and historical reader, should relocate to Moscow, wait for

<sup>16</sup> [How fine when in one's comfortable study, / To take a volume of Blok, Briusov, or "Nets" / (Kuzmin, the best of them); / To forget the weather's foul, the night's dark, / And the autumn wind howling plaintively. / Beneath electricity's calm light, / To sit in one's usual armchair by the window / And get drunk on poems as if on wine... / How fine. / All of a sudden remembering the bygone summer, / To sing of love in a *rondeau* or *triolet* / (The instant that a wave of inspiration strikes), / And to hearken to the flow of silence, / Secretly dedicating these lines to you... / How fine.] Georgii Sumarokov, "Rondeau," *Pervyi sbornik gruppy molodykh poetov* (Moscow, 1914), 21.

<sup>17</sup> (On the table, the volume of Akhmatova / Mourns in its simple binding; / The weary evening is sad and matte. / Like a gilded opal. / Soon an unseen hand will hang / The stars' golden lanterns in the heavens; / Beyond the dark gilt of the Moscow river, / The moon is already rising. [...] / The brisk wind, with chilly grip, / Has flown down in its light-winged garb, / And above the beloved book of Akhmatova, / I mourn the vanished 'before.') An unpublished poem by Igor' Shishov, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI), f. 2493, op. 1, ed. khr. 4, l. 7-7ob.

the appearance of the moon above the river, acquire a special green lampshade, or dispatch themselves to a grove in order to stroll with a book of poems... is an open question. There's an analogy of sorts with the history of the reconstruction of the practical experience of the historical viewer in Evreinov's Ancient Theater (*Starinnyi teatr*) at the beginning of the twentieth century; when, in accordance with the affiliation of ancient theater to one or another national theater culture, the floorplan of the auditorium was changed, taking into account the angle and scope of the audience's gaze, and the question of the ritualized selection from the spectator's historical (so to speak) menu: popcorn or sunflower seeds?<sup>18</sup>

Of course the Modernist poets could hardly have controlled for the 'scenery' against which their works were received, much less the dexterity and grace with which they were 'performed'; still, one cannot turn away from the context of reception. For example, in 1965 a construction worker from Uzbekistan (a so-called 'man of the people') wrote:

My knowledge is limited to the wonderful [...] memories of meetings with your admirers [R.T.: the wives of 'enemies of the people' in one of Kazakhstan's prison camps, delivered there via convoy to facilities where he was the foreman; during lunch breaks they read Akhmatova, Briusov, Blok, Gumilev, etc.]: they read, they cry, they laugh, and they reminisce.<sup>19</sup>

Let us return to the developmental process undergone by participants in a school of reading. Having underlined particular lines in a book, their next step would be citing those lines in diaries, letters, or oral communication—namely, the exchange of citations and the identification of one's own crowd. Essential here are the acts of making a citation enigmatic, boiling it down to its essential kernel, rendering its main words 'taboo'—as in Georgii Adamovich's lines: "Then immortal...Shhh! victory. / So how's he doing? '...pledge.'"<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> B. V. Kazanskii, *Metod teatra (Analiz sistemy N. Evreinova)* (Leningrad, 1925), 104. The Ancient Theater was a complex endeavor initiated by the director Nikolai Evreinov in 1907. It sought to replicate, with varying degrees of fidelity, the conditions that characterized more historically distant theatrical productions. These conditions included period-specific set designs, costumes, and even the atmosphere—established via the integration of spectator-actors in period-accurate dress into the general audience. For more on the Ancient Theater, see S. Golub, *Evreinov: The Theatre of Paradox and Transformation* (Ann Arbor, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> N. D. Bychkov's letter from Termez on June 7, 1965. Otdel Ruskopisei Rossiiskoi Natsional'noi Biblioteki (OR RNB), F. 1073, n. 1392.

<sup>20</sup> From Adamovich's poem "Oh, if it's true that in night..." ("O esli pravda, chto v nochi..."). These lines present themselves as being inspired by excised phrases à la Pushkin's line "But if..." from the poem "The Rain-Quenched Day" ("Nenastnyi den' potukh..."); they are completed by the "half-recalled citation" from *Feast in a Time of Plague* (*Pir vo vremia chумы*) ("For all that threatens to destroy / Conceals a strange and savage joy— / Perhaps for mortal man a glow / That promises eternal life.") A. Pushkin, *The Complete Works of Alexander*

Thus, we are speaking not only about the social context of literature (*literaturnyi byt*), but also about the penetration of that context into full-blown literary works. For within this ‘poet-reader’ dichotomy, certain transformations occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. Evgenii Anichkov, one of the most active participants in the literary culture of that time, recalled: “Symbolism calls forth inspiration. The only one who will read poems is the one who is inspired by them. Perhaps, then, just one great danger threatens [the reader of poems], a danger that befell some five hundred Russian youths at the turn of the century—the act of writing poems oneself.”<sup>21</sup>

Consequently, training within a school of reading means creating poems that point toward imitation, the tracing of footsteps, involuntary and willful ‘aping.’ These telltale signs include epigraphs, dedications, citations, and rhythmic and syntactic borrowings. And the next step in this self-development is the modeling of one’s life as an imitation of a particular protagonist (similarly to the *imitatio Christi*), including the *imitatio mortis*. Thus it is in one 1919 poem by a (then) young poet, Riurik Ivnev:

Как все пустынно! Пламенная медь.  
Тугих колоколов язвительное жало.  
Как мне хотелось бы внезапно умереть,  
Как Анненский у Царскосельского вокзала!<sup>22</sup>

But here it is important to recall by way of our primary aim (as Valerii Briusov noted in his opinion of the above-cited work of Boris Tomashevskii) that sometimes the obstinate disavowal of influence tells us more about that influence than a more straightforward declaration of it.

At this time there existed other methods of joining ‘one’s crowd,’ entering into the community of a school of reading—for example, attending literary evenings, staged readings of poems, ‘poem-concerts’ as Igor Severianin began to call them. Yet one more way that schools operated was the community (almost like a social network) of those corresponding with a poet. Whole swaths of as yet unanalyzed letters from readers to Aleksandr Blok

---

*Pushkin*, trans. James Falen (Norfolk, 1999), VI, 280; cf. “What do Pushkin’s lines have in store for me? / I crack open these dear pages. / Again, again, ‘The rain-quenched day is done,’ / Cut short by that piercing ‘But if...!’ / Does not my entire soul, my entire world / Now tremble at these two words?” (S. Parnok, *Stikhotvoreniia* [Petrograd, 1916], 69.) On the device of the ‘forgotten citation,’ see R. D. Timenchik “Printsipy tsitirovaniia u Akhmatovoi v sopostavlenii s Blokom,” *Tvorchestvo A. A. Bloka i russkaia kul’tura XX veka: Tezisy I vsesoiuznoi konferentsii* (Tartu, 1975), 124-127.

<sup>21</sup> See R. D. Timenchik, “Poeziia I. Annenskogo v chitatel’skoi srede 1910-x godov,” in *A. Blok i ego okruzhenie: Blokovskii sbornik VI* (Tartu, 1985), 101.

<sup>22</sup> (How desolate everything is! Flashing copper. / The mordant sting of taut bells. / How I would like to suddenly die, / Like Annenskii at the Tsarskoe selo station!) R. Ivnev, “Kak vse pustynno. Plamennaia med’...” in *Solntse vo grobe* (Moscow, 1921), 18.

and Valerii Briusov remain preserved, as do later letters (from the 1950s and 60s) to Akhmatova.<sup>23</sup> Pasternak even has a poem (one sure to arouse the envy of stamp collectors) about receiving letters from readers all over the world under special circumstances (i.e. the worldwide scandal of the novel *Doctor Zhivago*).<sup>24</sup>

If buying books doesn't yet signify recruitment into a poet's army of readers, then the act of rewriting their poems meets that standard. Such forms of samizdat can be unearthed in archives; I had the opportunity to see a complete facsimile of Akhmatova's collection *Evening* (1912), which sold out its 300 copies in under a year, and had become a hard-to-track-down rarity. I, for example, possess a notebook with a word-for-word copy (by a female associate of Gumilev's) of the extensive lyric drama "Gondla," printed in 1917 in the journal *Russkaia mysl'* (*Russian Thought*). It's well known that in Moscow between 1918 and 1922, handwritten copies of Pasternak's *My Sister, Life* (*Sestra moia—zhizn'*) were being passed around before they had even been published in book form.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, such evidence of readers' diligence typically fails to achieve the status of prioritized archival document; the owners and inheritors of private archives treat them with little foresight. Meanwhile, it happens to be priceless material for the study of reader reception. For example, when a typewritten copy of a text includes a question mark next to a particular name, thus marking it as "unknown," then we can evaluate the energy of this name's introduction into the poetic text. But sometimes there are even valuable, direct intertextual markers: "cf." and "see...". A slip of the hand, distortions in correspondence (as in the case of citation from memory) presents us with very important material: these often establish a horizon of expectations, expectations which the author leveraged but in reality did not satisfy.

And one must say yet another thing about the acquisition of books. The theft of a favorite poet's book from a library may serve as a test for entry into a school. In such an act, one can see the dilemma posed by dedicated service to the cult. One contemporary poet has a poem about how he wanted to make off with Annenskii's poems, which had remained untouched in his rural library, but then thought that it would be best to leave them on the shelf so that new readers might come across them.

To continue realizing the metaphor of the 'school of readers': one must say that exams really did occur. As the translator Rita Wright recalls:

---

<sup>23</sup> See RGALI, f. 55 (Blok A. A.), RGB. f. 386 (Briusov V. Ia.), OR RNB f. 1073 (Akhmatova A. A.).

<sup>24</sup> See B. Pasternak, "Wide World" ("Bozhii mir"), in Idem, *In the Interlude: Poems 1945-1959*, trans. H. Kamen (London, 1962), 115.

<sup>25</sup> E. F. Kunina, "O vstrechakh s Borisom Pasternakom," in B. L. Pasternak, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 2005), vol. 11, 110.



[At his dacha, Maiakovskii] would draw on the terrace, standing beside a table, with that perennial cigarette between his teeth, while I sat on the steps or on the bannister and read, on request, from *My Sister, Life*. Boris Leonidovich [Pasternak] gave me manuscript later that winter, and I knew it by heart, word for word. Once, having listened to “To the Memory of the Demon” (“Pamiati Demona”) (“He came at night / From Tamara, in the blinding blue, / Ruled with his flight / For the dream to burn and conclude. / Never wept. Never wrung, nor entwined / Bare, lashed and scared hands.”),<sup>26</sup> Maiakovskii suddenly whirled around and asked: “Do you remember? Really? Well then, tell me ‘Demon’ in your own words!” And I passed the test with flying colors.<sup>27</sup>

In this school there must be ‘days off’: the reader must, from time to time, take a break from their favorite poet. Thus, per Akhmatova, Mandel’shtam’s words about Pasternak: “I think about him so much that I’ve grown tired.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, readers, just like schoolchildren, can achieve varying degrees of success: there are great students, C students, D students. They can know a poet in their entirety, or only half of them, or a quarter, or an eighth, a single poem, a single stanza, a single line. They can even not read a poem while hearing it in song form; for example, the majority of people knew a poem by Innokentii Annenskii as a gypsy ballad (“Среди миров в мерцании светил / Одной звезды я повторяю имя — / Не потому, что я Ее любил, / А потому, что я томлюсь с другими. / И если мне сомненье тяжело, / Я у Нее одной молю ответа, / Не потому, что от Нее светло, / А потому, что с Ней не надо света”),<sup>29</sup> frequently without knowing its author’s name, or often considering Aleksandr Vertinskii, who performed this ballad to his own music, its original author. This text passed through all conceivable stages of folklorization. A vaudeville variant existed in the 1920s: in a single song, the combination of the second stanza of “One Star” (“Oдна звезда”) (such that for the audience it was not a star, but rather some lady with whom they pleaded for an answer) and a goodbye letter penned by Vertinskii in the manner of Esenin: “До свиданья, друг мой, до свиданья, Мне так трудно жить среди людей: Каждый шаг мой стерегут

<sup>26</sup> B. Pasternak, *Second Nature: Forty-six Poems by Boris Pasternak*, trans. A. Navrozov (London, 1990).

<sup>27</sup> *Maiakovskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, edited by V. V. Grigorenko (Moscow, 1963), 270.

<sup>28</sup> A. A. Akhmatova, *Pobeda nad sud'boi* (Moscow, 2006), vol. 1, 99.

<sup>29</sup> (Among the planets, in the glimmering of heavenly bodies / I repeat the name of just one star— / Not because I loved Her, / But because I pine away with others. / And if my doubt burdens me, / Then I pray only to Her for an answer, / Not because She gives the light, / But because with Her I don’t need light). I. Annenskii, “Sredi mirov...,” in *Idem, Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Leningrad, 1988), 122.

страдания. В этой жизни счастья нет нигде.”<sup>30</sup> In our day, a singer in Ukraine sings of her paramour: “Я люблю его за то, / Что рядом с ним теплее лето, / Не потому, что от него светло, / А потому, что рядом с ним не надо света.”<sup>31</sup> On the whole, many Soviet-era listeners of Vertinskii’s song (and there were, of course, those who read it—with their ears) also knew the poems of Blok and Akhmatova. And (a telling coincidence!)—the all-but-banned Gumilev. One literary critic, even as late as 1989, thought that she had first learned of Gumilev from a Vertinskii song: “Магросы мне пели про остров, / Где растёт Голубой Тюльпан... / Он большим отличается ростом, / Он огромный, и злой великан.”<sup>32</sup> This is not Gumilev, but rather a little-known émigré poet. But in the 1940s and 50s, Vertinskii, in spite of the songs listed in the concert program, sang an encore without clarifying the songs or their authors, specifically three unattributed songs of Akhmatova’s after her expulsion from the Writers’ Union in 1946. Thus, for the audience, the exoticism of the seascape theme the song was misattributed to the taboo, unsayable name of Gumilev. Does this literary critic earn the status of pupil in Gumilev’s school? Yes, she does. Because other poets (all the way back to Pushkin), even those unforbidden and canonical, can have texts incorrectly attributed to them. The great pianist M. V. Iudina, for example, who wrote to Mikhail Bakhtin “An ache is passing little by little; it’s not a permanent affliction (A. Akhmatova),” counts as a student in Akhmatova’s school even if the lines are Blok’s.<sup>33</sup> A reader often deconstructs the map of literary history while engaged with popular attributions (analogously to folk etymologies), attributions in the service of readers’ expectations; so it is with Bazarov’s formula about Pushkin, to whom Bazarov attributes the phrase “Nature induces the silence of sleep,” and, to the objection that Pushkin never said that, notes, “Well, even if he didn’t [say it], he could’ve and should’ve, as a poet.”<sup>34</sup> In nineteenth-century Russian prose, we encounter several instances of confusion between citations from Pushkin and Lermontov, understandable, perhaps, as the allegiance of the authors of that confusion to one of the two eternal camps of readers: Pushkin-lovers and Lermontov addicts. Apropos of Gumilev: in E. Kuznetsov’s book *From the past of the Russian stage: Historical sketches (Iz proshlogo russkoi estrady. Istoricheskie ocherki)*, in 1958, when an account of allusions to the executed poet’s name were laid out, the song “In the blue and distant ocean, somewhere near Tierra

30 (Goodbye, my friend, goodbye, / It’s too hard for me to live among people: / Anguish follows my every step. / In this life, no happiness can be found). M. Kravchinskii, *Pesni i razvlecheniia epokhi NEPa* (Nizhnyi Novgorod, 2015), disc no. 30.

31 (I love him because / When I’m beside him, the summer’s warmer. / Not because he gives the light, / But because beside him, I don’t need light)

32 (Sailors sang to me of the island / Where the Sky-blue tulip grows... / It’s distinguished by its great size, / It’s enormous, an evil giant) N. Kuznetsova, “Vas zdes’ ne stoyal,” in *Forum* [Munich], 20 (1989), 197.

33 M. Iudina, *Nereal’nost’ zla: Perepiska 1964-1966 g.* (Moscow, 2010), 394. The line is from “Poslednee napatstvie”; see A. Blok, *Sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1960), vol. 3, 272.

34 I. Turgenev, *Fathers and Children*, trans. M. Katz (New York, 2009), 104.

del Fuego...” (“V sinem i dalekom okeane, gde-to vozle Ognennoi zemli...”)  
from Vertinskii’s repertoire was entered as a song with words by Gumilev,  
when the author in this instance was actually Vertinskii himself.<sup>35</sup>

In just this way readers of the Gumilev school were those who took to believing the popular urban legend from the ‘50s that Konstantin Simonov filched the poem “Await me, I’ll return” (“Zhdi menia, i ia vernus”) which achieved the height of its popularity during the war, from Gumilev’s manuscript, which had just become known to him. Structurally speaking, these too are readers of Gumilev. Just as I became one after reading, in ninth grade, a single Gumilev stanza in an undistinguished literature textbook of the pre-Revolutionary period:

Или бунт на борту обнаружив  
Из пояса рвут пистолет,  
Так что сыплется золото с кружев,  
С розоватых брабантских манжет.<sup>36</sup>

And thousands, if not millions, of schoolchildren and university students were able to become attentive readers of Gumilev just as I did.

Readers’ schools, just like fan clubs, can be found in a state of latent conflict. Diaries furnish us with evidence of how adherents to the cult of Pasternak and Akhmatova, during the time of their joint performances in 1946 Moscow, calculated who received more applause; and there can be little doubt that each in the audience clapped just a little bit harder for their own idol.<sup>37</sup> As in the confrontation between adolescent cliques, one will see quarrels and insults arise; for example, as the excellent critic and literary historian Dmitrii Sviatopolk-Mirskii observed, Khodasevich is “the favorite poet of everyone who doesn’t love poetry.”<sup>38</sup> As Don-Aminado recalled of the aggressiveness of the Modernists’ school of reading in mid-1910s Moscow, “Through the late night to the first weak rays of sunrise, they would yell, make noise, argue, exalt Blok, then dethrone him, defend Briusov, read the poems of Anna Akhmatova, Kuzmin, Gumilev, spoke about Sergei Krechetov’s *The Iron Signet Ring* (*Zheleznyi persten*), mocked Maikov, Mei, Apukhtin, Polonskii.”<sup>39</sup>

(A brief digression: I’m speaking only of poets from that period with which I am engaged as a historian; but one can observe corresponding pro-

35 E. Kuznetsov, *Iz proshlogo russkoi estrady: Istoricheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1958), 331.

36 (Or revealing a mutiny on ship, / A pistol is ripped from a sash, / And gold scatters from the lace, / From the rose-colored bobbin lace sleeves.) N. Gumilev, “Kapitany,” in Idem, *Stikhi, pis'ma, o russkoi poezii* (Moscow, 1989), 123.

37 R. D. Timenchik, *Poslednii poet: Anna Akhmatova v 60-e gody* (Moscow, 2014), 53-54.

38 D. Sviatopolk-Mirskii, “Bibliografiia,” *Versty*, 1 (1925), 208.

39 Don-Aminado, *Poezd na tret'em puti* (Moscow, 1991), 141.

cesses in today's habitat of readers—let's say, in the attack on the cult of Iosif Brodskii and the advancement of alternative idols, presented as undeservedly silenced and marginalized.)

Sometimes conflict moved into a genuinely physical arena. In her memoirs, Nadezhda Mandel'shtam relates the following episode in a discussion of the clash between readers' tastes:

When Mandel'shtam was resurrected from nonexistence at the end of the fifties, readers of Pasternak reconciled themselves to the existence of both authors (not all reconciled, of course, though many did); but anyone who promoted Shengeli and beat the jew-loving Mandel'shtam scholar bloody had revived the glorious traditions of the past. I explained to this Mandel'shtam scholar that the appearance of a significant poet is always accompanied by an embrace of poetry and the appearance of many good poets, and thus it was time to cut out the absurd games. The Mandel'shtam scholar just covered his face with his hands and moaned. How to explain to him, that a poet cannot exist in isolation—and that not for nothing is the 'duel between two nightingales' spoken of? ... Already the fights between the partisans of Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva are quieting down.<sup>40</sup>

I learned about this episode by chance from this Mandel'shtam scholar himself: A. A. Morozov, the opponent who was then a talented and still undervalued scholar of literature; the incident didn't end in bloodshed, but Sasha Morozov told me, embarrassed: "He ran after me crying, *Give Tiutchev a dragonfly!*"<sup>41</sup>

The cult of a poet presupposes rituals—calling on them while they are alive, visiting their grave and commemorative locales after their death. We know of the pilgrimage to Pasternak in Peredelkino from the biographies of several then-young poets. Several people also told of their arrival at Akhmatova's in autumn 1946, after her government-orchestrated public shaming, with flowers in their hands and manuscripts under their arms. (Perhaps the number of people who *wrote* about visiting her apartment at Sheremetev Palace is greater than the number who *actually* went; incidentally, she didn't admit anyone in order to avoid bringing misfortune upon her sympathizers.) E. A. Lyzhina, the final mistress of Konstantin Paustovskii,

---

40 N. Ia. Mandel'shtam, *Vtoraia kniga* (Moscow, 1990), 373. "A duel between two nightingales" is a line from Boris Pasternak's "A Definition of Poetry" ("Opredelenie poezii"); see B. Pasternak, *Stikhi i poemy 1912-1932* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 22.

41 A citation from Osip Mandel'shtam's poem "Poem about Russian poetry" ("Stikhi o russkoi poezii"). In English, the poem is typically known by its first line, "Give Tiutchev a dragonfly"; see O. Mandel'shtam, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh* (Washington, 1967), I, 182. Aleksandr Anatol'evich Morozov (1932-2008) was one of the best readers of Mandel'shtam.

spoke of the performance of a ritual, with all the trappings of archaic rites: a procession and fortune-telling. Paustovskii was an admirer of Annenskii, who in a poem described a statue of Peace (the work of an Italian sculptor), desecrated via a broken nose, in Tsarskoe Selo:

We walked along the alley of Catherine Park; it was deserted and very quiet—the museum had a day off. Pushkin's immortal lines came to mind. K.G. knew a great many poems by heart, and read them in a restrained, halting voice. At that time he was reading the poems of Innokentii Annenskii, whose life and works were connected with Tsarskoe Selo. One of his poems was dedicated to the marble statue of “Peace” in Catherine Park... “I don't know why—goddesses' statues / Enthrall the heart so sweetly... / O, give me eternity, and I'll give it in return / For indifference to insults and passing time.”<sup>42</sup> The marble statues were covered with wooden casings for the winter, and Konstantin Georgievich and I struggled to figure out which one hid the statue that Annenskii had sung of.<sup>43</sup>

The emergence of the cult of Annenskii was facilitated by the conditions of his death: abrupt, outside, on the steps of a train station; a corpse that was not immediately identified; a mythologizing rumor that lasted for two decades, all the while exaggerating the duration of this non-identification, all the while exaggerating how long the corpse laid in a special room at the train station. At the funeral, the deceased was rendered honors befitting a beloved local pedagogue, although few spoke about the fact that Russia had lost one of its finest poets, and indeed, few knew him in this capacity: one of his books was published under the pseudonym *No One*, and the second, better one came out posthumously. So his cult (as is evident, for example, in its incarnation among Russian émigrés) possessed features of revanchism and posthumous restitution for the things left unsaid at the moment of his death. The abovementioned Didier, in his analysis of the Poe cult, noted that the circumstances of the poet's passing became the nucleus of his cult.<sup>44</sup>

The cult of the underappreciated poet twentieth-century Russia had a lofty precedent in the unique case of Tjutchev. Ivan Rozanov, one of the lone founders of the study of readers' tastes—that is, the subject that I am pro-

42 The poem is “Pace (*Statuia mira*)”; see I. Annenskii, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, 93: “Не знаю почему — богиня изваянье / Над сердцем сладкое имеет обаянье... / О, дайте вечность мне, и вечность я отдам / За равнодушие к обидам и годам”.

43 *Peterburgskie vstrechi*, ed. E. A. Lyzhina, O. K. Kozlov (St. Petersburg, 2000), 24-25.

44 “Unwept, unhonoured, unsung. His funeral was pathetic in its meagre attendance, its scant ceremony and absence of mourning. Only eight persons were present at the funeral of one of the immortals of earth.” Didier, “The Poe Cult,” 336.

posing to study synchronically, and he diachronically—wrote in the article “The Rhythm of the Epochs”:

Every significant writer rips the cobwebs of traditions. If they quietly follow their own unique path, taking no note of their own innovation, others will likewise fail to take note of it for a long time. But if they achieve a belated fame, then it is not as resonant, but it is more stable than others’. That’s how it was for Tiutchev. Such is the fate of Innokentii Annenskii.<sup>45</sup>

This generation dragged Tiutchev into its rites and rituals—thus, Sergei Gorodetskii dedicated this eight-line poem to fleecing an unwitting bookseller out of a rare find:

В лавчонке тесной милого глупца  
Твоих творений первое издание  
Приобрести — какое ликованье! —  
Смятенно чуют вянье творца...

Как дороги истлевшие листы,  
Ритмичный трепет каждого абзаца,  
И типография Эдварда Праца,  
И титула надменные черты! -<sup>46</sup>

and then brought order to the legacy of the poet and advised all “to rebind Tiutchev after tearing out of his book all political poems—for politics is vulgar banality.”<sup>47</sup> But in the 1920s in her own copy (*Stikhotvoreniia Fedora Ivanovicha Tiutcheva*. Moscow, 1883. *ex libris*—1922), Akhmatova made markings testifying to her perpetual and wholly intimate relationship to Tiutchev’s poetry. On December 4, 1925, Akhmatova used Tiutchev’s book to “tell the fortune of N. N. P[unin], her future husband—and happened upon the line ‘O, how viciously we love...’ (‘O, kak ubiistvenno my ljubim...’); and across from the line ‘The more terrifying the image of the deceased, / The dearer they were to us in life’ from the poem ‘From land to land, from

<sup>45</sup> *Literaturnaia tetrad’ Valentina Krivicha*, edited by Z. Gimpelevich (St. Petersburg, 2011), 197.

<sup>46</sup> (In that dear fool’s hole-in-the-wall, / To acquire—what a triumph!— / The first printing of your creations, / To feel, nervously, the master’s own breath... / How dear are these faded pages, / The rhythmic trembling of every indentation, / And Edward Pratz’s press, / And the haughty features of the title page!). S. Gorodetskii, *Tsvetuschii posokh: Verenitsa vos’mistishii* (St. Petersburg, 1914), 89.

<sup>47</sup> G. Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii v 3 t.* (Moscow, 1993), vol. 3, 602.

city to city...' ('Iz kraiaia v krai, iz grada v grad...') Akhmatova wrote, 'Isn't it so?'"<sup>48</sup>

In regards to the cult of the poet as compensation for an insufficiently honorable demise, the torturous death of the executed Nikolai Gumilev of course goes without saying. In the cult of dead poets—more than likely always—"there is an unspoken reproach," to use Pasternak's phrase about Marina Tsvetaeva.<sup>49</sup> And those who remain unenrolled in this school of readers will always be suspicious of those participating in its compulsory public rituals. In 1957, a critic from the second wave of emigration (i.e. one with the experiences of a Soviet reader still fresh) wrote:

As to that enthusiasm for Innokentii Annenskii which gripped the émigré community (or rather, its literary circles) in recent years: it is hard to not see in it the manifestation of a dubious snobbery. A second-rate poet, Annenskii has long ago been forgotten in Russia. His cult abroad has the very same reasons (first and foremost, the desire to appear original) on account of which they extol other little-known and rarely acknowledged writers, disdaining the unquestionable giants. And still, moreover, his corrosive disappointment, his unremitting gloom, impresses a certain part of the émigrés.<sup>50</sup>

A different émigré critic and poet Sergei Rafal'skii wrote fifteen years later:

One could fill all of hell with authors to whom contemporary criticism was once favorably disposed and yet who are in no way accepted by their grateful offspring. Examples of those resigned to such oblivion are [...] Igor' Severianin, or Bal'mont, or even—what heresy!—Innokentii Annenskii.<sup>51</sup>

Georgii Adamovich, whose personal efforts ensured Annenskii's fifty-year cult amongst the émigré poets, summed up the pretensions of the intractable readership in emigration: "Why do they make a fuss over some Annenskii whom they hadn't previously heard of?"<sup>52</sup> Evidently, Marina Tsvetaeva's comments emerged as a reaction to the intensified promotion of this cult; Adamovich recalled them many years afterward:

<sup>48</sup> A. L. Ospovat, "Kak slovo nashe otzovetsia....": *O pervom sbornike F. I. Tiutcheva* (Moscow, 1980), 98.

<sup>49</sup> B. Pasternak, "Pamiati Mariny Tsvetaevoi" ("Mne tak zhe trudno do sikh por..."), in *Idem, Stikhi 1936-1959. Stikhi dlia detei. Stikhi 1912-1957, ne sobrannye v knigi avtora. Stat'i i vystupleniia* (Ann Arbor, 1961), 39.

<sup>50</sup> Vl. Rudinskii, *Russkoe voskresen'e*, October 30, 1957.

<sup>51</sup> *Novoe russkoe slovo*, September 26, 1971.

<sup>52</sup> G. O. Adamovich, "O svobode poeta," *Novoe russkoe slovo*, February 17, 1957.

Yes, there was still pushback from Marina Tsvetaeva's side, not reserved or evasive like Khodasevich's, but stormy, indignant, contemptuous, tossed downward from the snow-peaked caps of her own personal, elevating inspiration. "Annenskii? I read him and tossed him aside. Why should I start reading him now?" One day I heard another note of hers about *The Cypress Chest* (*Kiparisovyi larets*), at one of the gatherings of the "Nomads," who had been formed by Slonim; as exemplified by the Gippius case, it's better to forget about it.<sup>53</sup>

Since many readers willfully come up with their own versions of the picture of the literary culture in spite of the pronouncements of Parnassus (as Tomashevskii noted), other readers, by a paradoxical (however unsurprising) move, drew Tsvetaeva and Annenskii closer together. For example, Vera Panova wrote to her friend in 1959: "Alas, I found the roots of Tsvetaeva's unusual quality wholly present in literature from the beginning of the century, especially in the various experiments of Innokentii Annenskii."<sup>54</sup>

In the example of the cults of Annenskii and Gumilev, as well as Tsvetaeva in the 1950s, and Akhmatova, we see that the hero of a cult is a sacred victim. This victimization is thus hyperbolized. Akhmatova herself wrote the article "The Final Tragedy of Annenskii" based on the correspondence between Annenskii and his editor (written over the two weeks leading up to his death) that she'd gotten hold of. In her interpretation, the poet's demise was hastened by the editor's refusal to print his poems in the very next printing of the journal. A swan song is needed for a poet's myth. And Akhmatova read the lines from the poem "My Sorrow" ("Moia toska") about the poet's muse—"how they bound her little children, broke their arms and blinded them"—as the story of the unpublished poems that called forth the fatal blow in his heart.<sup>55</sup> And because a poetic will and testament is likewise required for the reader's myth about Gumilev, so the fake poem "In the evening hour, at the hour of sunset" ("V chas vechernii, v chas zakata") (which can be compared to Andre Chenier's "Comme un dernier rayon") began circulating in 1960s samizdat; allegedly, Gumilev had written it while in jail.<sup>56</sup>

The logic of the myth leads to exaggeration, and already in one literary-historical article from a young colleague at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we read that Annenskii was, on the whole, banned in our

53 G. O. Adamovich, "Sud'ba Innokentii Annenskogo," *Russkaia mys'*, November 5, 1957. Zinaida Gippius's marks in her copy of Annenskii, it seemed, were not introduced into circulation.

54 S. Babenysheva, "Vera Vel'tman—Vera Panova," *SSSR: vnutrennie protivorechiia*, vol. 4, 1982, 192.

55 N. Struve, "Vosem' chasov s Annoi Akhmatovoi," *Zvezda*, 6 (1989), 124.

56 Cf. Timenchik, *Istoriia kul'ta Gumileva*, 81-86, in regards to the discussion about the authorship of this poem and about the projection of Chenier onto the myth of Gumilev.



country until the 1970s. This is absolutely not the case, although we cannot forget the anger of Aleksandr Fadeev, the head of the Union of Soviet Writer, apropos of the publication of the ‘reactionaries’ in the *Biblioteka poeta* series: “Even Innokentii Annenskii, even Andrei Belyi!”<sup>57</sup> But in general, today’s critics inevitably exaggerate the degree of tabooization suffered by the murdered Gumilev, the repressed Mandel’shtam, and the emigrated Khodasevich in the Stalinist press. An offstage struggle was being waged around each of these names, a struggle which makes up the most substantial part of the history of Soviet literature.

The boundaries of a school of readers do not coincide with civil, party, or ideological differentiations. A characteristic instance: Vitalii Korotich’s story about 1988, when he printed a small edition of Gumilev’s poems as a supplement to the journal *Ogonek* (*Spark*):

God didn’t see me, the censor didn’t swallow me up. But when they suddenly invited me to the office of the all-powerful Egor Ligachev, second-in-command of the Communist Party, the most orthodox of the orthodox, I decided that my optimism might have been misplaced. I entered his office on tiptoes, straining my ears, and Egor Kuz’mich inquired where I got the idea to publish an executed poet, and why I had been able to pull it off. Having spoken, he went up to the office door and moved a nearly indiscernible shelf above it: “For many years I’ve made copies of Gumilev’s poems, put them where only I could get at them, and bound these volumes for myself.” In a Morocco leather cover with a gold imprint, a strange, samizdat-ified two-volume Gumilev was resting in the lap of the second secretary of the Communist Party. I didn’t expect that, that’s for sure. “Why didn’t you order [them] to publish him in a mass edition?” I naively asked. “It’s hard...” Ligachev enigmatically said and prepared to bid me farewell.<sup>58</sup>

Everyone who opines about any poet demonstrates their adherence to a ‘school’; we must define that adherence. That is, before we speak about the composition and content of reception (which is universally practiced), we absolutely must assemble a dossier on the receiver, trace the personal routes of their engagements and rejections, attractions and repulsions. Perhaps other readers of poetry of the 1910s were schoolteachers in the 1920s and thus passed on their youthful passions to subsequent generations.

I am returning to the symmetry and isomorphism of the history of writers and the history of readers, from which it proceeds that studies of the

---

57 A. Fadeev, “O literaturnoi kritike,” *Literaturnaia gazeta*, September 24, 1949.

58 V. Korotich, *Dvadsat’ let spustia* (Moscow, 2008).

second are not lesser, but rather more laborious than the study of the traditional history of literature.

Leonid Chertkov was one of my oldest colleagues and instructors with regard to the study of the history of early twentieth-century literature; he once said: “But as a matter of fact, one must curtail this study; I’m sick of commenting on who drank tea with whom.” But the very analysis of the ‘collective text’ of readers’ reception begins with the clarification of who ‘invested’ in this text, where and with whom they received their literary education, who recommended and gave them books, who influenced the formation of their personalized code of reading; in other words, who drank tea with whom.

## WHAT AND HOW RUSSIAN STUDENTS READ IN SCHOOL, 1840–1917<sup>1</sup>

Roman Leibov, Alexey Vdovin

### I. PURPOSE, METHODS AND MATERIAL OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe the evolution of the reading practices of students of Russian gymnasiums and technical schools (*real'nye uchilishcha*) in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since there was no democratic educational system across classes before the reforms of 1915–1918, the students we consider are, first and foremost, boys of noble and petty-bourgeois descent and of eight to seventeen years of age.<sup>2</sup> To describe the reading ‘repertoire’ of these students, we will turn to sources of various types. On the one hand, it is necessary to account for *normative texts* (curricula, textbooks and methodological materials, readers). Yet, on the other hand, we should not lose sight of potential (and fairly frequent) discrepancies between such norms and real social reading practices which implemented such norms to differing degrees. This forces us to turn to another type of source: various kinds of *ego-texts*. At this point, however, the researcher faces a wide range of challenges. Since diaries and correspondence of children and adolescents were published rarely—only in exceptional cases—the main type of ego-texts available for study is the

---

1 This study was implemented within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE, Moscow) in 2017.

2 In some sections of this chapter, we also take into account the reading of technical school students—boys of the same age who undertook a shorter course of study, lasting six to seven years. Meanwhile, we consider neither girls’ education, nor literature programs in private gymnasias and commercial schools, although these issues, owing to their variability and wider scope, are of no less importance.

memoir. To this end, we have compiled and reviewed a small database of Russian memoirs of the nineteenth century which serves as the basis for this part of our study and includes 56 memoir sources, covering the period from the 1810s to the 1910s. Memoirs of the second half of the nineteenth century, which give us a more or less adequate picture of students' reading, are better represented within this database; unfortunately, the early memoirs are fewer and therefore lead to less conclusive results.

In addition to the usual complexities in the study of memoirs related to our temporal distance from these texts and, more generally, to the issue of reliability, the researcher of the nineteenth century contends with a special difficulty: a distorted selection. Published largely in the Soviet period, memoirs dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century are clearly oriented to the demands of the Soviet era and are largely distorted (even more so than in other cases) by its language and expectations. In these memoirs, information about reading in Populist and Marxist circles is presented much more extensively than data about reading at home and reading for pleasure.

To compensate, at least in part, for this bias, we have to refer to another type of source: contemporary *studies of gymnasium reading and the reading of adolescents*, which are not very numerous, but still notable. Unfortunately, they all belong to the later period and are based on private observations by the authors and governed by limited data from surveys and questionnaires.

If we try to describe the 'reader's menu' of Russian pupils qualitatively, it becomes obvious that its pragmatics and repertoire are interdependent and vary between periods, between age groups, and between socio-cultural strata.

Given the relatively high price of books in the nineteenth century, we should consider, first and foremost, the origin of books which fell into the hands of schoolchildren and briefly characterize these various "reading fields."

The first possible point of origin was the *family home library*. Obviously, this source was pertinent only for the children of wealthy families (which corresponds, more or less, to our research field). Here parents displayed various strategies. Some schoolchildren became familiar with books from family libraries before entering gymnasias or other schools, and some used them during their studies: parents could control or direct such reading, or they could leave the child to his own devices. In any case, common practices and censorship served as the only limits of this potential resource.

The main "reading field" we will discuss is the curricular one. Here, the sources were *textbooks* (readers [*knigi dlia chteniia*], anthologies [*khrestomatii*], required reading, etc.), organized according to educational programs or other normative guidelines. From the point of view of state control over children's reading, this segment was compulsory (to varying degrees,

of course, at different educational institutions). It formed the core of the literary canon and was the main object of teachers' attention. Accordingly, this source will be the main object of our study. Of course, such a focus describes normalized expectations more than real practices, but the impact of "required reading" remains undeniable<sup>3</sup>.

*School libraries* were another significant source of books. They allowed for some expansion of students' reading beyond syllabi, although their content was also monitored (for more details on the use of school libraries, see section 4.1 of this chapter).

Last but not least, we consider extracurricular reading, which was based on *public libraries* of various types (which were accessible to high school students) and the free *exchange of books* between students. Both practices are often documented by sources.

Here we should distinguish between two types of reading: recreational and self-educational. Recreational reading is unsystematic, and selection of reading materials is informed, in large part, by genre. The list of popular prose writers and texts of the nineteenth century, which we can draw from contemporary studies of children's reading or memoirs, is quite obvious. In the 1840s–50s it consisted of novels by Ivan Goncharov, Dmitrii Grigorovich, Lev Tolstoi, Ivan Turgenev, Konstantin Masalskii, Mikhail Zagoskin, Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Elena Gan (E. R-va) and I.I. Lazhechnikov; the ballads of Friedrich Schiller, the prose of Dickens, Thackeray, Scott, Dumas (the father), Eugène Sue and Paul Féval (see REBECCHINI, "Reading Foreign novels," in the present volume).

In the 1860s and 1870s, the most mentioned authors include Fedor Dostoevskii, Nikolai Nekrasov, Nikolai Pomialovskii, Innokentii Omulevskii, Fedor Reshetnikov, Gleb Uspenskii, Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin. Among them also rank foreign authors—Jules Verne, Friedrich Spielhagen, Victor Hugo, Gustave Aimard, James F. Cooper, Mayne Reid, Ruffini, Ferry.

In the 1880s–90s, new names appeared—Émile Zola, Ieronim Iasinskii (under the pseudonym "M. Belinskii"), Vladimir Korolenko, Daniil Mordovtsev, Semen Nadson, Konstantin Staniukovich, Andrei Novodvorskii ("Osipovich") and Aleksandr Sheller-Mikhailov. At the turn of the century and in the first years to follow, Stevenson and Kipling, Chekhov and Bryusov, Bal'mont and Maupassant began to appear in students' reading lists.

More accurate, albeit more localized, descriptions of readers' preferences can be found in the studies of children's and adolescents' reading, based

---

3 Our approach here follows the so-called "Anthology Studies" in the English and American criticism. For a recent study, see T. Mole, *What the Victorians Made of Romanticism. Material Artefacts, Cultural Practices, and Reception History* (Princeton, 2017), in particular Chapters 13–15. See also I. Michael, *The Teaching of English: From the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge, 1987); B. Korte, *Flowers for the Picking: Anthologies of Poetry in (British) Literary and Cultural Studies* (Amsterdam, 2000).

on surveys or the observations of teachers and librarians.<sup>4</sup> Presented here, for example, is the repertoire of Pskov schoolchildren's summer reading in 1909.<sup>5</sup>

Table 1. Summer reading of Pskov schoolchildren in 1909

Authors	Number of readers
Gogol'	289
Pushkin	244
Turgenev	177
L. Tolstoi	129
Lermontov	119
Goncharov	101
Charskaia	94
Mayne Reid	67
Verne	65
Dostoevskii	64
Chekhov	64
Grigorovich	46
Zhelikhovskaia	45
Danilevskii	40
Sienkiewicz	39
Twain	37
Staniukovich	35
S. T. Aksakov	29
Sheller-Mikhailov	29

4 Works of this kind include the following: "O chtenii knig iunkerami voennykh uchilishch i vospitannikami Pazheskogo i Finliandskogo korpusov", *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, 4 (1869), 284-294; S. P. Nezlobin, "Vneklassnaia shkol'naia literatura," *Russkaia shkola*, 1 (1893), 59-73, 2 (1893), 69-81; E. A. Andreeva, "Kakie knigi chitaiutsia v voskresnoi shkole," in *Chastnyi pochin v dele narodnogo obrazovaniia* (Moscow, 1894), 319-334; K. Levin, "Chto chitaet i chem interesuetsia uchashchaisia molodezh'", *Mir bozhii*, 11 (1903), 185-198; 12 (1903), 103-123; I. S. Simonov, "Chto chitaiut starshie vospitanniki nashikh kadetskikh korpusov," *Pedagogicheskii Sbornik*, 2 (1905), 210-215; 6 (1905), 642-665; 7 (1905), 29-46; 8 (1905), 89-105; 9 (1905), 212-227; K. Sivkov, "Idealy uchashchiesia molodezhi," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, 2 (1909), 117-158; I. A. Aleshintsev, "Chto chitaiut uchashchiesia v srednei shkole na kanikulakh," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, 2 (1910), 61-86; K. Sivkov, "Idealy gorodskikh shkol'nikov," *Vestnik vospitaniia*, 4 (1911), 92-108; S. A. Anan'in, "Detskie idealy," *Russkaia shkola*, 7-8 (1911), 201-219; I. Bachaldin, "Uchenik-chitatel': (Anketa o chtenii v srednei shkole)," *Russkaia shkola*, 3 (1912), 110-134; 4 (1912), 118-131; V. A. Vodarskii, "Chto i kak chitaiut ucheniki gimnazii: (Po dannym ankety)", *Rodnoi iazyk v shkole*, 1(6) (1915-1916), 11-16; N. Mendel'son, "O chtenii uchashchikhsia (po dannym ankety)," *Rodnoi iazyk v shkole*, 8-10 (1916-1917).

5 I. A. Aleshintsev, "Chto chitaiut..."

Nemirovich-Danchenko	25
Gor'kii	24
Dickens	22
Andreev	less than 20
Artsybashev	less than 20
Garshin	less than 20
Griboedov	less than 20
Zhukovskii	less than 20
Zagoskin	less than 20
Ibsen	less than 20
Kuprin	less than 20
Korolenko	less than 20
Kol'tsov	less than 20
Lazhechnikov	less than 20
Leskov	less than 20
Mamin-Sibiriak	less than 20
Nadson	less than 20
Nekrasov	less than 20
Nikitin	less than 20
Ostrovskii	less than 20
Pisemskii	less than 20
Pomialovskii	less than 20
Potapenko	less than 20
Saltykov-Shchedrin	less than 20
Vl. Solov'ev	less than 20
A. K. Tolstoi	less than 20
G. Uspenskii	less than 20
Fonvizin	less than 20
W. Shakespeare	less than 20
G. Hauptmann	a few
H. Heine	a few
M. Maeterlinck	a few
O. Mirbeau	a few
W. Scott	a few
G. Ebers	a few

Of course, this list is not complete and does not include the ephemeral literature of the tabloids, which was usually anonymous or semi-anonymous. A list of such texts is given in the same article and includes popular serial books about detectives and robbers (Sherlock Holmes, Nat Pinkerton, Nick Carter, Ethel King, Pat Conner, John Wilson, Putilin, Leichtweiß, Van'ka Kain) and “shockers” *In a Daze of Love* (*V chadu liubvi*), *Pink Letter* (*Rozovoe pis'mo*), *Open Grave* (*Razrytaia mogila*), *Love of a Villain* (*Liubov' zlodeia*), *Secret of the Heart* (*Taina serdtsa*), *Broken Life* (*Razbitaia zhizn'*), *First Love* (*Pervaia liubov'*), *In the Chains of Love* (*V okovakh liubvi*), *Under the Waves of Imatra* (*Pod volnami Imatry*), *In the City Fog* (*V stolichnom tumane*)—as well as the adjacent *Sanin* (*Sanin*) by M. Artsybashev.

In the first type of home reading, texts would reach the reader, as a rule, by horizontal social exchange: pupils would share either physical texts or reading recommendations. This kind of collective reflection became a sort of game. The well-known tendency of children and adolescents to confuse reality and fiction could often lead to various kinds of real-life projects, following in the footsteps of, for example, Chekhov's schoolchildren's escape to America.

The second type—self-educational reading—is often based on a more or less rigid canon which emerged in Russia in the era of the Great Reforms and was connected to the alternative culture of the intelligentsia. This kind of reading developed not so much via loose horizontal forms of communication as through political circles. Such circles represented a sort of *alternative school*, where the students studied texts recommended by a senior circle leader or by a self-education manual. Here we should note that extracurricular reading can be divided into two types, which focus on fiction and nonfiction texts, respectively. It is also notable that novels could appear on the reading lists of local circles, but these were, most frequently, ideological ones (on the reading of *What Is to Be Done?* [*Chto delat'?*] see section 4.2.) Otherwise, novels that appeared on reading lists were those which circle members considered ideologically significant. (Thus, Turgenev's *Fathers and Children* [*Ottsy i deti*] was merely an addendum to articles by Antonovich and Pisarev.)

The texts circulating in revolutionary circles took on an almost sacred aura, which, of course, their prohibition and inaccessibility did much to facilitate. In the memoirs of N. A. Morozov we find an episode describing the author's first introduction to the world of illegal literature. This introduction was a kind of revolutionary initiation, revealing a new reality to the hero:

For the next time they even promised me banned publications from abroad: an issue of the magazine “Forward!,” edited by Lavrov, and Sokolov's *Renegades*.

You can imagine how excited I was as I returned with this bundle! Every time I saw a policeman on the street, I was simultaneously both scared and joyful, and I mentally told him:



“Oh, if only you know, overseer, what I have here in my bundle, what you would say then!”

I pounced upon these brand-new for me publications with the greatest greed and devoured both books in one evening. It was like a whole new world had opened before my eyes, and this new world was so wonderful and unexpected! *Renegades*—a book full of poetry and enthusiastic romanticism, which I especially liked at that time, a book which exalted self-sacrifice in the name of the ideal—just put me in seventh heaven. In “Forward!” what I especially liked were not the places where the facts were stated—it seemed to me that the same kind of thing could be found in the newspapers—but the passages of proclamation, appeals to the active struggle for freedom.

I reread these pages several times and virtually memorized them. Their bold and direct language, the pouring out of reproaches to earthly kings—all this seemed to me a manifestation of some extraordinary, ideal heroism.<sup>6</sup>

The boundaries between curricular and extracurricular reading were quite distinct, although these spheres could intersect. Moreover, books from extracurricular (and not fully approved) lists could enter schools, often through educators themselves. Remarkable and almost emblematic in this respect is a fragment of the memoirs of M.I. Semenov, describing the Samara technical school in the era of Alexander III. Among the teachers who contributed to the boys’ development, Semenov mentions:

Pavel Andreevich Ososkov, a teacher of natural science would often read [...] articles by Pisarev, Lavrov (Mirtov) and Mikhailovskii during his classes, accompanied by eloquent, lengthy explanations. After his speeches debates would be held. Just in case the school director appeared, Ososkov would always have the book of some naturalist, like Brehm, Garvig, etc., under the book he was really reading. And if his superiors appeared, he would deftly take out this book and continue reading on a purely curricular topic.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. NORMS AND TECHNIQUES OF TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION IN SYLLABI, EDUCATIONAL LITERATURE, AND STUDENTS’ ESSAYS

The issue of how pupils were taught to read and understand texts in nineteenth-century Russian schools presents an inevitable methodological diffi-

<sup>6</sup> N. A. Morozov, *Povesti moei zhizni. Memuary*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1965), vol. 1, 63.

<sup>7</sup> M. I. Semenov, *Revoliutsionnaia Samara 80-90-kh godov* (Kuibyshev, 1940), 19.

culty. The sources at our disposal (memoirs, diaries, and essays) are clearly insufficient in order to fully reconstruct the situation. In this section, we will try to consider the problem of “how pupils read (and were taught to read)” from three interrelated perspectives, which are based on available sources and verified reconstruction procedures:

- 1) How did official (ministerial) syllabi define the goals and methods of reading fictional texts? What were the “blind spots” in reading and interpreting them?
- 2) What standard methods of interpretation developed throughout the nineteenth century and how did they supplant each other or coexist? Can it be said that particular teachers developed their own, individual methods of interpretation?
- 3) What can students’ surviving essays tell us about standard interpretations of texts and deviations from them?

The evolution of interpretation methods can be seen as a series seamless transitions from one reading paradigm to another, beginning with the appearance of the first educational literature in the 1830s-40s and continuing up to the emergence of the more scientific principles underlying the Soviet “methodology of teaching literature in schools” in the 1900s. However, the real process was somewhat intermittent; different methods could coexist for decades, since the Ministry of Education regulated only the most general principles of textual analysis. In students’ memoirs we find evidence of the simultaneous existence of both traditional and innovative practices of teaching literature, sometimes in one and the same gymnasium. For example, V.P. Ostrogorskii, who would become a teacher himself, wrote about the 3rd Petersburg Gymnasium of 1853-58, where—alongside lessons in the routine scholastic techniques of the “rhetorical era”—were those of Vladimir Stoiunin, a reformer of literary pedagogy. For students, Stoiunin’s classes were a breath of fresh air.<sup>8</sup> We should note that that some methods of outstanding teachers would later become the basis for official ministerial programs (for example, those of A. D Galakhov and F. I Buslaev in the 1847-1860s and V. V. Sipovskii and I. F. Annenskii in 1901-1905).

Methods of literary interpretation in imperial high schools should be seen as a practice inscribed into three broader institutional frameworks. First, literary education was to obey educational policy and reproduce social order.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, since the middle of the nineteenth century, the majority of European states recognized literary education as a tool for the education

---

<sup>8</sup> V. P. Ostrogorskii, *Iz istorii moego uchitel'stva: Kak ia sdelalsia uchitelem* (St. Petersburg, 1895), 13, 25-26.

<sup>9</sup> J. Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993), 6-10.

and indoctrination of citizens (or subjects) of emerging nations.<sup>10</sup> As Ian Hunter believes, “the reading and criticism of literature lost their function as the aesthetico-ethical practice of a minority caste, and acquired a new deployment and function as an arm of the emergent governmental educational apparatus.”<sup>11</sup> Hunter demonstrates how an earlier paradigm of learning Latin and Greek grammar and reading the ancient authors was replaced in Britain with the modern literary education based on special techniques of literary criticism that is now compulsory in schools. The new educational paradigm integrated aesthetics and ethics, a “concern for individual self-expression with new techniques of supervision and discipline operating at the level of the population.”<sup>12</sup> According to Hunter, the purpose of teaching literature in schools was to shape moral qualities of the citizenry rather than to institutionalize the authority of literature and its expressive possibilities.<sup>13</sup>

Hunter does not distinguish in his analysis between elementary and high schools, despite the obvious differences in students’ ages and, consequently, their response to literature. Still, Hunter’s overall explanation of the internal machinery of schooling sounds convincing and allows for the problematization of similar processes in the Russian Empire.

The second important context which influenced methods of textual interpretation in school was the conflict or interaction of two disciplinary fields—that of university science and the younger field of pedagogy, both of which tried to dictate their agendas to high schools.<sup>14</sup> Finally, the third frame is a much narrower one, which, as per Guillory, can be called the “pedagogic imaginary.” This context entails not only the specific methodological and didactic attitudes of teachers, but also the cultural and political implications of the pedagogical discourse of the time and teachers’ collective views of their closeness to tradition or breaks with it.<sup>15</sup>

From the 1830s to the 1900s, the main trend in techniques of textual interpretation was characterized by a gradual shift from a rhetorical (“poetics” and “theory of fine art”) to hermeneutical paradigm, followed by, at the end of the century, another shift to a historicist one. If in the 1820s–50s the literary work was understood primarily as an element of a rhetorical system, a hierarchy of styles and genres, then in the second half of the nineteenth century, school pedagogy began to interpret it as a system which simultaneously contains a certain ethical and aesthetic potential, yet is also inscribed in the historical and cultural context (“artistic movement”).

---

10 I. Hunter, *Culture and Government. The Emergence of Literary Education* (London, 1988), 3–4.

11 *Ibid.*, 3.

12 *Ibid.*, 4.

13 *Ibid.*, 152.

14 See J. Guillory, “Literary Study and the Modern System of the Disciplines,” in A. Anderson, J. Valente (eds.), *Disciplinary at the Fin de Siecle* (Princeton, 2002).

15 Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 35.

During the second half of the century, literature was still not an autonomous school subject and was taught as a part of the Russian language course. The subordinate position of literature and the very purpose of its study, as per the ministerial programs of 1852, 1872, 1890, 1905 and 1912, unambiguously indicate its derivation from the program for the study of Russian language. Characteristically, in the gymnasium program of 1872, the purpose of the study of literature in the high school was formulated as such: to study the “Russian language in its stylistic and historical-literary development”.<sup>16</sup> The lack of disciplinary independence and the struggle for its autonomy between university academics and the pedagogical elite in the second half of the nineteenth century explain why techniques for textual interpretation were initially underdeveloped and sometimes appeared on the periphery of the educational system (in technical or commercial schools) or as an import from other countries, as was the case with Ludwig Eckardt’s method, promoted by Skopin and Ostrogorskii (see below).

The general disciplinary and social framework of school literature can illuminate the circumstances under which the study of the literary work and its historico-literary contexts gradually migrated to the center of school pedagogy. The first unified ministerial programs regulating the interpretation of texts appeared in Russia in 1852. At that time, the disciplinary framework derived from the university theory of literature and journalistic criticism. If the systematic approach to textual understanding owed much to hermeneutics and the philosophical aesthetic (F. Schlegel, Hegel, Schelling, F. Ast, K. Bachmann and their followers in Russian universities), the principle of contextualization arose, in turn, under the influence of literary criticism (N. Polevoi, I. Kireevskii, V. Belinskii, S. Shevyrev).<sup>17</sup> In the 1840s, the “pressure” of criticism was still weak; it manifested itself in full force only in the 1860s. Thus, in the 1840s university theory still dominated, as is made clear by the fact that the authors of the first ministerial textbooks on the theory and history of literature were graduates of Moscow University, among them Mikhail Chistiakov (*Course in the Theory of Literature*, 1847; *Practical Guide to the Gradual Exercise in Composition*, 1847) and Konstantin Zelenetskii (Professor at the Richelieu Lyceum in Odessa).<sup>18</sup>

The functions of literary education which were indicated in the new curricula emphasized the subordinate status of literature in the later programs

---

<sup>16</sup> “Uchebnye plany predmetov, prepodavaemykh v muzhskikh gimnaziakh Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 162, 7 (1872), 35-161.

<sup>17</sup> On the brief history of German hermeneutics in the nineteenth century, see J. Zimmerman, “F.D.E. Schleiermacher,” in N. Keane, C. Lawn (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (Malden, MA, 2016), 360-65; G. Scholtz, “Ast and Schleiermacher: Hermeneutics and Critical Philosophy,” in J. Malpas, H.-H. Gander (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics* (London, New York, 2015), 62-73.

<sup>18</sup> V.F. Chertov, *Russkaia slovesnost' v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole. Izdanie 2-e, ispravlennoe i dopolnennoe* (Moscow, 2013), 70-73, 77.

of 1852, 1872, and 1890. The linguistic dominance of the 1852 program appeared under the influence of the university disciplinary field and, in a historico-linguistic key, owed much to the philology of Buslaev, the founder of Russian literary didactics.<sup>19</sup> Buslaev called his method of textual analysis “philological explanation.” Modern historians of pedagogy have termed the method logical-stylistic, as students were to move from reading the text sentence by sentence with grammatical commentary to an understanding of the main idea (through retelling and reproduction). Although Buslaev criticized German educators for their overly philosophical approach to analyzing texts, he was himself influenced by German philosophy. He followed Wilhelm von Humboldt and Jacob Grimm’s linguistic philosophy, according to which grammar definitively reflects the aesthetics and philosophy of language.<sup>20</sup>

Buslaev’s procedures for working with the text would be reproduced in all programs until 1917; they included translation, transcription, compilation of an outline, composition, and so on. After 1852 this framework would acquire more modern methods: literary conversations and “readers’ conversations” (i.e. extracurricular discussions of literature, often with essays on a topic of the student’s choice), comparison of texts, and critical analysis.<sup>21</sup>

Methods of textual understanding in the 1852 program, still under the disciplinary pressure of university philology, were almost independent of standard procedures of literary criticism. By the 1850s, such procedures, owing to Belinskii, had long since departed from the philosophical aesthetic and had adopted a historical method partly imported from Germany.<sup>22</sup> It is reasonable to suppose that the demand for a “practical and historical” understanding of texts, according to “the historical course,” appeared in the 1852 program under Galakhov’s influence.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Galakhov and Buslaev warned against the unnecessary historicization of the course, calling for the study only of key authors such as Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Karamzin, Zhukovskii, and Pushkin. With regard to, for example, the epic genre, Galakhov and Buslaev stipulated that teachers begin with Homer and then proceed to Tasso, followed by Mikhail Kheraskov’s epic “Rossiada” and the historical novels of Walter Scott.

19 On Buslaev’s role, see Chertov, *Russkaia slovesnost’ v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole*, 80–89.

20 F. I. Buslaev, *O prepodavanii otechestvennogo iazyka* [1844] (Moscow, 1867), 115.

21 A. D. Galakhov, F. I. Buslaev, *Konspekt russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti dlia rukovodstva v voenno-uchebnykh zavedeniakh*. (St. Petersburg, 1852), 12–19; Chertov, *Russkaia slovesnost’ v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole*, 82.

22 See A. Vdovin, *Kontsept “glava literatury” v russkoi kritike 1830–60-kh godov* (Tartu, 2011), 90–91.

23 Reviewing the methods of teaching literature at the Third Moscow Gymnasium, Petr Vinogradov noted that up to 1869, teachers practiced the historical reading of texts only in the final (seventh) class (P. Vinogradov, *Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk piatidesiatiletiia Moskovskoi III gimnazii. (1839–1889 g.)* (Moscow, 1889), 123–124).

Galakhov and Buslaev suggested Pushkin's "The Covetous Knight" as a potential text for analysis. The text was chosen in order to explain the differences between prosaic and poetic works. The teacher was meant to draw the students' attention to a concrete (non-allegorical) figurative expression of the idea of avarice, and then to examine its rendering in the "form" of the work. In fact, without using the term itself, Buslaev and Galakhov also touched upon the notion of literary typification: although Pushkin's miser may have never existed, the author nonetheless presents greed so plausibly as to align the character with our general understanding of avarice. Thus, basic aesthetic concepts and key terms of drama (action, denouement, character) could be explained on the basis of Pushkin's short play. The final step of analysis was the comparison of Pushkin's text with another work on avarice.<sup>24</sup>

In the 1850s, there were no special manuals or textbooks where teachers and students could find actual samples of textual analysis. Zelenetskii's four-part gymnasium course "Theory of Literature," introduced by the Ministry, contained rhetoric, the theory of poetry and prose, and a short essay on the history of Russian literature, but did not explain exactly how to analyze or understand a particular text.<sup>25</sup>

We might find evidence of students' methods of working with texts in their essays, but only the topics of such compositions have been saved in archives. As recent research has shown, the main form of teaching reading and hermeneutical skills was the so-called "literary conversations" established in Russian gymnasia in 1844. Until the middle of the 1860s, they allowed teachers to assign essays as homework.<sup>26</sup> In his study of 1268 real topics and their evolution over 20 years in four educational districts (Kazan', Petersburg, Kiev and Odessa), Aleksandr Reut finds that by the end of the 1850s the topics of the essays were increasingly associated with fiction rather than historical literature, and they increasingly demanded from students analysis of specific texts, rather than general arguments such as "the simi-

---

24 A. Galakhov, F. Buslaev, *Konspekt russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti*, 8-9.

25 Alongside Zelenetskii's textbook, there existed an older one, authored by Ivan Peninskii, released in 1848 and recommended by the Ministry for primary schools and the first classes of gymnasia. See *Sbornik raspriazhenii po Ministerstvu narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg, 1867), 79. We lack examples of textual analysis of the 1830-40s; only a few collections of students' compositions from this period have been published. See, for example, an 1836 book of real essays from Irkutsk gymnasia: the young authors sought to demonstrate how external form and style complemented the art of thought in Ivan Krylov's fables. See *Prozaicheskie sochineniia uchenikov Irkutskoi gimnazii, pisannye pod rukovodstvom starshago uchitelia rossiiskoi slovesnosti Ivana Poliksen'eva* (St. Petersburg, 1836), I.

26 A. Byford, "Between Literary Education and Academic Learning: The Study of Literature at Secondary School in Late Imperial Russia (1860s-1900s)", *History of Education*, 33 (2004), 651-652; A. V. Reut, "Sochineniia gimnazistov dlia literaturnykh besed v 1840-1860-e gg.: analiz tematiki", *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Pedagogicheskie nauki*, 8 (2016), 31-32.

larity between novel and epic.”<sup>27</sup> Finally, if students were free to choose their own topics (as was the case, for example, in the Kazan’ Academic District), they were three times more likely to choose contemporary literature than the literature of the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Since literary conversations were of an extracurricular nature, and the topics of essays were not rigidly regulated by a single program, the majority of grammar school students wrote essays on the poetry of Pushkin and Lermontov and, less frequently, on the poems of Zhukovskii, Krylov, Kozlov, Kol’tsov, Gogol’s prose, and Griboedov’s drama. There are several cases of essays on Aleksandr Ostrovskii (entitled “Modern Russian comedians”), Vladimir Sologub, Dmitrii Grigorovich, Goncharov, and even an imitation of Turgenev’s *A Sportsman’s Sketches* (as early as 1851!).

The period between 1852 and 1864 is generally considered the most liberal in the history of the Russian imperial system of education. These years witnessed a significant step toward the further instrumentalization of literary education and, as a result, the emergence of a new ethical concept of pedagogy. The institutional preconditions for these developments were provided by the reforms of Aleksandr Golovnin, the minister of education from 1861 until 1866<sup>29</sup>. He initiated and supervised the work on a new statute for high schools, adopted in 1864. The statute was the result of a mass-scale professional mobilization of the pedagogical community encouraged by the minister. The mobilization itself stimulated teachers’ congresses to approve major decisions in the sphere of education, thus recognizing the right of local pedagogical councils to modify the content of school curricula; contributed to the dissemination of modern European pedagogical methods; and promoted special pedagogical periodicals (such as the journal *Teacher*). The resulting democratization of the school system was reflected in the relative pluralization of the curriculum and easing of disciplinary control over teachers and students, as well as in the proliferation of textbooks for recently emancipated serfs and of anthologies of modern literature.

During the 1860s, in parallel to techniques of working with texts that had become routine in the 1850s, the well-known teachers V. P. Skopin, V. Vodovozov, V. Ia. Stoiunin, and later V. P. Ostrogorskii carried out a revolution in the methods of scholastic textual interpretation. They developed the idea of studying literary texts for the sake of personal self-realization and self-improvement—*vospitanie* (*Bildung*). Their differences notwithstanding, all of them shared the idea of the exceptional pedagogical potential of a good literary text and its interpretation for the education of adolescents.<sup>30</sup>

27 Reut, “Sochineniia gimnazistov”, 35–36.

28 Ibid., 36.

29 E. L. Staferova, A. V. Golovnin i liberal’nye reformy v Prosveshchenii (*Pervaia polovina 1860-kh godov*) (Moscow, 2007), 330–341.

30 On Stoiunin and Ostrogorskii methodology see Byford, “Between Literary Education and Academic Learning,” 641–644.

Stoiunin's method was based on the discussion of behavioral and moral ideas communicated by a text rather than its aesthetic merits. Students were invited to put themselves in the shoes of literary characters and project their own life choices under the given circumstances (this was called a "conversation about life").<sup>31</sup> This approach is very close to what Hunter describes as the modern paradigm of literary education<sup>32</sup>. The double meaning of the important category of "character" (as a person's identity and a book's protagonist), and the purposeful nondistinction of the fictional world of the text and the real world, facilitated the creation of a pedagogical-rhetorical machine still at work in the Russian school.

This model was most comprehensively presented in Stoiunin's book *On Teaching Russian Literature* (1864), which went through eight editions over the next half century. Even a masterpiece of literature was approached in a utilitarian perspective: its aesthetic value was ignored, and the text was instead treated as material for the training of students' attention, memory, perception, and moral judgment. Stoiunin transformed the traditional procedures of textual analysis, shifting the emphasis from the language of literary characters to their actions. He recommended discussing "the attitude of a person to the outside world," to find out "in what way he perceives all external facts, in other words, his naive or sentimental, or satirical attitudes; how characters develop under the influence of the environment and life; and what the writer's goals are and how he achieves these goals, in what ways he expresses his thought."<sup>33</sup>

It is easy to find the roots of such a utilitarian approach to text in the tradition of sociological literary criticism—in articles by Belinskii, Nikolai Dobroliubov, and Nikolai Chernyshevskii. For example, Stoiunin directly borrows Dobroliubov's concept of "real criticism" in his interpretation of Gogol's *The Overcoat*. The teacher should be concerned only with the ethical component when analyzing the type of "little man" and his relationship with superiors. Stoiunin believed that the death of even such a miserable hero as Akakii Akakievich in Gogol's short story was capable of awakening moral compassion in the most powerful people of this world, which means that there was hope for the improvement of the whole society<sup>34</sup>. Stoiunin's approach did not receive universal acceptance in Russian schools because of its politically subversive potential, and he was fired from the Third Petersburg Gymnasium in 1871 and later from the Moscow Nikolaevskii Institute<sup>35</sup>. Despite the persecution of Stoiunin, his works were reprinted

31 V. Ia. Stoiunin, *O prepodavanii russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1864), 244–45.

32 Hunter, *Culture and Government*, 119.

33 Stoiunin, *O prepodavanii*, 247–48.

34 V. Stoiunin, *Rukovodstvo dlia teoreticheskogo izucheniia literatury po luchshim obraztsam russkim i inostrannym*. (St. Petersburg, 1869), 78.

35 A. Ia. Rotkovich, *Voprosy prepodavaniia literatury. Istoriko-metodicheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1959), 134–136.



and, judging by memoirs and reports to the minister of public education, influenced many radical teachers. One can discern a tangible influence of his ideas and methods in the rhetoric of ministerial programs and the writings of authoritative pedagogues.

Another innovative take on literary education shared the humanistic goal of Stoiunin's method but differed from it in its approach to literature. Viktor Skopin and Viktor Ostrogorskii (Stoiunin's disciple) propagated what can be called an aesthetic-ethical education. Skopin and Ostrogorskii valued reading for its ethical potential, allowing a child's self-expression; however, they concentrated on aesthetic education through the development of the imagination and emotions. Skopin and Ostrogorskii borrowed this method from the German school of hermeneutics of Ludwig Eckardt, Johann Deinhardt, and August Lüben.<sup>36</sup> Popularizing the new methods in Russia during the 1860s and 1870s<sup>37</sup>, Skopin and Ostrogorskii undermined Stoiunin's utilitarianism by further developing Eckardt's method, which was oriented toward "weakening the desire for narrow utilitarianism" through the powerful aesthetic impact of canonical texts.<sup>38</sup>

The German school of hermeneutics and its Russian followers operated on two notions: that of "conscious, critical reading" based on Friedrich Schlegel's "understanding" criticism on the one hand, and university aesthetics on the other. Eckardt was, after all, a disciple of Friedrich Vischer, known as an influential follower of Hegel's speculative aesthetics, which was tethered to the development of university pedagogy<sup>39</sup>. Eckardt understood reading as laborious work, akin to the modern technique of close reading. He and his Russian adepts demanded repeated reading of the text, imposing the rule of the hermeneutic circle, and constant checking of the

---

36 J. Deinhardt, *Der Gymnasial-Unterricht nach den wissenschaftlichen Anforderungen der jetzigen Zeit* (Hamburg, 1837); A. Lüben, C. Nacke (eds.), *Lesebuch für Bürgerschulen* (Leipzig, 1851). Skopin reviewed Eckardt's and Lüben's books in a series of articles in the journal *Uchitel'* (*The Teacher*) in 1863–1865.

37 Since Ostrogorskii, in his introduction to the Russian translation of Eckardt's book *The Guide to the Reading of Poetic Works* (1875), wrote of the popularity of German methods in Russian schools, we can assume that this methodology became widespread in gymnasia. Moreover, in 1877 the Academic Committee of the Ministry of Public Education recommended this book for use in gymnasia.

38 L. Ekkardt, *Rukovodstvo k chteniiu poeticheskikh sochinenii s prilozheniem primechanii i kratkogo uchebnika teorii poezii. Dlia muzhskikh i zhenskikh uchebnykh zavedenii*, transl. by N. Maksimov, V. Ostrogorskii (St. Petersburg, 1875), iv.

39 We have found only one article on Eckardt's activity (our thanks to professor Jens Herlth for his generous help with this research). Eckardt seems to have been a marginal figure in the history of German and Austrian pedagogy. See: Herbert H. Egglmaier, "Der Literat und Ästhetiker Ludwig Eckardt – seine vergeblichen Bemühungen im Jahre 1868 im akademischen Leben Fuß zu fassen. Ein Beitrag zum Selbstverständnis der österreichischen Universitäten zwei Jahrzehnte nach der Reform des Bildungswesens 1848/49," *Mensch. Wissenschaft. Magie: Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Wissenschaftsgeschichte*, 26 (2008), 107–122. On the popularity of Eckardt's book in Russian, see I. I. Tikhomirova, "Kniga, po kotoroi Rossiia polveka uchilas' iskusstvu chteniia", *Bibliosfera* 3 (2006), 55–58.

correlation between the parts and the whole. Students' reading was guided by extensive lists of questions (more than thirty for works of poetry and almost fifty for epics). Although such pedantic "German" methods provoked criticism from Russian teachers and accusations of scholasticism,<sup>40</sup> most of these questions look quite meaningful even by the standards of modern-day literary criticism.<sup>41</sup> Unlike his teacher Stoiunin, Ostrogorskii postulated the priority of aesthetic qualities of works of literature, which became the main object of analysis, displacing the historical and cultural aspects of the text. Taking the form of conversations about "pure artistry," this analysis contributed to the sacralization of literary masterpieces included in the school canon as timeless samples of belles lettres, independent of any sociohistorical context. (It's no wonder that Ostrogorskii's textbooks and Russian translations of Eckardt's works were recommended for dissemination in gymnasia under Dmitrii Tolstoi's 1871 school statute, which focused on the decontextualized reading of texts).<sup>42</sup>

Thus, in the 1860s, at least three approaches to teaching Russian literature in high schools coexisted and competed with one another: Buslaev's "philological explanation" adopted in the 1840s, the ethical pedagogy of Stoiunin, and the aesthetic hermeneutics of Skopin and Ostrogorskii. Despite their fundamental differences, the two latter methods both contributed to the sacralization of literature: Stoiunin's by substituting for the Bible with fiction as the source of ethical standards, and Skopin-Ostrogorskii's by absolutizing literary texts as pure aesthetic forms.

An echo of a new way of reading and understanding texts can be found in a rare example of a surviving composition of a Stavropol grammar school pupil, Vasilii Novomariievskii, entitled "The Daily Life [by] of Merchants (based on Aleksandr Ostrovskii's plays)." While clearly influenced by Nikolai Dobroliubov's articles, Novomariievskii used the concept of "type" (widespread in criticism) in describing the powerful "tyrants" of Ostrovskii's early plays (from *It's a Family Affair—We'll Settle It Ourselves* to *The Storm*). The

---

40 See A. I. Nezelenov, "Nemetskii sposob prepodavaniia russkoi slovesnosti" [1877], in *Istoriia literaturnogo obrazovaniia v rossiiskoi shkole. Khrestomatiia* (Moscow, 1999), 188–195.

41 For example, one group of questions concerned the historical and literary context ("Do you know the author's biography, its trajectory?"). Another explored the structure of the text and the correlation of its parts ("In what kind of meter is the poem written and was the meter successfully chosen?"). The third type of question was related to the genre. Finally, the fourth group of questions is devoted to the perception of the text, based on questions such as "Why does the poem produce such an effect on our soul?" Eckardt also described the right the comfortable infrastructure of reading (search for experienced mentor, reading with pencil, reading aloud, rereading, making notes, etc.).

42 One more German textbook was extremely popular in Russia – Leo Cholevius' *Dispositionen und Materialien zu deutschen Aufsätzen* (Leipzig, 1860–1862), translated by M. Beliaevskii in 1874 and also recommended by the Ministry. This book prioritized the same approach to reading and interpretation by posing broad sociocultural questions. For instance, Cholevius explained the popularity of "Robinson Crusoe" through the analysis of its religious ideology and exotic plot.

student concluded his review of Russian merchants' patriarchal mores in an optimistic key, referring to positive characters such as Kuligin and Liubim Tortsov and noting that education still managed to penetrate into the world of Ostrovskii's plays.<sup>43</sup> Clearly, in the liberal 1860s, before Tolstoi's reforms, such works could still be valued highly by school authorities. Yet it is also clear that the majority of essays were far more traditional ("The Romantic movement in Vasilii Zhukovskii's works," "Distinctive features of Pushkin's poetry," "Distinctive features of some of Kol'tsov's works," and so on.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the teaching of Russian literature in high schools by the end of the 1860s was characterized by an unprecedented pluralism of the curriculum and growing concern over its standardization. The new gymnasium statute of 1871 and the centralized literary curriculum introduced by the Ministry of Education in 1872 put an end to the former pluralism and inaugurated the first standard single program for studying Russian literature in the entire Russian Empire. Thus the reforms of the new minister, Count Dmitrii Tolstoi, established a model that, with some amendments, survived until 1919 and was called 'Tolstoi's classicism'. The new ministerial list of mandatory reading differed from various syllabi of the 1860s. It now included a wide range of Old-Russian texts and eliminated contemporary literature and texts on the history of Russian literature. The modern literature in the syllabus was at least thirty years old—poems by Mikhail Lermontov and Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842).<sup>45</sup>

The programs of 1872, 1877 and 1890 (with, however, some discrepancies) preserved traditional methods of working with texts: retelling the content, drawing up an outline, analysis of the characters and the mores of the depicted era, comparison of the text with similar works, analysis of the connections between the parts and the whole, analysis of the language and style, definition of the genre, and brief historical and biographical commentary.<sup>46</sup> An important difference between the programs of the 1870s and those of the previous period was the ban on criticism in any form—aesthetic, psychological, or social. The program of 1890 permitted only a discussion of the literary movement to which the author belonged ("scholastic, false-classical, sentimental-romantic, artistic-national, real [*real'noe*]").<sup>47</sup>

---

43 *Glagol budushchego: Pedagogicheskii diskurs Ia.M. Neverova i rechevoe povedenie vospitanikov stavropol'skoi gubernskoi gimnazii serediny 19 veka: V 2 chastiakh* (Stavropol', 2002), Part 1, 362. The composition won the school prize and was acclaimed as the best in 1870.

44 *S'ezd uchitelei russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti v gimnaziakh Kazanskogo uchebnogo okruga* (Kazan', 1866), 129.

45 On the influence of Tolstoi's reform on the formation of the literary canon, see: A. Vdovin, "'Dmitry Tolstoi's Classicism' and the Formation of the Russian Literary Canon in the High School Curriculum," *Ab Imperio* 4 (2017), 108-137.

46 *Uchebnye plany predmetov, prepodavaemykh v muzhskikh gimnaziakh Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 59-60, 73.

47 This was a sign of the disciplinary influence of the cultural-historical school of Russian literary criticism (Byford, "Between Literary Education and Academic Learning," 653-654).

Here are two examples of how real textbooks of 1872 and 1880 proposed to analyze texts. Polevoi's popular textbook "A Russian Anthology with Analyses. Part 3. Upper Classes" (1872), recommended by the Ministry, offered the simplest method to analyze poems:

- 1) each text is followed by an explanation of difficult words;
- 2) analysis of linguistic characteristics;
- 3) composition of a synopsis (retelling);
- 4) retelling verses in prose;
- 5) determining the meter and type of rhyme;
- 6) interpretation of vivid and unexpected metaphors.<sup>48</sup>

For geographical contrast, it is worth quoting the principles of text analysis from Morachevskii's peripheral textbook, which was published in Kremenchug:

- 1) reading of the text;
- 2) definition of its parts;
- 3) search for excerpts which contain material to help characterize the etymological, syntactic, artistic, and logical features of the text;
- 4) explanation of the development of the text's main idea;
- 5) definition of the literary movement to which the text belongs (based on its language and style);
- 6) definition of the text's significance in the history of its genre and type.<sup>49</sup>

As we see, from 1872 on, the programs contain only the simplest of hermeneutical and historical-literary procedures for working with the text.<sup>50</sup> We might argue that these two methods of interpretation competed throughout the 1880–90s. Although they did not oppose each other, they could conflict in ministerial programs. Thus, in the years of "Tolstoi's classicism," historical contextualization was the only officially permitted method of interpretation, and it was meant to protect students from the nihilism which was seen as inherent to any form of criticism.

---

48 P. Polevoi, *Uchebnaia russkaia khrestomatiia s tolkovaniiami. Part 3. Starshii vozrast.* (St. Petersburg, 1872).

49 G. Morachevskii, *Plany razborov sochinenii.* (Kremenchug, 1880), 1.

50 Anton Chekhov's short story "The Literature Teacher" (first part – 1899) reflected new trends in teaching. In this story, the provincial teacher Nikitin (a graduate of St. Petersburg University) assigns his students an essay on the topic "Pushkin as Psychologist." The sister of his love interest criticizes him for assigning such a difficult topic, which, for this period, was a fair criticism.

Such a conservative course of study was undoubtedly echoed in the topics of pupils' essays, both regular compositions and examinations alike. In his 1881 manual "The Method of Writing School Essays," E. Beliaevskii, a popular teacher, stated that topics like "Chatski and Famusov" and "Chichikov and Khlestakov," popular in the 1860–70s, led students to denounce vices and express "civil grief" in their writing. As an antidote to such "ethicization" and even politicization of teaching, Beliaevskii proposed to stick to strictly historical and literary topics not related to the present day.<sup>51</sup> Examination topics were of precisely this sort, and they look archaic in comparison to the topics of the 'literary conversations' of the 1840–60s. Topics offered in various educational districts from 1873 to 1880 can be characterized primarily as general overviews: "Lomonosov and Karamzin as Reformers of the Russian Language"; "Karamzin's Literary Work," "Distinctive Features of Zhukovskii and Pushkin," "The Interest of Studying Krylov's Fables." More concrete exam topics were chosen only twice in this period of seven years and only in some districts: "Parallels between Tatiana and Olga in Pushkin" and "Characteristics of Chichikov."<sup>52</sup> It is clear that the majority of these topics—both literary and non-literary ones—were intended to test logic and language skills rather than literary knowledge per se.<sup>53</sup>

Another factor that influenced methods of textual interpretation in high school of the last third of the nineteenth century was the course "Theory of Literature," which was returned to the program in 1872. (Its specifics changed every 10 years: at times the course was taught in the fourth class, and sometimes in the seventh or eighth.)<sup>54</sup> The course contributed to the development of materials on theory, and the disciplinary influence of academic literary criticism was reflected in the structuring of these materials. For example, popular textbooks by P.V. Smirnovskii, E. Voskresenskii and A. Shalygin, which were reprinted dozens of times in the 1890s and 1910s, offered a slightly modernized research apparatus for the analysis of literary texts intended for students in the final gymnasium class. For example, A. Shalygin's textbook (considered eclectic by its reviewers) contained the topics "Means of Linguistic Expression" (highly indebted to Aleksandr Veselovskii's "historical poetics") and "versification" in its theoretical section. The second section, in turn, reviewed the main literary genres, providing detailed examples from Russian literature (including Tolstoi's *Anna*

51 E. Beliaevskii, *Metod vedeniia sochinenii*. (Moscow, 1881), 36, 39; cf. the same types of topics in: I. Gavrilov, *Temy, raspolozheniia i materialy dlia sochinenii v starshikh klassakh*, 2nd ed. (St. Petersburg, 1887), 168.

52 *Ispytaniia zrelosti. Spravochnaia kniga*, 2nd ed., edited by V. Al'bitskii. (St. Petersburg, 1884), 153–157.

53 Sh. I. Ganelin, *Ocherki po istorii srednei shkoly v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1950) 222–225.

54 On the history of the course "Theory of Literature" in school, see: S. Brailovskii, "Novoe napravlenie v shkol'noi teorii slovesnosti," *Pedagogicheskii vestnik* 1 (1909), 21–23; Byford, "Between Literary Education and Academic Learning".

*Karenina*). Meanwhile, textbooks with more academic substance, such as D.N. Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii's *Theory of Poetry and Prose* (1908) broke with the hybrid combination of theory of style and theory of poetry, and offered a consistent theory of the poetic image, the classification of poetic and prose genres and forms, and a description of creative techniques.<sup>55</sup>

The two components of the school literature course were reconfigured only in the last ministerial program of 1912.<sup>56</sup> Theory of literature became simply a base for the systematic historical study of Russian literature ("the study of oral, written and literary creations in connection with the historical life of the Russian people"). This shift in emphasis was driven by the introduction of a large body of modern literature (1850-60s) into the program of 1905. Declared principles of "systematization" and "historicism," however, bound these newly introduced texts to a central core—Pushkin and Gogol'.<sup>57</sup>

Yet both of these principles could obviously fail, leaving "blind spots" in textual interpretation. In its treatment of Gogol's story "The Old World Landowners," the composition of a city student, Konstantin Vengrinovskii, provides a striking example of such oversimplification. Although the literature course in his type of school—an urban school—was shorter and much easier than that of gymnasias, it did last six years and included historical aspects of literary studies. Vengrinovskii's essay is based on an effective antithesis: while noting the good humor and positive traits of the story's characters, the student criticizes their idleness, laziness, lack of higher interests, gluttony, and contempt for spiritual needs (almost in the style of Dobroliubov against Oblomov).<sup>58</sup> Of course, it is apparent that the concept of idyll and the lyrical tone of Gogol's narrative remained unknown to Vengrinovskii.

---

55 See Brailovskii. "Novoe napravlenie v shkol'noi teorii slovesnosti," II (1909), 113-115. Byford, "Between Literary Education and Academic Learning," 650-651. Another important feature of teaching methods in the 1900s was their orientation towards experimental psychology. For example, one leading teacher, Ts. Baltalon, published an article in 1909 entitled "Experimental Research on Class Reading" based on the answers of 1600 pupils (aged 9-13) about their reading preferences. The majority of students demonstrated more interest in longer stories about adults than in poetry, fables, and fairy tales (*Trudy vtorogo Vserossiiskogo s'ezda po pedagogicheskoi psikhologii v Sankt-Peterburge v 1909 godu* (St. Petersburg, 1910), 327). On the institutional history of experimental psychology, see A. Byford, "Turning Pedagogy into a Science: Teachers and Psychologists in Late Imperial Russia (1897-1917)," *Osiris* 23 (2008), 50-81.

56 The 1915 project was not implemented due to the First World War and subsequent revolutions. See I. V. Zubkov, "Zemskie shkoly, gimnazii i real'nye uchilishcha (1890-1916 gody)," in *Raspisanie peremen: Ocherki istorii obrazovatel'noi i nauchnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi imperii – SSSR (konets 1880-kh – 1930-e gody)* (Moscow, 2012), 220-222.

57 V. Mavritskii, *Pravila i programmy klassicheskikh gimnazii i progimnazii vedomstva Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia. Izdanie 26-e* (Moscow, 1912), 146-147.

58 *Sistematicheskii sbornik uchenicheskikh perelozhenii i sochinenii. Pis'mennye raboty po russkomu iazyku uchenikov i uchenits Kremenetskogo dvuklassnogo gorodskogo uchilishcha za 1901-1902 god*, compiled by P.M. Klunnyi (Kremenets, 1902), 103.

The collapse of “Tolstoi’s classicism” between 1898 and 1903 freed schools from severe external pressure. Updates to the program (including the introduction of Turgenev, Goncharov, Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, Ostrovskii, Fet, Nekrasov and Polonskii) and methods of textual analysis led to a rapid return of different critical approaches which had been banned under Tolstoi. Topics given in popular exam preparation manuals reflect the viewpoint by which students were meant to read the classics after the program update.<sup>59</sup> These included:

The Global Significance of Romanticism  
 Karamzin as a Writer  
 Karamzin’s Letters on French False-Classical Drama and Shakespeare’s Tragedy  
 The Role of the Symbol in Literature  
 The Essence of the Comic in Gogol’s “Overcoat”  
 Pushkin on the Calling and Role of the Poet  
 The Attitude of Society to Outstanding People  
 The Strengths and Weaknesses of Bazarov  
 Eugene Onegin in Relation to his Environment  
 Gogol’s Conception of Two Kinds of Writers  
 The Meaning of Laughter in the Works of Gogol<sup>60</sup>

The liberalization of education, the gradual unification of schools of different types between 1905 and 1916, and the increasing role of composition in the assessment of pupils contributed to the emergence of a huge official market of manuals and guides for writing essays [*temniki*] in the 1900s. As a rule, the manuals were composed of excerpts from critical articles (of authors ranging from Belinskii to Merezhkovskii) or scholarly articles (from Pypin to Ovs’aniko-Kulikovskii). Rarely did they offer specially composed essays. In any case, however, students were asked to interpret the texts and write about them, according to historicist principles. Thus, the essay on the character of Bazarov was meant to begin with a cultural and historical framework in which his image was understood as a cultural-psychological type of the sixties which arose in a strictly defined historical context, at a turning point for nihilism, when the new generation rejected the ideals of “people of the forties.”<sup>61</sup>

Thus, the 1900s and 1910s were characterized by an eclectic (simultaneously historicist and cultural-psychological) type of textual interpretation, which was criticized in the early works of the Russian formalists Viktor Shklovskii and Boris Eikhenbaum. It is no coincidence that, on the

---

59 The person who played a pivotal role in developing the syllabus and teaching methods in 1903-1905 was Vasilii Sipovsky (see Byford, “Between Literary Education and Academic Learning”, 653-656).

60 M. B. Gurevich, *Materialy, plany i obraztsy uchenicheskikh sochinenii* (Kiev, 1909).

61 *Ibid.*, 107-108.

one hand, Eikhenbaum's early 1915 article "On the Principles of Studying Literature in High School" polemicized with scholastic historicism, which interpreted all texts and the author's consciousness as a reflection of the epoch and characters as types reduced to "algebraic" formulas (the most striking example being a clichéd interpretation of Akakii Akakievich from Gogol's "Overcoat" as a "little man"). On the other hand, Eikhenbaum also opposed the naïve psychological approach, according to which literature was reduced to an expression of the author's experiences.<sup>62</sup>

Eikhenbaum considered the methodology of literary study widely—as a general disciplinary issue and, in particular, an issue of the autonomy of literary study. The new object of textual interpretation was not rhetoric, not image, not type, not the dichotomy of form and content, but rather the author's *style* (and the style of a concrete text) as an organic system. According to Eikhenbaum, the crucial procedure of analysis was "close study of the text." All of these programmatic claims, which grew out of the controversy surrounding school literature, became the foundation of a new science of literature, designed by OPOIAZ.<sup>63</sup> The OPOIAZ program was even, for a short time, implemented in school textbooks for the unified second labor school (i.e. high school). By the end of the 1930s, however, as literary study in the Soviet Union became rapidly ideologized, these were replaced by a new unified line of textbooks.

### 3. THE GENRE SPACE OF POETRY: GALAKHOV'S ANTHOLOGY

Given the diversity and heterogeneity of materials for gymnasium reading, which stemmed from various causes (the initial absence of unified ministerial programs and later, in the era of the Great Reforms, the liberalization and diversification of education), we must rely on sources with two crucial features for the investigation of transformations of the canon—continuity and variability. In addition, such sources should be sufficiently representative, widely distributed throughout the period, and authoritative<sup>64</sup>.

Fortunately, we have books that meet all these requirements—the anthologies edited by Aleksei Dmitrievich Galakhov (1807-1892). They were originally released under slightly different names: *The Full Russian Anthology* (*Polnaia russkaia khrestomatiia*) or *A Russian Anthology* (*Russkaia khres-*

<sup>62</sup> Eikhenbaum insightfully noted that "teaching literature in high school is really the popularization of trends dominant in current scholarship" (B. M. Eikhenbaum, "O printsipakh izucheniia literatury v srednei shkole" [1915] in *Istoriia literaturnogo obrazovaniia v rossiiskoi shkole. Khrestomatiia* (Moscow, 1999), 273).

<sup>63</sup> In 1928-1931, Boris Tomashevskii published his famous textbook *Introduction to Poetics*, a synthesis of traditional theory with a formalist approach, approved by the State Academic Council.

<sup>64</sup> For similar approach to poetry in the British anthologies see Mole, *What the Victorians Made of Romanticism*, 195-224.



*tomatiia*); the spelling of the word *khrestomatiia* also fluctuated from publication to publication.

Galakhov's anthologies served two main purposes: to give pupils an idea of the theory of literary genres and to present the best examples of them (in full or in fragments), focusing primarily on the Russian literary tradition (but not excluding examples from exemplary foreign authors, ranging from Homer to modern writers translated by Zhukovskii and Lermontov). In the preface to the first edition of *A Russian Anthology* (hereafter *RA*), Galakhov clarifies the problem: since Russian literature was very young, exemplary works had to be selected primarily on the basis of stylistic criteria: "the thoughts of exemplary writers decay faster than the language."<sup>65</sup> On the other hand, according to Galakhov, the language itself changes quite quickly as well, so the student should study "samples of an elegant modern language—the language of Karamzin, Krylov (in his fables), Pushkin, Lermontov."<sup>66</sup> Thus, Galakhov's program was both archaic and innovative: from the very beginning, his anthologies were collections not only of "exemplary texts," but also of current works. This project, as we show, was exemplified by various publications of *RA* (which appeared more or less regularly until 1915—new versions of his textbook continued to be published even after the death of its compiler.) At the same time, the principles of genre classification and the body of "elegant examples of eloquence and poetry" also changed.<sup>67</sup>

The period from 1843 to 1915 saw thirty-eight editions of *RA*. Some, according to the remarks on the title pages, received supplements; some were printed "without change." Analysis of the structure of these books shows two trends which determined the evolving treatment of genre in Galakhov's anthologies. The first of these is the expansion and refinement of genre terminology, which was already outlined in the reign of Nicholas I and continued in the era of Alexander II. Gradually the repertoire of literary genres expands, and eventually the compiler moves the idyll, fable and, ballad from the section "Lyrical Poetry" into the epics section. One can also note an opposite tendency (though weakly expressed) in the final editions, where classical small lyrical genres (inscription, epitaph, etc.), along with epistles, are not represented in the classification.

The second tendency is the inclusion of an increasingly extensive (and increasingly classified) corpus of epic and lyrical genres of Russian folklore. Samples of folk songs were already present in the first edition of *RA*. Then, in the sixties, following the *byliny* (folklore epics) and historical songs, fairy tales appeared in *RA* as well. Folk songs, first relegated to a special section in the 1861 *RA*, were represented by increasingly extensive and generically

65 A. Galakhov, *Polnaia russkaia khrestomatiia, ili obraztsy krasnorechiia i poezii, zaimstvovannye iz luchshikh otechestvennykh pisatelei*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1843), I, III (1st. pagination).

66 *Ibid.*, V.

67 *Ibid.*, II.

detailed repertoire. This trend was deeply connected with a broad concurrent interest in ethnography, which united various ideological and social strata of Russian culture (from the Populists to the monarchists) during the second half of the century.

### 3.1. *Diachrony of the authors' repertoire*

Next we will analyze the composition of the “Lyrical Poetry” sections in six editions of RA: 1843 (1st), 1853 (6th), 1859 (8th), 1866 (11th), 1889 (21st) and 1912 (35th). Judging by the titles, all of them were supplemented, with the exception of the 1889 publication (which reproduced the composition of the 15th edition of 1874). In choosing editions for analysis, we were guided by the goal of presenting RA’s history in several different historical contexts (change of monarch, various periods of the institutional history of education). We paid special attention to the transformation at the beginning, middle and end of the era of Alexander II. It seems that the atmosphere of general stagnation which characterized the reign of Alexander III reached RA. (This claim, however, requires further verification. The last edition in our sample takes us beyond the calendrical (but not the “long”) nineteenth century. It appeared in a fundamentally new context of state reforms (and accompanying educational reforms). This sample, in our view, represents the main trends in the movement of “Galakhov’s canon.”

Let us begin analyzing the content of the lyrical sections in these six anthologies (we also consider the ballad, the idyll, and the fable, which were all excluded from the “lyrical” section in the later editions of RA). We consider only Russian authors, including those whose poetic translations are listed in RA under their own name, but excluding those whose names are listed after the text. We also consider both whole texts and fragments of original works of epic genres (epic poems, novels in verse) of the “first-ranked” Russian authors (Pushkin, Lermontov, Zhukovskii, Kozlov), which essentially functioned for readers of RA as independent works. Excerpts from translated epics are not considered.

The dynamics of the general repertoire of Russian lyric poetry, presented as “exemplary” to gymnasium students of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, looks as follows. The 1843 edition of RA, which includes 43 authors and 301 texts, was obviously oriented towards contemporary literature: authors of the eighteenth century receive only modest representation, while maximum attention is paid to Pushkin (whose death was within the recollection of the anthology’s target audience) and the poets of his generation. It is worth mentioning that A. I. Odoevskii’s poem “To Father” (“Ottsu”) (“How the waves of mountains are immovable...,” published 1836), with its unambiguous allusions to the biographical circumstances of the

Decembrist poet, was published here anonymously. At the same time, poets of the post-Pushkin generations (Benediktov, Rostopchina, Lermontov, Maikov, Fet, Krasov, Ogarev) were likewise not forgotten. We should note in particular here the beginnings of the previously mentioned trend which would develop in the 1860s: although folklore lyrics are not included in the 1843 *RA*, there is an obvious interest in the genre of the literary “Russian song” (Merzliakov, Del’vig, Tsyganov, Kol’tsov, Lazhechnikov). Meanwhile, a large part of the fable genre is shared almost equally between Krylov and Dmitriev, although the remaining portion also included texts of different genres and fables by other authors.

In the 1853 edition of *RA*, the repertoire is slightly narrowed: lyrical plays or excerpts of 38 authors, for a total of 281 texts, are published here. Ogarev, Krasov, Fet and some poets of the older generations disappear and the contemporary Kliushnikov appears (with a text which would be included in the later editions of *RA*). The ratio of eighteenth-century texts increases (the number of Derzhavin texts doubles), and among the post-Pushkin generation, Lermontov, also doubling in presence, comes to the fore. These tendencies continue in the 1859 *RA*, where 38 authors are again represented, but the number of texts (276) is slightly smaller. In general, in the group under consideration, these two editions are the closest to each other (which, of course, is explained by the fact that the temporal distance between them is the least).

In comparison, the repertoire of poets expands slightly in the 1860s: the 1866 *RA* features 41 authors and 200 texts. Yet the expansion goes in two directions: on the one hand, Fet reenters the anthology, and other contemporary poets whose work became relevant in the preceding three decades (Nekrasov, Tiutchev, Polonskii, Nikitin, Mei, Shcherbina, I. Aksakov and even Kreshev) likewise appear. No less significant are the “losses”: lyrical poems by Gnedich, Pletnev, Oznobishin, Shevyrev and Shikhmatov are missing from “Galakhov’s canon” for the first time. On the other hand, we notice an attempt to flesh out the repertoire of authors by introducing pre-Pushkin poets and the idyllic alternative to Pushkin’s school. Thus, this edition of *RA* introduces works by I. Dolgorukii, Izmailov, Marin and V. Panaev.

However, this expansion of the corpus is altered only partially in the “contemporary” section (Mei, Nekrasov, Nikitin, Tiutchev and Fet) and very insignificantly in the “historical” part (Izmailov’s fables). By the end of the first decade of the reign of Alexander III, the repertoire is narrowed again. Thus, in the edition of 1889, almost as in the 1853 *RA*, we find yet fewer texts (178) and only 37 authors. The post-Pushkin era is represented only by authors who were already part of the previous editions. The tendency to add additional representatives to the historical section does not continue here; we can note, however, the appearance of Kantemir.

The final edition under consideration belongs to the new century. In the 1912 edition of *RA*, 42 authors and 228 texts are represented. These figures

are greater, of course, than in previous editions, but remain smaller by both parameters than the 1843 *RA* (which is easily explained by the inclusion of an increasing number of prose works and folkloric texts since the 1860s). It is also clear that, unlike the first edition of *RA*, this posthumous edition demonstrates a clear lag in the school canon in relation to contemporary poetry: of the four authors who first appeared in *RA* between 1889 and 1912, only one (Grand Duke Konstantin, known under the cryptonym K.R.) was alive at the time of the edition's publication.

Meanwhile, in 1843, when the first edition of *RA* appeared, 15 out of the 43 poets represented there—more than two thirds—were living contemporaries of the anthology's readers.<sup>68</sup>

The following summary table illustrates the placement of the authors in the “moving” and fluctuating canon of *RA*. The poets are presented here in descending order of the total absolute frequency of their texts. Thus, the table also gives an idea of the trends associated with individual poets. Since Pushkin's lyrics obviously prevail in all editions,<sup>69</sup> we compare the quantities of texts of other authors against the number of Pushkin texts in each edition and present the results of this comparison in the table.

Table 2. Absolute frequency and dynamics of representation of authors in *RA*. Given in parentheses: ratio of the number of the given author's texts to the number of texts by Pushkin (in each edition)

	1843	1853	1859	1866	1889	1912	All editions
Pushkin	48	45	45	30	27	43	238
Zhukovskii	31 (0.64)	33 (0.73)	33 (0.73)	18 (0.6)	15 (0.55)	19 (0.44)	149 (0.63)
Krylov	23 (0.48)	24 (0.53)	23 (0.51)	19 (0.63)	19 (0.7)	31 (0.72)	139 (0.59)
Dmitriev	22 (0.45)	21 (0.46)	21 (0.46)	9 (0.3)	7 (0.26)	9 (0.21)	89 (0.37)
Lermontov	6 (0.12)	12 (0.27)	12 (0.26)	12 (0.4)	11 (0.4)	20 (0.46)	73 (0.31)
Batiushkov	13 (0.27)	14 (0.31)	14 (0.31)	6 (0.2)	7 (0.26)	7 (0.16)	61 (0.26)
Derzhavin	6 (0.12)	12 (0.27)	10 (0.22)	8 (0.27)	9 (0.33)	7 (0.16)	52 (0.22)
Iazykov	11 (0.23)	9 (0.2)	9 (0.2)	8 (0.27)	6 (0.22)	6 (0.14)	49 (0.21)
Kozlov	13 (0.27)	14 (0.31)	13 (0.29)	3 (0.1)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	45 (0.19)
Kol'tsov	9 (0.19)	8 (0.18)	8 (0.18)	6 (0.2)	6 (0.22)	8 (0.19)	45 (0.19)
Maikov	8 (0.17)	6 (0.13)	6 (0.13)	7 (0.23)	7 (0.26)	9 (0.21)	43 (0.18)
Baratynskii	12 (0.25)	9 (0.2)	9 (0.2)	3 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	2 (0.05)	38 (0.16)
Viazemskii	10 (0.2)	8 (0.18)	8 (0.18)	4 (0.13)	4 (0.15)	3 (0.07)	37 (0.15)

<sup>68</sup> This is quite a large number, even if we consider that some of these authors had long ceased to be perceived as contemporaries (Batiushkov died in 1855).

<sup>69</sup> On the lyrics of Pushkin in nineteenth-century century see A. Vdovin, R. Leibov, “Pushkin v shkole: curriculum i literaturnyi kanon v XIX veke,” *Lotmanovskii sbornik 4* (Moscow, 2014), 247–259.

Del'vig	9 (0.19)	8 (0.18)	8 (0.18)	3 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	3 (0.07)	34 (0.14)
Merzliakov	5 (0.1)	5 (0.11)	5 (0.11)	5 (0.17)	3 (0.1)	3 (0.07)	26 (0.11)
Fet	8 (0.17)	-	-	6 (0.2)	6 (0.22)	6 (0.14)	26 (0.11)
Glinka	8 (0.17)	6 (0.13)	6 (0.13)	3 (0.1)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	25 (0.1)
Davydov	5 (0.1)	7 (0.15)	6 (0.13)	2 (0.07)	3 (0.1)	2 (0.05)	25 (0.1)
Lomonosov	3 (0.06)	4 (0.09)	4 (0.09)	4 (0.13)	4 (0.15)	4 (0.1)	23 (0.09)
Venevnikov	5 (0.1)	5 (0.11)	6 (0.13)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	22 (0.09)
Khemnitser	4 (0.08)	4 (0.09)	4 (0.09)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	18 (0.08)
Khomiakov	2 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	5 (0.17)	5 (0.18)	3 (0.07)	17 (0.07)
Tiutchev	-	-	-	3 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	8 (0.19)	14 (0.06)
Benediktov	5 (0.1)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.07)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	13 (0.05)
Gnedich	3 (0.06)	5 (0.11)	5 (0.11)	-	-	-	13 (0.05)
Tsyganov	3 (0.06)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	13 (0.05)
Polonskii	-	-	-	5 (0.17)	4 (0.15)	4 (0.1)	13 (0.05)
Strugovshchi-kov	3 (0.06)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	10 (0.04)
Pletnev	4 (0.08)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	-	-	-	8 (0.03)
Izmailov	-	-	-	3 (0.1)	3 (0.1)	2 (0.05)	8 (0.03)
Polezhaev	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	2 (0.04)	1 (0.03)	-	-	7 (0.03)
Mei	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	3 (0.07)	7 (0.03)
Lazhechnikov	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	6 (0.02)
Pushkin V.	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	6 (0.02)
Aksakov	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	6 (0.02)
Nekrasov	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	6 (0.02)
Nikitin	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	2 (0.07)	2 (0.05)	6 (0.02)
Kliushnikov	-	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.03)	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	5 (0.02)
Alekseev	2 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	4 (0.02)
Oznobishin	2 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	4 (0.02)
Shevryev	2 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	4 (0.02)
Anonymous	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	3 (0.01)
Shikhmatov	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	3 (0.01)
Shcherbina	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	-	1 (0.02)	3 (0.01)
Podolinskii	2 (0.04)	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.01)
Ogarev	2 (0.04)	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.01)
Ruban	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	2 (0.01)
Rostopchina	-	1 (0.02)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	2 (0.01)
Dmitriev M.	-	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	2 (0.01)
Kreshev	-	-	-	2 (0.07)	-	-	2 (0.01)
Kantemir	-	-	-	-	1 (0.04)	1 (0.02)	2 (0.01)
Apukhtin	-	-	-	-	-	2 (0.05)	2 (0.01)
Voeikov	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.004)

Grot	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.004)
Zagoskin	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.004)
Krasov	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.004)
Odoevskii A.	1 (0.02)	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.004)
Dolgorukii	-	-	-	1 (0.03)	-	-	1 (0.004)
Marin	-	-	-	1 (0.03)	-	-	1 (0.004)
Panaev V.	-	-	-	1 (0.03)	-	-	1 (0.004)
K.R.	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.02)	1 (0.004)
Pleshcheev	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.02)	1 (0.004)
Turgenev I.	-	-	-	-	-	1 (0.02)	1 (0.004)
<i>Total texts</i>	301	281	276	200	177	228	1463

The core of RA’s canon are those authors whose texts are replicated in the above-mentioned editions more than forty times: Pushkin, Zhukovskii, Krylov, I. Dmitriev, Lermontov, Batiushkov, Derzhavin, Iazykov, Kozlov, Kol’tsov and Maikov. These authors’ texts were reproduced 983 times—more than two-thirds of the total number of published poems. The first three authors listed occupy a special place in this group. It is readily apparent that the Pushkin era, understood widely—from Derzhavin, Dmitriev and Zhukovskii to Kol’tsov and Lermontov, who debuted in 1830—is presented as the “heart” of Russian poetry. In this group, the only representative of the next generation of poets is Apollon Maikov.

In considering the specifics of RA’s selection process, we can compare the representation of the same group of authors in other school anthologies published between 1846 and 1905 (for clarity, the “Pushkin index” is also given in parentheses):

Table 3. Texts of the authors of RA’s “core” in other anthologies from 1846 to the 1900s.

Pushkin	295
Krylov	271 (0.92)
Zhukovskii	161 (0.56)
Lermontov	126 (0.43)
Kol’tsov	80 (0.27)
Derzhavin	54 (0.18)
Dmitriev	46 (0.16)
Maikov	40 (0.14)
Iazykov	35 (0.12)
Batiushkov	31 (0.1)
Kozlov	25 (0.08)

Note that most of the books taken into account here were released after 1860; thus, the data in *Table 3* should be compared with the last three editions of RA. Overall, the numbers are quite close, and “Galakhov’s canon” thus appears to be representative, though slightly archaic.

Comparing the first three editions of Galakhov’s *Anthology* with editions of RA from the 1860s to 1910s, it is evident that the emphasis on Pushkin-era poets continues to fade. This fact is manifested in the asymmetry of the numbers in the right and left sides of our table. It is especially evident in the case of authors such as Gnedich, Pletnev, Shikhmatov, Shevyrev and Oznobishin, whose names simply disappear from the list. The same fate was shared by the now completely forgotten Fedor Alekseev, the author of a translation of T. Moore (subsequently put to music by Anton Rubinstein). The effect of this quite natural tendency is also noticeable in the cases of I. Dmitriev, Del’vig, Viazemskii, Batiushkov, Baratynskii, Kozlov, Polezhaev and other poets of the first half of the century. Let us note that one particular genre, well suited for school reading and in agreement with “national” tendencies—the national fable—turned out to be much more viable than romantic poetry. (To put it bluntly, Krylov defeated Zhukovskii.)

The inertia of the school canon did not allow for the total exclusion of authors who had been widely printed in years past, but the radical reduction of a given author’s work was possible. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Pushkin-era authors were not completely unknown to students of the inter-revolutionary period.

Two exceptions to the first tendency especially stand out: Lermontov and Khomiakov. (The case of Tiutchev and his “second discovery” by Nekrasov’s *Sovremennik* will be considered separately, but we will point out that Tiutchev’s poems were not included in the 1859 RA, published after the appearance of his first collection in 1854.)

The second trend—inclusion of contemporary poets—was already evident in the first edition of RA, but it did not receive a clear continuation. Flashes of “modernization” in the reading list in the editions of the 1860s and of 1912 are virtually invisible; the 1912 edition practically did not touch upon contemporary Russian poetry at all.

### 3.2. *The authors’ repertoires*

Now we will consider the dynamics of individual authors’ subcorpora in RA. These subcorpora represent various trends in the diachronic transformation of school reading. We confirm our observations against our general database of nineteenth century Russian school anthologies.

### 3.2.1. Reductions to the Repertoire: Del'vig and Kozlov

It is quite natural that the number of any given author's texts should reduce as the date of the author's death recedes ever further back into the past. One example is the legacy of Del'vig and Kozlov, two authors who had already passed away at the time of publication of the first edition of *RA*.

The 1843 edition of *RA* 1843 includes nine texts by Del'vig—these are the epitaphs “What was His Life?” (“Chto zhizn' ego byla?”) and “With Earthly Life She Played” (“Zhizn'iu zemnoi igrala ona”), the epigram “Consolation” (“Uteshenie”) (in the “Additions” section; it has previously been included in Zolotov's 1829 anthology<sup>70</sup>), the idyll “Retired Soldier” (“Oststavnoi soldat”) (included in the Peninskii's 1834 textbook<sup>71</sup>), the inscription “On the Statue of the Florence Cathedral” (“Na statuiu Florentiiskogo sobora”) (its original title was “The Inscription on the Statue of Florentine Mercury” (“Nadpis' na statuiu florentinskogo Merkuriiia”)—presumably, young readers could have been confused by the presence of a pagan idol in the Catholic cathedral), the sonnet “To N.M. Iazykov” (“N.M. Iazykovu”), the epistle “To A. Pushkin” (“A. Pushkinu”) (“Who is Like the Swan of the Blossoming Ausonia”) and two “Russian songs”—“Sang, Sang a Birdie” (“Pela, pela ptashechka”) and “Oh, the Night, the Night” (“Akh ty noch' li, nochen'ka”). In the edition of 1853, “The Inscription on the Statue” disappears; no further changes are made in the 1859 *RA*. However, the initial trend of reduction would grow stronger in the next decade. By 1866, the Del'vig corpus already consists of merely three texts representing the main genres—the Russian song and the Russian idyll. These three works became fixed in the canon and remained there until 1912; meanwhile, no new Del'vig texts were ever added.

The case of Kozlov differed slightly. The 1850s saw not only cutbacks to his canon, but also additions to it. The radical reduction of the 1860s was accompanied by the simultaneous inclusion of a new text, not included in the first collection—the translation of one of Moore's “Irish tunes,” widely distributed as a popular song. (The author of the score is unknown.) This text would eventually become the only Kozlov text (along with excerpts from the poem “Natalia Dolgorukaia” [“Natal'ia Dolgorukaia”]) to remain in *RA*. These changes are represented in the table (not including excerpts from Kozlov's poems):

70 *Russkaia stikhotvornaia khrestomatiia sobrannaia Vasil'em Zolotovym* (Moscow, 1829).

71 *Khrestomatiia Rossiiskaia Peninskogo* (Saint Petersburg, 1834).



Table 4. I. Kozlov's poetry over six editions of RA

Poem	1843	1853	1859	1866	1889	1912
Alushta at Day (from Mickiewicz) (Alushta dnem)		+	+			
View of the Mountains from the Kozlovski Steppes (from Mickiewicz) (Vid gor iz stepei Kozlovskikh)	+	+	+			
Evening bells (Vechernii zvon) (from Moore)				+	+	+
Hellespont (Gellespont)		+	+			
Kikineis Mountain (Gora Kikineis) (from Mickiewicz)	+	+	+			
To My Wife (Zhene)	+	+	+			
To Empress Alexandra Feodorovna (Imperatritse Aleksandre Fedorovne)	+	+	+			
To the Alps (from Jean-François Ducis) (K Al'pam)	+	+	+			
Towards Joy (K radosti)	+	+	+			
The Burial of Sir John Moore (from Moore) (Na pogrebenie Sira Dzhona Mura)	+	+	+	+		
Neither in Reality Nor in a Dream (Ne naiavu i ne vo sne)	+					
There is Joy in the Darkness of the Dense Forest (from Byron) (Otrada est' vo t'me lesov dremuchikh)	+	+	+			
Desdemona's Song (from Shakespeare) (Pesnia Dezdemony)		+	+			
Country Orphan (from Alexandre Soumet) (Sel'skaia sirotka)	+					
Sonnet by Saint Teresa (Sonet Sviatoi Terezy)	+					

### 3.2.2. Additions to the Repertoire: Lermontov

As mentioned above, the most notable case of an expanding repertoire in RA is that of Lermontov. The author was already presented in the anthology's first edition of 1843 with the texts "The Branch of Palestine" ("Vetka Palestiny"), "Airship" ("Vozdushnyi korabl'"), "From Goethe" ("Mountain

Peaks”) (“Iz Gete” [“Gornye vershiny”]), “The Cossack Lullaby” (“Kazach’ia kolybel’naia pesnia”), “The Prayer” (“In a Difficult Moment of Life”) (“Molitva” [“V minutu zhizni trudnuiu”]), and “Sail” (“Parus”).

The 1853 edition preserved all of these texts and also added recently published Lermontov texts (the dates of first publication are provided in parentheses): “I’m Going Out Onto the Road Alone” (“Vykhozhu odin ia na dorogu”) (1842), “The Caucasus” (“Kavkaz”) (1845), “The Prophet” (“Prorok”) (1844). The RA of 1853 also included texts published during the poet’s life—“Angel” (“Angel”), “When the yellowing field waves...” (“Kogda volnusia zhelteiushchaia niva...”), and “The Dispute” (“Spor”).

The same set of texts was preserved in the 1859 edition, but in 1866 a more mature work, the “civic” “Duma” (“Duma”), replaced the youthful piece “The Caucasus.” In 1889, “Branch of Palestine” unexpectedly disappeared from the set. However, in the last edition under consideration here, the Lermontov corpus expanded significantly. The two texts that had previously disappeared now returned, and seven texts that had already gained a foothold in other schoolbooks were added. These were the poems “Borodino” (“Borodino”) (which was frequently included in secondary school textbooks, appearing for the first time in Peninskii’s 1846 anthology<sup>72</sup>), “In the Wild North...” (“Na Severe dikom stoit odinoko...”) (first appearing in the Reval anthology by Shafranov and Nikolich in 1860,<sup>73</sup> and then in Iakovlev’s 1869 anthology<sup>74</sup>), “The First of January” (“Pervoe ianvaria”) (also published in Burakovskii 1871<sup>75</sup> and three other anthologies), “Homeland” (“Rodina”) (Filonov 1863<sup>76</sup>), “Death of a Poet” (“Smert’ poeta”) (ibid., then—after a considerable break—in Bublikov’s 1907 reader<sup>77</sup>), “Clouds” (“Tuchi”) (in Iakovlev’s 1869 anthology<sup>78</sup>) and “Cliff” (“Utes”) (Polevoi’s anthology of 1872<sup>79</sup>).

In general, RA here corresponds with common trends: Lermontov’s poetry was valorized by the first generation of readers (and critics, primarily by Belinskii, but also—and not least—by Galakhov himself). In the second half of the century, it became part of an “alternative canon” for readers. Anthologies of the early twentieth century, especially those which appeared

72 I. Peninskii, *Kniga dlia chteniia i uprazhnenii v iazyke, sostavlennaia dlia uezdnykh uchilishch i nizhnikh klassov gimnazii* (Saint Petersburg, 1846).

73 S. Shafranov, I. Nikolich, *Russkaia khrestomatiia dlia upotrebleniia v uchilishchakh pribaltiiskikh gubernii* (Reval, 1860).

74 V. A. Iakovlev, *Russkaia khrestomatiia. Sbornik statei, vybrannykh iz proizvedenii russkoi literatury, po programme... dlia voennykh uchilishch i gimnazii* (Saint Petersburg, 1869).

75 S. Z. Burakovskii, *Khrestomatiia noveishei russkoi literatury... Kurs VI klassa gimnazii* (Saint Petersburg, 1871).

76 A. Filonov, *Russkaia khrestomatiia s primechaniiami. Dlia vysshikh klassov srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Saint Petersburg, 1863).

77 M. A. Bublikov, *Russkaia literatura... Khrestomatiia* (Saint Petersburg, 1907).

78 V. A. Iakovlev, *Russkaia khrestomatiia* (Saint Petersburg, 1869).

79 P. Polevoi, *Uchebnaia russkaia khrestomatiia s tolkovaniiami (part 3)* (Saint Petersburg, 1872).

after the abolition of preliminary censorship, reflected the hierarchy of texts which had developed in readers' preferences, merely with some delay.

### 3.2.3. *Disappearing Repertoires*

Let us turn now to the bottom of Table 2. As we have already made clear, not all of the authors who appeared in various editions of RA were entrenched in the school canon. Three groups are noteworthy here:

1. Authors included in the first edition but not included in any of the subsequent editions under our consideration. Two of them were represented by two texts. These are Podolinskii and Ogarev (“Nocturno,” “Village Watchman” [“Derevenskii storozh”]). In 1853, when the sixth edition was released, the latter author had not yet emigrated from Russia, but his texts were already inappropriate for school anthologies. Even when it became possible, the compiler made no attempt to return Ogarev to the school reading repertoire. (The second text, for example, was included in anthologies by Paulson in 1861<sup>80</sup> and Filonov in 1863<sup>81</sup>; Ogarev’s works appear in other anthologies of the 1860s–1900s.) These same considerations may also explain the exclusion of an anonymously published poem by Odoevskii from the 1853 edition of RA. The tightening of official demands on literature might also account for the rejection of Voeikov’s satirical epistle to Speranskii, “On True Nobility” (“Ob istinnom blagorodstve”), with its anti-aristocratic message.<sup>82</sup> As for Zagoskin and his “To Liudmil” (“K Liudmilu”), its exclusion was apparently due not to the mention of civil rights and a “republic of literature,” but rather to the extreme anachronism of the object of invective (the “Bacchic poetry” of the Pushkin circle).

2. Authors previously represented by a single literary text who were subsequently excluded (Grot with his “Little Siskin” [“Chizhik”], very popular in readers for younger students, and Krasov with “The Night Comrade” [“Nochnoi tovarishch”]) can be explained, it seems, by an adjustment of the concept of the anthology.

3. Another group of authors, whose names disappear from RA at the turn of the 1850s–60s, is interesting for various reasons. Three cases (Shikhmatov’s inscription on the Alexander column and panegyric epigrams addressed to Peter I) can be clearly attributed to changes in the ideological landscape of the new reign. The rest are connected with the changes in historical and literary paradigms: these are two texts by F. Alekseev, two poems by Shevyrev (“Thought” [“Mysl”]) and “Infinity” [“Bespredel’nost’”], only the second of which remained in the publications of the 1850s) and two

80 I. I. Paul’son, *Kniga dlia chteniia i prakticheskikh uprazhnenii v russkom iazyke. Uchebnoe posobie dlia narodnykh uchilishch* (Saint Petersburg, 1861).

81 A. Filonov, *Russkaia khrestomatiia s primechaniiami. Dlia vysshikh klassov srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii. Part 1* (Saint Petersburg, 1863).

82 The RA 1864, in which this epistle was re-included, remained outside of our sample.

texts by Oznobishin—“Aksai Village” (“Aksaiskaia stanitsa”) and “Cuvier” (“Kiuv’e”) (only the second was present in the RA of 1850).

### 3.2.4. *Updating and consolidation*

Between the 1850s and 1860s, we also observe various attempts to tie up loose ends and diversify the canon with new names. These include E. Rostopchina with “Winter Evening” (“Zimnii vecher”) (RA 1853, 1859), excerpts from Delisle in the translation of M. Dmitriev, the above-mentioned historical and literary innovations of the 1866 RA, and the sporadically appearing poems “The Universe” (“Mir”) (1866) and “Hellas” (“Ellada”) (1866, 1912) by Shcherbina.

Far more interesting are cases of canonization of new authors who first appeared in RA after 1859. In addition to Fet and his return to RA (well represented in the first edition, he was later excluded from the list), new poets include:

- Nekrasov (“Harking the Horrors of the War” [“Vnimaia uzhasam voiny”] and “Vlas” [“Vlas”]);
- Aksakov (two excerpts from the long poem “The Tramp” [“Brodiaga”]), Nikitin (“The spade is digging a deep grave in the mould...” [“Vyryta zastupom iama glubokaia...”]) and the poem “Grandfather” [“Dedushka”], which in the 1912 edition was replaced by a poem about a grandmother—“Winter Night in the Village” [“Zimniaia noch’ v derevne”]);
- Mei, represented mostly by his translations;
- Polonskii (in 1866—“Look, what gloom” [“Posmotri, kakaia mgla”], “Road” [“Doroga”], “Evening” [“Vecher”], “Angel” [“Angel”] and a translation of Goethe’s “Fishermen,” later excluded; in the 1912 RA “Night” [“Noch’”] replaces the first text listed).

However, the most noteworthy case of updating is the introduction of Tiutchev’s lyrics, which enter RA for the first time in 1866, more than thirty years after the publication of his first text. Here Galakhov again follows general trends. Notwithstanding the reviving of Tiutchev’s corpus by Nekrasov’s article “Second-Tier Russian Poets” (“Russkie vtorostepennye poety”) (1851) and appearances of new Tiutchev texts in periodicals, or even after the publication of the poet’s first collection (1854), compilers of school anthologies did not hasten to include Tiutchev’s texts in their publications. As far as we can tell, the compilers of the Reval anthology, Shafranov and Nikolich, were the first to do so in 1860. Then, in 1862, Paulson, Pevlesskii and Ushinskii included some texts in their anthologies. But the true debut of Tiutchev for the school audience was a selection published in A.G. Filonov’s anthology of 1863. This selection gave its readers an overview of the different aspects of Tiutchev’s lyric poetry and described the various periods of its development. It included thirteen texts: “The East was white, the boat was rolling”

(“Vostok belel, lad’ia katilas”), “Thought after thought, wave after wave” (“Duma za dumoi, volna za volnoi...”), “And the coffin is lowered into the grave...” (“I grob opushchen uzhd v mogilu...”), “From the Schiller” (“S ozera veet prokhlada i nega...”) “Swan” (“Lebed”), “Napoleon” (“Napoleon”), “Not cooled from the heat...” (“Ne ostyvshaia ot znoi...”), “Nature is not what you imagine...” (“Ne to, chto mnite vy, priroda...”), “Not without reason by the merciful God...” (“Nedarom miloserdnym Bogom...”), “Under the breath of bad weather...” (“Pod dykhan’em nepogody...”), “Tears of the people, o tears of the people...” (“Slezy liudskie, o slezy liudskie...”), “At quiet night, in late summer...” (“Tikhoi noch’iu, pozdnim letom...”) and “Why are you bowing over the waters...” (“Chto ty klonish’ nad vodami...”). (For comparison, in the same anthology we find thirty-two Pushkin texts and twelve by Lermontov.)

Against this backdrop, the conservatism of the 1866 RA is notable: Galakhov chose only three texts (“Grant, Lord, your joy...” [“Poshli, Gospod’, svoiu otradu...”], “Autumn evening” [“Osennii vecher”] and “Nature is not what you imagine...”), and this same selection remained in 1889. Only in 1912, in the posthumous edition of RA, was the anthology’s conservatism amended somewhat. In addition to the three unchanging texts, the anthology also included “Not cooled down from the heat...,” “Tears of the people, o tears of the people...,” “Morning in the Mountains” (“Utro v gorakh”) and, finally, the poem “These poor villages” (“Eti bednye selen’ia”), extremely popular at the time but allowed into school readers only with the greatest reluctance.

### 3.2.5. “Steadfast Singles”

Another product of the conservatism of the later editions was the stable inclusion of texts which, in the early editions, served as the sole representative of their authors’ oeuvres, and retained that lonely status until 1912. Generally speaking, Table 2 makes clear that if an author was represented by fewer texts in the first edition, then that author’s poetry was less likely to be present in the early twentieth-century edition. There were, however, exceptions: Lazhechnikov’s song “Sweetly sang a nightingale...” (“Sladko pel dusha-solovushko...”) was printed continuously throughout all editions of RA (to which fact essentially we owe the appearance of Glier’s song). It is characteristic that in some nineteenth-century anthologies, this text was included with false attributions—to Del’vig<sup>83</sup> or to Tsyganov<sup>84</sup>. Here we might speak of a sort of secondary folklorization of folkloric stylization, which was, in general, characteristic for this category of texts.

<sup>83</sup> V. Rklitskii, *Russkaia khrestomatia, ili izbrannye mesta iz luchshikh russkikh pisatelei*. Kn. 1 (Warsaw, 1838).

<sup>84</sup> S. Shafranov, I. Nikolich, *Russkaia khrestomatia dlia upotrebleniia v uchilishchakh pribaltiiskikh gubernii* (Reval, 1860).

The same is true about one text which first appeared in the anthology under a pseudonym and only later received an attribution. The name of the poet, however, was far from well-known in 1912, even to connoisseurs of Russian literature. This text was I. Kliushnikov's "Life" ("Zhizn"), included in the publications of 1859-1912 (the author was still alive when the penultimate edition in our sample was in print). Undoubtedly, this deliberately naive text<sup>85</sup> was selected, first and foremost, in pursuit of didactic goals.

A similar function can be ascribed to another "steadfast single"—V. Pushkin's epigram "Some metromaniac (we have enough of them!)" ("Kakoi-to stikhotvor [dovol'no ikh u nas!]" (under the title "Fifteen-year-old poet" ["Piatnadsatiletnii stikhotvorets"])).<sup>86</sup> However, if even A. Gaevskii and S. Poltoratskii considered this epigram, written at the end of the eighteenth century, to be addressed to the poet's nephew,<sup>87</sup> students could surely have also managed to come to the same conclusion. Thus, the pedagogical meaning of this warning against teenage metromania was somewhat discredited.

### 3.3. *Gymnasium students' reading of Russian poetry (memoirs and contemporary research)*

No large-scale research of memoirs and diaries of gymnasium pupils (and schoolchildren in general) of the nineteenth century has been carried out.<sup>88</sup> This fact prompted us to create the database "The Reading Habits of 19th-Century Schoolchildren" in December 2016—March 2017 with the help of a group of volunteers from the National Research University Higher School of Economics. It is based on diaries and memoirs published in Russian from the end of the 1850s to the 1970s and indexed in P. Zaionchkovskii's bibliography and, in part, in A. Reitblat's monograph.<sup>89</sup>

85 Polemic replica of the famous Pushkin poem. Let us quote the first stanza of Kliushnikov's text: Дар мгновенный, дар прекрасный./ Жизнь, зачем ты мне дана?/ Ум молчит, а сердцу ясно:/ Жизнь для жизни мне дана (A momentary gift, a beautiful gift, / Life, why were you given to me? / The mind is silent, but the heart is clear: / Life was given to me for life).

86 As in other cases, in the inclusion of this text in the first edition of RA, Galakhov was guided by established tradition: the poem already appeared in Peninskii's 1834 anthology.

87 See V. L. Pushkin, *Stikhotvoreniia* (Saint Petersburg, 2005), 330 (commentary by S. Panov).

88 See N. N. Zhitomirova, "Chitatel'skie zaprosy i krug chteniia uchashchikhsia srednei shkoly predrevoliutsionnoi Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka," *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad, 1976), vol. 2, 67-82. M. V. Bulygina, "Chtenie v rossiiskoi dorevoliutsionnoi sisteme obrazovaniia (na primere shkol Zaural'ia)," *Homo legens v proshlom i nastoiashchem: Materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii, Nizhnii Tagil, 23-24 maia 2007 goda* (Nizhnii Tagil, 2007), 35-45.

89 *Istoriia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii v dnevnikakh i vospominaniakh. Annotirovannyi ukazatel' knig i publikatsii v zhurnalakh*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1976-1989); A. I. Reitblat, "Chtenie v Rossii (1861-1917)", in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009), 211-250. In total, the list contains 180 texts, but only sources with mentions of specific authors and/or works are included in our database. We thank our student volunteers

The database includes 1364 mentions of authors and/or works (novels, short stories, poems, articles, newspaper and magazine titles). It is important to keep in mind that a large percentage of the memoirs are texts written by members of the Populist, Marxist and revolutionary movements in the 1905-1950s, at which time a kind of “memoir boom” occurred in Russia and the Soviet Union. Since emigrant memoirs have not yet been taken into account, any generalizations about the real reading repertoire of schoolchildren of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries may seem premature.

First of all, the general picture is biased towards clandestine and non-programmatic reading. The participants in the democratic movement were inclined to remember and weave into their biography, first and foremost, anything connected with oppositional thinking and activity. The reading of banned literature appears in memoirs, naturally, as a symbol of initiation and motivated auto-indoctrination.

Secondly, the 1860–90s chronologically prevail in the representation of assigned reading, while sources about its earlier cases (of the 1810–50s) are represented more scarcely. And, finally, it should be noted that memoirists, who hardly sought to remember everything they had ever read, recorded, for obvious reasons, not so much their curricular reading as those texts (both Russian and foreign) which most influenced them or were most memorable for any reason. Meanwhile, the routine of assigned reading was described mostly by teachers, whose memoirs are also included in the database, although that routine is also mentioned in some students’ memoirs.

The memoirs quite rarely devote attention to poetry. This observation is not universal, since in certain epochs and for certain social groups the reading of poetry could be significant to one’s personal or group biography (for example, in memoirs of the Russian “Silver Age”). However, as regards descriptions of childhood and adolescence in memoirs, they suggest an interest in poetry that is quite low even for that period. Professional writers and poets (in our case, Polonskii at the beginning of the period, and Paustovskii at the end) devote more attention to assigned reading of poetry in their memoirs, but they are not very well represented in our sample.

Here are the names of Russian poets that were mentioned in the memoirs of former gymnasium students since the 1840s. Pushkin, who leads in this list as well, is excluded from the calculations; given in parentheses is the number of mentions of the given author (in cases where mentions exceeded one):

---

K. Abdukarimova, G. Baroian, A. Borzykh, A. Gagauz, E. Golovkina, E. Danilova, A. Kiseleva, K. Kremneva, E. Kuz'mina, U. Kurianova, A. Marinevich, V. Motyleva, A. Ostrozhkova, S. Pavlova, D. Panova, E. Piskunova, E. Pokhilenko, A. Riabichenkova, S. Svishcheva, M. Tolkacheva.

1840s–50s: Baratynskii, Batiushkov, Del’vig, Derzhavin (3), Zhukovskii (4), Krylov (4), Lermontov (2), Lomonosov;  
 1860s–70s: Ershov, Zhukovskii (3), Kol’tsov (2), Krylov (4), Kurochkin, Lermontov (10), Maikov (2), Nekrasov (8), Nikitin, A. K. Tolstoi, Fet;  
 1880s–1890s: Ershov, Kol’tsov, Lermontov (2), Nadson (2), Nekrasov (5), Nikitin;  
 1900s–1910s: Bal’mont, Briusov, Krylov, Lermontov (2), Nadson, Nekrasov (5), Nikitin, Ryleev, Tiutchev, Fet.

For the reason mentioned above, this data adds little to our notion of a change in readers’ preferences. As we can see, only a few of the non-curricular authors are recalled by memoirists as having once been relevant (but the high status of Nekrasov in everyday reading, versus in *RA*, is obvious and well understood).

Access to interviews conducted during the time period in question allows us to fill in this inexact and generalized picture. Surveys conducted by S. A. Anan’in,<sup>90</sup> for example, allow us to judge more accurately the poetic tastes of Russian gymnasium students of the first decade of the twentieth century. Favorite poets include Kol’tsov, A. Tolstoi, Apukhtin, Batiushkov, Fet, Byron, Heine, Verlaine, Słowacki and Mickiewicz (neither “programmatically” Pushkin nor “oppositional” Nekrasov is present on this list).

The list of “favourite poems” is more interesting: the obvious leader here is Nadson (“Mother” [“Mat’”], “Life” [“Zhizn’”], “The Veil is failed...” [“Zavesa sbroshena...”], “Only the morning of love is good...” [“Tol’ko utro liubvi khorosho...”], “To a Friend” [“K drugu”], “For what?” [“Za chto?”], “Our generation does not know youth...” [“Nashe pokolenie iunosti ne znaet...”], “The Funeral” [“Pokhorony”], “My Muse is dead...” [“Umerla moia muza...”], “Do not tell me he’s dead...” [“Ne govornite mne: on umer...”]), followed by Nekrasov (“Who is Happy in Russia” [“Komu na Rusi zhit’ khorosho”], “Musings By the Front Door” [“Razmyshleniia u paradnogo pod’ezda”], “Korobeiniki” [“Korobeiniki”], “Grandfather Frost the Red Nose” [“Moroz krasnyi nos”], “A Knight for An Hour” [“Rytsar’ na chas”]) and Lermontov (“Mtsyri” [“Mtsyri”], “Captive” [“Plennik”], “Clouds” [“Tuchi”], “Both boring and sad...” [“I skuchno, i grustno...”], “Waves and people” [“Volny i liudi”]). Two texts of Nikitin are also mentioned (“Burlaks” [“Burlaki”], “The spade is deep digging a grave in the mould...”). Pushkin is named only twice (with “The Prophet” [“Prorok”] and “Whether I Wander Along Noisy Streets” [“Brozhu li ia vdol’ ulits shumnykh...”]), followed by solo texts of Solov’ev and Turgenev and “The Song of the Stormy Petrel” (“Pesnia o burevestnike”) by Gor’kii.

Quite indicatively, “La Marseillaise” closes the list.

---

90 S. Anan’in, “Detskie idealy,” 201–219.



#### 4. FICTION IN SCHOOLCHILDREN'S READING (CURRICULAR AND UNDERGROUND READING)

##### 4.1. *The Reading Repertoire: Center and Periphery*

Unlike with short poetry, the inclusion of prosaic texts in curricula was primarily a technical challenge for compilers and educators throughout the entire nineteenth century. On the one hand, the volume of textbooks and copyrights allowed for the reprinting of only a certain amount of text.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, leading Russian teachers from Stoiunin to Eikhenbaum repeatedly lamented that reading a story or novel in fragments kills the meaning of the text as a whole and impedes its analysis.<sup>92</sup> The idea that the prosaic text should be read by students as a whole and at home emerged in the 1850s and gradually came into practice. It followed that the school should have a well-stocked library from which students could borrow books. The comprehensiveness of gymnasium libraries in different periods of the nineteenth century is little researched,<sup>93</sup> but the memoirs of students and the research of N.A. Rubakin<sup>94</sup> showed that, in the 1850–60s, far from every gymnasium—even in the capital—had a library and allowed pupils to borrow books.<sup>95</sup> For instance, V.P. Ostrogorskii, who was a student of the Third St. Petersburg Gymnasium from 1853 to 1858, recalled that it had no good library, and pupils could not take home Pushkin, Gogol' or Zhukovskii; only Galakhov's anthology was available. Ostrogorskii's favorite teacher, Stoiunin, inspired students to search for "whole" books, but they were expensive.<sup>96</sup> In the 1860s, especially under the liberal minister of public education A.V. Golovnin, budgets allocated for school libraries increased significantly.<sup>97</sup>

91 Stoiunin, *O prepodavanii russkoi literatury*, 267.

92 *Ibid.*, 255–256.

93 The history of *zemstvo* libraries is explored better. Ben Eklof recently showed that the amount and choice of books in this type of libraries were quite adequate to the number of educated population (B. Eklof, "The Archaeology of 'Backwardness' in Russia: Assessing the Adequacy of Libraries for Rural Audiences in Late Imperial Russia," in M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination* (Toronto, 2011)).

94 N. A. Rubakin, "Chastnye biblioteki i vneklassnoe chtenie uchashchikhsia," *Zhenskoe obrazovanie*, 6–7 (1889); N. A. Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike: Fakti, tsifry i nabliudeniia* (St. Petersburg, 1895), 71; N. N. Zhitomirova, "Chitatel'skie zaprosy i krug chteniia uchashchikhsia srednei shkoly predrevoliutsionnoi Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka," in *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad, 1976), vol. 2, 70.

95 Moscow and Petersburg gymnasia (like Karl Mai's private one) seem to form a separate type of well-equipped schools where students could borrow books of all sorts.

96 Ostrogorskii, *Iz istorii moego uchitel'stva*, 13, 25, 27.

97 Staferova, A.V. *Golovnin i liberal'nye reformy*, 340–341. In 1860–80s, the majority of gymnasia subordinated to the Ministry of Public Instruction had very rich libraries, which were open to the public since 1867. See B. V. Bank, *Izuchenie chitatelei v Rossii (XIX vek)* (Moscow, 1969), 34; V. L. Vinokur, "Gimnazicheskie biblioteki Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia," *Shkol'naia biblioteka*, 4 (2007), 74; 5 (2007), 90–92.

The second challenge regarding the inclusion of Russian prose in school textbooks was that its symbolic status in the first third of the nineteenth century was quite low and was to strengthen only in the 1840s–50s. The genres of the short story, the tale (*povest'*) and, especially, the novel gradually developed in the literary system (see REBECCHINI, *The Success of the Russian Novel*, in the present volume), and in the 1860s the Russian novel embraced all key genres (*Bildungsroman*, adultery, historical, ideological, etc.).<sup>98</sup> However, the 1872 program excluded all the “latest literature” from the curricula of gymnasia and technical schools.

The third issue was related to students’ age and to pedagogical ideas of the time: prosaic forms (especially novels) were not perceived as appropriate material for students’ upbringing and education. Very often, large “non-curricular” works were included in anthologies in fragments, abridged, and without attribution, so that students could never know from which text or story they were taken.<sup>99</sup>

Now we can turn to the circulation of prose in secondary schools in two different, though mutually overlapping, domains: that of ministerial programs and that of school readers. Prose, of course, was a part of gymnasium reading in the first half of the nineteenth century, but the government did not regulate it at that time. The inclusion of prose within ministerial curricula began in 1852. Table 5 shows the content of ministerial programs for gymnasia and technical schools from 1852 to 1912. The program of 1852 and its compilers Buslaev and Galakhov followed the content of existing reading books but tried to include new pieces (for example, S. T. Aksakov’s *Notes of a Rifle Hunter*, 1849–1852). The “core” consists of the texts of the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. Nineteenth-century works, Karamzin and Pushkin, and Old Russian literature appear only in excerpts (as a material for studying the Old Russian language and in a special class; it had only just begun to be recognized as a full-fledged part of Russian literature). In the liberal 1860s, from 1860 to 1866, the Ministry allowed the pedagogical councils to widen the program of 1852 themselves<sup>100</sup> so that schoolchildren could read the latest literature—from Lermontov’s *Hero of Our Time* to the articles of Dobroliubov. Thus, A.I. Georgievskii—the right hand of Dmitrii Tolstoi—lamented in his history of the Academic

---

<sup>98</sup> As Leah Price demonstrated, there is a subtle, indirect correlation between the rise of the novel and the rise of anthologies (L. Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel. From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge, 2004), 5–7).

<sup>99</sup> Fragments varied in genre: landscapes, characteristics, discourses (three types of narratives theorized in textbooks of the time). The most striking example of the fragmentation of a large prosaic work is that of S.T. Aksakov’s non-curricular stories *Family Chronicle* and *Childhood of the Bagrov Grandson*, which were literally broken into excerpts about nature, rural life and descriptions of the gymnasium, thus completely losing touch with the whole. The same fate waited D.V. Grigorovich’s novels.

<sup>100</sup> *S’ezd uchitelei russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti v gimnaziakh Moskovskogo uchebnogo okruga* (Moscow 1866), 1–3.

Committee of the Ministry of Public Education that the freedom of the 1860s led to the fact that even the head of one of the southern educational districts recommended that teachers have at their disposal critical articles not only by Belinskii, but also by Pisarev and Dobroliubov.<sup>101</sup> Konstantin Petrov, the author of several course books and readers, nominated recent works by Turgenev, Goncharov, Dostoevskii, and a minor Slavophile writer, Nadezhda Kokhanovskaia, for inclusion in the syllabus as essential material for “literary conversation.”<sup>102</sup>

Table 5. Russian Fiction in Ministerial Curricula of Gymnasia and Technical Schools, 1852-1912. with indication of class (1852-1912). Legend: G – gymnasia, RS – real school, number – form; fr stands for “in fragments.”

Author and text	1852	1872	1890	1905 (1906 for RS)	1912 (uni- fied for G and RS)
Sermon on Law and Grace by Hilarion of Kiev			G 5 + RS	G 5 + RS 5	5
The Primary Chronicle		G 6-7 (fr) + RS	G 5 + RS	G 5 + RS 5	5 fr
The Tale of Igor's Campaign	G 3 fr	G 6-7 + RS	G 5 + RS	G 5 + RS 5	5 fr
The Pilgrimage of the Russian Abbot Daniel in the Holy Land			G 5 + RS	G 5 + RS 5	5 fr
Lives of the Saints (Boris and Gleb, Aleksandr Nevskii, Sergius of Radonezh, et al.)	G fr		RS	G 5 + RS 5	5 fr
The Instruction of Vladimir Monomakh	G3		G 5 fr	RS 5	5
Praying of Daniel the Immured			G 5 fr		5
The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow by Prince Kurbskii		G 6-7 fr	G 6 fr		6 fr
Life of the Archpriest Avvakum					5 fr
Russia in the Reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich by Grigory Kotoshikhin			G 6 fr		6 fr

101 A.I. Georgievskii, *K istorii Uchenogo komiteta Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* (St. Petersburg, 1902), 37.

102 K. Petrov, “Prakticheskii vzgliad na programmuru russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia* 113 (1862): 2, 175.

The Tale of Savva Grudtsyn				RS 6	5
M. Komarov, Unlucky Nikanor				G 6	
M. Chulkov, Bitter Fate				G 6	
Karamzin, Poor Liza	n/d fr		G 7 fr	G 6 + RS 6	6
Karamzin, Letters of a Russian Traveller	3-4 fr	G 6-7 fr + RS 7 fr	G 7 fr + RS 6 fr	G 6 + RS 6	6 fr
Karamzin, History of the Russian State	1-2 fr	G 6-7 fr + RS 7 fr	G 7 fr + RS 6	G 6 + RS 6	6 fr
Karamzin, Frol Silin				G 6	
Karamzin, Natalia, the Boyar's Daughter.				G 6 + RS 6	
Narezhnyi, Bursak				G 6	
Zagoskin, Iuri Miloslavskii	extra year				
Pushkin, The Captain's Daughter	n/d		G 7 + RS 6	G 7 + RS 6	6
Pushkin, The Moor of Peter the Great				G 7 + RS 6	6
Pushkin, A Journey to Arzrum				G 7	
Pushkin, The Tales of Belkin				G 7 + RS 6	6
Pushkin, Dubrovskii				G 7	
Gogol', Tales	Extra year				
Gogol', Evenings on a Farm Near Dikanka				G 7 RS 7	7
Gogol', Mirgorod				G 7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarreled with Ivan Nikoforovich				G 7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', Old World Landowners		G 6-7	G 7 + RS 6	G 7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', Taras Bulba		G 6-7 + RS	G 7 + RS 6	G 7	7
Gogol', Portrait				G 7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', The Overcoat				G 7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', Diary of a Madman				G 7	
Gogol', Dead Souls	n/d	G 6-7 + RS	G 7 + RS 6	G 6-7 + RS 7	7
Gogol', Author's Confession				G 7	7

Lermontov, A Hero of Our Time			G 7 fr + RS 6 fr	G 6 + RS 6	7 fr
Aksakov, Notes of a Rifle Hunter	n/d fr				
Goncharov, Oblomov				G 7 + RS 7	7
Turgenev, A Sportsman's Sketches				G 7 + RS 7	7
Turgenev, Mumu				G 7 + RS 7	
Turgenev, Rudin				G 7 + RS 7	7
Turgenev, A Nest of the Gentlefolk				G 7 + RS 7	7
Dostoevskii, Poor People				G 7 (optional)	7
Dostoevskii, The Humiliated and Insulted				G 7	
Dostoevskii, Crime and Punishment				G 8	G 8
Lev Tolstoi, Childhood and Adolescence				G 8 + RS 7	7
Lev Tolstoi, Sevastopol Stories					G 7
Lev Tolstoi, War and Peace				G 8 + RS 7	G 8
Goncharov, A Common Story				RS 7	7
Turgenev, Fathers and Sons					7

The new 1872 and 1890 programs of mandatory reading differed from various syllabi of the 1860s. They now included a wide range of Old Russian texts and eliminated contemporary literature and texts on the history of Russian literature. The modern literature in the syllabus was at least thirty years old—poems by Mikhail Lermontov and Nikolai Gogol's *Dead Souls* (1842). As is clear from Table 5, the program of 1872 imposed a difference in reading lists between gymnasia and technical schools. Thus, conservatism and reproduction of the existing social order manifested not only in the prohibition of technical school graduates from entering universities, but also in the differentiated content of programs. It is well known that Dmitrii Tolstoi saw as the main purpose of a gymnasium education the upbringing of nobility and loyal government officials capable of resisting the subversive influences of radicalism and materialism. For this reason, ministerial syllabi prohibited all of the latest literature after Lermontov and Gogol', creating a thirty-year lag in the curriculum. At the same time, the program of 1890 substantially expanded the list of Old Russian literature.

The 1872 ministry's list of mandatory reading for classical gymnasias contained more Russian folklore, Old Russian, and eighteenth-century texts than the list for real schools. After 1890, the gap widened even more dramatically, as the reading in real schools included only five Old Russian texts and one eighteenth-century text (by Mikhail Lomonosov), and concentrated predominantly on early nineteenth-century literature, including poetry by Karamzin, Zhukovskii, Batiushkov, Pushkin, Lermontov, and Kol'tsov. The gymnasium literature course was deliberately "classicalized" by means of its archaization. This was the most conservative moment in the history of Russian syllabi. Between 1872 and 1905, the modern part of the literary syllabus was expanded only once, when, in 1890, the Ministry added the chapters "Bela" and "Maksim Maksimych" from Lermontov's novel and re-integrated Pushkin's *Captain's Daughter*.

The dismantling of "Tolstoi's Classicism" in 1898-1903<sup>103</sup> and the significant revision of the program led, firstly, to a substantial (but not complete) synchronization of the program of gymnasias and technical schools, and secondly, to the introduction of some contemporary literature while also preserving the Old Russian component of the program (with some cuts, as is visible in Table 5). Yet "contemporary" meant literature of 1855-1869; the course ended with Lev Tolstoi's *War and Peace*. The whole range of titles included: Ivan Goncharov's *A Common Story* (for technical schools) and *Oblomov*, *A Sportsman's Sketches*, *Mumu*, *Rudin* and *A Nest of the Gentlefolk* by Turgenev; Dostoevskii's *Poor Folk* (optional), *The Humiliated and Insulted* and *Crime and Punishment*; Tolstoi's *Childhood and Adolescence*. It is important to remember that the 1905 program significantly expanded the collection of Karamzin's prose ("Frol Silin," "Natalia the Boyar's Daughter"), Pushkin ("The Moor of Peter the Great", *The Tales of Belkin*, "Journey to Arzrum," "Dubrovskii") and Gogol' (almost all of his stories of the 1830-40s. Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time* was, for the first time, to be read in its entirety.

The new syllabus of 1905 was approved in 1912 in the final imperial program, which was never updated with Ignatiev's 1915 projections. The 1912 program already unified gymnasium and technical school reading (the only remaining difference was in the eighth gymnasium class), slightly reduced the number of texts by Karamzin, Pushkin and Gogol', and even expanded the list of literary readings from the 1850-60s. Additions included Tolstoi's "Sevastopol Stories" and Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.

Of course, comparison between curricula and the most frequent texts in school anthologies immediately corrects the picture and demonstrates that students in fact had much greater opportunity to read a wide range of texts, even in excerpts (one should remember that in most cases the name of the

---

103 Zubkov, "Zemskie shkoly, gimnazii i real'nye uchilishcha", 193-194.

source work was omitted). As Table 6 demonstrates, the list of novels included in anthologies was much broader than that of the official curriculum.

Table 6. The Most Frequent Fiction Texts and Fragments in Anthologies, 1805-1912 (source: database “Reading of 19th-Century Schoolchildren”).

Author	Text	Amount of times indexed	Most frequent fragments (“+” means some more fragments)	Year of first inclusion in any anthology
Gogol’	Dead Souls	76	Pliushkin (14+) Road (8) Russia- <i>troika</i> (8)	1843
Gogol’	Taras Bul’ba	57	Steppe (20+)	1843
Lermontov	A Hero of Our Time	54	Morning in Piatigorsk (13) Maksim Maksimych (10+)	1843
Goncharov	The Frigate Pallada	50	Luxury and Comfort (6)	1861
Pushkin	The Captain’s Daughter	47	Meeting with Catherine II (15+) Belogorskaia Fortress (12+) Snowstorm (9+)	1843
Lev Tolstoi	Childhood	45	Classroom (12)	1863
Karamzin	Letters of a Russian Traveller	41	Rhine waterfall (7+)	1805
Goncharov	Oblomov	40	Oblomov’s Dream (8+) Oblomov’s room (7)	1861
Pushkin	A Journey to Arzrum	28	Georgia (5)	1843
Turgenev	Bezhin Meadow	26	Boys (10+)	1862
Gogol’	Old World Landowners	26	Afanasii and Pul’kheriia (7+)	1843
Karamzin	History of the Russian State	25	No data	1830
Lev Tolstoi	War and Peace	24	Rostovy at uncle (6) Empty Moscow (2)	1868
Aksakov	Notes of a Rifle Hunter	22	Waters (8)	1861
Aksakov	Childhood of the Bagrov Grandson	20	Bobsleigh (5+)	1869
Batiushkov	A Picture of Finland	20	Finland	1830
Aksakov	A Family Chronicle	18	Stepan’s Day (10) Mill (4)	1861

Pushkin	The Moor of Peter the Great	17	Meeting with Peter (3) Ibragim (3)	1843
Grigorovich	The Fishermen	16	Spring is coming (4)	1866
Aleksei Tolstoi	Prince Serebrianyi	14	Boyarin's house (4)	1865
Zagoskin	Iurii Miloslavskii	13	Kuzma Minin (8+)	1843
Goncharov	A Common Story	12	Thunderstorm (8)	1866
Mel'nikov-Pecherskii	In the Forests	11	Fire in a forest (3)	1876
Turgenev	A Nest of Gentlefolk	7	Liza (3)	1866
Turgenev	Rudin	7	Summer rain (4)	1866
Dostoevskii	The Brothers Karamazov	5	At sick man's bed (2)	1884
Lazhechnikov	Basurman	5	Prologue	1843
Goncharov	The Precipice	4	Grandmother (3) Marfinka (3)	1883

The texts which appeared most frequently in anthologies were Gogol's *Dead Souls* and *Taras Bul'ba*, as well as Lermontov's *A Hero of Our Time*, which was included in the program only in 1890. Despite such late inclusion, the popularity of Lermontov's text in anthologies can be explained by the fact that it was used for grammar exercises and explanatory analysis in the study of narrative types (e.g. "Morning in Piatigorsk" exemplified the genre of description).

Texts of the second most popular trio—Goncharov's *The Frigate Pallada*, Pushkin's *The Captain's Daughter* and Tolstoi's *Childhood*—have a completely different reputation and history of scholastic study. One can assume that *The Frigate Pallada*, which was not included in the program, never existed in the minds of schoolchildren as an integral work, but always as part of some collection of excerpts from Goncharov. The most popular passage, "Luxury and Comfort" (a comparative description of European and Eastern civilizations from the Chinese chapter of the travelogue), was a perfect fit for teaching the writing of "discourse" (*rassuzhdenie*).<sup>104</sup> Other excerpts from Goncharov often existed as descriptions of exotic natural life in the tropics, marine phenomena (hurricanes, sharks, thunderstorms at sea, etc.). A similar thing happened with Tolstoi's *Childhood*, which was included in the program only in 1905, but had been, since 1863, consistently included in

<sup>104</sup> E.g., in Sosnitskii's "Theory of Literature" (Moscow, 1880).



anthologies for elementary school and lower classes of gymnasias and technical schools in fragments. Excerpts from *Childhood*, such as “Classroom,” “Happy Time of Childhood,” “Harvest,” and “Separation” correlated in both theme and content with students’ age and the classroom context. Meanwhile, Pushkin’s *The Captain’s Daughter*, which became part of the program since 1852 (with a hiatus in 1872), is an example of a text which was read in full as an example of the historical novel, discussed in the Theory of Literature course.<sup>105</sup>

The last five texts of the top ten (Karamzin, Goncharov, Pushkin, Gogol’ and Turgenev) look very different in their school circulation. Karamzin’s *Letters of a Russian Traveler* was included in anthologies (in fragments) and in syllabi since 1805, whereas Goncharov’s *Oblomov* officially appeared in the syllabus only in 1905, but from 1861–1868 was frequently included in popular anthologies such as those compiled by Ushinskii, Galakhov, Basistov and Polevoi. Moreover, as the semantic core of the novel, “Oblomov’s Dream” had a kind of autonomy.

If one looks at the long nineteenth century (1805–1912), prose takes a very modest place in comparison with poetry and drama and constitutes only 16.6% of all textual entries in our database. The insignificant role of prose in contrast to poetry is made clear with reference to the specific place of a hybrid lyric-epic work such as Pushkin’s *Eugene Onegin*, which is represented in our database 170 times (in fragments; compare with 76 entries of the prosaic “leader” of prose works—*Dead Souls*). Thus, we might wonder whether prose occupied a peripheral place in school reading as a whole. However, we believe that this was not the case. For the reasons mentioned above, the compilers of anthologies could not and did not seek to include long prosaic texts, relying instead on extracurricular reading at home. Thus, the modest role of prose in anthologies does not suggest that it was of an inferior status in the practice of teaching and individual reading. In the classical and technical gymnasias in the years 1852–1870, many major prosaic texts of the 1820–40s, such as Zagoskin’s *Iurii Miloslavskii*, Pushkin’s *The Captain’s Daughter* and Gogol’s *Dead Souls* were compulsory reading (Lermontov’s novel was not among them). Although, beginning in 1872, fragments of *Hero of Our Time* were added to this list, the 30 years from 1872 to 1903 proved to be the most difficult period for the high school, since at this time the glaring gap between the conservative curriculum and the burgeoning international fame of the great Russian novel had reached a critical point. The exploration of memoirs about official and underground reading allows us to understand how this played out in practice.

---

<sup>105</sup> It should be noted that in Soviet schools the novel was considered as a tale and was assigned for secondary school reading.

#### 4.2. Extracurricular and underground reading

As we have already mentioned in section 3.4, modern scholars can explore the extracurricular and underground reading of students only with the help of memoirs and diaries. In our above-mentioned database “The Reading Habits of 19th-Century Schoolchildren,” prose prevails in this category of reading: in many cases, it was extracurricular or even forbidden. Table 7 presents a list of authors who are most frequently recalled in the memoirs of gymnasium students (and, in part, their teachers). The date of memoirs, grouped by particular decades, is indicated on the right side of the table.

Table 7. Most frequently mentioned authors (fiction and non-fiction) in the memoirs of pupils of all types of schools and in gymnasia (with a frequency of more than 0.8%; by particular decades. Source: the database “The Reading Habits of 19th-Century Schoolchildren”).

Author	Total (abs. and %)	In gymnasia (%)	Decade of Memoir Author's Time in School			
			1830-1850s	1860-1870s	1880-1890s	1900-1917
<i>Pushkin</i>	93 (6.8)					
<i>Pushkin-prosaic</i>	12 (0.9)	33.3	3	0	7	2
Tolstoi, Lev	57 (4.2)	28.0	4	4	25	21
Gogol'	55 (4.0)	47.2	12	14	19	8
Turgenev	53 (3.9)	45.2	8	8	20	12
<i>Lermontov</i>	38 (2.8)					
<i>Lermontov-prosaic</i>	3 (0.2)	66.7	1	1	1	0
Pisarev	28 (2.0)	64.2	0	16	8	4
Dostoevskii	27 (1.9)	40.7	2	5	12	7
Chernyshevskii	27 (1.9)	63.0	-	15	11	1
Dobroliubov	23 (1.7)	70.0	-	15	8	0
Goncharov	18 (1.3)	33.3	2	4	8	4
Belinskii	13 (1.0)	77.0	4	5	3	0
Uspenskii, Gleb	13 (1.0)	38.4	-	4	5	3
Karamzin	12 (0.9)	58.3	5	4	2	0
Mill, J.S.	11 (0.8)	45.4	-	7	4	0

Comparing this list with that of the most frequent texts in textbooks and curricula, we observe only a partial intersection. If Gogol', Lermontov and

Goncharov dominate the texts printed in excerpt, memoirs designate Lev Tolstoi, Gogol' and Turgenev as the most frequently read. The lower part of the list has almost no intersections with pedagogical practice (except for Goncharov and Karamzin)—rather, it includes “forbidden” writers like Pisarev, Chernyshevskii, Dobroliubov and Belinskii and foreign philosophers such as J.S. Mill. It was such authors who were most often read and remembered by students, competing in popularity only with the prose writers Lermontov, Karamzin, Gogol' and Turgenev (in other types of schools the picture was different, as is evident in the table).

If we omit mentions of Pushkin (references to whom, just as with the case described above, far exceeded references to all other writers, despite the fact that his prose only accounted for 0.9% of total mentions), the most frequently recalled author is Lev Tolstoi (4.2% of all mentions of prose writers), who was not included in the ministry's curriculum until 1905. The next most popular writers are Gogol' and Turgenev, who, along with the author of *War and Peace*, form a trio which significantly outpaces the others in popularity. Naturally, Tolstoi's success is associated by and large with the period of 1880–1917, when the writer became an active public figure and thus predictably accrued the greatest number of mentions.<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, Tolstoi is the only one of the most widely read authors who was popular not in classical gymnasia (only 28% in the database), but in technical and public elementary schools. This fact can be partially explained by the writer's own intention to write for the people (with his *Folk Stories* and *ABC Books*). In almost 50% of cases, Gogol' and Turgenev were read in gymnasia, and the presence of the author of *Dead Souls* in the curriculum since 1852 provided him with a stable position throughout all of the decades considered (although he received a slight increase in attention in the 1880s). A sharp rise in the number of Turgenev mentions since the 1880s can be explained by his posthumous fame (as was also the case with Dostoevskii).

The next most frequent group of authors—Pisarev, Chernyshevskii, Dostoevskii and Dobroliubov (2.0–1.7%)—was read primarily by gymnasia students (in the case of Dobroliubov, 70%), with the exception of Dostoevskii, who, as the statistics demonstrate, was widely read in schools of various kinds (40% of gymnasium students and almost 30% in other types of schools). The influence of radical literary criticism reached even the margins of the Russian Empire. One example of its wide reach was an 1880 collection of essays written by students of the Novocherkassk Gymnasium. This collection consisted almost entirely of abstracts from Belinskii's articles on a wide range of issues, from artistry to the woman question; meanwhile, the preface of the essay collection called Belinskii himself “the pride

---

<sup>106</sup> Our calculations yield conclusions similar to those of Zhitomirova, who, in turn, cites a study conducted by G.P. Rokov in 1905. See Zhitomirova “Chitateľ'skie zaprosy i krug chteniia uchashchikhsia srednei shkoly,” 72.

and ornament of our native literature.”<sup>107</sup> This example points to the well-known phenomenon—the underground canon of the radical intelligentsia, for whom forbidden books and texts immediately became compulsory reading.<sup>108</sup>

In general, this odd foursome—three revolutionary-democratic critics and a religious writer—is far from accidental. It can help explain the reasons for Dostoevskii’s popularity among schoolchildren of the last third of the nineteenth century. In contrast to Dostoevskii, the popularity of the three radical critics peaked, predictably, in the 1860s–70s, and fell off at the end of the century, giving way to new idols (Marxists, Bakunin, N. Mikhailovskii). Dostoevskii and these radical critics are bound up together in our sample, and not only because they were opponents in the early 1860s (Dostoevskii continued to polemicize with them later). The reason for Dostoevskii’s popularity among schoolchildren was, apparently, also based on the social relevance of his novels and their newspaper-pamphlet style (especially *Demons*) and, in particular, their ability to touch on the most pressing problems of human rights, humanism, and religion. Early twentieth-century teachers recognized this feature of Dostoevskii’s work and used it to promote his novel for inclusion into ministry syllabi.<sup>109</sup>

The final part of the ranking comprises the group of authors who lag behind in popularity, but still appear comparatively often in the memoirs of former students. They include Goncharov, Karamzin, Belinskii (read most of all in gymnasias, though he was not included in the curriculum), G.I. Uspenskii and J.S. Mill. Such a motley set can be explained by the low frequency of the authors that make it up (less than 1%). Our database includes many such rarely mentioned but frequently read philosophers, economists and publicists (Mill is the most popular, thanks in large part to Chernyshevskii’s translation and commentary; he is followed by Lavrov, Lassalle, Bakunin, Mikhailovskii, Herzen, Spencer, Marx, Plekhanov, and Bervi-Flerovskii), Russian novelists (Sergei Aksakov, Vsevolod Garshin, Dmitrii Grigorovich, Vladimir Korolenko, Anton Chekhov) and foreign writers (Victor Hugo, Charles Dickens, Alexander Dumas Sr., James F. Cooper, Walter Scott, and Friedrich Spielhagen).

It is also useful to examine these reading lists from another angle—that of the most frequently mentioned individual works (Table 8). Such a sample reveals a wide range of titles: memoirists name individual works infrequently, but occasionally recall the most sensational works which strongly

107 *Gimnazicheskii sbornik: Raboty vospitannikov Novocherkasskoi gimnazii* (Novocherkassk, 1880), 23.

108 See I. Paperno, *Semiotika povedeniia: Nikolai Chernyshevskii – chelovek epokhi realizma* (Moscow, 1996); M. Mogil’ner, *Mifologiya podpol’nogo cheloveka. Radikal’nyi mikrokozmos v Rossii nachala XX veka kak predmet semioticheskogo analiza* (Moscow, 1999), 19–40.

109 V. Sipovskii, “O rasshirenii kursa russkoi slovesnosti v gimnaziakh i real’nykh uchilishchakh,” *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 8(1905), 116–118.

influenced their worldview. It is unsurprising that the number of mentions received by a particular text in our database is extremely small. Thus, at twelve mentions, Chernyshevskii's novel *What Is To Be Done?* becomes the leader, a result which validates not only the most vivid memoirs about the novel (such as Lenin's memoirs in his Geneva conversations with Valentinov that the novel "plowed me over"), but also scholarly findings.<sup>110</sup> Banned immediately after publication, the novel was widely read.

Table 8. The most frequently mentioned prosaic texts (with three or more mentions, 1850–1917, in all types of schools except religious schools. Database includes 1364 records in total)

Author and text	Year of publication in Russian	Frequency (abs.)	Inclusion in curriculum
Chernyshevskii, <i>What Is To Be Done?</i>	1863	12	- (banned)
Lev Tolstoi, <i>War and Peace</i>	1869	7	1905
Gogol', <i>Taras Bul'ba</i>	1842	7	1872
<i>Defoe, Robinson Crusoe</i>	1764	7	-
Turgenev, <i>A Sportsman's Sketches</i>	1852	6	1905
Pushkin, <i>Captain's Daughter</i>	1836	6	1852
Aleksei Tolstoi, <i>Prince Serebrianyi</i>	1863	6	-
<i>Stowe. Uncle Tom's Cabin</i>	1857	6	-
Goncharov, <i>Oblomov</i>	1859	6	1905
<i>Spielhagen. In Reih' und Glied</i>	1867-68	6	-
Lev Tolstoi, <i>Anna Karenina</i>	1878	5	-
Karamzin, <i>History of the Russian State</i>	1818	5	1852
Garshin, <i>Signal</i>	1887	4	-
Omulevskii, <i>Step by Step</i>	1870	4	- (banned)
Lavrov, <i>Historical Letters</i>	1868-70	4	-
Lev Tolstoi, <i>The Prisoner of the Caucasus</i>	1872	4	-
Turgenev, <i>Mumu</i>	1854	4	1905
Gogol', <i>Dead Souls</i>	1842	4	1852
Dostoevskii, <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i>	1881	4	-
Turgenev, <i>Fathers and Sons</i>	1862	4	1912
Dostoevskii, <i>Crime and Punishment</i>	1866	4	1905
Gogol', <i>Old World Landowners</i>	1835	3	1872

<sup>110</sup> See E. I. Shcherbakova, "Roman N.G. Chernyshevskogo «Chto delat'?» v vospriatii radikal'noi molodezhi serediny 60-kh godov XIX veka," *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 8. Istorii*, 1(1998), 59-68.

<i>Dumas. Les Trois Mousquetaires</i>	1846	3	-
Zagoskin, Iurii Miloslavskii	1829	3	From 1852 to 1860
Lermontov, A Hero of Our Time	1841	3	1890
Lev Tolstoi. Childhood and Adolescence	1852,1856	3	1905
E. Tur, Catacombs	1866	3	-
Mill J.S., Principles of Political Economy	1865	3	-
Pomialovskii, Seminary Sketches	1863	3	-
<i>Erckmann-Chatrion, Histoire d'un paysan</i>	1878	3	-

This sample data demonstrates the popularity not only of banned novels such as *What Is To Be Done?* and Innokenti Omulevskii's *Step by Step* (1870),<sup>111</sup> but also the curricular works of Turgenev (*A Sportsman's Sketches*), Pushkin (*The Captain's Daughter*), Gogol' (*Taras Bul'ba*), and Lermontov. Moreover, students demonstrated a preference for Tolstoi's *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, Aleksei Tolstoi's *Prince Serebrianyi*, Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons* and, of course, foreign fiction (Defoe, Stowe, Spielhagen<sup>112</sup>). It is clear that nearly 60 percent of these novels were included in the curriculum by 1912.

The lower part of the list contains both curricular and non-curricular texts in the same proportion, and their equal ratio is also clearly visible. The non-curricular texts listed include both texts included in anthologies in the 1880s and 1990s (*The Brothers Karamazov*, *Anna Karenina*, *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*) and texts which were banned (*Step by Step* by Omulevskii), as well as the widely read *Les Trois Mousquetaires* by Dumas, E. Tur's *Catacombs*, and Erckmann-Chatrion's *Histoire d'un paysan*.

For the period from the 1890s to 1910s, we have at our disposal the first statistical studies of extra-curricular and summer reading, which were conducted in the 1900s and mentioned in the earlier section on lyric poetry. This data overlaps with the memoirs, but also differs significantly, since it contains a "blind spot": the survey respondents, for various reasons, were unlikely to speak of forbidden books, which were risky to mention. Therefore, the questionnaires contain almost no reference to radical journalism. Table 9 shows the results of two such surveys conducted in 1893 and 1909. One can see that some of the popular authors here coincide with

<sup>111</sup> In the 1880s, the Ministry withdrew many books by contemporary authors which were bought for school libraries in the 1860 and 70s. The list of prohibited books contained, among others, Spenser, Sechenov, Blagoveshenskii, Dobroliubov, Zasadimskii, Zlatovratskii, Zola, Lassalle, Levitov, Marx, Mikhailovskii, Mill, Pisarev, Proudhon, Chernyshevskii, Shelgunov (*Sbornik postanovlenii i raspriazhenii po gimnaziiam i progimnaziiam Moskovskogo uchebnogo okruga za 1871-1895 gody* (Moscow, 1895), 398-403).

<sup>112</sup> N. S. Travushkin, "Kak chitali v Rossii roman Shpil'gagena 'Odin v pole ne voim'", in *Russkaia literatura i osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie* (Kazan', 1974), vol. 5, 51-71.

those we described above with reference to former students' memoirs (Scott, Turgenev, Gogol', L. Tolstoi, Goncharov, Dostoevskii, Stowe). Another group consists of prose writers who were rarely mentioned in memoirs (less than 1% of mentions) but occupied a very important place in the questionnaires of the same period. These writers include Jules Verne, Gustave Aimard, F. Cooper, Charskaia, Chekhov, Senkevich, Pecherskii, Ibsen, Dickens, and Garin-Mikhailovskii<sup>113</sup>.

Table 9. Children's Reading in 1893 and 1909

<i>Demand in library of anonymized school</i>	<i>Survey of Pskov high school students, summer 1909</i>		
<i>Author</i>	<i>Frequency of demand</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Number of mentions</i>
Jules Verne	14%	Gogol'	289
Cooper	11%	Pushkin	244
Scott	11%	Turgenev	177
Turgenev	8%	Lev Tolstoi	129
Aimard	6%	Lermontov	119
Gogol'	5%	Goncharov	101
Grigorovich	4%	Charskaia	94
Pushkin	3.3%	Dostoevskii	64
Polonskii	3.2%	Chekhov	64
Dickens	2.8%		

Thus, the tendencies of children's reading in the second half of the nineteenth century demonstrate a slight, though symbolically loaded, prevalence of non-curricular literature. This suggests that some portion of the school-children were not satisfied by the official school curriculum. Memoirs and a few collections of gymnasium compositions provide little material by which to evaluate the scale of out-of-class, non-curricular, and underground reading. But even the striking cases in which non-curricular works of modern literature were read and used in competitive essays (as mentioned above) testify to the extremely differentiated practice of reading, which varied from one gymnasium to another and largely depended on the political position of its director, inspector, the pedagogical council, and the literature teacher, not to mention the type of school (once again, it is important to keep in

<sup>113</sup> Archival sources on lending by school libraries would help complete the picture. Due to Timur Guzairov's generous assistance, we know the most in-demand authors in the Iuriev (now Tartu, Estonia) Gymnasium in 1893: W. Scott (45 times), Nestor Kukol'nik (30), Grigorovich (28), Turgenev (27), Zhukovsky (13), Pushkin (13), Gogol' (11), and Sergei Maksimov (11) (Estonian Historical Archive [Eesti Ajaloo Arhiiv]. 384.1.1216. Folio 24).

mind that in private gymnasia and commercial schools the circle of curricular reading was much wider).

Even taken in its broad form, the list of prosaic texts in the 1870s and 1890s (i.e. when attempts to orient the syllabus along classical and conservative lines were most severe), could, in some schools and with some teachers, be significantly expanded if students began to read non-curricular Russian or foreign prose, journalism, or scientific texts. This gap between curricular and non-curricular reading was partially resolved by the school reform of 1903-1905 and, of course, the Manifesto of October 17, 1905. Therefore, surveys conducted in the final decade of the Russian Empire give a much more balanced picture of reading practices (including classroom reading, out-of-class reading, and reading for fun). As such, school-age reading from 1905-1917 presents a completely different story than in preceding decades.

## CONCLUSION

As we have demonstrated, literature and contemporary *belles lettres* in Russian school curricula were embedded into the system of modern literary education. Through syllabi, the state regulated the distribution of social and cultural capital. From 1871 to 1905, Russian educational policy aspired to expel the notion of modernity from the classroom and relied on the classics to form the subjectivity of pupils. Although Russian literature (and its history) was not a central subject in the humanities at that time, it gradually underwent a process of emancipation, gaining some autonomy and disciplinary legitimization by 1905 and, in full, in 1912.<sup>114</sup> The imbalance between the classics and contemporary literature was serious, due not only to the discriminatory nature of political pressure but also to the high symbolic power of literature in Russia—the so-called “literature-centrism” and literature’s consecrated status—which was fueled by the endeavors of literary criticism.<sup>115</sup>

One of the most difficult problems for teachers and officials throughout the “long” nineteenth century was the modernization of the literature curriculum. Any syllabus naturally tends towards modernization,<sup>116</sup> especially during a period of intensive growth of the national imagination, as with the imperial Russia of the 1830-60s. The short but intensive formation period of the school canon and curriculum, launched by Buslaev and Galakhov, quickly ended in 1871 when Count Dmitrii Tolstoi’s Ministry of Education standardized all curricula. From 1871 to 1905, the teaching of contemporary fiction (written less than fifty to sixty years earlier) was prohibited in

114 Byford, “Between Literary Education and Academic Learning,” 658-659.

115 See G. Freidin, “By the Walls of Church and State: Literature’s Authority in Russia’s Modern Tradition,” *The Russian Review*, 5 (1993):2, 149-165.

116 Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 15.



gymnasia. Such a situation reinforced and perpetuated the cult of Russian literature (from Nestor's *Primary Chronicle* to Nikolai Gogol') and consecrated an emerging literary canon. The ban on the prose of Ivan Turgenev, Ivan Goncharov, Fedor Dostoevskii, and Lev Tolstoi, and on modern poetry and drama, combined with a school curriculum that generally promoted an interest in Russian literature, encouraged students to seek modern fiction elsewhere. The resulting proliferation of anthologies of seemingly elite, high-culture texts, as well as the spread of underground publishing, is an important part of this story.

Towards the end of Dmitrii Tolstoi's tenure as minister (1880), contemporary Russian literature and its novelists (Turgenev, Dostoevskii and Tolstoi) acquired such symbolic capital and strength, both in Russia and abroad, that the ban on their study increasingly became an outrageous anachronism. However, the more the symbolic capital of the latest Russian literature grew, the more strongly it was blocked from above and the more restrictive measures were placed upon it by the state.

From a comparative perspective, the Russian educational policy of the 1860-90s combined Prussian and French models. The pioneer of nationalizing the state education system, Prussia was followed by Russia in the 1860s and France after 1882;<sup>117</sup> the United States followed suit in the 1890s, as did Great Britain after 1904. By the time of the 1871 reform, only the Prussian model explicitly pursued the task of forging national cohesion on the basis of ethnocultural nationalism rather than early modern ideals of republicanism and civic duty (which the Russian imperial regime did not want to embrace). From the perspective of modern politics of population control, the classics could be instrumentalized only within the republican paradigm, while Russian literature had the potential to cultivate an ethnocultural Russian identity as a means to ensure the unity of the empire. As he explicitly stated in his speeches and articles, this was the reason that Tolstoi preserved the study of Russian literature in high school, where it was shaped by Ministry-approved school curricula.

In the final part of our chapter, we demonstrated the influence of such educational policy on the expanding sphere of underground reading. As a result of that policy, high school students experienced particularly large "gaps" in their knowledge of the latest prose and political journalism of the 1850-70s and tried to read it at home, in study circles, and—in the case of forbidden books—even secretly. Reclaiming the right to read, discuss, and teach recent literature, many students and teachers of the second half of the nineteenth century could feel frustrated. *Fin-de-siècle* literature and memoirs are full of descriptions of personal and collective traumas. It is worth

---

<sup>117</sup> On France, see M. Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic* (New York, 2004), 53; on Great Britain, see S. J. Ball, "English for the English Since 1906," in I. Goodson (ed.), *Social Histories of the Secondary Curriculum: Subjects in Study* (London, Washington, DC, 1985), 53–55.

remembering how Russian literature reacted to the educational reforms that aimed to change its status.

The prohibition on reading and discussing contemporary literature in the classroom was amply thematized in fiction of the time. Writers mocked the conservative system of “school classicism” in a series of famous texts from Garin-Mikhailovskii’s *Gymnasium Students* to Anton Chekhov’s short story “The Man in a Case” (1898). Precisely at the time when the Special Committee elaborated the project of a new program for the Ministry of Education from 1899 to 1903, the Symbolist Fedor Sologub (a former gymnasium teacher) was writing his famous novel *The Little Demon* (1905), wherein the main character Ardalion Peredonov was a Russian language and literature teacher in a provincial gymnasium. Depicting Peredonov as a careerist, as an imperialist- and chauvinist-minded person (he argues that Poland should belong to Russia indefinitely<sup>118</sup>), and as a caricature of the typical small man of Russian prose from Gogol’ to Chekhov, Sologub problematized not only the nationalist atmosphere of provincial Russian schools, but also diagnosed the contiguity between and close proximity of cultural and physical violence, as well as the relationship between aesthetic values and ethical ones. One can argue that Peredonov and *peredonovschina* symbolically manifest the crisis of cultural production in the educational system from 1866 to the 1890s. No wonder *The Little Demon* became one of the most read Russian novels in the last years of the Romanov Empire.

## Select Bibliography

### PRIMARY SOURCES:

- Beliavskii E., *Metod vedeniia sochinenii* (Moscow, 1881).  
 Buslaev F. I., *O prepodavanii otechestvennogo iazyka* [1844] (Moscow, 1867).  
 Ekkardt L., *Rukovodstvo k chteniiu poeticheskikh sochinenii s prilozheniem primechanii i kratkogo uchebnika teorii poezii. Dlia muzhskikh i zhenskikh uchebnykh zavedenii*.

---

118 On the connection between teaching literature and imperial imagination see: L. Pild. “Pushkin v ‘Melkom bese’ F. Sologuba,” in *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu. 2: Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii 18–20 sent. 1998 g.* (Tartu, 2000), 306–321. It is important that the close bind between teacher and violence became a popular topic not only in Russian literature but in German, in Heinrich Mann’s *Professor Unrat oder Das Ende eines Tyrannen* (1904). The representation of school in French literature was, on the contrary, rather positive (Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic*, 220–221).

- Transl. by N. Maksimov, V. Ostrogorskii (St. Petersburg, 1875).
- Galakhov A., *Polnaia russkaia khrestomatiia, ili obraztsy krasnorechiia i poezii, zaimstvovannye iz luchshikh otechestvennykh pisatelei*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1843).
- Galakhov A. D., Buslaev F. I., *Konspekt russkogo iazyka i slovesnosti dlia rukovodstva v voenno-uchebnykh zavedeniakh* (St Petersburg, 1852), 12-19.
- Sbornik postanovlenii i rasporiashchenii po gimnaziiam i progimnaziiam Moskovskogo uchebnogo okruga za 1871-1895 gody* (Moscow, 1895).
- Sipovskii V., "O rasshirenii kursa russkoi slovesnosti v gimnaziakh i real'nykh uchilishchakh", *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 8 (1905).
- Stoiunin V. Ia., *O prepodavanii russkoi literatury* (St Petersburg, 1864).
- "Uchebnye plany predmetov, prepodavaemykh v muzhskikh gimnaziakh Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia", *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 162 (1872), no. 7, 35-161.

#### SECONDARY SOURCES:

- Byford A., "Between Literary Education and Academic Learning: The Study of Literature at Secondary School in Late Imperial Russia (1860s-1900s)", *History of Education*, 33 (2004).
- , "Turning Pedagogy into a Science: Teachers and Psychologists in Late Imperial Russia (1897-1917)", *Osiris* 23 (2008), 50-81.
- Chertov V. F., *Russkaia slovesnost' v dorevoliutsionnoi shkole. Izdanie 2-e, ispravlennoe i dopolnennoe* (Moscow, 2013).
- Ganelin Sh. I., *Ocherki po istorii srednei shkoly v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XIX veka* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1950).
- Guillory J., *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago, 1993).
- Hunter I., *Culture and Government. The Emergence of Literary Education* (London, 1988).
- Istoriia dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii v dnevnikh i vospominaniakh. Annotirovannyi ukazatel' knig i publikatsii v zhurnalakh*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1976-1989).
- Reitblat A. I., "Chtenie v Rossii (1861-1917)", in Idem, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009).
- Reut A. V., "Sochineniia gimnazistov dlia literaturnykh besed v 1840-1860-e gg.: analiz tematiki", *Vestnik Volgogradskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta. Pedagogicheskie nauki*, 8 (2016), 31-32.
- Rubakin N. A., "Chastnye biblioteki i vneklassnoe chtenie uchashchikhsia", *Zhenskoe obrazovanie*, 6-7 (1889).
- , *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike: Fakty, tsifry i nabliudeniia* (St Petersburg, 1895).
- Vdovin A., "'Dmitry Tolstoi's Classicism' and the Formation of the Russian Literary Canon in the High School Curriculum", *Ab Imperio* 4 (2017), 108-137.

- Vdovin A., Leibov R. “Khrestomatiinye teksty: russkaia poeziia i shkol’naia praktika XIX stoletia” in: *Acta Slavica Estonica IV. Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii. Literaturovedenie, IX. Khrestomatiinye teksty: russkaia pedagogicheskaiia praktika XIX veka i poeticheskii kanon* (Tartu, 2013), 7–34.
- Zhitomirova N. N., “Chitatel’skie zaprosy i krug chteniia uchashchikhsia srednei shkoly predrevoliutsionnoi Rossii XIX i nachala XX veka”, *Istoriia russkogo chitatelia* (Leningrad, 1976), 2, 67-82.
- Zubkov I. V., “Zemskie shkoly, gimnazii i real’nye uchilishcha (1890-1916 gody)” in: *Raspisanie peremen: Ocherki istorii obrazovatel’noi i nauchnoi politiki v Rossiiskoi imperii – SSSR (konets 1880-kh – 1930-e gody)* (Moscow, 2012).

THE BOOK AND THE PEASANT IN THE NINETEENTH AND THE  
BEGINNING OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: FROM ILLITERACY  
TO THE RELIGIOUS BOOK TO THE SECULAR BOOK

Abram Reitblat

Peasants comprised the overwhelming majority of the population in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century—more than three quarters according to the census of 1897—and the extent of the spread and impact of the printed word in the country depended on their attitude to reading. In order to understand what the reading habits of the peasants were determined by, it is necessary to examine how writing in Russia originally arose and spread. It was during this initial period that many attitudes which ultimately determined the outlooks of broad sections of the population over the next thousand years were formed.

Slavic writing was created in the ninth century, and Byzantine and Bulgarian missionaries moved it to Rus in the tenth century. During this period it facilitated the propaganda of Christian dogma, which was carried out in the Old Bulgarian language. The use of this outside language contributed, on the one hand, to the exclusion of religious texts from the domestic sphere—to their “sacralisation”—and on the other hand, to the formation of a relationship that treated writing and reading as alien and foreign phenomena. According to some experts, as a result, a culture of diglossia—a distribution of functions between languages, each of which acted in a certain area—came to exist. There was Russian language—oral, profane, for the everyday, uncodified; at the same time, there was Church Slavonic language—written, sacral, and standardised<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> See B. A. Uspenskii, *Iazykovaia situatsiia Kievskoi Rusi i ee znachenie dlia istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* (Moscow, 1983).

Soon there appeared texts that represented a written fixation of oral forms of speech (in the fields of law and trade and everyday correspondence). From the end of the twelfth century, there were a few secular works (such as *The Tale of Igor's Campaign* [*Slovo o polku Igorevom*] and so on), but religious texts were written only in Church Slavonic (that is, literary) language.<sup>2</sup> A sacral text, according to the norms of that time, could not be translated into Russian, and an everyday text could not be translated into Church Slavonic. Reading and writing were taught only in Church Slavonic, and as a result, reading was associated primarily with the sacral realm.

During this period, reading was understood primarily as a particular kind of action—a component of religious ritual practice associated with the utterance of sacred texts out loud. The teaching of reading was conducted according to the Psalter, that is, the part of the Bible containing the psalms of King David (the beginning of this tradition was established in Byzantium no later than the ninth century),<sup>3</sup> while the texts were learned by heart and repeatedly recited aloud. In fact, the ability to read at that time specifically meant the ability to read religious texts. The fact that the reading took place in a foreign language contributed to separation of texts from domestic life. Thus, reading had, first of all, a ritual-magical character that was alien to standard behavior.

Books were read only by clerics and a few representatives of the social upper classes (princes and their confidants). Most of the books being rewritten and read were liturgical books: the lives of the saints, the works of the church fathers. Only a few works in the repertoire of an Old Russian reader were secular in nature (chronicles, historical tales, collections of sayings), but they also, as a rule, served a Christian worldview, one that offered an appropriate framing of world history and world order. “Recreational” reading or fiction did not exist in Russia until the end of the sixteenth century. Moreover, Old Russian literature contained assertions that reading could be not only useful but also harmful; the latter was believed to be able to lead one astray from the true path, away from genuine faith. “Correct” reading allowed one to communicate with God, and “improper” reading appeared to be dangerous, pushing one towards the devil.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the possession of literacy and its use for functional purposes (administrative management, diplomacy, legal proceedings, trade and so on) was quite widespread in cities, but the perception of such practical record-keeping was not considered true reading in medieval Rus.

---

2 See K. D. Seemann, “‘Diglossiia’ i sistemy iazykovoï kommunikatsii v Drevnei Rusi”, in *IX Mezhdunarodnyi s’ezd slavistov: Reziime dokladov i pis’mennykh soobshchenii*. Kiev, sentiabr’ 1983 (Moscow, 1983), 54.

3 See A. P. Kazhdan, *Kniga i pisatel’ v Vizantii* (Moscow, 1973), 47.

4 See E. A. Mel’nikova, “Voobrazhaemaia kniga”: ocherki po istorii fol’klora o knigakh i chtenii v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 2011), 58-63.

The peasants in Ancient Rus were overwhelmingly illiterate. Among them reading appeared to be something extraordinary, and if a peasant engaged in reading, it was perceived as an attempt by a layman to touch the sacred sphere. Basic changes in attitude to reading and its degree of prevalence in this environment did not occur for several hundred years; “One who knew how to read or write was perceived as a person outside the traditional milieu, as a ‘stranger’ with features belonging to the sacred world.”<sup>5</sup> The Tatar-Mongol conquest led to a slowdown in the socioeconomic and cultural development of Russia. In all likelihood, the level of literacy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries did not exceed what was achieved during the thirteenth century, and by the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, had grown but slightly, amounting to 8-10% of the population.<sup>6</sup> But until the middle of the seventeenth century, only a very small part of those who were literate read books. At various points of time, it seems that there were no more than several thousand readers of books.

It was only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with the acceleration of the country’s socioeconomic, political, and cultural development, that readership began to grow rapidly. Now in order to successfully fulfill their duties, representatives of the nobility had to be literate and educated, which meant accessing and reading relevant books. The function of book reading had changed significantly: with an increase in the number of readers, and with expanding specialisation, secular books that codified and taught various norms of social behavior—i.e. books that were scientific and technical, didactic and fictional (with a strong didactic emphasis)—began to form an increasingly large part of reading. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, reading was already widespread in noble circles. However, the nobility, clergy, officials, and other representatives of the upper classes in the eighteenth century represented only 6% of the population. The overwhelming majority (90%)<sup>7</sup> of the population were peasants, who were almost completely illiterate.

The exception was the Old Believers, that is, representatives of various currents of religious practice that did not accept Patriarch Nikon’s church reform in the 1650s-1660s. This reform was aimed at the unification of the church service of the Russian church with the Greek church. However, the Old Believers claimed loyalty to Russian church traditions and not only held worship services using pre-Reform editions, but also fought against other such innovations, composing an extensive polemical literature in the process. The prerequisite for conscious fidelity to tradition was considered to be the independent reading of the Bible and various kinds of mentoring texts. Such reading was aimed at achieving spiritual and moral perfection

5 A. B. Moroz, “K semantike slova ‘kniga’ v narodnoi kul’ture: kniga kak sakral’nyi predmet,” in *Sny Bogoroditsy: issledovaniia po antropologii religii* (St. Petersburg, 2006), 267.

6 See B. V. Sapunov, *Kniga v Rossii v XI—XIII vv.* (Leningrad, 1978), 199.

7 See Ia. E. Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii za 400 let* (Moscow, 1973), 56.

and, ultimately, approaching God. In addition, the book “provided advice for difficult life situations—it sought condemnation of or justification for the offending actions.”<sup>8</sup> At the same time, in every Old Believer movement there was a corresponding set of books, including those created by mentors, serving to ensure cohesion among the representatives of this movement—to unite them. In order for all those who belonged to the movement to enter it consciously, the Old Believers opened schools in which they taught reading (according to the Psalter and the Book of Hours) and writing. As a result, in 1908, the average literacy rate in European Russia was 23%, while amongst the Old Believers it reached 36%, and even 43% in the northern provinces.<sup>9</sup> The Old Believers rewrote books published before the reforms of Nikon (in the eighteenth century they even created scriptoriums), and established community and family libraries. Criteria for the selection of books were as follows: “... the need to understand the main aspects of dogma; moral tasks; educational aspirations, associated, as a rule, with a circle of everyday problems, regulated by all the same boundaries of ancient Orthodox piety; publicistic needs, which serve as the basis for a new polemical culture, etc.”<sup>10</sup> The libraries included both liturgical books and works of Old Believer writers (the lives of the saints, legends and visions, sermons, epistles, polemical writings, teachings, historical narratives, and so on), and various apocrypha (*The Trials of the Blessed Virgin* [*Khozhdenie Bogoroditsy po mukam*], *The Dream of the Virgin* [*Son Bogoroditsy*], *The Vision of the Apostle Paul* [*Videnie apostola Pavla*]), etc. In the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, secular books—historical, philosophical, and similar—began to appear in these libraries.<sup>11</sup>

A significant factor in the distribution of the book in the Old Believers’ sphere was persecution by the state and the official church, which led to the destruction of the Old Believers’ monasteries, sketes, and so on. V. G. Senatov wrote at the beginning of the twentieth century that:

the persecution of the old books contributed to the fact that they moved from churches to private homes of adherents to antiquity. The latter in every way, sparing no effort, no skill, no means, tried to acquire persecuted books, hide them and save them. And almost all Russian blacklisted books and ancient literature

---

8 T. I. Dronova, *Russkie starovery-bespopovtsy Ust'-Tsil'my: konfessional'nye traditsii v obriadakh zhiznennogo tsikla (konets XIX-XX v.)* (Syktyvkar, 2002), 25.

9 K. Ia. Kozhurin, *Povsednevnaia zhizn' starobriadtsev* (Moscow, 2014), 407.

10 E. I. Dergacheva-Skop, V. N. Alekseev, “Obshchinnye biblioteki krest'ianskikh starobriadcheskikh mirov Sibiri XVIII – nachala XX vv. i ikh rol' v sokhranении traditsionnoi dukhovnoi kul'tury,” in *Sibir' na perekrestke mirovykh religii* (Novosibirsk, 2002), 128.

11 See, for example: M. M. Beliakova, T.V. Chertoritskaia, “O krest'ianskoi starobriadcheskoi biblioteke nachala XX v.,” in *Obshchestvennoe soznanie, knizhnost', literatura perioda feodalizma* (Novosibirsk, 1990), 16-20.



spread very quickly among the Russian people, mainly among its lower classes – merchants and peasants.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the existence of religious books issued prior to the church reform, as well as editions of foreign and clandestine Old Believer printing houses, it was forbidden to print Old Believer books until 1905. Consequently, reading in this environment was carried out almost entirely with hand-written manuscripts. A shortage of printed books was not the only factor here: Old Believer communities' orientation towards the olden times endowed the manuscript book with an elevated authority.

The number of Old Believers was fairly significant. According to the census of 1897 (in which the community's under-reporting was a likely factor), there were approximately 2.2 million Old Believers, i.e. almost 2% of the country's population. It is also necessary to take into account representatives of a number of Christian sects (Stundists, Molokans, Dukhobors, etc.), whose attitude toward literacy and reading religious texts was much closer to the Old Believers.

But among the main part of the peasant population, the attitude towards the book and reading was different. The traditional religious and mythological picture of the world, which synthesized the remnants of pagan beliefs and elements of Christian dogma, as well as relationship norms within the family and the wider peasant community, were acquired in oral form and in everyday communication with others. Long-established forms of subsistence farming stymied the rationalization of agrarian labor, and likewise prevented the circulation of relevant literature on technological innovations, trade optimization, etc. The peasant did not really need to read. As the recollections of peasants show, even in the middle of the nineteenth century, most of them believed that books did not exist for them, and that they needed to work rather than read. Let us cite a number of characteristic quotes: "In my father's shop I read stealthily; I'd already heard more than once that I was not my father's assistant, if I could be seen with my head in a book like that. [...]. In quarrels my coevals poked books directly into my eyes—'we do not read books, we need to earn bread' " (from the a son of a serf, early 1850s)<sup>13</sup>; "I learned to read myself when I was already an adult and married [...]. I had to study secretly, away from my father and mother, because my parents were formidable, and did not allow me to engage with such (in their opinion) nonsense" (1860s).<sup>14</sup>

S. P. Pod'iachev recalled that in the mid-70s his father, a former serf, noticed that he (then in his school years) read a lot. His father

<sup>12</sup> V. G. Senatov, *Filosofia istorii staroobriadchestva* (Moscow, 1995), 28.

<sup>13</sup> L. Checherskii [L. Korkhov], "Iz shkol'nykh vospominanii krest'ianina", *Neva*, 7 (1911), 597-598.

<sup>14</sup> S. V. Martynov, *Sovremennoe polozhenie russkoi derevni* (Saratov, 1903), 56.

became angry and made fun of me [...]. Mother whispered to me fearfully, trying to speak as intelligibly as possible: “Why is it, sonny, that you seem to read everything? Please quit this occupation, it will lead to no good! Think: you’re not a gentleman, after all. Heaven forbid if the lords will get word of it! The lords will find out, and they’ll say: ‘What kind of a son are you raising? Is he a rich man’s son, is that it? A noble son?’ It’s not good! Come on! It’s better to pray to the heavenly father. To go as often as possible to the church. Read prayers instead [...]. Books will not feed you.”<sup>15</sup>

However, from the second half of the eighteenth century on, literacy (and, accordingly, reading) begin to gradually penetrate into the peasant environment. This involved, as a rule, people who were not engaged in agricultural work—peasants-merchants or artisans, or domestic serfs.<sup>16</sup> Representatives of these groups of peasants tried to independently read the Gospel, Psalter, the lives of saints and other religious texts to reinforce and deepen their religious faith. Still, most of the peasants perceived the religious book as a ritual-magical object, and the act of reading it as a ritual-magical activity. A well-known researcher of reading, S. A. Rappoport, noted that the peasant-reader “often considers the very reading of a religious book to be a charitable and soul-saving work [...]. The mechanical process of reading acquires a self-sufficient value for most of the literate representatives of the lower estates, and the significance is not unimportant, mainly religious”.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, the reading of religious books coincided with religious holidays, fasts, and so on. A peasant from the Kaluga province noted that “books of spiritual content are preferred to secular in the Great Lent, and by old men—because they always want salvation.”<sup>18</sup>

The most popular reading subject was typically not the Old Testament and not the Gospels, but the lives of the saints. Rather than teachings or stories which were abstracted from familiar everyday specifics, the peasants preferred biographical narratives that made it possible to understand the main aspects of the Christian way of life:

these lives of the saints are designed for an audience that needs not ideas, but norms—dogmatic statements taken a priori by themselves. The aim of hagiography, apparently, is to establish a certain emotional and moral *atmosphere*, a special “orthodox” world-feeling. “Tenderness,” through which the spiritual cold

15 S. P. Pod’iachev, *Moia zhizn’* (Moscow, 1934), 17-18.

16 See M. D. Kurmacheva, *Krepostnaia intelligentsiia Rossii* (Moscow, 1983), 84-113.

17 S. A. An-skii [S. A. Rappoport], *Narod i kniga* (Moscow, 1913), 70.

18 Department of manuscripts of the Russian state library (Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi gosudarstvennoi biblioteki - OR RGB), f. 358, k. 5, d. 1, l. 12.

melts and the severity of self-assertion is evaporated from the soul, with the help of the “fear of God” which must remove from itself and release the rapturous astonishment of the Miracle. Hagiography creates an atmosphere of appropriate submission before God in which it is easy to feel bliss [...]. A tenderness that does not seek a way out, but returns to itself and is therefore satisfied, the source of emotional interest of the reader of lives of the saints—a source of pleasure through a sense of contentment, comfort [...]. The unlimited repetition of the theretofore known precept confirms the belief in the immutability of the existing order of things and its firm correspondence to prescribed law.<sup>19</sup>

Among the most popular books of this kind were those that covered the lives of Tikhon of Zadonsk, Sergius of Radonezh, Cyril and Methodius, Alexius the Man of God, Zosima Solovetskii and Savvatii Solovetskii, and others.

Of the other religious books, the Psalter, the Gospel, and moral books were most widely distributed. The Bible was not often encountered in the peasant environment—there was a notion that after reading the Bible completely, one might go insane. Instead, it mostly acted as a sacred object, used in everyday life not for reading, but for divination, treatment, and so on. Moreover, there were stories about a special magical “black” book (which in reality did not exist) used by a priest for taking demons to task, which was in fact ambivalent and could be used for both good and evil (if it fell into the hands of a sorcerer).<sup>20</sup>

The emergence of the figure of the peasant-reader gradually—in different places in different ways (depending on how close to a city this or that village was, how prosperous the peasants were)—led to a change in attitudes toward reading. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the general negative attitude toward peasant-readers in this environment became more complex and differentiated. At this time, the peasants now tended to place books into two categories: those that were useful and concerned good deeds, and those that were seen as bad or useless. Among the first were, as a rule, religious books,<sup>21</sup> among the second—secular books, primarily fiction, which was perceived as harmful, and able to lead one down the wrong path. The following are a few accounts from villages in different regions

19 B. Berman, “Chitatel' zhitiia,” in *Khudozhestvennyi iazyk srednevekov'ia* (Moscow, 1982), 162, 180.

20 See Mel'nikova, “Voobrazaemaia kniga,” 68-103.

21 See M. M. Gromyko, “Krug chteniia russkikh krest'ian v kontse XIX veka,” in *V nachale bylo slovo: Prazdnik slavianskoi pis'mennosti i kul'tury v Novgorode* (Moscow, 1990), 189-197; A.V. Buganov, “Dukhovnaia knizhnost' i pis'mennost' russkikh krest'ian XIX veka,” in *Pravoslavnaia zhizn' russkikh krest'ian XIX-XX vekov: itogi etnograficheskikh issledovaniï* (Moscow, 2001), 316-332.

of Russia: “Fathers often beat their children for daring to read fairy tales in their presence in spite of prohibitions [...] Peasants of a more serious age barely tolerate them (fairy tales - A. R.), while calling their writers ‘idle’ and ‘empty chatterboxes’” (Voronezh province, 1888); “Peasants think that non-divine books are written only by idle people, layabouts—for fun or for personal gain and reward. The older people are especially doubtful as to the nature of modern, secular books written by ordinary people, and not by saints, to whom angels speak as they write” (Vyatka province, early 1890s); in the village they say: “Divine reading redeems for the soul and is of interest,” but “fables and fairy tales—all this is not true, it never happened [...]” (Perm province, late 1880’s).<sup>22</sup>

Even the peasants who moved to the city and became workers often confined themselves to reading religious literature: “Having supped, the father (a worker of peasant origin - A. R.) sat down to read. His books were valuable and of exclusively spiritual content [...]. We sweated over them for many years, with my father, from evening to evening we read and re-read them, and we almost lost our minds and it seemed to us that we were not far from the shrine”<sup>23</sup> (1870s). “This religious dope had power over me for a long time. The books that I got to read upon my arrival from the village were about saints and, most of all, various church sermons.”<sup>24</sup> “I am carried away by a religious mood. I read sacred literature [...]. I have begun to read the Gospel and the Bible”<sup>25</sup> (early twentieth century, a factory worker of peasant origin).

While the book was treated only as a transmitter of religious values, providing knowledge of the ‘righteous’ path, the number of readers among peasants was small. Gradually, however, old patriarchal relations in the village began to crumble, especially with the abolition of serfdom. As an expert on the economic history of Russia notes,

The peasant reform of 1861 severely undermined the foundations of serfdom and created the preconditions for the rapid development of capitalist relations in the countryside; the basis of the corvee system of the economy, with its patriarchal character, the insularity of the fiefdom, and the power of the landowner over the peasants, were also undermined.<sup>26</sup>

---

22 See OR RGB, f. 358, k. 6, d. 17, l. 13; k. 5, d. 13, l. 26 ob; k. 6, d. 18, l. 25; compare: E. Statuiev, “Iz detskikh vospominanii krest’ianina,” *Severnnyi vestnik*, 7 (1885), 99.

23 Quoted by: N. A. Rubakin, “K kharakteristike chitatelia i pisatel’ia iz naroda,” *Severnnyi vestnik*, 5 (1891), 64.

24 A. Buiko, *Put’ rabochego* (Moscow, 1934), 15.

25 A. Artamonov, *Ot derevni do katorgi* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1929), 11.

26 P. A. Khromov, *Ekonomicheskoe razvitiie Rossii* (Moscow, 1967), 321.

With time, the conventions of an urban lifestyle (in particular, the practice of reading books) penetrated the rural environment. Along with a relatively small group of hereditary proletarians and peasants constantly engaged in agricultural work, there was also a group engaged in seasonal work (i.e. those peasants who observed a practice of leaving the country for the city in winter when there was no agricultural work). This large group of “intermediate” workers did not break ties with the village, returning there for the period of field work or during a recession in production; however, they were nevertheless greatly involved in urban life.<sup>27</sup>

A turning point in relation to literacy in the peasant environment was associated with a change in the forms of literacy. Earlier, in the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century, the overwhelming majority of those peasants who knew how to read learned how to do so not in school, but with the help of priests and sextons, literate relatives, and self-taught teachers who taught at home. At the heart of the training lay, as a rule, the mechanical memorization of the Book of Hours and the Psalter (in the Church Slavonic language). As a result, reading was not necessarily accompanied by an understanding of what was read.

After the school reform of 1864 and the emergence of *zemstvos* (local self-governing bodies established in 1864 and dealing with issues such as medical care, statistics, public education, and similar, along with a number of economic spheres), a network of primary schools in rural areas started to develop.<sup>28</sup> In *zemstvo* schools, children were trained not in mechanical but in meaningful reading, designed to assist understanding of the text being read. They learned to read not in Church Slavonic, but in Russian. Education in the *zemstvo* schools taught the peasants to see rural life as if from outside it. This idea was aphoristically expressed by a peasant who wrote in 1893 that “the school gives a second sight, and gives us new eyes, with which two worlds can be seen.”<sup>29</sup> The military reform of 1874 also played a part in this process, since recruits in the army were taught to read and write, besides which they had the opportunity to “see the world,” and get acquainted with another way of life and with more modern standards of behavior.

Sharp changes in peasant attitudes towards literacy emerged in the last third of the nineteenth century, as demonstrated by the research of I. Voronov. In the 1870s the majority of the population treated literacy negatively or indifferently, and by the very end of the nineteenth century, there

---

27 See B. N. Mironov, *Sotsial'naia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII -- nachalo XX v.): Genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi sem'i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 2000), vol. 2, 332-345.

28 See B. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools. Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914*. (Berkeley, 1990).

29 P. Orelkin, “Otvety okonchivshikh kurs v narodnykh shkolakh na voprosy redaktsii ‘Russkogo nachal'nogo uchitel'ia,’” *Russkii nachal'nyi uchitel'*, 12 (1893), 547.

were still some people who had a negative attitude toward reading and writing (“if one’s pockets are empty, the fact of one’s literacy, or illiteracy, is unimportant,” “literacy is a great thing, but we can live without it”), as well as persons who viewed literacy exclusively through the lens of religious significance (reading and writing, “holy work,” “divine work,” it “pleases God,” “teaches the divine,” etc.). However, people possessing this mindset had become comparatively few. The majority supported the vital, practical utility of literacy (“now it’s hard to live without literacy,” “the educated man is paid more at the factory, and it is he that will get a place over an illiterate one,” “we grew up stupid, and children need to be taught to grow up clever”). At the end of nineteenth century in the Voronezh province, 88.4% of the peasants surveyed believed that literacy was necessary for everyone (despite the fact that two thirds of them were illiterate), 8.9% did not care about reading and writing, and only 2.7% (mostly old people) viewed literacy negatively. At the same time, among the supporters of literacy, only 13.3% noted its religious and moral role, while the others emphasized its importance for the comprehensive improvement of the person, the facilitation of life, material benefits, and so on.<sup>30</sup>

The increase in the level of literacy was particularly relevant for the younger generation. If we take into account that the rise of literacy coincided with a period of significant breakdowns in traditional social relations and worldviews, it becomes clear that a considerable number of peasant children began looking for answers to their burning questions in books, using them as guides for life. In addition, the peasant way of life during this period was more tolerant of reading among the young (as well as older ones, albeit with regard to another type of literature), treating it as permissible or even normal; on the other hand, for an adult peasant who possessed a land plot and was engaged in agricultural labor, reading would be considered capricious. In this social group, which formed the brunt of the rural population, readers became more common only in the 1880s and 1890s, when the graduates of the zemstvo schools grew up.

We do not have exact figures about the extent of reading in the villages of that time. Overall, for the late nineteenth century the volume of the readership was, according to our estimates, approximately 10-15% of the rural population, that is, 5-7 million people. True, many more peasants had become acquainted with books, due to the fact that the tradition of joint reading was widespread in the countryside and many listened to printed texts being read aloud rather than reading them themselves.

The type of book most frequently read was the *lubok* (a kind of brochure that had a picture on the cover and was addressed mainly to the peasant

---

30 I. Voronov, *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniuu v Voronezhskoi gubernii* (Voronezh, 1899), 15-21.

audience). In 1894 their total circulation was about 10-15 million copies.<sup>31</sup> This *lubok* literature consisted of books of various types and genres related to different literary and ideological traditions. *Lubok* publications embodied specific forms of writing and distribution that differed from those of the educated sections of the population.

The oldest genre in the history of the *lubok* was religious literature—the lives of saints and instructive books (for example, F. A. Emin’s regularly republished *The Way to Salvation* [*Put’ k spaseniiu*] from the eighteenth century). Moreover, according to the number of books produced annually, and given the share of such publications in home libraries, they occupied one of the leading segments of popular literature.

Next (organized by period of origin) were adventurous chivalric romances, which had made their way to Russia in the seventeenth century (mainly in translations from Polish) and for a long time were distributed in manuscript form, and were included in *lubok* literature at the end of the eighteenth century. They were repeatedly reissued long after and even lived to see the October Revolution. The most famous was *The tale of Bova Korolevich* (*Povest’ o Bove Koroleviche*), which appeared in Rus in the sixteenth century. Almost equally popular was *The tale of Eruslan Lazarevich* (*Skazka o Eruslane Lazareviche*), which had been passed around Russia for a long time in the form of an oral legend and was first recorded in written form only in the 1640s. Also widely known were the chivalric romances *Guak, or The Unshakable Fidelity* (*Guak, ili Nepreoborimaia vernost’*) and *The Story of the Brave Knight Franzil Venetsian and the Beautiful Queen Rentsivena* (*Istoriia o khrabrom rytsare Frantsyle Venetsiane i o prekrasnoi koroleve Rentsivene*). Somewhat later, in the eighteenth century, *The Tale of the Adventure of the English Milord George* (*Povest’ o prikliuchenii angliiskogo Milorda Georga*) (reworked by M. Komarov) was published for the first time and immediately achieved wide popularity.

Another source of *lubok* literature was Russian folklore, which appeared in print in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Under this designation we primarily have in mind such genres as songs and fairy tales. It should be noted that fairy tales usually appeared in the form of reworkings and retellings, which was due to the need to modernize the text and bring it in line with the tastes and needs of the modern grassroots reader. In addition to fairy tales, songs also began to appear in *lubok* publications.

The fourth source for *lubok* literature was the array of Russian historical novels written in the 1830s, which were already oriented towards folklore, as per telling subheadings such as “composed according to Moscow legends,” and so on. Many of the books written in those years were adapted for *lubok* literature and republished many times; nevertheless, there was typically a

<sup>31</sup> See *Ezhegodnik. Obzor knig dlia narodnogo chteniia. 1894* (Moscow, 1895), 3; V. P. Vakhterov, *Vneshkol’noe obrazovanie naroda* (Moscow, 1896), 6.

very limited selection that varied depending upon availability. Even popular authors of the time typically had but one or two of their works adapted into *lubok* literature. (In addition, the author's name might even be left off, and the work published anonymously.) The most popular of the books of this kind were, of course, the novel by N. I. Zriakhov *The Battle of the Russians with the Kabardians, or the Beautiful Mohammedan Dies on the Coffin of Her Husband* (*Bitva russkikh s kabardintsami, ili Prekrasnaia magometanka, umiraiushchaia na grobe svoego muzha*), published for the first time in Moscow in 1840. Also of note are I. I. Lazhechnikov's *Ice House* (*Ledianoi dom*) (1835) and M. I. Zagoskin's *Iurii Miloslavskii* (*Iurii Miloslavskii*) (1829) and Kuzma Roshchin (*Kuz'ma Roshchin*) (1836). Among the other books included in the *lubok* publications of the 1830s were S. M. Lubetskii's *Sokolniki, or the Weakening of the Power of the Tatars over Russia* (*Sokol'niki, ili Pokolebanie vladychestva tatar nad Rossieiu*) (1832), R. M. Zotov's *The Mysterious Monk* (*Tainstvennyi monakh*) (1834), A. Moskvichin's (A. A. Pavlov) *Yapancha, Tatar Rider, or Conquest of Kazan' by Tsar Ivan the Terrible* (*Iapancha, tatarskii naezdnic, ili Zavoevanie Kazani tsarem Ivanom Groznym*) (1834), and so on.

To continue with our description of *lubok* literature, it is necessary to characterize the production of authors who wrote specifically for that genre. Only a few of them are known by their names (a significant part of the publications were published anonymously or under pseudonyms such as Foma Balagur (Joker), Uncle Fyodor, etc.), including such writers as V. F. Potapov, V. Y. Shmitanovskii, V. Suvorov, N. M. Pazukhin and V. A. Lunin (pseudonym—Kukel). Among the most prolific and popular *lubok* creators were I. S. Ivin, Valentin Volgin and K. K. Golokhvastov.

Finally, other publications in this vein might include a small number of works by well-known writers of the nineteenth century, most often using folkloric subjects or describing folk life (Krylov's fables, Pushkin's fairy tales, *The Song about the Merchant Kalashnikov* (*Pesnia pro kuptsa Kalashnikova*) by Lermontov, and a number of folk tales by L. N. Tolstoi, etc.).

*Lubok* literature occupied an intermediate position between folklore and literature in the generally accepted sense of the word. First of all, it was close to folklore in a genealogical sense, since a significant part of it was (in one form or another) referenced fixtures of oral folk literature, even if folkloric texts were typically adapted in meaningful ways. Even when a *lubok* was the product of an independent author's creativity, it was close to folklore in its poetics (it appealed to the reader in prose stories, standard formulas and "folk verse" in poetry, etc.). Like folklore, the *lubok* usually did not include the name of the text's author and did not indicate the existence of a canonical version of its content (different versions of the work coexisted simultaneously, linked to the pen of different re-writers), just as different taleswappers put their own spin on a fairy tale or *bylina*. Finally, it was extremely important that, like folklore, *lubok* literature was received by many



consumers aurally (by virtue of their illiteracy or lack of literacy) via the process of collective reading, either in the family, at a neighbors's place, or at a gathering of seasonal workers, etc. In the village there was a tradition of collective reading on Sundays and holidays, and in the winter and on weekdays. A peasant from the Kaluga province wrote in 1889: "Spring is a convenient time for us to read together. Because of the warmth, people go out into the street, someone takes out a book, begins to read, and listeners gather from all directions. It always happens on a holiday [...]."<sup>32</sup> Summarizing such evidence, M. M. Gromyko comes to the conclusion that "the compositions repeatedly reread were also remembered by heart and distributed further via oral transmission."<sup>33</sup>

This *lubok* literature was different from the "usual" literature, as was the nature of its publication (format, cover, design) and distribution. As previously mentioned, it was created by special "*lubok literati*," most often by adapting books that had previously appeared within the framework of "higher" forms of literature. From there, the books were sent to publishers who specialized in the production of such literature. Some of them served the mainly urban lower classes (A. I. Manukhin, S. I. Leukhin, A. M. Zemskii, D. I. Presnov), and others served those living in the villages (I. A. Morozov, A. A. Abramov, I. D. Sytin and E. A. Gubanov).

The *lubok* books made their way into villages in three main ways. The first was through fairs, which played an important role in the economy and culture of post-reform Russia. Along with other goods, significant numbers of books were brought to fairs from St. Petersburg and especially from Moscow, and were bought up by visitors.<sup>34</sup>

After the end of the fair, on the last eve of the trip, the merchants, satisfied with their deeds, buy presents for their households; at the same time, they are known to order their clerks to run into a bookshop and grab some books that are 'cheaper' [...]. Thus books are purchased for one's children the same way that buns or gingerbread might be.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> OR RGB, f. 358, k. 5, d. 1, l. 12.

<sup>33</sup> M. M. Gromyko, *Traditsionnye normy povedeniia i formy obshcheniia russkikh krest'ian XIX v.* (Moscow, 1986), 152.

<sup>34</sup> See P. Mel'nikov, *Nizhegorodskaia iarmarka v 1843, 1844 i 1845 godakh* (Nizhni Novgorod, 1846), 204-208; I. Aksakov, *Issledovanie o torgovle na ukrainskikh iarmarkakh* (St. Petersburg, 1858), 92, 117, 136, 380; A. R. [A. A. Rusov], "Knizhnaia torgovlia na Vozdvizhenskoii iarmarke 1895 g. v Chernigove," *Zemskii sbornik Chernigovskoi gubernii*, 2/3 (1896), 38-68; A. O., "Prodazha knig i kartin dlia naroda na Nizhegorodskoi iarmarke 1899 g.," *Russkaia shkola*, 2 (1895), 254-255.

<sup>35</sup> V. P. Bezobrazov, *Narodnoe khoziaistvo v Rossii*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1882), vol. 1, 217.

Similarly, peasants bought books at fairs and bazaars as gifts for their children.<sup>36</sup> Wandering book hawkers (*ofeni*) at the fairs took (usually on credit) books for trade and peddling, and carried them through the villages. This network of hawkers was the second and, perhaps, the main system by which books were delivered to the village. These type of hawkers also came to Moscow to take books on credit. They assembled large batches of *lubok* books (often with some additional objects and accessories) in their boxes and then walked through the villages selling books or exchanging them for food.<sup>37</sup> According to I. A. Gorshkov, several tens of thousands of these hawkers were operating in the 1860-1870s.<sup>38</sup> The publisher I. D. Sytin, who was well-acquainted with the trade of these hawkers, characterized their activity in such a way:

On market days all these traders appear in the marketplaces, offering book goods to the assembled people, and on other days they walk around the villages: with a box behind their shoulders from one village house to another, showing their goods there, praising them and suggesting them to the village dwellers—with whom they were able to speak in a language they understood—that gather around.<sup>39</sup>

However, after 1877, when all of the peddlers were ordered to receive a special gubernatorial permission to trade books, the network significantly decreased.

Another important channel that enhanced the penetration of books into the village was the trips peasants took to the city, mainly for work. Returning to the village, the seasonal workers usually brought gifts, including books.

For readers of *lubok* books, other (non-*lubok*) publications were not available, due to their high cost and incomprehensibility: the language employed in them seemed unusual, and (most importantly) the topics they covered too challenging. Only from the 1880s on did literature that was specially published by the intelligentsia for the peasants begin to spread. However, that literature did not always correspond to the needs and values of the peasants; an extreme example of this is their negative reaction to the books of the revolutionary populists (*narodniki*) that were secretly published for the peasants.<sup>40</sup>

36 See Voronov, *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniuu*, 90.

37 See the memories of one of these *ofen'*: N. I. Sveshnikov, *Vospominaniia propashchego cheloveka*, edited by A. I. Reitblat (Moscow, 1996).

38 Iu. A. Gorshkov, "Torgovlia narodnymi izdaniiami i konsentratsiia torgovogo kapitala v lubochnom knizhnom dele poreformennoi Rossii (1860-1870-e gg.)," *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX-nachale XX v.*, 1 (1983), 110.

39 I. D. Sytin, *Zhizn' dlia knigi* (Moscow, 1962), 57.

40 See Iu. A. Safonova, "Praktiki 'nechteniia': krest'ianin naedine s narodnicheskoi nelegal'noi literaturoi," *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX – nachale XX veka*, 17 (2014), 24-25.

*Lubok* literature was read primarily by peasant youth: they were the most literate, and they more frequently sought in books answers to the new demands of life. A good idea of the scale of the acquisition and reading of various popular books can be acquired using information about the structure of *lubok* book publishing. The orientation of *lubok* publishers towards the needs of the peasants and an established distribution network ensured a rapid circulation of popular literature. Virtually an entire print run would be sold out within a year, and a year or two later, if necessary, a new edition would be printed. According to the Moscow Literacy Committee, in 1894, a total of 786 *lubok* books were published; of these, 32% were religious and moral works, 52% were fiction, and 16% were books of other types (songbooks, dream-books, letter writing manuals and so on). Among the religious and moral books, 55% concerned the lives of saints, 33%—religious and moral teachings. Among the fiction, 42% were stories on modern themes, 34%—fairy tales, 16%—historical stories, and 5%—chivalric romances, etc.<sup>41</sup>

These data are confirmed by surveys of *zemstvo* statisticians conducted during the years 1880-1900, and allow us to characterize the peasants' attitude towards books and reading, their reading preferences, and the composition of their home libraries. Although the studies were carried out in different regions and in different years, they nevertheless produced similar results in many respects. The data clearly indicates the presence of a large number of religious books among the peasants. However, the percentages given below do not allow us to draw universal conclusions about the function of the book in peasants' reading practices. This is due to the fact that different kinds of books were kept in a variety storage conditions and were read in distinct ways. The religious book was considered sacred. Therefore, it was carefully preserved and kept in a special, honorable place in the house. It was usually a large volume, and well bound. Possession of such a book would seem to reflect and enhance the virtue of the owner. All of this ensured good preservation of religious books.

Secular books (fairy tales and stories) were often printed in small volumes, and were purchased for spontaneous reading. They were not typically kept, but rather passed from hand to hand; they were read repeatedly and as a result quickly deteriorated. Thus, the very nature of such texts' intensive use lowered the share of fairy tales, stories, songbooks among the books kept by the peasants. This is the structure of the home collections (in which the *lubok* book prevailed) of the peasants of the three provinces of Russia in the early twentieth century.<sup>42</sup>

41 *Ezhegodnik*, 10, 13, 17.

42 A. V. Smirnov, "Kniga vo Vladimirskoi derevne," *Vestnik Vladimirskogo gubernskogo zemstva*, 5-6 (1905), 54-55; *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god* (Poltava, 1903), 143.

Kinds of books	Vladimir province	Orel province	Poltava province
Spiritual, moral (religious)	58,8	54,6	42,3
Famous authors	3,5	6,4	8,0
Other fiction	19,5	18,7	19,7
Historical and biographical	3,8	4,8	4,5
Agricultural	0,8	0,8	3,5
Scientific-Popular (Geography, Natural Sciences, Medicine)	2,1	1,4	2,6
Periodicals	11,5	2,6	8,2
Other	---	10,7	11,2

According to the survey, in the Voronezh province in 1897, religious books comprised 69.3% of those in farm households and small villages, and 50.5% in large commercial villages.<sup>43</sup>

Broadly speaking, changes in peasants' reading preferences were defined by a transition from religious books to secular ones, from the lives of saints to tales and novels. True, as the observers admitted, "books of spiritual, moral content enjoy the greatest respect amongst the elderly, and stories and novels are more respected by the younger generation,"<sup>44</sup> suggesting that there was not a rapid change of one type of reading to another. This is, rather, a statement about readers' preferences according to their age. In their older years, peasants often changed their interests and became readers of religious, moral literature. Naturally, some people enjoyed exposure to different types of literature. For example, in the Orel province, elderly peasant men who gathered in the winter for joint reading read liturgical literature some days, and in others—popular reprints of fairy tales (such as *Bova*, *Eruslan* and the like).<sup>45</sup>

So what, in sum, did *lubok* literature mean for the peasantry? In the post-reform period, objective socio-economic circumstances (the strengthening of the role of trade-money relations, villages' increased contact with legal bodies, the stratification of village community (*obshchina*), and the intensification of seasonal work practices), combined with the educational activities of the *zemstvos* and the populist intelligentsia (the growth of the school network in rural areas, the publication of "books for the people," the creation of "people's libraries") gradually destroyed the patriarchal picture

43 Voronov, *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniuu*, 54, 62.

44 N. S. Karinskii, "Chto chitaet krest'ianskoe naselenie Orlovskoi gubernii i kak ono otноситsia k knige," in *Sbornik statisticheskikh svedenii po nachal'nomu narodnomu obrazovaniuu v Orlovskoi gubernii za 1900-1901 uchebnyi god* (Orel, 1902), 115.

45 Gromyko, *Traditsionnye normy povedeniia*, 152.

of the world. At first these innovations only partially altered that culture, but by the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, they had led a considerable part of the peasantry into a crisis concerning their traditional worldview and encouraged them to engage in an intensive search for new spiritual support.

*Lubok* publications (as well as books in general) were read by those who had already been “gone astray” from the traditional rural way of life; who, through attending the *zemstvo* school or living in the city, had come into contact with a different culture and grasped that the prohibitions or regulations instilled in them by their parents and the rural environment were not binding. In books, the reader looked for answers to troubling questions—to help them navigate the complex world around them.

These individuals, as a rule, were dissatisfied with their place in the social hierarchy. The *lubok* reader was often looking for a way out of their ordinary life, even as others made efforts to fit into the “social system” by mastering a profession, marrying up, and so on. The *lubok* writer I. S. Ivin went on seasonal work trips in his childhood (at the end of the 1860s) with his father to various weaving factories in the Moscow province. He endured heavy physical labor, as well as beatings and insults from those in command, with difficulty: “I had one consolation at this time: I was addicted to reading. [...] Here I first became acquainted with *Bova Korolevich*, *Eruslan Lazarevich*, *Guak*, *Franzil Venetsian* and others. The reading of these books gave me an inexplicable pleasure [...].”<sup>46</sup> L. M. Grigorov, who in the early 1890s was an apprentice in a shoe shop, recalled that

there were free moments [...] when there was absolutely nothing to do—well, then my hand reached into my bosom and took out a thin, badly printed book—a tale, a grand vision born of Russian fancy [...]; my soul, forgetting about the boots and shoes, went into impenetrable forest thickets and trembled there from the noise of menacing trees—of giants; then, along with the firebird, I flew off to the far end of the world to a far-away kingdom [...]. I was transported away and forgot about everything else [...]. I took up my *Eruslan Lazarevich*, *Bova Korolevich* and *Princess Nesmeiana*. I loved them more than anything in the world, and I spent every penny I had to buy new tales.<sup>47</sup>

Works of *lubok* literature responded to the spiritual needs of the peasants, engaging topics that excited them and problems that vexed them. We will list some of the most important of them.

<sup>46</sup> I. S. Ivin, “Avtobiografiia,” in A. I. Reitblat (ed.) *Lubochnaia kniga* (Moscow, 1990), 353.

<sup>47</sup> Institute of Russian literature (Institut russkoi literatury -- IRLI), f. 586, d. 305 (Avtobiografiia L. M. Grigorova).

Peasants' formerly "naive," unreasoning attitudes to religion began to be rationalized more and more, which stimulated the appeal to religious-instructional literature such as the lives of saints, spiritual and instructive books (such as *The Way to Salvation*), but soon led some peasants (especially those who had moved to the city) to a crisis of belief and interest in atheism.<sup>48</sup> Going beyond the boundaries of the *obshchina* (both physically, in the form of walking, trips to the city, etc., and spiritually, through the knowledge gained in school) generated the need for a new object of self-identification. If earlier, a peasant's whole world was isolated within the village community (interestingly, the peasants' word used to denote their community was actually "world"), the peasants had now reimagined themselves primarily as residents of a particular country—Russia; hence the interest in books on its history and geography. This awareness was typically expressed through the opposition of "ours" and "not ours." In the past, the notion of "ours" for peasants was represented by members of their community; however, now that they saw themselves as residents of their country, literature about various historical events where clashes with external enemies occurred (the Kulikovo battle, the wars of Peter the Great, the Patriotic War of 1812, the Crimean War, etc.) inspired a new sense of identification and togetherness. Naturally, great interest was aroused by books' discussion of just such questions—the relationship of the sexes, parental authority, the rapid change in social customs and morals—which traditional culture framed within the most rigid norms. The oppression of the authorities now, as before, gave rise to a feeling of powerlessness and the desire for freedom, and in *lubok* literature, the image of a noble robber and rebel (which had long existed in folklore) took on a special role. The growing awareness of one's own personality, and contact with representatives of higher social and cultural strata, widened the peasant reader's world of feelings and emotions, increased the importance of love in relations between the sexes. Indeed, a stream of "courtly" literature that gave examples of "gallant" behavior as performed by different sexes was foregrounded in *lubok* publications. The influence of the city disintegrated traditional rural ethics and rural culture, and in late *lubok* publications, one finds books expressing sharp criticisms of urban mores from a moralistic point of view.<sup>49</sup> If we take into account that, as mentioned above, folklore (songs, tales) was reflected in *lubok* literature, and that works of classical writers and representatives of "high" literature were also included in it (both in an adapted and non-adapted form), then we will see how *lubok* literature strives for complexity and a heterogeneous audience—and did, in fact, answer the diverse demands made of it by different groups within the peasant population.

48 See L. I. Emeliakh, *Krest'iane i tserkov' nakanune Oktiabria* (Leningrad, 1976); M. M. Persits, *Ateizm russkogo rabochego (1870—1905 gg.)* (Moscow, 1965).

49 See J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), 361.

The growth in the peasants' level of education, their close contact with urban culture, the increased publication of books for ordinary people, and the adjustment of peasants to those books—all of this contributed to the complex status of *lubok* literature in the early twentieth century. It was partially displaced from the circle of peasant reading, and partially modernized; its content converged with “books for the people.”

Along with the transformation of the school system and the developments of the early 1860s, publishing activities aimed at peasants also enhanced the impact of urban culture on life in the village. The educated cultural strata (represented by their most diverse representatives from the government and the church, as well as interested conservatives, liberals, and revolutionaries) tried to create “books for the people” by organizing the publication of numerous books and periodicals; however, for various reasons, this activity was successful only from the second half of the 1880s on.

The growth of the number of libraries in rural areas also had a stimulating effect on the distribution of reading in the peasant environment. In the 1870-1880s, library services for peasants were carried out mainly by libraries that existed in rural schools. This became possible after 1867, following an order by the Ministry of Public Education dictating that these libraries become available for use not only by schoolchildren, but also by the entire peasant population of the area. The number of school libraries gradually grew, and many of them were created through the initiative of and using the money from the *zemstvos*. In total, in 1896 (according to incomplete data) there were 18,391 rural school libraries in Russia, and only 2-3 thousand of them were of a public nature.<sup>50</sup>

However, these libraries did not satisfy the peasants, because their collections were of poor quantity and lacked diversity, which was due to both their meager material resources and the restrictions on acquisitions created by the instructions of the Ministry of Public Education: their funds could only be used on books allowed by the Ministry for use in libraries of secondary and lower educational institutions, that is, mostly textbooks and children's publications<sup>51</sup>.

The emergence of a developed library network in rural areas was associated with the activities of the *zemstvos*. A special role in the success of this work was played by the consolidation of a social group that strove to influence the peasants through the sphere of culture (that is, by educating—literacy, increasing knowledge, reading, etc.)—namely, the intelligentsia.

In general, *zemstvos* were characterized by vague liberalism, which intensified during the revolutionary and social upsurge of the 1890s, and found

50 E. N. Medynskii, *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie, ego znachenie, organizatsia i tekhnika* (Moscow, 1919), 166.

51 On rural school libraries, see also K. E. Zvereva, V. A. Zverev, *Kak Sibir' uchilas' chitat': shkola, gramotnost' i kniga v russkoi derevne kontsa XIX – nachala xx v.* (Novosibirsk, 2013), 147-163.

its expression during this period in the designs of the *zemstvo* opposition.<sup>52</sup> Deprived of political power, *zemstvo* liberals sought to get the support of the peasants and turn them into their allies. A prerequisite for this shift was the involvement of the peasantry in the liberals' developing worldview, and the leveraging of the *zemstvo*'s available means—the school, the library, and public readings for the people. According to the remarks of N. M. Pirumova, they “needed not every school, but one that would ensure their influence in this most important area. The wider the population that was covered by education, the wider the base of their impact.”<sup>53</sup> Their attitude to rural libraries was similar. Almost from the very foundation of the *zemstvos*, considerable influence was attributed to “people’s libraries” (libraries for the people). From the early 1880s, *zemstvos* had begun to actively participate in the design of rural libraries. But this work acquired a wide and systematic character from the beginning of the 1890s. By this time, as a result of the activities of the rural school (mainly orchestrated by the *zemstvo*), a genuine readership in the villages had been created. Focusing on this subset of the population, the *zemstvos* began an intense campaigns to open rural libraries and quickly achieved success. It was specifically the *zemstvo* library that entered the life of the Russian village and later became a permanent component of the rural way of life.

From the second half of the 1890s, the main role in peasants' library services was played not by schools, but by independent rural “people’s libraries”. If in 1892 there were only 38 *zemstvo* “people’s libraries,” then by 1898, the number of them was already 3 thousand; by 1904—no less than 4.5 thousand; and by 1915—about 25 thousand.<sup>54</sup>

*Zemstvos*, literacy committees, and educational societies provided mainly financial support to rural libraries. But it was necessary to conduct daily work on the organization of libraries, providing them with books, and issuing books to peasants. This task was carried out by the intelligentsia, primarily by *zemstvo* employees (teachers, statisticians, doctors, etc.) among whom one could find liberals, populists, and even Social Democrats.

The library, which presented a certain image of the world in the printed word, was of primary importance for *zemstvo* figures. This is evidenced by the constant complaints of *zemstvo* figures about the restrictions on library acquisitions as mandated by the government administration. These restrictions arose in 1890 after the enactment of the *Regulations on Free Folk Reading Rooms and the Procedure for Their Supervision* (*Pravila o besplatnykh narodnykh chital'niakh i o poriadke nadzora za nimi*) which permitted only books entered in a special catalog to be included in the fund of “people’s libraries”. The Academic Committee of the Ministry of Public Education was

---

52 See N. M. Pirumova, *Zemskoe liberal'noe dvizhenie* (Moscow, 1977).

53 *Ibid.*, 153.

54 Medynskii, *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie*, 170, 172, 173.



responsible for compiling and then replenishing the catalog (less than 10% of the total number of books allowed by general censorship and available in the book market were included in the catalog).

The *zemstvo* library was designed to embody the values of the liberal intelligentsia. That being said, since the *zemstvo* itself was a phenomenon of compromise (it combined the interests of a number of social groups and institutions, including the government), then the funds of the *zemstvo* library also exhibited a compromised character: emphasizing primarily the importance of popular science books, they nonetheless included religious texts, and fiction. In addition, the government exerted direct pressure on the collectors of “people’s libraries,” seeking to include in their collection publications that represented their own values. According to the *Rules for Free folk Reading Rooms*, their founders were to “avoid in the reading room unilateral selection of books on certain branches of knowledge to the detriment of books of religious, moral, patriotic, and generally instructive content.”<sup>55</sup> The compromised nature of the collections was also generated by the obvious fact that the “people’s library” was created by the *zemstvo* for another social group. In such cases, the library founders had to necessarily take into account the values of their audience, otherwise the library would not be visited. Therefore, it was quite natural that in order to ensure the use of the “people’s library,” its organizers took into account the interests of the peasants to one degree or another. Of the two main streams of peasant book-taste that predated libraries—religious-moralizing and *lubok* literature—only the first was to be present in the collections. The collection of the *zemstvo* library included classic books, but also the simplest and most understandable publications (especially fairy tales), as well as religious, moral literature. The *zemstvo* rural library primarily stressed educational books (natural science, history, geography, etc.) as they introduced a “scientific” vision of the world), but also foregrounded domestic literary classics.

But it turned out that the peasants were very reluctant to read popular science books and publications of an applied nature. For example, according to the St. Petersburg Literacy Committee, in the early 1890s, books of those subjects accounted for 31% of the fund of rural “people’s libraries” but only 13% of demand.<sup>56</sup> Gradually, the share of popular science and applied books in the rural libraries’ collections began to decline, and the share of fiction and historical publications began to grow. An idea of the structure of the *zemstvo* libraries’ funds can be obtained from data on the composition of the libraries provided by the St. Petersburg Literacy Committee in 1895: fiction occupied 43.3%; natural science, mathematics, and geography—16.8%; history—11%; agriculture and crafts—7.9%; books on societal issues—7.7%;

<sup>55</sup> Quoted by *Narodnaia shkola: Rukovodstvo dlia uchashchikh v nachal'nykh uchilishchakh* (Kazan', 1905), 211.

<sup>56</sup> V. Devel', *Gorodskie i sel'skie biblioteki i chital'ni dlia naroda* (St. Petersburg, 1892), 56, 57.

religious, moral texts—7.3%; hygiene and medicine—3.2%; other—2.8%.<sup>57</sup> According to *zemstvo* surveys, in the early 1900s in a rural library there were an average of 400-500 books and about 200 readers.<sup>58</sup> In a typical library collection there were also books and brochures published specifically by literacy committees in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the publishing house “Posrednik” (“Mediator”), and other similar publishing houses for “folk” reader-audiences.<sup>59</sup>

According to E. N. Medynskii, who summarized materials from various provinces in Russia, rural libraries were used in Russia by 2.9% of the total rural population,<sup>60</sup> that is, about 3 million people, during the years 1909-1911.<sup>61</sup> This conclusion is confirmed by our calculations (based on the materials of one of the publications by *zemstvo* statisticians), according to which about 3% of the rural population of the Poltava province used different types of libraries in 1901.<sup>62</sup>

Significant in how few peasants visited the library, of course, was the low literacy rate in the peasant population. However, this was not the only factor, as evidenced by the fact that by the end of the nineteenth century, the total number of literate citizens was comprised of about 20% of peasants, while “people’s libraries” were visited by only 2-3% of the peasants—that is, a tenth of the total literate peasants. Among the reasons for the low usage of library services by peasants, we might also include the uneven development of the library network (many villages lacked a library) and the narrow repertoire of the publications represented in them. Nevertheless, it seems to us that the most important factor was that the library “programmed” its audience according to the contents of its collection and in so doing “cut off” a number of potential readership groups. First of all, we note that the library, as a rule, was not used by elderly peasants, i.e. readers of religious literature. In the “people’s libraries,” especially within the spiritual, moral department that interested them, they found almost exclusively thin pamphlets with the lives of saints, and even then in a limited quantity. To some extent, libraries in churches and parish schools satisfied these readers’ need for books, but there were much fewer of such institutions than there were “people’s librar-

---

57 Calculated by D. D. Protopopov, *Istoriia S.-Peterburgskogo komiteta gramotnosti* (St. Petersburg, 1898), 191.

58 V. I. Charnolusskii, *Zemstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, 2 vols. (Saint Petersburg, 1916), vol. I, 172.

59 About *zemstvo* and school libraries see B. Eklof, “The Archeology of ‘Backwardness’ in Russia: Assessing the Adequacy of Libraries for Rural Audiences in Late Imperial Russia,” in M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book. Print Culture in the Russian Social imagination* (Toronto, 2011), 108-141.

60 Charnolusskii, *Zemstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, 132.

61 We made our calculations on the basis of data on the number of the Russian population and the urban population (see A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811-1913)* (Moscow, 1956), 26, 88.

62 *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god*.

ies,” and the number of their readers was significantly smaller.<sup>63</sup> Another group of rural readers who were little interested in the “people’s library” were lovers of recreational reading—fans of *lubok* literature. The didactic, moralizing stories represented in the libraries’ collections, not to mention the popular science and applied works, could not satisfy lovers of interesting and fascinating books.

A village teacher who simultaneously performed the duties of a librarian described the readers in the following way: “You can attract peasants to reading only with books of easy content, for many, especially young peasants, have view the book as something that should give one pleasure in one’s free time. Old men require a book of religious and moral content. Books that communicate knowledge have to be offered very persistently. The peasants usually say: “These books are difficult for us to understand; the book does not teach one how to take care of your farm.”<sup>64</sup>

At the end of nineteenth century, statisticians from the Vyatka province conducted among rural librarians a survey (about one and a half thousand answers were received) which included a question about the relevance of the library. The answers allow us to characterize the different types of relations that the peasant population (to which the overwhelming majority of respondents belonged) had to the library.<sup>65</sup> Some of them believed that “there is nothing for the people useful in books, they only violate (that is, spoil, corrupt.- A. R.)” According to librarians, such peasants “keep to old habits. If you tell them something new, then they say that one shouldn’t break the old ways, nor start up new ones”; “You read to someone from a newspaper or a book, but he only says that it was invented by the *zemstvo*, that they are forcing us to pay large taxes for this.” Another group, having already acknowledged the benefits of reading, waited for the appearance of religious books in the library. Considering that the library is “very useful, because everyone reads, opens up his heart, seeks to fulfill the commandments of God,” they wanted the library “to have good books: about how to achieve salvation, how to go to church and what a church is, and about the lives of saints.” They say about other sections of the collection: “We want to send the novels away and to be sent back God’s law in return”; “In our opinion, all the fables and fairy tales (as the peasants called all the fiction- A. R.) are replacing godly books”. Representatives of another type of library user (incidentally, quite a few of the respondents) saw its main benefit in the fact that it gives “...pleasant and useful entertainment.”

Most librarians shared the enlightened views that stimulated the creation of libraries by the *zemstvos*. They claimed that “before our great-grandfa-

<sup>63</sup> See S. P. Funtikova, *Pravoslavnye biblioteki: proshloe i nastoiashchee* (Moscow, 2002), 65-78.

<sup>64</sup> *Statisticheskii sbornik po S.-Peterburgskoi gubernii. 1896 god* (St. Petersburg, 1897), n. 2, 48.

<sup>65</sup> *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Viatskoi gubernii za 1899 god* (Viatska, 1901), 209-214.

thers and grandfathers and fathers we were a dark people, lived in oblivion, did not know what there is in the world, but now everything is shown and indicated to us,” that the library “serves as a conductor of education among the people,” that by “reading books, the peasant is developing imperceptibly for himself”; that “the peasants have already learned much about heaven, about the earth, about the luminaries of the heavens and are telling others,” that “the people [...] have begun to no longer recognize village sorcerers, and have begun to believe in medicine.” In addition, it was stressed that the use of the library dramatically broadens one’s horizons (“although I myself have never been anywhere, but I’ve read about everything in books”), strengthens literacy, distracts from drunkenness and, finally, contributes to innovations in agriculture (“The library is useful: there are many books that teach the right way to farm”). Supporters of the educational approach to the library expressed the attitude toward it that existed among the main readers of the *zemstvo* “people’s library” (i.e. those who most frequently engaged with and expressed satisfaction with the collection). They were the target audience, given the aspirations and expectations of the creators of this type of library.

The “people’s library” was designed for a specific reader, one who had acquired literacy and basic ideas about the world in the *zemstvo* school and who wanted to replenish and expand their knowledge. However, transitioning from the traditional peasant worldview to one informed by modern natural science was an extremely complex and dramatic process, and it was only possible for the few who remained in the village to complete it. After several years of study in the *zemstvo* school (2-3 years), most of its graduates remained at a crossroads, not breaking with the old view of the world, while having already mastered some of the basic provisions of the new one. After having attended school, some of them engaged in typical agricultural work, stopped reading and gradually forgot the lessons they had learned at school. Another portion of the graduates continued to read books, finding themselves intellectually isolated in a rural environment. As the researcher of that time wrote, “children are—for the most part—required to conceal from their elders the ideals gleaned from school, because [the elders] laugh at different innovations in both economic and moral life.”<sup>66</sup>

In such a situation, the school (with the accompanying library) was the only place of communication with the new world of ideas—both directly, in the person of the teacher, and indirectly, as the source of “new,” “modern” books. (*Lubok* publications could be bought primarily from the book hawkers or the fair.) The desire to “reinforce” the new image of the world that they had developed encouraged these readers to visit the *zemstvo* library.

That is why the audience of the “people’s libraries” mainly consisted of students from the *zemstvo* school and its recent graduates, according to data

---

<sup>66</sup> Ocherk polozheniia nachal'nogo narodnogo obrazovaniia v Smolenskoii gubernii v 1897-98 uchebnom godu (Smolensk, 1901), 25.

covering 13.9 thousand readers from 91 rural libraries. Persons aged no more than 17 years accounted for 64% of their audience,<sup>67</sup> and most were boys and young men; among readers, women were a rare exception.

With the secularization of peasant consciousness and the formation of a new reading public, the demand for religious, moral literature declined. But at the same time, there was an increase in demand for fiction—at the expense of educational or utilitarian books.

It is interesting to compare the data cited by E. N. Medynskii on the structure of the collections and the books loaned in *zemstvo* libraries between 1909-1911.<sup>68</sup>

Table	Sections of the collection				
	Fiction, children's books	Natural History	History and Geography	Religious, moral books	Other
% of collection	48,9	9,7	9,6	9,1	22,7
Book loans,%	61,0	5,9	9,6	6,8	17,0

As can be seen from the table, by this time the provisions of the library creators and the needs of the readers had become much closer—the share of popular publications on natural science had gone down and the share of fiction had increased, and peasants had begun to read religious books more rarely.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the reading demands of the peasants had become more complex and differentiated, approaching the level of the general educated public. They enjoyed reading such native authors as Grigorovich, Lev Tolstoi, Turgenev, Pushkin, Gogol', I. I. Lazhechnikov, E. A. Salias, G. P. Danilevskii, M. N. Zagoskin, I. A. Goncharov, A. K. Tolstoi, V. I. Nemirovich-Danchenko, V. P. Avenarius, A. V. Kruglov, and among foreign authors—Mayne Reid, J. Verne, Zola, Auerbach, and F. Cooper.<sup>69</sup> In the twentieth century, the line between “people’s libraries” and public libraries of other types began to fade: they gradually converged both in terms of their funding structures and in terms of their audiences’ reading skills.

Libraries had become part of the rural way of life, and indeed a necessary component of it; they influenced the formation of a category of regular readers in the village. Typical in this respect are the following statements from peasants of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of

67 “Shkola, literatura i zhizn'” *Vestnik vospitaniia*, 3 (1898), 118.

68 Medynskii, *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie*, 112. See also V. P. Vakhterov, *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie naroda* (Moscow, 1896), 39; Devel', *Gorodskie i sel'skie biblioteki*, 56.

69 See *Narodnye besplatnye biblioteki-chital'ni vo Vladimirskoi gubernii i poriadok otkrytiia ikh pri material'noi pomoshchi gubernskogo zemstva* (Vladimir, 1900), 17; N. Z. Kovalevskii, “Po sel'skim bibliotekam,” *Obrazovanie*, 4 (1902), 113; *Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god*, 91.

them writes: “I want to know what happened and where it came from. For example, we say: we live, but did everyone live like this before, and what we should now strive for?”<sup>70</sup> We meet a similar world outlook with another peasant who writes:

I am a peasant, 35 years old, educated in the elementary school of the people, but I have the title of an elementary teacher for peasants. [...] My main occupation is peasant agriculture, which I do only in the summer, and in winter I give myself over solely to mental labor. [...] All my attention is drawn to the creation and development of a philosophical worldview connected to the natural sciences<sup>71</sup>

The third, characterizing the foundations of such a life orientation, noted that

life is unconscious, instinctive, is not a person’s life—you do not know why you live, do not know yourself and others, do not know to know the normal legal duties in relation to others and yourself. If you do not develop a high moral standing, this means you are not able to live, and do not have the right to be considered a person. And since I want to live, I want to be useful, and honest, I have to learn—because education can give this all to me.<sup>72</sup>

Such an “educational” approach to reading was based, as a rule, on the belief that if earlier, only people of the “upper” classes possessed scientific knowledge, then now the working people themselves must receive it from books. A worker-revolutionary recalled that in the 1870s, his father, an old soldier who had served under Tsar Nicholas I—and who had learned to read by himself, and read with great appetite on all issues—told him: “The working poor need to break through to knowledge, and then they will build a new life.”<sup>73</sup> Maksim Gor’kii’s grandfather instructed his grandson: “We are not the gentlemen. There is nobody to teach us. We need to understand everything ourselves. For others, books are written, schools are built, but for us nothing is done. Take everything yourself.”<sup>74</sup> A. S. Shapovalov, a worker and participant in the revolutionary movement, recalled that for him

reading, especially academic books, was very difficult work. Only the consciousness that the proletariat must, in order to achieve

---

70 Orelkin, *Otvetny okonchivshikh kurs*, 503.

71 A. Titov, “K istorii samoobrazovaniia v Rossii,” *Russkaia mysl’*, 7 (1908), 84.

72 Quoted by: Titov, “K istorii samoobrazovaniia v Rossii,” 85-86.

73 M. Zhabko, *Iz dalekogo proshlogo* (Moscow, Leningrad, 1930), 14.

74 M. Gor’kii, *Detstvo. V liudiakh. Moi universitety* (Moscow, 1975), 152.

its liberation from the yoke of capitalism and establish a socialist system, master knowledge, forced me (and I noticed the same in other workers) to exert great efforts to force myself to engage in mental work and read intensively.<sup>75</sup>

As a result of the intense “exchange” between the rural and urban populations noted above, a novel orientation toward reading spread rapidly among the peasants. In the village, along with a long-established figure of the religious doctrinaire, a new type of “non-religious literature” reader appeared, one whose outlook was based on knowledge derived from academic, popular science, and literary books.

If the representatives of the two types mentioned above were quite numerous in the peasant environment at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, then representatives of this third type, which had just started to be formed during this period, were very few. They were guided by utilitarian, “practical” books which helped them to “rationally” manage their farms.

To sum up: in the second half of the nineteenth—early twentieth centuries, in the course of the breakdown of patriarchal relations in the countryside and the more regular contact of peasants with an urban way of life, the penetration of the printed word into the rural environment proceeded intensively. The attitude of the peasants towards literacy and reading quickly (if only in comparison with preceding centuries) changed. If earlier they considered reading to be a useless, unnecessary thing, now almost all of them had become convinced of the usefulness of reading. However, if we recall that their involvement in reading and writing was quite often spurred by utilitarian motives and considerations of practical function, then reading books in this environment was typical of few peasants and was caused, as a rule, by reasons of an ideological nature.

Those who felt the crisis of the traditional religious perspective first sought to strengthen their worldview by reading moral and religious literature, and later, to find a replacement for it in a secular worldview (for example through fictional, scientific, and educational literature, etc.). Although the readers at the time under discussion were a minority of the rural population, it is nevertheless clear that reading went from being an extraordinary phenomenon to a rather commonplace activity in the peasant’s world.

---

75 A. Shapovalov, *V bor'be za sotsializm* (Moscow, 1934), 256.

## Select Bibliography

- An-skii S. [Rappoport, Sh.Z.], *Ocherki narodnoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1894).
- , *Narod i kniga* (Moscow, 1913).
- Berman B., “Chitatel’ zhitiia,” in *Khudozhestvennyi iazyk srednevekov’ia* (Moscow, 1982).
- Brooks J., *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature. 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985).
- Charnolusskii V. I., *Zemstvo i narodnoe obrazovanie*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1916).
- Dergacheva-Skop E. I., Alekseev V. N., “Obshchinnye biblioteki krest’ianskikh staroobriadcheskikh mirov Sibiri XVIII – nachala XX vv. i ikh rol’ v sokhraneniі traditsionnoi dukhovnoi kul’tury,” in *Sibir’ na perekrestke mirovykh religii* (Novosibirsk, 2002).
- Devel’ V., *Gorodskie i sel’skie biblioteki i chital’ni dlia naroda* (St. Petersburg, 1892).
- Ekl’of B., “The Archeology of ‘Backwardness’ in Russia: Assessing the Adequacy of Libraries for Rural Audiences in Late Imperial Russia,” in M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book. Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination* (Toronto, 2011).
- , *Russian Peasant Schools. Officialdom, Village Culture and Popular Pedagogy, 1861—1914* (Berkeley, 1990).
- Emeliakh L. I., *Krest’iane i tserkov’ nakanune Oktiabria* (Leningrad, 1976).
- Funtikova S. P., *Pravoslavnye biblioteki: proshloe i nastoiashchee* (Moscow, 2002).
- Gromyko M. M., “Krug chteniia russkikh krest’ian v kontse XIX veka,” in *V nachale bylo slovo: Prazdnik slavianskoi pis’mennosti i kul’tury v Novgorode* (Moscow, 1990).
- Gromyko M. M., *Traditsionnye normy povedeniia i formy obshcheniia russkikh krest’yan XIX v.* (Moscow, 1986).
- Karinskii N. S., “Chto chitaet krest’ianskoe naselenie Orlovskoi gubernii i kak ono otnositsia k knige,” in *Sbornik statisticheskikh svedeniі po nachal’nomu narodnomu obrazovaniiu v Orlovskoi gubernii za 1900—1901 uchebnyi god* (Orel, 1902).
- Kozhurin K. Ia., *Povsednevnaia zhizn’ staroobriadtsev* (Moscow, 2014).
- Medynskii E. N., *Vneshkol’noe obrazovanie, ego znachenie, organizatsia i tekhnika* (Moscow, 1919).
- Mel’nikova E. A., “Voobrazhaemaia kniga”: ocherki po istorii fol’klora o knigakh i chtenii v Rossii (St. Petersburg, 2011).
- Mironov B. N., *Sotsial’naia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII - nachalo XX v.): Genezis lichnosti, demokraticheskoi sem’i, grazhdanskogo obshchestva i pravovogo gosudarstva*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 2000).
- Protopopov D. D., *Istoriia S.-Peterburgskogo komiteta gramotnosti* (St. Petersburg, 1898).
- Reitblat A. I., *Ot Bovy k Bal’montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009).
- Rubakin N. A., *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike* (St. Petersburg, 1895).
- Rubakin N. A., “K kharakteristike chitatelia i pisatel’ia iz naroda,” *Severnnyi vestnik*, 5 (1891).



- Safonova Iu. A., "Praktiki 'nechteniia': krest'ianin naedine s narodnicheskoj nelegal'noi literaturoi," *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii v XIX - nachale XX veka*, 17 (2014).
- Smirnov A. V., "Kniga vo Vladimirskoi derevne," *Vestnik Vladimirskogo gubernskogo zemstva*, 5-6 (1905).
- Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Poltavskogo gubernskogo zemstva na 1903 god* (Poltava, 1903).
- Statisticheskii ezhegodnik Viatskoi gubernii za 1899 god* (Viatka, 1901).
- Statisticheskii sbornik po S.-Peterburgskoi gubernii. 1896 god* (St. Petersburg, 1897), n. 2.
- Vakhterov V. P., *Vneshkol'noe obrazovanie naroda* (Moscow, 1896).
- Voronov I., *Materialy po narodnomu obrazovaniiu v Voronezhskoi gubernii* (Voronezh, 1899).
- Zvereva K. E., Zverev V. A., *Kak Sibir' uchilas' chitat': shkola, gramotnost' i kniga v russkoi derevne kontsa XIX – nachala XX v.* (Novosibirsk, 2013).



THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE A REGIONAL PUBLIC IN THE  
EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY RUSSIAN EMPIRE:  
THE CASE OF *KAZANSKIE IZVESTIIA*

Susan Smith-Peter

In the early part of the reign of Alexander I (1801-1825), the emperor sought to reform Russia through the creation of new European-style institutions. The aim was to ensure that Russia's great-power status would be retained through updating its institutions, in line with a reform impulse dating back to Peter the Great and before. Among the new institutions formed in the first few years of the nineteenth century were ministries, such as of education, based on the centralized French system, as well as new universities based on the German model of the research university. German universities, such as Göttingen, were marked by university autonomy and the creation of a public, although one that might be limited to professors and teachers, capable of judging the merits of its own research in an open way. Both the ministries and the universities sought to shape a public that could respond to their needs.

This chapter argues that these new institutions led to a conflict between an idea of the public as consumers of knowledge provided by the ministries and an idea of the regional public as producers of knowledge, fostered by the new research universities. This conflict can best be seen through *Kazanskie izvestiia* (*Kazan' News*, 1811-1821), the first long-lasting provincial periodical.<sup>1</sup> After a review of the historiography and sources, the chapter turns to an outline of the interlocking structures of primary, secondary and higher education in order to understand why the university was so engaged with defining the region. It then outlines earlier attempts to study the region, which were confined to faculty and university students and had lim-

---

<sup>1</sup> The first was the short-lived *Tambov News*, established under Tambov governor and poet Gavriila Romanovich Derzhavin.

ited to no success. The bulk of the chapter is taken up with an analysis of the development of *Kazanskii izvestiia* and to show through it the conflict between the idea of a public as consumers of knowledge from above and a regional public that would study its own region and thus produce its own knowledge. This might lead that public to a critique of the ministries, however, which the latter were determined to avoid.

The ministries had established claims to national and international knowledge, such as of foreign affairs.<sup>2</sup> And yet, greater understanding of the region did not always threaten the ministries' position and provided a sphere within which an educated and regional public could share its findings and attain self-awareness. Although the ministries may have wanted a public that listened rather than spoke, a public that was capable of receiving knowledge could also produce it. The conflicts between these two visions of the public are early examples of a dynamic that would only intensify over the next century.

Kazan' was chosen as the site of the new university in the eastern part of Russia due to its position as the largest city in the region, along with its preexisting classical high school, known as the Kazan' gymnasium. Kazan', located 447 miles south and east of Moscow, has long been a major cultural center and point of contact between Russians and Tatars, a Turkic Muslim people with a long history of literacy, as well as other ethnic groups. Ivan the Terrible's conquest of the Khanate of Kazan' in 1552 is generally seen as the moment when a multi-ethnic empire began to take shape in Russia. In terms of population, Kazan' was the unquestioned capital of the eastern part of Russia, with a population in the city itself of 40,000 by the late eighteenth century, of whom 2,800 were Tatars.<sup>3</sup> In 1811, Kazan' had a population of 53,900 and was the fourth largest town in the Russian Empire, after St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Vilnius. It dwarfed the population of the towns of the Urals, such as Orenburg (5,400) and Perm (3,100).<sup>4</sup>

Using the rich published and archival sources found in Kazan', including the periodicals themselves and the published and unpublished plans

2 A. K. Smith, "Information and Efficiency: Russian Newspapers, ca. 1700-1850," in S. Franklin, K. Bowers (eds.), *Information and Empire: Mechanisms of Communication in Russia* (Cambridge, 2017), 185-211.

3 I. P. Ermolaev, Iu. I. Smykov, "Kazan'," in A. M. Prokhorov et al. (eds.), *Otechestvennaia istoriia: Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen do 1917 goda: Entsiklopediia* (Moscow, 1996) vol. 2, 448; A. N. Biktasheva, *Kazanskii gubernator v dialogakh vlastei (pervaia polovina XIX veka)* (Kazan', 2008), 94. Statistics from the early nineteenth century vary considerably. Another source suggests that Kazan' had a population of 30,000 by 1804, while a contemporary source suggests that there were more than 17,000 residents of Kazan', of them 5,000 Tatars. E. A. Vishlenkova, "Pervye gody Kazanskogo Imperatorskogo Universiteta: 1804-1827 gg.," in I. P. Ermolaev et al. (eds.), *Ocherki istorii Kazanskogo Universiteta* (Kazan', 2002), 8; M. Pinegin, *Kazan' v ee proshlom i nastoiashchem: Ocherki po istorii, dostoprimechatel'nostiam i sovremennomu polozeniiu goroda* (St. Petersburg, 1890), 242. Regardless, this was a large town for the region.

4 A. G. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 let (1811-1913 gg.): Statisticheskie ocherki* (Moscow, 1956), 90-91.

for the newspapers and the archives on the debates in Kazan' University's censorship committee helps us to understand the conflict over whether the emerging public should consume or produce knowledge. Periodicals were the main way to reach a larger audience during this time. The archive of Kazan' University is extensive and is located both at the university itself and the National Archive of the Republic of Tatarstan, allowing the research to provide a detailed understanding of the debates, both published and unpublished, that shaped the newspaper and the idea of the public.

This chapter builds upon the sociological approach to the history of reading and publishing, or what Gary Marker has called "the social history of ideas."<sup>5</sup> It also draws upon a growing interest in spatial and regional history that has already begun to influence the history of reading and the book.<sup>6</sup> Greater attention to ideas of space broadens the sources considered worthy of attention and allows us to look at regional reading publics as well as imperial or national ones. Intellectuals spent as much time writing and reading about regional spaces as they did imperial or, later, national ones, but their efforts have not been as well studied. Because the state was so large geographically, it was more willing to accept participation from non-state actors when it came to the region, such as writing topographical descriptions and other forms of regional commentary. A focus solely at the imperial level elides this activity.

The idea of the public was in the process of transformation in the early nineteenth century. 'Public' as a term had been in use in Russia since the early eighteenth century, at which time it was most likely introduced directly from the Latin *publicum*. Reflecting an Aristotelian definition, the term referred to the government and society in contradistinction to the private or family sphere.<sup>7</sup> In Peter the Great's General Regulation of 1720, there was a distinction made between "public State affairs" and "private affairs." These words were new enough to require definition in a glossary at the back of the work, where public (*publichnyi*) was defined as national (*vsenarodnyi*).<sup>8</sup> The public, as in classical Greece, dealt with all aspects of life beyond the private

5 G. Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton, 1985), xi. J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985); L. McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime: The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton, 1991); M. Beaven Remnek, "Russia, 1790-1830," in H. Barker, S. Burrows (eds.), *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 2002), 224-247.

6 M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book: Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination* (Toronto, 2011); M. Bassin, C. Ely, M. Stockdale (eds.), *Space, Place, and Power in Modern Russia: Essays in the New Spatial History* (DeKalb, IL, 2010); S. Smith-Peter, "Bringing the Provinces into Focus: Subnational Spaces in the Recent Historiography of Russia," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 12, 4 (Fall 2011), 835-848.

7 P. Ia. Chernykh, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii slovar' sovremennogo russkogo iazyka*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1993), 80.

8 D. Smith, *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia History* (DeKalb, IL, 1999), 55.

or family sphere. Under Catherine the Great (r. 1762-1796), it also came to mean those people outside the state, whom the state sought to shape. The public often referred to a group of people gathered at a particular place, such as the theater.<sup>9</sup> At times, these were conjoined, as with Catherine the Great's plays, which sought to edify and polish the public attending the theater.<sup>10</sup> In such a situation, the public was there to watch and learn.

One Russian scholar notes that the idea of a cultured public, such as one would find in a theater, was quicker to develop in Russia than the idea of the public as a judge of events and a place of discussion, perhaps even of political topics. The eighteenth-century classical playwright A. P. Sumarokov wrote in 1781 that "the word public (*publika*), as Voltaire explains somewhere, does not mean the whole society, but a small part of it; that is, knowledgeable people who have taste."<sup>11</sup> Somewhat more broadly, by the mid-nineteenth century, V. I. Dal' stated that *publika* meant "society, aside from the common people, the simple folk."<sup>12</sup> A more active and evaluative role of the public is evident in Russian statesman M. M. Speranskii's statement from 1802 that, "Abuses, which avoid the judgment of the law, appear before the judgment of the public (*sud publiki*), which is far more terrible."<sup>13</sup>

This chapter seeks to tease out how the idea of the public developed at Kazan' University and so avoids normative definitions such as that by Jürgen Habermas in his work on the public sphere, which has been very influential in many fields, including history. Harold Mah, however, has pointed out the schematic nature of Habermas' work, noting that "not only has there never been a public sphere that has been genuinely universal, there also has never been the kind of individualism that it presupposes. People have always belonged to groups."<sup>14</sup>

Indeed, the definition of the public itself was what was under debate in Kazan' at this time. Kazan' was an early site for this debate in the Russian Empire, along with Kharkiv (Khar'kov), where the state founded another university in 1804. The universities developed the idea of the public far more than was found in other provincial towns, such as Vladimir, where the

9 Smith, *Working*, 56-57.

10 L. Donnels O'Malley, *The Dramatic Works of Catherine the Great: Theatre and Politics in Eighteenth Century Russia* (London, 2017).

11 D. A. Sdvizhkov, "Ot obshchestva k intelligentsii: istoriia poniatii kak istoriia samosoznaniia," in "Poniatiia o Rossii": *K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda* (Moscow, 2012), vol. 1, 388.

12 Chernykh, *Istoriko-etimologicheskii*, 80. See also E. Pravilova, *A Public Empire: Property and the Quest for the Common Good in Russia* (Princeton, 2014), 229.

13 Sdvizhkov, "Ot obshchestva," 388.

14 H. Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," *Journal of Modern History*, 72, 1 (March 2000), 168. On the problems of using Habermas in Russia, see also A. Schonle, "The Scare of the Self: Sentimentalism, Privacy, and Private Life in Russian Culture, 1780-1820," *Slavic Review*, 57, 4 (Winter 1998), 727.

idea of the public was limited to idea of a physical audience, especially one composed of the nobility, as late as the 1850s.<sup>15</sup>

#### I. THE KAZAN' EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT AS THE FRAMEWORK FOR A REGIONAL READING PUBLIC

The creation of the linked institutions of Kazan' University and the Kazan' Educational District, composed of elementary through secondary schools from the Volga to Siberia, led to a new regional reading public that was contiguous with the district. The vision of the new reading public was influenced by the requirement that Kazan' University professors provide oversight of the lower educational institutions, including taking long inspection tours. Because the government asked that education fit the needs of the region, professors and teachers in the district envisioned the newly-invented Kazan' Educational District as a region and sought to encourage a reading public that would describe itself and its new region into being. Institutions such as the university and newspapers helped to provide the structure within which these intellectuals could create a new regional identity.<sup>16</sup>

The legal documents establishing the district encouraged provincial intellectuals to imagine it as a region with its own needs; in 1803, rules for district (*uezd*) schools noted that classes should include "practical knowledge, useful for the needs of the region (*poleznye dlia potrebnosti kraia*)." In 1828, the statute for gymnasias and district schools noted that classes could be established "according to local needs."<sup>17</sup> In order to determine what the region's needs were, the educational district first had to be imagined as a region. Left unstated was whether these needs could be filled through one-way top-down edification through the knowledge deemed appropriate by the Ministry of Education and other ministries, or whether the region ought to come to awareness through a process of self-study of all its facets. This would lead to a continuing struggle.

In order to understand how this institutional framework encouraged the birth of a regional reading public, this section will first look at the reasons for the creation of the Kazan' Educational District with its particular geographical boundaries, then survey the larger decision-making process for the creation of several new universities in 1804, including in Kazan', and

15 S. Smith-Peter, V. Shevtsov, "Russian Society at a Provincial Scale: Ideas of Society in Provincial Newspapers," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, 50 (2016), 439-464.

16 On the importance of institutions to the creation of modern regional identity, see A. Paasi, "The Institutionalization of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity," *Fennia*, 164 (1986), 105-146.

17 Quoted in L.V. Koshman, *Gorod i gorodskaiia zhizn' v Rossii XIX stoletii: Sotsial'nye i kul'turnye aspekty* (Moscow, 2008), 291.

finally discuss how the universities in both Kazan' and Kharkiv contributed to the growth of new forms of identity later in the nineteenth century.

Founded on January 24, 1803, the Kazan' Educational District encompassed most of the eastern part of the Russian Empire. It included the provinces of Siberia, Kazakhstan, the Caucasus, the Volga region, the Urals, and part of central Russia.<sup>18</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the district was by far the largest in Russia and, indeed, the world. The founding of the district was part of a larger plan to increase state oversight of Tatar merchants and the trade with the East, including China and India, more broadly.<sup>19</sup> With the founding of the Kazan' Educational District, the state sought to broaden its intermediaries beyond just the Tatar people, who the state feared might become too powerful in the region.

The Tatar people had been the main intermediary for the Russian state in this region. Catherine the Great had noted that Russian, German and Tatar languages should be taught in schools, as the Russian Empire had three provinces where the German language was the language of administration and "there are three kingdoms of the Russian Empire inhabited by Tatar people and their boundaries stretch from Kiev to China."<sup>20</sup> These kingdoms were the former khanates of Kazan', Astrakhan' and Sibir', which had been conquered during the reign of Ivan the Terrible (r. 1533-1584). The Kazan' Educational District provided a new way to imagine this territory, not mainly as Tatar, but rather as an Eastern part of a Russia in which many other peoples awaited education in Russian as well as in their own languages.

The district educated a new generation of non-Russians and non-Tatars who could become administrators in their own regions. The schools in the district were not just Russian-language schools, but included schools for and using the language of Iakuts (Sakha), Armenians, Georgians, Tungus and Buriats in addition to Russian.<sup>21</sup> The authorities discouraged the creation of Tatar schools, despite much demand from the Tatars. However, individual Kazan' University professors worked on teaching Tatar and proposed the founding of Tatar schools.<sup>22</sup> Russians also studied these languages at the

18 The district consisted of the following provinces: Kazan', Viatka, Perm, Nizhnyi Novgorod, Tambov, Saratov, Penza, Astrakhan', the Caucasus, Orenburg, Simbirsk, Tobol'sk, Irkutsk, Tomsk, Enisei (from 1823) and Georgia. E. A. Vishlenkova, *Kazanskii universitet Aleksandrovskoi epokhi* (Kazan', 2003), 9-10.

19 F. A. Petrov, *Rossiiskie universitety v pervoi poloviny XIX veka. Formirovanie sistemy universitetskogo obrazovaniia. Tom 2: Stanovlenie sistemy universitetskogo obrazovaniia v pervye desiatletiiia XIX veka* (Moscow, 2002), 378.

20 S. M. Mikhailova, *Kazanskii universitet v dukhovnoi kul'ture narodov vostoka Rossii (XIX v.)* (Kazan', 1991), 142.

21 S. M. Mikhailova, O. N. Korshunova, *Kazanskii universitet: mezhdū Vostokom i Zapadom* (Kazan', 2006), 45.

22 *Ibid.*, 46-47.



lower level and German, Russian and Tatar professors at Kazan' University provided advanced study of Eastern languages.<sup>23</sup>

The Russian state did not generally encourage the rise of a Tatar-language reading public. Many Tatars were literate in their own language, as we can see from the fact that 930 works in the Tatar language were published in Kazan' between 1801 and 1855. In comparison, 1,463 books were published in all the other provincial presses (those outside Moscow and St. Petersburg) during that time.<sup>24</sup> Despite more than two dozen requests for a Tatar-language newspaper in the nineteenth century, such a newspaper was published only in 1905. Several newspapers in other Eastern languages were published during the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> In general, the new universities did stimulate publishing in their districts, though.

The creation of new universities was part of Alexander I's interest in reform early on in his reign. Alexander was particularly interested in providing future state employees with an education that was equal to the best in Europe, both as a matter of prestige and to ensure that Russia did not fall behind Europe. Having come to power after the assassination of his erratic and generally disliked father, Paul, the new emperor raised high hopes among the public for a fresh start. In 1801, Alexander called together a group of his friends and created the Secret Committee, which discussed plans for reform, including of the university system, which at the time consisted of universities in Moscow, Vilnius and Tartu (Dorpat). Within the Secret Committee there was a debate over the sort of education needed.

By 1802, the committee had generally settled on Göttingen as the model for Russian universities.<sup>26</sup> Founded in 1734, Göttingen was one of the first modern universities, with an emphasis on politics, history, mathematics and the sciences, which were useful for future civil servants, rather than the traditional subjects of theology and philosophy.<sup>27</sup> In addition, by the late eighteenth century, Göttingen professors articulated the idea of the research university, in which scholarship was linked to teaching, within a context of academic freedom and faculty autonomy that would prove influential up to the present.<sup>28</sup>

Alexander's Secret Committee discussed where to establish new universities, and committee member Christopher Meiners, a historian of higher education, argued that they should be founded away from the capital in order to decrease state influence.<sup>29</sup> Thus, instead of a group of universities

23 Petrov, *Rossiiskie*, 388-390, 409.

24 Mikhailova, *Kazanskii universitet v dukhovnoi*, 161.

25 *Ibid.*, 168.

26 J. T. Flynn, *The University Reform of Tsar Alexander I, 1802-1835* (Washington, DC, 1988), 18.

27 R. Steven Turner, "University Reformers and Professorial Scholarship in Germany, 1760-1806," in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *The University in Society* (Princeton, 1974), vol. 2, 504.

28 *Ibid.*, 495-531.

29 Flynn, *The University Reform*, 18.

clustered around the center, universities were established in Kharkiv and Kazan', as well as in the capital, St. Petersburg. Kharkiv and Kazan' were major administrative centers with pre-existing secondary schools that could be reshaped to provide higher education for the many civil servants needed in the western and eastern regions of the Russian Empire.<sup>30</sup>

In the 1750s, Kazan' had already become the center of learning for the Urals and Siberia. The founding of Moscow University in 1755 was directly linked to the establishment of the first provincial gymnasium, or classical high school, in Kazan', three years later. The curator of Moscow University, I. I. Shuvalov, wished to spread education to Siberia and asked academician and explorer of Siberia Johann Eberhard Fischer for advice on where to establish a gymnasium. Due to the sparse population of Siberia, Fischer suggested that it be founded in Kazan', which served as the gateway to Siberia.<sup>31</sup> Empress Elizabeth Petrovna ordered the founding of two Kazan' gymnasia on July 21, 1758: one for nobles and one for people of various ranks (*raznochintsy*), as was the case with the gymnasia in Moscow. The teachers in Kazan' were drawn from those at Moscow University and the gymnasia were funded from Moscow University's budget.<sup>32</sup> Important figures, including the poet Gavril Derzhavin, studied at the Kazan' gymnasium. The gymnasium was turned into a university by government order. On November 5, 1804, the government proclaimed the founding of Kazan' University, but this was a formal matter only, as the Kazan' gymnasium was renamed Kazan' University and its teachers became professors there.<sup>33</sup>

The educational districts gave universities a built-in audience and a great deal of influence over the education of the regions' students. The universities had to deal with hiring and firing teachers, establishing schools, and overseeing curricula. In each university, a School Committee (*uchilishchnyi komitet*), composed of professors, dealt with a constant stream of correspondence about the lower-level schools. While this was a heavy burden on professors' time, it also meant they influenced what students were taught at the lower level. When regional identity developed within the university, it could also reach a large audience through the educational district.

One of the more onerous duties committee members had to face was the inspection trips around the district, which were extremely long, due to the vast distances involved. Making the situation worse was the very small number of professors at Kazan'. While Kharkiv University had nine professors and 11 assistant professors to begin with, at Kazan' there were only two

<sup>30</sup> J. T. Flynn, "V.N. Karazin, the Gentry, and Kharkov University," *Slavic Review*, 28, 2 (1969), 209-220.

<sup>31</sup> I. P. Ermolaev, A. I. Ermolaev, *Predshestvennitsa Kazanskogo universiteta (k 250-letiiu Pervoi kazanskoi gimnazii)* (Kazan', 2008), 31-32.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>33</sup> Vishlenkova, "Pervye gody," 10.

professors and four assistant professors when the university opened.<sup>34</sup> Such trips exposed the faculty members to the great diversity within the region, and provided them with a direct means to collect information on the geographical, ethnographic and economic aspects of the district.<sup>35</sup> Inspection trips could be exhausting and dangerous. In 1809, Petr Sergeevich Kondyrev, assistant professor of political science, geography and history, and Ivan Ipatovich Zapol'skii, assistant professor of mathematics and physics, set off on such a trip to Orenburg province. Zapol'skii, who proposed the creation of the first newspaper in Kazan', *Kazanskie izvestiia*, fell ill in Ufa and died in 1810.<sup>36</sup> Kondyrev would be the main force shaping the second version of the newspaper.

The new Kazan' Educational District did lead to the spread of schools at the elementary and secondary levels. In 1804, there were 45 popular schools (*narodnoe uchilishche*) with 2304 students and 95 teachers that had once been under the control of the Provincial Welfare Boards (*Prikaz obshchestvennogo prizreniia*) and were funded by voluntary donations.<sup>37</sup> By 1811, the number of schools had risen to 61 and by 1825, there were 92 schools, with 441 teachers for 6621 students.<sup>38</sup> This was part of Alexander I's larger vision for universities that would administer their own district and oversee their development.

The creation of universities with the responsibility to identify regional needs and to oversee education throughout their districts led to the articulation of regional identities within the new universities and districts. This chapter will trace this in Kazan' in the 1810s, but it is useful to note that a parallel process occurred in Kharkiv. Alexander I chose Kharkiv over Kiev partly as a result of the lobbying of Vasilii Karazin, a Kharkiv nobleman. Karazin's vision—of a university in which most of the subjects could only be studied by nobles—lost out to Alexander's need for educated civil servants from a range of estates.<sup>39</sup> I. E. Sreznevskii, a professor of literature at Kharkiv University and a member of Karazin's circle, established a journal titled *Ukrainskii Vestnik* (*The Ukrainian Herald*), whose goal was to “discover all the information dealing with this region (*zdeshnego kraia*).”<sup>40</sup> Working within an Enlightenment framework, *Ukrainskii Vestnik* praised Ukrainian nobles and peasants for being model members of the Russian Empire but did not argue that the Ukrainian language was a language of culture.<sup>41</sup> In

34 Petrov, *Rossiiskie*, 382.

35 Mikhailova, Korshunova, *Kazanskii universitet*, 50-51.

36 *Ibid.*, 50.

37 Mikhailova, *Kazanskii universitet v dukhovnoi kul'ture*, 142.

38 Mikhailova, Korshunova, *Kazanskii universitet*, 44.

39 S. Smith-Peter, “Ukrainskie zhurnaly nachala XIX veka: ot universalizma Prosveshcheniia do romanticheskogo regionalizma,” in I. G. Zhiriakov, A. A. Orlov (eds.), *Istoriia i politika v sovremennom mire* (Moscow, 2010), 447-461; Flynn, “V.N. Karazin.”

40 Smith-Peter, “Ukrainskie zhurnaly,” 453.

41 *Ibid.*, 451-456.

contrast, *Ukrainskii zhurnal* (*The Ukrainian Journal*), founded in 1823 by A. V. Sklabovskii, adjunct professor of literature at Kharkiv University, drew upon Romanticism to celebrate Ukrainian specificity in language, history and culture as worthy of European-wide attention and praise. *Ukrainskii zhurnal* drew upon the teachers and administrators of the Kharkiv educational district as its audience.<sup>42</sup> This Romantic regionalism was not yet a political movement, but it did provide the raw materials for a later political nationalism.

Later, in the 1850s and 1860s, Kazan' University became the center of a new vision of regionalism, as developed by Kazan' professor of Russian history A. P. Shchapov, who envisioned a federalist state composed of regions and who was himself half Buriat.<sup>43</sup> His views would inspire Siberian regionalists, who wrote about the need for a United States of Siberia, possibly to be federated with the United States of America; they were arrested after their proclamation to that effect was found in 1865, and were exiled away from Siberia. One of the regionalists lived long enough to take part in the attempt to create an independent Siberia during the Russian Civil War.<sup>44</sup>

The creation of new universities in Kharkiv and Kazan' with responsibilities for overseeing educational districts in their region would lead to the creation of regional identities in Ukraine and Siberia. In Ukraine, this would be transformed into national identity over time, while in Siberia it remained as a regional identity. A knowledge of the structure of the district and university is thus crucial to understanding the nature of the regional reading public, which emerged out of these regional educational institutions. The rest of the chapter explores the conflicts over the role of this public in the 1810s.

## 2. EARLY ATTEMPTS TO STUDY THE REGION

Before the creation of *Kazanskie izvestiia*, there were attempts to study the region without reaching out to a larger public. Two voluntary associations founded in 1806, each in their own way, were interested in the region around Kazan'. Disputes among faculty members ended the first, while the second was closed due to the fears of a retrograde curator. Failing to engage

42 Ibid., 456-461.

43 M. von Hagen, "Federalism and Pan-Movements: Re-imagining Empire," in J. Burbank, M. von Hagen and A. Remnev (eds.), *Russian Empire: Space, People, Power, 1700-1930* (Bloomington, IN, 2007), 502.

44 D. von Mohrenschildt, *Toward a United States of Russia: Plans and Projects of Federal Reconstruction of Russia in the Nineteenth Century* (Rutherford, NJ, 1981); D. Rainbow, "Siberian Patriots: Participatory Autocracy and the Cohesion of the Russian Imperial State, 1858-1920" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2013).

a larger public limited their impact. The lesson was not lost on those who followed.

Although the state had proclaimed the existence of Kazan' University in 1804, the actual social context of the university remained the traditional and patriarchal world of the Kazan' gymnasium, which was ruled by its director, I. F. Iakovkin, with an iron hand. The curator (*popechitel'*) of the Kazan' Educational District, Stepan Iakovich Rumovskii, an important St. Petersburg scientist with authoritarian tendencies, personally chose Iakovkin, who was well trained in German and French, had co-authored one of the first textbooks in Russian history, and was likely connected to Masonic circles, as was Rumovskii.<sup>45</sup> Iakovkin became director of the university and gymnasium and inspector of students. For these posts, he received 4900 rubles a year and regularly used state funds for his own purposes.<sup>46</sup> Iakovkin ignored the existence of university autonomy.<sup>47</sup>

Interest in the region was fostered by voluntary associations and by the ideas of Adam Smith. As Joseph Bradley has noted, the Russian government engaged society to stimulate the economic development of the country and thus sponsored such voluntary associations as the Free Economic Society (*Vol'noe ekonomicheskoe obshchestvo*), founded in 1765 with Catherine the Great's assistance.<sup>48</sup> The Society was interested in gathering information on economic aspects of Russian regions. In early 1801, Free Economic Society member Weidemeier wrote to Alexander I to ask for permission to disseminate a questionnaire so that the society would be able "to see if there are shortcomings in existing institutions (*zavedeniiiakh*) and industries and occupy itself with means to remove [the shortcomings] and in this, of course, devote ourselves to the necessary spread, both inside and perhaps outside of Russia, of the best and most foundational understanding of wealth and its power."<sup>49</sup> This was a rather audacious suggestion, given that it was asking subjects to critique the institutions of power and suggest improvements. This questionnaire was nevertheless disseminated to provincial institutions and individuals and served as the basis of several descriptions of particular provinces.

As with many other Russian institutions in the early nineteenth century, the Free Economic Society was influenced by the ideas of Adam Smith.<sup>50</sup> In line with Smith's ideas, the questionnaire sought to discover the foundations of Russia's wealth by looking at her industry and institutions, the

45 Vishlenkova, "Pervye gody," 13, 17-18.

46 Ibid., 17.

47 Ibid., 13.

48 J. Bradley, *Voluntary Associations in Tsarist Russia: Science, Patriotism, and Civil Society* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), 38-85.

49 Quoted in A. I. Khodnev, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Vol'nogo ekonomicheskogo obshchestva s 1765 do 1865 goda* (St. Petersburg, 1865), 72.

50 C. Leckey, *Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Newark, DE, 2011).

latter of which was not further defined, but which seemed to include the bureaucracy and perhaps larger social structures such as serfdom. In addition, since a questionnaire was sent out in 1790 to governors and had only brought about one reply, Weidermeier asked that the governors be asked to inform “not only their subordinate bureaucrats, but private persons” of the questionnaire and ask them to take part.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the questionnaire went beyond the government to invite a public to take part that was still in the process of being conceptualized.

On March 10, 1806, the council of the Kazan’ gymnasium petitioned curator Rumovskii for permission to “establish a society (*obshchestvo*) in order to write a description of Kazan’ province in conformity with that [program] announced, with the emperor’s approval, by the St. Petersburg Free Economic Society.”<sup>52</sup> In order to distinguish this organization from others, I will refer to it as the Society to Study the Province, although it was not given a proper name in the document. The Society to Study the Province was an early example of learning about a region by dividing up the work between several people. The first version of *Kazanskii izvestiia* would take it even further by inviting the public to take part.

The document proposed that the unnamed society would divide up the work between its members: Iakovkin, the patriarchal director of the gymnasium/ university, would write the parts on geography and topography, Karl Fuchs, later a noted geographer and naturalist of the Kazan’ region, would cover zoology, biology and economy, while the medical professor I. P. Kamenskii would deal with everything related to medicine.<sup>53</sup> Zapol’skii would provide work on physics as needed, as would Friedrich Evest, an adjunct in medical sciences, on chemistry.<sup>54</sup>

Another society, the Kazan’ Society of Lovers of the Russian Language (*Kazanskoe obshchestvo liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti*), was also founded in 1806 and created two manuscript journals, *Arkadskie pastushki* (*The Arcadian Shepherds*) and *Zhurnal nashikh zaniatii* (*The Journal of our Exercises*), mainly of literary works, including the student writings of the future Slavophile patriarch Sergei Aksakov. The Kazan’ Society, in its works, presented Asia as both familiar and strange, both next to home and alien. The Society also published a book, *The Celebration of the Society on December 12, 1814* (*Torzhestvo obshchestva Dekabria 12 dnia 1814 goda*) and had plans for a larger second volume, but the arrival of the retrograde inspector, and later curator, M. L. Magnitskii resulted in the closure of the Society.<sup>55</sup> Although its aim was to combat literary traditionalists rather than to study the region,

51 Khodnev, *Istoriia*, 72.

52 Natsional’nyi arkhiv Respubliki Tatarstan (NA RT), f. 92, op. 1, d. 180, l. 3.

53 K. Fuks, *Karl Fuks o Kazani, Kazanskom krae*, ed. M. A. Usmanov et al. (Kazan’, 2005).

54 NA RT, f. 92, op. 1, d. 180, l. 2.

55 V. V. Aristov, *Pervoe literaturnoe obshchestvo povolzh’ia (k istorii Kazanskogo obshchestva liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti v 1806-1818 gg.)* (Kazan’, 1992); S. Smith-Peter, “Enlightenment

the location of the Society on what it saw as the borders of Asia influenced the content of their poems, speeches, and stories.

The Society to Study the Province was unable to complete its work due to a serious conflict over faculty autonomy in 1805-6. The leader of the opposition was Peter Daniel Friedrich Tseplin, professor of history and economy. Others involved were German and Russian colleagues, including Grigorii Ivanovich Kartashevskii, adjunct professor of mathematics and Zapol'skii. Tseplin and Kartashevskii wrote to Rumovskii explaining their protest as a defense of university autonomy, but Rumovskii allowed Iakovkin to fire them, as well as Zapol'skii, for disobedience to superiors, which would have made getting jobs elsewhere quite difficult.<sup>56</sup> Of the members of the Society to Study the Province, Kamenskii and Zapol'skii sided with those who argued for the promise of faculty autonomy, while Fuchs refused to be drawn in to the debate.

Governor Mansurov, who later supported Zapol'skii's proposal for the first version of *Kazanskii izvestiia*, protested the firings to Minister of Internal Affairs Viktor Pavlovich Kochubei, saying that the public supported the professors and that parents were dissatisfied and some had withdrawn their sons from the university.<sup>57</sup> Because high-level officials in the Ministry of Education distrusted the German Protestant roots of university autonomy, they allowed Iakovkin to crush it in Kazan.<sup>58</sup> However, Zapol'skii was later rehired.

Supported by Rumovskii, Iakovkin felt he could then do as he pleased and misappropriated funds from the gymnasium, allowing him to build a house and buy ten serfs, failed to teach his classes, drank excessively, and was capricious toward the requests of his faculty.<sup>59</sup> Even his former student, Kondyrev, who owed his job to Iakovkin, was dismayed, writing in his diary in 1810 that Iakovkin "is lazy and decadent; my sincere desire is to tell him this due to my feelings of gratitude toward him, but fear and his conceit do not allow it." Even so, Kondyrev wrote at another time that "there is some coldness from I. F. [Iakovkin] toward me for telling the truth."<sup>60</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the Society for the Study of the Province did not fulfill its promise of jointly writing an economic description. By 1813, the Free Economic Society had received 12 responses, including from Astrakhan' and Iaroslavl, but not from Kazan.<sup>61</sup> Despite this, it seems likely that Zapol'skii's experience in this proposed society influenced his later proposal

---

from the East: Early Nineteenth Century Russian Views of the East from Kazan University," *Znanie. Poniimanie. Umenie*. 2016, vol. 1, 318-338.

56 Vishlenkova, "Pervye gody," 14.

57 *Ibid.*, 14-15.

58 *Ibid.*, 15.

59 Vishlenkova, *Kazanskii universitet*, 85.

60 *Ibid.*, 157.

61 V. V. Oreshkin, *Vol'noe ekonomicheskoe obshchestvo v Rossii, 1765-1917* (Moscow, 1963), 35; Khodnev, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo*, 74-76.

for *Kazanskie izvestiia*, which, like the Free Economic Society's questionnaire, had a strongly economic focus.

### 3. THE START OF KAZANSKIE IZVESTIIA: A PUBLIC OF PRODUCERS

The first version of *Kazanskie izvestiia* sought to reach a reading public of merchants and others engaged in the market who would create, it was hoped, a collective economic chronicle of the town of Kazan' and its region. The ideas of Adam Smith shaped the newspaper, which sought to discover the wealth of regions through sharing the work of its description among those who had property. The Free Economic Society and its many attempts to engage provincial institutions and then individuals in creating descriptions of provinces was a key influence. Although the paper was too short-lived to meet its goals, it inspired later provincial newspapers. The first version of the newspaper sought to create a market public to produce knowledge of itself and its city in the same way that this public produced the wide range of goods that supplied Kazan'.

Kazan' University professor Zapol'skii, who would later die in Ufa on an inspection trip, proposed the newspaper. His patron, the Kazan' civil governor Boris Aleksandrovich Mansurov, brought the project to the attention of the Ministry of Police, later the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which sponsored the paper. Regardless, the Ministry of Education took over control of the paper later on in 1811 due to struggles over university autonomy in Kazan' and to the desire of the Ministry of Education to control the flow of information rather than allow an emerging public to produce that information itself.

A year after the failed attempt to create the Society for the Study of the Province, Zapol'skii proposed a newspaper in 1807 that would instead create a sort of economic chronicle written by the participants in the market themselves. After his death, it would begin publication as *Kazanskie izvestiia* in 1811. The newspaper would also stimulate competition and the economy more broadly, rather than simply describing it, he argued. This would be a productive public in every sense of the word.

A sense of municipal pride in Kazan' as one of Russia's capitals was evident in Zapol'skii's proposal:

It is known to all in the enlightened Russian public (*rossiiskaia publika*), that the provincial capital Kazan', among capitals, occupies first place in the list of best towns. Being the center of Siberian trade, it possesses an advantage over others in that it has very important government institutions... and is densely populated, being settled by a great many merchants, nobles and other



classes of residents, which inevitably creates an attitude among the residents of Kazan' exactly like that found in the capitals.<sup>62</sup>

Zapol'skii argued that just as in the capitals, Kazan' needed a newspaper to serve "the mutual needs of the residents."<sup>63</sup> He emphasized that the audience would include the bureaucracy and the nobility, and also especially the merchantry, both Russian and non-Russian, traders, factory owners and so on, who were invited to advertise in the paper. The argument that Kazan' was a city equal to that of the capitals of Moscow and St. Petersburg was one that had implications beyond the economic sphere. Moscow, the ancient capital, and St. Petersburg, Peter the Great's window on the west, were associated with the center and the north, while Kazan' was presented as the capital of the east through its trade with Siberia.

The market was the focal point of the proposal. After the description of Kazan' claiming its status as another capital, the rest of the proposal dealt with economics. The reading public was primarily presented as those who "provide themselves with property" by serving "as mediators between buyers and sellers."<sup>64</sup> This definition emphasized property as the key idea of the paper, and trade as the means of creating property. This echoed a Smithian idea of economics rather than the needs of the state. The proposal turned to the needs of the market first, arguing that those who wanted to take part in it were hindered by a lack of information about prices and the people who had goods to sell or the need to buy.<sup>65</sup>

According to this proposal, *Kazanskie izvestiia* would inform the public (*publika*) about public trades, the repayment of *obrok*, or quitrent, by serfs, supplies and contracts, and job announcements.<sup>66</sup> All these events were connected through the market and might involve people of various estates. Only after the discussion of the public more broadly did Zapol'skii begin to list the ways in which members of individual estates—nobles, merchants, artisans, and various types of people—might interact with the market, but these were simply modifications of what the broader public would need to know.<sup>67</sup>

The reading public of the newspaper was to be market oriented. This is also visible in Zapol'skii's plan to gather 500 subscribers before asking the university to set in motion the petitions necessary to start the newspaper. In the proposal, he describes how the university could announce to the public, most likely in a physical marketplace, the number of subscribers that had

62 N. P. Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, vol. 2, pt. 2 (1814-1819) (Kazan', 1902), 284.

63 *Ibid.*

64 NA RT, f. 92, op. 1, d. 229, l. 1.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob.

67 *Ibid.*, l. 1 ob- 2.

come forward and the number still needed.<sup>68</sup> This recalls the definition of a public in Russian as a group of people gathered together in a particular place, like the audience in a theater. According to Zapol'skii, 500 subscribers would provide 2040 rubles to the university treasury, 1000 of which would be pure profit.<sup>69</sup> Each subscription would thus be around 5 rubles a year.

Zapol'skii focused on the needs of Kazan' as a town. While he did mention that "not only neighboring but also faraway provinces will find it useful to present various information for publication in *Kazanskie izvestiia*," this comes as almost an afterthought as well as an assurance that income for the publication of announcements would be substantial.<sup>70</sup> The reading public for the first version of *Kazanskie izvestiia* was primarily to reside in Kazan' and to be motivated by competition, not just in their business dealings, but in ensuring that the number of subscribers was met. The public announcements stating how many subscribers were still needed were likely in the hope that those who had already subscribed would prevail on those in the crowd who had not yet done so. Similarly, the clerk for the newspaper, the proposal suggested, should be paid a percentage of the money raised for the paper, rather than a salary, which would insure that he was "motivated to increase the income for the university."<sup>71</sup>

While Russia was an autocracy, the government was not monolithic, and a canny petitioner could appeal to different parts of it to reach his goals, especially if those included the encouragement of economic life in the provinces. This allowed Zapol'skii to negotiate between ministries. Although Zapol'skii had originally petitioned the Ministry of Education, his superiors, for permission, they were reluctant to act on the proposal. As a result, Zapol'skii petitioned Governor Mansurov, who had earlier interceded for Zapol'skii in his conflict with Iakovkin, restating the basic plan and adding that the newspaper should be printed both in Russian and in Tatar. On December 22, 1808, Mansurov petitioned the Minister of Police Prince A. B. Kurakin for permission to establish the newspaper which "would be useful not only for this town and its districts, but even for other neighboring provinces, especially Siberian ones, and, along with that, not only for Russian subjects, but also for peoples of Asiatic origin, as the news would also be printed in Tatar," which would be profitable for the press.<sup>72</sup> When Kurakin asked Minister of Education Count A. K. Razumovskii for his opinion, the latter objected to Zapol'skii's work as both a university professor and as an editor, and also refused to allow publication in Tatar because the Asiatic Press at the university had a shortage of Tatar type and the font was

68 Ibid., 3 ob.

69 Ibid., 3.

70 Ibid., 2 ob.

71 Ibid., 3 ob.

72 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 288.

also old.<sup>73</sup> Although the governor was willing to absorb the cost of a new Tatar font, and the Committee of Ministers and Alexander I approved the *Kazanskii izvestiia* as a bi-lingual newspaper, after the death of Zapol'skii in 1810, no more was said about printing in Tatar.

When the *Kazanskii izvestiia* began publication on April 19, 1811, it did indeed focus on economics, as Zapol'skii had proposed before his death. It consisted mainly of government announcements, economic news, advertisements, and classifieds, all in Russian.<sup>74</sup> Local author and landlord D. N. Zinov'ev was the editor; he and Zapol'skii had already rented a press in the governor's office for the paper before the latter died.<sup>75</sup> The focus was on the town of Kazan' and Kazan' province rather than the larger area of the Kazan' Educational District. It was a business-oriented newspaper, reporting on the exchange rate, the tariffs on food, ships docking in Kazan', and various other information of interest mainly to merchants and traders.<sup>76</sup> For example, in the fourth issue, it reported that Kazan' merchant Abdreshit Mustafin had discovered a way to create sal ammoniac from Russian materials.<sup>77</sup> Surprisingly, it reported on local bureaucrats fired for engaging in illegal activity.<sup>78</sup> This suggests either that the idea of the public as a judge of the activities of the state was not absent from this version of the paper or that punishment was seen as edifying for a receptive public.

The third issue of the newspaper listed the rules for publication of announcements in the following rubrics: "the Kazan' theater," "buying and selling," "from the merchantry and townspeople," "from artists and artisans," and "from the public (*publika*) in general."<sup>79</sup> Many advertisements listed serfs for sale and offered rewards for runaway serfs.<sup>80</sup> While advertisements included listings of the courses that would be taught by Kazan' University's professors, most of the other announcements were of an economic nature. For example, the first issue included an announcement from the Kazan' committee for the sale of state property with long lists of properties for sale in various parts of the province. It specifically noted that "not only nobles and bureaucrats have the right to buy these properties, but also merchants, townspeople and state peasants."<sup>81</sup> This underlines the broad audience for the paper and its interest in property as a means of bringing together those people engaged with it. Underlining the strong print culture in Kazan', there

73 Ibid., 289.

74 P. Ponomarev, comp., *Polnyi sistematicheskii ukazatel' mestno-oblastnogo sodержaniia napechatannykh v "Kazanskikh izvestiakh", izdavavshikhsia pri Im. Kazanskom universitete s 1811 po 1821 g.* (Kazan', 1880), 4.

75 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 287.

76 Ibid., 292.

77 Ponomarev, *Polnyi sistematicheskii ukazatel'*, 26.

78 Ibid., 38.

79 *Kazanskii Izvestiia*, 3 (May 3, 1811), 4-7.

80 Ponomarev, *Polnyi sistematicheskii ukazatel'*, 45.

81 *Kazanskii Izvestiia*, 1 (April 19, 1811), 3.

were advertisements from bookstores and individuals selling books, along with announcements for new periodicals and books recently published.<sup>82</sup> Readers who submitted classified advertisements were contributing to a tabulation of economic needs and the means for their supply.

There were also glimpses of the description of the province that had been one of the original ideas of the abortive Society for the Study of the Province. An article on the town of Sviiazhske provided an intriguing mixture of Catherinian-era topographical description, focusing on history and demography, with a lyrical appreciation of nature more in line with sentimentalism. A sketch of ruined mosques combined with an appreciation of a distant monastery, where elders were “living for God alone” showed that landscape description could also take part in the displacement of the Tatars mentioned earlier as one of the reasons for the founding of the educational district.<sup>83</sup>

*Kazanskii izvestiia* was itself an independent economic entity and partly for this reason, Minister of Education Razumovskii had been hostile to the publication since its founding. The Ministry of Education was uncomfortable with a public that could produce its own knowledge outside the control of the ministry and so stopped the experiment. By July 22, 1811, Razumovskii had received Alexander I’s permission to order the transfer of the newspaper to the university. However, the experience of the Ministry of Internal Affairs with *Kazanskii izvestiia* was very important in creating a precedent for, among other things, the creation of provincial newspapers in forty-two provinces in 1837.<sup>84</sup> In fact, Zapol’skii’s proposal was strikingly similar to the original program for these newspapers, which also focused on economic news and sought to stimulate the Russian economy through greater knowledge and competition in the market. In the original 1828 proposal for the provincial newspapers, Minister of Finance E. F. Kankrin stated that they should “be like *Kazanskii izvestiia*” in focusing on local economic material and selling classified advertisements.<sup>85</sup>

The attempt to create a market-based public that would produce knowledge of itself as well as the goods needed for the city ran into resistance from the Ministry of Education, which preferred a top-down approach. The Ministry was not against all newspapers, but an independent one was a threat. Even under its own control, however, there was a conflict over whether a regional public should merely consume knowledge or should also produce it.

82 Ponomarev, *Polnyi sistematicheskii ukazatel*, 44.

83 “Nechto o gorode Sviiazhske,” *Kazanskii Izvestiia*, 12 (July 5, 1811), 3.

84 See S. Smith-Peter, *The Russian Provincial Newspaper and its Public, 1788-1864*, *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies*, no. 1908 (Pittsburgh, 2008), 7-8.

85 S. Smith-Peter, *Imagining Russian Regions: Subnational Identity and Civil Society in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Leiden, 2018), 98-99.

#### 4. KAZANSKIE IZVESTIIA UNDER KAZAN' UNIVERSITY: CONFLICTS OVER A REGIONAL PUBLIC

When the university took over the publication of the paper, a conflict over the definition and function of its reading public emerged. On the one side were the conservatives, including the representatives of the ministries, mainly concerned that ministerial precedence and control was not challenged. They were supported by conservative faculty like Kazan' University professor of Russian literature, Grigorii Nikolaevich Gorodchaninov, who was chosen by the curator to be the editor of the newspaper. From their point of view, the content of the paper would most likely be reprints from the central paper or translations from foreign works, rather than generated from readers. For them, the public was there to consume, not to produce, knowledge.<sup>86</sup>

On the other side was professor of history and political economy Kondyrev, whom we met earlier as Iakovkin's former student. He was also a liberal and a follower of Adam Smith and envisioned the paper as serving the needs of the region. The regional content of the paper also served to justify the participation of an educated public—in practice, mainly university professors and directors of schools throughout the Kazan' Educational District—in its composition. The ministries were ambivalent about such a public. Although gaining information about the region was useful to the state, the process of engaging individuals might lead such people to believe that they could critique the ministries. This section argues that the conflict between these sides shaped the early years of the paper and gives us a greater understanding of the tension between the visions of a receptive but mute public the ministries wanted and that of a regional public that could describe features of interest to the state but might also become critical of it.

Kondyrev's vision of a productive and critical public became more prominent over time. In the first issue of 1812, a *Kazanskie izvestiia* editorial noted that since it was published "for the use of our co-citizens (*sograzhdan*), thus letters from any office, society, and person, along with the discussion of what specifically is needed for them to know, do, and so on, as well as what contributes to the well-being of others has been and will be received by the university with satisfaction."<sup>87</sup> Officials, societies, and private individuals were all able to discuss what was needed, according to this statement, on the pages of the newspaper. This was not the vision of the vertical control of ministries endorsed by the curator and Gorodchaninov, but rather of a public capable of judging a wide range of subjects.

86 For the origins of this view, see Smith, "Information and Efficiency." E. A. Vishlenkova, "Pamiat' o konfliktakh: Osobennosti arkhiva Kazanskogo imperatorskogo universiteta," *Ekho vekov*, 2 (2008) argues against using the terms "conservative" and "liberal" for discussing conflicts, but due to Kondyrev's Smithianism, I argue that it is appropriate here.

87 *Kazanskie Izvestiia*, 1812, 1 (January 6, 1812), 6.

The paper was part of a larger conflict over the study of the state and society, particularly in the field of statistics. Statistics in the eighteenth century had been focused on the needs of the state and especially on cataloguing its resources. It did not clearly delineate the state from non-state areas such as the market, but rather saw resources as part of the state, whether in the market or elsewhere. This type of statistics had its origin in the Germanies and was called cameralism. By the early nineteenth century, a new kind of statistics, influenced by the work of Adam Smith, had emerged in Russia and elsewhere. Instead of describing the state, Smithian statistics focused on the well-being of the people and its productive capacities, which they saw as only partly under the state's control.

Leading Smithian statisticians were critical of serfdom, which depressed the economic activities of the majority of the population by depriving them of freedom and choice within the market. One of the most important Smithian statisticians, K. I. Arsen'ev, ran afoul of his more traditional cameralist colleagues at St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute (later University) and lost his professorship. His anti-serfdom views were well known, but the future Nicholas I nevertheless chose him to tutor his son, the future Alexander II, who would abolish serfdom in 1861.<sup>88</sup>

Statistics at this time was more descriptive than mathematical and involved the exposition and sometimes the critique of state and societal institutions. Smith's focus on the market as an arena of where individual choice could be exercised helped statisticians to begin to conceive of it as separate from the state, in contrast to the earlier views of cameralists. The conflict between cameralists and Smithian statisticians was also present in Kazan'.

Although Kondyrev argued for a new vision of the public, the newspaper itself was established in a very bureaucratic, rather than market-driven, way. The curator of the Kazan' Educational District and the Minister of Education were both highly motivated to take control over the press itself, with the latter prevailing upon the Minister of Police to withdraw his protection of the newspaper by pointing out the high number of typographical mistakes—a problem that would continue after its transfer.<sup>89</sup> Governor Mansurov, after receiving an order from the Minister of Police that the press was to be transferred to the university, was not in a position to protect it any longer. Then the process of taking the press from its editor, Zinov'ev, began.

The gymnasium council had originally proposed that they continue to work with Zinov'ev as the publisher of the paper, but the curator wanted the university to have complete control over the press, and thus said that Alexander I's will was for it to be under the control of local authorities so

88 S. Smith-Peter, "Defining the Russian People: Konstantin Arsen'ev and Russian Statistics before 1861," *History of Science*, 45, 1 (March 2007), 51; L. D. Shirokorad, "Prepodavanie politicheskoi ekonomii: nachal'nyi etap," *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo universiteta* Seriya 5, 3, 21 (2004), 3-14.

89 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 295.

that other government offices and employees would send in information.<sup>90</sup> We can see the conflict between the ministry's vision of vertical power and the earlier idea of a public motivated by interest in the market.

The curator also ordered that the university increase the income from the paper and create a publishing plan for it. Iakovkin responded by saying that the costs for each sheet of paper printed were five kopecks for a raw sheet of paper, and seven for a white one. He stated that there were only 120 subscribers and that the annual subscription fee was only five rubles. There were not enough printers, and often the newspaper was delivered to the censor late, which made it late to the subscribers. This, plus the high number of typographical errors, had frustrated the subscribers.<sup>91</sup> Although the costs of printing each page were only in kopecks, the gymnasium council decided to set the new price at 5 rubles 50 kopecks an issue for delivery within Kazan' and seven rubles for mail delivery. The gymnasium council agreed on November 29, 1811, that all gymnasia and district schools would be required to pay seven rubles per issue out of the money set aside for the upkeep of the school buildings.<sup>92</sup> Given that the paper was published weekly, this would bring in an extortionate 364 rubles for a year's subscription from each such institution located outside Kazan' city limits. The curator later confirmed these prices for 1812.<sup>93</sup>

And yet an interest in the market was not lacking in the newspaper. In particular, Kondyrev was part of the new Smithian statistics that was beginning to emerge at the St. Petersburg Pedagogical Institute. One leading statistician was Mikhail Balug'ianskii, who was part of a larger shift in Russian statistics from the cameralist listing of the possessions of the state to a Smithian analysis of the well-being of the people as the origin of national wealth.<sup>94</sup> Kondyrev characterized Mikhail Balug'ianskii as "one of the most outstanding and most scholarly of our statisticians today" and praised a journal article in which Balugian'skii defended Smith's views on how wealth was created and circulated.<sup>95</sup>

In 1812, Kondyrev published his translation of Georg Sartorius' *Foundations of National Wealth*, which included a long introduction by Kondyrev that was the first Russian history of economics written by a Russian in that language.<sup>96</sup> This work by Sartorius was a summary of Smith's *The Wealth of*

90 Ibid., 296.

91 Ibid., 297.

92 NA RT, f. 977, op. "Uchilishchnyi Komitet," d. 21, l. 1.

93 Kazanskii universitet, Nauchnaia biblioteka imeni N. I. Lobachevskogo, Otdel rukopisei i redkikh knig, N. 4245, l. 6 ob.

94 Smith-Peter, "Defining the Russian People," 47-64.

95 G. Sartorius, *Ob istochnikakh, otkuda mogu byt' udovletvoreny potrebnosti naroda ili ob osnovaniakh narodnogo bogatstva*, trans. P. S. Kondyrev (Kazan', 1812). 247-248; Smith-Peter, "Defining the Russian People," 49.

96 Sartorius, *Ob istochnikakh*. M.N. Beshpalov, "K voprosu o vozniknovenii bibliografii politicheskoi ekonomii i statistiki v Rossii," *Sovetskaia bibliografiia* 6, 154 (1975), 37-45; Cf. J.

*Nations*, which Kondyrev considered too long to use as a textbook. In the introduction, Kondyrev paid special attention to Smith's works, providing a synopsis of the Russian translation of *The Wealth of Nations*, along with a bibliography of other foreign-language translations of that work.

This remarkably candid historical survey of Russian statistics and political economy was allowed to be published, but Kondyrev had to pay the university press for printing it. While the original agreement was that it would be taken out of his salary over six months, the costs were higher than expected.<sup>97</sup> Kondyrev raised part of the money by creating a list of subscribers, who included institutions such as Kazan' University, which bought 50 copies and the Astrakhan' gymnasium (25 copies). Individuals included university professors, university and gymnasium students, priests and higher clergy, and merchants. Subscribers came from provinces such as Kazan', Penza, Tambov and Orenburg.<sup>98</sup> The subscriptions only covered part of the full cost of 471 rubles, 46 3/4 kopecks for printing.<sup>99</sup> Kondyrev paid off the costs over the course of 1812, with the last payment received by the press on December 4, 1812.<sup>100</sup>

Kondyrev's Smithian interests are also visible in an article he wrote in 1811 and which provoked a sharp debate with Gorodchaninov. The article, "On the Makar'ev Fair, Nizhnii Novgorod (Statistical News)," provided a Smithian analysis of the goods bought and sold at this fair, which, while it was open, was the center of Russian economic life. He noted that there was greater supply than demand for many goods, which forced down prices, leading to more sales; this was particularly the case with Asian goods.<sup>101</sup> Kondyrev stated that most of the people there were "Russian subjects, as well as those from Asian lands (*Rossiiskikh poddannyykh, tak i iz Aziiskikh zemel'*), while there were very few Europeans. Persians traded their silks and cottons, Bukharans and Khivans the latter in great quantity; there were also Indians, Georgians and others."<sup>102</sup> The Russian economy was thus presented as closely tied to the East, perhaps even more so than to the West. He also showed in detail why the total value of goods brought to the fair was around 131,800,000 rubles and not the 58,155,000 rubles given in *Severnaia Pochta* (*Northern Post*), a St. Petersburg newspaper focusing on economic

---

Zweynert, "The Theory of Internal Goods in Nineteenth-Century Russian Classical Economic Thought," *European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, 11, 4 (Winter 2004), 541.

97 NA RT, f. 977, opis "Uchilishchnyi komitet," d. 13, l. 1-11.

98 Sartorius, *Ob istochnikakh*, 279-291.

99 NA RT, f. 977, op. "Uchilishchnyi komitet," d. 13, l. 9-90b.

100 NA RT, f. 977, op. "Uchilishchnyi komitet," d. 13, l. 130b.

101 [P. S. Kondyrev], "O Makar'evskoi Iarmonke Nizhegorodskoi gubernii (Statisticheskoe izvestiia)," *Kazanskiia izvestiia*, 25 (October 4, 1811), 1.

102 "O Makar'evskoi Iarmonke," 3.



and foreign news that was published by the Post Office under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.<sup>103</sup>

Here, Kondyrev focused on trade and the well-being of the population, along the lines of other Smithian statisticians. The merchants who were Russian subjects and those from Asian lands played a key role in tying Russian trade together and in making Russia an international trading partner. At the same time, the new statistics provided a scientific basis from which to critique official statistics, as Kondyrev provided an extended discussion of the total value of goods at the fair in order to show that the Ministry of Internal Affairs' estimate was far too low. Kondyrev was speaking back to the ministries by taking on a role of someone who understood the region better than central bureaucrats did. On the one hand, the ministries needed information from the regions. On the other, they disliked any criticism.

This article caused conflict among members of the censorship committee, composed of other professors and given the task of censoring the newspaper and all other publications in the district. While Kondyrev's presentation assumed that economic information should be made widely available to the public, the more conservative Gorodchaninov saw it as belonging to the state and possibly as state secrets. Gorodchaninov did not agree with the rest of the censorship committee's approval of the article, stating that "it was not attested to by the chairman of the municipal duma (*gradskii golova*) of the merchant estate or by the police."<sup>104</sup> Gorodchaninov saw statistics in the older, cameralist spirit as a listing of the possessions of the state rather than an outline of the productivity of the people.

As a result of Gorodchaninov's opposition to the article, *Kazanskii izvestiia* shifted from a post-publication to a pre-publication censorship regime.<sup>105</sup> Kondyrev was not given a reprimand, however, and in this he was more fortunate than the Smithian statisticians in St. Petersburg. In 1821, cameralist statistician E. Ziablovskii assisted the reactionary curator of St. Petersburg University in putting Smithian statisticians there on trial, which resulted in their expulsion from the university, adversely affecting the teaching of statistics in St. Petersburg for several decades.<sup>106</sup>

Kondyrev and Gorodchaninov also fought over the scope of the new *Kazanskii izvestiia*. Because the university had taken control of *Kazanskii izvestiia*, the professors needed to create a new plan that would determine what could and could not be published. This would be used by the Ministry of Education to determine if any article had deviated from the plan.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 3-4; A. G. Dement'eva et al. (eds.), *Russkaia periodicheskaia pechat' (1702-1894): Spravochnik* (Moscow, 1959), 131.

<sup>104</sup> Kazanskii universitet, Nauchnaia biblioteka imeni N. I. Lobachevskogo, Otdel rukopisei i redkikh knig, N. 4245, l. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Smith-Peter, "Defining the Russian People," 51; Shirokorad, "Prepodavanie politicheskoi ekonomii: nachal'nyi etap", 3-14.

At first Gorodchaninov and the conservatives seemed to have gained the upper hand. Kondyrev argued for wide-ranging regional coverage, even including political news, rather than simply copying the plan for *Moskovskie vedomosti* (*Moscow News*) and filling it with reprints and translations, as Gorodchaninov and other more conservative professors had wanted. On July 19, 1811, the gymnasium council met, forming a six-man committee that included both Gorodchaninov and Kondyrev and which, after a lengthy meeting, agreed to a plan that would be divided into three parts like *Moskovskie vedomosti*: a scholarly part, with news on literature, natural history, weather, technology, statistics, agriculture, and chemistry. The stated audience were the directors of schools throughout the educational district. The civil part incorporated some of the earlier paper's interest in the market, with news of sales, and arriving and departing ships and caravans, with lists of goods and their owners. In addition, it would print various legal papers, such as deeds of sale and on the mortgaging of serfs, which had been approved at local governmental offices. Finally, a meteorological part would chronicle the weather.<sup>107</sup> Broad as this seemed, it was not focused on the needs of the region.

The next stage of the battle for the plan led to the victory of Kondyrev and a more regionally based plan that would have encouraged its readers to also become writers. At the August 17, 1811 meeting of the council, where Gorodchaninov stated that he needed subscriptions to foreign journals and research assistants to help him translate them for the paper, while Kondyrev presented a three-page plan for the publication of the newspaper that focused on regional news, including a rubric for "political news" (*politicheskie izvestiia*). Its inclusion of political news, a monopoly of central official Russian papers since Peter the Great, was especially striking. Including political news in the program was another aspect of according Kazan' equal status with the other capitals. Despite Iakovkin's criticism of the plan, supported by Gorodchaninov and the assistant editor, adjunct professor of Russian literature, V. M. Perevoshchikov, the council approved Kondyrev's plan by a majority, if not unanimous, vote.<sup>108</sup> This suggests that Kondyrev had a considerable amount of support for his more regionally-based vision among the council.

On August 28, 1811, the curator approved Kondyrev's plan, aside from the section on political news, which he said was not the business of any administration in Kazan', particularly not regarding news of European governments, which was chosen specifically by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburg for publication there.<sup>109</sup> In addition to political news, Kondyrev's plan called for articles on literature, articles on jurisprudence,

<sup>107</sup> Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 298.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

history, medicine, geography, philosophy and the arts and sciences.<sup>110</sup> At first, the Ministry of Education would not allow any political news; however, in spring 1812, the newspaper was allowed to republish political news from *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* (*St. Petersburg News*), as well as news from the foreign press as long as it had no connection with Russia.<sup>111</sup> Although the ministries asserted their rights to their own territory, they were willing to cede considerable leeway to study of the region.

Kazan' University also had the ability to censor the paper through its own censorship committee. As part of a liberal censorship law promulgated in 1804, the universities had control over what they and others published in their educational districts. A faculty committee was to oversee all publications in what scholars have argued was the most liberal treatment of the press during the Imperial period. The tone of the censorship law, shaped by reformers, was clear in article 22:

A careful and reasonable investigation of any truth which relates to the faith, humanity, civil order, legislation, administration or any other area of government not only is not to be subjected to modest censorship strictures but also to be permitted complete press freedom, which advances the cause of education.<sup>112</sup>

The law drew upon Emmanuel Kant's idea of the difference between public and private reason, which allowed for public figures to question the state in their capacity as private individuals, even as they were bound to obey in their public roles.<sup>113</sup> Only works that were against "religion, the government, morality, or the personal honor of a citizen" were to be banned, and the ban was to be confirmed by a committee vote. The committees were instructed to interpret works in the way most advantageous to the author.<sup>114</sup>

The curator's rejection of political news within the plan required the censorship committee to produce a new one, which they did after a considerable amount of debate. Although the revised plan excluded political news, the new rubrics were so broad that nearly anything could be published. At the committee meeting of October 4, 1811, they approved Kondyrev's new plan, which had three parts: first, announcements from the government; second, interesting news in the following rubrics: trading news, agriculture and industry, technology, statistics, a chronicle of military affairs and military news, jurisprudence, history, geography, philosophy, art, exact sciences,

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 316.

<sup>112</sup> Quoted in C. Ruud, *Fighting Words: Imperial Censorship and the Russian Press, 1804-1906* (Toronto, 1982), 27.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>114</sup> M. Tax Choldin, *A Fence Around the Empire: Western Censorship of Western Ideas under the Tsars* (Durham, NC, 1985), 24.

physics and chemistry, medicine, literature, and scholarly affairs; third, governmental, social (*obshchestvennaia*) and private announcements.<sup>115</sup> Military news might also provide a pretext to include foreign news.

The once-again revised plan also ran into problems with ministries that wanted to assert control over their intellectual territory. On November 29, 1811, the curator informed the censorship committee that the sections of the plan dealing with jurisprudence, philosophy and medical news had not been approved. Other ministries dealt with jurisprudence, philosophy might lead to scholarly debate, and the medical-surgical academy already published its own journal, the curator stated.<sup>116</sup> Again, we see that the ministries did not want to involve the public in producing knowledge that they felt should be under their own control.

In response, the committee argued for a broader understanding of the role of the paper in communicating information to a larger public for the general good, rather than being a government mouthpiece. The committee's response, presumably written by Kondyrev, asked the curator if the ban on jurisprudence extended to decrees from the government and if the ban on medical news dealt only with "profound medical investigations or with everything that might be related to the general good (*obshchaia pol'za*) and should be given as information to everyone, such as, for instance, on livestock epidemics and on measures to prevent them."<sup>117</sup>

In January 1812, the censorship committee met to discuss the news that the curator had restricted the newspaper's program in ways that challenged the idea of a public that produced knowledge and, possibly, the critique of ministries. The curator forbade the publication of material in the government announcements section, or, as Kondyrev's plan put it: "new laws, new institutions, new creation of courts, appointment of bureaucrats, etc." Similarly, articles dealing with jurisprudence and "the decisions of provincial and district courts, interesting to many" were forbidden. Military news ("information on new foreign fortresses; military cunning, old and new; impressive affairs of domestic warriors; victories of Russian troops, taken from Russian newspapers; land and sea") could only be presented as long as it did not put Russian troops in a bad light.<sup>118</sup> The ministries did not want to have the public, however defined, discuss their activities. Similarly, medical news was forbidden for a second time. And yet the paper continued to publish articles on livestock epidemics and means to combat them, as well as Fuch's articles on the health of Kazan' residents.<sup>119</sup>

115 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 302-303.

116 *Ibid.*, 312-313.

117 Kazanskii universitet, Nauchnaia biblioteka imeni N. I. Lobachevskogo, Otdel rukopisei i redkikh knig, N. 4245, l. 3 ob.

118 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 314.

119 *Kazanskii Izvestiia*, January 27, 1812 and February 23, 1812.

Another statement on the aim of the newspaper came on April 6, 1812, and focused more on the local needs of the residents and did not mention the government. “The goal of the publication of *Kazanskie izvestiia* is for the local benefit (*mestnaia pol’za*) of residents of Kazan’, other provinces bordering it and the provinces and countries that have many connections with it.”<sup>120</sup> The local nature of the paper meant that reprints alone were not enough and that Kazan’ was connected to a wide range of places, which could all be of use to each other. This was a more circumspect statement of hopes than the one from January, however, as it did not mention discussion of government actions.

Kondyrev and others may have attempted to expand the plan beyond its original bounds. On March 15, 1812, the censorship committee informed the curator that a section dealing with the arts—painting, drawing, architecture, dance, music, poetry and rhetoric—had been left out of the original plan due to a printing error. They knew that the curator had previously forbidden jokes, charades and other literary genres, but they hoped he understood it was a printing error that had banished the arts from the pages of the paper.<sup>121</sup> Unfortunately, he failed to understand, probably assuming that they were trying to add to a program that had already been published, and refused to allow articles dealing with the arts.

Despite the curator’s ruling, discussed at the October 26, 1811 censorship committee meeting, that novels, tales, epigrams, charades (and sermons) were not to be included, some literary works were published.<sup>122</sup> On November 29, 1811, the co-editor V.M. Perevoshchikov, wrote a feuilleton titled “Conversation at a Ball,” which, he stated, aimed to “present the soul of the Kazan’ public.”<sup>123</sup>

A new curator was even less comfortable with engaging the public. After the death of Rumovskii on September 16, 1812, M. A. Saltykov, a bureaucrat at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was appointed the new curator of the Kazan’ Educational District.<sup>124</sup> Saltykov was helpful for the university in that he realized that Iakovkin was stealing from it on a grand scale and sought to have him removed as director and took measures to strengthen the institution.<sup>125</sup> But, toward the end of 1812, he saw no need to publish the Kondyrev plan in *Kazanskie izvestiia*, calling it “useless” to do so “as [the plan] does not concern the public, and is rather a set of rules for the editors of the newspaper to help them decide which articles should be published

120 *Kazanskie Izvestiia*, April 6, 1812.

121 Kazanskii universitet, Nauchnaia biblioteka imeni N. I. Lobachevskogo, Rukopisnoe otdelenie, N. 4245, l. 9.

122 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 313.

123 *Ibid.*, 316.

124 Vishlenkova, *Kazanskii universitet*, 23.

125 *Ibid.*, 24.

and which should not.”<sup>126</sup> Again, we see a ministerial view of the public as simply a consumer of knowledge, rather than a producer.

The idea of the public as producer of knowledge would soon be replaced with an even more intense focus on top-down edification of a passive public. In 1819, Prussian university students took part in terrorist acts against bureaucrats, which influenced a conservative turn in Alexander I’s educational policies. These acts deeply shook the emperor, as the Prussian university system had been one of the models for the Russian universities in 1804.<sup>127</sup> Concerned also about the very low number of students (over the fourteen years of Kazan’ University’s existence, there had been 43 graduates, each of whom had cost the state around 40,000 rubles) and accounts of misappropriation of government funds, Alexander I named M. L. Magnitskii inspector of the university in 1819. While Magnitskii’s report, running over 5000 pages, detailed the serious administrative and financial misdeeds of Iakovkin and the resulting disorder within the university, it did not stop there. Instead, it noted that universities in Europe were like a raised dagger to the state and recommended that Kazan’ University be closed. Alexander I disagreed, and the university remained open, but with Magnitskii as the new curator. Magnitskii did carry out some positive changes, such as removing Iakovkin from his position due to his misappropriation of funds, and several other professors for ill health, lack of qualifications, or for alcoholism, and oversaw construction of the main building of Kazan’ University now seen as a symbol of the university.

In 1820, Magnitskii replaced *Kazanskie izvestiia* with a monthly journal entitled *Kazanskii vestnik* (*The Kazan’ Herald*), which was designated as a means to the “edification of youth in Christian piety and good morals.”<sup>128</sup> It lost much of its scholarly tone due to the demands of Magnitskii. Filled with popularizing theological pieces, the journal also continued to publish works describing the lands of the Kazan’ Educational District, along with foreign news, such as on the treatment of Christians under the Ottoman Empire.<sup>129</sup> A supplement to *Kazanskii vestnik* entitled *Pribavlenie k Kazanskomu Vestniku* was also published weekly from 1821 to 1824, consisting of official notices, listings of persons arriving and leaving Kazan’, private announcements, along with observations of the weather.<sup>130</sup>

Over time, Magnitskii’s policies became increasingly retrograde and obscurantist. Finally, he himself was deposed and arrested on December 1,

126 Zagoskin, *Istoriia Imperatorskogo Kazanskogo Universiteta*, 315.

127 Vishlenkova, “Pervye gody,” 28.

128 *Kazanskii vestnik* 1824 (October), 142. The full program of *Kazanskii vestnik* can be found in N. P. Zagoskin, *Istoriia imperatorskogo Kazanskogo universiteta za pervyia sto let ego sushchestvovaniia 1804-1904* (Kazan’, 1904), vol. 4, 33-34.

129 See, for example, *Kazanskii vestnik* 1824 (October), 95-116.

130 V. Aristov, N. Ermolaeva, *Vse nachalos’ s putevoditel’ia: poiski literaturnye i istoricheskii* (Kazan’, 1975), 31.

1825, for spending the money given to him for an annual inspection trip from St. Petersburg to Kazan' for other purposes.<sup>131</sup> Although the reign of Iakovkin was over, the tradition of misappropriation of funds and of ignoring university autonomy remained. For a time, the idea of a passive public receiving information prevailed over an active public creating knowledge of its own region, but the conflict would continue throughout the nineteenth century and beyond.

In conclusion, creating a regional press led to conflicts over what the nature of the regional public was and should be. Conservatives sought to continue the tradition of a public as at a theater, who would absorb the information provided by the state without talking back. For this, not much was needed besides reprints from the ministries' own central publications and translations from appropriate Western periodicals. Liberals, following the ideas of Adam Smith, sought to foster a regional reading public, who would write as well as read about their region. The first version of *Kazanskie izvestiia* focused on a productive reading public, whose announcements would create local knowledge in the same way they produced goods for the market of the town of Kazan'. The second version was more focused on educators spread throughout the Kazan' Educational District and had a broader view of their ability to critically engage with the needs of the region and the state. This might lead to criticism of the ministries, as well as greater knowledge for the center, though. The central state had to balance their need for information with their dislike of criticism and as a result, they did not immediately reject the idea of an active and critically minded regional reading public. Although the experiment would be suspended in the last, conservative, part of Alexander I's reign, the regional public would later reemerge in Ukrainian and Siberian national and regional identities.

---

131 Ibid., 35-41.





## THE GOTHIC NOVEL READER COMES TO RUSSIA

Katherine Bowers

Gothic writer Orest Somov describes a woman who falls victim to the gothic novel craze in the satirical story *Mommy and Sonny* (*Matushka i synok*, 1833). While observing a year of mourning following her husband's death, Margarita Savishna

read novels, of which she ordered a great supply from Moscow, basing the choice of titles on the positive testimony of the announcements placed in the supplements to the *Moskovskie vedomosti* [*Moscow News*], composed by resourceful publishers and booksellers. ... Margarita Savishna passionately loved robbers' castles, the glint of daggers, the kidnapping of unfortunate heroines, and the secret pacts of murderers under the windows of innocent victims doomed to be killed, meanwhile confined in a tiny room of the east or west tower. In a word, the imagination of Margarita Savishna, a woman of firm character and strong nerves, delighted only in novelistic blood, breathed with the atmosphere of the dungeon, fed on the smell of murder. So to say, she lived on terror.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The research for this chapter was supported by an Open Research Laboratory grant from the University of Illinois Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center. My thanks to the University of Illinois library's Slavic Reference Service, especially Joe Lenkart, for their invaluable assistance with my research, and to John Randolph, Valeria Sobol, and the staff at REEEC for kindly hosting me during my stay. I am grateful to Hilde Hoogenboom for sharing her notes on and scans of Mariia Izvekova's novels with me. Additionally, I would like to thank Connor Doak and Tatiana Filimonova for their feedback on an early version of this chapter, John Ayliff for reading several drafts.

O. Somov, "Mommy and Sonny," translated by J. Mersereau, Jr., in *Russian Romantic Prose* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1979), 220. Subsequent citations refer to this translation. For the original text

This passage's humor lies in its juxtaposition of Margarita Savishna's vivid inner life—rife with dramatic landscapes, desperate deeds, and dangerous individuals—and her daily domestic life as a provincial landowner and widow, a life far removed from the “robbers' castles, the glint of daggers, the kidnapping of unfortunate heroines,” etc. of her imagination. Somov's story satirizes readers caught up in popular lowbrow fiction.

In the discussion of the heroine's reading habits, the passage provides a precis of the relationships between generic convention (the gothic elements), reader experience (Margarita Savishna's imagination), critical response (Somov's satire), and literary marketplace (the Moscow booksellers) that all converge in the practice of reading gothic novels in Russia. First, Margarita Savishna orders the novels from Moscow, based on publishers' lists and booksellers' recommendations, which results in a somewhat arbitrary reading list based not on personal taste so much as on market trends and surpluses. This then reflects the state of the book market in Russia outside of the big cities like St Petersburg and Moscow. Second, the reader's character is discussed in relation to her reading habits; her “firm character and strong nerves” allow her to engage in the pursuit of “novelistic blood.” Somov's discussion is meant humorously here, but, as I will discuss, critics were quick to judge a reader's character by their reading material, particularly where lurid and immoral gothic novels were concerned. Third, the effect on the reader is both physiological and affective, a nod to the important relationship between reader and narrative which developed in gothic fiction.

Gothic novels were not a Russian invention, nor were they considered to be ‘good literature’ by critics. Yet, they were extremely popular—one of the first examples of mass-produced popular fiction, both in Western Europe and Russia—and served to influence the development of Russian literature significantly.<sup>2</sup> In this chapter I will contextualize the development of the gothic novel reader, a cliché that appeared alongside the novels in eighteenth-century Britain and which followed the genre to Russia. As I will demonstrate, the gothic novel reader is a historically contextualized

---

see O. M. Somov, “Matushka i synok,” *Al'tsiona: almanakh na 1833-i god.* (St. Petersburg, 1833), 128-186.

2 On gothic reception in Russia, the most significant critical source is Vadim Vatsuro's posthumous *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow, 2002). On the gothic novel's influence on later Russian literature, see N. Cornwell (ed.), *The Gothic Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature* (Amsterdam, 1999), particularly the chapters by Ignat Avsey, Leon Burnett, and Ann Komaromi; N. D. Tamarchenko, A. A. Poliakova (eds.), *Goticheskaia traditsiia v russkoi literature* (Moscow, 2008), especially Parts 2 and 3; K. Bowers, “Shadows of the Gothic: Adapted Terror in Russian Fiction, 1792-1905,” PhD diss. (Evanston, IL, 2011); M. Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts: Gothic Themes in Early Soviet Literature* (Oxford, 2012); V. Sobol, “The Uncanny Frontier of Russian Identity: Travel, Ethnography, and Empire in Lermontov's ‘Taman’,” *Russian Review*, 70, 1 (2011), 65-79; and V. Sobol, “Monakh v Madride: Otvzuki goticheskogo romana Met'iu G. L'iuisa ‘Monakh’ v p'ese A.S. Pushkina ‘Kamennyi gost’,” *Filologicheskie nauki*, 5 (2015), 75-84.

imagined reader, the appearance of which in criticism, both British and Russian, led to a cultural understanding of what gothic novels are, how their readers experienced them, and what type of person would read them that transcended national borders.

British and Russian readers and critics of gothic novels are separated by at least a decade, sometimes more, due to the belated entry of gothic novels into the Russian book market. Yet, as their reactions are so similar, for the purposes of my study, I consider these reader reactions to be one body of source material. Taking a comparative approach, I will foreground my discussion of how the gothic novel came to Russia with a history of its aesthetic development in Britain. After an overview of what gothic novels are and how gothic novelists related to their readership, I will discuss gothic fiction's arrival in Russia through translation, Russian writers who engaged in this new genre, its critical reception in Russia, and the experience of Russian readers. Finally, the chapter will address the legacy of gothic fiction among Russian readers in terms of genre memory. This chapter is not a history of the gothic novel in Russia; for that, I recommend readers consult Vadim Vatsuro's comprehensive and excellent study *The Gothic Novel in Russia (Goticheskii roman v Rossii, 2002)*.<sup>3</sup> The assessment of the quality of Russian translations of English gothic novels is also beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, what I aim to do in the following pages is trace the threads—esthetic, generic, cultural, critical, and economic—that led to the creation of the imagined gothic novel reader in the Russian cultural context.

#### I. 'THE MACHINERY OF GHOSTS AND GOBLINS': GOTHIC AESTHETICS AND READER AFFECT

The gothic novel reader's journey to Russia begins in England, where the first gothic novel was created, nearly 30 years before the first gothic translation appeared on the Russian book market. In this section of the chapter I will give an overview of the first gothic novel's esthetic conception. Because gothic is a genre that is designed to manipulate readers' emotions in a significant way, an understanding of how this manipulation is constructed in the genre's esthetic formulation is necessary to understand gothic reader affect.

One morning in June 1764, writer and politician Horace Walpole woke up at Strawberry Hill, his neo-medieval fantasy estate on the banks of the Thames, from a dream:

I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story), and that on the

---

<sup>3</sup> See note 2 for full reference.

uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate.<sup>4</sup>

Walpole's account reveals several design elements that later became enshrined as gothic generic convention. Engaging in 'automatic writing' like this was a way of attempting to address the subconscious mind, so that "what flowed from his pen would be close to the unconscious sources of his nightmare."<sup>5</sup> Walpole's comment that his head is filled "with Gothic story" refers to his passion for all things medieval: history, architecture, literature, legend, art, even politics. These elements—the subconscious, fantasy, and the medieval—come together in the novel he wrote, inspired by his dream, *The Castle of Otranto*: the first gothic novel.

Walpole published the first 500 copies of *The Castle of Otranto* in late December 1764, claiming the work was a found manuscript "translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canton of the Church of St. Nicholas at Otranto." This alleged provenance lent the volume credibility and it quickly became a success. The work incorporates a medieval Italian setting and concerns Manfred, the lord of Otranto, and his family's right to the estate. After the supernatural death of his son, Manfred grows concerned about a prophecy that the true heir of the castle will claim his rightful place. Various horrific, exciting, and mysterious scenes ensue as Manfred works to counteract this presage by imprisoning his daughter-in-law and attempting to force her hand in marriage, planning to murder his wife and accidentally killing his daughter in the process, and, finally, repenting when, in the end, the true heir of Otranto is revealed.

The novel immediately resonated with readers and their responses to it show us what the gothic can effect in readers not yet influenced by gothic generic expectation and cliché. The graveyard poet Thomas Gray, known for his lyric meditations on death and the afterlife, wrote to Walpole on 30 December 1764 that the work "engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to-bed o'nights."<sup>6</sup> Reacting to the first French translation in 1767, critic and diplomat Friedrich Melchior von Grimm wrote:

Let one be ever so much of a philosopher, that enormous helmet, that monstrous sword, the portrait which starts from its frame and walks away, the skeleton of the hermit praying in the oratory, the vaults, the subterranean passages, the moonshine, -- all

4 H. Walpole, "969. To the Rev. William Cole," in *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Oxford*, 8 vols. (London, 1857), vol. 4, 328.

5 M. Tropp, *Images of Fear: How Horror Stories Helped Shape Modern Culture (1818-1918)* (London, 1990), 13.

6 T. Gray, *The Works of Thomas Gray*, 2 vols. (London, 1825), vol. 1, 266 (Letter LXIV).

these things make the hair of the sage stand on end, as much as that of the child and his nurse; so much are the sources of the marvellous the same to all men.<sup>7</sup>

Both Gray and von Grimm discuss the universality of Walpole's creation in terms of the feeling it arouses: terror. And yet, both readers are compelled to read onwards; Gray mentions that the novel has engaged his attention, while von Grimm uses the term 'marvellous,' referring to the work's intriguing novelty and imagination. Walpole had hit upon an entertaining mode of terror, one that some critics mentioned specifically. In a 1764 review, one critic wrote,

Those who can digest the absurdities of Gothic fiction, and bear with the machinery of ghosts and goblins, may hope, at least, for considerable entertainment from the performance before us: for it is written with no common pen; the language is accurate and elegant; the characters are highly finished; and the disquisitions into human manners, passions, and pursuits indicate the keenest penetration and the most perfect knowledge of mankind.<sup>8</sup>

From this review it is clear that *The Castle of Otranto* was received as much as an entertaining romp as it was a frightening tale. The fear factor contributed to the volume's entertainment value; as Martin Tropp observes, "Whether fantastic or factual, horror stories attract their audience by frightening it, two seemingly contradictory impulses."<sup>9</sup> The idea of generic convention also enters clearly into this review when its author speaks of "the machinery of ghosts and goblins." To address reader demand for the popular work, Walpole published 500 copies of the novel's second edition in April 1765, revealing his authorship and the work's true provenance in it as well as a new subtitle, "A Gothic Story." This subtitle gave the gothic genre its name.

Walpole's preface to the second edition discusses the work's popularity among readers and gives some explanation about his intentions in writing the fantasy: "It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern,"<sup>10</sup> that is, to create a work that fused the superstition, violence, adventure, and supernatural fantasy of the medieval romance with the eighteenth-century English novel set in the familiar and realistic present. The medieval setting was a key part of this formula; it enabled the

<sup>7</sup> F. M. von Grimm, *Historical and Literary Memoirs and Anecdotes*, 4 vols. (London, 1815), vol. 2, 292.

<sup>8</sup> Anonymous review, *The Monthly Review, or Literary Journal*, 32 (Feb. 1764), 97.

<sup>9</sup> See Tropp, *Images of Fear*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Walpole, "Preface to the Second Edition," *The Castle of Otranto*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London, 1769), xiv.

author to draw on “miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events,” which he saw as absent from his contemporary fiction but embedded in both the literature of the past and the beliefs associated with it (for example, Catholic mysticism).<sup>11</sup> Walpole’s novel was not the first work to focus on a medieval setting, nor was it the first to narrate gratuitously violent or blatantly supernatural events. Beyond the eighteenth-century novels in this vein, including Tobias Smollett’s *Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753), Thomas Leland’s *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762), or William Hutchinson’s *The Hermitage* (1772), there are, of course, the examples from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literature, most prominently William Shakespeare’s plays featuring a medieval past, supernatural plot elements, and significant violence such as *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. Walpole’s novel, however, served to signify the outline of a genre dwelling on “things gloomy, macabre, and medieval.”<sup>12</sup> Walpole’s gothic novel included both a set of conventions and a narrative mandate to manipulate its reader’s emotions.

## 2. A RECIPE FOR A GOTHIC NOVEL: GENERIC DEVELOPMENT AND READER ENGAGEMENT

How does the gothic novelist accomplish this manipulation of the reader? The gothic genre is best known for its array of conventions, many of them touched on by Margarita Savishna in the passage I cited from Somov’s story: a landscape featuring brooding castles, ruined monasteries, mysterious caves, and gloomy mountains and cliffs; a villain who tries to enact his nefarious plans on innocent victims; a variety of dangers, both natural and potentially supernatural. In Somov’s humorous poem “Plan for a Novel à la Radcliffe” (Plan romana à la Radcliff, 1816), a list of these elements appears:

Robbers, an underground prison,  
 A tower, half a dozen owls;  
 Gleaming through ravines the moon has risen,  
 Wolves are baying, the wind howls;  
 Awful dreams torment my heroes  
 Fiery dragons, flying griffins from myth;  
 Fear, horror after them flows...  
 There you have it, a novel à la Radcliffe!<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Walpole, “Preface to the First Edition,” *The Castle of Otranto*, vii.

<sup>12</sup> T. Castle, “Ann Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho*,” in *Boss Ladies, Watch Out! Essays on Women, Sex and Writing* (London, 2002), 56.

<sup>13</sup> This rhymed translation appears in A. Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin: Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801-1825)* (Amsterdam, 2006), 84-85. The original may be found here: O. S., “Plan romana a la Radcliff,” *Khar'kovskii Demokrit* (1816), vol. 5, 61.

The emphasis in Somov's plan for a gothic novel is on the senses: sight—the moon gleams; hearing—wolves bay, the wind howls; and feeling. Beyond the mention of tormenting nightmares and mythological creatures, Somov names the primary affective operators in gothic fiction, fear and horror. The poem's humor lies in its calling attention to the gothic novel's formulaic quality, that the array of conventions is similar (or the same) in each text. While the repetition of tropes and themes to the point of cliché seems as though it would bore, the positioning of tropes in different relationships creates new productive models, and the predictability of surprising and frightening elements assures readers' engagement. Walpole's winning formula for this is to emphasize the role of terror in the novel's structure; as he notes in the preface to the first edition of *Otranto*,

Everything tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed. The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece. The characters are well drawn, and still better maintained. Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from ever languishing; and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions.<sup>14</sup>

Intriguingly, Walpole discusses the formulation of his story in terms of genre, referring to Aristotle's *Poetics*, but rather than keeping pity and fear in equilibrium, the English author privileges terror as 'the principal engine.' Keeping his reader in a state of affective vacillation between the Aristotelian categories of pity and terror, that is, in eighteenth-century genre terms, drawing on techniques from horror (or its forebear revenge tragedy) and sentimentalism, Walpole created a page turner.

When Walpole first published *The Castle of Otranto*, the work represented a wholly new reading experience. Later readers, having read a bevy of novels in the same vein, could readily identify narrative patterns and clichés in the text. Sir Walter Scott, in his preface to an 1811 Scottish edition of Walpole's novel (nearly fifty years removed from the novel's inaugural edition), cautions his readers that,

the character of the supernatural machinery in the *Castle of Otranto* is liable to objections. Its action and interference is rather too frequent, and presses too hard and constantly upon the same feelings in the reader's mind, to the hazard of diminishing the elasticity of the spring upon which it should operate. The fund of fearful sympathy which can be afforded by a modern reader to a tale of wonder, is much diminished by the present

---

<sup>14</sup> Walpole, "Preface to the First Edition," *Otranto*, vii-viii.

habits of life and mode of education. Our ancestors could wonder and thrill... but our habits and feelings and belief are different, and a transient, though vivid impression is all that can be excited by a tale of wonder even in the most fanciful mind of the present day.<sup>15</sup>

Here Scott critically examines the reader's reaction to the novel and why it does not engage modern readers to the same degree it did Walpole's original public. Scott attributes the diminished sense of 'wonder' he feels upon reading the work to temporal distance, but his criticisms of Walpole come from generic distance, the experience of reading an originating work after reading its generic imitators and followers. Strikingly, Scott considers the work not in terms of aesthetic merit, but in its effect on readers. His closing comments underscore the importance of reader affect.

If Horace Walpole, who led the way in this new species of literary composition, has been surpassed by some of his followers in diffuse brilliancy of description, and perhaps in the art of detaining the mind of the reader in a state of feverish and anxious suspense, through a protracted and complicated narrative, more will yet remain with him than the single merit of originality and invention.... The applause, in fine, which cannot be denied to him who can excite the passions of fear and of pity, must be awarded to the author of the *Castle of Otranto*.<sup>16</sup>

My working definition of the gothic breaks down and builds on Scott's point that gothic novels detain "the mind of the reader in a state of feverish and anxious suspense, through a protracted and complicated narrative," underscoring the role of the reader in the experience of the text:

Looking beyond the gothic's hauntings and mysteries ... several key characteristics emerge as definitive for the genre: 1) the text must focus on the solution of a mystery: the reader is propelled to continue reading out of curiosity, anticipating horrors or terrors that are hinted at but constantly deferred; 2) the text must refer to some kind of transgression or broken taboo, the exploration of the repercussions of which informs the work as a whole; and, finally, 3) the text is preoccupied with the depiction and/or evocation of emotions such as fear, anxiety, and revulsion, and

<sup>15</sup> W. Scott, "Introduction," in H. Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Edinburgh, 1811), xxxv-xxxvi.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, xxxvi.



these psychologies both inform the text and attempt to evoke a strong emotional reaction from the reader.<sup>17</sup>

Gothic writers connected with readers by provoking emotional responses: suspense, horror, anxiety, fascination, dread, laughter, disgust. The gothic novelist's main aim is to prey on readers' emotions through suspense, to make them feel dread and terror, postponing resolution as long as possible to keep them turning pages. The novels are predicated on the exploration of fear, and the best of them provoke a visceral reader response. Tropp studies the appeal of horror fiction, positing that works of horror "continue to speak to their audience because they echo fears that have remained with us... Their power comes from more than the tapping of ancient and private sources of nightmare; they use those materials to connect individual lives with the group experience of culture."<sup>18</sup>

The best gothic novels during this period were produced from, as Mark S. Simpson observes, "a particular frame of mind which questioned traditional values of good and evil, of virtue and reward and which sought to test philosophical, religious, and ethical beliefs through the postulation of a basically uncertain and incomprehensible world."<sup>19</sup> Arguably, the works also transmitted this worldview to their readers, a relationship made possible through readers' affective responses. To this end, gothic novelists added sensational and taboo elements. For example, in addition to murder, supernatural occurrences, and illegitimate inheritance claimants, *The Castle of Otranto* introduces transgressive sexual desires and relationships. Transgression became a driving force of the genre, a crucial element in its task to horrify and terrify readers; as Fred Botting notes, gothic is "the writing of excess" which evinces a "fascination with transgression and anxiety over cultural limits and boundaries."<sup>20</sup> After all, it is a short step from Walpole's suggestion of a kind of technical incest, when Manfred attempts to marry his widowed daughter-in-law, to Matthew Lewis's later gothic novel *The Monk* (1796), in which the hero, Ambrosio, seduces his own sister.

Walpole's success was possible because 1760s England was home to a thriving literary marketplace, which included presses and booksellers, circulating libraries, subscription libraries, literary journals and magazines, and a critical tradition, the circumstances that made literature a possible profession. Literary critics positively reviewed *The Castle of Otranto*, encouraging

17 K. Bowers, "The City Through a Glass, Darkly: Use of the Gothic in Early Russian Realism," *The Modern Language Review*, 108, 4 (2013), 1237-1253, 1238. This definition is my own. For its underpinnings, see D. Punter, *The Literature of Terror: The Modern Gothic* (New York and London, 1996), 146; F. Botting, *Gothic* (New York, London, 1996), 2-3; and, especially, Maguire, *Stalin's Ghosts*, 10-14.

18 Tropp, *Images of Fear*, 5.

19 M. S. Simpson, *The Russian Gothic Novel and its British Antecedents* (Columbus, 1986), 10.

20 Botting, *Gothic*, 2-3.

more would-be readers to try the volume. Subsequent gothic works followed Walpole's model and developed its conventions, themes, and tropes. Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777, originally titled *The Champion of Virtue*) referred directly to *Otranto* as a forebear, both with the subtitle "A Gothic Story" and in her Preface:

This Story is the literary offspring of *The Castle of Otranto*, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel, at the same time it assumes a character and manner of its own, that differs from both; it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic Story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners.<sup>21</sup>

Reeve also borrowed Walpole's plot for her medieval fantasy novel about a usurped birthright and a secret heir. Others, like Ann Radcliffe, the subject of Somov's poem above, created new models from those originally set out by Walpole. Radcliffe, nicknamed 'The Enchantress' for her entrancing fictional worlds, published five novels between 1789 and 1797, including *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), her most famous, as well as *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Italian* (1797). Radcliffe's novels, like Walpole's, are set in a temporally distant, exotic, and potentially sublime place, often in Italy, and feature innocent heroines who must contend with immoral guardians, bandits, violence, hauntings, and other tribulations. In *Udolpho*, heroine Emily St Aubert is driven from her home, orphaned, robbed, imprisoned by an unscrupulous guardian, and set upon by bandits, yet also falls into reveries as she travels through the beautiful countryside of southern France and the Alps. Tapping into Walpole's formula of balancing suspenseful terror with sentimental feeling, Radcliffe quickly became the most famous writer in England; her works traveled abroad in French, German, and eventually Russian translation, among others.<sup>22</sup>

Reeve and Radcliffe are but two outstanding examples among a multitude, a veritable deluge of gothic novelists, who would openly copy from works in print. Tropp, describing the book market in England in the late eighteenth century, evocatively writes, "The sheer number of these works, their similarities, and their availability to all classes of the reading public impressed the main elements of the horror story upon the culture with a nearly indelible force. Individual tales with their own peculiarities were sub-

<sup>21</sup> C. Reeve, "Preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition," *The Old English Baron: A Gothic Story*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, (London, 1789), v.

<sup>22</sup> On French translations of Radcliffe, see T. Hale, "Translation in Distress: Cultural Misappropriation and the Construction of the Gothic," in A. Horner (ed.), *European Gothic: A Spirited Exchange* (Manchester, 2002), 24-28. On Russian translations, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 113-150.

merged under an ocean of imitations, each one a variation of the simple formula that chilled spines and sold books.”<sup>23</sup> While the first critics of *The Castle of Otranto* found the work to be unique and fascinating, faced with an inundation of imitations, later critics began to decry the gothic novel and its successors, both for their formulaic quality and ‘bad writing’ and for their potentially dangerous effects on readers, criticism that was repeated when gothic fiction came to Russia. While the English and Russian book markets developed along different models and at different historical moments, they both experienced a similar “gothic wave,” the Russian wave a delayed echo of its English counterpart.<sup>24</sup>

### 3. GOTHIC MIGRATION: GOTHIC NOVELS COME TO RUSSIA

The gothic wave hit Russia in 1792. *The Castle of Otranto* was the first gothic novel, but the first of the genre to appear in Russian translation was its literary offspring, Reeve’s *The Old English Baron*, which appeared as *The Knight of Virtue: a Story from the Most Ancient Notes of English Chivalry* (*Rytsar’ dobrodeteli: Povest’, vziataia iz samykh drevnikh zapisok angliiskogo rytsarstva*), translated by Kornilii Lub’ianovich and published in St. Petersburg in 1792. William Beckford’s *Vathek* (written 1782, published 1786), translated as *Caliph Vathek, an Arabian Tale* (*Kalif’ Vatek. Arabskaia skazka*), appeared shortly after. Beckford’s Oriental fantasy tells the story of a caliph who renounces Islam and, corrupted by a demon, carries out a number of gruesome crimes in order to gain supernatural powers. Both of the Russian translations were created from French versions. Reeve’s novel had been translated into French in 1787 while Beckford’s was originally written in French and subsequently translated into English by Samuel Henley; the English translation of *Vathek* was published in 1786 under the title *An Arabian Tale from an Unpublished Manuscript*, while the French original was published the same year in Paris (but dated 1787) as *Vathek, Conte Arabe* (*Vathek, the Arabian Count*). A translation of Sophia Lee’s gothic novel *The Recess, or a Tale of Other Times* (1785) quickly followed in the same year, translated from French and published in Russian as *Underground, or Matilda* (*Podzemel’e, ili Matil’da*) in Moscow (later the novel acquired the more literally translated title of *The Recess, or a Tale of Other Times* [*Ubezshishche, ili Povest’ inykh vremen*]). Lee’s historical adventure novel details the adventures of Mary, Queen of Scots’s secret twin daughters as they emerge from a hiding place under an abandoned abbey where they have been raised and seek their for-

23 Tropp, *Images of Fear*, 15.

24 Vatsuro calls the period 1800-1810 the Russian ‘gothic wave’ [goticheskaia vol’na]. He first uses this term in V. Vatsuro, “Literaturno-filosofskaia problematika povesti Karamzina ‘Ostrov Borngol’m,’” in G. Makogonenko, P. Berkov, I. Serman (eds.), *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII – nachala XIX veka* (Moscow, 1969), 191-192.

tune in the world; the work depicts political intrigues in court, a battlefield, sea voyages, a gruesome execution, and other elements calculated to thrill readers.

Russian readers, like the English and French readers who encountered these works before them, found the novels to be exciting, suspenseful, and fantastic, temporally removed as they were from the present and set in exotic and romanticized locations such as a medieval English castle, a medieval Arabian caliphate, and the Elizabethan world, broadly conceived. In short order the Russian book market was flooded with novels of all types, including English gothic novels in Russian translation. Russian gothic works derived their conventions from this flurry of English imports, a trend that reached its peak in 1810.<sup>25</sup> Poet and critic Vasilii Zhukovskii pondered the appeal of the new novels when he wrote in the journal *Vestnik Evropy* (*Herald of Europe*) in 1808:

What are the booksellers shouting about in their gaudy advertisements? About novels—gothic, entertaining, sentimental, satirical, moral, etc. What do the visitors to Nikol'skii Street in Moscow buy? Novels. What merit do these celebrated titles have that beguile readers' curiosity?<sup>26</sup>

The novels' popularity is clear from Zhukovskii's description, as is his skepticism of the deluge inserted into his final rhetorical question.

The undisputed ruler of the gothic wave in Russia was Ann Radcliffe. Radcliffe, mentioned above, was one of the most celebrated writers in England between 1789, when her first novel was published, and 1797, when she retired from her literary career.<sup>27</sup> In Russia, too, her novels were extremely popular. The first Russian translation of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* appeared in 1802, and in that year alone, according to V. S. Sopikov, seven Russian translations of Radcliffe's novels entered the market.<sup>28</sup> This figure is particu-

<sup>25</sup> On the reception of English gothic novelists in Russia, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 7-168: on the reception of Clara Reeve, see 52-68; on the reception of Sophia Lee, see 69-77. Vatsuro does not discuss the reception of William Beckford other than to mention *Vathek's* publication. See also REBECCHINI, "Reading Foreign Novels," in the present volume.

<sup>26</sup> V. A. Zhukovskii, "Pis'mo iz uezda k Izdatel'iu," *Vestnik Evropy*, 1 (January 1808), 5. My translation.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Miles writes, "After 1789—after Radcliffe—the deluge. Europe was flooded with specimens of the 'terrorist school' of novel writing, with what we—following Walpole—have come to call the 'Gothic novel'. Literary crazes of such proportions by their very nature have complex origins. They do not have single 'authors.' And yet Radcliffe's contemporaries were clear in their views: it was she who had galvanized Walpole's moribund literary experiment, setting it stalking about the land, to the peril of young ladies. More than that, she was a huge, Europe-wide success. She was also one of the most influential novelists of her generation." See R. Miles, *Ann Radcliffe: The Great Enchantress* (Manchester, 1995), 2.

<sup>28</sup> V. S. Sopikov, *Opyt rossiiskoi bibliografii*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1813), cited by A. Tosi, "At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel: Nikolai Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Gerra* (1803),"

larly striking when one considers that she had only published five novels by 1802! Radcliffe's Russian translators worked from French translations, not from the original English. Alessandra Tosi describes Radcliffe's popularity among Russian readers in terms of translation: "Radcliffe reached such a high level of popularity that her name alone on a book cover was perceived as a guarantee of commercial success; hence the number of works by other authors (including Lewis's *The Monk*) attributed to the 'celebrated Radcliffe.'"<sup>29</sup> Iu. I. Masanov, examining Russian book catalogues for the period 1820-1830, identifies seventeen unique novels (and implies there are more) listed as Radcliffe's, many of them translations of other gothic novelists or original works by Russian writers with Radcliffe's name added for a sales boost.<sup>30</sup>

The most popular gothic novels in Russia were those that circulated in French or Russian translation during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but Russian writers also produced gothic works during this period. Among these are Nikolai Karamzin's gothic tales "Bornholm Island" ("Ostrov Borngol'm", 1794) and "Sierra-Morena" (1795); Vasilii Narezhnyi's gothic dramas such as *The Dead Castle* (*Mertvyi zamok*, 1801), and parts of his picaresque novel *A Russian Gil-blas* (*Rossiiskii Zhil'blas*, 1814); Petr Shalikov's story "The Dark Grove, or the Memorial of Tenderness" ("Temnaia roshcha, ili Pamiatnik nezhnosti", 1801); Nikolai Gnedich's novel *Don Corrado de Gerrera; or, The Victim of Vengeance and the Barbarism of the Spaniards* (*Don Korrado de Gerrera*, 1803); Gavril Kamenev's ballad "Gromval" (1804); and Zhukovskii's narrative poems "Liudmila" (1808) and "Svetlana" (1813). Gothic also influenced works in other genres. Karamzin's gothic stories were heavily sentimental, a pairing inspired by Radcliffe's sentimentalism, and in this vein writers such as Mariia Izvekova incorporated gothic tropes into otherwise sentimental novels, as in *Emilia* (*Emiliia*, 1806) and *Milena, or the Rare Example of Goodness* (*Milena ili Redkii primer velikodushchiia*, 1809).

All of these texts clearly demonstrate the influence of the English gothic writers, particularly Walpole, Lewis, and most of all Radcliffe. Radcliffe and Lewis represent two strains of gothic writing, the Schools of 'Terror' and 'Horror,' respectively.<sup>31</sup> The School of Terror, represented by Radcliffe's writing, has its origin in the notion of the sublime as outlined by Edmund

in Cornwell (ed.), *The Gothic-Fantastic*, 62, n.14.

<sup>29</sup> Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin*, 327.

<sup>30</sup> See Iu. I. Masanov, *V mire psevdonimov, anonimov i literaturnykh poddelok* (Moscow, 1963), 99-102. Masanov's study includes a photograph of the frontispiece from the 1802 St Petersburg edition of Lewis's *The Monk* attributed to Radcliffe. Vatsuro has a chapter on "Pseudoradcliffiana" that includes some discussion of what these fake Radcliffe novels were in terms of plot, themes, etc. See Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 301-311.

<sup>31</sup> This is a traditional line of gothic literary scholarship; see, for example, the discussion of the two schools in M. Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (New York, 1964), 49. Later scholars have worked to reconceptualize this model, as in Anne Williams's gendered reading of gothic models in *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic* (Chicago, 1995).

Burke and features an innocent heroine who experiences a series of terrifying events; the reader sympathizes with her and evoking fear for her well-being is as much a part of the author's narrative strategy as provoking fear in the reader. The School of Horror, on the other hand, is epitomized by Lewis's *The Monk*, a novel, which depicts the devil's corruption of a monk, Ambrosio, who is then convinced and tempted to increasingly horrific deeds, described in graphic and fearful detail. The reader of a novel from this tradition is scandalized as much as horrified, and fear comes from the perverse escalation of crimes and sins detailed in the narrative. Radcliffe, in manuscript notes published posthumously, delineates the two schools in this way: "Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life, the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them."<sup>32</sup> In this vein, for example, Karamzin's works, which describe the narrator's pure feelings, clearly fall in the Radcliffe tradition,<sup>33</sup> while Gnedich's novel, which borrows heavily from Schillerian *Sturm und Drang* for its gruesome horrors, is in Lewis's line.<sup>34</sup>

The Russian book market at the time differed significantly from the English and French markets. Where the English market had been in place for over a century, the Russian market was relatively newly formed, growing from just fifteen booksellers in the mid-1770s to more than fifty by the 1790s and over a hundred at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> The introduction of gothic fiction to Russia coincided with both this sharp rise in the market's capacity and the loosening of censorship and the regulation of private printing following Alexander I's ascension to the throne in 1801. As more private printing presses were established, literary journals flourished as well. A direct result was the rise of the novel, and by extension, the rise of the gothic novel—these events occurred more or less concurrently in Russia, while the rise of the novel and the rise of the gothic novel in England had been separated by several decades.

#### 4. 'FOOLISH, YET DANGEROUS, BOOKS': ON THE DANGERS OF (GOTHIC) NOVEL READING

Eighteenth-century critics in both England and Russia sharply judged novels (not just gothic novels) for their immorality and deleterious effects.

<sup>32</sup> A. Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* (1826), 149.

<sup>33</sup> On Radcliffe's influence on Karamzin, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 82-88.

<sup>34</sup> On Lewis's influence on Gnedich in *Don Corrado de Gerra*, see Tosi, "At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel," 66-79. On Lewis's influence on Pushkin in "The Stone Guest," see Sobol, "Monakh v Madride," 75-84.

<sup>35</sup> See G. Marker, *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton, 1985, reprinted 2014), 164.

These critiques came to inform the construction of the imagined reader in both nations and were predicated on the assumption that novel readers are susceptible to the moral depravity and frivolity present in the works.

These concerns began to appear in criticism well before Walpole published *The Castle of Otranto*. An early English critic of the form, Samuel Johnson, cautioned in 1750 that

These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions ... not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion.... If the power of example is so great, as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken that ... the best examples only should be exhibited; and that which is likely to operate so strongly, should not be mischievous or uncertain in its effects.<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, in 1783, just at the cusp of the gothic's rise in England, James Beattie remarks on the potential danger to novel readers that:

Romances are a dangerous recreation ... A few, no doubt, of the best may be friendly to good taste and good morals; but far the greater part are unskillfully written, and tend to corrupt the heart and stimulate the passions. A habit of reading them breeds a dislike to history, and all the substantial parts of knowledge; withdraws the attention from nature, and truth; and fills the mind with extravagant thoughts and too often with criminal propensities.<sup>37</sup>

Johnson and Beattie demonstrate that concerns about novel reading leading to overstimulation and violent or criminal tendencies had been present long before gothic novels appeared. Russian critics wrote of similar fears. One anonymous critic writing in the *Ladies' Journal* (*Damskii zhurnal*) in 1823 remarked that he treated all novels "guardedly" because

... the habit of reading about incredible incidents, the amazing adventures of charlatans with vaunted characters that are non-existent in nature; finally, love, always excessive yet plausible

<sup>36</sup> S. Johnson, *The Rambler*, 4 (31 March 1750), 21-22.

<sup>37</sup> J. Beattie, "On Fable and Romance," in *Dissertations Moral and Critical*, 3 vols. (London, 1809), 3, 112-113.

bly derived in this genus of works ... gives a false understanding of society, relaxes the soul and brings youth into an idealized world, where it cannot learn at all how to behave in the real world, is made ridiculous, and sometimes even unhappy, going beyond the limits prescribed by sound reason.<sup>38</sup>

The anonymous Russian critic's worries about the dangers of novel reading clearly echo the concerns of his English counterparts decades earlier. The juxtaposition of these reviews demonstrates the similarity of the critical landscape after the early rise of the novel in both countries.

Early reviews of gothic novels often describe the dangers of reading in these terms as well. For example, this review of Charlotte Smith's novel *Emmeline, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) reiterates the same points as above about the dangers of novel reading and its potential for the destruction of morality, reason, and social responsibility.

We must observe, that the false expectations these wild scenes excite, tend to debauch the mind, and throw an insipid kind of uniformity over the moderate and rational prospects of life, consequently *adventures* are sought for and created, when duties are neglected, and content despised.<sup>39</sup>

The critics' concerns about reader morality easily transferred from the reader of any novel to the reader of the gothic novel, aided by the lurid and scandalously depraved material present in the gothic. Whereas critics of the novel cautioned against reading that "fills the mind with extravagant thoughts," the critic of the gothic novel claims that the work "debauches the mind," underscoring the immorality implicit in the act of gothic reading. Both in England and in Russia the gothic novel reader was typically imagined to be a woman.

##### 5. 'THE HEART OF A WOMAN': THE FEMALE READER IN THE CRITICAL IMAGINATION

One reason for fears about the dangerous effects of novel reading both in terms of over-stimulation of the imagination and neglected duties was a social shift along gender lines, as the following complaint from 1795 demonstrates.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in V. V. Sipovskii, *Iz istorii russkago romana i povesti* (St. Petersburg, 1903), 279. My translation.

<sup>39</sup> Review of *Emmeline, The Orphan of the Castle* by Charlotte Smith, in *Analytical Review*, 1 July 1788, 333.



Women, of every age, of every condition, contract and retain a taste for novels ... the depravity is universal. My sight is everywhere offended by these foolish, yet dangerous, books. I find them on the toilette of fashion, and in the work-bag of the sempstress; in the hands of the lady, who lounges on the sofa, and of the lady, who sits at the counter. From the mistresses of nobles they descend to the mistresses of snuff-shops—from the belles who read them in town, to the chits who spell them in the country. I have actually seen mothers, in miserable garrets, crying for the imaginary distress of an heroine, while their children were crying for bread: and the mistress of a family losing hours over a novel in the parlour, while her maids, in emulation of the example, were similarly employed in the kitchen. I have seen a scullion-wench with a dishclout in one hand, and a novel in the other, sobbing o'er the sorrows of Julia, or a Jemima.<sup>40</sup>

With the rise of the novel, reading became seen as a woman's pastime, and not just that of upper-class women. In English literary history the female reader and her socio-cultural influence and situation has been a significant topic of study.<sup>41</sup> In the Russian context we know that the literacy rate was smaller and mainly only upper-class women were reading novels, but considerable gaps in knowledge about female readership exist.<sup>42</sup> The present chapter, however, illustrates that the same gendered conception of the typical novel reader existed in both cultural contexts. An anonymous Russian satirical poem, "Liza the Novel Reader" (Liza-Romanist, 1816), for example, laments the rise of women reading novels, linking the phenomenon directly to immorality:

We know how Russians lived in olden times,  
Not knowing today's amusements: they would raise children  
instilling only virtue,  
and our girls didn't read novels!<sup>43</sup>

Of all the varieties of novels, gothic novels were generally seen as among the worst, if not the worst. They were notorious both for their dreadful aesthetic qualities, including thoughtless, hackneyed prose, and their dreadful

40 Anonymous, *Sylph*, 6 October 1795.

41 The literature on this is extensive. On the field and its gaps, see J. Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2008), 2-15.

42 On the female reading public in Nicolaevan Russia, see M. Beaven Remnek, "A Larger Portion of the Public: Female Readers, Fiction, and the Periodical Press in the Reign of Nicholas I," in B. T. Norton, J. M. Gheith (eds.), *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia* (Durham, NC, 2001), 26-52.

43 Anonymous, "Liza-Romanist", *Khar'kovskii Demokrit*, 5 (1816). My translation.

subject matter, which included scenes of exaggerated horror, gratuitous violence and gore, and immoral behavior including seduction, lust, adultery, and incest.

Not all critics viewed novel reading in a negative light. Karamzin's essay "On the Book Trade and the Love of Reading in Russia" ("O knizhnoi torgovle i liubvi ko chteniiu v Rossii", 1802) directly addresses the benefits of novel reading:

This type of writing [the novel] undoubtedly captivates a larger portion of the public, engaging the heart and imagination, picturing the world and people, who are similar to us, in interesting situations, depicting the most powerful and at the same time the most common passion in its varied activities. Not everyone can philosophize or take the place of the heroes of history; but everyone loves, has loved, or wants to love, and finds in the romantic hero his own self. It seems to the reader that the author speaks to him in the language of his own heart; in one novel he nourishes hope, in another—a pleasant recollection. In this type of book, as known, we have more translated than original works and, consequently, foreign authors have surpassed the fame of the Russians... I do not know about others, but I am happy so long as they read. And novels, the most mediocre—even written without any talent—contribute in some way to enlightenment... All pleasurable reading influences the mind, without which the heart cannot feel, nor the imagination conceive. In very bad novels there is still a certain logic and rhetoric: He who reads them will speak better and more coherently than the utter ignoramus who has never opened a book in his life.<sup>44</sup>

Karamzin saw potential in the novel—as a genre that manipulates readers' feelings through narrative devices—in its universality, that is, its appeal to the common feelings that all humans share: for example, love, fear, happiness, sorrow. Karamzin's approval of novel reading, broadly, resonates with positive sentiments about gothic novel reading. In this same vein, one English reviewer of Radcliffe's final novel, published posthumously in 1826, reflected,

It may be true that her persons are cold and formal; but her readers are the virtual heroes and heroines of her story as they read; and when they rise from the perusal, instead of having become

---

44 Translated by H. M. Nebel, Jr., "On the Book Trade and Love of Reading in Russia," in *Selected Prose of N. M. Karamzin* (Evanston, 1969), 187-189. The original can be found in N. M. Karamzin, "O knizhnoi torgovle i liubvi ko chteniiu v Rossii," *Idem, Izbrannye sochineniia*, 2 vols. (Moscow, Leningrad, 1964), vol. 2, 178-179.

intimate with a rich troop of characters, they seem to have added a long series of interesting adventures to their individual history.<sup>45</sup>

Karamzin and journal editor and publisher Nikolai Novikov contributed significantly to the rise of the novel in Russia through their publishing projects aimed at women readers, like Novikov's 1779 literary journal, *Modnoe ezhemesiachnoe izdanie, ili Biblioteka dlia damskogo tualeta* (*Fashionable Monthly Edition, or the Library for the Lady's Toilette*), the first periodical aimed at a female audience in Russia. For this reason, Olga Glagoleva calls them "the founders of female reading in Russia."<sup>46</sup> Glagoleva observes that, "by the beginning of the nineteenth century the reading of novels had become so common a pastime for women that in the eyes of contemporaries the image of a young lady was inseparable from romantic reading."<sup>47</sup>

Gothic fiction entered the Russian literary scene at a time when Russian literature was in transition, moving away from the somewhat rigid generic models of the eighteenth century towards the sentimental and pre-romantic genres popular in Western Europe. Sentimental tales appealed to the traits that good women of the time should have, namely that "the female soul, in contrast to the male, was gentle and sensitive by nature."<sup>48</sup> Gitta Hammarberg argues that Novikov even went so far as to construct an idealized female reader.

Novikov's constructed woman reader was attracted to a narrow register of styles, genres, and themes; she favoured melodramatic plots with love-deaths, monastic seclusions, elopements, cross-dressing, mistaken identity, and so on, all centred on a love plot. Her range is further circumscribed by didactic content aimed at preserving traditional gender roles: she is taught to avoid erotic temptation, to preserve her chastity, to select a husband, and act as a mother and child-rearer. She is offered a classical and cosmopolitan education through mythological or exotic settings and personages (from the fashionable 'Orient' to Huron Indians, Swedish miners, Spanish adventurers, or Scottish damsels), but this broad agenda is narrowed by a stereotypical 'exotic' aura, and most, if not all, of these pieces follow

45 Anonymous, "Mrs. Radcliffe's Posthumous Romance," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, 16 (London, 1826), 533.

46 O. E. Glagoleva, "Imaginary World: Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750-1825)," in W. Rosslyn (ed.), *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia* (Aldershot, 2003), 132.

47 *Ibid.*, 142.

48 *Ibid.*, 140.

Karamzin's dictum that 'even peasant women [Huron maidens, Scottish lasses, etc.] know how to love.'

Because the constructed woman is modest, chaste, faithful, sensitive, and humble, most erotically inclined women in the texts are mythological or foreign, and authors frame their behavior in moralising rhetoric.<sup>49</sup>

While women were idealized and cast in the role of sentimental reader and heroine, gothic novels posed a threat to gender roles. This 1804 piece by Vladimir Izmailov, using the pseudonym O. O. O., criticizes Radcliffe's 'unwomanly' imagination.<sup>50</sup>

The English woman Radcliffe devoted her pen to the most terrifying fantasies, such as could be contrived not by the heart of a woman but by the imagination of the most inflamed fanatic. We can only hope that the English Muses, having frightened us for a moment with the wild horrors of Radcliffe's imagination, will soon charm us with pleasant descriptions in the taste of Marmontel.<sup>51</sup>

According to Izmailov, the threat posed by Radcliffe's imagination is not the 'wild horrors' she writes, but the fact that these come—unnaturally—from a woman's mind and pen. Izmailov's critique of Radcliffe as gothic writer is one that also appears in both English and Russian criticism of gothic readers.

This line of thought considered gothic novel reading a direct cause of medical infirmities such as 'delicate nerves' and 'imbecility.' Jacqueline Howard observes, from the English periodicals, that:

Reading the reviews of the time, ... one is immediately struck by both the severity and condescending indulgence of a coterie of male critics who frequently express contempt for novels *per se*. ... Concern is also expressed about "the influence that novels have over the manners, sentiments and passions of the rising generation"; works are usually praised only if they are informative, instructive, or "afford some intellectual improvement".

49 G. Hammarberg, "The First Russian Women's Journals and the Construction of the Reader," in W. Rosslyn, A. Tosi (eds.), *Women in Russian Culture and Society, 1700-1825* (Basingstoke, New York, 2007), 86.

50 On Izmailov's criticism of gothic criticism more broadly see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 268-271.

51 "Vzgliad na povesti, ili skazki," *Patriot*, May-September 1804; reprinted in Sipovskii, *Iz istorii russkago romana i povesti*, 243; translated in Tosi, "At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel," 66.

The “young and unformed”, including “many a boarding school miss” and those with “delicate nerves”, are felt to be particularly at risk before “the horrid ideas of supernatural agency” and “visionary terrors”, as well as the murderers, assassins, and robbers, which abound in gothic fiction. ... Gothic novels, including *Udolpho*, are “literary abortions”; reading them gives rise to “imbecility of mind”, particularly amongst females as “the female mind is more readily affected by the tendency of such works”.<sup>52</sup>

Russian critics made similar remarks disparaging women novel readers and writers in clinical terms. Petr Makarov, writing about Lewis’s *The Monk* (published under Radcliffe’s name) wrote that gothic novels, “having no purpose, providing no true representation of society or people, revealing no new moral truths or new aspects of the human heart, do not have any use for any society and may be very damaging!”<sup>53</sup> He observed that “a protracted experience of horror works on the nerves... [and] can sometimes lead to unhappy results; in this we call to witness all doctors.”<sup>54</sup> Further, he cautioned, “We know women, who haven’t slept for three nights while reading *The Abbey of St Claire*, or *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Books of that sort should carry the epigraph: *et la mère en défendra la lecture à la fille* (the mother will forbid the daughter from reading it).”<sup>55</sup> Makarov’s fear is not that women will be overcome by gothic novels, but that the fact that they are overcome will cause them to shirk their proscribed domestic duties. Strikingly, Makarov gave a positive review to Mariia Arbutova’s translation of Regina Maria Roche’s *The Children of the Abbey* (1796; in Russian 1802-1803), which he praised for its sentimental features.<sup>56</sup> This last point intrigues as it suggests that gothic novels by women could be acceptable if they adhered to the conventions of sentimentalism, focusing on emotion rather than horror, perhaps following Novikov’s idealized sentimental woman reader.

In an 1823 issue of *Damskii zhurnal* (*Ladies’ Magazine*), an article appeared called “On the Difference of Opinions Regarding Novels” (*O razlichii mnenii otnositel’no romanov*) which laid out the opposing critical points of view on the topic. On the one hand, following Karamzin, “reading (selected) novels affords knowledge of society and the human heart,” while, on the other, the author concluded, it remains the case that “there is nothing more

52 J. Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach* (Oxford, 1994), 148-149. The quoted material in Howard’s summary comes from a selection of anonymous critical reviews that appeared in *Monthly Review*, *Critical Review*, and *Scots Magazine* between 1789 and 1802. For the full citations, see Howard, p. 149, notes 10-15.

53 P. Makarov, “Retsenziia na Monakha,” *Moskovskii Merkurii* (1803), 218-219. My translation. On Makarov’s criticism of gothic fiction broadly, see Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 263-268.

54 Makarov, “Retsenziia na Monakha,” 218. My translation.

55 Ibid.

56 See Tosi, *Waiting for Pushkin*, p. 88, note 92.

horrible for a young person than reading such works.”<sup>57</sup> Again, this debate echoed critical arguments that had been taking place in English periodicals for decades at this point, and, while many critics saw moral and, potentially, physical danger in gothic reading, the novels remained popular with readers. The tension between critics and readers is aptly and humorously expressed by this anonymous author of “Terrorist Novel Writing,” a rhetorical and satirical piece that appeared in the English press in 1797:

I allude, sir, principally to the great quantity of novels with which our circulating libraries are filled, and our parlour tables are covered, in which it has become the fashion to make *terror* the *order of the day* by confining the heroes and heroines in old gloomy castles, full of spectres, apparitions, ghosts, and dead men's bones....

A novel, if at all useful, ought to be a representation of human life and manners, with a view to direct the conduct in the important duties of life, and to correct its follies. But what instruction is to be reaped from the distorted ideas of lunatics, I am at a loss to conceive. Are we come to such a pass, that the only commandment necessary to be repeated is, “Thou shalt do no murder?” Are the duties of life so changed, that all the instruction necessary for a young person is to learn to walk at night upon the battlements of an old castle, to creep hands and feet along a narrow passage, and meet the devil at the end of it? Is the corporeal frame of the female sex so masculine and hardy that it must be softened down by the touch of dead bodies, clay-cold hands, and damp sweats? Can our young ladies be taught nothing more necessary in life, than to sleep in a dungeon with venomous reptiles, walk through a ward with assassins, and carry bloody daggers in their pockets, instead of pin-cushions and needle-books?

... Meanwhile, should any of your female readers be desirous of catching the season of terrors, she may compose two or three very pretty volumes from the following recipe:

*Take* – An old castle, half of it ruinous.

A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones.

Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.

As many skeletons, in chests and presses.

An old woman hanging by the neck, with her throat cut.

Assassins and desperadoes, *quant. suff.*

Noises, whispers, and groans, threescore at least.

<sup>57</sup> Cited in M. R. Nenarokova, “Evropeiskie prototipy Vladimira Dubrovskogo: Krug chteniia russkogo dvorianstva pervoi poloviny XIX veka,” in *Genezis zarubezhnoi massovoi literatury i ee sud'ba v Rossii. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Moscow, 2015), 206. My translation.

Mix them together, in the form of three volumes, to be taken at any of the watering places before going to bed. *Probatum Est.*<sup>58</sup>

In this passage, the critic dismisses the formulaic gothic novel as so much junk, an undifferentiated panorama of gloomy castles, ghosts, skeletons, and frightened heroines. It may provide fodder for humorous jabs as seen in the critic's closing satirical recipe, but the danger is not in imitation so much as in moral bankruptcy and a privileging of imagined terrors over a depiction set in a world that reflects the real one. However, in closing his critique with a recipe, the critic points to readers' enjoyment.<sup>59</sup> After all, we savor a recipe, and repetition is the mark of a pleasing one, just as three volume novels are a pleasing bedtime diversion.

## 6. 'SHE LIVED ON TERROR': GOTHIC READERS AND THE PLEASURES OF IMAGINED TERROR

In this section I will compare the experience of fictional gothic novel readers: Somov's Margarita Savishna and Jane Austen's Catherine Morland. Both Austen and Somov wrote parodies in which the gothic reader plays a central role. Although the possibility that Somov read Austen is remote, the depiction of the gothic novel reader in both works is similar, clearly shaped by the same observed cultural assumptions despite their obvious differences in terms of cultural context. The comparison of the two fictional readers' responses to gothic novels will develop a framework for the imagined gothic novel reader, a framework which will in turn inform the memoir accounts of gothic reading that follow in the next section.

By the 1810s provincial Russians were able to acquire gothic fiction in the way Margarita Savishna does in Somov's "Mommy and Sonny":

She ... read novels, of which she ordered a great supply from Moscow, basing the choice of titles on the positive testimony of the announcements placed in the supplements to the *Moscow News*, composed by resourceful publishers and booksellers. Although such announcements do not serve as proof of the literacy of those who write them, to compensate for that, how many inflated, artful praises, how many exclamations, how many series of periods they contain! Margarita Savishna... always scanned

<sup>58</sup> Anonymous, "Terrorist Novel Writing," *The Spirit of the Public Journals* (London, 1797), 227-228.

<sup>59</sup> See K. Bowers, "A Recipe for a Gothic Novel," *The Recipes Project*, 10 December 2015, <https://recipes.hypotheses.org/7219> (accessed March 14, 2020).

them greedily, attracted by the latest products of the Moscow book industry which they advertised.<sup>60</sup>

Margarita Savishna reads with pleasure, but indiscriminately, basing her reading choices on advertising above all. Somov's narrator remarks, tongue in cheek, that his heroine read "at random all the novels and tales translated or composed" in Russia, which lent her a reputation for being the "most intelligent and educated lady" among her neighbors.<sup>61</sup> Throughout the story, Somov pokes fun at the haphazard reading patterns of the provinces, which reflect market trends, showing the ridiculous contrast between gothic fiction and Russian realia, for example in this passage about the fate of Margarita Savishna's son following her discovery of his illicit romance.

Margarita Savishna had already returned home, already put Valery in the north tower, which she had recently had constructed on one corner of her house according to a plan which she had read in some novel about cutthroats. The outside of the tower had been covered with pine shingles, painted an unusual off-granite color, and the joints had been covered with moss to give a more ancient and threatening appearance.... Ilyushka Lykoderov, a tall, corpulent, broad-shouldered peasant had been promoted from forester to jailer. With heavy tread he paced in front of the tower's outer doors, wearing a dark grey under-vest and a tall fur peak cap, with a black fringe on the crest, made to resemble a helmet. It was a frightening sight to see Ilyushka Lykoderov standing in the moonlight, motionless as a ghost and dreaming, supported by the shaft of his pole-axe, his long shadow projected in black against the gloomy wall of the north tower.<sup>62</sup>

Margarita Savishna's incorporation of gothic tropes into her daily life is reminiscent of Catherine Morland, the self-conscious heroine of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817), who reads too many gothic novels and begins to see villains and evil plots everywhere, which leads to social embarrassment. Catherine Morland and Margarita Savishna are both archetypes of gothic novel readers, imagined from cultural stereotypes about what gothic novels can do to readers' minds. Where Catherine Morland's mistakes are charmingly naïve and result in a happy ending in Austen's depiction, the last glimpse the reader has of Margarita Savishna is a grotesque one: "As before she reads novels and gets fatter by the year, thus overturning the opinion of

60 Somov, "Mommy and Sonny," 220.

61 *Ibid.*, 213.

62 *Ibid.*, 229.



physiologists and poets that hatred and vengeance dry a man up and slowly undermine his life.”<sup>63</sup> Somov’s humor here is self-conscious, considering that he was, himself, a noted author of gothic prose from the late 1810s until his death in 1833.

Both Catherine Morland and Margarita Savishna are heroines of works that spoof the gothic novel reader, but both sincerely love reading gothic novels. When Catherine and her friend, Isabella Thorpe, discuss the terrors of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, the most common word in their dialogue is “delight.”

“I am just got to the black veil.”

“Are you, indeed? How delightful! Oh! I would not tell you what is behind the veil for the world! Are not you wild to know?”

“Oh! Yes, quite; what can it be? But do not tell me—I would not be told upon any account. I know it must be a skeleton, I am sure it is Laurentina’s skeleton. Oh! I am delighted with the book! I should like to spend my whole life in reading it.”<sup>64</sup>

Catherine’s engagement with the book to the point that she declares “I should like to spend my whole life reading it” rests on the machinery of suspenseful terror that Radcliffe deploys. The black veil, a trope made famous by *Udolpho*, conceals a mystery not revealed in full to the reader for hundreds of pages after its introduction in that novel. The suspense of the mystery is arguably more important for the novel’s narrative force than the mystery’s resolution, which is anticlimactic for the reader after so much build-up. Similarly, Margarita Savishna’s attachment to gothic fiction is physical.

Margarita Savishna passionately loved robbers’ castles, the glint of daggers, the kidnapping of unfortunate heroines, and the secret pacts of murderers under the windows of innocent victims doomed to be killed, meanwhile confined in a tiny room of the east or west tower. In a word, the imagination of Margarita Savishna, a woman of firm character and strong nerves, delighted only in novelistic blood, breathed with the atmosphere of the dungeon, fed on the smell of murder. So to say, she lived on terror.<sup>65</sup>

While this passage does not include some of the visceral readers’ responses from the time (hair standing on end from terror, for example), it

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> J. Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Oxford, 1988), 39-40.

<sup>65</sup> Somov, “Mommy and Sonny,” 220.

does incorporate a physical vocabulary to discuss Margarita Savishna's reaction: her imagination "breathed [*dyshalo*] with the atmosphere of the dungeon, fed [*pitalos*] on the smell of murder" and she "lived on terror" [*zhila uzhasami*]. Furthermore, Somov's use of the words that typically signify the essential activities of living—breathed, fed, lived—to describe the sensationalistic and outlandish gothic elements of Margarita Savishna's inner life speaks to the strong lure of gothic fiction for its readers in its ability to create an alternate and believable reality.

## 7. 'SOME KIND OF PLEASANT FEAR': REMEMBERING GOTHIC AFFECT

In this section I will present some excerpts from memoirs in which gothic readers recall the affective experience of reading. The accounts presented below are not contemporaneous, but from a perspective looking back on the experience of reading gothic fiction at the beginning of the nineteenth century, sometimes multiple decades removed; many of the accounts here are those of adults recalling childhood memories. It is important to reflect that these accounts were published in memoirs, and thus some curation has inevitably taken place in addition to the distance and distortion naturally occurring as a result of the passage of time. These are not fresh reactions, but, still, these accounts are valuable in that they speak to the aspects of gothic novel reading that the readers themselves found important: the pleasure of reading the novels, of visceral fear but also the thrill of romantic adventure, the humor of clichéd writing, and, ultimately, genre memory.

Ekaterina Sushkova, a memoirist known for her biography of the poet Lermontov, describes using her aunt's library as a child. At the top of a shelf in her enormous library, Sushkova finds some French volumes by Madame de Genlis and Ann Radcliffe. As she remembers reading the tomes, Radcliffe's ghosts and terrors are foremost in her description: "With what freezing of my heart I learned the theory of apparitions—sometimes it seemed to me that I saw them—they caused me fear, but some kind of pleasant fear."<sup>66</sup> Sushkova's "pleasant fear" recalls the delightful terrors that fascinate Catherine and Isabella in *Northanger Abbey*. Sushkova goes beyond the notion that ghosts may exist, suggesting that the act of reading creates an imagined world so real that ghosts seem to appear before her, blurring the boundaries of reality.

Mikhail Dmitriev, a poet, critic, and memoirist best remembered for his translations of Ossian and Luís de Camões, remembers reading gothic fiction in his youth. His neighbors in Simbirsk province, the Kashpirovs, had a small library of "new novels and some works by Kotsebue, translated into

---

<sup>66</sup> E. A. Khvostova, *Zapiski: 1812-1841*, Iu. G. Oksman, ed. (Leningrad, 1928), 63. My translation.

Russian.” Dmitriev’s aunts borrowed from the library, and Dmitriev in turn read the novels they took, which he “thirsted” [*zhadnost’iu*] after (phrasing recalling the physicality of Margarita Savishna’s experience with gothic novels). Dmitriev recalls:

The fashionable novels of the time were those of Madames de Genlis and Radcliffe. I didn’t like the delicate works of the former I did not like as they always seemed saccharine, but my aunts shed a lot of sensitive tears over them. But the horrors and secrets of Madame Radcliffe fascinated me, like all the readers of that time.<sup>67</sup>

Dmitriev juxtaposes de Genlis, a prolific French writer known for her sentimental theme, with Radcliffe’s more calculated machinery of fear. He describes Radcliffe’s secrets and horrors as “fascinating,” the result of the gothic formula, Walpole’s ‘machinery’ of carefully balanced terror, suspense, and sentiment. Dmitriev also places his reading into the context that it is what ‘everyone’ at the time was reading, linking the act of reading popular literature to community practice.

Aleksandr Nikitenko, a critic, censor, and academic, recalls reading gothic novels as a child and teenager, and the effects they had on his development:

The novels were largely in translation and mostly bad, without the slightest hint of psychological development in the characters. They fascinated me exclusively with romantic adventures and the fiery feelings depicted in them. With what trembling I penetrated into dark dungeons following Ann Radcliffe...! But I gained little from this course of reading: ... first, the fact that for a long while afterwards I was afraid to stay alone in a dark room, and second that, meeting a new woman, I rushed to elevate her into a pearl of creation and fall in love with her.<sup>68</sup>

Nikitenko’s account speaks to the perceived poor quality of gothic novels—their lack of psychological development—and yet they fascinate him. His description of reading Radcliffe is both suspenseful and experiential; in reading he is, like Sushkova, drawn into the imagined world of the novel, and his response is physiological, “trembling.” Nikitenko’s judgment of gothic novels as “mostly bad” suggests he has succumbed to the critics’ view of them as low-quality literature, a position seemingly at odds with his excitement at reading the novels. His wry comments on the “use” of gothic

67 M. Dmitriev, *Glavy iz vospominanii moei zhizni* (K. G. Bolenko, E. E. Liamina, T. F. Neshumova, eds.) (Moscow, 1998), 52. My translation.

68 A. V. Nikitenko, *Moia povest’ o samom sebe i o tom, ‘chemu svidetel’ v zhizni byl’: Zapiski i dnevnik (1804-1877)*, M. K. Lemke, ed., 2 vols. (St Petersburg, 1904), vol. 1, 53. My translation.

fiction, the results of his reading, also humorously echo the fears voiced by critics that the novels will hinder personal development in young people and cause them to shirk their duties.

Filipp Vigel', author of copious memoirs (originally published 1864) documenting early nineteenth-century life and a member of the literary society Arzamas, mentions his reaction to reading gothic fiction several times. The first instance occurs in the early 1800s in Moscow while employed in the archives of the College of Foreign Affairs, before Arzamas. Vigel's co-workers were also of a literary bent, and they shared reading material.

They supplied me with French books, for the most part novels, and I imagined I was doing useful reading when I devoured them at night. I often was driven beside myself by the horrors of Mrs Radcliffe, whose torturously pleasant narrative model worked on the irritable nerves of my friends.<sup>69</sup>

In Vigel's recollection, the same elements appear that occurred in the responses already mentioned: the writer "devoured" the novels, Radcliffe's narrative is "torturously pleasant," the author was "driven beside himself" by the novel, and reading the books was a form of community building. The notion of "useful reading" also appears, although the use of reading gothic fiction is not further addressed and the comment "I imagined I was doing useful reading" seems possibly to be a humorous yet self-critical jab, particularly given the following clause about devouring the novels. Vatsuro notes that it is unclear which of Vigel's colleagues supplied him with gothic novels, but the crucial fact here is that Vigel', a future Arzamasian, was reading gothic fiction and gothic fiction was entering literary discourse.<sup>70</sup>

The second episode in Vigel's memoirs is his reaction to Zhukovskii's ballad "Svetlana", and this passage connects gothic fiction to broader literary development and discourse in Russia. Vigel' writes:

Corpses, apparitions, devilry, murders, all bathed in moonlight—yes it all appears in fairy tales, and moreover English novels. In place of a heroine [Hero], waiting with tender trepidation for drowned Leander, he gives us wild and passionate Lenora with the galloping corpse of her lover! [The author's] marvelous talent makes us not only read his ballads without disgust, but even to love them. I don't know if he has spoiled our taste, but, at least, he has given us new sensations, new pleasures. Here is the beginning of romanticism for us.<sup>71</sup>

69 F. F. Vigel', *Zapiski*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1891-1893), vol. 1, 167. My translation.

70 See Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman*, 115.

71 Vigel', *Zapiski*, 1, 342-343. My translation.

The author's enthusiasm for the poem is clear, and he swiftly positions Zhukovskii's work as belonging to the gothic genre based on the list of conventions that begins this passage and their connection to "English novels." Like the earlier responses, this passage juxtaposes the sentimental with the gothic tale, and also speaks to the critical point that the gothic is immoral and scandalous. The comparison of meek Hero with wildly passionate Lenora underscores the flip in gendered roles, but Vigel' assures his readers that he experiences this perversion of traditional gender roles "without disgust," which is made possible through gothic fiction. Vigel's point that Zhukovskii has provided "new sensations, new pleasures" seems to harken back to Karamzin's observation that all reading of imagined literature is positive as it enables the human mind to engage in new experiences. Vigel's final comment in this extract—"Here is the beginning of romanticism for us"—places yet more value on Zhukovskii's gothic ballad; it also demonstrates a sense of literary precedent.

Prince Petr Shalikov, in an essay called "Countryside" (*Derevnia*, 1819), describes one of the activities at a house party:

We go into the garden. The dark paths, the tall grass, the half-ruined summerhouse, the enticing labyrinth, the ancient vases, the savagery of the place, the deep silence, the bleak hushed noise of the trees held something terrible for us and we exclaimed in one voice: "Here are les mysteres [sic] d'Udolphe!" Laughter followed the romantic memory and pleasure sparked in everyone's eyes.<sup>72</sup>

For Shalikov, Radcliffe (and gothic fiction) evokes a pleasant memory in which both terror and entertainment are bound together. Notably, Shalikov also wrote gothic fiction; he is the author of "The Dark Grove, or the Memorial of Tenderness" (1801). In his reminiscence, the other party guests also engage with the memory, sharing in Shalikov's exclamation and laughter, forging a community of gothic novel readers. Shalikov's memory is not about reading gothic fiction, however, but one born from genre memory, that is, the *experience* of reading (and possibly writing) gothic fiction—its tropes and how those conventions and narrative devices made the reader feel.

Genre memory, a concept significantly theorized by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Art* (*Problemy tvorchestva Dostoevskogo*, 1929), refers to the idea that "A genre lives in the present, but always remembers its past, its beginning."<sup>73</sup> It is constantly being renewed as additional literary works are created that continue the generic tradition. By extension, a writer (or

<sup>72</sup> P. Shalikov, *Sochineniia Kn. Shalikova*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1819), 2, 45-46. My translation.

<sup>73</sup> M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, translated by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, 1984), 104.

reader) does not need to know every work of a genre to understand that genre's function; he must only understand the function of the genre, and this may be derived as much from the memory of one's own reading as from the saturation of culture with elements of the genre.<sup>74</sup> Genre memory plays a role in many of the readers' accounts presented above, allowing readers to describe their imagined flights of fancy as a result of reading in the same language gothic novelists would use. It is genre memory that enables the gothic parodies discussed above to function effectively, for their intended audiences to understand them; the writers are spoofing not one novel of Radcliffe's, but all of them, and the pseudo-Radcliffiana as well. Genre memory also proves important for the legacy of gothic reading on Russian literature and culture.

## 8. GOTHIC SHADOWS, GOTHIC MEMORY

In *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions* (*Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh*, 1863), Fedor Dostoevskii recalls having gothic novels read aloud to him as a child.

I used to spend the long winter hours before bed listening (for I could not yet read), agape with ecstasy and terror, as my parents read aloud to me from the novels of Ann Radcliffe. Then I would rave deliriously about them in my sleep.<sup>75</sup>

Dostoevskii's experience of gothic reading bears all the characteristics of the other reader responses to the genre presented in this chapter; he describes being in a state of "ecstasy and terror," a state characterized by a physical response, he begins agape and in the end is deliriously raving. This early experience reading gothic fiction, which would have occurred in the 1820s, more than a decade after the 'gothic wave' in Russia, speaks both to the genre's staying power within Russian culture and to its impact.

These delirious gothic ravings of the young Dostoevskii stayed with the writer. In an 1861 letter to his friend Iakov Polonskii, Dostoevskii admits that his dream of traveling to Italy is grounded in his early reading of Radcliffe's novels.

How many times have I dreamed, since my childhood, of visiting Italy. Ever since I read the novels of Radcliffe, which I had

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 120-122.

<sup>75</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, translated by D. Patterson (Evanston, 1997), 1-2. The Russian text can be found in F. M. Dostoevskii, *Zimnie zametki o letnikh vpechatleniakh*, Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, 30 vols. (Leningrad, 1972-1990), vol. 5, 46.

already read by the age of eight, various Alfonsos, Catherines and Lucias have been whirling around in my head.<sup>76</sup>

Much has been written about Dostoevskii's gothic influence, from Leonid Grossman's "Composition in Dostoevskii's Novels" (*Kompozitsiia v romane Dostoevskogo*, 1925) to contemporary scholarship,<sup>77</sup> but beyond literary analysis, references to gothic novels appear throughout Dostoevskii's works, implying broad saturation. Dostoevskii's letter to Polonskii states that, by 1829, he had read all of Radcliffe, and his final novel *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*, 1880) includes an overt reference to *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. In the courtroom scene of Book XII, Fetiukovich gives a long speech in defense of Dmitrii, who has been accused of patricide. He evokes *Udolpho* in an attempt to cast aspersions on the prosecution's assumptions.

It's just this consideration that has led the prosecutor to assume that the money is hidden in some crevice at Mokroe. Why not in the dungeons of the castle of Udolpho, gentlemen? Isn't this supposition really too fantastic and too romantic?<sup>78</sup>

The passage assumes that its reader is familiar not only with Radcliffe's novel, but also with the cultural context surrounding it. Fetiukovich is a somewhat ridiculous character with a tendency towards hyperbole. Fetiukovich's exaggerations are part of his rhetorical toolkit; he disparages the dungeons of Udolpho as a romantic fantasy, and one that a serious person would not entertain; in this sense, his reading of Udolpho chimes with

<sup>76</sup> This translation appears in R. Feuer Miller, "Dostoevskii and the Tale of Terror," in *Dostoevskii and Britain*, ed. W. J. Leatherbarrow (Oxford, 1995), 140. The Russian text can be found in Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, vol. 28/2, 19.

<sup>77</sup> See, for example, L. Grossman, "Kompozitsiia v romane Dostoevskogo," *Sobranie sochinenii*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1928), vol. 2, 9-59; G. Steiner, *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky: An Essay in Contrast* (New Haven, 1960), 188-220; R. Gaustad, "Rebuilding Gothic on Russian Soil: The Roles of Religion and Intertwining of Minds in Dostoevskii's *The Landlady*," in K. A. Grimstad, I. Lunde (eds.), *Celebrating Creativity: Essays in Honor of Jostein Børtnes*, (Bergen, 1997), 205-215; the essays by Ignat Avsey and Leon Burnett in *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth Century Russian Literature*, 211-256; the work of Robin Feuer Miller, especially *Dostoevsky and The Idiot: Author, Narrator, and Reader* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), 108-120, "Dostoevskii and the Tale of Terror," in *Dostoevskii and Britain*, 139-158, and *Dostoevsky's Unfinished Journey* (New Haven, 2007), 128-147; essays by A. A. Mikhaleva and N. D. Tamarchenko in *Goticheskaia traditsiia v russkoi literature*, 164-213; I. Vinitsky, *Ghostly Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism* (Toronto, 2009), 119-135; Bowers, *Shadows of the Gothic*, 74-143; Bowers, "The City Through a Glass, Darkly," 1237-1253; and A. Urakova, S. Fokin (eds.), *Po, Bodler, Dostoevskii: Blesk i nishchita natsional'nogo geniia* (Moscow, 2017). This list is not comprehensive, but gives a chronological overview of scholarship examining Dostoevskii's gothic influences.

<sup>78</sup> F. Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated by C. Garnett (New York, 1996), 830. The Russian text can be found in Dostoevskii, *Brat'ia Karamazovy*, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 30 tomakh*, vol. 15, 158.

those of many critics before him. By 1880, however, the ‘gothic wave’ when Radcliffe’s books were bestsellers that virtually everyone read was seventy years in the past. The scene, however, suggests that the memory of gothic fiction persisted significantly enough that a reference to the ‘dungeons of Udolpho’ would be perfectly understandable.

Beyond Dostoevskii, a number of other writers—too numerous to name—engaged with gothic literature in their writing, essentially incorporating gothic genre memory into the Russian literary tradition. Literary incidences appear in some of the most influential and important novels of the nineteenth century, ranging from Tat’iana reading Onegin’s marked gothic novels after his departure from the country to Bazarov’s absurd statement that “The Russian peasant is the mysterious unknown that Mrs. Radcliffe once analyzed at such length. Who can understand him? He doesn’t understand himself!”<sup>79</sup> In addition to the first ‘gothic wave,’ a second wave of so-called gothic-fantastic literature swept Russia in the 1820s and 30s. Authors such as Vladimir Odoevskii, Aleksandr Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, and especially Aleksandr Pushkin and Nikolai Gogol’ created Russian romanticism on a gothic foundation, delving into the genre in works such as *The Queen of Spades* (*Pikovaia dama*), “The Bronze Horseman” (“Mednyi vsadnik”), *The Nose* (*Nos*), and *The Portrait* (*Portret*). As time passed, the original gothic novel readers in Russia moved on to other genres, but the imagined gothic novel reader persisted in the Russian cultural imagination. Eventually, as Russian writers adapted gothic narrative devices for their own purposes, the imagined gothic reader merged with the imagined reader. The imagined reader at the end of the nineteenth century was readily able to identify gothic cues in Russian narratives and enjoy being immersed in a tale.

---

<sup>79</sup> Ivan Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*, translated by Constance Garnett (New York, 2001), 166. The Russian passage may be found in I. S. Turgenev, *Ottsy i deti*, Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem v 30 tomakh*, 30 vols. (Moscow, 1978), vol. 7, 147.



BELLES-LETTRES AND THE LITERARY INTERESTS OF  
MIDLING LANDOWNERS. A CASE STUDY FROM THE  
ARCHIVE OF THE DOROZHAEVO HOMESTEAD

Tatiana Golovina

This chapter is based on documents from the 1830s taken from an estate archive.<sup>1</sup> These are letters, diaries, and notebooks of Kovrov district landowners in Vladimir province: Andrei Ivanovich Chikhachev (1798–1868);<sup>2</sup> his wife Natalia Ivanovna Chikhacheva, Chernavina by birth (1799–1866); their son Aleksei (1826–after 1874); and Natalia’s brother Iakov Ivanovich Chernavin (1804–1845).<sup>3</sup>

The estates of the two noblemen lay at the heart of European Russia. Dorozhaevo, which belonged to Chikhachev, was located 100 versts<sup>4</sup> to the northeast of Vladimir, the principal town of the province, and his other estate, Borduki, and Chernavin’s estate, Berezovik, were located 50 versts away.

---

1 Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Ivanovskoi oblasti (GAIO), f. 107, op. 1. Further references to the documents are provided with specific case and page numbers.

2 N. V. Frolov and E. V. Frolova, in *Istoriia zemli Kovrovskoi* (Kovrov, 1997) and, following them, K. Pickering Antonova in *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia* (Oxford, 2013) and *Gospoda Chikhachevy. Mir pomestnogo dvorianstva v nikolaievskoi Rossii* (Moscow, 2019) mistakenly claim that Chikhachev’s date of death occurred in the year 1875 and list his burial place as one of Suzdal monasteries. I personally discovered alternative information in the letter from his son regarding the illness and the death of Chikhachev, as well as a letter by the local priest describing his grave and the tombstone. Both documents state the exact date of death as May 25th, 1868 and the burial place as located next to Spasskaia Church in the village of Berezovik (GAIO, f. R-255, op. 1, d. 102, l. 3, 158-159).

3 Diary of A. I. Chikhachev 1831 (d. 54), Diary of N. I. Chikhacheva 1835 (d. 63), 1836–1837 (d. 67) and 1837 (d. 69), Diaries of A. A. Chikhachev 1835 (d. 128) and 1838 (d. 71), Diary of Ia. I. Chernavin 1834–1841 (d. 60), his Utility Book 1834–1845 (d. 61), Four Notebooks with the Correspondence of A. I. Chikhachev and Ia. I. Chernavin 1834–1837 (dd. 57–59, 66).

4 1 verst = 3,500 feet.

The Chikhachevs and Chernavin were middling landowners who lived permanently in their estates. In the decade that is of interest to us, the number of male serfs owned by each of them ranged from 200 to 350 souls. Their estate revenues were not too high.<sup>5</sup> These middling landowners fell into the category of consumers of printed products, which, according to the book market connoisseur Faddei Bulgarin, was “the most numerous” at the time and constituted “the so-called Russian public.”<sup>6</sup>

What was the place of reading and literature in the daily life of the noble estate? What did the landowners read? What guided their choice of books? How did they feel about what they read? What influence did those books have on the mindset and feelings of their readers? Documents from the family archive provide answers to these questions and permit us to resolve two interconnected tasks: first, to reconstruct the range of literary interests of middling landowners; and secondly, to develop a better understanding of their worldview and self-perception.

Hundreds of books concerning a variety of topics (religious, economic, legal, medical, etc.), as well as dozens of newspapers and magazines, are mentioned in the diaries and letters of Chikhachev and Chernavin. This range of reading materials cannot be exhaustively described here. Therefore, we will focus solely on fiction.

First of all, it should be noted that this family was united by a great love for books.<sup>7</sup> The head of the family believed that “reading is the best thing to do.”<sup>8</sup> He often discussed its importance in his diaries, letters, and later in newspaper articles:<sup>9</sup> “Reading is a basic need for every person. You live and you learn. And you can’t learn without reading. Everything that humanity has experienced is narrated in books. All responsibilities, all rights, all human warnings—everything, without exception, is in books. Is it even possible not to love reading?”<sup>10</sup>

Chikhachev and Chernavin’s love of reading dated back to their childhood and adolescence.<sup>11</sup> From the age of 8 to 14, Chikhachev lived in

5 See Pickering Antonova, *Gospoda Chikhachevy*, 79–80, 166.

6 F. V. Bulgarin, “O tsenzure v Rossii i o knigopechatanii vooobshche,” *Russkaia starina*, 9 (1900), 581.

7 For more information on the landowners’ affinity for reading and on the ways they acquired printed materials, see: T. N. Golovina, “‘Chtenie—samoe luchshee zaniatie,’” in M. V. Nashchokina (ed.), *Russkaia usad’ba. Sbornik Obshchestva izucheniiia russkoi usad’by* (Moscow, 2009), vol. 15, 103–114.

8 d. 54, l. 11 ob.

9 Between the years of 1845 and 1865 Chikhachev published over 100 articles both in provincial and Moscow newspapers. See T. N. Golovina, “Zabytyi publitsist A. I. Chikhachev,” in K. E. Baldin (ed.), *Materialy III s’ezda kraevedov Ivanovskoi oblasti* (Ivanovo, 2008), vol. 1, 149–154.

10 A. I. Chikhachev, “Neskol’ko slov o knige ‘Pis’ma o bogosluzhenii vostochnoi katolicheskoi tserkvi,’” *Vladimirskie gubernskie vedomosti*, November 12, 1849.

11 For more information on raising the children in noble families, and particularly on the role that books played in their upbringing, see T. N. Golovina, “Detstvo v usad’be (po materialam arkhiva pomeshchikov Kovrovskogo uyezda Vladimirskoi gubernii Chikhachevykh),”

Moscow, in a private boarding house run by Il'ia Greshishchev, who was in charge of housekeeping at Moscow University and translated French moralistic novels and Eli Bertrand's book *The Foundations of Universal Morality* (*Osnovanie vseobshchego npravouchenia*, 1796).<sup>12</sup> Chikhachev studied at the Academic Gymnasium affiliated with the Moscow University. In 1813–1815 he went on to continue his studies in St. Petersburg, in the Noble Regiment (Dvorianskii polk) at the 2nd Cadet Corps. After a year of service in the artillery, he returned to the Noble Regiment as a corps officer. In 1818 he retired as a second lieutenant (*podporuchik*) and went to his estate.

Chernavin studied in the Marine Cadet Corps (1814–1822), like his father and his brothers, where he was one of the best pupils. Then, while serving in the Baltic Fleet, he visited Denmark, Great Britain, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. In 1834 he retired as a captain-lieutenant and settled in his hereditary estate of Berezovik.

It should be noted that both landowners had been raised in a Masonic environment. Chikhachev's mentor Greshishchev had, in his youth, served as a secretary of Mikhail Kheraskov, the curator of the Moscow University. Kheraskov was part of the Moscow Rosicrucians community. Greshishchev attended the Friendly Scholarly Society (*Druzheskoe uchenoe obshchestvo*), which consisted entirely of freemasons, and the Translation Seminary (*Perevodcheskaia seminariia*) founded by the Head of the Order of the Russian Rosicrucians, Ivan Schwartz. The Masonic influence was great in the cadet corps where Chikhachev and Chernavin studied. Suffice it to say that the catechists (religion teachers) were freemasons: in the 2nd Cadet Corps, it was Hieromonk Feofil, a member of the Masonic lodges To the Dead Head and Dying Sphinx; in the Marine Cadet Corps it was Hieromonk Iov, a member of the same lodges and the sect of Tatarinova. It is known that a number of Chikhachev's fellow students and colleagues in the 2nd Cadet Corps were members of the Masonic lodges. For example, Nikolai Lorer was in the Palestine lodge and Iurii Bartenev was in the Dying Sphinx lodge.

In their youth, Chikhachev and Chernavin joined the brotherhood of freemasons, which is evidenced by them occasionally addressing each other as "builder" in their letters. However, we can only guess what lodges they were in and what degrees of initiation they reached (secret societies had been banned since 1822, and any affiliation with them was kept secret even in personal diaries and correspondence between friends).

They adopted specific features of Masonic book culture in their youth and adolescence, such as: a reverence for the book; seeing reading as a spiritual exercise, a means of self-improvement and education of the 'inner person';

---

in M. V. Nashchokina (ed.), *Russkaia usad'ba. Sbornik Obshchestva izucheniia russkoi usad'by* (Moscow, 2006), vol. 12, 7–15.

<sup>12</sup> M. P. Lepekhin, "Greshishchev Il'ia Iakovlevich," in A. M. Panchenko (ed.), *Slovar' russkikh pisatelei XVIII veka* (Leningrad, 1988), vol. 1, 228.

an orientation towards intensive rather than extensive reading; and the idea of the hierarchy of books and readers.<sup>13</sup> Chikhachev and Chernavin retained these ideas for the rest of their days, and even (to a certain extent) applied them to secular texts as well as religious ones.<sup>14</sup>

Chikhachev lived in the depths of the country since he was 20, and Chernavin since he was 30. There, in the countryside, books, magazines, and newspapers acquired special significance. According to Chikhachev himself, here they “are essential to a moral existence.”<sup>15</sup> Thanks to the development of book publishing industry, book trade, and library services in the 1830s, Russian readers gained greater access to reading materials.<sup>16</sup> However, it was still not very easy for provincial middling landowners to find food for thought and heart. In his diaries and letters, Chikhachev often complains about the ‘book hunger.’ “What is man without reading? And how can one who lives in the country, especially if he is not rich, get hold of things to read?”<sup>17</sup> This was the question that the owner of Dorozhaevo used to ask himself, while his brother-in-law was expressing envy of the French: “You, the happy inhabitants of the shores of the Seine, where there is never a shortage of magazines or the latest literary works, you are, in fairness, spoiled by an abundance of books.”<sup>18</sup>

The two landowners read their personal books over and over again multiple times. We do not know how many books Chikhachev had. Information regarding the size of Chernavin’s library is contradictory. One description suggests that there were 600 book volumes, while according to another one, there were only 245.<sup>19</sup> The landowners’ home libraries consisted of books that they inherited, as well as the books they bought from bookshops during rare trips to major cities. They were also able to order books from some of Moscow’s booksellers and publishers. However, the majority of their book collection consisted of texts purchased from traveling book sellers and peddlers. Middling landowners could not afford to spend a lot of money on books. To address such individuals’ limited spending power, traveling book sellers would not only sell books, but also loan them for a reasonable fee (60 kopecks).

Another important way for landed gentry to access books was to borrow volumes from their neighbors. The dwellers of Dorozhaevo and Berezovik

<sup>13</sup> See A. Kurilkin, “Ezotericheskaia kniga v Rossii vtoroi poloviny XVIII–nachala XIX veka (predvaritel’nye zamechaniia),” in M. O. Chudakova (ed.), *Tynianovskii sbornik* (Moscow, 2002), vol. II, 30–50.

<sup>14</sup> For more information, see T. N. Golovina, “Chitatel’skaia kul’tura provintsial’nykh masonov,” in A. I. Nikolaev (ed.), *Potaennaia literatura: Issledovaniia i materialy* (Ivanovo, 2012), 2nd edition, vol. 6, 80–85.

<sup>15</sup> D. 95, l. 32 ob.

<sup>16</sup> See REBECCHINI, “The Success of the Russian Novel,” in the present volume.

<sup>17</sup> D. 100, l. 4 ob.

<sup>18</sup> D. 57, l. 38.

<sup>19</sup> D. 93, l. 8 ob.; D. 129, l. 2 ob.

constantly exchanged books, newspapers, and magazines with nearby and sometimes very remote noble estates. Some landlords even kept registers of their neighbors' home libraries. Chikhachev and Chernavin found people of similar interests among the nobles, but also among representatives of the merchants and clergy. Thus, Stepan Karetnikov, a rich merchant from the village of Teikovo, regularly supplied Chikhachev and Chernavin with new editions.<sup>20</sup> The priest of the village of Lezhnevo, Lev Polissadov, also lent them books from his abundant library.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously, personal book collections, which were often very modest, did not meet such readers' enormous need for printed word. The 'book hunger' could only be satisfied by public libraries: "Without reading, a person does not live, he vegetates; and a city without a book depository is like a desert," Chikhachev said.<sup>22</sup> In 1834 a public library in Vladimir was opened.<sup>23</sup> Chikhachev certainly visited it whenever he traveled to the city. Such trips, however, were rare, so Chikhachev dreamed of having public book depositories in the countryside.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, the first public library in the nearest county town of Shuia (20 versts away from Dorozhaevo) appeared only in 1863.

10 years earlier, in 1853, Chikhachev created a library in the village of Zimenki at the Church of the Holy Prophet Elijah. He was driven by his concern for all the other villagers—landowners, priests, merchants and peasants. The library was mostly comprised of personal books donated by Chikhachev, Iurii Bartenev, Prince Vladimir Volkonskii and Princess Natalia Golitsina (1300 books in total). In addition, Chikhachev sent numerous letters asking for book donations and placed advertisements in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and local newspapers. The library received gifts from Emperor Aleksandr Nikolaevich and Empress Maria Aleksandrovna, writers Aleksei Pogosskii, Konstantin Ushinskii, Mikhail Rosenheim, Eugenia Salias de Tournemir, and others.<sup>25</sup> Scientists Grigorii Leberfarb, Konstantin Veselovskii, Piotr Keppen and theologians Grigorii Debolskii and Aleksandr Sulotskii also made significant contributions. By the mid-1860s, there were about 6,000 volumes in the library.

20 See T. N. Golovina, "Tysiacha blagodarnostei Stepanu Ivanovichu Karetnikovu...," in I. Iu. Cheremushkin (ed.), *Istoriia Teikova v litsakh* (Ivanovo, 2004), 6–8.

21 See: E. B. Frolova, "Lev Polissadov — kovrovskii blagochinnii pushkinskoi pory," in O. A. Moniakova (ed.), *Rozhdestvenskii sbornik* (Kovrov, 1999), vol. 7, 38–44.

22 A. I. Chikhachev, "O vospitanii detei (otkrovennost' startsa)," *Zemledel'cheskaia gazeta*, March 17, 1859.

23 A. I. Gertsen "Vladimirskaiia publicnaia biblioteka," *Pribavlenie k gubernskim vedomostiam*, February 26, 1838.

24 A. I. Chikhachev, "O snosheniakh mezhdru pomeshchikami," *Zemledel'cheskaia gazeta*, March 30, 1848.

25 T. N. Golovina, "Pis'ma literatorov A. I. Chikhachevu," in V. A. Smirnov (ed.), *Fol'klor i literatura Ivanovskogo kraia* (Ivanovo, 1994), 119–125.

Chikhachev's civic activities, which began in his close family circle in the 1830s, aimed at "promoting general education."<sup>26</sup> In order for his family to acquire a taste for reading, Chikhachev established 'reading hours' and set some strict rules in 1834:

1. As soon as someone starts reading, there should be no distractions and no one should move from their seats.
2. Once we set a date for the reading, we get down to work immediately. If there are things to say, these can be said afterwards. Otherwise, people here would keep coming and going, chatting, bumping into things, and eventually my book would end up falling on the floor and instead of reading we would end up feeling annoyed.
3. Interrupting the reading is allowed only to explain what is being read, and in no other case.
4. After the time set for the reading (for example an hour) is up, we can speak, even if the book has not been finished.<sup>27</sup>

At least twice a week the family gathered to read aloud. Chikhachev believed that

nothing else helps one to develop one's conversation skills so much as reading aloud. Nothing else offers so many opportunities to form an opinion as reading aloud. What is more, nothing else in my view helps a man to know himself well as reading aloud. And finally, nothing else can benefit one so much in the shortest time as reading aloud.<sup>28</sup>

Chikhachev considered this to be a custom worth following, which he often wrote about in *Zemledelcheskaia gazeta* (*The Agricultural Newspaper*) and *Vladimirskie Gubernskie Vedomosti* (*The Vladimir Provincial Gazette*): "Its usefulness is obvious to all: it contributes to accuracy, facilitates a clear presentation of your thoughts, brings souls and hearts closer, and educates. These are the cornerstones of our happiness."<sup>29</sup>

So what did the Kovrov landowners read? Provincial booklovers did not demonstrate any strict commitment to any one literary movement

---

<sup>26</sup> A. I. Chikhachev, "Sel'skaia biblioteka v sele Zimenki, bliz goroda Shui, v Kovrovskom uezde," *Vladimirskie gubernskie vedomosti*, April 12, 1858.

<sup>27</sup> D. 59, l. 25.

<sup>28</sup> D. 59, l. 77.

<sup>29</sup> A. I. Chikhachev, "O ezhdnevnom vslukh domashnem chtenii," *Zemledelcheskaia gazeta*, September 5, 1847. See also his articles: "Sochuvstvie k mysli o derevenskikh vrachakh," *Ibid.*, October 5, 1848; "Otkrovennost' startsa. Eshche raz o semeinom chtenii," *Ibid.*, June 12, 1859; "O neobkhodimosti semeinogo chteniia v nastoiashchee vremia bolee, chem v prezhee," *Ibid.*, July 10, 1859, 55. "Otkrovennost' startsa. Upravlenie sem'ei," *Ibid.*, July 17, 1859.

or a set of authors. Their reading preferences followed their own logic. Chikhachev criticized his ‘backward’ neighbors, that is, other landowners “who read everything they came by.”<sup>30</sup> He himself, as well as his brother-in-law Chernavin, read a lot, but not indiscriminately. Thus, after having read the novel *Count Oboianskii or Smolensk in the year 1812* (*Graf Oboianskii, ili Smolensk v 1812 godu*, 1834) by Nikolai Konshin, Chikhachev vowed: “I give my word not to read these mediocre writers. It’s a complete waste of one’s time.”<sup>31</sup> Later, in the article “A few words about the book” (*Neskol’ko slov o knige*), he mused:

You can’t reread everything. [...] Books, like everything in the world, are of different quality and are meant for different purposes. They are like fabrics: some are meant for ceremonial wear and magnificent decorations, while others can only serve as a wrapper. They are like foods: some are nutritious, while others are bland and exhausting.<sup>32</sup>

We can make conclusions about the literary tastes of local gentry simply by the books and periodicals they chose to read. However, their assessments of what they have read paint an even brighter picture. In their diaries, such assessments are usually brief, but in the correspondence of Chikhachev and Chernavin, they are more detailed. Chikhachev believed that “Reading without talking to anyone is a form of extreme selfishness, and not just literary selfishness, but pure daily selfishness.”<sup>33</sup> In his brother-in-law he found an excellent interlocutor.

Bookloving landowners took into account not only the judgments of their relatives and friends, but also the opinions of newspaper and magazine reviewers. Chernavin confessed:

I love reading reviews and counter-reviews in magazines. The result of such disputes [...] is always fruitful! Literary debates help you delve into the essence of a literary work. They allow you to notice new beauties, new strengths and weaknesses in the work that, to a greater or lesser degree, even a shrewd reader cannot always notice.<sup>34</sup>

The most reputable periodicals for Chikhachev and Chernavin were *Severnaia pchela* (*The Northern Bee*) and *Moskovskie vedomosti* (*The Moscow Gazette*), as well as the magazine *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* (*The Library for*

---

30 A. I. Chikhachev, “Vyzov na obshchepoleznoe delo,” *Ibid.*, August 5, 1847.

31 D. 59, l. 50.

32 A. I. Chikhachev, “Neskol’ko slov o knige.”

33 D. 66, l. 92.

34 D. 57, l. 7 ob.

Reading).<sup>35</sup> The Berezovik landowner even started a table where he marked all the positive and negative reviews of the most recently published books.<sup>36</sup> However, his own impressions from what he had read did not always coincide with the assessments of literary critics.

Let us now begin characterizing the (often quite wide) range of the landowners' literary interests. Foreign literature played an important role in their lives. The Chikhachevs and Chernavin usually read the works of foreign authors translated into Russian. Books published abroad were expensive and difficult to access for the provincial middling landowners;<sup>37</sup> yet judging by letters and diaries, their home libraries had books in French, such as *Les confessions* (Paris, 1782) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the French translation of the book by Edward Gibbon, *L'Histoire de la décadence et de la chute de l'Empire romain* (Paris, 1819). It is known that Chernavin made a list (not preserved) of foreign publications he owned and copied several times—not only for himself, but also for his friends, who used his library.

The Chikhachevs spoke French (and Chernavin also likely spoke German, English, and Italian). In order not to forget the language, the landowners sought to read, write and speak French as often as they could. They worked hard to get French books. For instance, in 1835, Chernavin wheedled a Suzdal' landowner Petr Sekerin into giving him *Histoire de Pierre III* (Paris, 1798) by Jean-Charles Laveaux, a book forbidden in Russia.

The provincial book-readers wanted to read French books in the original not only to practice their French skills, but also because they were not always happy with the Russian translations. When reading *The Story of Joachim Murat, Son-in-Law of Napoleon, Former King of Naples* (*Istoriia Iokhima Miurata, ziatia Napoleona, byvshego korolia neapolitanskogo*, 1830) by Leonard Gallois, Chernavin commented indignantly: "What a terrible style this translator has! He deserves a hundred lashes for a punishment, and even that should be considered a mercy!"<sup>38</sup> He also disapproved of the translation of the memoirs of Napoleon's secretary, Louis de Bourrienne, that came out in 1834-1836: "I am very much interested in reading Bourrienne's *Notes* but even though Mr. De Chapelet has given us many good translations of the best European authors, I do not always like his style in Bourrienne."<sup>39</sup>

Despite the difficulties in obtaining foreign books and magazines, the Kovrov landowners sometimes managed to get hold of some issues of *Revue française*, a liberal but moderate magazine published by François Guizot and

35 The complete list of the newspapers and magazines read by Chikhachev and Chernavin along with their reviews can be found in my article "Gazety i zhurnaly 1830–1860-kh godov v otsenkakh chitatelei-sovremennikov," in S. L. Strashnov (ed.), *Regional'naia zhurnalistika i reklama: teoriia i praktika* (Ivanovo, 2007), 129–135.

36 D. 66, l. 106.

37 See REBECCHINI, "Reading Foreign Novels in Russia," in the present volume.

38 D. 59, l. 54.

39 D. 66, l. 78.



Charles de Rémusat; other times they mention Marc Antoine Jullien's *Revue encyclopédique*, or the French-language journal *Revue étrangère* published by Ferdinand Bellizare and Selim DuFruar, where many of the French literary novelties appeared even before they were published in Paris.

The inhabitants of Dorozhaevo and Berezovik were familiar with writers of different times and from different countries, from ancient authors to modern European fiction writers. Chernavin had the book *Transformations of Publius Ovidius Nason in Russian (Publia Ovidia Nasona prevrashcheniia, perevedennye s latinskogo na rossiiskii iazyk, 1772–1774)* in his library. The Chikhachev spouses and Chernavin mention the names of Virgil, Homer, Aesop, Demosthenes, and Cicero in their diaries and letters.

The further history of world literature up to the middle of the eighteenth century apparently remained almost unknown to the provincial gentry. Only two great works written in the seventeenth century—William Shakespeare's tragedy *Hamlet* translated by Nikolai Polevoi (1837) and John Milton's poem *Paradise Regained (Vozvrashchennyi rai)* translated by Il'ia Gresishchev (1778)—are mentioned in the documents from the Dorozhaevo archive.

The literature of the Enlightenment era had the strongest influence on Chikhachev and Chernavin. They discovered it in their youth, during their studies and military service. As adults, Chikhachev and Chernavin did not often re-read the works that they grew up with. Nevertheless, Enlightenment-era literature continued to influence their thoughts and feelings.

Voltaire's writings were no doubt an important part of the 'mental repertoire' of the landowners. On various occasions, Chikhachev enjoyed quoting the words of Pangloss, a character from Voltaire's novel *Candide: or All for the best!*<sup>40</sup> Chikhachev's knowledge of Voltaire's biography and his orientation towards it (namely, that it "magnified"<sup>41</sup> the Russian landowner's everyday life) might be seen in how he jokingly renamed the estate of Borduki as Fernay, and referred to himself as "the Fernean philosopher." Chikhachev sometimes signed his messages to his brother-in-law as "the Fernean sage."<sup>42</sup>

The name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is also found in the manuscripts of the landowners. They learned about Rousseau's ideas not only from the original source, but also through the writings of Jean-Francois Marmontel and Nikolai Karamzin. These ideas are reflected in their speculations, found in their diaries and letters alike, about the beauty of nature and the advantages of rural life over urban life.

40 D. 57, l. 75; D. 59, l. 38 ob. etc.

41 The mechanism of 'consolidation' of everyday behavior by means of including associations with historical and literary storylines is described in Iu. M. Lotman, "Dekabrist v povsednevnoi zhizni (Bytovoe povedenie kak istoriko-psikhologicheskaiia kategoriiia)," in Idem, *Izbrannye stat'i*, 3 vols (Tallin, 1992), vol. 1, 296–336.

42 D. 57, l. 113; D. 59, l. 66 etc.

Whenever Chikhachev had thoughts about the meaning of life and brevity of existence, he used to reread Edward Jung's religious-didactic poem *The Complaint: or Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (which one of the many translations he had in the Dorozhaevo library is impossible to establish). The landlords, however, did not frequently indulge in abstract philosophizing and melancholic moods. They were much more worried about matters close to hand. In the 1830s, several of the estate residents—including Alesha, a young son of Andrei Ivanovich—repeatedly turned to novel *The Adventures of Telemachus* by Francois Fénelon created at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The novel anticipated the ideas of the Enlightenment and outlined the principles of the perfect social order in an entertaining way. This book was not only a source of political ideas for the landowners, but also a practical guide to managing their estates. Modern researchers have repeatedly noted how nobles' conception of their 'social well-being' was based on comparisons between their private estate and the larger Russian state, as well as the desire to bring their estate into line with ideals of public order.<sup>43</sup> Chikhachev also tended to draw parallels between society and family, the state and the estate.<sup>44</sup> He treated his works on the arrangement of the estate as part of the great task of the arrangement of Russia itself: "This great family—the class of the Russian gentry, whose well-being is reflected throughout the Homeland—consists of our small families. Therefore, any improvement of family life will undoubtedly benefit the Homeland."<sup>45</sup> The state described in Fénelon's novel, the state of Salenta, is a class-based agrarian monarchy. All citizens, starting with the supreme ruler, lead a moderate way of life and work selflessly for the common good. The landlords understood and sympathized with this idea of a prosperous state and it served for them as an example to follow.

Chernavin and Chikhachev constantly turned their attention to the utopian novel *Numa, or the Flourishing Rome* (*Numa, ili protsvetaiushchii Rim, 1793*), which was written by a Russian follower of Fénelon, Mikhail Kheraskov. The novel concerns a rural philosopher who was chosen for his virtues to be the Roman emperor. Chernavin and Chikhachev even tried to translate into French this treasure trove of socio-political ideas and ethical norms that never lost its relevance for them.

43 See O. S. Evangulova, *Khudozhestvennaia "Vselennaia" russkoi usad'by* (Moscow, 2003); V. Lazarev, A. Tolmachev, "Zvezda polei, ili Usadebnaia zhizn' bednogo dvorianina," *Nashe nasledie*, 29-30 (1994), 20-25; L. N. Letiagin, "Krasnaia nuzhda—dvorianskaia sluzhba." Tipologicheskie aspekty biografii pomeshchika—pushkinskogo sovremennika," in M. V. Nashchokina (ed.), *Russkaia usad'ba: Sbornik Obshchestva izucheniia russoi usad'by* (Moscow, 2000), vol. 6, 25-35.

44 See T. N. Golovina "Mysl' semeinaia v publitsistike A. I. Chikhacheva," in R. Noikhel' (ed.), *Konstrukty natsional'noi identichnosti v russkoi kul'ture XVIII-XIX vekov* (Moscow, 2010), 161-176.

45 A. I. Chikhachev, "O ezhednevnom vslukh domashnem chtenii."

The estate libraries contained works by Russian authors of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: fables by Ivan Khemnitser, Ivan Dmitriev, and Ivan Krylov, poems by Aleksandr Sumarokov and Gavriil Derzhavin, the poem by Ivan Bogdanovich *Dushenka, an Ancient Novel in Free Verse* (*Dushen'ka, drevniaia povest' v vol'nykh stikhakh*, 1783), mythological novel *Cadmus and Harmonia* (*Kadmii i Garmoniia*, 1789) by Mikhail Kheraskov, the tragedies of Vladislav Ozerov and Aleksandr Sumarokov. They enjoyed rereading old books. They memorized words of wisdom and little sayings from those books and quoted them on occasion. The fact that their interest in writers of the past had not faded is evidenced by the fact that the landlords followed the release of new editions of such authors' works. Thus, in 1843, Chernavin intended to acquire the newly published *Works* by Gavriil Derzhavin (1843).

Both the way of thinking and the emotional world of the provincial gentry was formed under the influence of literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>46</sup> Chikhachev considered the most important of the human virtues to be “sensitivity” and “poetism,” that is, kindness, sincerity, ability to admire the sublime things and to enjoy the beautiful, and the ability to express your thoughts and feelings orally and in writing. Chikhachev cherished the movements of his soul, even the fleeting ones, and wanted to preserve the memory of them both for himself and for posterity. In order to “not lose his feelings,”<sup>47</sup> he and his family kept diaries for many years.

Remembering his childhood, Chikhachev linked the awakening of strong and sublime emotions with one book—*The Golden Mirror for Children* (*Zolotoe zerkalo dlia detei*, 1787), a collection of moralistic stories for children edited by Joachim Campe and Arnaud Berquin: “I remember well the first emergence of my sensitivity. I had just learned to read and was moved to tears by an illustration in *The Golden Mirror* of a dying mother, beside whom her obedient daughter was kneeling.”<sup>48</sup> Chikhachev wanted to see his children become “virtuous, sensitive, and compassionate to their neighbor.”<sup>49</sup> Reading played an important role in the development of these qualities. In 1836 Andrei Ivanovich gave the *The Golden Mirror* to his ten-year-old son Alesha, who was absolutely fascinated by it.

As we can see, in the 1830s, Chikhachev remained true to the ideals that developed in his youth under the influence of sentimental literature. Throughout the first third of the nineteenth century, the Chikhachevs and Chernavin continued to reread the works of English, French, and German Sentimentalists: Laurence Sterne, Jean-Francois Marmontel, August Lafontain, August von Kotzebue, Madeleine-Félicité de Genlis, and others.

46 See ZORIN, “A Reading Revolution? The Concept of Reader in the Russian Literature of Sensibility,” in volume 1 of the present work.

47 D. 54, l. 18.

48 A. I. Chikhachev's letter to priest M. V. Milovskii (1859), GAIO, f. R-255, d. 101, l. 20.

49 D. 54, l. 8.

In 1835, Chernavin lent Chikhachev Sterne's book *A Sentimental Journey*, which gave the name to the entire literary movement. It was a translation into Russian called *Yorick's Journey through France (Puteshestvie Iorika po Frantsii, 1806)*.

Chikhachev felt a unique timeless sense of spiritual closeness with the founder of Russian sentimentalism, Nikolai Karamzin. He admired the beauty of his soul, as well as the skill with which the author of *Letters of the Russian Traveler (Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika, 1797-1801)* expressed his emotions: "I like his style so much, some very simple feeling is expressed so sweetly that I would have liked to be acquainted with him, to be his friend. It seems like his feelings are my own."<sup>50</sup> In 1835, Chikhachev acquired the book *Karamzin's Spirit, or Chosen Thoughts and Feelings by this Author (Dukh Karamzina, ili izbrannye mysli i chuvstvovaniia sego pisatel'ia, 1827)*, edited by Nikolai Ivanchin-Pisarev and, while reading it, repeatedly exclaimed: "He is my second self."<sup>51</sup>

Landowners read *Poor Liza (Bednaia Liza, 1792)* and other stories by Karamzin, as well as the articles from his collected works available in the estate library. The article "A letter of a villager" ("Pis'mo sel'skogo zhitelia," 1803) was particularly important for the Dorozhaevo owner. Records of him reading it can be found in his diary of 1831. Chikhachev firmly adopted Karamzin's idea that "the main right of the Russian nobleman is to be a landowner, and his main duty is to be a good landowner; one who performs this duty, serves the homeland as a faithful son, and serves the monarch as a faithful subject."<sup>52</sup> Karamzin's words brought greater meaning to the landowner's life; they convinced him that, even without ever leaving his estate, he could "live, work and be useful not only for himself and his family."<sup>53</sup> This is exactly how Chikhachev understood his civic duty: "I find nothing more majestic than proper, orderly, pious governance of one's land."<sup>54</sup>

The idyllic-minded landowners enjoyed the pictures of farming and happy family life in the heart of nature depicted in classic Sentimentalist works such as *Louisa, or the Cottage on the Moor (Luiza, ili khizhina sredi mkhov, 1790)* by Elizabeth Helme, *The New Marmontel's Novels, Published by N. Karamzin (Novye Marmontelevy povesti, izdannye Karamzinym, 1794, 1798)* of Jean-Francois Marmontel, *New Family Paintings, or The Life of a Poor Priest of One Village and His Children (Novye semeistvennyye kartiny, ili Zhizn' bednogo sviashchennika odnoi derevni i ego detei, 1805-1806)*, *Amalia Gorst, or The Mystery of Being Happy (Amalia Gorst, ili Taina byt' shchastlivym,*

<sup>50</sup> D. 54. L. 42 ob.

<sup>51</sup> D. 59. L. 42.

<sup>52</sup> N. M. Karamzin, "Pis'mo sel'skogo zhitelia," in Idem, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, 2 vols (Moscow, Leningrad), 1964, vol. 2, 288-296.

<sup>53</sup> A. I. Chikhachev, "Tserkovnoe ktitorstvo," *Zemledel'cheskaia gazeta*, June 14, 1857.

<sup>54</sup> A. I. Chikhachev, "Neskol'ko myslei sel'skogo zhitelia (Avtobiograficheskoe)," *Vladimirskie gubernskie vedomosti*, November 18, 1850.

1818), *Baron Bergedorf, or the Rules Based on Virtue* (*Baron Bergedorf, ili pravila osnovannye na dobrodeteli*, 1823) by August Lafontaine, and *The Blessings of Morpheus* (*Blagodeiania Morfeia*, 1784) by Francois Turban.

Descriptions of the afterlife and terrible atrocities frightened the peaceful inhabitants of the estates. So it is no surprise that they did not read the English Gothic novels by Ann Radcliffe, Horace Walpole, and Matthew Gregory Lewis, which were extremely popular at the time.<sup>55</sup> The genre of the German light novels (bandit and horror novels by Heinrich Zschokke, Christian-August Vulpius, Achim Von Arnim) was represented in their reading circle by only one book: *The Life, Opinions and Strange Adventures of Erasmus Schleicher, The Traveling Mechanic* (*Zhizn', mnenia i strannye prikliuchenia Erazma Shleikhera, stranstvuiushchego mekhanika*, 1802) by Carl Gottlob Cramer. Christian-Heinrich Spiess, another creator of bandit novels, was known to the landowners only as the author of the book *The Biographies of Mad Men*, published in Russia under the title *Crazy, or in Disgrace with Fortune* (*Sumasshedshie, ili gonimye sud'boiu*, 1816).

The destructive power of feeling as depicted by Germaine de Staël, Ernst Hoffmann, Benjamin Constant, and other Romantic writers also aroused fear in the landowners. Books, according to Chikhachev, should soothe raging passions rather than inflame them. Apparently, that is why, out of the entire bulk of foreign Romantic literature of the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the landowners were only familiar with Russian translations of François-René de Chateaubriand's *Atala* (1802), Friedrich Schiller's tragedy *Wilhelm Tell* (Russian trans. *Vil'gelm Tell'*, 1829) and George Byron's poem *The Bride of Abydos* (Russian trans. *Nevesta Abidoskaia*, 1826).

The works of the Russian Romantics, written in the 1820s, were not read by the landowners in the following decade, except for the early poems by Aleksandr Pushkin, poems by Vasilii Zhukovskii, and a collection of fantastic novels titled *The Double, or My Evenings in Malorossia* (*Dvoinik, ili moi vechera v Malorossii*, 1828) by Aleksei Perovskii (pseudonym Antonii Pogorelskii).<sup>56</sup>

Chikhachev came across Aleksandr Griboedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* (*Gore ot uma*) only 12 years after it had been written (1824). Why the Kovrov landowners sought to obtain not the printed version of the comedy, published in Moscow in 1833, but rather its handwritten copy, remains unclear. Apparently, even provincial readers, far removed from the literary circles, were aware that the published text of the comedy was heavily censored. Chikhachev read the comedy four times in a row, and made it into an

<sup>55</sup> Numerous evidence of the wide dissemination of the mystery literature and horror literature, especially among the landowners (opinions of literary critics, evidence provided by memoirists, surviving inventories of estate libraries, etc.), is provided in V. E. Vatsuro, *Goticheskii roman v Rossii* (Moscow, 2002).

<sup>56</sup> Which romantic books exactly they read right after their publication remains unknown, since the Chikhachevs' and Chernavin's diaries from the 1820s were not preserved.

evening reading for the whole family. There is no information in the diaries regarding how the reading went. But there is no doubt that everyone, including the ten-year-old Aleksei, liked the comedy.<sup>57</sup> At night, Chikhachev began to copy the text. Due to lack of time, he managed to copy only fragments of it, specifically the first act and the monologues by Famusov, Khlestova, Molchalin, and Chatskii, and later regretting not having copied it in full.<sup>58</sup> The comedy made such a strong impression on the Dorozhaevo owner that he “caught the rhyming bug,” and for several weeks thereafter he corresponded with his brother-in-law partly in verse: “You see what it means to read *Woe from Wit* for the fourth time,” he wrote, “There’re rhymes at the tip of my pen and I can’t do away with them” (“Stikhi sami l’nut k peru, tak chto ikh nikak ne otderu”).<sup>59</sup>

Thus, we have seen that in the 1830s, the landowners did not lose interest in the literature of the past. However, the pride of place within the range of their literary interests was held by the most recent works in Russian fiction, as well as recent translations of foreign books. What subject matter was the most interesting for them to read about?

In 1830s, history books were of the greatest interest for the landowners. But before we review them, we should mention a special ‘country’ perception of time that existed within estate life. Being “farmers” (Chikhachev insisted that landowners should not only be landowners, but also farmers),<sup>60</sup> the masters shared with their peasants the idea of time as an endless cycle. At the same time, they had the inherent belief in progress, personal development of an individual, and the development of the humanity in general, like all the educated people of their era.<sup>61</sup> The dual time perception (as both cyclical and linear) generated conflicting states of mind. The joy derived from the stability of the universe, the satisfaction coming from the firm order of the daily life, and the bliss of harmonious coexistence with nature were suddenly replaced by very different moods—for example, annoyance at monotonous existence and boredom: “It has been a while since I was as much bored as I am today! I’ve been alone all day, and what bores me even more, there’s nothing to read!”<sup>62</sup> At such moments, the landowners felt themselves falling behind from the progressive course of history. Any evidence of progress fascinated them. But their delight at the advancement

57 Eleven years later, in the first year of his service in Vilnius, Aleksei Chikhachev, being homesick, reread his favorite childhood books, including *Woe from Wit* (d. 83, l. 13 ob., 17 ob.).

58 See T. N. Golovina, “Eshche odin spisok ‘Goria ot uma,’” in D. L. Lakerbai (ed.), *Potaennaia literatura: Issledovaniia i materialy* (Ivanovo, 2004), vol. 4, 27–33.

59 D. 66, l. 16.

60 See A. I. Chikhachev, “Patrioticheskoe sochuvstvie k uchilishchu sel’skogo khoziaistva dlia potomstvennykh dvorian,” *Vladimirskie gubernskie vedomosti*, February 24, 1849.

61 For more information on the estate chronotope, see T. N. Golovina, “Obrazy vremeni i prostranstva v domashnei literature,” in A. Iu. Moryganov (ed.), *Potaennaia literatura: Issledovaniia i materialy* (Ivanovo, 2002), vol. 3, 11–18.

62 D. 57, l. 41.

of science and technology was often mixed with bitterness from not being involved in any of it themselves:

What a century it is, the century of Nicholas! After all, this thing does not walk and does not ride, but it flies. How is that even possible? At the speed with which the light and the sound travel! If I were a good scientist, I could make a big discovery at this time and get it published. That would be a great good and my living tribute.<sup>63</sup>

Unable to live 'historically' in the present, the landowners mentally immersed themselves in their past when they were the ones to witness significant events. For Chikhachev, these were the memories of fleeing Moscow from the French in 1812 and then returning to the looted and burned city. For Chernavin it was participating in the Russian-Turkish military campaign (1828–1829) and in the Civil War in Greece (1831–1832).

Books helped them extend the axis of time even further into history. In the 1830s there was a real 'historic boom' in Dorozhaevo and Berezovik, just as everywhere else in Russia<sup>64</sup>. The landowners studied scientific works on Russian history, in particular *History of the Russian State (Istoriia gosudarstva rossiiskogo, 1818)* by Nikolai Karamzin, *History of the Russian People (Istoriia russkogo naroda, 1829–1833)* by Nikolai Polevoi, and *Russia in Historical, Statistical, Geographical and Literary Terms (Rossiia v istoricheskom, statisticheskom, geograficheskom i literaturnom otnoshenii, 1836–1837)* by Faddei Bulgarin and Nikolai Ivanov. Coming across his own last name, and the last name of his close relatives the Zamytskiis, Chikhachev was proud to feel the connection to his lineage, whose history was inseparable from that of his homeland.

Reading so many historical works and memoirs, not only about figures from the past, like the biography *Real Anecdotes from the Life of Peter the Great (Podlinnye anekdoty o Petre Velikom, 1786)* by Jakob von Stählin, but also about individuals from his own time like Suvorov, Aleksandr I, and Napoleon, helped him connect his personal experience with recent European history. He read *The Life and Military Feats of the Generalissimus Prince of Italy, Count Suvorov-Rymnikskii (Zhizn' i voennye deianiia generalissimusa, kniazia italiiskogo, grafa Suvorova-Rymnikskogo, 1804)* by Johann Friedrich Anthing, *Chosen Excerpts from the Most Memorable Speeches and Anecdotes by the August Emperor Aleksandr I, the Peacemaker of Europe (Izbrannye cherty dostopamiatneishchikh izrechenii i anekdoty avgusteishego imperatora Aleksandra I, mirotvortsa Evropy, 1826–1827)*, *The Life of Napoleon Buonaparte* by Walter

<sup>63</sup> D. 58, l. 83 ob.

<sup>64</sup> See, for example: M. G. Al'tshuller, *Epokha Valtera Skotta v Rossii: Istoricheskii roman 1830-kh godov* (St. Petersburg, 1996).

Scott in Russian translation (*Zhizn' Napoleona Bonaparta, imperatora frantsuzov*, 1831–1832), or Bourrienne's *Notes on Napoleon, the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire and the Bourbon ascension to the Throne of the Bourbons* (*Zapiski Burienna o Napoleone, Direktorii, Konsul'stve, Imperii i vosshestvii*, 1831–1836) and many more.<sup>65</sup> Chikhachev's opinion of Bourrienne's memoirs of Napoleon shows his critical awareness of the different parties that contended for the symbolic legacy of that great historical figure. He wrote:

It seems like one can trust the words of Mr Bourrienne to be true. He does not hide any of the errors or weaknesses of Napoleon. On the contrary, recognizing all his merits, he highlights his errors and weaknesses very well; and every time, when it is the case, he thoroughly proves wrong both the negative things written about Napoleon, and the flattering ones reported by the gentlemen who wanted to adulate him, and thus reasoned and wrote in a biased way.<sup>66</sup>

A greater sense of identification may have led Chikhachev to read many Russian historical memoirs on the 1812 war, an event that had touched him closely when he was 14 years old; these included *Memoirs of a Gunner on the Military Campaigns from 1812 to 1816* (*Pokhodnye zapiski artillerista s 1812 po 1816*, 1835) by Il'ia Radozhitskii, or the famous *Letters of a Russian Officer* (*Pis'ma russkogo ofitsera*, 1815) by Fedor Glinka.

The Berezovik and Dorozhaevo libraries also had textbooks on history: *Russian History for Initial Reading* (*Russkaia istoriia dlia pervonachal'nogo chtenia*, 1836) by Nikolai Polevoi, *An Outlined History of the State of Russia* (*Nachertanie istorii gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, 1829) by Ivan Kaidanov, *Russian History for the Benefit of Family Education* (*Russkaia istoriia v pol'zu semeinogo vospitaniia*, 1817–1818) by Sergei Glinka and one of the many Russian editions of *Ancient and New History* (*Drevniaia i novaia istoriia*, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1785) by Abbot Milot.

Translations of historical novels and short novels by Jean-Pierre Florian, Madeleine-Félicité de Genlis, Carl Franz Van-der Felder, Auguste Saint-Tomas, Alfred de Vigny, and Charles Robert Maturin were in great demand. The most favored by the landowners was, of course, Walter Scott, whose works became available to provincial readers only after they had been translated into Russian<sup>67</sup>. In the 1830s Chikhachev and Chernavin

65 For the complete list of research on history, memoirs, and biographies of historic figures read by the landowners, see: T. N. Golovina, "Iz kruga chteniia pomeschikov srednei ruki (po dokumentam 1830-1840-kh godov iz usadbnogo arkhiva)," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 93 (2008), 384-387.

66 D. 66, l. 80.

67 See Iu. D. Levin, "Prizhiznennaia slava Val'tera Skotta v Rossii," in M. P. Alekseev (ed.), "Epokha romantizma. Iz istorii mezhdunarodnykh sviazei russkoi literatury" (Leningrad,



read the novels *Guy Mannering* (Russian trans. *Mannering, ili Astrolog*, 1824), *Woodstock* (Russian trans. *Vudstoki*, 1829), *Perth Beauty, or Valentine's Day*<sup>68</sup> (Russian trans. *Pertskaia krasavitsa, ili Valentinov den'*, 1829), *Rob Roy* (Russian trans. *Rob-Roi*, 1829), *The Monastery* (Russian trans. *Monastyr'*, 1829) and *Dangerous Castle* (Russian trans. *Opasnyi zamok*, 1833). These books had changed hands many times before they got to Dorozhaevo and Berezovik. Anticipating the pleasure of reading *Rob Roy*, Chernavin wrote to Chikhachev: "We should expect it to be very interesting. A guarantee of this novel's high quality is its pitiful condition, as apparently it has been the subject of the attention of many people."<sup>69</sup>

But it was the Russian historical novel of the 1830s which most drew the attention of these provincial landowners of that time. Of the 93 Russian historical novels published in 1830s,<sup>70</sup> at least 22 passed through their hands (to compare: of the 66 non-historical novels published in the same decade, only 6 are mentioned in the diaries and letters of Chikhachev and Chernavin). The reason for this preference is revealed in Chikhachev's review of Aleksandr Stepanov's moralizing novel *The Inn. The memoirs of the deceased Gorianov* (*Postoiialyi dvor. Zapiski pokoinogo Gorianova*, 1835): "It is an excellent book [...], but it did not impress me as much as *Leonid* [Rafail Zotov's historical novel about Napoleon—T. G.] did, and I'm not surprised, because there is a very big difference in the substance of their themes."<sup>71</sup>

Of course, not all Russian historical novels received a positive review from Chikhachev and his family. Thus, the novels *Maryna Mniszzech, Princess of Sandomierz, Wife of Dimitrii the Usurper* (*Marina Mnishek, kniazhna Sendomirskaia, zhena Dimitriia Samozvantsa*, 1831) by Ivan Gur'ianov, *The Justice of Shemiaka, or The Last Discord among the Independent Russian Princes* (*Shemiakin sud, ili Poslednee mezhdousobie udel'nykh kniazei russkikh*, 1832) by Pavel Svin'in, *The Fall of Great Novgorod* (*Padenie velikogo Novgoroda*, 1833) by Sergei Liubetskii, *Count Oboianskii, or Smolensk in the year 1812* (*Graf Oboianskii, ili Smolensk v 1812 godu*, 1834) by Nikolai Kon'shin, *The Astrologer of Karabakh, or the Establishment of the Fortress of Shushi in 1752* (*Karabakhskii astrolog, ili Osnovanie kreposti Shushi v 1752*, 1834) by Platon Zubov, and *Maluta Skuratov, or the Thirteen Years of the Reign of King John of the Terrible* (*Maliuta Skuratov, ili Trinadtsat' let tsarstvovaniia Tsaria Ioanna Vasil'evicha Groznogo*, 1833) by an unidentified author were severely criticized for their

---

1975), 5-67.

<sup>68</sup> The author and the second part of the title are not stated by Chikhachev. However, the attribution is not difficult in this case because it is a very famous novel. Nevertheless, K. Pickering Antonova suggests that Chikhachev was writing about the Russian translation of Corneille's tragedy *Rodogune*, called *The Persian Beauty* (*Pers [ids] kaia krasavitsa*). (K. Pickering Antonova, *Mir pomestnogo dvorianstva*, 209).

<sup>69</sup> D. 59, l. 26 ob.

<sup>70</sup> See D. Rebekkini (Rebecchini), "Russkie istoricheskie romany 30-kh gg XIX veka," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obzrenie*, 34 (1998), 421-426.

<sup>71</sup> D. 66, l. 12.

lack of content, for being implausible, and for being hard to read in terms of their author's writing style. The novels *Harald and Elizabeth, or The Age of Ivan the Terrible* (*Garal'd i Elizaveta, ili Vek Ioanna Groznogo*, 1831) by Vasilii Ertel', *The Fall of the Shuiskies, or the Dark Times in Russia* (*Padenie Shuiskikh, ili Vremena bedstvii Rossii*, 1836) by Aleksandr Kislov, *Prince Skopin-Shuiskii, or Russia at the Beginning of the Seventeenth century* (*Kniaz' Skopin-Shuiskii, ili Rossiia v nachale XVII stoletiiia*, 1835) by Olimpiada Shishkina, *Providence, or the Event of Eighteenth Century* (*Providenie, ili Sobytie XVIII veka*, 1837) and *The Gypsy, or the Terrible Revenge* (*Tsygan, ili Uzhasnaia mest'*, 1838) by Ivan Steven, historical short novels by Sergei Liubetskii from the collection of short novels called *The Russian Sheherezada* (*Rusaskaia Shekherezada*, 1836) and the works of Egor Alad'in from the collection *Short Novels* (*Povesti*, 1833) all apparently failed to make a strong impression on these discerning readers, and therefore were left without any reviews.

Konstantin Massal'skii's work *The Regency of Biron* (*Regenstvo Birona*, 1834) was praised by Chernavin for his "respectable style and the entertaining subject matter," but criticized by Chikhachev: "If I were a grand commandant, I would call up Bulgarin and order him [...] to make some corrections and small changes here and there and then I would be able to enjoy this book about Biron as much as I feel indignant about the former existence of (the living) Biron himself."<sup>72</sup>

Faddei Bulgarin, Mikhail Zagoskin, Rafail Zotov and Ivan Lazhechnikov were the family's undisputed and constant favorites among historical novelists. Much effort was made by the Dorozhaevo and Berezovik owners to get hold of the popular novels *Dimitrii the Usurper* (*Dimitrii Samozvanets*, 1830) and *Mazepa* (1833–1834) by Bulgarin, *Iurii Miloslavskii, or Russians in 1612* (*Iurii Miloslavskii, ili Russkie v 1612 godu*, 1829), *Roslavlev, or The Russians in 1812* (*Roslavlev, ili Russkie v 1812 godu*, 1831) and *Askol'dova's Tomb. A Tale from the Times of Vladimir* (*Askol'dova mogila. Povest' iz vremen Vladimira*, 1833) by Zagoskin, *Leonid, or Some aspects of Napoleon's Life* (*Leonid, ili Nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Napoleona*, 1832), *The Mysterious Monk* (*Tainstvennyi monakh*, 1834), *Niklas, Bear's Paw, or Some Aspects of the life of Frederick II* (*Niklas, Medvezhia lapa, ili Nekotorye cherty iz zhizni Fridrikha II*, 1837) and *Fra-Diavolo, or the Last Years of Venice* (*Fra-Diavolo, ili Poslednie gody Venetsii*, 1839) by Zotov, *The Ice House* (*Ledianoi dom*, 1835) and *The Last Novik, or The Conquest of Lifland in the Reign of Peter the Great* (*Poslednii Novik, ili Zavoevanie Lifliandii v tsarstvovanie Petra Velikogo*, 1831–1833) by Lazhechnikov. These works were reread multiple times and always with delight.

As for the qualities that were most appreciated in these historical novels, we can learn much from the letter of Chikhachev to Chernavin:

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., l. 89 ob.

Mr. Leonid [the main character of one of Zotov's novels—T. G.] has interested me so much that [...] I literally did not move for two days, until I read the novel's very last page [...] When you compare it with Bourrienne [Bourrienne's *Notes on Napoleon*—T. G.], you can make your own remarks: How closely you think the author describes the character of Napoleon?<sup>73</sup>

As we can see, as readers, they primarily expected the fiction writer to be authentic, and compared the artistic portrayal with the testimony of a memoirist. Chikhachev went on to note that “the style of the work is very clear, it is remarkably well-planned, and there are lot of fresh ideas.”<sup>74</sup> In conclusion, he once again praises Zotov for his detailed and, as he believed it to be, accurate account of political and military events: “Among the many scenes, those that interested me the most were the diplomatic scenes. It seems that Mr. Zotov knows his stuff when he writes these scenes. Everything regarding Napoleon, the military actions, and the negotiations is really compelling.”<sup>75</sup>

Chikhachev noted and particularly praised the accurate recreation of the national flavor in the novel *Iurii Miloslavskii*: “Zagoskin could not have written his *Iurii Miloslavskii* so well if he had not so attentively observed the formation of the various ranks of our masses.”<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that this assessment coincided with the opinion of literary critics, who praised Zagoskin for the accurate representation of the “physiognomy of the people: their characters, habits, customs, dress, and language”<sup>77</sup> and the depiction of the “vivid pictures of the daily existence of a simple man.”<sup>78</sup>

Being sensitive readers, Chikhachev and Chernavin were very concerned about the moral aspect of historical conflicts. Thus, Chernavin was struck by “all the horrors of the reign of Ivan the Terrible and all the abominations of the villain Skuratov”<sup>79</sup> described in the novel *Maliuta Skuratov*. On the other hand, Vladimir Solonitsyn's “glorious, wonderful story” *The Tsar is the Hand of God (Tsar' – ruka Bozhiia)*, published in the magazine *Moskvitianin (The Muscovite)* in 1841, caused him to shed tears.<sup>80</sup> The discussion of the novel *The Regency of Biron* turned into an exchange of views on the characters of historical figures and an ethical assessment of their actions.

Thanks to Zagoskin, Lazhechnikov, and other historical novelists, the landowners were able to make the long hours of their leisure time pleasant and useful. They learned from historical novels about the events of the

73 D. 58, l. 60.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

76 D. 57, l. 39 ob.

77 S. T. Aksakov, *Sobranie sochinenii, v trekh tomakh* (Moscow, 1986), vol. 3, 353.

78 V. G. Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii, v devyati tomakh* (Moscow, 1976), vol. 1, 118.

79 D. 66, l. 30.

80 D. 95, l. 8 ob.

distant and recent past, and about the personalities of historical figures. They also learned moral lessons of courage, honor, and devotion to the Homeland. And the best thing was that all of it was presented in the form of entertaining and emotional stories about the adventures and romantic experiences of fictional characters. This was what the estate dwellers found the most appealing about historical fiction.<sup>81</sup>

Travel notes firmly occupied the second place among the reading interests of Chikhachev and Chernavin. And this is no accident: while historical books extended the time frame of the estate chronotope, the travelogues pushed its geographical boundaries. The estate dwellers' perception of space was as dual as their perception of time. On the one hand, they considered their little world remote and secluded. "We live in the most deserted area, where not a bird would fly, nor a living soul would pass,"<sup>82</sup> complained Natalia Ivanovna, the wife of Chikhachev. Chernavin, a retired sailor well accustomed to the sea, lamented his fate, "which has decreed" that he "live in the forest and be surrounded by mountains."<sup>83</sup> All he could do was keep recalling and listing the cities that he had visited while serving in the navy: Copenhagen, Portsmouth, Bristol, Naples, Rome, Athens... Chernavin calculated the distances from the village of Berezovik to the "most renowned cities": it was 665 versts to St. Petersburg, 200 to Moscow, 1708 to Berlin, 1785 to Vienna, 2541 to Paris, 2534 to London, 5101 to Calcutta, 5421 to Beijing, etc. Chikhachev had a passionate desire to visit at least Moscow where he had spent his childhood: "I want to go to Presn'ia, I want to go to Lafertovo, I want to go to Devich'e, to the Kuznetskii Bridge, I want to go to the Kremlin, I want to go to Arbat!"<sup>84</sup> But the landowners rarely left their province. They tried to overcome the isolation and remoteness of their world with works of art that revived their memories and aroused their imaginations. So Chikhachev acquired engravings with views of Moscow and, looking at them, "got immediately transported to the capital city" in his imagination.<sup>85</sup> He also had prints with views of Rome, Venice, and London in his house. Imagination not only allowed them to escape from their remote corner of the world, but it also helped transform this corner itself. All it took was to rename it. They ended up giving more attractive European names to their estates, and in their correspondence they jokingly called Dorozhaevo "Paris," while Berezovik was "Napoli di Romagna" and Epidaurus, the Borduki estate was Voltaire's "Ferney" or "Bor d'Uki," and the estate Chernetsy-Vorotynskie belonging to their friend Maria Izmailova was Athens.

---

81 See REBECCHINI, "The Success of the Russian Novel," in the present volume.

82 D. 57, l. 41 ob.

83 Ibid., l. 15.

84 D. 58, l. 70 ob.

85 D. 57, l. 51 ob.

As one can see, the life of the inhabitants of the estates proceeded in two spaces simultaneously: real—comfortable, familiar, but mundane, cramped and isolated from the big world; and imaginary—limitless, attractive, but accessible only in fantasies and memories. This great world was what the landlords discovered through travel books. Chikhachev and Chernavin read factually accurate and detailed reports on scientific and military expeditions, descriptions of pilgrimages to holy places, guides, reference books, atlases, and geography textbooks.<sup>86</sup> But pride of place in the range of their literary interests was held by travelogues. One of their most beloved books was *Letters of a Russian Traveler* (*Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika*, 1797–1801) by Nikolai Karamzin. It charmed the dweller of Dorozhaevo not only with its colorful descriptions of overseas countries, but also with its detailed depictions of the traveler's emotions. In his library, Chernavin also had an essay by the founder of the genre of the sentimental journey Lawrence Sterne, whom Karamzin called his teacher. Another book that influenced the author of *Letters of a Russian Traveler* was the book *The Journey of Mr. Dupaty to Italy*, in *Letters* (*Puteshestvie g. Diupati v Italiu v pis'makh*, 1800–1801) by Charles Marguerite Dupaty, which was kept in the Dorozhaevo library. In 1835, impressed by his brother-in-law's stories about Italy, Chikhachev reread this book he had known since childhood.

Not only the hereditary sailor Chernavin, but also his brother-in-law were interested in depictions of life at sea. Together, they read *Sea Scenes* (*Morskii stsény*, 1836) by Nil Davydov, *Notes of a Naval Officer* (*Zapiski morskogo ofitsera*, 1818–1819) and *Journey from Trieste to St. Petersburg* (*Puteshestvie ot Triesta do Sankt-Peterburga*, 1828) by Vladimir Bronevskii, *Constantinople Essays* (*Ocherki Konstantinopolia*, 1835), *The Archipelago and Greece in 1830 and 1831* (*Archipelag i Gretsiia v 1830 i 1831 godakh*, 1834) and *The Bosphorus and New Essays on Constantinople* (*Bosfor i novye ocherki Konstantinopolia*, 1836) by Konstantin Bazili. Chernavin received the books of Bazili as a gift from the author himself, who was his “good acquaintance and fellow-officer.”<sup>87</sup> The captain-lieutenant was very pleased to read them, because the places and events described in them were “still fresh in his memory.”<sup>88</sup> Later, Chernavin came across travel notes of the Irish priest Robert Walsh, titled *Traveling in Turkey from Constantinople to England, through Vienna* (*Puteshestvie po Turtsii iz Konstantinopolia v Angliiu, cherez Venu*, 1829).

The former sailor mentions three descriptions of round-the-world expeditions in his papers: *A Universal Journey around the World* (*Vseobshchee puteshestvie vokrug sveta*, 1835–1837), composed by Jules Dumont-D'urville from the works of famous seafarers, *A Journey around the World* (*Puteshestvie*

86 For the complete list, see T. N. Golovina, “Iz kruga chteniia pomeshchikov,” 392–395.

87 In 1830–1833 they served together on the frigate Princess Lovich (Kniaginia Lovich). Bazili served as secretary of the diplomatic department at the Russian squadron in Greek waters under the command of Vice Admiral P. I. Ricord.

88 D. 59, l. 25 ob.

*vokrug sveta*, 1834–1836) by Fedor Litke and *Impressions of a Sailor During Two Voyages around the World* (*Vpechatleniia moriaka vo vremia dvukh puteshestvii krugom sveta*, 1840) by Vasilii Zavoiko. However, not all the members of the family possessed an interest in travel notes. Natal'ia Ivanovna, for instance, did not share the same passion for this kind of literature as her brother and husband.<sup>89</sup>

Among the above mentioned travelogues there are no descriptions of trips around Russia. According to researchers, in the minds of Russians of the eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries, “traveling is, above all, traveling abroad.”<sup>90</sup> Chikhachev was saddened by this state of affairs:

I read Karamzin—I admire him, but at the same time I think: “Why isn’t there a book *Traveling in Russia* written by him, or hasn’t he traveled in Russia?” I would only let my son go abroad when he firmly knew his homeland and has certainly traveled to all the provinces [...] having learned the national history really well. Because what is the point of looking at things abroad without knowing anything at home?<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, he was, for whatever reason, not familiar with the works of the followers of Karamzin who wandered around his native country—Vladimir Izmailov, Pavel Sumarokov, Maksim Nevzorov, and Petr Shalikov.

The landlords read descriptions of pilgrimages to the holy places. Among those, they especially noted the works of Andrei Murav'ev, who “laid the foundations for a new variety of spiritual and church literature, giving it some features of artistic narration” and making it “more accessible and appealing to the general reader.”<sup>92</sup> Chernavin purchased the third edition of *Travels to Holy Places in the year of 1830* (*Puteshestvia po sviatym mestam v 1830 godu*, 1835), which described Murav'ev's pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and he re-read the book multiple times. This book was in great demand:<sup>93</sup> many of Chernavin's friends asked to borrow it. The descriptions of domestic shrines were read about with great reverence in Murav'ev's book *Traveling to Russian Holy Places. Trinity Lavra, Rostov, New Jerusalem, Valaam* (*Puteshestvie po sviatym mestam russkim. Troitskaia Lavra, Rostov, Novyi Ierusalim, Valaam*,

89 K. Pickering Antonova does not agree with this assertion (see K. Pickering Antonova, *Gospoda Chikhachevy*, 373), but she does not provide references to any specific archival sources to refute it.

90 V. Faibysenko, “Mezhdunarodnaia konferentsiia ‘Nash XIX vek. Fenomen kul'tury i istoricheskoe poniatie,’” in *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 112 (2011).

91 D. 54, l. 43.

92 N. A. Khokhlova, “Murav'ev Andrei Nikolaevich,” *Russkie pisateli 1800–1917: Biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1999), vol. 1, 158.

93 For evidence of the enormous success of *Traveling to Russian Holy Places*, see: A. Kaplin, “Predislovie,” in A. N. Murav'ev, *Puteshestvie po sviatym mestam russkim* (Moscow, 2014), 17–19.

1836). “Andrei Nikolaevich writes so sweetly,”<sup>94</sup> exclaimed Chikhachev, because Murav’ev’s style reminded him of the manner of his beloved Karamzin.

In third place among the range of the reading interests of the landed gentry, following the books of historical content and travelogues, were Russian moral and satirical novels<sup>95</sup> and essays on modern life, including rural life. And although the time and space that were described in them were well known to the landlords, reading these books proved both useful (through learning about people and themselves, correcting their morals) and fascinating (through entertaining plot, humor, everyday language). At the top of this list of authors is Faddei Bulgarin, thanks to whom “the national novel has won a wide reading audience.”<sup>96</sup> In their diaries and letters, the Chikhachev spouses and Chernavin mention only *Memorial Notes of the Titular Adviser Chukhin (Pamiatnye zapiski tituliarnogo sovetnika Chukhina, 1835)* out of all Bulgarin’s moral and satirical novels. Judging by the fact that the book was re-read more than once, they really liked it. It is surprising, though, that we do not see the name of the first and most famous of Bulgarin’s novels, *Ivan Vyzhigin (1829)*,<sup>97</sup> in the documents from the estate archive. It was probably read shortly after its publication, and the earliest surviving diaries of Chikhachev, Chikhacheva, and Chernavin are dated 1831, 1835, and 1834, respectively.

Bulgarin’s moral essays, being topical, witty, and edifying, glued readers to the page. The Dorozhaevo landowner called Bulgarin “his favorite writer and the greatest of friends.”<sup>98</sup> “Say what you like, but my dear Faddei Venediktovich is a sensible, smart and sincere writer,”<sup>99</sup> said Chikhachev. “All of his articles are good without exception, and it’s very difficult for me to recall an article that I would have liked more than another—everything is good,”<sup>100</sup> his brother-in-law agreed with him.<sup>101</sup>

“A clear, understandable, and stable picture of the world, with a clear separation of good and evil,”<sup>102</sup> undisguised didacticism—everything that

94 D. 95, l. 46.

95 See REBECCHINI, “The Success of the Russian Novel,” in the present volume.

96 Iu. Shtridter, *Plutovskoi roman v Rossii: k istorii russogo romana do Gogolia* (Moscow, St. Petersburg, 2014), 107.

97 For a variety of evidence of its phenomenal success among contemporary readers, see A. I. Reitblat, *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii. Istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture pushkinskoi epochi* (Moscow, 2001), 98-107.

98 D. 58, l. 179 ob.

99 Ibid.

100 D. 57, l. 73.

101 For more detail about the way that landowners felt about Bulgarin, see: T. N. Golovina, “Golos iz publiky: chitatel'-sovremennik o Pushkine i Bulgarine,” *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 40 (1999), 11-16; T. N. Golovina, “‘Moi liubimeishii pisatel i velichaishii iz druzei,’” in A. I. Reitblat (ed.), *F. V. Bulgarin—pisatel, zhurnal'ist, teatral'nyi kritik: Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 2019), 409-422.

102 N. N. Akimova, “Bulgarin i Gogol (massovoe i elitarnoe v russkoi literature: problema avtora i geroia),” *Russkaia literatura*, 2 (1996), 21.

seemed dated in the eyes of literary critics and the sophisticated metropolitan audience did not bother provincial readers. So, in 1831, the Chikhachev spouses were introduced to the anonymously published novel *Iagub Skupalov, or The Corrected Husband* (*Iagub Skupalov, ili Ispravlennyi muzh*, 1830), which they “loved very much.”<sup>103</sup> The Dorozhaevo landowner found that there were “a lot of fair moral teachings, including regarding me personally. *On y se reconnaît involontairement.*”<sup>104</sup>

The moralizing novels *The Kholmiskii Family* (*Semeistvo Kholmiskikh*, 1832) by Dmitrii Begichev, *The Black Woman* (*Chernaia zhenshchina*, 1834) by Nikolai Grech, *The Inn. The Memoirs of the Deceased Gorianov* (*Postoialyi dvor. Zapiski pokoinogo Gorianova*, 1835) by Aleksandr Stepanov, and *The Love of My Neighbor* (*Liubov' moego soseda*, 1834) by Nikolai Lutkovskii appealed to Chernavin and Chikhachev with their satirical and idyllic depictions of the metropolitan and provincial life, accurate representations of members of different social classes, and the abundance of moralistic maxims that so irritated literary critics.<sup>105</sup> Here is Chikhachev's review of Stepanov's novel:

What writing skills! What a knowledge of the human heart and passions! How masterfully the writer captured and described the personality of each character! How witty it is, how many edifying scenes. And all of it is so sweet, interesting, and proper; the language or the style of the writing is so genteel, such that it is transparent and clear, there is no ambiguity, but it is not boring either. A book that no matter how many times you have read it, when you read it again, you can be sure that you will enjoy it anew.<sup>106</sup>

The landowners liked not only moralizing novels and essays that retained a connection with the traditions of the previous literary era, but also trendy romantic novels and various kinds of short stories (love, Caucasian, etc.). The main requirements were that they are able to “seduce, delight, charm, engage”<sup>107</sup> and at the same time inspire deep reflections and profound feelings in their readers. The works of Aleksandr Bestuzhev (pseud. Marlinskii), Nikolai Polevoi, and Vasilii Ushakov were fully consistent with these requirements.

<sup>103</sup> D. 54, l. 6 ob. Until now, it remains uncertain whether Aleksandr Boshniak or Pavel Svin'in is the actual author of the novel. See: V. N. Bochkov, “Boshniak Aleksandr Karlovich,” in *Russkie pisateli 1800-1917. Biograficheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1989), vol. 1, 323.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 7.

<sup>105</sup> See, for example, V. A. Ushakov, “Novye knigi,” *Severnaia pchela*, November 3, 1832; and N. I. Nadezhdin, “Letopisi otechestvennoi literatury,” *Teleskop*, vol. 19 (1832), 376–385.

<sup>106</sup> D. 59, l. 127.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 30 ob.



Marlinskii's two-volume *Russian Short Novels and Stories* (*Russkie povesti i rasskazy*, 1832, 1834) was read twice by Chikhachev and Chernavin, in 1836 and 1837. By that time, the landowners had already become familiar with Marlinskii's work from newspaper and magazine publications. "Being a lover of [...] moralizing expressions,"<sup>108</sup> Chikhachev copied the maxim, which concludes the novel *The Clock and the Mirror* (*Chasy i zerkalo*)<sup>109</sup> into his 1831 diary:

Time always moves evenly, measuring its uniform steps, it is we who are in a hurry to live in our youth and we want to slow it down when it flies away, and therefore we age early without experience, or try to stay young then without youthful beauty. Nobody knows how to use the benefits of their age or see the right time, and everyone is complaining about the clock—that it is either too far ahead or is too far behind.<sup>110</sup>

Chernavin liked the ironic assessment of modern literature given by Marlinskii in his feuilleton "The Announcement of the Society of the Adaptation of Exact Sciences to Literature" (*Ob'iaвление ot obshchestva prisposobleniia tochnykh nauk k slovesnosti*) so much, that he spent time rewriting it in full.<sup>111</sup>

In 1834, Chikhachev and Chernavin enjoyed reading the collection of works by Polevoi titled *Dreams and Life* (*Mechty i Zhizn'*, 1833–1834). Published in the *Moskovskii telegraf* (*Moscow Telegraph*) (1834), the story *Emma* by the same author was approved by Chikhachev for its "smooth style, picturesque characters, and convincing ideas."<sup>112</sup> In anticipation of the next issue of the magazine, in which he would read the tale's ending, the intrigued Chikhachev offered his version of the denouement. He had an assumption, which did not coincide with the author's intention: he believed that the ending would be a happy one.<sup>113</sup>

Ushakov's writings enjoyed great success with the local gentry. According to Chikhachev, in the eighth volume of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* of 1835, the

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., l. 7 ob.

<sup>109</sup> A. M. [A. A. Bestuzhev], "Chasy i zerkalo," in *Severnaia pchela*, January 30, 1831.

<sup>110</sup> D. 54, l. 7 ob.

<sup>111</sup> D. 57, l. 54–55, 58–58 ob. K. Pickering Antonova (*Gospoda Chikhachevy*, 225–226) considers it to be a work written by Chernavin himself. In fact, the text is preceded by the title: "Extract from the Short Novels and Stories by A. Marlinskii" ("Vypiska iz povestei i rasskazov Marlinskogo").

<sup>112</sup> D. 57, l. 32 ob. K. Pickering Antonova in her book (see *Gospoda Chikhachevy*, 207, 209, 218) believes that this is a novel by Jane Austen, although in his diary, Chikhachev clearly states both the author's surname—Polevoi—and the magazine in which the story was published, as well as its plot and characters, all of which has nothing in common with the novel of the English writer.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., l. 3 ob.

story *Thunder of God* (*Grom Bozhii*) by Ushakov “was the best piece of prose.”<sup>114</sup> His book *Leisure of the Disabled* (*Dosugi invalida*, 1832–1835), which one Moscow critic called “a lifeless imitation of the Lafontaine family depictions transferred into the Russian framework,”<sup>115</sup> was very popular with the provincial admirers of August Lafontaine. “Here, my brother, this is how one should write—this is Mr. Ushakov: a smooth style, so that the book reads effortlessly, *bon ton*, sensitivity, knowledge of the heart, and experience—all these are virtues Vasilii Apollonovich Ushakov obviously possesses in abundance,”<sup>116</sup> expressed Chikhachev in admiration. Chernavin agreed with his brother-in-law: “This is certainly a delightful book!”<sup>117</sup> At that time, when pure didacticism was no longer in favor, for Chikhachev it was almost the main advantage of Ushakov’s short novels: “Oh, no! You won’t regret the time spent reading such books. *Mother Madame* (*Matushka-madam*) is a glorious lesson to our mothers and fathers. [...] Elevating one’s feelings should be the main point in upbringing and education.”<sup>118</sup>

*Tales of the Mad* (*Povesti bezumnogo*, 1834) by Il’ia Selivanov, *Tales* (*Povesti*, 1833) by Egor Alad’in and *The Russian Scheherazade* (*Ruskaia Shekherezada*, 1836) by Sergei Liubetskii written in the spirit of the French “frenetic school,” talking about fatal passions and bloody crimes were read, but did not receive the approval of the peaceful inhabitants of the estates.

The writings of Osip Senkovskii (pseud. Baron Brambeus), published in his journal *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* as well as separate editions, enjoyed Chernavin’s sustained attention. The book *The Fantastic Travels of Baron Brambeus* (*Fantasticheskie putesthestvia Barona Brambeusa*, 1833) was read by the Berezovik gentleman several times in a row with unceasing enthusiasm. Chikhachev, on the other hand, remained indifferent to it, as indeed always happened to him when it came to any other fruits of someone’s overactive imagination: “A fairy tale and nothing more!”<sup>119</sup>

The picture will be incomplete if we do not talk about contemporary Russian poetry. During the particular decades of interest to us, Russian poetry occupied a modest place in the range of the reading interests of the Chikhachevs. Chikhachev admitted that he was “not familiar with poetry writing” (*ne znakom so stikhotvorstvom*).<sup>120</sup> Indeed, if we look through the pages of the diaries and letters of the landowners, we will only find *Zither, or Petty Poems* (*Tsitra, ili Melkie stikhotvorenia*, 1830) by Ivan Gruzinov, *The Little Humpbacked Horse. A Russian Fairy Tale* (*Konek-gorbunok. Russkaia skazka*,

114 Ibid., l. 87.

115 N. I. Nadezhdin, “Letopisi otechestvennoi literatury,” in Idem, *Literaturnaia Kritika. Estetika* (Moscow, 1972), 324.

116 D. 57, l. 91.

117 D. 59, l. 57.

118 D. 59, l. 57–57 ob.

119 D. 66, l. 130–130 ob.

120 D. 58, l. 26 ob.

1834) by Pavel Ershov, *Poems (Stikhotvorenia, 1835)* by Evgenii Baratynskii, and, of course, the works of Aleksandr Pushkin. All of these poets are mentioned only once, save Pushkin, who is mentioned dozens of times. The Dorozhaev and Berezovik residents loved and reread, often aloud, not only the novel *The Captain's Daughter (Kapitanskaia dochka, 1836)*, but Pushkin's poetry as well. Thus, in Chernavin's diary we can find that on January 10, 1837 he was visiting the Chikhachevs and listened to the head of the family reciting *Eugene Onegin (Evgenii Onegin)*. On December 22 of the same year, he himself read *The Bakhchisarai Fountain (Bakhchisaraiskii fontan)* to his friends, and on January 30, 1838, he recited some of Pushkin's poems (titles not stated)<sup>121</sup>.

The death of Pushkin in a duel was perceived by the Chikhachevs as a personal tragedy. *The Extract of Life (Ekstrakt vsei zhizni)*<sup>122</sup> compiled by Chikhachev in 1845 lists all of the most important family (!) events. The death of the poet was among the notable events of 1837 that he lists in his family history in addition to the birth of his daughter Varvara, his eldest son Aleksei's move to be admitted to the Moscow Institute for Nobles (*Moskovskii dvorianskii institut*), and the beginning of the construction of a new family home. This is the only case when the family chronicle mentions the death of a writer. In February 1837, Chernavin turned to Karetnikov with the following request: "I humbly ask you to lend me for the shortest time those issues of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* which contain the poems of the late A. S. Pushkin."<sup>123</sup> After the death of the poet, the landowners not only wanted to re-read, but also to acquire his works. Prior to that, only *Eugene Onegin* was part of their home libraries. In 1838, Chernavin ordered in Moscow a collection of *Poems and Short Novels by A. S. Pushkin (Poemy i povesti A. S. Pushkina)*, published back in 1835, while Chikhachev signed up to receive his posthumously collected works in eleven volumes (1838–1841),<sup>124</sup> having paid a considerable sum of his income—35 rubles in bills.

In the 1830s, the provincial nobles paid a great deal attention to the most recent publications of foreign literature. However, they did not always speak favorably of them. The landowners got the opportunity to familiar-

<sup>121</sup> D. 60, l. 5, 116, 129 ob.

<sup>122</sup> D. 95, l. 120 ob.

<sup>123</sup> GAIО, f. 12, op. 1, d. 1296, l. 243.

<sup>124</sup> According to O. A. Moniakova, who references "Subscription Case for the First Postmortem Edition of A. S. Pushkin's works in the Vladimir province" (Gosudarstvennyi archiv Vladimirskoi oblasti, f. 14, op. 1, d. 161, l. 1), the inhabitants of the province purchased 28 subscription tickets, 3 of which were purchased in the Kovrov district (See O. A. Moniakova, "Podpiska na pervoe posmertnoe izdanie sochinenii A. S. Pushkina vo Vladimirskoi gubernii," in O. A. Moniakova, N. V. Frolov (eds.), *Rozhdestvenskii sbornik* [Kovrov, 1999], vol. 6, 17–20). There were 4 subscribers in the neighbouring Shuiskii district, including two good friends of Chikhachev and Chernavin—Sergei Ikonnikov and Nikolai Iazykov (See L. A. Rozanova, "Ot Shuiskikh rodnikov—k A. S. Pushkinu, ot poeta Pushkina—k shuianam," in L. A. Rozanova, *Shuiskie rodniki* [Shuia, 2007], 38).

ize themselves with these works thanks to book publishers who published multi-volume collections of translations of modern foreign authors: *Novels and Literary Passages, Published by N. A. Polevoi (Povesti i literaturnye otrvyki, izdannye N. A. Polevym, 1829–1830)*, *Library of Novels and Historical Notes, Published by the Bookseller F. Rotgan (Biblioteka romanov i istoricheskikh zapiskov, izdavaemykh knigoprodavtsem F. Rotganom, 1835)* and *Forty-One Stories by the Best Foreign Writers, Published by Nikolai Nadezhdin (Sorok odna povest' luchshikh inostrannykh pisatelei, izdannaiia Nikolaem Nadezhdinym, 1836)*. In addition to these titles, they read translations of novels and short stories in the magazines *Biblioteka dlia chteniia, Moskovskii telegraf*, and *Otechestvennyye Zapiski (Notes of the Fatherland)*, and sometimes read other journals as well.

The most popular of foreign writers was Paul de Kock. According to Chernavin, he had read Paul de Kock's novel *La Maison Blanche* (1837) in French "five hundred times".<sup>125</sup> He also read two more works by the same author in the original—*The Cuckold (Le Cocu, 1832)* and *Sister Anna (Soeur Anne, 1825)*. Chernavin even began to translate *Sister Anna* from French into Russian, because in his opinion the translation published in Russian did not measure up to the original. As Belinskii had also noted, Paul de Kock in Russian sounded much more vulgar than in French: the original novels "are funnier and more amusing and not as dirty as they sound in Russian translations."<sup>126</sup> In the late 1830s, the landowners reread *The Cuckold* (Russ. edit. *Rogonosets, 1838*) and *Sister Anna (Sestra Anna, 1834)*, this time in Russian, as well as several other works by the prolific French fiction writer: *The Barber of Paris (Parizhskii Tsiriul'nik, 1831)*, *The Monfermel Milkmaid (Monfermel'skaia molochnitsa, 1832)*, and *The Son of My Wife (Syn moei zheny, 1835)*. However, they did not agree on their assessment of these works. Here is how unfavorably Chikhachev spoke of the novel *The Son of My Wife* by Paul de Kock, which he had read in the 1835: "It's a bunch of idle chatter without any real reflection."<sup>127</sup> Chernavin, obviously, had a different opinion, but this time did not object to his brother-in-law. However, they had a big dispute regarding the novel *The Cuckold*. Chikhachev was a little cross: "I have read *The Cuckold* [...], but I cannot find anything sensible or to my taste in it."<sup>128</sup> Chernavin tried to convince him to read further: "Read it again. Really, it's a good book, and if you do not like the style it's only the translator's fault, there are really beautiful passages in this novel which deserve all of the reader's attention, the translator has left out many things; if you want, when I see you, I'll tell you what exactly!"<sup>129</sup> And yet, having finished the book, Chikhachev still could not appreciate it. In particular, he mentioned the style and especially the ending, which made the whole story

125 D. 66, l. 8r ob.

126 V. G. Belinskii, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 2, 491.

127 D. 58, l. 127 ob.

128 D. 57, l. 33 ob.

129 Ibid.

immoral in his eyes: “I do not like it. 1. The narration does not flow. 2. The ending is lamentable.”<sup>130</sup> Chernavin responded to his brother-in-law:

You did not like *The Cuckold*: what can I say to you? I won't say anything to you about the style. But why didn't you like the lamentable ending? Unfortunately, these are things that cannot be helped, and blaming the author for this seems to me a bit unfair. On the other hand, *chacun à son goût*.<sup>131</sup>

It is noteworthy that Chernavin attributed the book's merits not to an entertaining plot, not to its humor or spicy descriptions (which were normally considered part of the appeal of Kock's novels), but to some “truly beautiful places.” The Berezovik landowner did not dare to confess to his brother-in-law that he allowed himself to read just for entertainment. From a young age, Chikhachev and Chernavin were accustomed to treat reading as a serious and useful matter. The main requirements for literary works were the educational and moral value of the content. Chernavin did not want to admit that the novels of the trendy French writer did not meet these requirements. Chikhachev had stronger principles, but apparently was not completely honest with himself. Resenting the emptiness and immorality of de Kock's novels, he still read them, although he did regret the wasted time.

Other writers such Jules Janin, Victor Hugo, Théophile Gautier were no less popular than de Kock. However, despite having several collections of contemporary European prose in Russian translation, neither Chernavin nor Chikhachev ever cite in their diaries and correspondence the “frenetic school” works by Victor Hugo, Jules Janin or Théophile Gautier. They did not appreciate works of that type for the same reason that they did not become passionate about Gothic fiction. The idyllic atmosphere of their estate did not encourage them to read any of the “frenetic school” with its pessimism, its descriptions of evil and its manifestations of a depraved sensuality.

Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Dorozhaevo and Berezovik did read certain works by Honoré de Balzac, Alfred de Vigny, Gustav Druino, Charles Nodier, Frédéric Soulié, Michel Marson, Eugene Sue, and Alexandre Dumas, which Russian critics also considered to be part of the “frenetic school.” They read Balzac's *Old Goriot* (*Starik Gorio*) in two 1835 issues of *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*. It was a highly abridged and altered edition, accompanied by strongly polemical evaluations penned by the editor Osip Senkovskii, an ardent opponent of “young French literature,” who saw in Balzac a defender of immorality. Obviously, Senkovskii convinced them of his opinion, so Chernavin's first reaction was decidedly negative: “I don't really like

<sup>130</sup> D. 57, l. 34.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

the author's, Mr. Balzac's, way of thinking at all. It seems to me that he philosophizes in too fashionable a way."<sup>132</sup> Chikhachev was impressed with certain "pointy and fresh expressions" that he copied out: "to feel sharp issues with your heart" or "to issue such an ultimatum to a woman."<sup>133</sup> In his eyes, Balzac's metaphors outlined a completely new relationship between the individual and his inner life and the female sex that he did not seem to share. Other expressions, albeit repulsive, made him ponder. He thought that some of them could incidentally shake the numbed moral conscience of contemporary readers: "A body as swollen as the one of a cemetery rat.' I do not know how you reacted to this expression when you read it," he wrote to his brother-in-law Chernavin, "but it did shock me: so we will be eaten not only by worms, but also by rats!"<sup>134</sup> He reflected, struck by the choice of words that marked such a sharp change from the lexicon of "graveyard" and Sentimental prose, to which he was accustomed, to the much rougher and coarser language of the new French realistic literature. Chikhachev continued following in the same sepulchral vein: "How many vain thoughts and actions can a man be prevented from having and doing, when he thinks of what his body will fall prey to?! However, the expression itself is repulsive (in my opinion)."<sup>135</sup> Balzac's novel in general appeared to Chikhachev "tiring," and some characters (like Mr. Poiret and Mademoiselle Michonneau) seemed to him "repulsive."<sup>136</sup> Chernavin's opinion, initially critical, seemed to change over the years—a change in line with Balzac's increasing success in Russia.<sup>137</sup> In 1838, he bought from a peddler the Russian translation of *Scenes from Private Life* (*Scènes de la vie privée*, Russ. edit. *Stseny iz chastnoi zhizni*), published in Russia in 1832-1833, and in the same year he continued to read some of Balzac's stories (borrowed from a neighboring estate) and his magnificent article, "La Femme de Trente ans," which he found in the *Revue étrangère*.

In 1837, Chernavin read the novel *Balzac's Walking Stick* (*Trost' Balzaka*, 1837) by Delphine Gay (pseud. Emile de Girardin), which promised to reveal the secret of Balzac's gift, that is, the ability to penetrate into areas hidden from outsiders. But the fictitious story about a magic walking stick that could make its owner invisible did not appeal to him: "I've read *Balzac's Walking Stick*. I didn't enjoy it much. There is nothing meaningful about it."<sup>138</sup> Chernavin also mentions Theodore Anna's novel *The Duchess of Berry*,

<sup>132</sup> D. 59, l. 55 ob.

<sup>133</sup> D. 57, l. 87.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> See L. Grossman, "Bal'zak v Rossii," in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow, 1937), vol. 31-32, 149-372.

<sup>138</sup> D. 60, l. 37.

*The Captive in Ble* (*Gertsoginia Berriiskaia, plennitsa v Ble*, 1833–1835) in his diary in 1838, but he does not comment on it in any way.

Gustav Druino's novel, *The Green Manuscript* (*Zelenaia rukopis'*, 1833) was evaluated differently by the two landowners. Chernavin liked it. Chikhachev did not agree: "I do not like the book. I do not know why. No idea why. I just do not like it."<sup>139</sup> However, the final part of the book, where the protagonist, previously caught in a maelstrom of passions and having made many mistakes, finally follows his father's moral guidance and finds peace and happiness in the family life, made him change his mind about the novel.<sup>140</sup>

An excerpt from *Gilbert and Louis XV* (*Zhil'bert i Liudovik XV*) from the novel *Stello, or the Blue Demons* (*Stello, ili Golubye besy*) by Alfred de Vigny, published in *Moskovskii telegraf* (*The Moscow Telegraph*) in 1832, did not earn Chikhachev's approval. According to his ideas, the spirit of deepest despair that permeates the work of Alfred de Vigny was sinful and inspired by the devil: "The *Telegraph*, which I read every now and then, tells me of the good and of the devil: the latter is a translation from French under the title of *Gilbert and Louis XV*."<sup>141</sup> Chikhachev also read the novel *Margarita* by another luminary of the "frenetic school," Frederic Soulié, but he did not understand it.<sup>142</sup>

As could be noted by now, when it comes to contemporary foreign authors, Chikhachev knew mainly the French ones. Writers of other countries did not usually cross his path. However, there were some exceptions. Thus, looking through the magazine *Syn otechestva i severnyi arkhiv* (*Son of the Fatherland and the Northern Archive*, 1833), Chikhachev stumbled upon the story of an American writer James Kirk Paulding *Blue Stocking* (*Sinie Chulki*) from the satirical series *Salmagundi*, which he really liked.

Chernavin was more interested in foreign literature than his brother-in-law and rated it higher as well. He called the short novel *Iniesa de La Sierras* (*In'esa de las Sierras*) by Charles Nodier, published in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* in 1837, "a delightful story."<sup>143</sup> The novel *Tadeusz Resurrected* by Michel Masson and Augustus Lusche, published in Russian in 1836 under the title *The Hanged Man* (*Poveshennyi*), and the short novel *Pascal Bruno* by Alexandre Dumas, printed in *Revue Étrangère*, also received his generous praise. But despite the flattering reviews of Chernavin, these works did not find their way to Dorozhaevo. Chikhachev and his wife preferred the authors who continued the sentimental-idyllic and didactic traditions. They

<sup>139</sup> D. 59, l. 51 ob.

<sup>140</sup> Most of all, Chikhachev liked the following scenes: "The marriage and description of the family life of Emmanuel and Lalageia is amazing. The insult at the ball is touching. The prison visit to Lalageia is emotional." D. 59, l. 53.

<sup>141</sup> D. 57, l. 41.

<sup>142</sup> D. 95, l. 39 ob. The novel *Margarite* by Soulié appeared in *Notes of The Fatherland*, 5 (1842).

<sup>143</sup> D. 60, l. 94.

liked the novel *A Man in an Unknown World, or the Family of Count \*\*\** (*Chelovek v neznakomom mire, ili Semeistvo grafa\*\*\**, 1832) by Carl Gottlieb Samuel Heun (pseud. Heinrich Clauren), a representative of the literary Biedermeier. Much praise was given by Chikhachev to *Pan Podstolich. The Country Novel* (*Pan Podstolich. Roman uezdnyi*, 1832–1833), a moral-didactic book by the Polish author Edward Tomasz Massalski which was the continuation of the unfinished *Pan of Podstolia* (*Pan Podstoli*) by Ignacy Krasitski: “The book is very interesting.”<sup>144</sup> Such a reaction could be prompted by Bulgarin’s laudatory comment about the new Polish novel.<sup>145</sup>

Being a faithful servant of the throne, a virtuous Christian, a zealous landowner, and a loving head of the family, Chikhachev was looking for literature that would represent the ideals that he was striving to achieve in his life. His favorite literary characters were the ones endowed with high morality, a sense of duty, and were ardent, energetic and selfless, and thus worthy of imitation.<sup>146</sup> The literary tastes of Chernavin, who was only six years younger than his brother-in-law, differed from those of Chikhachev. He was annoyed by obsessive moralizing and far-fetched idealization of characters. The retired captain-lieutenant Chernavin, on the other hand—who was lonely in the wilderness of the remote countryside and yearned for the sea and distant lands—gravitated to the latest works of romantic writers. He could truly relate to those characters who were reserved, disappointed, and without a definite life purpose.

It might seem that the provincial book lovers were “omnivorous” in their reading choices. Chikhachev himself admitted: “It would seem that I could read everything, I would like to firmly contain everything I read in my memory.”<sup>147</sup> But then he immediately reminded himself of the true purpose of reading and reproached himself for unworthy intentions: “But for what? It could hardly be for consoling myself through the calamities of life, or

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., l. 114.

<sup>145</sup> F. V. Bulgarin, “Pan Podstolich (Syn Podstoliiia), ili Kto my teper’ i chem byt’ mozhem. Administrativnyi roman. Soch. G. Masal’skogo,” *Severnaia pchela*, October 31, 1831.

<sup>146</sup> Referring to my article “Iz kruga chteniia pomeschchikov srednei ruki,” K. Pickering Antonova writes that I claimed that Andrei Chikhachev was “an example of the so-called ‘superfluous man’” (K. Pickering Antonova, *Gospoda Chikhachevy*, 372). I did not refer to Chikhachev in this or in any other work of mine as a ‘superfluous man’; quite the contrary, I have always emphasized his energy, determination, desire to serve the interests of his family and his homeland. In particular, I wrote: “Not only in his words, but also in his actions, he sought to contribute to the ‘prosperity of our most precious homeland’: he put effort into opening schools and libraries, and built and decorated churches.” (“Iz kruga chteniia pomeschchikov srednei ruki,” 392). Chikhachev’s numerous charitable activities are discussed in my article “Podvigom Dobrym Podvizakhsia...” in K. E. Baldin (ed.), *Kraevedcheskie zapiski* (Ivanovo, 2005), VIII, 9–74, as well as in a number of other works. However, these and other articles published long before hers remained unknown to the American researcher.

<sup>147</sup> D. 57, l. 83 ob.



bringing some good to my neighbor? No, it is really just for bragging, to be a know-it-all.”<sup>148</sup>

The reading habits of Chikhachev and Chernavin were informed by a youth spent in the Masonic environment. The concept of the book as a treasury of knowledge, ideas and moral standards was firmly engraved in their minds. Reading was not so much a form of rest for them as a serious undertaking, accompanied by equally serious work on matters of self-development. Reading for fun, to satisfy idle curiosity, etc., would mean wasting one’s time.<sup>149</sup> Accordingly, literary works were divided by them into “useful” and “efficient” or “worthless” and “empty.”

The local gentry grew up consuming the literature of the eighteenth–early nineteenth centuries. It influenced the formation of the main “repertoire” of their ideas and feelings: the desire to live in harmony with the world and with oneself, faith in progress, patriotism, the inviolability of moral principles, hard work, a craving for knowledge, a cult of family and friendship, compassion for neighbors, and a love of nature. It also shaped their aesthetic tastes and determined their criteria for evaluating creative works: richness in content, morality, emotion, clarity (“definiteness”), entertaining narration, and for Chikhachev it was also a life-affirming pathos. And although the books written in the past century were not often reread in the 1830s, they continued to serve as a measure of literary virtues.

Despite being rather conservative in their tastes, the provincial readers—Chikhachev to a lesser extent, Chernavin to a greater extent—were ready to perceive fresh trends in art, provided that they presented a connection to a moral-didactic and Sentimental-idyllic tradition. Therefore, the writings of classicists, sentimentalists, as well as some Romantics and Realists generally peacefully coexisted in the range of the reading interests of these readers.

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> D. 59. L. 50.



THE MAKING OF A NATIONAL POET:  
PUBLISHING PUSHKIN, 1855-1887

Marcus C. Levitt

A paradox of reading is that as an inner, subjective experience it may be perceived in an intensely personal and unique way, while when seen from an external perspective it may appear overly determined (or even predetermined) by a myriad of social, political, cultural and other factors. As part of a reading public readers make up a special type of “imagined community,” Benedict Anderson’s well-known concept of the nation.<sup>1</sup> According to Anderson, imagined communities owe their existence to “print capitalism” (another term he coined), which in turn is predicated on the standardization of the vernacular tongue that both created a common discourse and maximized its spread.

In his *The Practice of Everyday Life* Michel de Certeau dramatically describes the ways in which these two aspects of reading clash as the social context (“modern society”) turns reading into a tool (“weapon”) of social conformity:

The fiction of the ‘treasury’ hidden in the work, a sort of strong-box full of meaning, is obviously not based on the productivity [understanding] of the reader, but on *the social institution that overdetermines his relation with the text*. Reading is as it were over-printed by a relationship of forces (between teachers and pupils, or between producers and consumers) whose instrument it be-

---

1 B. R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. ed. (London, 1991). For criticism of Anderson’s argument with special attention to Russia see: M. Bouchard, “A Critical Reappraisal of the Concept of the Imagined Community and the Presumed Sacred Languages of the Medieval Period,” *National Identities*, 6, 1 (March 2004), 3-24.

comes. The use made of the book by privileged readers constitutes it as a secret of which they are the “true” interpreters. It interposes a frontier between the text and its readers that can be crossed only if one has a passport delivered by these official interpreters, who transform their own reading (which is also a legitimate one) into an orthodox ‘literality’ that makes other (equally legitimate) readings either heretical (not ‘in conformity’ with the meaning of the text) or insignificant (to be forgotten). From this point of view, ‘literal’ meaning is the index and the result of a social power, that of an elite. By its very nature available to a plural reading, the text becomes a cultural weapon, a private hunting reserve, the pretext for a law that legitimizes as ‘literal’ the interpretation given by socially authorized professionals and intellectuals.<sup>2</sup>

The institution of the ‘national poet’ represents a powerful example of this process of turning reading into “an orthodox literality,” “the result of a social power, that of an elite.” As a hermeneutic move, employing de Certeau’s harsh rhetoric of “power” and “weapons” serves to help counter-balance the romantic rhetoric that very often accompanies discussions of ‘the national spirit,’ allowing us to better understand the forces that shape both a modern reading public and modern national identity, entities that more or less dovetail.

Abram Reitblat entitled his essay about the realization of what he considered a fully functioning modern Russian literary system in the 1820’s-40’s “How Pushkin Came to be Considered a Genius (Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii).” The question of Pushkin’s genius per se was not at stake. Rather, as Reitblat wrote, “in this study Pushkin interests us not in and of himself as an outstanding writer and unique personality, but as a literary figure in whose works were reflected many tendencies and aspects of Russian literature of the time.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, Reitblat focused on how Pushkin’s reputation was shaped by early nineteenth-century literary institutions. In this chapter, my aim is to apply a somewhat similar approach to the second half of the century, and to focus on the question “how Pushkin came to be considered a national poet.” How in particular did the practices of publishing Pushkin in the second half of the nineteenth century both shape and reflect his role as national poet and help to create a national reading public?

Many things have to come together for the creation of a national poet: a well-developed literary culture; a poet whose work is amenable (written on appropriate themes and in appropriate genres, most often but not only: na-

2 M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1984), 172. Italics added.

3 A. I. Reitblat. *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii: istoriko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki o knizhnoi kul'ture Pushkinskoi epokhi* (Moscow, 2001), 5.

tional epics, historical works, dramas); critics and nation-building intellectuals to advance his candidacy, those whom Itamar Even-Zohar has dubbed “socio-semiotic entrepreneurs;”<sup>4</sup> a reading public of sufficient size and social-political-cultural consciousness; and a commercially viable publishing industry producing print matter of sufficient quantity and affordability to supply readers with the appropriate materials. In the case of Russia, by 1855, just under two decades after Pushkin’s death, these elements were beginning to coalesce. I have chosen 1855 as the starting point both because it was the beginning of a new era, the great reforms of Alexander II, that with the Emancipation of the serfs opened the way for a potentially immense new reading public; and also because of the appearance of Pavel Annenkov’s works.

Annenkov’s *Materials for a Biography of Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin* (*Materialy dlia biografii Aleksandra Sergeevicha Pushkina*) was the first complete biography of Pushkin and his seven-volume edition (of which *Materials* formed the first) was the first critical “full works” of the poet.<sup>5</sup> Annenkov’s edition and biography set the stage for the ‘Pushkin Question’ in the Emancipation era and put in motion the efforts that led to his triumphant canonization in the Pushkin Celebration of 1880. Among other things, it established Pushkin’s oeuvre, more or less, making available many previously unknown and censored works; it gave a jump start to the scholarly and academic science of textology in Russia; it generated interest in Pushkin’s controversial biography and in his works; and, most famously (or notoriously), it sparked intense debate among the critics over Pushkin in which Pushkin’s candidacy for national poet was famously rejected.<sup>6</sup>

4 I. Even-Zohar, “The Role of Literature in the Making of the Nations of Europe: a Socio-Semiotic Study,” *Applied Semiotics/Sémiotique appliquée*, 1, 1 (1996), 51.

5 The earlier attempt at a “full works,” the posthumous edition of 1838-41 in 11 volumes, had gone down in Russian publishing history as a famous failure for a variety of reasons including censorship, poor editing, uneven format, high price, and a slump in the book market. On Annenkov and his edition, see V. V. Kunin, “Vosemnadtsat’ let spustia: Dokumental’noe povestvovanie o nasledstve Pushkina i o pervykh pushkinistakh,” in V. V. Kunin (ed.), *Svetloe imia Pushkina* (Moscow, 1988), 470-569 (esp. 484-485); and G. M. Fridlender, “Pervyi biograf Pushkina,” in P. V. Annenkov, *Materialy dlia biografii A. S. Pushkina* (Moscow, 1984), 5-31. Six volumes of Annenkov’s edition appeared in 1855 and a seventh in 1857; the new relaxed censorship permitted Annenkov to print various previously unpublished material in the last volume. See: P. E. Shchegolev, “I. E. Goncharov – tsenzor Pushkina,” in his *Pervertsny russkoi svobody* (Moscow, 1987), 398-405, 461-463; and Kunin, “Vosemnadtsat’ let spustia.” Annenkov’s edition had a press run of 5000 copies; the Annenkov brothers had paid 5000 silver rubles for the right to publish the edition, which was quite successful and earned 40,000 rubles (Kunin, “Vosemnadtsat’ let spustia,” 554).

6 The debate is well known but has not been seriously studied. The attack on Pushkin culminated in D. I. Pisarev’s “Pushkin i Belinskii” in *Russkoe slovo*, 1865, April and June. For a survey of Pushkin criticism, see B. P. Gorodetskii, N. V. Izmailov, B. S. Meilakh (eds.), *Pushkin: Itogi i problemy izucheniia* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1966), Part I, 5-150. See also C. Moser, *Aesthetics as Nightmare: Russian Literary Theory, 1855-1870* (Princeton, 1989).

Pushkin had been nominated as national poet even during his lifetime. Gogol's "Some Words on Pushkin" (*Neskol'ko slov o Pushkine*) of 1832, which appeared in the first volume of his *Arabesques (Arabeski)* in 1835, was one of the first declarations that Pushkin was Russia's "national poet," and at a moment when critical opinion had turned against him.<sup>7</sup> It began: "The name of Pushkin immediately inspires (*oseniaet mysl'*) the idea of a national poet." The phrase *oseniaet mysl'*, which in Romantic discourse, borrowing from the Biblical, meant "sudden mystical revelation" (*ozarenie*) and often referred to poetic inspiration,<sup>8</sup> suggests the mystical meaning of 'national poet' for Gogol. Gogol's piece, together with Belinskii's famous series of eleven articles on Pushkin (1843-46), became basic texts for Pushkinism, and retain their influence today. The problem for Belinskii<sup>9</sup> and for many critics in the nineteenth century was the gap between "national" as *natsional'nyi* and as *narodnyi*, the latter in the sense of *obshchedostupnyi*, known and valued by the people, as opposed to simply embodying the national spirit. The task facing these socio-semiotic entrepreneurs was *priokhotit' publiku k chteniiu* (a phrase Karamzin used to describe Novikov's efforts), *to instill an appreciation for reading*, and validating Pushkin became a major instrument and impetus for doing so. As Reitblat has written, the Emancipation transformed the peasantry into a potentially mighty political force, and "revolutionary democrats, liberals, conservatives, the church and even the government all became convinced that to control it on the basis of violence was extremely difficult. Hence in order to create a reading public, there was an intensive effort to teach the peasantry to read."<sup>10</sup> To some of Pushkin's critics, he was not a proper role model for this (an aristocrat; a gambler and womanizer; possibly an atheist; a man who died in a duel);<sup>11</sup> but for others, especially true believers in him, Pushkin represented an attractive, supremely inspiring national poet and hence a catalyst to Russian literacy.

The population boom of the later nineteenth and early twentieth-century Russia, together with industrialization, caused a large-scale emigration to urban centers, and increasingly made literacy a necessity,<sup>12</sup> but even while

7 E. E. Naidich, "Lermontov i Pushkin," *Etiudy o Lermontove* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 105-113.

8 V. V. Vinogradov, "SENI, SEN', OSENIT'," in N. Iu Shvedov (ed.), *Istoriia slov* (Moscow, 1999), 1138.

9 E.g., in his well-known fifth article on Pushkin of 1844.

10 A. I. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009), 22.

11 E.g., S. S. Dudyskhin, who in his article "Pushkin—narodnyi poet?," in *Otechestvennye zapiski* (1860, v. 129, n. 4, otd. III, 57-74), came to a negative conclusion on the basis of the facts that the people didn't know him and that his historical views were outdated.

12 See REITBLAT, "The Reading Audience of the second half of the Nineteenth Century," in the present volume. See also B. N. Mironov, "The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *History of Education Quarterly*, 31, 2 (Summer, 1991), 229-252.

many scholars of Russian readership, starting with the pioneering N. A. Rubakin, have expressed their frustration with what they have felt was the slow pace of progress, especially when seen in terms relative to Western Europe, in absolute terms the gains on all fronts were significant.<sup>13</sup> Between 1855 and the end of the century the size of the reading public; the number of peasant and working-class readers; the number and press runs of journals and newspapers; the quantity of books produced, of book stores and commercial chains, libraries, reading rooms and lending libraries; the number of village and other schools and their students, of universities and university graduates—all made major gains. Still, for all of these advancements, there always remained a certain sense of unease and uncertainty on the part of Russian intellectuals, sensitive to what they perceived as Russia's slow pace of cultural and political change. The poorly acculturated mass readership also gave rise to doubts about the nature and cohesion of the 'reading public,' which remained somewhat of an enigma.

The history of readers necessarily begins with texts, and with many national poets, the publication and distribution of their works obviously played a central role. Furthermore, as in the cases of Shakespeare and Goethe, their canon became the arena for the development of native literary scholarship and academic literary institutions. These in turn had fundamental influence on schools. Annenkov's edition-plus-biography helped spawn the tribe of socio-semiotic entrepreneurs who are still known as *pushkinisty* and their trade as *pushkinistika* or *pushkinovedenie* (in the late nineteenth-early twentieth century also *pushkinizm* and *pushkinianstvo*). The early cohort of *pushkinisty* included P. I. Bartenev, V. P. Gaevskii, P. A. Efremov, M. N. Longinov, and E. I. Iakushkin. They spent their time mostly in establishing Pushkin's texts, searching out new ones and rejecting false attributions, and in painstaking biographical study. There was also a concerted effort by Pushkin's friends, relations and contemporaries to collect both written and oral memoirs about him.<sup>14</sup> Annenkov's *Materials for a Biography*, despite the fact that it had to soft-pedal or ignore key episodes in Pushkin's life due to censorship,<sup>15</sup> as noted, was the first comprehensive biography and made

13 Citing Rubakin's fundamental study *Etudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike: Fakty, tsifry, nabliudeniia* (St. Petersburg – Moscow, 1895), Damiano Rebecchini and Raffaella Vassena note that "in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century [...] the Russian reading audience was characterised by great cultural fragmentation, with few new books, a defective distribution network, a small number of both public and private libraries spread over a huge territory, with a reduced readership and incomplete collections" (D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena, "'Reader, Where Are You?' An Introduction," in D. Rebecchini, R. Vassena (eds.), *Reading in Russia: Practices of Reading and Literary Communication, 1760-1930*, [Milan, 2014], 11).

14 Ia. L. Levkovich, "Biografiia," in *Pushkin: Itogi i problemy izucheniia*, 265.

15 The suppression of information about Pushkin's close ties to the Decembrists and about the role of the court in Pushkin's death led to the subsequent narrative of Pushkin the rebel that began to emerge about 1899 (e.g., in the work of V. E. Iakushkin), that in turn helped re-tune the cult of the national poet in the Soviet period. On Annenkov's problems with censorship, see Kunin, "Vosemnadtsat' let spustia."

use of Pushkin's manuscripts. Pushkin's widow N. N. Lanskaia had given Annenkov full access to Pushkin's papers when she asked him to undertake the edition. After Pushkin's property was split up among his children a few years later, his oldest son, Aleksandr Aleksandrovich, who had received all but his father's letters to his mother, kept scholars from examining the archive until 1880.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, until 1887, Pushkin's works were still under copyright. The initial limit had been twenty-five years, that is, until 1862, but Lanskaia successfully petitioned to have it extended another quarter century.<sup>17</sup>

In the twenty-five years between Annenkov's full works and 1880, there were two further collected works produced by Ia. A. Isakov, the publisher of the Annenkov edition who had acquired the copyright.<sup>18</sup> They were edited by the well-known bibliographer G. N. Gennadi and appeared in 1859-60 and 1869-71, but were markedly unsuccessful, perhaps because of Pushkin's earlier bad press, and certainly because of poor editing.<sup>19</sup> Pushkin's friend S. A. Sobolevskii quipped:

Oh, unfortunate victim of two spawn of perdition,  
Killed by Dantes' bullet and Gennadi's edition.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> He allowed P. E. Bartenev access to the papers in 1880 and in 1882 donated them to the Rumiantsev Museum in Moscow. See Kunin, "Vosemnadtsat' let spustia," 556 and 559; and M. A. Tsiavlovskii, "Sud'ba rukopisnogo nasledia Pushkina," in his *Stat'i o Pushkine* (Moscow, 1962), 260-275.

<sup>17</sup> She clearly understood that with time the big increase in readership would bring major income. She wrote to the Minister of Popular Education A. Norov to prevent "strangers from taking advantage of the profits from future popular editions of him, so that the works of the poet would thus be lost for his heirs, enriching more or less clever speculators" (S. A. Pereselenkov, "Pushkin v istorii zakonopolozhenii ob avtorskom prave v Rossii," *Pushkin i ego sovremenniki: Materialy i issledovaniia*, 11 [St. Petersburg, 1909], 55-56).

<sup>18</sup> The title page of Annenkov's edition says "Izdanie P. V. Annenkova," while the documents concerning the censorship refer to it as "izdanie knigoprodavtsa Isakova" (S. V. Belov, "Izdatel' Pushkina Ia. A. Isakov," *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii*, 21 [Leningrad, 1987], 177). The various volumes of Annenkov's edition were printed at different typographies.

<sup>19</sup> These editions were: *Sochineniia*, 6 vols., ed. G. N. Gennadi (St. Petersburg: Ia. A. Isakov [Tip. Eduard Prats] [1859-1860]); *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols., ed. G. N. Gennadi, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed. (St. Petersburg, 1869-1871). See S. V. Belov, "Izdatel' Pushkina Ia. A. Isakov," 175-180. In his desire to present a maximally new and complete Pushkin text, Gennadi reintroduced material that Pushkin had crossed out in manuscript (material that had been published by Annenkov and Grot), inserting it into the texts, which made for difficult reading. See L. M. Ravich, *G. N. Gennadi (1826-1880)* (Moscow, 1981), 27. Isakov then hired P. A. Efremov to edit, and his revised edition began coming out during preparations for the Pushkin Celebration (*Sochineniia A. S. Pushkina*, 3-e rev. ed., ed. P. A. Efremov [St. Petersburg, 1878-1881]; vols. 1-4 came out in 1880 and the fifth in 1881; the sixth appeared in 1878). However, Efremov as well as several of Pushkin's later editors followed Gennadi's practice, even though they may not have been happy with it. See *Pushkin: Itogi i problemy izucheniia*, 562.

<sup>20</sup> Belov, "Izdatel' Pushkina Ia. A. Isakov," 175.



Publication of Pushkin's individual works was sluggish during this period; not including journal or newspaper publications, I count 86 separate book editions, based on Mezhov's admittedly incomplete but still only bibliography for the period, which makes about 3.6 titles per year.<sup>21</sup> More than forty percent (35 editions) were individual editions of Pushkin's tales (*skazki*), plus there were seven copies each of *Poltava* and *The Captain's Daughter* (*Kapitanskaia dochka*), five each of *Evgenii Onegin* and *Boris Godunov*.<sup>22</sup> More than half (about sixty-four percent) of this corpus was published by Isakov, and almost forty percent of these were in the series "Classroom Library (*Klassnaia biblioteka*)," cheap annotated booklets meant for use in high schools (*srednie uchebnye zavedeniia*) that were harshly criticized in the press.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, Russian composers helped keep Pushkin in the public eye with regular dramatizations based on his works, many of them made newly available by Annenkov's and Gennadi's editions. These included dramas, *skazki*, ballets, operas, and vaudevilles. To name just the operas that premiered between 1855-1880, these included: Dargomyzhskii's *Rusalka* (1856) and *The Stone Guest* (*Kamennyi gost'*) (1872), Cui's *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (*Kavkazskii plennik*) (1858), Mussorgskii's *Boris Godunov* (1874) and Chaikovskii's *Evgenii Onegin* (1879).<sup>24</sup>

A prime example of the collective efforts of socio-semiotic cultural entrepreneurs to promote Pushkin was the one-volume edition of Pushkin published by the writer and journalist M. M. Stasiulevich in March, 1874. The publication, which launched the new "Russian Library" (*Russkaia biblioteka*) series, had the twin goals of spreading cultural literacy and to provide aid to victims of the famine in Samara of 1873-74. Copyright holder Isakov gave permission to use all of the prose and ten of eighty-five *listy* (printer's sheets) of poetry from the "full works" of 1869-71. N. A. Nekrasov, P. A. Efremov, V. P. Gaevskii and Stasiulevich collectively undertook the editing (*korrektura*), with additional help from A. N. Pypin; P. N. Polevoi contributed a reworked version of his short biography of the poet. The typography (Stasiulevich's) gave its services for free, A. I. Vargunin's paper factory gave a five percent discount, and publisher A. F. Marks granted a fifty percent dis-

21 V. I. Mezhov, *Pushkiniana: bibliograficheskii ukazatel' statei o zhizni A. S. Pushkina, ego sochinenii i vyzvannykh imi proizvedenii literatury i iskusstva* (St. Petersburg, 1886). I am only counting editions published in Russian and in Russia (several came out in Germany). On publishing Pushkin see also: P. I. Egorov, "Izdanie proizvedenii A. S. Pushkina," *Avtoreferat* (Leningrad, 1956); L. Kozmina, "Istoriko-kul'turnyi kontekst sobraniia sochinenii Pushkina iz kollektzii Grafa Aleksandra Alekseevicha Bobrinskogo," *Mikhailovskaia pushkiniana*, 67 (2016), 78-91.

22 Then come: "Skupoi rytsar'" (three editions), "Motsart i Sal'eri" (two), "Mednyi vsadnik," "Kamennyi gost'" and "Istoriia Pugachevskogo bunta" (one each), as well as several selected works. In these figures I am not counting anthologies in which Pushkin's poems appeared or the collected works cited earlier; I do include editions for school.

23 Egorov, "Izdanie proizvedenii A. S. Pushkina," 8.

24 See S. N. Durylin, *Pushkin na stsene* (Moscow, 1951), 21, 35, 41, 46, 48, 53, 56-59; Durylin also suggests that these theatrical works helped acquaint the illiterate with Pushkin (55).

count on Bristol paper (presumably for the frontispiece, Thomas Wright's gravure of Pushkin of 1837); *Sankt-Petersburgskie Vedomosti* (*St. Petersburg News*), *Golos* (*Voice*), *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*) and *Vestnik Evropy* (*The Herald of Europe*), all printed advertisements for the edition gratis. The paperback volume cost 75 kopecks, as opposed to the 7 rubles 50 kopecks for Gennadi's full works of 1869 (in contrast, the "Classroom Library" booklets cost from 20 to 50 kopecks), and had a press run of 10,000 copies.

The goal of the "Russian Library" series was "to make accessible to the public the works of our best and greatest writers with selections from their works that best constitute their fame and which collectively can have the greatest enlightening effect (*samoje prosvetitel'skoe vliianie*) on readers' minds."<sup>25</sup> The series may thus be seen as specifically meant to construct a national canon, and this, the maiden volume in the series, explicitly sponsored Pushkin as the Russian national poet. The principle of choosing works for inclusion was explicit:

If one wanted to limit oneself only to those works in which Pushkin's genius displayed itself wholly independently, drawing strength from within itself and from its people (*narod*), with no admixture of foreign influence (for instance, of Byronism) - in a word, in which Pushkin himself could thus serve as the model - then there would hardly be many gaps in the selection of works we have chosen. And this was the very principle that served as basis for choosing material for this volume dedicated to Pushkin. Here he appears in the highest sense of the word the national poet, a poet of his people, of his age, subservient to his genius alone.<sup>26</sup>

A central aspect of Pushkin's elevation to the status of national poet emphasized here was that he proved Russia's cultural independence, a response to the crisis of cultural identity that had erupted during his lifetime.<sup>27</sup> Stasiulevich's volume also testifies to Pushkin's works that were to be foregrounded as the basic canon.<sup>28</sup> The edition also illustrates Philip

---

<sup>25</sup> *Kniga v Rossii, 1861-1881*, vol. 2 (Moscow, 1990), 76, quoted by I. E. Barenbaum, *Knizhnyi Peterburg: tri veka istorii; Ocherki izdatel'skogo dela i knizhnoi torgovli* (St. Petersburg, 2003), 140.

<sup>26</sup> A. S. Pushkin, *Mednyi Vsadnik. Boris Godunov, Poltava, Evgenii Onegin. Rusalka, Galub. Brat'ia Razboiniki. Pesni, Skazki, Proza*. Russkaia biblioteka, I (St. Petersburg: Tip. M. Stasiulevicha, 1874), vi.

<sup>27</sup> See M. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca, New York, London, 1989), 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> The volume contains *The Bronze Horseman* (*Mednyi vsadnik*), *Boris Godunov*, *Poltava*, *Evgenii Onegin*, "Rusalka," the unfinished "Galub" ("Tazit") and "The Robber Brothers" ("Brat'ia-razboiniki"), in that order, plus "songs, tales and prose" ("pesni, skazki, proza"): two chapters of *The Moor of Peter the Great* (*Arap Petra Velikogo*), *The History of the Village*

Lejeune's idea that the "fringe of the printed text"—what Gérard Genette named the "paratext,"—everything that frames a text, from cover, to title page, the name of the editor and publisher, forewords, prefaces, illustrations, appendices and so on—"in reality *commands* the entire reading."<sup>29</sup> In addition to Wright's portrait and Polevoi's biography, Stasiulevich's volume also included Gogol's and Belinskii's remarks on Pushkin. It thus could be seen as a prototypical primer on Pushkin as national poet.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, Stasiulevich offered a very clear description of the readers to whom his edition was addressed. Full works, he wrote in the foreword, were accessible only to the few, and put their emphasis on maximum fullness; in lieu of this there were only school anthologies, of limited interest for a general audience. A collection of easily accessible, well selected works was the answer, as long it was inexpensive. The target audience was

that significant part of our society that is forced to be satisfied with present-day literature, those who, after leaving school, lose all connection with native writing, and with those works which, if they were right there at hand could have educational influence and further the development of literary taste. Without question, everyone agrees that Pushkin should be put at the head of such a project [...]. Such an edition, together with the advantages of low price and accessibility, can also have the advantage of being a guide to the extensive full works, where the main thing is completeness, so that together with the best works there are others from the same pen without distinction.<sup>31</sup>

At this transitional moment—between the attacks on Pushkin of the sixties and his public triumph in the eighties—the principal aim of the publication was to promote and enhance appreciation of Pushkin rather than to introduce new readers to him. It was aimed at what we might call cultural

---

*Goriukhino (Istoriia sela Goriukhina)* and "Dubrovskii"; and a selection of twenty-six poems that included "October 19" ("19-ogo oktiabria") and "The Prophet" ("Prorok") and concluded with "Monument" ("Pamiatnik").

29 P. Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris, 1975), 45, my translation; this sentence is quoted by G. Genette, *Seuils* (Paris, 1987), Engl. Transl. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, (Cambridge, 1997). See also G. Genette, M. Maclean, "Introduction to the Paratext," *New Literary History*, 22, 2, *Probing: Art, Criticism, Genre* (Spring, 1991), 261-272.

30 In sharp contrast to this and the other "paratextual" material discussed below, Pushkin's own publications during his life (in the words of N. Smirnov-Sokol'skii) "strike one with their severe clarity and simplicity [...]. Nothing stands between you, the readers, and the genius creator of the work. Nothing disturbs or distracts. No drawings, no notes, no foreword. Everything is simple—Pushkin's word and you, the reader." (N. S. Ashukin [ed.], *Rasskazy o prizhiznennykh izdaniakh Pushkina* [Moscow, 1962], 24).

31 Pushkin, *Mednyi Vsadnik. Boris Godunov, Poltava*, iii-iv.

literacy, addressed both to intelligentsia readers and those who had finished school but had an otherwise limited cultural background and sophistication.

Paul Debreczeny has described the kind of reader Stasiulevich was addressing—arguably the main contingent of Pushkin’s readers in the nineteenth century—as the “middle segment of society” or “middlebrow” readers. In Pushkin’s day this had been composed “mainly of the lower echelons of the tsarist bureaucracy but also of other groups, such as merchants, craftsmen, and the lesser gentry” as well as “people with cultural aspirations, capable of embracing new aesthetic norms”; after the middle of the century and the Emancipation this segment “grew in number and complexity.” Debreczeny suggests that by the end of the century

the most crucial group, upon whose interaction with both the elite and the masses all cultural communication depended, was the white-collar working class with its ideology of “service to the people.” If the middle-brow culture of Pushkin’s time had been engendered by a trend in imaginative literature—the romantic movement—its equivalent at the turn of the century was the child of a branch of literary criticism.<sup>32</sup>

The branch of literary criticism referred to is that of Belinskii and the so-called ‘radical critics’ of the sixties, and, significantly, their view of Pushkin during the period in question was rather ambiguous. If, on the one hand, Pushkin’s nomination for national poet had been rejected, on the other hand, other critics, especially N. V. Chernyshevskii, acknowledged and even embraced Pushkin’s usefulness for pedagogical purposes.<sup>33</sup> Hence B. S. Meilakh, seconded by Debreczeny, could conjecture that during the seventies “propagandists of the populist era” probably played a role in bringing Pushkin to the peasantry despite their admiration of Pisarev.<sup>34</sup>

The various organizational scandals leading up to the Pushkin Celebration in June, 1880, followed by its huge success, produced a flood of publicity, especially in newspapers, which covered it intensely.<sup>35</sup> The Russian telegraph

32 P. Debreczeny, *Social Functions of Literature: Alexander Pushkin and Russian Culture* (Stanford, 1997), 163 and 204.

33 See Ia. A. Rotkovich, “Ocherki po prepodavaniiu literatury v russkoi shkole”, *Izvestiia Akademii Pedagogicheskikh Nauk RSFSR, Trudy Instituta metodov obucheniia*, no. 50 (Moscow, 1953), 309-340.

34 B. S. Meilakh, “Pushkin v vospriatii i soznanii dorevoliutsionnogo krest’ianstva,” *Pushkin: Issledovaniia i materialy*, 5 (Leningrad, 1967), 74; also in his *Talisman: kniga o Pushkine* (1975; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1984); Debreczeny, *Social Functions*, 201. See the typical populist preference for Lermontov and Nekrasov over Pushkin cited by Ben Eklof, Tatiana Saburova in *A Generation of Revolutionaries: Nikolai Charushin and Russian Populism from the Great Reforms to Perestroika* (Bloomington, 2017), 53-54. On Pisarev, see note 6.

35 For a history of the celebration, see Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics*. See also V. I. Mezhev, *Otkrytie pamiatnika A.S. Pushkinu v Moskve v 1880 godu: sochineniia i stat’i, napisannye po povodu etogo torzhestva: bibliograficheskii ukazatel’* (St. Petersburg, 1885); and Mezhev, *Pushkiniana*.

agencies that had come into their own during the Russo-Turkish War of the late 1870's helped spread the news of the celebration to the far corners of the empire. At the same time, publication of Pushkin's works continued to be mostly limited to the handful of works published for school use and to reprints of individual texts in newspapers and thick journals that had been newly published in the various full works. In September, 1879, the well-known pedagogue and publicist Viktor Ostrogorskii, already looking ahead to the opening of the Moscow monument, complained that it was a "national disgrace" that "it has now been about a year that *it is impossible to buy Pushkin at any price in Petersburg or Moscow.*"<sup>36</sup> The situation did not substantially change until the copyright ran out in 1887, at which time it became abundantly clear what a tremendous pent-up demand had been built up.<sup>37</sup>

In the early 1860's, in conversation with the book publisher M. O. Vol'f, the young journalist A. S. Suvorin had told him that "Had I the capital, I would flood the book market with a huge quantity of books. It is strange that capital in Russia is so indifferent to publishing; indeed, now, after the liberation of the peasants, a huge field has opened up for Russian books."<sup>38</sup> By the end of the 1870's, with the acquisition of the newspaper *Novoe vremia* (*New Times*), Suvorin was able to realize his plans, and when the copyright ran out on Pushkin he was ready—perhaps not ready enough, because on the day after the copyright ended—January 30, 1887, there were something close to a riot in the *Novoe vremia* bookstore on Nevskii Prospect, which was cleaned out and left in total disarray. As I have written elsewhere,

In the fifty years after Pushkin's death, the total number of copies of his works sold had not exceeded 50- or 60,000; of these only an estimated 20- or 30,000 remained in private hands; the rest were in libraries or had not survived. This one day, asserts I. Ia. Aizenshtok, did more for Pushkin's fame than all of the monuments erected in Moscow, Petersburg and Odessa put together. In Petersburg alone, 10,000 copies of Pushkin's "complete works" [in Suvorin's edition]—100,000 in all—were sold. During the next two to three days, five new editions came out, each of about 40,000 copies; the next ones were published in even bigger numbers. These figures refer only to the various "complete works"; the publisher L. N. Pavlenkov, writing in 1888,

<sup>36</sup> "V vidu ozhidaemogo otkrytiia pamiatnika Pushkinu," *Novoe vremia*, 1266, Sept. 7, 1879, 3. Ostrogorskii's italics.

<sup>37</sup> During these interim years several major Pushkin biographies came out, including ones by Annenkov (1874); V. Ia. Stoiunin (1880-1881); A. I. Nezeleov and A. A. Venkstern (1882); V. P. Avenarius (1886 and 1888); and Ia. K. Grot (1887). See Ia. L. Levkovich, "Biografiia." Annenkov's *Materialy* was republished in 1873.

<sup>38</sup> S. F. Librovich, *Na knizhnom postu* (St. Petersburg-Moscow, 1916), 123-124.

counted up 163 different Pushkin titles in the previous year, totaling 1,481,275 copies; and my own calculations, based on a Soviet bibliography published in 1949,<sup>39</sup> indicate that Pavlenkov may have been short by as much as a million. Spearheaded by the surging demand for Pushkin's works, Russian publishing by absolute or relative standards expanded at a rate fantastic for any country.<sup>40</sup>

The years 1887-1917 became the age of "mass-published" Pushkin.<sup>41</sup> Freed from copyright restrictions,

the specialization of editions began. With the development of new typographical capabilities the appearance of books changed and artistic editions began to appear. Publishers and booksellers faced the responsibility and challenge of having to print more copies, lowering prices, and finding new ways of distributing books of Pushkin.<sup>42</sup>

Publishing Pushkin became a major undertaking by the Russian printing houses as well as by a throng of socio-semiotic cultural entrepreneurs, and makes clear the connection between the distribution of Pushkin's works and his canonization as national poet. All of the major publishers got in on the Pushkin boom as did bookshops, newspapers, journals and philanthropic societies. The latter included the Society for Spreading Literacy, established by Turgenev with Annenkov's participation; the Society of Lovers of Russian Letters, that had organized the 1880 celebration; Committees for Spreading Literacy in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kharkiv (Khar'kov); and the Literary Fund (the Society to Support Needy Literary Men and Scholars, established in 1859). With the profits from its 1887 publications (including 10,000 volumes of a seven-volume edition edited by P. O. Morozov and printed by Suvorin) and other jubilee activities, the "Litfond" created a "Pushkin fund" (*kapital imeni A. S. Pushkina*) to fund further undertakings.<sup>43</sup> Jeffrey Brooks has noted the importance of non-commercial publishing ventures in the publishing and promotion of the 'classics' during this

39 P. N. Berkov, V. M. Lavrov (comp.), *Bibliografiia proizvedenii A. S. Pushkina i literatury o nem, 1886-1899* (Moscow, 1949). Over the course of 1887 at least eighteen "full works" came out in one to twelve volumes; fifteen "collected works," seven of which were multi-volume; and about 86 individual works. These numbers are for Moscow and Petersburg; there were also editions published in Odessa (15 titles), Vilnius (4), Orel (2), Riga (3), Riazan, Warsaw, Kharkiv, and Derpt (1 each).

40 Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics*, 155.

41 P. I. Egorov, "Izdanie proizvedenii A. S. Pushkina," 8, refers to "massovost'."

42 Ibid.

43 Kozmina ("Istoriko-kul'turnyi kontekst"), who focuses on this edition, notes that the Litfond made 17,689 rubles' profit on these 1887 jubilee ventures (79).

period: “Russian educators, intellectuals, and activists of various perspectives sought to bring Russian literature to the people either by publishing their own inexpensive editions of works they favored or [as in the case of the 1887 Morozov edition –M. L.] by purchasing this material from enterprising commercial publishers.”<sup>44</sup>

Pushkin’s works, especially full and collected editions, often featured copious illustrations—portraits of Pushkin, especially the 1827 portrait by V. A. Tropinin and the engraving by Wright; pictures of Opekushin’s Pushkin monument and of the 1880 Jubilee; images of Natal’ia Nikolaevna (Pushkin’s wife); of the duel; of Pushkin’s grave; facsimiles of Pushkin’s letters, drawings and manuscripts; as well as illustrations of his works. One typical hefty paperback one-volume “full works” put out in 1887 by the “bookseller-publisher” S. I. Leukhin advertises itself on the title page as “An edition intended for the entire Russian people” and cost 2 rubles. It includes a series of color lithographs (*khromolito-grafirovannye kartiny*) illustrating Pushkin’s works and a sepia copy of Kiprenskii’s portrait on the cover framed with garlands. The back cover features images of Pushkin’s grave, the Moscow monument, a depiction of the duel, and in the center an illustration of “Lady Into Lassie” (“Baryshnia-krest’ianka”). Two of its twelve parts may be labeled paratext. The opening section includes a lengthy biography (treating Pushkin’s “childhood, residence at the Lycée, poetic activity, duel and death”) plus eyewitness accounts and documents concerning his last days. The final section contains extensive material concerning the Pushkin Celebration of 1880<sup>45</sup> as well as on the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of his death; this section includes lengthy excerpts from the press, speeches (including Dostoevskii’s famous oration), historical materials, and a large number of poems on Pushkin, his death, and on the commemorations themselves. These materials literally frame Pushkin’s works and constitute almost ten percent of the 1000-page edition.

Suvorin, like the other major publishers of the day, used a variety of means to reach the broadest possible public.

He published some of his books in two editions: in a large press run for the mass reader and in a small run meant for bibliophiles that were souvenir [*podarochnye*] editions, beautifully pro-

44 J. Brooks, “Russian Nationalism and Russian Literature: The Canonization of the Classics,” in I. Banac, J. G. Ackerman, R. Szporluk, and W. S. Vucinich (eds.), *Nation and Ideology: Essays in Honor of Wayne S. Vucinich* (Boulder, 1981), 315-334; the given quote is on 324.

45 Taken from: F. B. [Fedor Il’ich Bulgakov], *Venok na pamiatnik Pushkinu: pushkinskie dni v Moskve, Peterburge i provintsii: adresy, telegrammy, privietstviia, rechi, chteniia i stikhi po povodu otkrytiia pamiatnika Pushkinu: otzyvy pechati o znachenii Pushkinskogo torzhestva. Pushkinskaia vystavka v Moskve: novye dannye o Pushkine* (St. Petersburg, 1880).

duced and on deluxe paper. This is also how he published Pushkin's full works, which in the mass edition cost 1.5 rubles, and in the deluxe edition, on various kinds of paper (rag, "elephant," Holland, Whatman paper), from 20 to 100 rubles.<sup>46</sup>

At the high end of the market, there began to appear luxury illustrated "bibliophile" editions as well as novelty miniature ones.<sup>47</sup> At the low end, following the example of the "Classroom Library" series mentioned earlier, book production in 1887 (and through the end of the century) included a large variety of inexpensive "popular" (*obshchedostupnye*) editions: editions "for family and school"; "for popular and school libraries"; for soldiers; as well as for youth, preschoolers, elementary, middle school and older students. Series included the "Illustrated Pushkin Library" (Illiustrirovannaia Pushkinskaia biblioteka) (Pavlenkov), "Parish Library" (Prikhodskaia biblioteka), "Little Ones' Library" (Biblioteka kroshki) (F. Ioganson, in Kiev), "Completely Accessible Library of Russian Writers" (Obshchedostupnaia biblioteka russkikh pisatelei) (E. Fesenko, in Odessa), "Universal Library" (Vseobshchaia biblioteka) (Ia. S. Samoilov), and the "Inexpensive Library" (Deshevaia biblioteka) (Suvorin). However, here and later in the century there was often a lack of distinction between editions for schoolchildren, editions for peasants (the *narod*) and children's books.

In response to Dostoevskii's speech at the Pushkin Celebration of 1880, Ivan Aksakov had declared that "Even yesterday it could have seemed to be a question whether Pushkin is a *narodnyi poet* or not; even yesterday the doubt was expressed here whether it was possible to give him the name of *natsional'nyi poet*; now, thank God, that question is irrelevant, finished forever..."<sup>48</sup> If in 1880 the question of Pushkin's status as national poet had been in some sense definitively resolved, which the boom in publishing confirmed, various parties still vied to make use of his high prestige in order to turn reading Pushkin into what de Certeau called "an orthodox literalism," that is, to shape and control the growing mass reading public and Russian national identity. These groups and institutions included the school establishment, which played a major role in associating literacy with Pushkin.<sup>49</sup> "In the capacity of an 'official' classic, who loved the people and at the same time was faithful to tsar and Orthodox faith, he [Pushkin] was [after 1887] represented in gimnazia textbooks and

46 Barenbaum, *Knizhnyi Peterburg*, 135.

47 These included *Kapitanskaia dochka*. S 8 ris. K.S. Vysotskogo. 3-oe izd. (Moscow: Izdanie magazina "Detskoe vospitanie," 1882); *Evgenii Onegin* (Kiev: Izdanie knizhnago magazina Iogansona, 1887), in the series "Biblioteka-Kroshka." See M. P. Nesterova, A. I. Karmishin (eds.), *Pushkiniana v miniatiurnykh izdaniiah: Bibliogr. ukaz. miniatiur. izd. 1836-1999 gg.* (Moscow, 2002).

48 Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics*, 126.

49 See LEIBOV, VDOVIN, "What and How Russian Students Read in School," in the present volume.



in courses at higher educational establishments.”<sup>50</sup> The official church, at first skeptical, played an ever-greater role in espousing Pushkin, as did the tsarist government whose censors continued to try and regulate Pushkin’s image.<sup>51</sup> The state, of course, controlled both the Orthodox Church and the educational establishment, and sponsored the official 1899 Pushkin Jubilee, which was of unprecedented empire-wide scope.<sup>52</sup> Intelligentsia socio-semiotic entrepreneurs, including the growing ranks of *Pushkinisty* as well as poets, artists, composers, sculptors and playwrights, also continued to create and debate, and there were sporadic attempts to erode the state-sponsored image of the poet.<sup>53</sup>

The doubt Aksakov referred to concerning “whether it was possible to give [Pushkin] the title of national poet” had been expressed by Turgenev, who in his speech at the Pushkin Celebration had recalled the problem that Belinskii had posed—the gap between Pushkin as embodiment of the national spirit and the fact that he remained largely unknown to the nation (the *narod*).<sup>54</sup> Notably, if by the 1897 census the Russian literacy rate had reached 30 percent,<sup>55</sup> that means that almost 39 million people remained illiterate. If, on the one hand, V. E. Iakushkin could write that “on the fiftieth anniversary of Pushkin’s death [1887] his works became public property (*obshchestvennoe dostoianie*)”<sup>56</sup>—and not only in the sense of the lapse in copyright—; on the other hand, an investigative committee from Iaroslavl’ in 1899 could declare that despite the fact that one could

50 Kozmina, “Istoriko-kul’turnyi kontekst,” 81.

51 See B. M. Mar’ianov, *Krushenie legendy: protiv klerikal’nykh fal’sifikatsii tvorchestva A. S. Pushkina* (Leningrad, 1985).

52 “The church and state authorities were originally reluctant to sanction veneration of a group [Russian writers] not formally identified with the Orthodox autocracy and in some respects hostile to it, but they eventually came to terms with the *fait accompli*, and sought to dispel the idea that writers were opposed to the state” (Brooks, “Russian Nationalism and Russian Literature,” 316). On the jubilee, see: M. C. Levitt, “Pushkin in 1899,” in B. Gasparov, R. Hughes, I. Paperno (eds.), *Cultural Mythologies of Russian Modernism: From the Golden Age to the Silver Age*. California Slavic Studies (Berkeley, 1992), 183-203; on 1899 as the “apogee” of ideological manipulation by church and state, see Mar’ianov, *Krushenie legendy*, 52-57.

53 On political opposition, see, for example, R. Maier, “‘Neskol’ko slov o Pushkine’: Nelegal’naia broshiura saratovskoi sotsial-demokraticheskoi gruppy k pushkinskomu iubileiu 1899 g.,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 16-18 (Moscow, 1934), 1043-1052; on intellectuals’ dissatisfaction, see Levitt, “Pushkin in 1899,” 192-200. See also Brooks, “Russian Nationalism and Russian Literature,” for opposition to the use of the classics to spread literacy.

54 Turgenev had in mind the audience that Stasiulevich’s “Russkaia biblioteka” aimed to reach. Notably, the cover of the “Russkaia biblioteka” edition of Pushkin that I consulted at the library of the Pushkinskii Dom bears the printed statement “Ekzempliar I. S. Turgeneva.” It was most likely acquired from Alexander Onegin’s well-known collection of Pushkiniana in Paris.

55 Mironov, “The Development of Literacy,” 245. The figure of 30 percent includes men and women, rural and urban populations. This is out of 55,667,469 Russian speakers recorded by the 1897 census.

56 V. E. Iakushkin “Novoe izdanie Pushkina,” *Literaturnyi vestnik*, 1903, vol. 5, Part 1, 3-23; quote is on 4.

find “enthusiastic fans [of Pushkin] in the folk milieu,” the Russian people as a whole “hardly knows Pushkin, and does not value him, primarily due to illiteracy, the cost of books, the lack of village libraries or the lack of Pushkin’s works in those libraries.”<sup>57</sup> As the educator K. A. Koz’min, the editor of a three-volume graded school edition of Pushkin, wrote in 1882, “What’s the purpose of the recently erected monument-built-by-hands in Moscow when the narod has no idea whatsoever of [Pushkin’s] monument ‘not-built-by-hands’?”<sup>58</sup>

The ‘mass reader’ of Pushkin during the period in question remained and remains diffuse and puzzling, difficult to describe as an “imagined community.” This is understandable insofar as attempts to comprehend newly literate readers came from without and almost inevitably reflected the biases of the (literate, cultured) researcher.<sup>59</sup> Becoming literate meant to enter Pushkin’s world, to assume a modern Russian national identity.<sup>60</sup> The problem as stated by a radical critic of the 1860’s was that “Our people cannot understand our poetic propaganda because we speak two different languages, we live in two different spheres, and in our mental interests we do not have one—yes, not even one—point of contact.”<sup>61</sup> Opinions were divided among critics and early investigators of the question “What Should be Read to the People?” (*Chto chitat’ narodu?*), and the issue was only conclusively decided by force in favor of Pushkin and the Russian classics after the Revolution.<sup>62</sup> The question “*Chto chitat’ narodu?*” that might be interpreted

57 See A. R. Svirshhevskii, *A.S. Pushkin v sel'skom naselenii i shkol'e Iaroslavskoi gubernii. Trudy Iaroslavskogo gubernskogo statisticheskogo komiteta* 10 (1899), 70. The quotation is a paraphrase by P. Sakulin in “Populiarizatsiia Pushkina v iubileinykh izdaniakh 1899 goda,” *Vestnik vospitaniia*, 11, 1 (ianvar', 1900), 9-10.

58 *Sochineniia A. S. Pushkina, izdanie dlia shkol'*, Vol. 1: *Dlia sel'skikh i gorodskikh uchilishch i dlia mladshikh klassov srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii*, ed. K. Koz'min (Moscow, 1882), v.

59 See, for example, A. Toporov, “Krest'iane o Pushkine,” *Krest'iane o pisateliakh* (Novosibirsk, 1963), 31-47, which is based on a survey for *Krasnaia niva* in 1928; and Meilakh, “Pushkin v vospriiatii i soznanii,” concerning letters solicited by the newspaper *Sel'skii vestnik* in 1899.

60 Skeptics of different generations could imagine these readers in various disparaging terms. Belinskii contrasted informed public opinion to the “*tolpa*,” the mass readership that the commercial press was creating. These are the readers Paul Debreczeny classified as “middle brow,” marked by “non-controversial banality” and self-assured mediocrity (Debreczeny, *Social Functions*, 203). Saltykov-Shchedrin, writing during the reactionary late 1880’s, opposed a handful of “good readers” (of the kind Chernyshevskii made famous in *Chto delat'*—that is, the radical intelligentsia) to those he classified as *chitateli-nenavistniki*, *solidnye chitateli*, and *chitateli-prostetsy*, that is, as passive or active antagonists of progressive political opinion. And for Merezhkovskii at the end of the century, writing in a Nietzschean vein, these were the unwashed masses, as contrasted to the elite few like Pushkin and the Symbolists.

61 D. I. Pisarev, “Narodnye knizhki,” *Russkoe slovo*, 3 (1861); <http://e-libra.ru/read/122250-narodnye-knizhki.html> (accessed March 16, 2020).

62 In the later nineteenth century, the debate centered in part around Kh. D. Alchevskaia’s 3-volume *Chto chitat’ narodu?: kriticheskii ukazatel' knig dlia narodnago i detskago chteniia* (St. Petersburg, 1884-1906), which defended teaching Pushkin and the classics. But as critics like S. A. An-skii [Rappoport] (in *Ocherki narodnoi literatury* [St. Petersburg, 1896], and *Narod i*

as “what the people should read,” almost always meant what should be read *to them*, suggesting how the still mostly non-literate population should be directed.<sup>63</sup> Opinions were divided between those who believed that this population required a new kind of literature “for the people,” adapted to its special needs (for example, the type Tolstoi wrote and advocated), and those socio-semiotic Pushkin entrepreneurs like Stasiulevich who believed that intelligentsia values should be transmitted to the masses via the structures associated with the national poet—including celebrations, monuments, artworks, press exposure, and, perhaps most of all, widespread publication of his works.

What conclusions may we draw concerning the question how the institution of national poet as reflected in the publication of Pushkin’s works influenced reading in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century? On the one hand, publishing Pushkin as national poet functioned as a *tool*, a means to create and shape a readership and its identity as a “reading public”; on the other, Pushkin’s elevation to national poet may be seen as a *result* of the increasing demand for his works on the part of a reading public whose identity at the same time was being shaped by them. This feedback loop was created by a complex interaction of factors and forces. As a *tool*, an instrument of power, the publication and propagation of Pushkin’s works became an arena of contention among several groups. First were the “semiotic entrepreneurs” like Turgenev, Stasiulevich, and many of the *Pushkinisty*, whose goals we may characterize as liberal humanist; this was the group that was largely responsible for the Pushkin Celebration of 1880. Second we may consider the intelligentsia in its oppositional aspect, and in particular the devotees of the radical critics of the 1860’s, who despite some reservations, recognized Pushkin’s pedagogical, enlightenment, value; an important subgroup of this category were Russian schoolteachers.<sup>64</sup> By the end of the century the tsarist state (which had long concerned itself with policing Pushkin’s public image by means of censorship), recognized the ideological value of promoting Pushkin as an imperial national poet; this led to a new emphasis on him as a patriotic and Orthodox figure. These efforts clearly furthered the great expansion of readership, but to what extent they resulted in a reading public that represented, at least in embryonic form, a national public sphere, was and is open to serious question. Through the end of the century, and beyond, the Russian reading public (and nascent

---

*kniga: Opyt kharakteristiki narodnogo chitatelia* [Moscow, 1913]) countered, Alchevskaia’s own reports on her readings to peasants showed that they had major problems understanding what they heard, which undercut her *a priori* assumptions.

63 Hence the works on this question by Alchevskaia, Rappoport and others mostly consisted of reports of peasants’ oral responses to Pushkin’s works that were read to them (so that they can’t really be called “readers” of Pushkin).

64 On the intelligentsia as an oppositionist force, see P. Pomper, *The Russian Revolutionary Intelligentsia* (Wheeling, IL, 1970).

public opinion) remained amorphous and disunified, segregated into factions each of which had “its” own Pushkin.<sup>65</sup> While there may have been sporadic attempts to shake Pushkin’s authority (e.g. note 53), his position as national poet became so strongly rooted that, as Aksakov stated, the question was “finished forever.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> See Levitt, “Pushkin in 1899,” esp. 193.

<sup>66</sup> For recent discussions of Pushkin’s great and complex significance (mostly concerning the twentieth century), see: S. Sandler, *Commemorating Pushkin: Russia’s Myth of a National Poet* (Stanford, 2004); J. Platt, *Greetings, Pushkin!: Stalinist Cultural Politics and the Russian National Bard* (Pittsburgh, 2017); S. Dement, *Pushkin’s Monument and Allusion: Poem, Statue, Performance* (Toronto, 2019).

## DOSTOEVSKII AND HIS READERS, 1866-1910

Raffaella Vassena

Over the thirty years that separated his debut novel *Poor Folk* (*Bednye liudi*, 1846) from his last masterpiece *The Brothers Karamazov* (*Brat'ia Karamazovy*, 1879-1880), Dostoevskii repeatedly had the chance to reflect on the role of the reader. While at the beginning of his career he tended to distrust the public (who “has an instinct, but lacks education”<sup>1</sup>), in the 1860s his orientation toward the reader became a fundamental element of his creative method.<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that Dostoevskii wrote only what could meet the tastes of the masses; rather, he dealt with issues that concerned him personally. In order to express his convictions, without having to be subjected to the whims of the public or blackmailed by publishers, Dostoevskii did not hesitate to put his professional reputation at stake, and often risked ending up broke. And yet the conquest of a “symbolic capital”<sup>3</sup> cannot be dissociated from the scrupulous care that Dostoevskii always put into even the most practical aspects of the literary profession, and which for him were important indicators of his popularity: the fees he was paid, the development of suitable publishing strategies, the circulation of his novels

---

1 Letter from F. M. Dostoevskii to M. M. Dostoevskii, 1 February 1846 (F. M. Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*. Edited and translated by D. Lowe and R. Meyer [Ann Arbor, 1989-1991], 5 vols., vol. 1, 122).

2 On “zanimatel'nost'” (captivatingness) as Dostoevskii's new artistic principle see L. P. Grossman, *Poetika Dostoevskogo* (Moscow, 1925), 7-63.

3 Pierre Bourdieu places the concept of “recognition” at the base of the different definitions of “symbolic capital”: “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (P. Bourdieu, “Social Space and Symbolic Power,” *Sociological Theory*, 7 (1), 1989, 17); “a kind of ‘economic’ capital, denied but recognized, and hence legitimate—a veritable credit, and capable of assuring, under certain conditions and in the long term, ‘economic’ profits” (Idem, *The Rules of Art. The Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* [Stanford, 1996], 142).

and the profits from sales, readers' opinions, his participation in literary evenings and public readings.<sup>4</sup> The main purpose of this chapter is to describe, through the analysis of some of these indicators, the evolution of Dostoevskii's literary reputation and the growth of his audience between 1866 and 1910. These chosen chronological limits can be explained by the role that Anna Grigor'evna Dostoevskaia (née Snitkina, 1846-1918) played in disseminating her husband's work. First as a stenographer, and then as his wife and publisher, for over forty years Dostoevskaia was the faithful guardian, guarantor, and promoter of Dostoevskii's name until 1910, when she sold the copyright. Dostoevskaia's role must therefore be considered a constant presence throughout the various periods examined, in particular the one concluding this chapter.

The methodology adopted consisted in building a dialogue between sources representing the different social actors within the literary field: not only the author, the critic and the censor, but also the publisher, the bookseller, the librarian, the pedagogue and, naturally, the reader.<sup>5</sup> In this way, the data on the fees received by Dostoevskii, the reviews of his works, the information on the volume editions and any subsequent reprints, the presence of a given work in the repertoire of his public readings, his works' presence in library catalogues, their presence in the catalogues of literature recommended for the people and for school-reading, the opinions about readings reported in memoirs, diaries, letters, and surveys—combined, they form a framework that yields a varied and dynamic system in which the differences between normative reading practices and social reading practices are particularly emphasised. Dostoevskii's path to a wide and relatively heterogeneous audience indeed was a long and complex process, conditioned by ideological, social, cultural and economic factors that also inevitably influenced the interpretation of his work. Here we will limit ourselves to highlighting the main aspects of this process, which can be divided into three phases. In the first phase, 1866-1875, i.e. from the beginning of the publication of *Crime and Punishment* (*Prestuplenie i nakazanie*) to the publication of *The Raw Youth* (*Podrostok*), the circle of Dostoevskii's readers ideally fits into the first of the three groups identified in 1862 by the censor F. F. Veselago (see REITBLAT, "The Reading Audience of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in the present volume): educated and well-informed readers, possessing an ideological orientation similar to the author's, and able to grasp the complex moral implications of the current events behind

4 On the importance of professional reputation throughout Dostoevskii's literary career see W. M. Todd III, "Dostoevskii as a Professional Writer," in W. J. Leatherbarrow (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dostoevsky* (Cambridge, 2002), 66-92. On the concept of "literary reputation" and, in particular on the canonisation of the classics, it is worth mentioning the study, although dated, by I. N. Rozanov, *Literaturnye reputatsii* (Moscow, 1990).

5 Cf. L. Gudkov, B. Dubin, V. Strada, *Literatura i obshchestvo: vvedenie v sotsiologiiu literatury* (Moscow, 1998).

his novels. In the second phase, 1876-1880, i.e. between the beginning of the publication of *The Diary of a Writer* (*Dnevnik pisatel'ia*) and the end of the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, this group of readers expanded to include a number of students and a relevant female component, who seem to look to Dostoevskii as an alternative to the progressive and revolutionary leaders of the 1860s. In particular, the phenomenon of the letters written by the *Diary* readers testifies, on the one hand, to the successful consecration of Dostoevskii and, on the other, to the evolution of the Russian public and the changes taking place in the social composition of the intelligentsia.<sup>6</sup> The third phase includes the years from the death of the writer, in 1881, until the end of Dostoevskii's publishing activity. In this period, characterised by the progressive spread of literacy and the rapid development of the book market in Russia (See REITBLAT, "The Reading Audience of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in the present volume), it is possible to identify signs of a further expansion of Dostoevskii's readers, in terms of both social composition and geographical origin. Thanks to Dostoevskii and other cultural activists, who adapted, published, and disseminated his texts in economic editions, Dostoevskii's works entered the popular circuit, reaching new audiences. Thus, Dostoevskii's literary reputation was further reshaped: having crossed the boundaries of their traditional distribution, his works generated a complex range of reactions and interpretations, even generating cases of real "creative treasons"<sup>7</sup> that have yet to be investigated.

## I. THE GREAT NOVELS OF THE 1860S AND 1870S

Dostoevskii's new orientation toward the reader found its full realization in *Crime and Punishment* which, in September 1865, he proposed to the editor of the Moscow journal *Russkii vestnik* (*The Russian Herald*), Mikhail Katkov. Accepted for publication, the novel came out in instalments between January and December 1866. Dostoevskii did his best to achieve success, which he desperately needed not only to make up for the closure of his journals *Vremia* (*Time*) and, later, *Epokha* (*Epoque*), but also to address the economic problems that afflicted him at the time. The typical elements of the feuilleton-novel, such as the police intrigue, the urban setting and the Balzac-inspired characters, the techniques he employed—the dialogues, the contrasts, the rapid changes in the scenarios, the sudden acceleration or slowing down of the narrative pace—demonstrate his desire to impress the

<sup>6</sup> V. R. Leikina-Svirskaiia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow, 1971), 50-70.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Escarpit defines the notion of "creative treason" as a "shift of emphasis [...] obtained by discarding the author's original intentions [...] and substituting new, surmised intentions compatible with the needs of a new public" (R. Escarpit, *Sociology of Literature* [London, 1971], 23).

reader and ‘force’ him to read. Dostoevskii’s efforts were rewarded, and the publication of *Crime and Punishment* granted him a new, unexpected popularity: “I have to note that my novel is an extraordinary success and has raised my reputation as a writer. All my future depends on doing a good job of finishing it.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, sources on the spread of the novel among Russian readers, especially during its serial publication, are rather limited, and the absence of an archive of *Russkii vestnik* makes it impossible to know the precise number of subscriptions. The few existing sources report about 6,100 subscribers at the beginning of the 1860s,<sup>9</sup> and Dostoevskii himself mentions a presumed increase by five-hundred subscriptions during the publication of the novel: “In ‘67 Katkov himself, in the presence of Lyubimov and the secretary of the editorial board, told me that they had gained 500 new subscribers, attributing that to *Crime and Punishment*.”<sup>10</sup> In regards to the average subscriber to the Katkov journal, it is worth mentioning the relatively high cost of the subscription (13 roubles a year excluding shipping, 15 with shipping<sup>11</sup>), which might lead to the hypothesis that many readers used copies kept in public and reading libraries. Thus the number of actual readers of *Crime and Punishment* was far greater than that of those subscribing to *Russkii vestnik*.

As concerns the public’s reactions to the novel, primary sources from the 1866-1867 period are limited to critical reviews, twenty-three in two years.<sup>12</sup> These, however, only provide a partial picture, tainted by subjectivism and different ideological positions: the inconsistent opinions of competent readers is exemplified by the case of Ivan Turgenev, who defined the opening lines of the novel “surprising” and “remarkable,” but who then expressed himself negatively about Dostoevskii’s intricate psychologism.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, in spite of the perplexity of those who found the author excessively keen on exploring the “underground” of his characters, *Crime and Punishment* managed to get people talking. Twenty years later, the novel’s disruptive effect would thus be described by the journalist Nikolai Strakhov, an attentive observer of Dostoevskii’s literary career:

8 Letter from Dostoevskii to Ivan Ianyshv, 29 April 1866 (Ibid., 195).

9 This information is taken from the article “Zhurnal” in Brokgauz-Efron *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’* (St. Petersburg, 1890-1907), vol. 12, 64-65.

10 Letter from Dostoevskii to S. A. Ivanova, 8 March 1869 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 143). It should however be noted that the alleged increase in subscribers could also be attributed to the publication, between 1865 and 1866, of the first part of Tolstoi’s novel *War and Peace* (initially written under the title 1805), subsequently suspended after the April 1866 issue.

11 *Sbornik svedenii po knizhno-literaturnomu delu za 1866 god* (Moscow, 1867), vol. 1, 101.

12 S. V. Belov, *F. M. Dostoevskii. Ukazatel’ proizvedenii F. M. Dostoevskogo i literatury o nem na russkom iazyke, 1844-2004* (St. Petersburg, 2011), 68-69.

13 See Turgenev’s letters to M. N. Katkov of 8 March 1866, to A. A. Fet of 25 March 1866, and to I. P. Borisov of 30 March 1866 (I. S. Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 28 vols., *Pis’ma* [Moscow-Leningrad, 1961-1968], vol. 6, 58, 66, 109). For an overview of critics’ opinions on Dostoevskii’s novel see F. M. Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Leningrad, 1972-1990), vol. 7, 345 and following.



People in 1866 were reading only this, those who loved reading spoke only of this, complaining as usual about the oppressive force of the novel, about the profound impression that it made, so that healthy people almost got sick, while those with weak nerves were forced to stop reading it.<sup>14</sup>

Several circumstances contributed to the general interest in *Crime and Punishment*, some of them quite random: in January 1866, a few days before the first instalment went to press, the news reported the murder of a Moscow moneylender and his maid by a student, A. M. Danilov. In the following months, the press did not hesitate to compare the story of Raskol'nikov and that of Danilov, whose trial took place in February 1867, soon after the release of the last instalment and the novel's epilogue.<sup>15</sup> The Danilov case only emphasized the topicality of the novel: the fate of Raskol'nikov could have fallen on any lonely and penniless university student, while that of Sonia touched budding feminist sympathies, expressed here by Nadezhda Stasova (1822-1895): "While I was reading *Crime and Punishment*, I cried along with the unfortunate Sonia".<sup>16</sup> It was precisely this contemporaneity that provided the attractive force of the novel, with which Dostoevskii hoped to attract the young generation who sought in books an existential orientation and an answer to the most pressing problems of life.<sup>17</sup>

Always attentive to the promotional aspect of the writer's profession, Dostoevskii relied on charity public readings to probe the tastes of his readers. He had been taking part in these events since 1860 when, revealing an unexpectedly comic vein of his character, he had played the role of the postmaster in the presentation of Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* (*Revizor*), organized by the Russian Literary Fund on 14 April that year, in the hall of Dom Ruadze in Petersburg. He participated in public readings in subsequent years, interpreting extracts from *Poor Folk*, *Netochka Nezvanova*,

<sup>14</sup> N. N. Strakhov, "Vospominaniia o Fedore Mikhailoviche Dostoevskom," *F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1990), vol. 1, 491.

<sup>15</sup> See for example I-n A. (A. S. Suvorin), "Zhurnal'nye i bibliograficheskie zametki. Prestuplenie i nakazanie, roman F. M. Dostoevskogo," *Russkii Invalid*, 4 March 1867; "Bibliografiia," *Golos*, 8 March 1867.

<sup>16</sup> V. V. Stasov, *Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: vospominaniia i ocherki* (St. Petersburg, 1899), 84. The novel's success also probably influenced the project of a theatrical adaptation conceived in February 1867 by the Moscow bookseller, playwright, and belletrist A. S. Ushakov, although it was never staged due to the veto of the censorship. See T. I. Ornatskaia, G. V. Stepanova, "Romany Dostoevskogo i dramaticheskaiia tsenzura (60-e gody XIX v.-nachalo XX v.)," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (Leningrad, 1974), vol. 1, 268-271. *Crime and Punishment* was first staged in 1889 (*Ibid.*, 273-274).

<sup>17</sup> On the attitude of the youth of the Sixties toward reading see A. I. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009), 27-29. According to Fridlender, Russian readers perceived *Crime and Punishment* as a "physiological description of the summer of 1865" (G. M. Fridlender, *Realizm Dostoevskogo* [Moscow – Leningrad, 1964], 139).

and, in 1862, from *Notes from the House of the Dead* (*Zapiski iz Mertvogo doma*), concurrent with its publication in *Vremia*. Dostoevskii chose to directly probe the mood of the public about *Crime and Punishment*, too: on 18 March 1866, on the occasion of a public reading to raise funds for the Literary Fund, he read a fragment of the second chapter of the first part (the dialogue between Marmeladov and Raskol'nikov in the tavern), just published in the first issue of *Russkii vestnik*.<sup>18</sup>

After its serial publication, interest in *Crime and Punishment* did not even begin to falter. This is proved in part by its successful publishing history, which reflects the booksellers' constant demand for it. While Dostoevskii was still alive, three editions in book form appeared: one in 1867 (in two volumes, edited by A. Bazunov), one in 1870 (the fourth volume of the first complete collection of Dostoevskii's works, edited by F. Stellovskii), and one in 1877 (in two volumes, edited by A. G. Dostoevskaia). Reprints in book form usually brought little profit to the authors, if compared to the proceeds from the serial publication of their works in thick journals, and represented a risk for publishers, as evidenced by the bankruptcy of both Stellovskii and Bazunov.<sup>19</sup> Despite this, it is significant that, even after many years, *Crime and Punishment* remained one of Dostoevskii's best-selling novels: according to Strakhov's memoirs (who had probably had access to Dostoevskaia's account records, by virtue of their collaboration on the first posthumous collection of Dostoevskii's works, in 1882-1883), at the end of the 1870s the revenue from the sales of *Crime and Punishment* was double that from the joint sales of *The Idiot* (*Idiot*), *The Possessed* (*Besy*), and *Notes from the House of the Dead*: in 1877, for example, the profits from these three novels amounted to 561 roubles and 63 kopecks, while those from the sales of *Crime and Punishment* alone reached 487 roubles and 12 kopecks. In the three following years, even if with some differences, the figures still testify to the preference given to *Crime and Punishment*: in 1878, the joint sales of *The Idiot*, *The Possessed*, and *Notes from the House of the Dead* amounted

18 Although there is no information on the reaction of the public to this evening, there are sources that attest to the exaltation of the crowd when Dostoevskii performed the same passage fourteen years later, on 28 March 1880, during a public reading for the benefit of the students of the University of St. Petersburg: "As soon as he appeared on the stage, thunderous applause broke out. F. M. read the second chapter of his novel *Crime and Punishment*. At the end of the reading, they brought him two laurel wreaths and they called him out about seven times [...] All the participants in the evening were welcomed by warm applause, but most of the ovations were for F. M. Dostoevskii." *Novoe vremia*, 30 March 1880. On Dostoevskii's public readings see R. Vassena, "Le letture pubbliche nella Pietroburgo del 19 secolo: le origini, le polemiche, i protagonisti," *Europa Orientalis*, 26 (2005), 7-33; R. Vassena, "Dostoevskii's Reading Performances," in K. Kroó, T. Szabó (eds.), *F. M. Dostoevskii in the Context of Cultural Dialogues* (Budapest, 2009), 522-528; B. N. Tikhomirov, *Dostoevskii na Kuznechnom. Daty. Sobytiia. Liudi* (St. Petersburg, 2012), 167-203. On the public literary readings organized in the 1860s by the Literary Fond see R. Vassena, "'Chudo nevedomoi sily': Public Literary Readings in the Era of the Great Reforms," *The Russian Review*, 73, 1 (2014), 47-63.

19 See Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 89.

to 1199 roubles and 50 kopecks, compared to 548 roubles and 98 kopecks from the sale of *Crime and Punishment* alone; in 1879, the proportion was 1271 roubles and 99 kopecks to 797 roubles 16 kopecks; in 1880, 1287 roubles and 20 kopecks to 933 roubles and 99 kopecks.<sup>20</sup>

We can only surmise the reasons for the success of *Crime and Punishment*, but even the most limited and latest existing sources suggest that, in his readers' imagination, Dostoevskii's fame as a 'psychologist' was linked precisely to the story of Raskol'nikov and Sonia. Sof'ia E. Lur'e, a Jewish girl student from Minsk, wrote to the author, in 1877: "It is customary to consider you a psychologist, thanks to your Raskol'nikov."<sup>21</sup> Three years later, a third-year student at Moscow Theological Academy, I. V. Livanskii, paid tribute to the quality of the psychological analyses of *Crime and Punishment's* author. In thanking Dostoevskii for donating his works to the academy's library, Livanskii recounts how these students went literally crazy for them, and defined the effect of reading Dostoevskii in a way diametrically opposed to how a good portion of critics did:

Yes, the reader's attention is involuntarily drawn to works like yours, highly-respected Fedor Mikhailovich—one not only reads them, he gets excited about them, no, more than this, one wishes that everyone would consider them in the same way, that everyone would experience that deep pleasure, that feverish tension that one himself feels while reading them...<sup>22</sup>

After having noted the pleasant state of exaltation that Dostoevskii's works created, Livanskii expresses his preference for *Crime and Punishment*,

---

20 Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 504-505. In his 9 November 1878 letter to his wife, Dostoevskii wrote that of 109 roubles 90 kopecks given to him by the Moscow librarian Solov'ev, *Crime and Punishment* alone accounted for 87 roubles (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 63). *Crime and Punishment* was especially demanded by *Diary of the Writer* subscribers, to whom Dostoevskii gave a 10 percent discount (see his 21 July 1878 letter to L. V. Grigor'ev, in Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 55).

21 Letter from S. E. Lur'e to Dostoevskii, 7 May 1877, in "Neizdannnye pis'ma k Dostoevskomu," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (St. Petersburg, 1996), vol. 12, 216. Lur'e's words were probably inspired by Dostoevskii, who in his previous letter responding to Lur'e—in which she had exalted Hugo's *Les Misérables*—had written: "I very much like *Les Misérables* myself. It came out at the time my *Crime and Punishment* did (that is, it came out two years earlier). The late F. I. Tyutchev, our great poet, and many other people found at that time that *Crime and Punishment* was incomparably superior to *Les Misérables*. But I argued with everyone sincerely, with all my heart, which I am certain of even now, despite the general opinion of all our authorities." (Letter to S. E. Lur'e, 17 April 1877, Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 366). There is no evidence of such statement from Tiutchev, which Dostoevskii quotes at least two more times: in his 9 April 1876 letter to Kh. D. Alchevskaia (Ibid., 277) and in his 1875-1876 notebooks (Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 24, 119).

22 Institut Russkoi Literatury i iskusstva (IRLI), St. Petersburg., f. 100, n. 29762, letter of 14 February 1880.

which he read in just three days, enthralled by the depth of the author's psychological acumen:

I will always remember with what spasmodic attention and how breathlessly, during three whole days, still in my second year at the Seminary, I read your famous novel *Crime and Punishment*, and even now, at the mere memory of what I read and well assimilated, I feel all the authentic vitality of this marvellous novel, all the immense force of its impressive psychological analysis [...] Many more of us have felt and still feel the same sensations, under the effect of this and your other novels, the latest being *The Brothers Karamazov*. We consider ourselves lucky to have been able to randomly buy five samples of *Crime and Punishment* and one sample of *Notes from the House of the Dead*.<sup>23</sup>

The success of *Crime and Punishment* did not seem to repeat itself—at least not immediately—with *The Idiot* (released in *Russkii vestnik* between January and December 1868), in which Dostoevskii, by his own admission, focused not so much on the “effect” as on the “essence.”<sup>24</sup> The initial curiosity about the novel is reflected in the reviews of the first chapters that appeared in the press; these were described in enthusiastic terms by Apollon Maikov in a letter to Dostoevskii of February 1868,<sup>25</sup> and confirmed in a letter by Stepan Ianovskii of 12 April of the same year.<sup>26</sup> However, cooler reactions followed, citing the fanciful world of the novel, so different from the contemporary quality of Raskol'nikov's adventures:

The impression is this: terribly powerful, with flashes of genius (for example, when they slap the idiot, and what he says, and several other elements), but throughout the story there is more probability and likelihood than truth [*istina*]. Perhaps the most real character is the Idiot (will this seem to you strange?), all the others live as in a fantasy world, all are illuminated by a light

23 Ibid.

24 See how Dostoevskii defines the idea of *The Idiot* in his letter to S. A. Ivanova of 29 March 1868: “the idea is one of those that seizes you by its essence, not by a showy effect” (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 70).

25 “... I have the honour to inform you of some very pleasant news: it is a success. The great curiosity, the interest in the many terrible moments experienced personally, the original character of the hero [...] the general's wife, the promise of something great in Nastas'ia Filippovna, and much, much more has attracted the attention of many with whom I have spoken...” (A. Maikov, “Pis'ma k F. M. Dostoevskomu,” publ. T. N. Ashimbaeva, in *Pamiatniki kul'tury. Novye otkrytiia. Ezhegodnik 1982* [Leningrad, 1984], 65, 66-67).

26 “All the masses, all are unquestionably enthusiastic! [...] everywhere, in clubs, in small salons, in railway carriages, they speak only of Dostoevskii's latest novel, from which, from what they say, “it is impossible to break off until the very last page” (F. M. Dostoevskii. *Stat'i i materialy* [Leningrad, 1924], vol. 2, 375-376).

that, while intense and characteristic, is also fanciful and peculiar. One reads it in one breath and, at the same time, one cannot believe it. Conversely, it is as if *Crime and Punishment* were explaining life; after reading it, you see life more clearly.<sup>27</sup>

The sense of disbelief aroused by *The Idiot*, despite Dostoevskii's attempts to defend its realistic character,<sup>28</sup> resulted in a lower number of reviews in the periodical press, which amounted to ten between 1868 and 1869,<sup>29</sup> and yielded a lack of profit for *Russkii vestnik*: "*The Idiot*, I believe, could not have provided any new subscribers; I'm sorry about that, and that's why I'm very glad that in spite of the novel's apparent failure, they are still hanging on to me".<sup>30</sup> Among the few sources available concerning the reception of *The Idiot*, one often finds two typical ways of accepting Dostoevskii's 'rhetoric of pain.' The first is represented by a letter sent to Dostoevskii in the late 1860s by a provincial reader, Aleksandr I. Selevin (?-1910), a notary from Elizavetgrad. Selevin seems to derive some moral benefit from the pain he felt in identifying himself with the events of Dostoevskii's characters, which leads him to repeatedly reading *The Idiot*:

I re-read all of your works (I read *The Idiot* almost a hundred times, and it seems to me I will never tire of rereading it) with such enthusiasm, in such a morbid (if I may say) and feverish state... How much have I reflected and suffered, so that I cannot but thank you for those thoughts, those ideas, which I derived from reading your works.<sup>31</sup>

Those same impressions for which Selevin is grateful to Dostoevskii (and which years later another exceptional reader, Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov, will similarly record<sup>32</sup>) represent a torment for the second type of reader, Fedor N. Kitaev, from Petersburg. A typical representative of the 1860s generation and an avid reader of Nikolai Chernyshevskii's *What Is To Be Done?* (*Chto delat'?*), Kitaev certainly caught the polemical referenc-

27 See Maikov's letter to Dostoevskii of 14 March 1868 (Maikov, "Pis'ma k F. M. Dostoevskomu," 65, 66-67).

28 In his reply Dostoevskii objected to Strakhov's remarks: "I still believe in the absolute truth of Nastasya Filipovna's character, however. By the way: many little things at the end of the first part are taken from nature, and certain characters are simply portraits, for instance, General Ivolgin, Kolya. But your judgment may in fact be very accurate" (21-22 March 1868, Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 60).

29 Belov, *Ukazatel' proizvedenii F. M. Dostoevskogo*, 69.

30 Letter to S. A. Ivanova, 8 March 1869 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 143).

31 See A. I. Selevin's undated letter to Dostoevskii in "Neizdannnye pis'ma k Dostoevskomu," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (Leningrad, 1976), vol. 2, 299.

32 "I have got Dostoevskii's *Idiot*. When you read his works you seem to go crazy." From a note on K. Romanov's diary, 9 March 1879, in L. Lanskii (ed.), "F. M. Dostoevskii v neizdannoii perepiske sovremennikov (1837-1881)," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow, 1973), vol. 86, 135.

es to Chernyshevskii that featured in Dostoevskii's novel. In particular, Dostoevskii's technique of treating similar situations (for instance, the love triangle between Myshkin, Nastas'ia Filippovna, and Rogozhin) in a diametrically opposed manner and denouncing its destructive effects on the protagonists did not escape Kitaev, making his experience of *The Idiot* particularly burdensome.<sup>33</sup> In a 1879 letter to the historian and literary scholar E. S. Nekrasova (1842-1905), Kitaev recalls the pleasure of reading a 'realistic' work like *Notes from the House of the Dead* and, conversely, the sense of oppression caused by reading *The Idiot*, where the author forces the reader to relive the same torments of the characters:

As you could not hear about Chernyshevskii, so now I can't about Dostoevskii. With great satisfaction I once read his *Dead House*, then with less and less satisfaction I read what followed, but when *The Idiot* appeared, I could not even finish it, so unpleasant was the impression it aroused in me. This way of writing, this pleasure in rubbing salt into wounds already so deep and hard to heal is not to my taste. This attitude towards the phenomena of ordinary physical and psychic human life reminds me of those poor cripples, half-naked and covered with sores who, with false moans, drag on their nags in the bazaars of villages, and try to attract the attention and the sympathy of the public in any way possible. Dostoevskii is like those cripples.<sup>34</sup>

Kitaev highlights an aspect of Dostoevskii's work that, according to some, made it unsuitable for those with weak nerves, regardless of their social status: "I have read very little Dostoevskii; his works act morbidly on me (I am a very nervous person)"<sup>35</sup>, was the answer that in 1895 a painter and academician of the Imperial Academy of Arts, Baron Mikhail P. Klodt (1835-1914), gave to a survey about the Russians' favourite books. On this characteristic feature of Dostoevskii's writing and on its heterogeneous effects we will return soon. In any case, Kitaev's judgment echoes the accusation made by several contemporaries regarding Dostoevskii's tendency to pour useless pain into his novels, all the more damaging because it lacked a reason and, above all, an antidote. As for the controversial receipt of *The Idiot*, we should also consider its difficult publishing history after first being released

<sup>33</sup> For an insight on the connection between the two novels and in general on the polemic between Dostoevskii and Chernyshevskii, see I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism. A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), 155-156 and passim.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from F.N. Kitaev to E.S. Nekrasova, 21 November 1879 ("F. M. Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 491).

<sup>35</sup> M. Lederle, *Mneniia russkikh liudei o luchshikh knigakh dlia chteniia* (St. Petersburg, 1895), 41. On Lederle's survey see J. Brooks, "Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era," in W. M. Todd III (ed.), *Literature and Society in Imperial Russia, 1800-1914* (Stanford, 1978), 103-105.

in instalments: despite Dostoevskii's repeated attempts to find a publisher,<sup>36</sup> the first version in book form, edited by his wife, only came out in 1874 with a circulation of two thousand copies, at the cost of 3.5 roubles per copy.<sup>37</sup> In more than one letter, Dostoevskii himself regretted not being able to realize his 'idea' in his novel,<sup>38</sup> and although many years later he declared he had had proof of the public's approval,<sup>39</sup> it is significant that *The Idiot* did not appear in his repertoire of public readings: Dostoevskii was aware that the deep meaning of the novel could only be communicated to a restricted category of reader, one characterized by "something special in his mental make-up that has always surprised me and pleased me".<sup>40</sup>

A similar fate befell the next novel, based on a new "impactful idea" with which Dostoevskii intended to redeem himself after *The Idiot's* lack of success: "I now have in mind an idea for an enormous novel that, in any case, even if a *failure*, ought to produce an effect—actually because of its topic. The topic is *atheism* [...]. That *has* to intrigue the reader."<sup>41</sup> Two years later, on the first 1871 issue of *Russkii vestnik*, the first episode of *The Possessed* appeared. During the first months of its publication, Strakhov reported to Dostoevskii, who was stationed in Dresden, on the progress of the novel in increasingly less encouraging tones, noting in particular that it was generally incomprehensible due to its unclear plot: if moderate optimism prevailed in February ("Your novel is read with greed, it's already a success, even if not one of the biggest. The next parts will probably make it very big"), in April and then again in June the situation became much more critical due to Dostoevskii's excessively convoluted way of writing:

... the public is now very confused; they cannot see the purpose of the story and are lost in the multitude of characters and epi-

---

<sup>36</sup> On 26 October 1868 Dostoevskii wrote to Maikov: "And now the idea of *The Idiot* has nearly gone bust. Even if there is or will be some merit, there's little striking effect, and striking effect is essential for a second edition, which I was counting on blindly just a few months back and which could have provided some money. Now, when the novel isn't even finished, there's no point even in thinking of a second edition" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 104). A few months later, on 15 May 1869, Dostoevskii asked Maikov to broker a deal with the librarian Bazunov: "Please drop by to see him at his shop and ask him whether he's willing to publish *The Idiot* for 2000 (I don't want to go down to 1500)" (Ibid., 167). Eventually Dostoevskii received an offer from the librarian Stellovskii, but the deal did not come to a successful conclusion.

<sup>37</sup> Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 504.

<sup>38</sup> See Dostoevskii's letter to S. A. Ivanova on 25 January 1869: "I am dissatisfied with the novel; it hasn't expressed even a tenth part of what I wanted to express, although I nonetheless do not disown it and I still love my unsuccessful idea" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 3, 127).

<sup>39</sup> See for example what Dostoevskii wrote in his 1876 notebooks: "Who among the critics knows the end of *The Idiot* (a scene of such force, that is not repeated in literature)? Well, the audience knows it" (Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 24, 301).

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Dostoevskii to A. G. Kovner, 14 February 1877 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 351).

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Dostoevskii to S. A. Ivanova, 25 January 1869 (Ibid., vol. 3, 128).

sodes, and the link between them is not clear to them [...]. You write especially for a chosen audience but, in the meantime, you botch up your works, you complicate them too much. If the texture of your stories were simpler, they would be more effective. For example, *The Gambler* and *The Eternal Husband* have impressed the public a great deal, but all you have poured into *The Idiot* has been wasted.

All around me I can hear them discuss animatedly—some are reading it with great passion, others are perplexed.<sup>42</sup>

The discordant opinions recorded by Strakhov are partially reflected in the reactions of two educated readers of different ideological orientations. The first is the radical feminist Anna Filosofova (1837-1912), one of the founders of the Bestuzhev Courses for women. Although linked to Dostoevskii by a feeling of deep respect and friendship, in her memoirs Filosofova also recalls her tense discussions with him, exacerbated because of their different positions: “I very often behaved toward him in the most unseemly fashion. I shouted at him and battled with him with unseemly anger, and he, the dear man, patiently bore all my sallies. At that time I couldn’t digest his novel *The Possessed*. I said it was an outright denunciation [of the young radicals - R. V].”<sup>43</sup> The second reader is Pavel A. Viskovatov (1842-1905), the son of the general A. V. Viskovatov (1842-1905), a historian of literature and the biographer of M. Iu. Lermontov. In his letter to Dostoevskii dated 6 March 1871, Viskovatov joins the author of *The Possessed* in condemning liberalism à la Turgenev, such as that which was represented in the novel by characters like Verkhovenski. A typical example of the 1840s generation of ‘fathers’ possessed of a liberal and Westernizing orientation, Verkhovenski became the object of the sarcasm not only for the author of the novel, but also for his ideal reader:

The history of the development of our society in the last decades is clearly outlined, and to the fortunate expression of A. N. Maikov, according to whom you have represented the end of the Turgenev heroes, I add my hope that you will be able to bury other heroes too, delivering them to posterity forever. Alone in my room I have laughed wildly, reading about Stepan Trofimovich and the people with whom he meets and spends time. Our audi-

42 See N. N. Strakhov’s letters to F. M. Dostoevskii respectively of 22 February, 12 April and 8 June 1871 (*Shestidesiatye gody. Materialy po istorii literatury i obshchestvennomu dvizheniiu* [Moscow-Leningrad, 1940], 269-274). Strakhov’s first letter referred to chapters 1 and 2 from Part One, published in the January issue of *Russkii vestnik*; the second letter might refer to chapters 3 and 4, published in the February issue, and the third letter might refer to chapter 5, published in the April issue, in which the story of Stavrogin is narrated.

43 A. V. Tyrkova, *Anna Pavlovna Filosofova i ee vremia* (Petrograd, 1915), 258.



ence is very volatile. I do not know how they will receive your excellent work, but all the attentive and sincere people will follow the developments of the novel with interest and impatience.<sup>44</sup>

Both readers judge *The Possessed* not as a novel but as a political pamphlet, to be appreciated only by those who share the author's *Weltanschauung*. This may explain the merely partial success that, in the early 1870s, the novel achieved among the public: some periodicals even came to question the author's sanity,<sup>45</sup> reproaching his abrupt turnaround from the revolutionary and socialist ideals of the Petrashevskii circle towards Slavophile and conservative ideals. The oscillating mood of the public is also confirmed by other indicators: first of all, the poor demand of the book market, with only one edition in book form of the novel, published in 1873 by Dostoevskaia. In her memoirs, Dostoevskaia reports in detail the story of the publication of *The Possessed* in book form, which marked the beginning of her publishing activity, lasting almost forty years: three thousand copies were sold within a year, with a profit of about four thousand roubles, while the remaining five hundred copies were sold over the following three years.<sup>46</sup> The decline in the demand for *The Possessed* did not seem to change in the second half of the 1870s, when Dostoevskii's popularity reached its peak: at least that is what can be deduced from the absence of the novel from Dostoevskii's repertoire of public readings which, with due caution, can be considered representative of the tastes of the different types of audiences whom Dostoevskii addressed.<sup>47</sup>

In 1875, *The Raw Youth* appeared in Saltykov-Shchedrin and Nekrasov's *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*). The progressive *Otechestvennye zapiski* was a difficult choice for a venue, in that it contrasted with Dostoevskii's political ideas but remained in line with his professional ambitions: forced to reject the disadvantageous conditions offered him by *Russkii vestnik*, which meanwhile was publishing Lev Tolstoi's

44 "Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 420. In the 1860s I. S. Turgenev had reached the peak of popularity thanks to his novel *Fathers and Sons* (1861). See Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 78.

45 It was exactly at the same time as the publication of *The Possessed* that the term "painful" (*boleznennyi*) would begin to be reported, not only referring to Dostoevskii's novels but also to his person. See "Z." [V. P. Burenin], "Poiavlenie snova besov v *Russkom vestnike*," *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 16 December 1872; Z., "Zhurnalistika," *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 6 January 1873, n. 6; "A. S." [A. S. Suvorin], "*Russkii vestnik* (noiabr' i dekabr')". *Besy F. Dostoevskogo*," *Novoe vremia*, 16 January 1873.

46 A. G. Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moi zhizni – Fedor Dostoevskii. Vospominaniia. 1846-1917* (Moscow, 2015), 304. About the history of the publication of *The Possessed* see *Ibid.*, 298-305. On Dostoevskaia's publishing activity, especially related to Dostoevskii's *Collected works*, cf. I. S. Andrianova, *Anna Dostoevskaia: prizvanie i priznaniia* (Petrozavodsk, 2013), 26-44.

47 *Spisok ustnykh vystuplenii s 1876-1880 gg. Fedora Mikhailovicha Dostoevskogo. Otdel rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki (OR RGB), Moscow. Otdel rukopisei, f. 93, razd. III, kart. 5, ed. khr. 17, ll. 1-2.*

*Anna Karenina*, Dostoevskii accepted Nekrasov's proposal.<sup>48</sup> The fact that *The Raw Youth* failed to be published in *Russkii vestnik* is indicative of the delicate position that Dostoevskii still occupied in those years, as shown also by a comparison of his rates with those of other authors: while in 1875 Katkov granted Tolstoi 500 roubles per printer's sheet for *Anna Karenina*, and while Turgenev received 400 roubles respectively for *Fathers and Sons* (*Ottsy i deti*) and *Smoke* (*Dym*) in 1862 and 1867, what Dostoevskii had obtained from Katkov for *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot* and *The Possessed* did not exceed 125 roubles per printer's sheet.<sup>49</sup> His collaboration with *Otechestvennye zapiski*, however, marked an increase in Dostoevskii's fee, which went up to 250 roubles per printer's sheet.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, perhaps also due to the commotion caused by Dostoevskii's collaboration with Prince Vladimir Meshcherskii's *Grazhdanin* (*The Citizen*) in 1873, the critics' interest in *The Raw Youth* was greater than that accorded to previous novels: in 1875 alone, it received thirty-one reviews.<sup>51</sup>

As for common readers, even in this case there are not many sources that can provide a clear picture. Presumably, the excessively intricate style of Dostoevskii also made *The Raw Youth* an uneasy reading, accessible only to educated readers, and appealing only to a part of them. Kitaev, a quintessential 'man of the Sixties' who had failed to finish *The Idiot*, expressed himself similarly about *The Raw Youth* in 1875: "I could not bring myself to finish Dostoevskii's *The Raw Youth*; it is a worse blotch than *The Possessed*, the whole story is full of demented and subjective reasoning".<sup>52</sup> Besides these sporadic comments by readers, it is possible to make some suppositions based on contemporary reprints, which also in the case of *The Raw Youth* were limited to only one (published in 1876 by the Petersburg publisher P. E. Kekhrbardzhi, on terms that Dostoevskii himself did not consider very favourable<sup>53</sup>). As for other works by Dostoevskii, the available contemporary sources on the reception of *The Raw Youth* date back to the late 1870s-early

48 In any case, as Todd rightly remarks, the ideological distance from *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*The Notes of the Fatherland*) was a minor problem: Nekrasov's populism in the Seventies was incomparably closer to Dostoevskii than radicals' nihilism in the Sixties. See W. M. Todd III, "Dostoevskii kak professional'nyi pisatel': professiia, zaniatie, etika," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 58, 6 (2002), 15-43.

49 L. K. Il'inskii, "Gonorary Dostoevskogo," *Bibliograficheskie listy Russkogo bibliograficheskogo obshchestva*, 3 (1922) 8. On Turgenev's remuneration see Turgenev, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, vol. 4, 365; vol. 6, 93.

50 With regard to the criteria for the determination of the fees see Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 93 and following pages.

51 Belov, *F. M. Dostoevskii. Ukazatel'*, 73-74.

52 Letter from F. N. Kitaev to E.S. Nekrasova, 18 May 1875 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 441).

53 See what Dostoevskii writes to his younger brother Andrei on 10 March 1876: "I'm sending you my book, which was published in a quite slovenly way by the bookseller Kekhrbardzhi. He published it, advertised it in the newspapers, stuck it away somewhere and didn't put it on sale until 2 months later, which damaged the book" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 274).

1880s, when Dostoevskii's popularity skyrocketed, and people began to read or re-read even his previous works. In the case of *The Raw Youth*, public readings can be of help. As we have seen, Dostoevskii had participated in public readings since the beginning of the 1860s, but it was only towards the end of the 1870s when, after a period of decline, these events experienced some renewed popularity, and his performances became particularly requested: Dostoevskii's name had now become a guarantee of the success of the evening, and organizers were literally competing for him. For his part, Dostoevskii was always very sensitive to the fundraising purposes of these events: for this reason, he accepted the invitations willingly, submitting himself to real *tours de force* and declining only if forced to for health reasons. Dostoevskii used to select the extracts he would read very carefully. In choosing a fragment, he was guided by precise criteria: first of all, there was the need not to run into the veto power of the censors, to whom the texts in the programme had to be submitted in advance. Then, he would want to tickle the appetites of the public by presenting a preview of the novels that were still being published (in the case of *The Brothers Karamazov*), or that had just been published (in the case, as seen, of *Notes from the House of the Dead* or *Crime and Punishment*). Finally, he felt he should empathize with the kind of public in favour of whom the charity reading had been organized, while also paying attention to the performers who would precede or follow him on stage. However, Dostoevskii's main criterion remained the educational mission, in which he felt particularly invested, to reach the young generation.

According to the available sources, after its publication, *The Raw Youth* was read in public at least once, on 21 March 1880 in St. Petersburg, in the hall of the Blagorodnoe sobranie, on the occasion of a literary-musical evening benefiting the students of the Bestuzhev Courses for women. Dostoevskii was particularly attached to these courses—the first advanced courses for women in Russia, inaugurated in St. Petersburg in 1878—and gladly appeared among the members of the charitable society dedicated to them, presided over by the aforementioned A. P. Filosofova.<sup>54</sup> For these young students, Dostoevskii had already read, on 14 December 1879, a fragment from *The Insulted and the Injured*, focusing on the figure of the young child Nelly and arousing much emotion among the audience. For the evening of 21 March 1880, Dostoevskii chose a passage from *The Raw Youth* that could serve as an explicit warning to the young female students sitting in the audience: the story of the mother of the suicide victim Olia (Part I, chapter 9, paragraph 5). This passage of the novel had received much praise

<sup>54</sup> *Obschestvo dlia dostavleniia sredstv Vysshim zhenskim kursam. Otchet za 1878-79 gg.* (St. Petersburg, 1896), 50.

from Nekrasov, who had called it “the summit of art”<sup>55</sup>; the reactions of readers had been similar, as reported by Strakhov in one of his usual bulletins:

Your second part was very successful; it was read with the utmost attention. The episode of the girl who hanged herself is extraordinarily good and has aroused much praise. The conclusion of this part finally reveals the mutual positions of the characters, outlining both Versilov and the raw youth. This clarification acts very positively on the reader and arouses strong interest. [...] You have chosen a magnificent theme and everyone expects a miracle from its development; at least, I expect it; the audience is already subdued, and will read you eagerly.<sup>56</sup>

Nevertheless, Dostoevskii’s choice was harshly criticized by the press of the time, who deemed it inappropriate to present to a public of young women the story of a girl their same age, who had arrived in Petersburg in search of lessons but was deceived, forced into prostitution, and induced to take her own life by her feelings of shame.<sup>57</sup> The indignation of the press was nourished by the impression that Dostoevskii’s reading had had on the public, and of which we find testimony in the memoirs of two young women students. The first, A. A. Von Brettsel (? -1932), who later became the wife of Dostoevskii’s personal physician, Ia. B. Von Brettsel, limited herself to describing the moment of confusion the audience had experienced at the end of such an inspired and realistic interpretation of Olia’s suicide scene: “Dostoevskii read in a low voice, but one so inspired as to instil terror, you seemed to experience that terrible scene yourself. The effect was such that the applause did not arrive immediately. Only when the first strong impression had passed, did the audience burst into applause”.<sup>58</sup> In the recollection of the second witness, S. V. Karchevskaia (1859-1947), who later became the wife of the physiologist I. P. Pavlov, the effect that the reading had on those present in the hall was similar to a phenomenon of real mass hysteria:

At the end of the reading, a real pandemonium broke out. The audience shouted, banged, broke the chairs and cheered in delirium: “Dostoevskii!”. I do not remember who passed me my coat. I put it on and cried from euphoria.<sup>59</sup>

55 Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 29/2, 13.

56 Letter from N.N. Strakhov to Dostoevskii, 21 March 1875 (*Shestidesiatye gody*, 274).

57 A. S., “Literaturnoe chtenie,” *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 25 March 1880, 59.

58 A. A. Von Brettsel, “Moi vospominaniia o Dostoevskom i Turgeneve,” edited by I. S. Zil’bershtein, in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 86, 320.

59 S. V. Pavlova, “Iz vospominanii,” *Novyi mir*, 3 (1946), 117.

Although certainly influenced retrospectively by the image of Dostoevskii as a ‘prophet’ that would express itself after his death, Von Brettsel and Pavlova’s memoirs are in line with many other testimonies about his public readings of those years: they contain the same emotional upheaval, the same enthusiasm mixed with hysteria shared by those who listened to Dostoevskii read in public between 1879 and 1880. The reasons for these reactions are to be sought not only in the audience’s aesthetic discernment, or in the ideological convergence or in the ease of identification with Dostoevskii’s characters, but also in the involvement of the audience with Dostoevskii’s persona, who by now had assumed the role of a ‘public celebrity.’

## 2. DISCOVERING THE REAL READER: THE DIARY OF A WRITER AS WORKSHOP

If the 1860s and early 1870s novels had consolidated his fame as a novelist, the real crowning of Dostoevskii’s career came relatively late, with the publication of *The Diary of a Writer*, in 1876-1877. Dostoevskii’s idea to publish a periodical that was meant not as a news journal, but as a “diary in the full sense of the word,”<sup>60</sup> proved to be successful. Every month, in the pages of *Diary*, Dostoevskii dealt with the most burning issues of current reality, starting from his personal experience as a man and a writer, using both journalistic and artistic language: as Gary Saul Morson states, in *The Diary of a Writer*, the “I” of the journalist and the “I” of the novelist alternate to achieve the same effect on the reader who becomes capable of reading not only vertically but also horizontally, across genres.<sup>61</sup>

Dostoevskii devoted himself exclusively to this creature for two years, as the sole author of all the articles and the only person in charge (together with his wife) of all phases of its editing, promotion, and distribution to the public. Completed on the 24<sup>th</sup> or 25<sup>th</sup> of each month, each issue of *The Diary of a Writer* was subjected to preliminary censure by N. A. Ratynskii. Once the censor approved it, the issue came out on the 29<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> from V. V. Obolenskii’s printing house, having a maximum format of two printer’s sheets (about 32 pages) and thus being much smaller than the standard format of thick journals (which had up to 40 printer’s sheets). It was then distributed by subscription or retail sales, although some letters show that Dostoevskii attempted to spread his new publication through special part-

<sup>60</sup> See Dostoevskii’s letter to Vsevolod Solov’ev, 11 January 1876 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 270).

<sup>61</sup> G. S. Morson, “Dostoevsky’s Great Experiment. Introductory Study,” in F. Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary*, Volume One, 1873-1876, trans. Kenneth Lanz (Evanston, 1993), XXXIII. On the *Diary of a Writer* see also I. L. Volgin, *Dostoevskii-zhurnal’ist (“Dnevnik pisatel’ia” i russkaia obshchestvennost’)* (Moscow, 1982); D. A. Martinsen, “Dostoevskii’s *Diary of a Writer*: Journal of the 1870s,” *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, ed. by D. A. Martinsen (Cambridge, 1998), 150-168; R. Vassena, *Reawakening National Identity. Dostoevskii’s Diary of a Writer and its Impact on Russian Society* (Bern, 2007).

nerships with publishers of other magazines from the Russian provinces.<sup>62</sup> The circulation of the first January 1876 issue was set at two thousand copies, but the demand of the public immediately forced Dostoevskii to proceed to a second, and in some cases a third, reprint. Sources report about 1,982 subscribers at the end of 1876, to whom some 2,000 copies for retail sale should be added; in 1877, up to 3,000 copies were printed each month for subscribers and just as many for retail sale.<sup>63</sup> If we consider the runs of the thick journals of the time that, in contrast to *The Diary of a Writer*, had a substantial editorial apparatus, Dostoevskii's enterprise appears even more remarkable: adding up the various reprints, the run of *The Diary of a Writer* oscillated between 4,000 and 6,000 copies per month, while, for example, that of *Otechestvennye zapiski* reached about 8,000 subscription copies, without counting retail sales.<sup>64</sup> In any case, the total number of *Diary* readers was greater than just the amount of published copies, for at least three reasons: first, copies kept in public institutions (which 1877 Igor' Volgin calculates at 161 copies, distributed in different amounts to libraries, schools, editorial offices, military institutes, courts, and charitable associations<sup>65</sup>) were available to more readers; second, it was common practice (especially in the provinces) to share one single copy and take turns reading it, as suggested by some letters from the *Diary* readers;<sup>66</sup> finally, a single copy of the *Diary* could be used in group readings, as the Kharkiv activist educator Khristina Alchevskaia mentions in her letter to Dostoevskii of 19 April 1876.<sup>67</sup>

A. G. Dostoevskaia took charge of the promotional and accounting part of the work. As the person who was mainly in charge of shipping and distributing *The Diary of a Writer*, Anna Grigor'evna was responsible for establishing as many contacts as possible with the booksellers from all the cities in Russia:

62 See I. L. Volgin, "Redaktsionnyi arkhiv *Dnevnik*a pisatel'ia (1876-1877)," *Russkaia literatura*, 1 (1974), 154-158.

63 Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 300; M. A. Aleksandrov, "F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh tipografskogo naborshchika v 1872-1881 godakh," in *F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, vol. 2, 279, 280.

64 In 1877 N. K. Mikhailovskii himself hypothesized that about 8,000 subscriptions corresponded to around 100,000 readers, since each copy was read by several people (N. K. Mikhailovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* [St. Petersburg, 1913], vol. 10, 812). On the success of *Otechestvennye zapiski* see R. J. Ware, "A Russian Journal and Its Public: *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 1868-1884," *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, 14 (1981), 121-146.

65 Volgin, "Redaktsionnyi arkhiv *Dnevnik*a pisatel'ia (1876-1877)," 159.

66 See for instance the letter written to Dostoevskii by a teacher from Kishenev, L. S. Matseevich, on March 7, 1876: "I wish to thank you most sincerely for me and for all those who asked me to read your *Diary*" (IRLI, f. 100, n. 29775).

67 Kh. D. Alchevskaia, *Peredumannoe i perezhitoe. Dnevnik, pis'ma, vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1912), 68-69.

The *Diary* is going very well. In addition to yearly subscribers (up to one and a half thousand), the retail is going very well. We print six thousand copies of the *Diary* and we sell almost all of them. Yet, since I am not content with the circulation of the *Diary* in Petersburg and Moscow, I distribute it all over the provinces and I sent it to some librarians with whom I am acquainted in Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov and Kazan'. I'm receiving good news from there: for instance, in just a few days Dubrovin in Kazan' sold 125 copies of one issue and he asked me to dispatch to him up to one hundred copies every month, and in the other cities the retail is going very successfully as well.<sup>68</sup>

Anna Grigor'evna's accuracy and precision in her task are evidenced by some of her notebooks, where she noted the addresses of those who subscribed to *The Diary of a Writer* in 1877: according to Volgin's calculations, there were 478 subscribers in the cities of Moscow and Petersburg and 1,542 in the provinces.<sup>69</sup> The data reported by Volgin provide an idea of how vast a geographical area the distribution of the *Diary* covered and, in particular, of the greater amount of subscribers in the provinces compared to those from the capitals: Dostoevskii himself would implicitly identify the reasons for this ratio in that the "genuinely Russian people,"<sup>70</sup> who were more inclined to accept his message, resided in the provinces and not in the large Europeanized cities.

At any rate, the diffusion of *The Diary of a Writer* in the Russian provinces probably had other more practical reasons: the first lies in its low cost (2 roubles for the annual subscription, and 30 kopecks for each single issue), competitive with respect to the prices of thick journals<sup>71</sup> to which the *Diary*, different in its format but not in the type of content, was a valid alternative.<sup>72</sup> The second reason may lie in the cultural isolation that afflicted the provinces, and that led the most educated provincial readers to welcome with particular enthusiasm any possibility of contact with other representatives of the intelligentsia. In this regard, Khristina Alchevskaia was among the first to express her gratitude to Dostoevskii for having changed his image

68 Letter from A. G. Dostoevskaia to A. M. Dostoevskii, 11 March 1876 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 447).

69 I. L. Volgin, "Redaktsionnyi arkhiv Dnevnika pisatel'ia," *Russkaia literatura*, 1 (1974), 158-159.

70 See Dostoevskii's 17 December 1877 letter to S. Ianovskii (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 401).

71 For example, the cost of yearly subscription to *Otechestvennye zapiski* was 14 roubles and 40 kopecks (Ware, "A Russian Journal and Its Public," 131).

72 See for example the letter written to Dostoevskii by A. Guladze from Kutais, who asked to send the *Diary of a Writer* as it was useful for "those youths who do not have the opportunity to buy thick journals because of their high cost" (Volgin, "Redaktsionnyi arkhiv Dnevnika pisatel'ia (1876-1877)," 156).

through *The Diary of a Writer*. He had overcome the myth of abstractness and unattainability to which every writer was long relegated by the provincial reader:

To us, provincial people, every writer seems something nearly mythical, inaccessible, unimaginable, and mysterious. We just get to read him, that's all! We are deprived of the possibility of seeing, hearing, or corresponding with him. What would happen to a writer if provincial people attacked him with their letters? Some satirists said that Pisarev drowned not in a river, but in the sea of letters he received from the provinces.<sup>73</sup>

Alchevskaia's words proved prophetic: attracted by the name of the novelist, readers responded enthusiastically, writing to Dostoevskii from every corner of Russia and in some cases even contributing concretely to the journal. Although Dostoevskii spoke with amazement of "hundreds of letters"<sup>74</sup>, and that same information appears in other contemporary and belated sources,<sup>75</sup> archives yield evidence of 204 letters received during the publica-

<sup>73</sup> "Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 448. Alchevskaia presumably referred to the success that the radical critic D. I. Pisarev had achieved in the 1860s as a contributor to the magazine *Russkoe slovo* (1859-1866), not without an ironic reference to his tragic death by drowning, which occurred in 1868.

<sup>74</sup> See Dostoevskii's letter to Liudmila Ozhigina dated 17 December 1877: "The *Diary* has also given me many happy moments, specifically by allowing me to find out how educated society is in sympathy with my activity. I have received hundreds of letters from all over Russia and have learned a great deal that I had not previously known" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 399). On the same day he wrote to Stepan Ianovskii: "Approving letters, and ones even sincerely expressing love, have come to me by the hundreds. Since October, when I announced the cessation of publication, they have been coming daily, from all over Russia, from all (the most diverse) classes of society, with regrets and with requests not to give it up" (*Ibid.*, 400).

<sup>75</sup> So remembers the typesetter M. A. Aleksandrov: "Towards the end of the first year of publication of *Diary of a Writer*, which had become a considerable phenomenon in the second year, a relationship between Fedor Mikhailovich and his readers developed that had no equal in Russia: readers showered him with letters and cards thanking him for the extraordinary 'moral food' represented by *The Diary of a Writer*" (Aleksandrov, "F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh tipografskogo naborshchika v 1872-1881 godakh," 281). Strakhov also recalls this phenomenon in similar terms: "In recent years, particularly since the publication of *The Diary of a Writer*, Dostoevskii was showered with letters and visits. He received missives from completely unknown people from all over Petersburg and from every part of Russia. They addressed him with requests for help, since he devotedly supported the poor and sympathized with the difficulties and misfortunes of others; but they also constantly came to express their admiration, with questions, with complaints about others, or with objections to his work. The letters were also similar. He had to discuss, to ask, he received many demonstrations of the fact that his words had not gone unnoticed, he met many people who brought him comfort with their own qualities of mind" (Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 519). See also the memoirs of E. P. Letkova-Sultanova: "No Russian writer was ever so successful in the so-called 'society' as Dostoevskii was [...]. Hundreds of letters were written to him, and he considered it his duty to answer; since the morning he was introduced to people, old and young, looking for an answer to the questions that afflicted them, or wishing to express their devotion, and he welcomed



tion of *The Diary of a Writer*. The amount includes various types of letters: letters on current issues dealt with in the pages of *The Diary of a Writer*; letters which, apart from requesting a subscription, also included a brief opinion on the journal; letters with requests for specific topics that the journal might address; and finally, confessional letters with requests for moral and spiritual advice, as well as letters with requests for material assistance.

Regarding the places of origin of the letters, 99 come from Petersburg and Moscow, and the remaining 105 from other Russian cities and provinces. Among the letters, 176 are signed while 28 are initialled or remain completely anonymous, even if some of the correspondents who initially preferred to remain anonymous revealed their name in a subsequent letter. The majority of those who wrote to Dostoevskii were students, mainly males, and well-represented professional categories among his correspondents are aspiring journalists, writers, and teachers, followed by clergymen and employees, as well as (to a lesser extent) doctors, lawyers, artists, soldiers and—even if only in a couple of cases—workers and peasants.

To fully grasp the significance of the phenomenon of the letters written by the readers of *The Diary of a Writer*, it is necessary to consider things from a dual point of view: firstly, from the microcontext of Dostoevskii's literary and journalistic activity; secondly, from the macrocontext of the Russian literary world of the 1870s, especially vis-à-vis the European one. As for the former, the catalogue of Dostoevskii's archival materials, released in 1957 by V. S. Nechaeva, can be of help. It has a record of all the letters (over five hundred) received by Dostoevskii over about forty years of his career, each with a brief description of their content. Of these, more than two hundred concern the years 1876-1877; of the remaining ones, at least two hundred others are from 1878-1880; about a hundred concern preceding years. To this figure, one should add a certain number of letters that have not reached us, of which we find evidence in the notes to Dostoevskii's correspondence in the academic edition of his complete works. In addition to the clear numerical majority of letters dated from 1876 compared to those of previous years, also worthy of note are the new type of correspondent represented therein (i.e. those not pertaining to Dostoevskii's circle of family members, friends and acquaintances) and the new type of content covered in the letters: before 1876, the letters dealt mainly with family or professional matters, while after 1876 many letters touched on the current topics dealt with in the pages of the *Diary*.

As has been said, Dostoevskii himself, on several occasions, expressed his amazement at the quantity of letters he received, and his contemporaries similarly noted the exceptionality of the phenomenon. The letters to

---

them all, listened to everyone, believed it his duty not to reject anyone." (*F. M. Dostoevskii v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, vol. 2, 457). According to A. S. Dolinin, Dostoevskii received up to 400 letters a year (see *F. M. Dostoevskii, Pis'ma* [Moscow, 1928-1956], vol. 3, 5). On the reasons for the loss of part of the letters there is no reliable source.

Dostoevskii often open with *captatio benevolentiae* formulas showing that the correspondent was aware that they were resorting to an unorthodox practice, at least in Russia:

You will certainly be amazed at my impudence [...] I address you as my favourite writer and I ask you to set a day and an hour when you are free to see me. If my idea is too insolent, I ask you to excuse it due to my young age and ignorance of good manners. Well, in France people turn to Proudhon for advice, not to mention Dumas [...] why then should I not address you as a mature and educated person, with the request to be my mentor?<sup>76</sup>

It is precisely these concurring sources that suggest Dostoevskii's case represents something, if not unique, then at least out of the ordinary: the archival collections of other Russian writers that we have consulted up to now endorse this thesis, which can be further verified in the future.<sup>77</sup> By restricting the field of inquiry exclusively to the realm of journalism, the hypothesis that other journals received mail from their readers is certainly plausible and partly verified: for example, between the 1870s and the 1880s, many wrote to the editors of *Otechestvennyye zapiski* to praise the ideas expressed in the journal, ask for advice on what to read, or communicate their intention to dedicate themselves to the cause of the people.<sup>78</sup> The decline of the traditional system of values and the diffusion of a utilitarian and materialistic concept of life intensified the need to find new points of reference, which could substitute for those, by now ineffective, of the past; in a similar context, a 'monojournal' such as *The Diary of a Writer* encouraged the establishment of an almost personal relationship between the author and the reader.

During the same period, the context was quite different in Europe, where writing to authors had been an observable practice, at least in France, since as early as the end of the eighteenth century. Critical studies dedicated to Rousseau, Dumas, Sue, Balzac in France show how the deep social and cultural but also literary motivations that led the readers of the time to write to their favourite authors changed and developed in line with, on the one hand, the evolution of the genre of the novel and, on the other, the con-

<sup>76</sup> S. E. Lur'e's letter to Dostoevskii, 25 March 1876, in Volgin, "Pis'ma chitatelei k F. M. Dostoevskomu," *Voprosy literatury*, 9 (1971), 181-182.

<sup>77</sup> Dostoevskii's only other contemporary writer who would also become the recipient of not hundreds but thousands of letters from strangers would be Lev Tolstoi, though only starting from the late nineteenth century. So far, our research has focused on Tolstoi's collected correspondence, and in part on those of Nekrasov and Turgenev.

<sup>78</sup> Ware, "A Russian Journal and Its Public." On the popularity of thick journals in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century see Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 32-47.

secration of the man of letters (as a public authority).<sup>79</sup> Even if the letters that Dostoevskii received from his readers may be traced back to the same reasons—notwithstanding the specificity of the Russian socio-cultural context compared to the European one—this phenomenon remains inextricably linked to the nature of *The Diary of a Writer*: a delicate combination of different genres, from autobiographical prose to fiction, political pamphlet and feuilleton, thanks to which the author's persona is communicated to the reader, conveying an impression of familiarity and authority at the same time. Through the *Diary*, the novelist who, probing the depths of the soul of his heroes had repeatedly forced his readers to “talk with their own conscience,”<sup>80</sup> finally revealed a man in flesh and blood. The feeling of having entered into communion with him led some to develop a sort of ‘symbiosis’ with his persona, which in many cases turned into a real cult. There were those who considered the renewal of the subscription as a moral duty;<sup>81</sup> those who expected Dostoevskii to provide them with spiritual help; those who solemnly swore loyalty to him;<sup>82</sup> those who showed fetishistic behaviours<sup>83</sup> or mythomania, transposing autobiographical episodes reported in *The Diary of a Writer* into their own life;<sup>84</sup> and even those who compared Dostoevskii to Christ<sup>85</sup> or a prophet and the *Diary* to the Holy Scriptures:

79 See R. Darnton, “Readers Respond to Rousseau: The Fabrication of Romantic Sensitivity,” in Idem, *The Great Massacre and Other Episodes of French Cultural History* (New York, 1984), 215-225; J. Smith Allen, *In the Public Eye. A History of Reading in Modern France, 1800-1940* (Princeton, 1991); J.-P. Galvan, *Les mystères de Paris. Eugène Sue et ses lecteurs* (Paris, 1998); J. Lyon-Caen, *La lecture et la vie. Les usages du roman au temps de Balzac* (Paris, 2006). On the writer as a secular version of ‘spiritual authority’ in modern France see P. Bénichou, *The Consecration of the Writer 1750-1830* (Lincoln, NE, 1999).

80 Kharkiv University's Professor N. N. Beketov (1827-1911) wrote to Dostoevskii on 23 February 1877: “While reading your works one talks with his own conscience. Such is their universal meaning” (I. L. Volgin, “Dostoevskii i russkoe obshchestvo [Dnevnik pisatel'ia 1876-1877 godov v otsenakh sovremennikov],” *Russkaia literatura*, 3 [1976], 123).

81 See the letter written between August and September 1877 by the provincial reader Iu. Miuller from Krestsy: “Dear Mr. Fedor Mikhailovich! I have recently become acquainted with your *Diary of a Writer* of the last year by chance, and in consequence of that I deem it a duty, precisely a duty, to subscribe it for the current year. In our everyday, godforsaken life, honest beliefs such as yours are as necessary as any moral shaking.” (Dostoevskii, *Pis'ma*, vol. 3, 390).

82 See the letter from anonymous woman “A. M.” from St. Petersburg to Dostoevskii, 9 February 1876, in “Epistoliarne materialy,” *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (St. Petersburg, 1992), vol. 10, 206.

83 “How I will treasure your letter! I shall take care of it as of a holy thing!” the gymnasium student V. Fausek wrote to Dostoevskii on 30 October 1876. See R. Vassena, “Vy ne mozhetе ne sochuvstvovat' nam, bednym studentam. Pis'ma studentov k Dostoevskomu,” *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (St. Petersburg, 2005), vol. 17, 332. Judith Lyon-Caen points to fetishistic collection of portraits or autographs as one of the practices that mark the consecration of the literati in early nineteenth-century France (Lyon-Caen, *La lecture et la vie*, 109).

84 In her 28-29 March 1877 letter to Dostoevskii, the aforementioned Sofia Lur'e wrote about an event happened to her in a library in Minsk that resembled a similar one reported by the *Diary* author in the October 1876 issue.

85 Vassena, “Vy ne mozhetе ne sochuvstvovat' nam, bednym studentam. Pis'ma studentov k Dostoevskomu,” 332.

Dear Mr. Fedor Mikhailovich,

In our contemporary rotten press you appear as an Ancient Prophet [...]. When our printed word lost its individuality to the point of worthlessness, you alone began, away from this trend, 'to proclaim the eternal teachings of love and truth' in your *Diary*. You rightly limited each issue of the *Diary* to 1 or 2 quarto pages. This is what, alongside its contents of course, makes us involuntarily respect every word in it, and we read it as if it were the Holy Scripture.<sup>86</sup>

There were aspects of Dostoevskii's editorial policy that most likely encouraged the phenomenon of letter-writing. Firstly, the announcements advertising *The Diary of a Writer* featured Dostoevskii's personal address at the bottom, to which subscription requests had to be addressed. Even casually seeing the address on the pages of a newspaper was sometimes enough to stimulate the reader's desire to personally verify if the 'real' Dostoevskii was up to his fame:

While glancing through the newspapers with the hope to find some advertisements by any benefactor, I casually came across your surname and address. You yourself experienced many things in your life, therefore you can also understand the anguish of another, though unknown, man.<sup>87</sup>

No less effective were those sections from 1877 specifically dedicated "To the readers," in which Dostoevskii communicated directly with his audience, informing them of the state of his health or apologizing for the delay in his answers. In any case, it was in May 1876 that Dostoevskii inaugurated the practice of publishing extracts from his readers' letters, using them to start off his reflections on current issues. In doing so, he probably stimulated the initiative of other readers; for example, a Kiev librarian, who wrote to him the following month, started out in these terms: "Fedor Mikhailovich! Apparently, many people write to you. So do I."<sup>88</sup>

Dostoevskii kept the letters he received in high esteem: in more than one case, he used them as ideas for his reflections, answering them privately or publicly, and sometimes even going so far as to elevate the authors

86 Letter from Kartashov, Dmitrovsk ("Epistoliarne materialy," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* [St. Petersburg, 1992], vol. 10, 206–07).

87 Letter of 13 November 1876 from G. Glinskii, a student of the St. Petersburg Imperial Medical Academy. See Vassena, "Vy ne mozhetе ne sochuvstvovat' nam, bednym studentam. Pis'ma studentov k Dostoevskomu," 334.

88 Letter to Dostoevskii written by Grebtsov from Kiev, 8 June 1876 ("Neizdannye pis'ma k Dostoevskomu," in S. V. Belov (ed.), *Dostoevskii i ego vremia* [Leningrad, 1971], 272–273).

to 'heroes' of *The Diary of a Writer*.<sup>89</sup> Thanks to the letters of his readers, Dostoevskii managed to delve into the causes of the main social scourge that the *Diary* intended to eradicate: dissociation (*obosoblenie*), a pervasive tendency to break links with the past and to move away from the Russian Orthodox tradition and the moral values it preserved.<sup>90</sup> Directly feeling the moods of different parts of the Russian society allowed Dostoevskii to better calibrate the transmission of *Diary of a Writer's* educational message and to carry out his main task, which he formulated in clinical terms:

It is not enough to accuse, one must seek remedies as well. I think that there are remedies: they are to be found among the *narod*, in the things the *narod* hold sacred, and in our joining with the *narod*. But... but more about that later. I undertook my *Diary* in part for the purpose of speaking about these remedies, insofar as my abilities permit me.<sup>91</sup>

The letters of his readers thus assume a double meaning: they are not to be considered simply a reaction to *The Diary of a Writer*, because, at the same time, they actively contributed to the realization of its purpose. For example, the letters that Dostoevskii received during 1876 helped him shape the 1877 edition of the *Diary*, in which, intervening in the debate on the conflict between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire, he consciously touched his audience's most sensitive spots. One could speak of a sort of "imagined community"<sup>92</sup> of the *Diary* readers, united at once by a nationalistic ideology and a submissive docility that would allow them be 'awakened' by the 'logic of the heart' of Dostoevskii's discourse. Thus a school teacher from the Tver' region wrote, following the first two years of the publication:

---

89 Dostoevskii planned to devote one section of the *Diary* to his correspondence with readers, as he writes to his wife on June 21, 1876: "It's too bad, dear, that you didn't send me the letter by the provincial who criticizes me. I need it for the *Diary*. There's going to be a section there called 'A Reply to Letters that I Have Received'" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 4, 313). This project was not ultimately carried out.

90 "Judging only by the letters I receive personally, I could draw a conclusion about one extremely important fact of our Russian life which I have already hinted at indirectly not long ago: namely, that everyone is restless, everyone wants to participate in everything, everyone wants to express an opinion and state his views; the one thing that I cannot make up my mind about is whether each person wants to dissociate himself through his opinions or join his voice in one common, harmonious choir." F. Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*. Translated and annotated by K. Lantz (Evanston, Ill., 1994), 472. On how social disintegrations reflected in Dostoevskii's writing style see K. Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration: Dostoevsky and the Problem of Genre in the 1870s* (Evanston, Illinois, 2013).

91 Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, 740.

92 B. Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, New York, 1991).

I cannot but thank you for your sincere, straightforward, and sobering words. In the thick fog your words always touched first the heart, and subsequently the mind came into its own and was brightened with the logic of your thought.<sup>93</sup>

In a similar way, others before him had expressed their gratitude, such as this reader from Mirgorod:

I cannot refrain from expressing my sincere gratitude for the immense happiness I felt reading your *Diary*, which forced me, and anyone who read it, to cry and laugh. I happened to read each issue as many as three times, and every time I felt a unique joy, for we have such great writers, who [are able to] sober the mind and heart.<sup>94</sup>

Like provincial readers, noble and educated readers, such as the painter Ekaterina F. Iunge (1843-1913), could not escape its fascination even as they sensed the utopian character of this apparent 'logic':

During the war, when sometimes the soul was so afflicted as to leave me without strength, only *The Diary of a Writer* gave me relief. Sometimes I happened to read and think: "All this is utopia," but meanwhile inside you could feel something sweet and consoling, because there you saw a heart that loved.<sup>95</sup>

In the author's final years, critics located the main reason for Dostoevskii's popularity precisely in his being a spokesman for the utopian image of a severe but just Russia, powerful but magnanimous, ready for war but a guarantor of peace: "Not the whole of Dostoevskii's artistic personality, but only some of his ideas are successful; [...] they applaud him not for what is dear to him, but for what is dear to those who applaud him".<sup>96</sup> Although his correspondents represent only a portion of *The Diary of a Writer's* audience, their letters provide us with a certain picture of Russian society in the second half of the 1870s, specifically of some specific categories of readers fascinated by Dostoevskii's message. Particularly noteworthy are the letters of female

93 Letter to Dostoevskii written by N. Gorelov from Torzhok, 26 January 1878 (Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva [RGALI], Moscow, f. 212, d. 1 69). Partly published: Volgin, "Dostoevskii i russkoe obshchestvo," 135).

94 Letter to Dostoevskii by M.M. Danilevskii from Mirgorod, 13 November 1876 (IRLI, f. 100, n. 29690). Partly published: Volgin, "Dostoevskii i russkoe obshchestvo," 133.

95 See E. F. Iunge's undated letter to A.I. Tolstaia ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 497).

96 S. A. Vengerov, "Dostoevskii i ego populiarnost' v poslednie gody," *Otklik: Literaturnyi sbornik v pol'zu studentov i slushatel'nits vysshikh zhenskikh kursov g. S.-Peterburga* (St. Petersburg, 1881), 280.

readers, which reveal signs of a new social awareness and a specific way to relate to journalism and literature, which may constitute a useful, though not exhaustive, comparison with other periods examined in this volume.

### 3. THE FEMALE READERS OF THE DIARY OF A WRITER

*The Diary of a Writer* has given me the means to see the Russian woman at closer hand; I have received some remarkable letters; they ask me, who know so little, 'What is to be done?' I value these questions, and by being frank I try to compensate for my lack of knowledge in answers.<sup>97</sup>

This author's confession opened the *Diary* issue of May 1876. We have already discussed elsewhere the Dostoevskian conception of the social role of women and the way it was expressed in *The Diary of a Writer*.<sup>98</sup> Here it may be appropriate to summarize the distinctive features of women's letters. It is easy to distinguish two categories of letters, even if the division is not to be understood in a rigid way: on the one hand, confessional letters in which the correspondents pose questions of a moral and spiritual nature to Dostoevskii; on the other, letters dedicated to the problem of the role of women in society, in terms of work, civil rights, married life, and education. What unites both categories is their high degree of identification with the female characters created by the novelist, who in the *Diary* seemed to have revealed his true face: "Then you are as good in life as you are in your novels!".<sup>99</sup>

One of the first correspondents of *The Diary of a Writer* was an anonymous young woman from St. Petersburg, A. M., who, in her letter of 9 February 1876, clearly described the various phases that had marked her initial 'meeting' with the novelist and, later, the man himself: first, the reading of his novels, of which the correspondent herself felt to be a protagonist and to which she traced the origins of her 'symbiosis' with Dostoevskii ("I came out entirely from the pages of your works. I am your creation and your semblance too"<sup>100</sup>); then, the contemplation of the portrait of Dostoevskii painted by V. G. Perov and shown at the Second Wanderers' Exhibition in St. Petersburg in 1872 ("In it I see your soul, your inner appearance, I see you exactly as you must be"<sup>101</sup>), and finally the *Diary's* 'revelation'. Precisely because of this acquired intimacy, the reader felt entitled to ask Dostoevskii

97 Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary*, 501-502.

98 Vassena, *Reawakening National Identity*, 147-167.

99 Letter to Dostoevskii by K. V. Nazar'eva from St. Petersburg, 7 February 1877. Volgin, "Pis'ma chitatelei k F. M. Dostoevskomu," 180.

100 "Epistoliarne materialy," 204.

101 Ibid.

to explicitly address in *The Diary of a Writer* the problem of the condition of women.<sup>102</sup> This feeling of symbiosis with Dostoevskii also led some readers to address him with a certain temerity and a peremptory tone, especially after the praises he addressed to women from the pages of the May and June 1876 issue, in relation to the nascent *Movement for the Liberation of the Slavic Brothers*:

I want, I demand the truth from you, and you must tell me this in the name of precisely that Christian love you preach [...] Why so much praise for women? Out of respect for their actual qualities and strengths, or was it just a momentary fashion, not without a hidden hint of irony? Or is it a fanciful theory, a topic that one can modify as one likes [...] but there can be a cruel gap between saying and doing...Do not be offended by my lack of trust and the hardness of my questions, we have been deceived so many times that we no longer believe solely in beautiful words, however spoken with affection. To tell you the truth, I turned to you because one has to, really has to turn to someone, and I do not know anyone, but you seem more sincere, and after all I believe you more than I do others.<sup>103</sup>

The letters of women correspondents show an acute sense of disillusionment, perhaps as a result of a now extinct infatuation with radical ideas about gender equality that had spread in the 1860s. From Dostoevskii, women demand not only coherence: they request a new word, which may rise above those who, from the stands and in the press, pontificate on the rights or duties of women. Thus writes an anonymous woman from Kiev after reading the July-August 1876 issue of the *Diary*, in which Dostoevskii entrusts a rather sharp statement on the vocation of women to the voice of the Paradoxicalist, the author's imaginary interlocutor of sorts:

Dear Mr. Fedor Mikhailovich!

I subscribe to your *Diary*, sometimes I read it with pleasure, sometimes even with enthusiasm, as for example the article "On Love of the People" in the February issue. As I love reading you and I never forget you as the author of *Notes from the House of the Dead*, I got very upset at reading your thoughts about the need for every woman to bear as many children as possible (July-August). Although you call the author of this statement a Paradoxicalist, what he says is so close to some of your beloved views

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 205-206.

<sup>103</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii from St. Petersburg, signed "Deeply respecting you" (Gluboko uvazhaiushchaia vas), 4 September 1876, (IRLI, f. 100, n. 29948).



(for instance, about children), that I easily traced the reflection about the need to bear children back to your own theories. [...] Repudiate your recipe for women's happiness, otherwise I will stop reading you, even if that would be a great loss for me in view of my sympathy for many of your ideas.<sup>104</sup>

The letters written by women readers differ from those written by men in their mode of reading, one absolute and all-encompassing, intending to interpret every word of the *Diary* as the literal expression of the author's opinion. The correspondents charge Dostoevskii with the task of answering the most urgent questions, without distinction—whether they dealt with the social dimension of women or with more intimate aspects:

Will you answer me, then? Advise me, dear Mr. Dostoevskii, on how to recover my intellectual abilities in my studies. How can one obtain strength and patience, and finally tell me, in conscience, can a person live when she realizes that she is not worthy of living, when she has lost hope in herself and has been left only with contempt for her own misery? I am sure of your clemency, Mr. Dostoevskii; you alone can understand every state of the human soul!<sup>105</sup>

This exclusive talent attributed to Dostoevskii by the reader brings us back to that 'rhetoric of pain' towards which women showed to be particularly sensitive. Since the days of *Poor Folk*, the critics had focused their attention on Dostoevskii's mastery in describing human suffering: commenting on the famous scene of Makar Devushkin's ripped button, Vissarion Belinskii had identified the characteristic of the author's genius in his compassion for the weak;<sup>106</sup> speaking of the works that had followed *Poor Folk* and which had marked the end of the hopes he had first placed in the young writer, Belinskii had then spoken of some of his characters' "nervous" nature;<sup>107</sup> on the subject of *The Insulted and the Injured*, Nikolai Dobroliubov had shifted his attention to the problem of the reception of Dostoevskii's works, highlighting as a specific feature his tone capable of provoking "nervous pain," which tormented the reader to such an extent

<sup>104</sup> Letter of 29 September 1876, signed "One of your subscribers." First published in Vassena, *Reawakening National Identity*, 159-160.

<sup>105</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii written by O. A. Antipova from St. Petersburg (Vassena, "Vy ne mozhete ne sochuvstvovat' nam, bednym studentam. Pis'ma studentov k Dostoevskomu," 340).

<sup>106</sup> V. G. Belinskii, "Peterburgskii sbornik" (1846), in Idem, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 13 vols. (Moscow, 1953-1959), vol. 9, 555-563.

<sup>107</sup> See Belinskii's letter to P. V. Annenkov, 20 November 1847 (Belinskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 12, 430). Belinskii referred to the characters of *The Landlady (Khoziaika)*.

that he was forced to explore the labyrinths of his own “underground”.<sup>108</sup> In the following years, it was common among critics to refer to Dostoevskii’s novels in such terms as “painful” or “nervous,” epithets actually due more to the author’s *Weltanschauung* than to his narrative style, until in 1875 Aleksandr Skabichevskii coined the evocative image of the two “doubles” that would cohabit the very personality of the writer: the “bright double” and the “gloomy double”.<sup>109</sup> If, as we have seen, some readers shared the perplexities of the critics, women readers seemed more inclined to see in the depth of his analysis proof of Dostoevskii’s sincere dedication to those who suffer, all the more authentic because it arose from personal experience: “You are the poet of suffering; you are the nicest, the deepest Russian writer. You have suffered for your talent. That is why your works turn man upside down, and force him to look inside himself with terror”.<sup>110</sup>

Many women confess they have no one else to turn to: “Speak, because I have nobody to ask”;<sup>111</sup> “I believe in you as no other person in the world; nobody illuminates my spirit like you do.”<sup>112</sup> The *Diary* author becomes, for his female correspondents, a more authoritative figure than their families and turns into an object of intense trust, going far beyond the limits of the traditional author-reader relationship. Female readers do not hesitate to unveil the darker sides of their personality: convinced that the artistic talent of Dostoevskii is able to solve not only important social issues, but also the most intimate problems both daily and private, they try to involve him in their family or romantic dramas, they confess to him their anxieties about the future, they ask him to be their guide, they seek advice, they await a word of comfort with confidence. These letters reflect the gradual transition from admiration for the novelist to an increasingly all-encompassing involvement with Dostoevskii’s persona, which led many to attribute to him a sort of “omnipotence,” which he himself could not believe.<sup>113</sup> Admiration

<sup>108</sup> N. A. Dobroliubov, “Zabitye liudi” (1861), in Idem, *Pervoe polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 4 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1911), vol. 4., 855-912.

<sup>109</sup> “Zauriadnyi chitatel’,” “Mysli po povodu tekushchei literatury,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 6 February 1875, n. 35 e “O g. Dostoevskom voobshche i o romane *Podrostok*,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 9 January 1876.

<sup>110</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii written by K. V. Nazar’eva from St. Petersburg, 3 February 1877 (Volgin, “Pis’ma chitatelei k F. M. Dostoevskomu,” 180).

<sup>111</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii written by L. F. Surazhevskaiia from Tver’, 17 December 1876 (“Neizdannye pis’ma k Dostoevskomu,” *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* [Leningrad, 1976], vol. 2, 309).

<sup>112</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii written by the listener of Bestuzhev Courses A. I. Kurnosova, 11 January 1880. See I.L. Volgin, *Poslednii god Dostoevskogo* (Moscow, 2010), 91-99, 140.

<sup>113</sup> See what Dostoevskii wrote to M. A. Iazykov on 14 July 1878, about the requests for material help he kept receiving from readers: ““You” they say, “are righteous, kind, and sincere person—that is clear from everything you have written, and therefore do a favor for us, too, and find a position” and so on and so forth. Most characteristic of all is that they consider me to have ties to everyone on whom the dispensing of positions depends. I have to write refusals in reply to all these letters, because I can’t carry out even a tenth of the requests, and this has all

for the novelist and the journalist changed into a cult of his personality; the characters created by his imagination became the term of comparison with one's own life, the criterion by which to measure one's anguishes and pains. Such is the case of a reader from Tver', who first calls her family situation more tragic than that which led *The Meek One (Krotkaia)* to commit suicide, and then presses Dostoevskii for his opinion on a type of woman like Anna Karenina:

My children! And to none of them can I give even just one hour of happiness, I do not have the power to save even one of them from the thoughts and fate of your Meek One. At least she was luckier: she did not bear such a weight on her shoulders, she did not have little baby hands reaching out to her, she did not have to say to herself that she had to live. She decided she could not, and threw herself, and did not have to retrace her steps and say to herself "I cannot do it, I cannot—but I will live, I cannot, I cannot—but I must"; and on and on again until the end, until the end [...]. Please forgive my inopportune sincerity, but my mother is dead, my father is far away, and my husband and all the officers are different from me: I would not say anything to them; I do not love them, I do not seek their opinion, I do not want it and I do not fear it. You, on the other hand, I have been listening to you for a long time, and you seem good to me [...] And then: have you read *Anna Karenina*? Do you justify it? You defend Sonia Marmeladova, but would you have a kind word for Anna Karenina? Do you justify the love of a married woman, a mother-woman? Do you? And I am not talking about myself, but this is also an unresolved question for me. So far, no one has dealt with it. They say many things and represent women like Karenina, but they are two completely different things, a woman who leaves her husband, and a woman who stays with her husband but betrays him, and loves another. Is that not so?<sup>114</sup>

Perhaps even to avoid having to answer such questions, in *The Diary of a Writer* Dostoevskii did not explicitly return to the subject of the social role of women. For the Dostoevskii of the late 1870s, not only the progressive ideals of female education, but also the conservative and patriarchal ones,

---

brought me a lot of anguish. I cannot understand why Alfimov appealed to me too, that is, why he too considers me so *omnipotent*" (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 53.)

114 Letter from L. F. Surazhevskaiia from Tver', 17 December 1876 ("Neizdannnye pis'ma k Dostoevskomu," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* [Leningrad, 1976], vol. 2, 307, 308-309). Dostoevskii replied to Surazhevskaiia, but his letter is missing. Surazhevskaiia wrote a second letter, in which she apologized, having learned how difficult it was for Dostoevskii to reply to such letters as her former one (*Ibid.*, 318-319).

such as respect for the paternal will or the need to marry and have children, had to be subordinate to the Orthodox and Pan-Slavistic ideals for which the *Diary* intended to speak. Wishing to educate his female readers, to help them become gradually aware of the ethical problem that was hidden in women's issues and the repercussions that those issues could have for the fate of Russia, Dostoevskii felt it appropriate to maintain contact only with those readers in whom he had glimpsed a serious willingness to be guided. For this reason, he entertained correspondence with at least three of them (S. E. Lur'e from Minsk, A. F. Gerasimova from Kronshdtadt, and O. A. Antipova from St. Petersburg) between 1876 and 1877.<sup>115</sup> The epistolary relationship with these readers must have also partly inspired the writing of the last paragraph of the September 1877 issue of the *Diary of a Writer*, "An Intimation of the Future Educated Russian Man. The Certain Lot of the Future Russian Woman," in which Dostoevskii lays the foundation of that apologia of Russian women that would culminate in the exaltation of Pushkin's "humble" (*smirennaiia*) Tatiana in 1880.

The case of women correspondents thus confirms that the *Diary of a Writer* was in fact a kind of workshop, not only because it allowed its author to immerse himself in current events, to read up on news stories and reflect on the issues that he would later develop in *The Brothers Karamazov*, but also because it allowed him to get in touch with the tastes, problems, and interests of his audience: Dostoevskii then entered the 1880s ready to modulate his new novel on a type of reader whom he had by now begun to know.

#### 4. ON THE SUMMIT OF OLYMPUS. *THE BROTHERS KARAMAZOV* AND THE SPEECH ON PUSHKIN

The success of *The Diary of a Writer* earned Dostoevskii a prominent position in the literary field and a series of prestigious awards. Affiliations with literary associations and charities,<sup>116</sup> participation in public events, invitations to the most exclusive literary salons of the time,<sup>117</sup> contacts with the

<sup>115</sup> On this correspondence see Vassena, *Reawakening National Identity*, 161-167.

<sup>116</sup> As a member of the Literary Fund, Dostoevskii had attended the social dinners organized by the Society for Financial Aid to Needy Writers and Scholars since the beginning of 1878 (see Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 378). In November 1880 Dostoevskii was given a gratuity from the Literary Fund. Another important achievement was, in 1878, his election as a member of the Slavic Benevolent Society and as associate member of the Division of Russian Language and Letters of the Imperial Academy of Sciences (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 11); then, in 1879, his election as a member of the honorary committee of the International Literary Association, founded by Victor Hugo. See Dostoevskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 30/1, 300).

<sup>117</sup> On Dostoevskii's attendance of exclusive literary salons see Tikhomirov, *Dostoevskii na Kuznechnom. Daty. Sobytiia. Liudi*, 73-110, 130-148.

high governmental circles:<sup>118</sup> the last three years of Dostoevskii's life were marked by a series of meaningful encounters, tokens of esteem, meetings with the crowds, in a crescendo of notoriety that contributed, on the one hand, to the serious deterioration of his physical condition but, on the other, to his conquest of a long-pursued state of economic well-being. This also resulted from his new novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, about which even before its publication people were making forecasts:

There, even in this moment, I am looking forward to the new Dostoevskii novel. In recent years, he has suffered from a kind of creative delirium; he writes in this way: first a success, then a failure, then a success again. Now it's the turn of a successful novel—let's hope this is one.<sup>119</sup>

The choice to publish with *Russkii vestnik* was carefully pondered by Dostoevskii, who feared he might be damaged by once again associating his name with a controversial and openly reactionary man like Katkov. In addition to the editor's cold answers about his fee, the proposals that Dostoevskii received from other journals also contributed to his increasing doubts.<sup>120</sup> In the end, however, the economic factor prevailed, and he succeeded in making Katkov agree to publish the book for a fee of 300 roubles per printer's sheet.<sup>121</sup>

On 1 February 1879, in the first issue of *Russkii vestnik*, the first two books of the first part of *The Brothers Karamazov* were published. The earliest testimonies of the reactions of the public come from a few days later: as early as on 8 February, the historian K. N. Bestuzhev-Riumin notes in his diary his positive impression about the figure of Zosima: "I have read [...]"

---

<sup>118</sup> In March 1878, thanks to the mediation of Admiral D. S. Arsen'ev, former tutor to the Grand Dukes Sergei and Pavel, Dostoevskii was invited at least twice to the Winter Palace. In March 1879 he began to attend literary evenings in the Marble Palace as a guest of Grand Duke Konstantin Kontantinovich (cf. Tikhomirov, *Dostoevskii na Kuznechnom. Daty. Sobytiia. Liudi*, 110-130). In this period Dostoevskii also became closer to K. P. Pobedonostsev, whom he had met in 1872. As a member of the State Council and as the Ober-Procurator of the Most Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev played an important role in Dostoevskii's shift to reactionary positions in his late years. Cf. L. Grossman, "Dostoevskii i pravitel'stvennye krugi 1870-kh godov," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Moscow, 1934), vol. 15, 83-123. See also Tikhomirov, *Dostoevskii na Kuznechnom. Daty. Sobytiia. Liudi*, 98-105.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from Vs. Solov'ev to K. N. Leont'ev, 6 January 1879 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 476).

<sup>120</sup> See for example S. A. Iur'ev's proposal to publish Dostoevskii's new novel in the new Moscow journal *Russkaia дума* (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 50-52).

<sup>121</sup> See Dostoevskii's letter to A. G. Dostoevskaia of 22 June 1878 (*Ibid.*, 46). In fact, economic terms were only partially honored by *Russkii vestnik*. In his last letter, written on 26 January 1881, Dostoevskii submitted to N. A. Liubimov his request to pay 4000 roubles, as stated in the contract (*Ibid.*, 309).

*The Brothers Karamazov* (what a magnificent character the *starets* is!)”.<sup>122</sup> A month later, Dostoevskii himself writes with satisfaction about how the novel is producing a furor in St. Petersburg “in the palace, among the reading public, and at public readings,”<sup>123</sup> and a few days later he receives confirmation that the same is happening in Moscow<sup>124</sup> and in the provinces.<sup>125</sup>

The first opportunity for a public reading of the new novel presented itself on 9 March 1879. Sources report that more than six hundred spectators gathered in the Assembly of the Nobility Hall (*Zal Blagorodnogo Sobraniia*) in St. Petersburg, attracted by the illustrious names of the performers in the programme. The presence of Turgenev, triumphantly welcomed back on his return to Russia, led Dostoevskii to carefully weigh his selection: having stepped onto the stage after his rival, who had read the story “The Steward” (*Burmistr*), Dostoevskii read the chapters “The Confession of an Ardent Heart. In Verse” and “The Confession of an Ardent Heart. In Anecdotes” from the third book of the novel, which had only been published a few days earlier in the second issue of *Russkii vestnik*. In the beginning, Dostoevskii’s performance seemed to not to meet the expectations: “It started in a weak and boring way; there was talk of a real devilry, so that I involuntarily thought: here is the man... He points to a sort of apocalypse”.<sup>126</sup> Although it is not possible to establish precisely how Dostoevskii adapted the text, the testimonies of those who were present clearly indicate at what point the audience had to change their mind:

But when it came to Dmitrii Karamazov’s confession, everything suddenly changed. The public was petrified. The painful depth of the feeling of this burning heart was made by the author so credible and artistic... I had never heard anything like it. The way he read the prose, the verses ... the vibration of his vocal organ... that certain characteristic acceleration in the most dramatic passages... it was unbelievable.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>122</sup> Quoted from Institut Russkoi Literatury (Pushkinskii Dom), *Letopis’ zhizni i tvorchestva F. M. Dostoevskogo 1875-1881* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 301.

<sup>123</sup> See Dostoevskii’s letter to V. F. Putsykovich, 12 March 1879 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 75).

<sup>124</sup> See Putsykovich’s reply from Moscow: “Your novel is stirring here such a furor, as in Petersburg” (Letter of 14 March 1879, IRLI, f. 100, n. 29828).

<sup>125</sup> “Fedor Mikhailovch Dostoevskii’s new novel is read with great interest—I cannot meet my acquaintances’ requests to loan copies of *Russkii vestnik* from my library” (Letter from Kh. D. Alchevskaia to A. G. Dostoevskaia, March 1879, “Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov,” 478). See also the letter written on 10 December 1880 to Dostoevskii by A. F. Blagonravov, a doctor from Iur’ev-Polskii: “*The Brothers Karamazov* [...] is read by many even in our most remote province, even though under the guidance of people better able to understand your art” (“Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov,” 490).

<sup>126</sup> D. N. Sadovnikov, “Vstrechi s Turgenevym. ‘Piatnitsy’ u poeta Ia. P. Polonskogo v 1879 godu,” *Russkoe proshloe*, 1 (1923), 75.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.* On 9 March evening see Volgin, *Poslednii god Dostoevskogo*, 91-99.

The extraordinarily fortunate choice of the passage from the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*—the confession of Dmitrii Karamazov to his younger brother Aleksei—which well reflects the particularities of the author's talent and style, and his inspired reading have made a strong impression. During one passage, even our public, usually cold and severe, did not resist and burst into applause.<sup>128</sup>

The dramatic tension of the scene, exacerbated by the decadent setting—the lonely, rotten and semi-destroyed kiosk, the green table with a half-empty cognac bottle—and Dmitrii's state of feverish exaltation was further stressed by the painful and “nervous” interpretation of Dostoevskii: “His nerves and those of the public, from the beginning of the reading, [...] gradually grow more tense, the voice of the author-reader seems to spring, with its painful intensity, from the most secret depths of his soul”.<sup>129</sup> The empathetic power exerted by the scene was such that there was someone who confessed to Dostoevskii they had experienced similar situations: it was the case of a woman who had witnessed the reading of 9 March and who, affected by the story of Katerina Ivanovna and her father, the colonel who had stolen a large sum of money from his regiment's register, wrote to Dostoevskii on 14 March, invoking help for a young man who had stolen from the treasury to support his poor sister.<sup>130</sup> Several people who had attended the *Brothers Karamazov* public readings also wrote similar letters. Their words show that the involvement they felt with the characters of the novel was of a piece with the exaltation that came to them from being in the presence of the writer. The emotional upheaval predominated over the exegetical act, as per this anonymous letter of 6 April 1879, which takes up the ‘logic of the heart’ already described by other readers:

Yesterday I came to the evening just to see you. In fact, I had never seen you before yesterday. Not just me, but many of us came only for this. And everyone is very happy with the love with which you were received. Simply with love, and in no other way. Even Turgenev was welcomed well, with honour, perhaps, with honour, in fact. But there was hardly any heart involved there. He speaks more to the intellect. They welcomed him with respect because one cannot do otherwise; he is a talent. You were instead welcomed with simplicity, love, sincerity, because your

128 *Golos*, 11 March 1879.

129 Letter from N. A. Solov'ev-Nesmelov to I. Z. Surikov, 21 March 1879, (“Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov,” 476). The same effect is reported in Kh. D. Alchevskaia's letter to A. G. Dostoevskaia of the end of March 1879 (Ibid., 478).

130 Letter from V. Bauer to Dostoevskii, 14 March 1879 (RGALI, f. 212, op. 1, d. 59).

talent is so simple, lovable, sincere. With you, one cannot do anything else but tell you everything one has in his heart [...]. Fedor Mikhailovich! Now you have written a new novel, everyone is reading it: in libraries it is impossible to find *Russkii vestnik*, they are literally fighting over it...<sup>131</sup>

With the public readings of the *Brothers Karamazov*, the crowd's emotional involvement in Dostoevskii almost took the form of religious devotion. Some testimonies, especially those of students, reveal the unstable potential of emotions and feelings that had by then become unmanageable for his readers—a prelude to that 'cult of Dostoevskii' that N. K. Mikhailovskii would stigmatize in 1882:

My dear, my darling, you must not read out aloud! If one could listen to you on one's knees, if one could give up one's soul for every ingenious word of yours, then you would be allowed to read; instead, think of what torment it is to listen to you, to feel a kind of pain out of the ecstasy, and to know that one does not have the strength, the ability to express what one feels. It's terrible, how much it hurts!<sup>132</sup>

The positive feedback received by his public readings convinced Dostoevskii to perform other chapters of the novel, some of which were as of yet unpublished. Between 1879 and 1880 his repertoire was enriched with "Women Who Have Faith," from the Second Book; some excerpts from the Fourth Book, "Lacerations"; "Rebellion" and "The Grand Inquisitor," from the Fifth Book; some excerpts from the Tenth Book, "Boys"; and finally, "Iliushechka's Funeral" from the Epilogue. In addition to the charity public readings, sources report people performing collective readings of *The Brothers Karamazov* even in private homes. Excerpts from the novel were read aloud in the residence of Grand Duke Konstantin Romanov<sup>133</sup> and in that of the magnate and art collector Pavel Tret'iakov,<sup>134</sup> but also during student meetings, where the readings were followed by heartfelt discussions about the possible developments of the plot:

<sup>131</sup> Letter to Dostoevskii signed "One of your readers and admirers," of 6 April 1879 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 478-479).

<sup>132</sup> Unsigned letter to Dostoevskii, 6 April 1879 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 479). On the controversial "cult of Dostoevskii" among Russian students in 1880s see O. N. Ansberg, "K istorii vospriiatiia tvorchestva F. M. Dostoevskogo studencheskoi molodezh'iu 1880-kh gg.," *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX-nachale XX v.* (Moscow, 1990), vol. 5, 33-40.

<sup>133</sup> I. S. Zil'bershtein, "Novonaidennye i zabytye pis'ma Dostoevskogo," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 86, 136-138.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.



In the days when the new issue of *Russkii vestnik* was published, with Dostoevskii's novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, there were neither songs nor laughter. When we got together, we all sat around the table under the big green lamp, and began reading aloud. We all read, in turn, without moving away until the last page. Faces paled and burnt with excitement, the reader's voice trembled with agitation. When the reading ended, we talked about nothing more than what had been read, we analysed every movement of the soul of the characters, we made assumptions about the subsequent developments of the novel.<sup>135</sup>

Evenings like the one described by Lebedeva could turn into real battles, in which each of the participants, shouting and crying, defended their interpretation of the episodes read, supporting their positions with meticulous analyses of the characters' psychology. In her 1908 memoirs, recalling with what fear she had finally resolved to write to Dostoevskii to ask him to solve her age-old doubt about the identity of Karamazov's murderer, Lebedeva compares two different ways of relating to the figure of the literary author. If in 1908 anyone could argue with Tolstoi through the pages of a newspaper (See VASSENA, "Reading the News on Tolstoy in 1908," in the present volume), in 1880 writing to Dostoevskii was still considered a bold gesture, justifiable only by the extreme gravity of a situation which, in this case, stemmed from the reader's total identification with his fictional characters:

My interest was so strong that it was not possible for me to wait for a whole month for the next issue of *Russkii vestnik*. Now everything seems possible and accessible: gymnasium students do not hesitate to publicly debate with Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi on a newspaper; in a superficial article they would irreverently refute a conception elaborated in the course of a lifetime. In my day, reaching the decision to directly address the author of *The Brothers Karamazov* to solve a nagging doubt was not so easy. We considered our favourite writers as masters, their authority was for us like a beam of light. I only justified my courage in writing to Dostoevskii by the torment that haunted me and that had obscured all other interests in my life, with the torment of not being able to decide who had killed Karamazov: Dmitrii, or Smerdiakov?<sup>136</sup>

<sup>135</sup> E. N. Lebedeva, "Kak prezhde chitali knigi. Stranichka vospominanii," *Vsemirnyi vestnik*, 10 (1908), 7.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9. Dostoevskii replied to Lebedeva on November 8, 1879.

With the passing of months, interest in the new novel grew, as Dostoevskii himself reports to N. A. Liubimov in a letter dated 8 December 1879: “The novel is being read everywhere, people write me letters, it’s being read by young people, it’s being read in high society, it’s being criticized or praised in the press, and never before, with regard to the impression produced all around, have I had such a success”.<sup>137</sup> The interest aroused by the novel is reflected in over sixty reviews that appeared between the beginning of 1879 and the end of 1880, but also in the appeal that it exercised in other scientific fields, such as psychiatry and jurisprudence.<sup>138</sup> Its success, however, was not unanimous: if some readers drew pleasure from “shedding tears over a work of art”<sup>139</sup> or from attempting a “psychological analysis”<sup>140</sup> of the characters, or other experienced, at least momentarily, fascination at the prophetic visions of a future universal brotherhood scattered throughout the novel,<sup>141</sup> others found the Dostoevskian style excessive. For example, Lev Tolstoi expressed himself several times on the “non-artistry” (*nekhudozhestvennost’*)

<sup>137</sup> Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 168. Dostoevskii held in such high regard the opinions of the people he met, even of the strangers who came to his door to discuss his new novel, that he attributed precisely to these ‘distractions’ his delays in delivering the instalments to *Russkii vestnik*: “I have been unable to get anything written now for the May issue because I am literally prevented from writing here, and I need to flee Petersburg as soon as possible. The Karamazovs are again to blame for that. So many people come to see me every day apropos of them, so many people seek to make my acquaintance, invite me to their homes—that I’m absolutely at my wit’s end and am now fleeing Petersburg!” (Dostoevskii’s letter to N. Liubimov, 29 April 1880. Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 193-194).

<sup>138</sup> See for example the study of psychopathologist V. F. Chizh, who compared Dostoevskii’s last novel to a handbook of psychiatric medicine (V. F. Chizh, *Dostoevskii kak psikhopatolog* (Moscow, 1885). As for the juridical field, it is worth mentioning the speech “Dostoevskii as a criminologist” given by A. F. Koni at a meeting of the St. Petersburg University Juridical Society the day after Dostoevskii’s funeral. In his study on the serialization of *The Brothers Karamazov* in *Russkii vestnik*, William Mills Todd III notices how each instalment ‘dialogued’ with the non-artistic contents of the journal, thus favoring a trans-discursive approach to the issues reflected in the novel. See W. M. Todd III, “*Brat’ia Karamazovy i poetika serializatsii*,” *Russkaia literatura*, 4 (1992), 36-37.

<sup>139</sup> “This thing left me in such a turmoil, at night I could not sleep and shed warm tears; but this is a pleasure, to shed tears over a work of art” (undated letter from E. F. Lunge to S. I. Tolstaia, in “Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov,” 497). In a letter to his wife dated 30-31 May 1880, Dostoevskii reported: “... He [Viskovatov] told me that Saburov (the Minister of Education), a relative of his, read certain passages of *The Karamazovs* while literally weeping from ecstasy” (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 219). Andrei Aleksandrovich Saburov (1838-1916) was the Minister of Public Education from 1880 to 1889.

<sup>140</sup> In June 1880 P. M. Tret’iakov’s wife wrote in her diary: “In this period I have read *Brothers Karamazov* by Dostoevskii and together with Pasha I have enjoyed the psychological analysis, feeling how everything in the soul stirs, and turns over what is good and mean in it. Thanks to *Brothers Karamazov*, it is possible to change and to improve oneself” (Zil’bershtein, “Novonaidennye i zabytye pis’ma Dostoevskogo,” 127).

<sup>141</sup> Thus the writer L. I. Veselitskaia describes how she was subjugated by Alesha’s vision of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven in the first book of the novel: “When will it come? ... And will it really come? And, imbued with Dostoevskii’s passionate faith, I also thought: “It will come, it will come, it will come soon. It’s at the door, it’s near.” V. Mikulich (L. I. Veselitskaia), *Vstrecha s znamenitost’iu* (Moscow, 1903), 11-12.

of *The Brothers Karamazov*,<sup>142</sup> while in May 1879 Petr Chaikovskii wrote to his brother: “I have read the continuation of *The Brothers Karamazov* in the new issue of *Russkii vestnik*. It is becoming unbearable. All the characters, from the first to the last, are crazy. In general, Dostoevskii can only hold up for a part of the novel. Then it becomes chaos”.<sup>143</sup> Similar opinions were expressed by educated readers and university students close to the radical-democratic circles.<sup>144</sup> Despite this, even those who did not love Dostoevskii could not remain indifferent. That same Kitaev who had not been able to finish *The Idiot* and *The Raw Youth*, confessed to a correspondent that he had resolved to read Dostoevskii’s latest work, notwithstanding his scepticism, if only to be able to *discuss* it:

As far as I can judge from the extracts of Dostoevskii’s novel published in the press, *The Brothers Karamazov* does not attract me even a little and, if I ever read it, I would do it not for the pleasure I could draw from it but simply out of curiosity. I might as well read the last words of a dwindling writer. Forgive me if I express myself in such a hard way and if I am so cold about what you are passionate about; all my reflections go absolutely beyond what you say, indeed I even suppose that, all things considered, I will have to read *Karamazov* in order to talk about Dostoevskii in a more detailed and specific way ...<sup>145</sup>

This climate of general fervour for *The Brothers Karamazov* certainly influenced the reception of the speech on Pushkin pronounced by Dostoevskii on 8 June 1880, on the occasion of the Moscow celebrations for the inauguration of the monument to Pushkin. The authority with which Dostoevskii felt vested gave him unprecedented confidence: his anxiety about the public’s reaction, which had characterized the release of his previous works, gave way to the awareness of finally being able to express his most radical convictions. Hence the absence of hesitation that characterized the preparation of the *Speech*: in the letters written to his wife between May and June 1880, Dostoevskii insists on the need to greatly impact his audience with his speech, and calls it his “main debut,” the crowning of his career; his letters from this period are studded with military expressions, which leads us

<sup>142</sup> See D. P. Makovitskii, “Iasnopolianskie zapiski,” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 90 (Moscow, 1979), part 4, 380, 385, 386, 388.

<sup>143</sup> P. I. Chaikovskii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (Moscow, 1963), vol. 8, 226.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. A. V. Blium, “Chitatel’skie nastroiia i vkusy peterburgskogo studentchestva kontsa 70-kh godov XIX veka (po materialam novonajdennykh dokumentov chital’ni peterburgskogo universiteta),” *Knizhnoe delo Peterburga – Petrograda – Leningrada* (Leningrad, 1981), 146-161.

<sup>145</sup> Letter from F. N. Kitaev to E. S. Nekrasova, 21 November 1879 (“Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov,” 491-492).

to assume he thought he was approaching some hard fight against masses of opponents.<sup>146</sup>

The extraordinary event that this speech represented was recognized, at least at the beginning, unanimously: acclaimed by the crowd as a revelator of the prophetic meaning of Pushkin's work, Dostoevskii in turn earned himself the title of "prophet."<sup>147</sup> Nonetheless, after the first "hypnotic" moment, critics began to attack the writer harshly, accusing him of having manipulated the emotions of the public to inculcate his fanatical ideas on the role of Russia in the fate of the world.<sup>148</sup> The public's interest in Dostoevskii's figure grew exponentially, perhaps due to the heated debate in the press: between June 1880 and January 1881, A. G. Dostoevskaiia recorded in her notebooks over two thousand addresses of subscribers to the last two issues of *The Diary of a Writer*. The *Diary* issue that contained the full text of his *Speech on Pushkin* was snapped up, and they were forced to publish a second edition in 2,000 copies: "It is flying off the shelves. He printed four thousand copies and they sold out in one week. It is an unprecedented success in the field of publishing."<sup>149</sup> Dostoevskii's newly achieved notoriety also influenced the editorial fate of *The Brothers Karamazov*: while for his previous novels, the search for a publisher in book form had caused Dostoevskii a lot of trouble, this time the proposals from the publishers started to flow in even before the last of the instalments was out.<sup>150</sup> In any case, the first edition in book form was published at the end of 1880 by Dostoevskaiia, who had by then become a skilled entrepreneur and the guardian of her husband's interests: the edition was printed in five thousand copies, half of which sold out in a few days.<sup>151</sup> The opening of the Dostoevskii book storage on 1 January 1880, intended only for readers residing outside of Petersburg, caused a surge in sales, with orders coming every day from every part of Russia.<sup>152</sup> However, with Dostoevskii's sudden death, on 28 January 1881, new priorities took

146 See his letter to K. P. Pobedonostsev of 19 May 1880 and his letter to his wife of 5 June 1880 (Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 5, 200, 231).

147 On Dostoevskii's speech in the context of the Pushkin celebration see M. C. Levitt, *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (Ithaca, London, 1989), 122-146.

148 The term "hypnosis" to describe the effect of Dostoevskii's speech was used by A. G. Dostoevskaiia (Dostoevskaiia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 416). The same word appears in the text of S. A. Vengerov's speech "Stat' nastoiashchim russkim—znachit stat' bratom vsekh liudei," in S. A. Vengerov, *Sobranie sochinenii* (St. Petersburg, 1913), vol. 4, 29.

149 N. V. Shelgunov, "Vospominaniia," in N. V. Shelgunov, L. P. Shelgunova, M. L. Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1967), vol. 1, 369. See also Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 502.

150 The first proposal was made by P. E. Kekhrbardzhi, who in 1876 had published the book edition of *The Raw Youth* (*Letopis' zhizni i tvorchestva F. M. Dostoevskogo 1875-1881*, 331).

151 Dostoevskaiia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 419. Strakhov talks about 4,000 copies (Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 504).

152 See the memoirs of the office boy P.G. Kuznetsov "Na sluzhbe u Dostoevskogo," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 86, 332-336.

over: having closed down the book storage, Dostoevskaia began to devote herself to the complete edition of her husband's works.

##### 5. POST MORTEM: THE FIRST ATTEMPTS TO POPULARIZE DOSTOEVSKII'S WORK

Thousands of people, including many students, took part in the funeral procession that accompanied Dostoevskii's coffin on 31 January 1881, giving rise to a spectacle hardly ever seen in Petersburg: a stream of people that wound along the streets of the city, choirs, commemorative speeches, banners and crowns of flowers, all immortalized in several memoirs.<sup>153</sup> The transformation of Dostoevskii into a "star"<sup>154</sup> of the literary firmament was now complete: hundreds sent offers to erect his funeral monument, and in the following weeks alone more than two hundred obituaries, memoirs, articles and poems about the illustrious deceased were published. On the one hand, as Leonid Grossman observed,<sup>155</sup> the Tsarist government played a fundamental role in the process of Dostoevskii's canonisation by endeavouring, immediately after his death, to honour the 'patriot' writer; on the other, the demonstrations of affection that the public had already paid to Dostoevskii in previous years prove that his popularity cannot be dismissed only as the result of a political strategy. It was rather the result of the interaction between different literary and social institutions and their respective interpretations of the meaning of Dostoevskii's work.

The mass psychosis caused by Dostoevskii's death had deep repercussions for the publishing market, which recorded a significant increase in the sales of his works. Thus the journalist A. S. Suvorin recalls those days: "The turmoil in Petersburg was extraordinary. [...] The public ran to read and buy Dostoevskii. As if death had revealed him, and he had not existed before."<sup>156</sup> The interest of the public did not go unnoticed by Dostoevskaia, who immediately reprinted the single editions of her husband's works and, a few months later, set about realizing what she felt to be her own "duty"<sup>157</sup>: publishing the complete collection of his works. Having declined other

<sup>153</sup> See Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 433-441; I. L. Kuz'mina, "Peterburg ne vidal nichego podobnogo," in *Dostoevskii i ego vremia* (Leningrad, 1971), 305-307.

<sup>154</sup> For a discussion of the meaning of "star" in this context see B. Dubin, "Klassik – zvezda – modnoe imia – kul'tovaia figura: o strategiakh legitimizatsii kul'turnogo avtoriteta," *Sinii divan*, 8 (2006).

<sup>155</sup> L. Grossman, "Dostoevskii i pravitel'svennye krugi 1870-kh godov," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 15 (Moscow, 1934) 118.

<sup>156</sup> A. S. Suvorin, *Dnevnik* (London – Moscow, 2000), 351. A significant example of the effects of so much clamour on the collective psyche is represented by A. S. Suvorin's volume itself, in which the journalist recounts the hallucination he witnessed from reading *Brothers Karamazov*, from Dostoevskii's funeral, and from his vision of his funerary portrait made by V. S. Kriukov. A. S. Suvorin, *Ten' Dostoevskogo* (St. Petersburg, 1895).

<sup>157</sup> Letter from A. G. Dostoevskaia to E. F. Iunge, 14 August 1881 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 558).

publishers' offers to purchase the rights to Dostoevskii's writings, the widow obtained a line of credit from V. M. Tuganov, head of the "A.I. Vargunin" trading house, and she set out to work. The fourteen tomes of the first edition of the *Complete collection* of Dostoevskii's works were printed in the printing houses of brothers Panteleev and Aleksei Suvorin between 1882 and 1883, with a circulation of 6,200 copies, and offered for sale at the cost of 25 roubles (1 rouble and 78 kopecks per tome), with the possibility of paying in instalments. The success of the project exceeded all expectations, yielding Dostoevskaia two thousand subscribers and a profit of 75,000 roubles.<sup>158</sup> Although it is not easy to outline a profile of the average reader of Dostoevskaia's edition, it is possible to make some assumptions based on the information in our possession. Even if it was possible to pay in instalments, the high cost made the collection accessible only to a limited range of readers. Furthermore, in order to advertise the work, Dostoevskaia decided to resort not to announcements in newspapers, but rather to leaflets which she printed for that purpose and then sent to specific recipients, so that they would arrive "precisely in the hands of those who read and buy books (gymnasiums and colleges), or in the office of any institution where many people converge."<sup>159</sup> The preliminary selection of the subscribers suggests that, at the beginning of the 1880s, the circulation of Dostoevskii's works had not undergone any substantial changes: it mainly involved (in addition to the higher classes) students and officials, and did not reach readers from the lower social classes. Nevertheless, the figures relating to the subsequent five editions of the complete collections published by Dostoevskii's widow attest to her effort to widen that circle of readers: the second edition (1885), in 6 volumes, was printed in 6,200 copies (in a large two-column format) and sold at 15 roubles (20 with shipping); it sold out in two years. The third edition (1888-1889), in 12 volumes, was printed with a circulation of 12,200 copies; sold at 10 roubles, 12 with shipping, it sold out in two and a half years; the fourth edition (1888-1891), in 12 volumes, was printed with a circulation of 12,200 copies; the sixth (jubilee) edition (1904-1906), in 14 volumes, was printed on tissue paper, included an appendix with thirty unpublished new portraits of Dostoevskii's and his relatives', and was distributed in 3,200 copies, at the cost of 25 roubles, with the possibility of purchasing it in instalments by paying two roubles a month; at the same time Dostoevskaia released the seventh edition (1904-1906) in 12 volumes, which was printed with a circulation of 3,200 copies, and put on sale at the cost of 10 roubles, 12 with shipping.<sup>160</sup> Dostoevskaia's efforts were largely

<sup>158</sup> Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 485-486. See also A. G. Dostoevskaia's letter to S. A. Tolstaia, 1 October 1885 (T. Nikiforova, "Pis'ma A. G. Dostoevskoi k S. A. Tolstoi," *Mir filologii* (Moscow, 2000), 295.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 294.

<sup>160</sup> Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 489, 574-575; Andrianova, *Anna Dostoevskaia: prizvanie i priznaniia*, 36.

rewarded, in terms of both economic gain and literary reputation: according to a study conducted by Nikolai Rubakin (1862-1946), one of the leading pre-revolutionary researchers of popular reading, in nine libraries in the Russian provinces, Dostoevskii was among the ten most read authors in the 1891-1892 period.<sup>161</sup> However, after the fourth edition of the *Complete collection* of Dostoevskii's works (1888-1891), Dostoevskii's publishing activity suffered a setback, and in 1894-1895 the fifth edition of the *Complete works* of Dostoevskii came out in the form of monthly supplements to the illustrated weekly *Niva* (*The Field*).

The encyclopaedic and popular character of Russia's illustrated magazines at the end of the century met the tastes of semi-educated readers, for whom thick journals represented an overly complex text (See REITBLAT, "The Reading Audience of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in the present volume): small and medium-level clerks, priests from rural parishes, merchants, low-ranking soldiers, elementary schoolteachers learned the latest news in science, fashion, art, and literature in a language accessible to them—and in an attractive form, in which the iconographic component had a fundamental role. In order to increase their number of readers, beginning from the 1870s, the publishers of illustrated magazines had begun to include promotional items or 'free gifts,' usually oleographs, which were widely publicized almost to the point of obscuring the contents of the magazine itself. In the 1880s, the oleographs were gradually replaced by books; precisely this new form of free gifts, thanks to the high circulation and low cost of the magazines, became an important channel for the dissemination of literature among the less educated classes.<sup>162</sup> The editor of *Niva*, Adolf F. Marks, was one of the first to focus on free gifts, not only to enrich the magazine's content, but also to expand the reader's quota and to challenge the competition. From the beginning, *Niva* had been addressing 'average' readers with less refined tastes than those of its main competitor, the magazine *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia* (*World Illustration*) (which also differed in the price: 6 roubles for an annual subscription to *Niva*, 12 for *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*), but with more education than the public of other thin illustrated magazines, such as *Rodina* (*The Homeland*).<sup>163</sup> The idea of free gifts proved to be successful: within two decades, between 1870 and 1891, the circulation of *Niva* increased tenfold, from nine thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand copies, and its subscribers started to include both representatives of the provincial intelligentsia and (in smaller quanti-

161 N. A. Rubakin, *Etiudy o russkoi chitaiushchei publike* (St. Petersburg, 1895), 127.

162 On illustrated magazines see Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 101-112; J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), 111-117.

163 Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 103. On *Niva* reading public see E. A. Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" *chitatelei* A. F. Marks (Moscow, 1986), 42-45. According to Rubakin, *Niva* circulated "in considerable quantities among the clergy, the clerical world and other public officials only in the provinces" (Rubakin, *Etiudy*, 17).

ties) workers and educated farmers. Marks's next step was, in 1890, to seek and obtain from the Central Department of the Press (Glavnoe upravlenie po delam pechati) first to publish monthly supplements, and then to double them; these were no longer just oleographs but also books, increased from twelve to twenty-four a year.<sup>164</sup> Starting from 1891, Marks took to publishing one or two economic editions of the complete works of classic authors, which were either given away as free supplements to *Niva* or sold separately.

Marks's initiative turned out to be an unprecedented publishing success, especially relevant in the spread of classics among the "large public with a low budget,"<sup>165</sup> those who could not afford the expensive books of other publishers. Within a decade, the personal libraries of subscribers to *Niva* were enriched by the complete collections of the majority of the most famous writers:

Nothing to say about *Niva*—there was probably no corner in Russia where they did not subscribe to it, waiting impatiently for each issue, but not for the magazine itself (it was almost always quite boring and monotonous) but rather for the free books, and these books bore names such as Mel'nikov-Pecherskii, Dostoevskii, Leskov, Gleb Uspenskii, Korolenko, Mamin-Sibiriak, Rostand, Bunin, Kuprin, Fet, Maikov, Molière, Hamsun, Ibsen, Hauptmann, Garshin, Leonid Andreev...<sup>166</sup>

Thanks to the publication of the complete collections of works in the form of free books, in 1904 the circulation of *Niva* reached about 275,000 copies.<sup>167</sup> After the complete collections of the works of Lermontov, Lomonosov, Fonvizin, and others, Marks's choice fell on Dostoevskii: on 15 April 1893, at the end of a confidential negotiation, he purchased from A. G. Dostoevskaia, for 75,000 roubles and for three years only, the copyrights to all the novels and the stories, as well as all the articles and the editions of the *Diary of a Writer* of 1876-1877.<sup>168</sup> As Dostoevskaia remembers, she accepted Marks's proposal because she hoped the works released as free books via *Niva* would in this way also reach the readers from the lower classes, who could not afford to purchase her editions, but who would have no problems paying five roubles for an annual subscription to *Niva*.<sup>169</sup> That being said, once the deal was made, Marks—who had also hoped to increase the num-

164 Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei, 38.

165 V. Avseenko, "Kruzhek belletristov Nivy v 70-kh godakh," *Niva*, 50 (1904), 1006.

166 L. I. Borisov, *Roditeli, nastavniki, poety... Kniga v moei zhizni* (Moscow, 1967), 40.

167 Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei, 40.

168 On the negotiations between Marks and Dostoevskaia see Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 541-554; Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei, 112-117.

169 Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 543. Dostoevskaia's considerations were not groundless: Rubakin attributes the low diffusion of books to their excessive cost (Rubakin, *Etiudy*, 24).



ber of subscribers to his magazine via this deal—was assailed by the fear that the public would not respond as he hoped. However, time dispelled his doubts and proved the worth of the enterprise, which happened to be far more profitable for Marks than for Dostoevskaia. The *Complete collection* of Dostoevskii's works earned *Niva* fifty thousand more subscribers, which meant that, in one year only, between 1893 and 1894, its circulation increased from 120,000 to 170,000 copies, with a consequent additional profit of 250,000 roubles.<sup>170</sup>

If public library reports in different regions of Russia confirm Dostoevskii's consistent presence among the ten most requested authors in the years 1896-1898,<sup>171</sup> this was probably at least partially due to representatives of the lower-middle class entering into his readership. But this is not the whole story. In forging the agreement, Marks and Dostoevskaia had taken for granted that *Niva's* novice readers would soon forget about the free books after their enthusiasm for them waned, leaving them to gather dust on the shelves of their homes. Furthermore, the widow was counting on publishing a more expensive luxury edition of her husband's complete works within a few years. However, contrary to expectations, subscribers to *Niva* turned out to know better, and the antiquarian booksellers took advantage of the situation, buying the free books at a ridiculously low price and reselling them at a higher price:

Many institutions (restaurants, hotels, etc.) that offered the illustrated magazine to their customers kept the free books. This came to the knowledge of antiquarian booksellers, who began to buy this edition at a low price and to resell it at a higher price. When it became known that *Niva's* free books had this value, private individuals also began to sell them. At the beginning, the trade of the *Complete works* of F. M. Dostoevskii was not particularly active, and the twenty-four tomes were sold at a cost comprised between 4 and 5 roubles. Then the price increased and reached 10 to 12 roubles per full set. In this way, little by little, the book market was filled with *Niva* edition of Dostoevskii's works, and this lasted about ten years, instead of the three-four years that we imagined.<sup>172</sup>

<sup>170</sup> Dinershtein, "Fabrikant" chitatelei, 113.

<sup>171</sup> Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu*, 80-81; P. Astaf'ev, "Chitaiushchaia publika v provintsii," *Zhizn'*, 18 (1898), 331.

<sup>172</sup> Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 543-544. Dostoevskaia took advantage of this time to dedicate herself to two major projects: the creation of the first bibliography of Dostoevskii's works and the foundation of the Dostoevskii Museum. See I. S. Andrianova, "Muzei pamiati F. M. Dostoevskogo": istoriia i perspektivy proekta (Petrozavodsk, 2013).

Only in 1904 did Dostoevskaia succeed in publishing a new luxury edition, in fourteen volumes, of the *Complete works*, setting its price at 25 roubles. Nevertheless, the last two editions of the *Complete works* were less successful than the previous ones:<sup>173</sup> this (in addition to the revolutionary ferments of the period, the consequent fear of thefts and fires, as well as the increase in price of printing work), convinced Dostoevskaia to cease her publishing activity and to sell the literary rights to N. S. Tsetlin, owner of the “Prosveshchenie” publishing company.

In retrospect, it seems reasonable to suppose that the saturation of the book market caused by the Marks edition should also be counted among the reasons for the lack of success of Dostoevskaia’s last two editions. Contemporaries’ memoirs testify that *Niva*’s free books were the main if not the only means of spreading the classics among the readers from the provinces and, in general, among the lower-middle class: “The provinces read the classics only thanks to the publisher A. F. Marks, when they began to be given away with *Niva* as free gifts.”<sup>174</sup> In some cases, this circumstance was to be expected, but it also proved serendipitous: sometimes the reader was attracted to the book’s low price rather than its content, and only afterwards did he become aware of the value of what he had begun to read. However, the fortunate cases in which the reader really got to understand the work in depth were rare. Some testimonies dating back to the early twentieth century show that readers from the lower social classes, or simply only partially educated readers lacking adequate exegetical tools, struggled to navigate not only the complex moral, social and philosophical issues of Dostoevskii’s novels, but also the prolixity and non-linearity of his style, to say nothing of the large cast of characters that crowd his stories. Working class readers, especially those residing in the cities, read a wide variety of works, and unlike peasant readers (who will be discussed later) did not seek religious precepts in secular literature, but simply morality that was applicable to life.<sup>175</sup> Hence the need for the adventures of novels’ heroes, explored with clarity and narrated in a linear manner. In 1902, a student at the Sunday school for Moscow workers, I. Iakovlev, wrote about *Crime and Punishment*: “I have read [...] *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevskii’s novel, but I did not like this book because I had never read anything like it before.”<sup>176</sup> Similarly, another student at the same school, Avakin, wrote that he had already read Zhukovskii, Pushkin, Lermontov, Gogol’, Turgenev, Tolstoi and others, but

<sup>173</sup> Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 575-578.

<sup>174</sup> N. V. Kuz’min, *Krug tsaria Solomona* (Moscow, 1966), 195-196.

<sup>175</sup> Brooks, “Readers and Reading at the End of the Tsarist Era,” 141-142. For a description of the Russian worker-readers in the early 20th century see L. M. Kleinbort, *Ocherki rabochei intelligentsii* (Petrograd, 1923), vol. 1, 42-64.

<sup>176</sup> “Chitatel’skie avtobiografii uchashchikhsia voskresnykh kursov dlia rabochikh,” in A. I. Reitblat (ed.), *Kniga i chitatel’ 1900-1917. Vospominaniia i dnevniki sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1999), 33.

that he found reading Dostoevskii particularly difficult. Not only limited reading skills, but also limited time available for reading, made it difficult for a worker to understand Dostoevskii's works:

The teacher did not deny us the books, but for some reason I was ashamed to ask him to explain to me the passages that I found most obscure in the books, especially Dostoevskii's. One reads in this way, without thinking any more about what he has read, and, in the end, nothing is left in one's head but a series of titles of works and names of characters which do not mean anything....<sup>177</sup>

In some cases, the increase in the number of books that were being read did not correspond to readers' greater ability to truly penetrate their contents: in the absence of an appropriate paratext, the new readers were struggling to understand Dostoevskii.<sup>178</sup> The efforts of the Russian pedagogues and publishers of the 1880s and 1890s, who attempted to adapt Dostoevskii's works to those categories of readers who until then had not had access to them, were aimed to overcome this very difficulty.

## 6. CONQUERING NEW AUDIENCES: THE CASE OF NOTES FROM THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

After Dostoevskii's death, his reputation as a 'pedagogue' and 'friend of children,' which he had developed thanks to the social commitments that had characterized his last years, reached its apogee. Although direct testimonies of Dostoevskii being read at a young age are limited, there are signs of his growing popularity among schoolchildren in the 1880s and 1890s (See LEIBOV, VDOVIN, "What and How Russian Students Read in Schools, 1840-1917," in the present volume), which is also reflected in the lively publishing production for children that started immediately after his death. In 1881, the commission of the School Section of the Muscovite Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge (*Moskovskoe obshchestvo rasprostraneniia tekhnicheskikh znaniia*), chaired by V. Ia. Stoiunin, included some of Dostoevskii's titles in the *Bibliograficheskii listok* (*Bibliography Sheet*), which represented an attempt at creating a bibliographic catalogue

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>178</sup> The report by the official from the Ministry of Popular Education P. A. Annin, read on 27 March 1898, referred precisely to the need for an apparatus of notes, and criticized the inclusion of Dostoevskii's works in the list of books recommended for popular reading. See I. L. Volgin, "Dostoevskii i pravitel'stvennaia politika v oblasti prosveshcheniia 1881-1917," *Dostoevskii. Materialy i issledovaniia* (Leningrad, 1980), vol. 4, 199.

for the development of children's literature.<sup>179</sup> The repertoire also included an article by the Kharkiv pedagogue Kh. D. Alchevskaia, who remarked on the lack of talented authors of children's literature in Russia and called for the publication of fragments of Dostoevskii's works, especially the short story "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party" ("Mal'chik u Khrista na elke") and extracts from *The Brothers Karamazov*, in editions dedicated to young readers. While admitting the need to modify or eliminate some passages of these texts, Alchevskaia claimed that the figure of the child who froze on Christmas Eve and the story of little Iliusha, abused by his school friends, would trigger a critical reaction rather than imitation, inspiring in young readers feelings of compassion and mercy toward the weakest. Alchevskaia expressed the belief that the love and compassion with which Dostoevskii had looked at the world of children would make his works understandable even to younger readers:

Dostoevskii loved children too much, he was too much an advocate of children, not to be accessible to a child's heart and understanding [...] No one can deny the beneficial influence that the great writer-psychologist had on our society; he taught us to be patient and sympathize, where previously we knew only contempt and revenge. And if he was able to transfuse into us his sympathy for the humiliated and the insulted, even more so can this sympathy be transfused into the docile soul of the child.<sup>180</sup>

The *Bibliography Sheet* and Alchevskaia's *peroratio* gave publishers a valid reason to broaden the quota of Dostoevskii readers to include younger age groups. Starting from this moment, some of his works began to be published in book form, as well as in anthologies and magazines for children and adolescents, arousing a heated debate between supporters and opponents of this educational 'revisiting' of Dostoevskii. At the same time,

---

<sup>179</sup> *Bibliograficheskii listok. Trudy komissii pri Uchebnom otdel Mosk. Obshchestva rasprostraneniia tekhnicheskikh znaniu, po sostavleniiu kriticheskogo kataloga knig i statei dlia detskogo chteniia* (Moscow, 1881), vol. 1. On the activity of the Muscovite Society for the Dissemination of Technical Knowledge see J. Bradley, "Voluntary Associations, Civic Culture and Obshchestvennost' in Moscow," in E. W. Clowes, S. D. Kassow, J. L. West (eds.), *Between the Tsar and the People. Educated Society and the Quest for Public Identity in Late Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1991), 131-148. Opened in 1871, its School Section was tasked with solving questions related to the teaching of technical subjects and facing more general educational problems. (Leikina-Svirskaiia, *Intelligentsiia v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka*, 261). The *Bibliography Sheet* mentioned the following fragments from Dostoevskii's works: from *The Brothers Karamazov* – "O sviashchenom pisanii v zhizni ottsa Zosimy" and "U Iliushinoi posteli," *Semeinye vechera*, 2 (1881); from *Netochka Nezvanova* – "Netochka i Katia," *Vospitanie i obuchenie*, 3 (1881); from *Crime and Punishment* – "Razdavili! Cheloveka razdavili!," *Domashnee chtenie*, 4 (1870); "The Boy at Christ's Christmas Party," reprinted in Avenarius's *Tridtsat' lushchikh novykh skazok*, 1877 (*Bibliograficheskii listok*, 35).

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

Dostoevskii's works began to attract the attention of the new publishing houses for the masses: the negotiations between the "Posrednik" publisher and Dostoevskaiia for the publication of a fragment of *The Brothers Karamazov* entitled "The Elder Zosima's Story" ("Rasskaz startsa Zosimy") date back to 1886; the project was then stopped by the censors.<sup>181</sup> The year after, the publisher Ivan Sytin planned to give away Dostoevskii's story "The Peasant Marey" ("Muzhik Marei") as a free supplement to his *Universal Calendar for 1887* (*Vseobshchii Kalendar' na 1887*), oriented to what he called "the embryo of the Russian reader," for whom "the calendar is the first and the last book," and who "in the calendar looks for an answer to all the questions arising in his awakening brains."<sup>182</sup> However, even in this case the project was not successful due to the veto of the censors.<sup>183</sup> Also worthy of mention are A. S. Suvorin's economic editions, which made an important contribution to the process of putting Dostoevskii's work before "the large public with a low budget": after printing several pocket-sized editions of Dostoevskii's works aimed at younger readers,<sup>184</sup> in 1887 Suvorin published *Poor Folk* in his famous "Cheap Library" (*Deshevaia biblioteka*) series.<sup>185</sup>

The attempts to launch Dostoevskii as a "children's writer" and as a "people's writer" on the market must be considered in the light of Russia's socio-cultural context in the late nineteenth century, a time in which educated Russians (especially those coming from the lower classes) grew increasingly aware of their mission to educate the masses, which was naturally accompanied by increasing attention to pedagogical practices.<sup>186</sup> Attempts to adapt

181 The volume did not receive the approval of the censorship because of its "mystical-social precepts in conflict with the spiritual precepts of the Orthodox faith and Church and with the current order of the government and society." See "Otryvok iz romana *Brat'ia Karamazovy* pered sudom tsenzury," publ. V. K. Lebedeva, *Russkaia literatura*, 2 (1970), 124. See also V. G. Chertkov's 10 December 1886 letter to L. N. Tolstoi in L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 90 vols. (Moscow, 1928-1958), vol. 85, 405, 423.

182 I. D. Sytin, *Zhizn' dlia knigi* (Moscow, 1962), 68, 69.

183 "Although free books pursue philanthropic objectives, they try to obtain them by indulging in details on the corruption of power, of the government, on the deprivations and sufferings of workers, peasants and members of the lower class" (quoted in E. A. Dinershtein, *Ivan Dmitrievich Sytin i ego delo* [Moscow, 2003], 63-64). Regarding the populist revival of Dostoevskii, we would also like to mention the publication, in 1891, of a small volume entitled *The Tasks of the Russian People* (*Zadachi russkogo naroda*), edited by the Tolstoian socio-revolutionary L. P. Nikiforov. The volume, addressing not the popular reader but the educators of the people, included extracts from Dostoevskii's *Diary of a Writer* of January 1877. See F. M. Dostoevskii, *Zadachi russkogo naroda*. Sostavleno po Dnevniku pisatel'ia L. P. Nikiforovym (St. Petersburg, 1891). Nikiforov's commitment was praised by L.N. Tolstoi in his letter to L. P. Nikiforov of 31 March 1891, in Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 65, 280.

184 F. M. Dostoevskii, *Muzhik Marei*. *Stoletniaia* (St. Petersburg, 1885); *Mal'chik u Khrista na elke* (St. Petersburg, 1885); *Letniaia pora* (St. Petersburg, 1886); *Predstavlenie* (St. Petersburg, 1886); *Veruiushchie baby* (St. Petersburg, 1886); *V barskom pansione* (St. Petersburg, 1887).

185 F. M. Dostoevskii, *Bednye liudi* ("Deshevaia biblioteka" N. 60) (St. Petersburg, 1887).

186 On the educational tasks of children's literature in Russia in the second half of nineteenth century see B. Hellman, *Fairy Tales and True Stories. The History of Russian Literature for Children and Young People (1574-2010)* (Leiden-Boston, 2013), 77-168.

Dostoevskii's texts to the needs of this new "theoretical public"<sup>187</sup> provided questionable results. Especially significant is the case of *Notes from the House of the Dead*, one of the works in Dostoevskii's catalogue that saw the largest number of reprints—partial, complete or edited—in the period we examine. In addition to the editions contained in the *Complete Collection* of his works, after Dostoevskii's death, the novel was republished in book form in 1881 (fifth edition), in 1883 (sixth edition), in 1896 (thirteenth edition), in 1900 (fourteenth edition) and in 1905 (seventeenth edition).<sup>188</sup> Where did this interest in *Notes* come from? First of all, from its documentary character: the vivacity and compassion with which Dostoevskii had first described the living conditions of the deportees were a source of inspiration for many other pioneers of the "gold" that glittered "under a coarse crust".<sup>189</sup> But there is also another factor that must be considered: although in his private letters Dostoevskii defined his new novel the "notes of an unknown man" and insisted on the artifice of the narrative ego, so as to untangle it from his personal experience,<sup>190</sup> the audience, as he himself had foreseen, was intrigued by the proximity of the subject of the novel to the experience actually lived by the author. Thus writes L. F. Panteleev, recalling the ovation that the audience awarded Dostoevskii after his public reading of the novel in 1862: "His literary glory was still budding, but in him they honoured the martyr".<sup>191</sup> In the following years, such curiosity did not seem to decrease. As Dostoevskaia recalls, the decision to print the fourth edition in two thousand copies (1875), exactly ten years after Stellovskii's, was dictated by the need to satisfy the booksellers' requests.<sup>192</sup> Similarly, Dostoevskaia was "forced" to publish the fifth edition (1881) immediately after her husband's death: "*Notes from the House of the Dead* and the posthumous number of *Diary of a*

187 Robert Escarpit describes selection as the first of the publisher's three functions: "Selection presupposes that the publisher—or his delegate—imagines a possible public and chooses from the mass of writing that is submitted to him the works best suited for that public [...] From the beginning of the study, preliminary to actual manufacturing, the public must be kept constantly in mind. Depending on whether the house is thinking in terms of a handsome volume destined for a few hundred bibliophiles or a popular, cheap book, everything changes: the paper, the format, the typography [...], the illustrations, the binding and, especially, the number of copies to be printed" (Escarpit, *Sociology of Literature*, 52).

188 The subsequent edition was published in 1911 by the publishing house "Prosveshchenie."

189 "Believe it or not, there are profound, strong, marvelous personalities there, and how delightful it was to find gold under a coarse crust" (Dostoevskii's letter to Mikhail Dostoevskii, 30 January–22 February 1854, in Dostoevsky, *Complete letters*, vol. 1, 190)

190 "My person will disappear. These are notes of an unknown person" (Dostoevskii's letter to Mikhail Dostoevskii, 9 October 1859, *Ibid.*, 390). Then he continued: "The interest will be most capital. There will be serious and gloomy and humorous things [...] and finally, the main thing—my name. Remember that Pleshcheev attributed the success of his poems to his name (do you understand?)" (*Ibid.*).

191 L. F. Panteleev, *Vospominaniia* (Moscow, 1958), 225. Panteleev refers to an evening organized by the Literary Fund in St. Petersburg on March 2, 1862.

192 Dostoevskaia, *Solntse moei zhizni*, 327.

Writer were especially in demand, and in the first few months I had to send these two editions to the press".<sup>193</sup> *Notes from the House of the Dead* and *The Diary of a Writer* were perceived by the public as autobiographical works, which offered the reader the opportunity to learn about the personality of the author and the legendary circumstances of his life: this partly explains why the *House of the Dead* became so popular again after Dostoevskii died at the height of his popularity. The particular editorial case of *Notes from the House of the Dead* includes not only the reprints, but also the numerous publications of individual parts of the novel, sometimes adapted to the needs of specific categories of readers. As early as 1863, an adapted version of the chapter "Akul'ka's Husband" ("Akul'kin muzh") had been published in a collection of stories—later confiscated by the censorship—written by people close to the founder of the revolutionary organization "Land and Liberty" ("Zemlia i Volia"), N. A. Serno-Solov'evich. The political reasons for this choice were clarified in the editors' final gloss: "Here's how people die! [...] Our best forces have died in vain, they have died illegally, without remedy. And whose fault is this? Whose is it, then?".<sup>194</sup> Between the 1880s and the 1890s, *Notes from the House of the Dead* was also republished in editions aimed at the lower classes: consider, for example, Suvorin's two illustrated economic editions of 1886 or the publication, in 1894, of illustrations to the novel in the illustrated weekly *Rodina*, which, according to an expression attributed to its publisher A. A. Kaspari, featured "the most uneducated Russians" among its readers.<sup>195</sup>

Appropriately selected and revised, the text of *Notes from the House of the Dead* therefore lent itself to very different facets of the public, including children. In 1864, one of the brightest chapters of the novel, "The Performance" ("Predstavlenie"), was included in the second edition (1864) of the *Russian Collection* (*Russkaia khrestomatiia*), edited by Andrei Filonov. This collection was re-edited several times in the following years and was very appreciated by school-age readers, as evidenced in this account by a former self-taught person who later became a teacher in popular schools: "I very much loved reading the anthologies of Polevoi and Filonov [...]. In general, I read almost every page of the anthologies with interest, and I kept reading them over and over again."<sup>196</sup> Together with *Poor Folk*,<sup>197</sup> *Notes from the House of the Dead* was for many years the only Dostoevskii work included in chrestomathies—and, in any case, it remained the one with the

193 Ibid., 481.

194 *Sbornik rasskazov. V proze i stikhakh* (St. Petersburg, 1863), 124.

195 Quoted from Starozhil, "Metranpazh Nekrasova," *Solntse Rossii*, 1913, 3, 14. See Suvorin's editions of *Letniaia pora: iz "Zapisok iz Mertvogo doma"* (St. Petersburg, 1886) and *Predstavlenie. Iz "Zapisok iz Mertvogo doma"* (St. Petersburg, 1886).

196 Lederle, *Mneniia russkikh liudei*, 91.

197 Excerpts from the novel had appeared in *Russkaia istoricheskaiia khrestomatiia* (862-1850). Sost. K. Petrov (St. Petersburg, 1866), 542-550.

highest number of appearances, surpassing texts likely more suitable for a children's audience, such as "The Peasant Marey" and some parts of *The Brothers Karamazov*.<sup>198</sup>

In the 1880s, besides in Suvorin's pocket-sized books, other extracts from *Notes from the House of the Dead* were included in two miscellaneous collections for children: *To Russian Children. From the Writings of F. M. Dostoevskii* (Russkim detiam. Iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo) and *A Selection from the Writings of F. M. Dostoevskii for middle-aged students (from 14 years old)* (Vybor iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo dlia uchashchikhsia srednego vozrasta [ot 14-ti let]).<sup>199</sup> The publication of these two volumes was, according to Dostoevskaia, the realization of a longstanding dream of her husband's: "Fedor Mikhailovich dreamed of choosing passages from his works that could be given to children."<sup>200</sup> The widow made every effort to have her husband's work included in the catalogues of school libraries, but her efforts often clashed with evidence that Dostoevskii's novels and stories had not been designed for children. Only in some cases did the state officials responsible for compiling and modifying the list of permitted books accept Dostoevskaia's requests, according to criteria that are not always intelligible, and in any case far from consistent. For example, the short stories "The Peasant Marey" and "A Centenary" ("Stoletniaia"), published together in 1885 illustrated edition, were approved by the Scientific Committee of the Ministry of Popular Education in 1885 for school-pupil libraries of middle schools and popular schools; in 1896 for school-pupil libraries of city schools and teacher libraries of primary schools; and in 1900 for free public reading halls (besplatnye narodnye chital'ny). In 1886 "The Peasant Marey" and "A Centenary" also were approved by the Department of the Institutions of Empress Maria for reading in rural schools and preparatory classes of girls' schools, but in 1897 they were rejected by the Scholastic Council Under the Holy Synod for church parish schools.<sup>201</sup> Regarding these same

198 Cf. A. V. Vdovin, "Prilozhenie 2. Chastotnost' avtorov i ikh tekstov v russkikh khrestomatiakh XIX veka (1805-1912)," A. V. Vdovin, R. G. Leibov (eds.), *Khrestomatiinye teksty: russkaia pedagogicheskaiia praktika XIX v. i poeticheskii kanon* (Tartu, 2013), 316.

199 *Russkim detiam. Iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo*, pod red. O. F. Millera (St. Petersburg, 1883); *Vybor iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo dlia uchashchikhsia srednego vozrasta (ot 14-ti let)*, pod red. V. Ia. Stoiunina (St. Petersburg, 1887. Second edition in 1902).

200 Letter from A. G. Dostoevskaia to E. F. Iunge, 16 November 1882 ("Dostoevskii v neizdannoi perepiske sovremennikov," 558-559).

201 IRLI, f. 100, n. 29525, "Otnosheniia k A. G. Dostoevskoi Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia," 14 April 1885; n. 29526, "Otnosheniia k A. G. Dostoevskoi Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia" 3 February 1900; n. 29528, "Otnoshenie k A. G. Dostoevskoi Vedomstva Uchrezhdenii Imperatritsy Marii," 1 December 1886; n. 29529, "Otnoshenie k A. G. Dostoevskoi Uchilshchnogo soveta pri Sviateishem sinode," 25 November 1897. Starting from the mid-1880s, "The Peasant Marey" and "A Centenary" appeared in official lists of books for primary and secondary school-libraries and for public readings: *Opyt kataloga uchenicheskikh bibliotek srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii vedomstva Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia* (St. Petersburg, 1889), 70; *Katalog knig dlia upotrebleniia v nizshikh uchilshchakh vedomstva*



stories, the pedagogical critique was not unanimous either: Alchevskaia expressed doubts about their suitability for popular readers, both young and adult, due to their excessively “fantastic”<sup>202</sup> nature, while other reviewers believed these stories to be the only ones that, with some adaptations, could also be offered to a young audience.<sup>203</sup> A particularly significant case revealing the differences between regulatory and social reading practices is Dostoevskii’s short story “The Boy at Christ’s Christmas Party,” taken from the 1876 *Diary of a Writer*. Although it had been published starting from the 1880s in several children’s collections, included in Suvorin’s successful pocket-sized editions, and considered by popular pedagogues and readers to be one of Dostoevskii’s best works,<sup>204</sup> “The Boy at Christ’s Christmas Party” did not obtain the approval of the Ministry of Popular Education to feature in free public reading halls and libraries until 1905.<sup>205</sup>

*Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia* (St. Petersburg, 1891), 59; *Katalog knig dlia upotrebleniia v nizshikh uchilishchakh vedomstva Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia i dlia publichnykh narodnykh chtenii* (St. Petersburg, 1897), 115; *Katalog knig dlia upotrebleniia v nizshikh uchilishchakh vedomstva Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia i dlia publichnykh narodnykh chtenii* (St. Petersburg, 1901), 193; *Katalog knig dlia upotrebleniia v nizshikh uchilishchakh vedomstva Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia i dlia publichnykh narodnykh chtenii (po iun’ 1901). Otdel III. Knigi dlia uchenicheskikh bibliotek i dlia publichnykh narodnykh chtenii* (St. Petersburg, 1905), 78. On state officials supervising children’s reading in prerevolutionary Russia see O. Luchkina, “Instituty rekomendatel’noi bibliografii dlia detskogo chteniia v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii,” *Vestnik Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. A. S. Pushkina*, 1 (3), 22-34. On the Russian prerevolutionary educational system in the 1880s and 1890s see Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 35-58 and passim; B. Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture, and Popular Pedagogy, 1861-1914* (Berkeley, 1986), 97-119. On the spread and the holdings of school-libraries in the countryside in the 1890s and 1900s see B. Eklof, “The Archaeology of ‘Backwardness’ in Russia: Assessing the Adequacy of Libraries for Rural Audiences in Late Imperial Russia,” in M. Remnek (ed.), *The Space of the Book. Print Culture in the Russian Social Imagination* (Toronto, Buffalo, London, 2011), 108-141.

202 *Chto chitat’ narodu? Kriticheskii ukazatel’ knig dlia narodnogo i detskogo chteniia* (St. Petersburg, 1889), vol. 2, 507.

203 Iakov, “Mal’chik u Khrista na elke. Rasskaz F. M. Dostoevskogo. SPb. 1885. Ts. 5 kop.; Muzhik Marei. Stoletniaia. F. M. Dostoevskogo. SPb. 1885. Ts. 10 k.,” *Pedagogicheskii listok*, 2 (1885), 136; N. P.-ia-v, “Mal’chik u Khrista na elke. Rasskaz F. M. Dostoevskogo. SPb. 1885. Ts. 5 kop.; Muzhik Marei. Stoletniaia. F. M. Dostoevskogo. SPb. 1885. Ts. 10 k.,” *Zhenskoe obrazovanie*, 8 (1885), 551-552.

204 Besides the already mentioned editions, in the 1880s and 1890s “The Boy at Christ’s Christmas Party,” appeared in several miscellaneous collections: *Tridtsat’ luchshikh novykh skazok. Sobral i razrabotal dlia detei V.P. Avenarius* (St. Petersburg, 1887); *Otrada i mecht’y bednykh detei* (St. Petersburg, 1892); *Skazki russkikh pisatelei dlia detei*. Sbornik izdannyi redaktsei gazety “Kievskoe slovo” (Kiev, 1893); *Skazki russkikh pisatelei. Sbornik* (Kiev, 1897). As for Dostoevskaia’s economic editions, annual income from his 1885 edition of “The Boy at Christ’s Christmas Party” (each copy costed 10 copecks) amounted to 150-200 roubles (Letter from A. G. Dostoevskaia to S. A. Tolstaia, 1 October 1885, in Nikiforova, “Pis’ma A. G. Dostoevskoi k S. A. Tolstoi,” 300). According to research conducted on eight Sunday schools in 1893-94, “The Boy at Christ’s Christmas Party” was one of the preferred readings of both adult and younger female pupils (mainly peasants and workers): see E. A. Andreeva, “Kakie knigi chitaiutsia v voskresnoi shkole,” *Chastnyi pochin v dele narodnogo obrazovaniia* (Moscow, 1894), 330.

205 IRLI, F. 100, N. 29525. Otnosheniia k A. G. Dostoevskoi Min. Nar. Prosv., 3 August 1905.

On the one hand, this lack of homogeneity is explained by the extreme diversification of the Russian prerevolutionary educational system and its evident lack of alignment with the students' extra-curricular readings (See LEIBOV, VDOVIN, "What and How Russian Students Read in Schools," in the present volume); on the other, it is also due to Dostoevskii's controversial reputation as a 'children's author.' In fact, if the 'humanitarian' themes—the morally and physically degraded settings, the poverty and the hunger, the "accidental character" (*sluchainost'*) of Russian families, the suffering of children, the contrast between the world of the rich and that of the poor, together with the pathetic-sentimental tone of the Dostoevskian narrator—share some aspects with the populist pedagogical thought regarding compassion toward the weakest, the intricate Dostoevskian style made his texts almost inaccessible to a reader not yet fully formed: the convoluted syntax, the widespread use of inversions and repetitions, the alternation of different stylistic registers, the fast pace of narration all contravened the basic pedagogical principles of order, concision, and clarity. More importantly, Dostoevskii's tendency to dwell on the darker and murkier sides of the human personality, the mystical nature of some of his characters, and the exasperation caused by their pain and suffering all aroused the interest of some who, from the variegated sample of child characters offered by his novels, found material for scientific observations of an anthropological and psychological nature<sup>206</sup>—but evoked only bewilderment in many others. Dostoevskii's characters lacked the clear moral integrity, the genuine patriotic feeling, the harmonious vision of nature that were considered indispensable educational requirements for a children's novel or story.<sup>207</sup>

Proof of this is the disputed popularizing work of the scholar Orest Miller, an early biographer of Dostoevskii and one of the most fervent advocates of the educational potential in his works. His long-standing friendship with Dostoevskii, and the deep respect that Miller had always nurtured for him, convinced his widow to open the doors of his personal archive, allowing Miller to write Dostoevskii's aforementioned first posthumous biography, which was published in the first volume of the Collection of Dostoevskii's works in 1882-1883.<sup>208</sup> Between 1882 and 1883, moreover, Miller had dedicated to Dostoevskii a series of public readings and lectures which were advertised in the press and attracted hundreds of listeners. Having already written a long article entitled "Children in F. M. Dostoevskii's Works," pub-

206 R. A. Iantareva, *Detskie tipy v proizvedeniakh Dostoevskogo. Psikhologicheskie etiudy* (St. Petersburg, 1895); A. Podosenova, "Russkie deti," *Knizhki nedeli*, 1898, n. 2, 161-173; 8, 158-176.

207 Cf. O. Luchkina, "Raison d'être russkoi klassiki: poety-pedagogi i pisateli-vospitateli," *Detskie chteniia*, 8, 2 (2015), 30-51.

208 On this work see N. Perlina, "Pervaia posmertnaia biografia F. M. Dostoevskogo – analiz istochnikov," *Russian Language Journal*, 102 (1975), 42-56.

lished in the journal *Zhenskoe obrazovanie* in 1882,<sup>209</sup> Miller was also the editor of the miscellaneous edition published by Dostoevskaia and released in three thousand copies the following year, the previously mentioned *To Russian Children*. This volume, costing 2.5 roubles (3.25 with cover), had a refined appearance. On the burgundy cover, there was a golden oval portrait of Dostoevskii, framed by two intertwined laurel branches; above the portrait, also printed in gilded letters, there appeared the title, which left no doubt as to the recipients of the book: the *Russian* children, thus confirming the role of national paladin that Dostoevskii had achieved for himself thanks to his “Speech on Pushkin.” Reinforcing the function of the title was the book’s dedication to Dostoevskii’s two children, who were thus evoked as guarantors of the paternal and reassuring aura which the publisher wanted to attribute to the author.<sup>210</sup> On the content page,<sup>211</sup> next to the titles of the works, the editor placed the titles of the individual excerpts, which in some cases he had reformulated with the clear purpose of softening the impact of the texts’ “adult” themes, such as pain and death. For example, the title of the last fragment of the chapter “Iliushechka” (this diminutive of the child’s name does not feature in the original version), taken from the epilogue of *The Brothers Karamazov*, had been modified from the original “Iliushechka’s Funeral” (Pokhorony Iliushechki) into a more reassuring “Send-off” (Provody). In his preface, Miller made his debut remembering the heartfelt participation of children in Dostoevskii’s funeral, and presented the volume, published during the Christmas season, as a token of gratitude from the deceased for that manifestation of affection. In addition to Miller’s proclaimed intention of dedicating this “present to be placed under the Christmas tree” for children, another implicit interlocutor also emerged from his words:

This present from the deceased will seem to many too sad for children. In fact, there is much talk of children’s pain, and also of any other type of pain. But the deceased, not by chance, said that in his works there is also joy, the mere joy of the soul, the highest

209 O. F. Miller, “Deti v sochineniakh F. M. Dostoevskogo,” *Zhenskoe obrazovanie*, 2 (1882), 107-122; 3 (1882), 190-206.

210 On the function of dedicatees see G. Genette, *The Paratext. Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1997), 131-136.

211 From *Poor Folk*, “Iz zapisok Varin’ki Dobroselovoi”; from *Netochka Nezvanova*, “Netochka i Katia”; from *The Insulted and Humiliated*, “Rasskaz sirotki Nelli”; from *Notes from the House of the Dead*, “Letniaia pora v tiur’mu”; from *Crime and Punishment*, “Smert’ Marmeladova”; from *The Diary of a Writer*, “Mal’chik u Khrista na elke,” “Stoletniaia,” “Foma Danilov, zamuchennyi russkii geroi”; from *The Raw Youth*, “V barskom pensione”; from *The Brothers Karamazov*, “Starets i poslushnik: - Iz vospominanii Inoka Zosimy”; Alesha; “*Iliushechka*: - Shkol’niki – U kapitana – Kolia Krasotkin – Zhuchka – U Iliushechkoi postel’ki – Doktor – Provody”)

kind of it. Children will be able to capture this joy, perhaps even better than adults.<sup>212</sup>

The editor's *excusatio not petita* acquires meaning in light of the ferocious attack, indirectly also addressed to Miller himself, that N. K. Mikhailovskii had launched the year prior against Dostoevskii's "cruel talent," which he thought guilty of oppressing the masses with senseless exaltation of pain, inducing them to suffer violence and abuse passively.<sup>213</sup> Thus, in an attempt to prevent the objections of those who may consider Dostoevskii's works unsuitable for children on the basis of their darkness and anguish, Miller's introduction justified his edition by appealing to the many child characters in Dostoevskii's texts, and to the value of discovering one's own or others' suffering as a fundamental moment in a child's moral and cognitive development—and indeed, a necessary step in the transition to adult life. The pedagogical assumption from which Miller proceeded was therefore not far from that evoked by Alchevskaia in her article on the *Bibliography Sheet*: the educational value of Dostoevskii's works lay not in any foregrounding of positive ethical-behavioural models, but in showing the harmfulness of *anti*-models, whose consequences were taken to extremes. The 'Dostoevskian method' therefore placed itself in sharp contrast with the pedagogical thought of the time, the pivotal points of which lay in the gradual development of the child's personality and in the transmission of positive values, which would stimulate the naturally optimistic nature of the child.<sup>214</sup>

On the one hand, despite his efforts, Miller left himself open to criticism, which was not late in coming. The main objection concerned the intended recipient of the volume, which had been made so explicit in the title: more than a book 'for' children, Miller's could be considered a book 'about' children, which could perhaps be useful to educators as a compendium of child psychological types.<sup>215</sup> The most severe criticisms, however, concerned the very *raison d'être* of the volume. It is precisely the "cruel talent" thesis that seems to be the subtext of all the reviews of the *Russkim detiam* volume, including that penned by Mikhailovskii himself; he contested Miller's desire to administer suffering to young readers as a virtue to be conquered.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>212</sup> "Predislovie," *Russkim detiam*, I.

<sup>213</sup> N. K. Mikhailovskii, "Zhestokii talant" (1882), in Idem, *Literaturnaia kritika. Stat'i o russkoi literature XIX-nachala XX veka* (Leningrad, 1989), 153-234. In this article, Mikhailovskii likened Miller to a "woodpecker," who, with stubborn fidelity, magnified Dostoevskii's talents, raising him to the role of moral guide of the Russian people.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. O. Rogova, "Lektsii po detskoj literature," *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, 11 (1889), 444-446.

<sup>215</sup> "Bibliografia i kritika. Russkim detiam," *Zapiski uchitel'ia*, 4 (1883), 209-210; "Obzor detskikh knig za 1883," *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, 9 (1884), 286-290.

<sup>216</sup> "Novye knigi," *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 3 (1883), 74. For other reviews to Miller's volume see N., "Chto nashi deti chitaiut?," *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 13 December 1883; M.

On the other hand, Miller's heavy editing of the texts denotes his will to transmit to the young reader only an idealized vision of suffering, free from brutal details that could make it too realistic. For instance, the choice to include a fragment of *Notes from the House of the Dead* ("Summertime in Prison" ["Letniiaia pora v tiur'me"]) was explained by Miller thus: "Let our children learn to understand why people call even deported prisoners simply 'unfortunate.' May they learn to understand that even in these people the spark of God cannot go out altogether, and that a neighbour's duty is to not let it extinguish in others."<sup>217</sup> Of course, Miller's educational purposes could only be implemented by radically intervening in the text: for this reason, the published version was heavily edited, eliminating the initial digression on the deportees who try to escape from their place of imprisonment, the description of the disarray caused by the news of the general arriving from Petersburg, and then the entire final part of the chapter, replaced by excerpts from the following chapter, "Prison Animals" ("Katorzhnye zhivotnye").<sup>218</sup>

The second volume mentioned, aimed at adolescent readers, was published by Dostoevskiaia in 1887 and put on sale at the cost of 2 roubles. In addition to the integral versions of *Poor Folk*, "Mr. Prokharchin" ("Gospodin Prokharchin") and *Netochka Nezvanova*, the volume included some fragments from *Notes from the House of the Dead*.<sup>219</sup> In the absence of a preface, the content of the volume can only be interpreted in relation to the pedagogical method of the curator, V.Ia. Stoiunin. In his frequently reprinted work *On the Teaching of Russian Literature* (*O prepodavanii russkoi literatury*, 1864), Stoiunin suggested studying a literary work from the point of view not of its aesthetic qualities, but of the moral and behavioural ideals transmitted by it: the conversations between the teacher and the pupil about the work would help the latter to identify himself with the characters' situations and learn from them. Precisely to ensure this effect, Stoiunin recommended presenting to the young reader not individual fragments taken from more than one work, but two or three works in their entirety:

---

Tsebrikova, "Mimo tseli (Russkim detiam. Iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo. Izdano pod redatsiei O. F. Millera)," *Pedagogicheskii listok*, 1 (1883), 1-33.

<sup>217</sup> *Russkim detiam*, II.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* Although dismissed by many as controversial and inappropriate, *To Russian Children* was quite successful among young readers, as attested by this survey on cadets' home readings during Christmas holidays in 1882-1883: "Chto chitaiut nashi deti?," *Pedagogicheskii sbornik*, 5 (1883), 409-416.

<sup>219</sup> *Vybor iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo dlia uchashchikhsia srednego vozrasta (ot 14-ti let)*, pod red. V. Ia. Stoiunina (St. Petersburg, 1887). The volume included the following fragments from *Notes from the House of the Dead*: "Introduction" ("Vvedenie"); "The Dead House" ("Mertvyi dom"), "Akim Akimych," "An Old Believer" ("Starover"), "Sirotkin," "Leznig-Nurra," "Alej," "Sushilov," "Petrov," "Isai Fomich," "The Christmas Holiday" ("Prazdnik Rozhdestva Khristova"), "The Performance" ("Predstavlenie"), "Prison Animals" ("Katorzhnye zhivotnye"), "The Release" ("Vykhod iz katorgi").

To tell of this or that work in a synthetic way is a superfluous and useless task: can a bad lithograph give even a vague idea of the splendid painting of a brilliant artist? Is it possible, based only on fragments, to analyse a work and judge its qualities, when only the dark contours of the figures remain, while what constitutes their life and soul has disappeared?<sup>220</sup>

However, this criterion obviously did not apply to *Notes from the House of the Dead*, which, adapted and reformulated in a sort of gallery of portraits of the different characters and different moments in the life of the deportees, recreated a world that appeared, if not sweetened, certainly distant from that described in the original.<sup>221</sup> If the reasons for this radical intervention in the text of *Notes from the House of the Dead* stem from the obvious need to preserve young readers from a premature contact with deviant behaviours, which could arouse the dangerous desire to emulate those behaviors, less obvious are the reasons that led the pedagogues of the time to consider this novel, in spite of everything, an instructive text, good to train the younger generations and to educate the lower class. In this regard, the words of Alchevskaia, one of the most strenuous supporters of the educational value of Dostoevskii's works, can be of help. During these same years, she also read to her female pupils at Kharkiv's Sunday school extracts from *Notes from the House of the Dead* (from the 1875 fourth edition):

They may ask us: why did you concentrate on *Notes from the House of the Dead* and not on some other of Dostoevskii's works? — Because, we will answer, this work alone is dedicated to describing the people and must therefore be closer to them than

220 V. Ia. Stoiunin, *O prepodavanii russkoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1879), 15.

221 In a letter to Dostoevskaia dated November 28, 1886, V. Ia. Stoiunin shares his fears about the reception of the volume: "In the press for the public, I usually connect my name with such independent work, which required real effort from me, whereas I cannot say that here I made any effort; I just read and made notes with a pencil; but I didn't know and I'm not sure that I made a good choice, because I would like it to have educational value, and this question is not easy to solve: whoever wishes to can find fault in it without difficulty; and I don't have the slightest desire to respond and start a polemic with our clever people and critics" (IRLI, f. 100, n. 30281). Despite Stoiunin's fears, the volume received good reviews. Moreover, in 1896 it was approved by the Ministry of Popular Education for pupils' libraries of secondary urban schools and for teachers' libraries of primary schools (IRLI, f. 100, n. 29527. Otnosheniia k A. G. Dostoevskoi Min. Nar. Prosv., 17 August 1896), and in 1902 a second edition was released: *Vybor iz sochinenii F. M. Dostoevskogo dlia uchashchikhsia srednego vozrasta (ot 14-ti let)*. Pod redaktsiei V. Ia. Stoiunina. S portretom F. M. Dostoevskogo (St. Petersburg, 1902). 2-e izdanie. Razreshen Ministerstvom Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia k upotrebleniiu v uchenicheskikh bibliotekakh gorodskikh uchilishch i v uchitel'skikh bibliotekakh nachal'nykh shkol. Tip. br. Panteleevykh.

many others, despite the fact that even its author did not intend it for popular reading.<sup>222</sup>

The edits that Alchevskaia made to alter Dostoevskii's text show that, although she defined *Notes from the House of the Dead* a novel "close to the people," she considered as such only those specific depictions and scenes that did not show the environmental and human aberration of the world of deportees. For example, when reading the first chapter, Alchevskaia deliberately omitted several passages: those in which it was said that among criminals the majority were educated people and that there were some who believed that education killed people; the "incomprehensible reflections" in which the author observes that "crime cannot be examined from ready-for-use points of view, and that its philosophy is a little more complex than one might think"; the story of a person convicted for parricide; and finally, the narrator's considerations on the crime of smuggling and on the smuggler who supposedly worked "out of passion, by vocation."<sup>223</sup> The edits made by Alchevskaia therefore concerned not only passages that contained cruel descriptions or vulgar characters, but also those that could confuse the reader, who is "separated from us by an abyss,"<sup>224</sup> through the subtle ambiguity in statements by the narrator. What emerges from analysis of the young Kharkiv pupils' reactions is a particular type of reading: they compared what they heard with their personal experience and identified themselves with the destiny of this or that character, but did so without being able to rework their impressions within the entire context of the novel. Comments on the passages they read were reduced to single statements conditioned by their primordial rural religious sensitivity:

- It's so interesting to learn about how they live, the poor, and what they do! This is indeed far from us, here you could never see anyone who has been there, and you cannot hear of how people live in Siberia.

"I know an old Polish man," said another female pupil, "who goes around the courtyards to chop wood and also comes to us. It's so interesting to listen to him, when he starts telling stories! He too was deported for murder.

- And are you not afraid of him?, asked the first student.

- Not at all! - answered the second - He's so good! As if he had never killed anyone.

---

222 Kh. D. Alchevskaia, *Chto chitat' narodu?*, vol. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1884), 74. See also *Ibid.*, 288-291.

223 *Ibid.*, 74.

224 *Ibid.*

- Even if he has killed someone, he has repented - observed a third one - perhaps he has been expiating his sins his entire life.<sup>225</sup>

Alchevskaia wrote again about *Notes from the House of the Dead* in the second volume of *What Should Be Read to the People?* (*Chto chitat' narodu?*), in which she revealed the disappointing results of a reading performed before adult peasants. Taking into consideration the two fragments of the novel that had repeatedly been published in economic editions, "Summertime" (Letniaia pora) and "The Performance" (Predstavlenie), Alchevskaia, with regard to the first, attributed the poor attention of the audience to some of Dostoevskii's expressions, which were incomprehensible to a peasant reader; for the same reasons, Alchevskaia even decided not to read the second extract, which describes the staging of a theatrical performance in prison.<sup>226</sup> Alchevskaia's doubts and her appeals to publishers to put out an appropriately adapted version of the text did not prevent *Notes from the House of the Dead* from entering, in 1896, the list of books approved for public reading halls in the villages (*narodnye chital'ni*)—and remaining in the next two editions of the list.<sup>227</sup> Surprisingly, the approval concerned the complete edition of 1882, while the adaptations of "Summertime" and "The Performance" in

225 Ibid., 73-74.

226 *Chto chitat' narodu? Kriticheskii ukazatel' knig dlia narodnogo i detskogo chteniia*, 507-509. Alchevskaia's experiments with Dostoevskii's works were harshly criticized by other culture activists. S. A. An-skii (Rappoport) attributed the failure of her readings of excerpts taken from *Notes from the House of the Dead* to the practice of extrapolating individual fragments, which mutilated the literary text and altered the message, making it even more incomprehensible to the popular reader (S. A. An-skii, *Ocherki narodnoi literatury* (St. Petersburg, 1894), 128). Similarly, Rubakin had pointed to the difference between listening to a text and reading it: "Firstly, from the fact that some of our best writers' works, when they were read aloud, were understood and produced a great impression among the people, we must not conclude that all the works by these writers will be understood and will produce the same impression. From the fact that the people can understand works of a certain kind, it does not follow that they can read them: listening and reading on one's own are absolutely not the same thing. It is not simple for an uneducated reader to read, almost syllable by syllable, a long sentence by Dostoevskii: by the time he has finished reading it, he will have already forgotten the beginning. A book for the people must facilitate their understanding, which is not possible when presenting Dostoevskii's works to the people" (N. A. Rubakin, *Opyt programmy dlia issledovaniia literatury dlia naroda* [St. Petersburg, 1889], 4).

227 *Katalog knig dlia besplatnykh narodnykh chitalen*. Izdan po raspriazheniiu Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia (St. Petersburg, 1896), 80. This catalogue included the following editions of Dostoevskii's works: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 14 vols., St. Petersburg 1883; *Muzhik Marei. Stoletniaia*. St. Petersburg 1885; *Bednye liudi*. St. Petersburg (without year of publication); *Zapiski iz Mertvogo doma*. St. Petersburg, 1882. The second edition of this catalogue included the same editions (*Katalog knig dlia besplatnykh narodnykh chitalen*. Izdan po raspriazheniiu Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia. Izdaniie 2-oe, dopolnennoe. St. Petersburg, 1897, 88). The third edition of this catalogue, besides the aforementioned works, included Dostoevskaia's 1891 edition of *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii* (*Katalog knig dlia besplatnykh narodnykh chitalen*. Izdan po raspriazheniiu Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia. Izdaniie 3-e, dopolnennoe, St. Petersburg, 1900, 107).



1885 cheap editions were rejected.<sup>228</sup> But there is another factor here even more interesting and significant, not only in regards to the internal contradictions within the offices responsible for regulating reading, but also the particular nature of Dostoevskii's case: only a few years later, in 1898, the Ministry of Popular Education expunged all works by Dostoevskii from the lists of books recommended for the people, defining their past authorisation a "misunderstanding" and justifying their banning on the basis of the "very diverse, sometimes diametrically opposed views" stirred by Dostoevskii's works.<sup>229</sup>

In conclusion, much remains to be investigated concerning the circulation and reception of Dostoevskii's works among and by real readers—a topic studied so far almost exclusively with regard to *Diary of a Writer* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, a circumstance due, no doubt, to the objective difficulty of finding sources. From this analysis a substantial correspondence emerges between the success of Dostoevskii's work (even with its changing fortunes, which saw successive alternations between vertiginous rises and dramatic falls in terms of its popularity)<sup>230</sup> and developments in reading and publishing in Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century (see REITBLAT, "The Reading Audience of the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", in the present volume). In the sixties and the seventies the circulation of Dostoevskii's works was essentially limited to the cultured circuit and his audience included mainly educated readers, both nobles and *raznochintsy* (literary critics, social activists, students at universities, bureaucrats, provincial intelligentsia, etc.).<sup>231</sup> After 1881 the diversified publishing production of his works led to an expansion of his audience, which came to include half-educated readers and readers of lower classes (pupils in primary and secondary schools, merchants, literate workers and peasants, etc.). The conquest of new categories of readers exposed Dostoevskii's works to new and especially interesting 're-readings': the cases of the complete collection

<sup>228</sup> IRLI, f. 100, n. 29525. Otnosheniia k A. G. Dostoevskoi Min. Nar. Prosv., 16 October 1896.

<sup>229</sup> Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGIA), St. Petersburg, f. 734, op. 3, d. 84, ll. 762-762 ob. See the 1902 edition of *Spisok knig, razreshennykh Ministerstvom Narodnogo Prosveshcheniia (s iuliia 1900 goda po iul' 1902 goda) dlia publichnykh narodnykh chtenii, besplatnykh bibliotek chitalen, uchenicheskikh i uchitel'skikh bibliotek nizshikh i srednikh uchebnykh zavedenii* (Tver', 1902), in which Dostoevskii's name is not mentioned. Subsequent attempts to propose *Notes from the House of the Dead* to popular readers were led by L. N. Tolstoi, who included two fragments ("Orel" and "Smert' v gosspitale") in his *Reading Circle (Krug chteniia)* (1905).

<sup>230</sup> On the 'ups and downs' of the fortunes of Dostoevskii's work see Strakhov, "Vospominaniia," 523.

<sup>231</sup> Especially significant is the absence of Dostoevskii from the first, intended for the mass public series of Russian classics "Russian Library" (Russkaia biblioteka, ), edited in 1874-1879 by M. M. Stasiulevich (See LEVITT, "The Making of a National Poet," in the present volume). This series included cheap editions (seventy-five kopecks per volume) of works by A. S. Pushkin, M. Iu. Lermontov, N. V. Gogol', V. A. Zhukovskii, A. S. Griboedov, N. A. Nekrasov, M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin, I. S. Turgenev, and L. N. Tolstoi.

of his works and of *Notes from the House of the Dead* show that the departure of Dostoevskii's texts from their traditional distribution circuit and the editorial strategies used to increase their dissemination impacted their semantic potential, giving rise to a range of reactions (from censors, from critics, and from the public) that in some way did not correspond either to the intentions of the author or to the expectations of the pedagogue or the publisher. Whether and to what extent these "creative treasons" influenced the reception of Dostoevskii in the following decades are questions that the critical literature still has to face, beyond all the ideological readings and re-readings that Dostoevskii's works underwent in the Soviet era.<sup>232</sup>

---

<sup>232</sup> On this see A. V. Blum, "Russkaia klassika XIX veka pod sovetskoi tsenzuroi (po materialam sekretnykh arkhivov Glavlila 30-kh godov)," *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*, 32 (1998), 434, 437-438.

## READING THE NEWS ON TOLSTOI IN 1908

Raffaella Vassena

When Tolstoi made public his spiritual conversion at the beginning of the 1890s, he offered the world an unprecedented point of view on his person. In the following years, the crack that Tolstoi himself had opened gradually expanded: the audacity of the issues addressed in his new narrative and journalistic production, his involvement in charitable social activities, his public renunciation of the copyrights on his works published after 1881, his close criticism of governmental institutions and, of course, the scandal of his excommunication by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1901—all of this increased the curiosity of the public, which was attracted and at the same time disoriented by the charisma of such a complex and contradictory personality. The effects of this growing clamour around Tolstoi's name were unprecedented. Especially in the final ten years of his life, his image modified, fragmented and multiplied itself before the eyes of the world: any small event concerning his everyday life at Iasnaia Poliana, his new works, his alleged movements, his visitors, his health, even the sporadic fires in his estate or the quarrels among the peasants there became the subject of debates on the press, in which every detail was magnified, dissected, distorted and, bouncing from one newspaper to another, thrown to the reading public.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter will consider the case of Tolstoi in the light of the spread of new communication technologies in Russia and of the new reading practices that these implied. Recent studies have convincingly demonstrated that studying the reception of the later Tolstoi cannot ignore a serious reflection

---

1 The morbid interest in the person of Tolstoi was a widely debated phenomenon in the Russian press, which wondered to what limits the public could be pushed. See for instance A. Voznesenskii, "O pisatele i chitatele," *Odesskie novosti*, 18 December 1902; K. Fabianskii, "Genii i tolpa (Lev Tolstoi i publika)," *Russkoe slovo*, 8 July 1907; L. N., "Obrazets nekul'turnosti," *Russkoe slovo*, 5 October 1907.

on how his image was mediated by the press.<sup>2</sup> To what extent did the media transform the nature of this image, affecting the way in which it was received and creating new interpretative models for it? This turns out to be a major issue which needs further investigation. Here we limit ourselves to highlighting some aspects of such issues, namely, the mechanisms through which daily coverage of Tolstoi created an illusion of intimacy, offering the reader the opportunity to take possession of him as an object from an ever closer distance. This gradual cancellation of distances makes it possible to compare the case of Tolstoi to a primitive “global village,”<sup>3</sup> in which news about him spread incredibly fast, up to the borders of Russia and beyond, changing and transforming his image every time news about him was republished by a new newspaper. To grasp the significance of this phenomenon, it is necessary to consider the diffusion and the evolution of newspapers in Russia at the turn of the twentieth century.

Especially after the publication of “The Manifesto on the Improvement of the State Order” of 17 October 1905 and the subsequent imperial decree of 24 November of the same year, which sanctioned the end of preventive censorship and promised new guarantees in freedom of speech, the Russian periodical scene underwent further diversification, adapting itself to the tastes and pockets of very diverse audiences. 1891 statistics report the existence of 296 newspapers, 70 of which were dailies; in 1908 the number of dailies increased to 440, of which seven were published twice daily.<sup>4</sup> Within a decade, the circulation of newspapers grew exponentially: while at the end of the 1890s the average circulation was about 20-25,000 copies (with peaks of 70,000 as in the case of *Svet* [*The Light*]), after 1905 it doubled, reaching exceptional figures in some cases, like in that of *Russkoe slovo* (*The Russian Word*), which had a circulation of 250,000 copies a day.<sup>5</sup> The unstoppable growth of newspapers

2 See M. Denner, “‘Be Not Afraid of Greatness...’: Leo Tolstoy and Celebrity,” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 42, 4 (2009), 614-645; by the same author see also: “The Proletarian Lord: Leo Tolstoy’s Image During the Russian Revolutionary Period,” in D. Tussing Orwin (ed.), *Anniversary Essays on Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 2010), 218-244; “Introduction,” in L. Fitzsimmons, M. A. Denner (eds.), *Tolstoy on Screen* (Evanston, Illinois, 2015), 3-19. A milestone in the study of Tolstoi and the press of his time is W. Nickell, *The Death of Tolstoy. Russia on the Eve, Astapovo Station, 1910* (Ithaca, London, 2010).

3 H. M. McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: the Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto, 1962), 31.

4 These figures are reported in J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read. Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861-1917* (Princeton, 1985), 112, and L. McReynolds, *The News Under Russia’s Old Regime. The Development of a Mass-Circulation Press* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1991), Table 2. It should be noted that these figures differ, albeit slightly, from those reported by Makhonina, who, for 1913 counts 417 dailies, of which 10 went out twice a day (S. Ia. Makhonina, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki nachala XX veka* [Moscow, 2003], 60). On the spread of newspapers in late nineteenth-century Russia see also A. I. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal’montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 2009), 113-132; D. R. Brower, “The Penny Press and Its Readers,” in S. Frank, M. D. Steinberg (eds.), *Cultures in Flux. Lower-Class Values, Practices and Resistance in Imperial Russia* (Princeton, 1994), 147-167; B. I. Esin, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki 1703-1917* (Moscow, 2000).

5 Makhonina, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki*, 60.

signalled the advent of a new type of reader, a phenomenon acknowledged by more than one contemporary author—including Tolstoi—with some concern.<sup>6</sup> In 1904, the populist journalist S. N. Krivenko (1847-1906), already a collaborator with authoritative periodicals like *Sankt-Peterburgskie-vedomosti* (*St. Petersburg News*), *Otechestvennye zapiski* (*Notes of the Fatherland*), *Russkoe bogatstvo* (*Russian Wealth*) and *Novoe slovo* (*New Word*), painted a portrait of this new *gazetnyi chitatel'* [newspaper reader], implicitly contrasting him with the old reader of the thick journals. In contrast with the old reader, the new newspaper reader would not interpret what he read in the light of reason, would not devote to his reading the time that was necessary for him to assimilate and reflect on what he had read, but, rather, would be satisfied with a hasty and superficial reading:

We read or, rather, thumb through newspapers in passing, between tea and morning errands, and mainly to keep ourselves up to date. First of all, the reader goes through the telegrams or the obituaries, then takes a look at the stock exchange or the governmental decrees, then browses the news section and the sub-headings of articles and sections, so as not to miss something exceptional, sensational, about which people are bound to talk. If he still has time, then he will also browse the local feuilleton, or otherwise he will leave it for after lunch or for the evening, to scan quickly before falling asleep. [...] When you meet people in offices or on suburban trains in the summer and overhear their conversations, without fail you can tell which of them have leafed through which newspaper, and what kind of material they have been subsisting on. And the same thing happens again the next day, and on and on. This attitude, one might say, is superficial. This is not a type of reading that implies a necessary reflection on what is being read; this is merely browsing, a very easy thing to do if one has a minimum set of skills.<sup>7</sup>

After denying that newspapers possessed any integral ideological content and consistency of opinions (i.e. the qualities which instead characterized thick journals), Krivenko criticised their language. He deemed it an empty,

---

6 Tolstoi's concern was the naivety of lower-class readers, who were unable to distinguish false news from true news and prone to being affected by the sensationalist tones of newspapers. D. P. Makovitskii reports a statement by Tolstoi about his waiter Vania: "About the way today's newspapers insinuate themselves into family affairs and write blatantly, L. N. said that Vania (the waiter) is getting his education from the newspapers (he reads them diligently every day). This is bad, because the consequence of reading newspapers is that it allows you to judge things you don't know. Currently, 99% of people who read the newspapers repeat what they have read in them, they do not have their own opinion on things." D. P. Makovitskii, "Iasnopolianskie zapiski," *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 90 (Moscow, 1979), part 4, 351-352.

7 S. N. Krivenko, "Gazetnoe delo i gazetnye liudi," *Russkaia mysl'*, 10 (1906), 7.

bureaucratic language, composed of simple clichés, which often reflected the reporter's own poor level of education and very nearly dazed the reader, inhibiting his capacity to judge the facts as they were reported. The reading modality of the newspaper reader described by Krivenko was therefore influenced not only by the social and cultural profile of the reader, but also by the specific form of the medium, i.e. the structural features of the newspaper—by its style, language, genre of published materials, the way these were arranged, etc. The situation described by Krivenko leads to the question of whether it is possible to isolate some interpretative models suggested by the formats of the newspapers themselves and verify their effect on the public. To test this hypothesis, we chose to narrow the field of investigation to 1908 and to focus on a selection of newspapers representing the main categories of the pre-revolutionary Russian press.<sup>8</sup>

On August 28, 1908, Tolstoi turned eighty years old. Despite a rich, long-standing tradition of celebrations and literary festivals in Russia, Tolstoi's jubilee was an unprecedented event. For months, in spite of Tolstoi's preemptive condemnation of any manner of celebration, the news about his birthday dominated the pages of all newspapers, from the most serious and authoritative dailies to the yellow press, from Moscow and St. Petersburg to the most remote provinces. While initially coverage of the event seemed to be a simple exchange of ideas about whether and/or how to celebrate the occasion, over the course of several months, it took on aspects of a political, social, and religious debate on a national scale. Tolstoi's life, as well as his political, social, and religious theories (or, rather, the infinite derivations of these) became, for some, a pretext for promulgating foggy concepts of equality and democracy; for others, for open attacks on the interests of both Church and State; for others, again, for condemning the rampant crisis of values in modern Russian society. Manufactured, modelled, and endlessly reproduced, the news about Tolstoi's eightieth birthday also lent itself to commercial purposes, both in the field of publishing and in that of consumer goods: from newspaper pages and the covers of supplements and journals, to candy wrappers and cigarette boxes, Tolstoi's images multiplied, each time adapting to the tastes of reader-consumers. This story (which,

---

<sup>8</sup> In 1901, basing his distinctions on parameters such as the format, content, style, and cost of subscription or retail sale price, the social-revolutionary journalist A. V. Peshekhonov (1867-1933) divided newspapers into *bol'shaia pressa* (authoritative, large format, political information newspapers that cost between 8-12 roubles, addressing a selected and educated public), *malaia pressa* (smaller-sized and lower-priced newspapers [annual subscription between 7 and 10 roubles] aimed at the lower urban classes) and *deshevye* or *bul'varnye gazety* (cheap and scarcely informative newspapers, printed on low quality paper, for a poorly educated audience) (A. V. Peshekhonov, "Russkaia politicheskaiia gazeta. Statisticheskii ocherk," *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 1901, 3). More recent studies have identified a fourth category in the so-called "informationnaia pressa," represented by two newspapers such as *Novoe vremia* and *Russkoe slovo*. Cf. Makhonina, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki*, 66, 82-99.

by any measure, has all the features of a “pseudo-event”<sup>9</sup> was reconstructed in several biographies and studies of Tolstoi,<sup>10</sup> none of which, however, considered it in light of Russia’s developing journalism industry and of the appearance of a new type of reader. The ‘montages’ of the articles published about Tolstoi during that year, while effective in rendering the chaotic heterogeneity of opinions, fail to grasp the mechanisms of manipulation to which Tolstoi’s image was subjected, nor do they tell us what effects these articles had on the public. The aim of this chapter is to shed new light on the media coverage of Tolstoi’s jubilee in 1908 by proceeding on two levels: on the one hand, drawing from the continuous and apparently disordered flow of materials on Tolstoi’s jubilee (articles, surveys, parodies, caricatures, but also private and public letters from and to Tolstoi) a narrative of the media debate that dominated the first half of 1908; on the other, highlighting some of the strategies used by the media in constructing Tolstoi’s image and bringing them into dialogue with the target-reader of selected newspapers published in Moscow and St. Petersburg on 28 August 1908.

#### I. THE MEDIA DEBATE ON TOLSTOI’S JUBILEE AND THE FIRST REACTIONS OF READERS

In the early months of 1908, on the initiative of M. A. Stakhovich (1861-1923), a longtime friend of Tolstoi’s and a member of the State Duma, a committee was set up in St. Petersburg for the celebration of the writer’s eightieth birthday. The intense activity of the committee, which included authors, artists and journalists, resulted in a meeting that took place on 23 February 1908 and saw forty delegates from the Russian periodical press of the time gather to discuss the possible forms of the event. However, there was much more at stake than just a celebration: a powerful catalyst for public attention, Tolstoi’s name represented, for the progressive press, an impediment to the policies supported by the tsarist government concerning the distribution of land to peasants, capital punishment, and the prison system. Precisely for this rea-

<sup>9</sup> Daniel J. Boorstin coined the term “pseudo-event” to indicate artificial news which gains credibility in the eyes of the public only because of its media impact. According to his definition, a “pseudo-event” possesses the following characteristics: “it is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted or incited it [...]; it is planted primarily [...] for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced [...]; its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity [...]; it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy” (D. J. Boorstin, *The Image. A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* [New York, 2012], 11-12).

<sup>10</sup> Among the others, see the extensive and valuable research of Russian scholar Irina Petrovitskaia: *Lev Tolstoi – Publitsist i obshchestvennyi deiatel’* (Moscow, 2013); “Tolstovskii s’ezd russkikh zhurnalistov. 1908 god,” Idem (ed.), *Iz istorii russkoi literatury i zhurnalistiki. Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 2009), 245-256. A recent collection of excerpts from the articles on Tolstoi published in Russian newspapers in 1908 is also worthy of note: F. Tolstaia e al., *Kak zhal’, chto Tolstoi ne arbuz* (Moscow, 2018).

son, as early as the month of March, the state and religious authorities became alarmed, issuing warnings about maintaining the public order. In the coming months, these became actual prohibitions to celebrate the event.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these circumstances, a debate on the ways in which the celebration should take place emerged in all Russian periodicals from the very beginning of that year. The question of how to mark the occasion resonated in almost every publication, giving rise to answers of all kinds, from the most polemic to the most creative, and thus creating more than one opportunity for satire:

When he sewed boots, they demanded that he write novels, and when he wrote novels, they demanded that he sew boots. They spied in his kitchen to see if he was breaking his fast by eating meat [...] They have bought and sold his words, his gestures and his thoughts at wholesale and retail prices. [...] And so they got to the eightieth birthday of the great writer of his own land. And they started discussing why and how they should celebrate this jubilee.<sup>12</sup>

Some newspapers published phantasmagorical news: the American billionaire Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was about to buy from S. A. Tolstaia the rights to Tolstoi's works in order to distribute them to the population for free; funds were being raised to buy Tolstoi's birth house, or even Iasnaia Poliana, in order to turn them into national museums.<sup>13</sup> Other newspapers launched surveys to establish the most appropriate way to celebrate Tolstoi's birthday. The answers published in the pages of the newspaper *Rannee utro* (*Early Morning*, 1907-1918) testify to the ongoing ferment at all levels of the Russian society. Among the individuals interviewed, several came from the world of politics and culture; these believed that traditional forms of celebration did not suit Tolstoi, and suggested more appropriate initiatives, such as the publication of his complete works.<sup>14</sup> Common readers instead proposed to celebrate Tolstoi's birthday by raising funds to open universities, schools or libraries for the people, while others suggested distributing Tolstoi's works for free in the countryside and in villages, where apparently he was known only by dint of his excommunication by the Holy Synod:

Many, very many, especially in the countryside and in villages, do not know Tolstoi, but have heard of him only through rumours ac-

<sup>11</sup> "Tolstoi i o Tolstom: Nove materialy," *Tolstovskii muzei* (Moscow, 1924), vol. 1, 81-83.

<sup>12</sup> Vlad. Azov, "Malen'kii fel'eton. V trekh sosnakh," *Rech'*, March 1, 1908.

<sup>13</sup> See for instance "K iubileiu L. Tolstogo," *Russkoe slovo*, 1 February 1908; "Kak oznamenovat' iubilei L. N. Tolstogo," *Penzenskie vedomosti*, 5 February 1908; "K tolstovskomu iubileiu," *Russkoe slovo*, 11 March 1908.

<sup>14</sup> See for instance the letters of lawyer Mikhail L. Mandel'shtam and of the member of the State Assembly Z. A. Maklanov, published in "Kak chestvovat' Tolstogo?," *Rannee utro*, 26 February 1908; see also the answer of Tolstoi's son, S.L. Tolstoi, in "Kak chestvovat' Tolstogo?," *Rannee utro*, 9 March 1908.



ording to which Tolstoi is a heretic, excommunicated by the Holy Synod, and this means a lot to the masses of faithful peasants.<sup>15</sup>

The ongoing debate in the press went hand in hand with an exponential increase in the mail arriving at Iasnaia Poliana. Tolstoi's archive in Moscow contains over fifty thousand letters addressed to him, still largely unpublished, reflecting the lively dialogue between Tolstoi and his contemporaries: almost half of these letters reached Tolstoi in the decade before his death, between 1900 and 1910; of these, over four thousand date back to 1908; of these, those that refer to the jubilee number 1,364.<sup>16</sup> Even the periodicals publicized the extraordinary flow of letters addressed to Tolstoi, from Russia and from abroad, offering brief samples of their various types, and sometimes even indulging in satirical interpretations of the phenomenon.<sup>17</sup>



“Tolstoi at work” (*Seryi volk*, 23 March 1908, n. 12)

<sup>15</sup> Letters by “Provintsial P. F. Veselovskii” and “M. Alf-ii” in “Kak chestvovat’ Tolstogo?,” *Rannee utro*, 2 March 1908 and 9 March 1908.

<sup>16</sup> [http://tolstoy-manuscript.ru/index.php?option=com\\_virtuemart&page=shop.browse&category\\_id=414&Itemid=8](http://tolstoy-manuscript.ru/index.php?option=com_virtuemart&page=shop.browse&category_id=414&Itemid=8) (accessed May 6, 2020). Over the years only a small part of the letters to Tolstoi has been published. A huge selection of letters can be found in V. A. Zhdanov (ed.), “Iz pisem k Tolstomu (po materialam tolstovskogo arkhiva),” *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 37/38, L. N. Tolstoi, book 2, (Moscow, 1939), 369-396.

<sup>17</sup> “Perepiska L. N. Tolstogo (Vesti iz Iasnoi Poliany),” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 13 February 1908; “L. N. i tri rozy,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 29 February 1908. G. Sergeenko, “Arkhiv Tolstogo,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 14 June 1908; “Perepiska Tolstogo,” *Kievskie vesti*, 20 June 1908. See also the caricature published in the satirical magazine *Seryi volk*, 12 (23 March 1908), 170.

Many of the letters protested against the celebration of the jubilee, which was seen by Tolstoi's followers as a base and corrupt event antithetical to his teachings, and by his opponents as a dangerous instrument of mass propagation of his anticlerical ideas. It was precisely these letters that prompted Tolstoi to take a more defined position with respect to what was happening, even if, at first, he only did so in private, in answering some of his individual correspondents.<sup>18</sup> What struck him most was a letter that he received from Princess M. M. Dondukova-Korsakova, a benefactor and a woman with a marked religious sensitivity, who had written to him on 22 February, begging him to give up his jubilee so as not to cause further pain to Orthodox Christians. In his response of 27 February, Tolstoi admitted his profound discomfort with the clamour that the media had generated around him and agreed with Dondukova-Korsakova as to the harmful effects that the celebrations would have on parts of the Russian society. In line with this position, the following day Tolstoi wrote to M. A. Stakhovich, asking him to stop any initiative related to his jubilee and motivating his request with his desire not to offend the sensitivity of the Orthodox.<sup>19</sup>

News of Tolstoi's letter to Dondukova-Korsakova appeared in newspapers on 13 March, resulting in controversy centered either around the correspondent who had unwittingly presented herself as spokeswoman for all the Orthodox believers, or around Tolstoi himself, who was seen as spiteful of the affection that the Russian society showed for him.<sup>20</sup>

A few days later, the controversy became sharper with the publication of a passage from another of Tolstoi's private letters, this time addressed to one of his followers, the former landowner A. M. Bodianskii. In an open letter to the newspapers, Bodianskii had proposed to honour the writer's jubilee by locking him up in prison. In his private response, Tolstoi was very pleased with this idea, stating: "Really, nothing would satisfy me and give me more joy than being put in prison, in a beautiful, real, smelly, cold, hungry prison."<sup>21</sup> Tolstoi's paradoxical declaration came out in the Moscow newspaper *Russkie vedomosti* (*Russian News*, 1863-1917) on 18 March, and was taken up by other newspapers, sparking controversy and sarcastic jokes even on the

18 See Tolstoi's letters of 24 February to I. A. Samsonov, of 27 February to M. M. Dondukova-Korsakova, and of 17 March 1908 to the peasant A. I. Shashkin (L. N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii v 90 tomakh* [Moscow, 1928-1958], vol. 78, 68-71, 96).

19 Letter of 28 February 1908 to M. A. Stakhovich (Ibid., 73-75). A summary of Tolstoi's letter to Stakhovich was made public on 23 March, after Stakhovich's public reading of the letter during a meeting of the Tolstoi honors committee (see "Otkaz L. N. Tolstogo ot iubileia," *Russkoe slovo*, 23 March 1908; "K chestvovaniiu L. N. Tolstogo," *Rech'*, 23 March 1908). The text of the letter was published on the Russian press on April 6.

20 See for instance "K chestvovaniiu L. N. Tolstogo," *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 13 March 1908; "K iubileiiu L. N. Tolstogo," *Rannee utro*, 13 March 1908.

21 Letter of 12-13 March 1908 to A. M. Bodianskii, Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 88-89. Bodianskii was serving a six-month sentence for spreading Tolstoi's prohibited works.

part of the public.<sup>22</sup> The great confusion generated by the breathless circulation of such news only swelled river of correspondence entering Iasnaia Poliana. Some took the opportunity to reiterate their longstanding hatred of Tolstoi.<sup>23</sup> Others outlined to him the political objectives that the jubilee might help realize: there were those who hoped that it would put pressure on the government to grant amnesty to exiled sectarians, and those who suggested that it could be a favourable opportunity to obtain the abolition of capital punishment.<sup>24</sup> Then there were those who, misrepresenting what was written in the newspapers, hypothesised Tolstoi's involvement in the preparations for the event and asked him about them directly. Thus, for example, one lady reader from Odessa wrote to him at the end of March:

From everywhere comes word that all of Europe, America, and, so to speak, the whole world is preparing to celebrate your eightieth birthday.  
Debates are being held on how it is best to do it, they ask for your opinion about it.  
You agree with these celebrations, and this is incredible.<sup>25</sup>

After pointing out not only the risk that the debate between the supporters and the opponents of Tolstoi's thought might become harsher, but also the enormous economic expenditure that organising the jubilee would entail, the correspondent came to formulate the usual request for Tolstoi's public rejection of the event, adding precise indications of what Tolstoi's statement should include:

Stop all this publicly, write a letter to the newspapers saying that you renounce these celebrations on, say, material grounds. But if people so want to pay tribute to you, show them a really good and useful action that they could do, and [show them] what would give moral satisfaction to both them and yourself. Certainly, to stop death sentences in your name, to open the doors of prisons

---

<sup>22</sup> In a letter of 1 April 1908, an anonymous correspondent joked about Tolstoi's desire to shut himself up in a prison, signing his letter "An old fool": Gosudarstvennyi Muzei im. L. N. Tolstogo, Otdel rukopisei (hereafter GMT OR), Moscow, f. 1, 149/66.

<sup>23</sup> Letter of 14 March 1908 from N. A. Dunaeva, who attended Moscow's Women's Higher Courses: "I, Nadezhda Dunaeva, daughter of a merchant, attending the Moscow Women's Higher Courses, feel a personal hatred for you... I have never seen you, I have not read all of your works, but what I have read put me against you" (Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 91).

<sup>24</sup> Letter to Tolstoi from S. N. Maiboroda from Kharkiv, 24 April 1908 (Ibid., 336).

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Tolstoi from Varvara Doiban from Odessa, 26 March 1908. GMT OR, f. 1, 47249.

to all those who suffer in the name of an idea, all this would be a great demonstration of humanity and love for your neighbour.<sup>26</sup>

In another letter from 16 March 1908, a man from Kursk, K. Voinov Razumov, having read about the jubilee in the newspapers, accused Tolstoi of colluding with the Babel that the media had unleashed around him:

Dear Mr. Lev Nikolaevich!

Reading every day of the approaching jubilee in your honour, I am truly amazed that you, a man of intellect [...], have not yet examined your conscience, against which you have acted for half a century, and that now, nearing the end of your life, still read and listen to the masses of people who are only capable of repeating somebody else's words, including yours [...]<sup>27</sup>

Unlike other correspondents who asked Tolstoi for a public rejection in the press, the correspondent from Kursk showed greater awareness of his influence; he aspired to be a protagonist, and not only a passive consumer, of the media show. After having urged Tolstoi to renounce falsity (which significantly, for this particular writer, coincided with disposing of the clothes worn in the portraits that circulated in the press), he challenged Tolstoi to have his [i.e. the correspondent's] letter published in a newspaper:

In conclusion, I will say that if you have ever had the conscience of a reasonable person, then you should take off your mask (your sandals and shirt) and, after reading this letter, you should not throw it away with the useless papers, but send it to the editorial staff of important newspapers and ask them yourself to publish it in full, so that the whole world may judge who the true believers really are, and not those corrupted by you, and this will purify your conscience.<sup>28</sup>

In an attempt to calm things down and distance himself from the accusation of participating in an ambiguous and harmful system, Tolstoi paradoxically ended up using the same means attributed to that system. After noting his discomfort in his diaries,<sup>29</sup> he also expressed it in a letter of 21

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>27</sup> Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 56, 483-484.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> "21 March 1908 Ias. Pol. [...] I have now received an abusive letter in this regard. I want to fulfil the sender's wish—send the letter to a newspaper and take advantage of it to express myself more and more clearly" (Ibid., 110-111).

March to his son Lev,<sup>30</sup> and finally decided, on 25 March, to make a public pronouncement about it. In an open letter to the newspapers, Tolstoi officially distanced himself from the preparations for his jubilee, attaching the letter from the Kursk reader, as the reader had commanded, and asking them to publish it.<sup>31</sup> In his letter, Tolstoi used as his first argument his natural distaste for public ceremonies, which years before had led him to decline Turgenev's invitation to take part in the Moscow celebrations in honour of A. S. Pushkin. His second argument, more importantly, was the awareness that these manifestations risked initiating a vicious circle, disproportionately propagating and increasing negative feelings towards him:

[...] the celebrations that are being prepared, even their very preparation, arouse in a large number of people quite negative feelings toward me. These negative feelings may remain unexpressed, but this only stimulates and fosters them. I know that these negative feelings were caused by me; I myself am guilty of them, I am guilty of the harsh and reckless words with which I dared judge other people's beliefs. I sincerely regret this and I am very happy to have the opportunity to declare it. But this does not change the question. At my age, with one foot in the grave, the only thing one wants is to be in loving relationships with people as much as possible, and to take leave of them with these same feelings. This letter and other similar ones that I receive show precisely that the preparations for the jubilee arouse in people— and absolutely rightfully so— feelings totally contrary to love. And this is very painful to me.<sup>32</sup>

However, perhaps fearing the consequences of his action,<sup>33</sup> at the last moment Tolstoi decided not to post the letter, but to give it to his friend N. V. Davydov, who had come to Iasnaia Poliana on behalf of the Moscow committee for the celebration of the jubilee. Davydov read out Tolstoi's letter during a session of the Society of Lovers of Russian Literature (*Obshchestvo liubitelei russkoi slovesnosti*) and the Moscow committee decided to respect Tolstoi's wishes, publicly renouncing its intentions.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> "My jubilee is a very difficult task for me: how can I not offend friends or stir up enemies? I am looking for a way to affect the people's natural feeling of love as little as possible" (Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 98-99).

<sup>31</sup> "Letters like these, from people who see my next jubilee negatively, I have received a certain number. This, I ask you to publish, as its author wishes" (Ibid., 104-106).

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>33</sup> Precisely in those days Tolstoi, who had been asked to use the jubilee as a means to obtain the repatriation of emigrated sectarians, stated: "If I asked for an amnesty, those words would be lost in the wind. I commit to this: I shall intervene as little as possible" (*Makovitskii, "Iasnopolianskie zapiski,"* vol. 3, 41).

<sup>34</sup> That said, as soon as 31 March, newspapers reported its resurgence, under the name of "Obshchestvo imeni L'va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo," with the intention to found a museum

Although creating a sensation, Tolstói's refusal immediately lost part of its effectiveness because it coincided with an interview with Tolstói's son Lev, published in the 30 March issue of the Moscow newspaper *Rus'* (*Russia*).<sup>35</sup> This interview included excerpts of the letter written to him by his father on 21 March, in which he seemed to be torn between conflicting feelings. In the interview, moreover, Lev was misleadingly quoted as saying that his father would not have liked the interruption of the preparations for the celebrations. The statements attributed to L. L. Tolstói forced him to retract them publicly, in an article published in St. Petersburg's *Novoe vremia* (*New Time*, 1868-1917) on 1 April. Lev distanced himself from the article published in *Rus'* and tried to re-establish the correct version of the facts, reporting the words that his father himself had used in his letter of 21 March.<sup>36</sup>

The conflicting rumours about the attitude of Tolstói and his family toward the jubilee merely exacerbated speculations and conjectures about the writer, providing material for serious and satirical articles alike. Over the course of several days, *Novoe vremia* published an article by A. Stolypin positively commenting on Tolstói's statements regarding the jubilee; then the aforementioned letter to the editor from Tolstói's son; then a caricature that represented Tolstói, intent on fleeing from the jubilee celebrations, riding a galloping horse exhausted by fatigue; and finally a moving article by Vasilii Rozanov, in which he proposed to celebrate Tolstói in silence, and fantasized about an unlikely press release he would like to see in Russian newspapers the day before the fateful anniversary: "Simply, we will think of you in silence, and we will rejoice in the fact that you are still with us, that you see and feel, just as we see and feel you."<sup>37</sup> It was no different with St. Petersburg's *Birzhevye vedomosti* (*Stock Exchange News*, 1880-1917): in the 2 April 1908 issue, just a few days after publishing an article respectful of Tolstói's reasons (one sympathetic to and inspired by the open letter of the writer's son published in *Novoe vremia*), the news of Tolstói's rejection of the jubilee was reported as an April Fools' joke.<sup>38</sup>

---

dedicated to Tolstói. See for instance "K 80-ti-letnemu iubileiu L. N. Tolstogo," *Peterburgskii listok*, 31 March 1908. The committee spread the will of Tolstói through a press release that was taken up by the main Russian newspapers (Tolstói, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 56, 485).

35 "O iubile," *Rus'*, 30 March 1908.

36 "O iubile L. N. Tolstogo (Pis'mo v redaktsiiu)," *Novoe vremia*, 1 April 1908.

37 See: A. Stolypin, "Otkazannyi iubilei," *Novoe vremia*, 29 March 1908; "The end of the jubilee company," *Novoe vremia*, 2 April 1908; V. Rozanov, "Krasota molchaniia (K iubileiu L. N. Tolstogo)," *Novoe vremia*, 3 April 1908. In turn, Rozanov's proposal aroused controversial reactions on the part of the yellow press, which saw Tolstói's jubilee as a possible source of income. See "Sovershenno novoe predlozhenie, kak otprazdnovat' iubilei grafa L'va Tolstogo..." *Peterburgskii listok*, 4 April 1908.

38 See: A. Izmailov, "Iubileia Tolstogo ne budet," *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 28 March 1908; "Malen'kii fel'eton. 1-e aprelia," *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 2 April 1908.



“The end of the jubilee company,” *Novoe vremia*, 2 April 1908.

Among the most important consequences of the report was the uncontrolled publication of Tolstoy’s other private letters, in which his statements, deprived of any context, lent themselves to increasingly conflicting interpretations. Around that time, first excerpts from and then the entire text of Tolstoy’s 28 February letter to his friend M. A. Stakhovich, in which he asked for the jubilee preparations to be halted, were published. The full text of the letter to Stakhovich appeared on 6 April in the supplement to *Birzhevyye vedomosti*, the popular *Ogonek* (*Spark*); it was introduced by the headline “L. N. Tolstoy renounces his jubilee. A historical document”<sup>39</sup> and accompanied by a note specifying that the typescript was reproduced by courtesy of Stakhovich. In the same issue of *Ogonek*, there was also another of Tolstoy’s private letters (penned on 28 February 1908 to Arvid Järnefelt), interesting not so much for its content as for the editor’s introduction. It justified the letter’s publication on the grounds that any word pronounced by Tolstoy possessed value *a priori*, in spite of what he said and no matter how public or private it was. Hence the absolute subordination of the reliability of the news or of the private nature that it may have: any event concerning Tolstoy, any sentence pronounced by or attributed to him was already news in and

<sup>39</sup> *Ogonek*, 6 April 1908.

of itself, and it was therefore the reporter's duty to ensure its maximum dissemination and thereby foster an informed public.<sup>40</sup>

In the following weeks, preparations for Tolstoi's looming eightieth birthday did not cease or even slow. Newspapers reported daily about fervent initiatives of all kinds: schools and libraries for peasants named after Tolstoi; his appointments as an honorary member of institutions and associations; proposals to name streets after him; charity publishing projects.<sup>41</sup> However, voices of protest were also raised against the prospect of official celebrations, which had resumed following an 8 April decree of Moscow's city Duma, and which also resulted in the creation of new associations against the jubilee.<sup>42</sup> Once again, it was Tolstoi himself who fuelled the media hype around his name with an open letter dated 18 May to the newspaper *Rus'*, in which he openly asked to be punished instead of those arrested for spreading his writings.<sup>43</sup> Tolstoi's statements, published in the *Rus'* issue of 22 May, triggered a new flow of reactions on the part of the press and led to a peak in the correspondence reaching Iasnaia Poliana: between July and August, sixty letters in support of Tolstoi and twenty-one abusive letters were delivered to his estate, including an envelope with a rope hanging from it and an anonymous note saying: "Count—here's the answer to your letter. Without disturbing the government, you can do it yourself, it's not difficult. Thus you will do your country and our youth a favour".<sup>44</sup>

40 A key figure in the new journalism that sought to inform rather than interpret, the reporter sought both to guarantee the reader's right to truthful and reliable information and to safeguard the commercial interests of the newspaper that he worked for. On the rise and evolution of the reporter profession in Russia see McReynolds, *The News Under Russia's Old Regime*, 145-167.

41 One of these cases reveals how not only the image and words of Tolstoi but also those of his family underwent media proliferation. The announcement of the publication of an anthology of children's texts by Tolstoi (*Khrestomatiia iz pisanii L'va Tolstogo, sostavlena gruppoi detei pod redaktsiei P. A. Sergeenko*, Moscow, 1908) prompted S. A. Tolstaia to write an open letter to the editors of *Russkoe slovo* in which she stated that she owned the copyright on her husband's works prior to 1881. Tolstaia's letter stirred many reactions, both from the public and from other newspapers. On 5 August, *Golos Moskvy* reported the news that a group of Moscow journalists had provocatively decided to publish an anthology of Tolstoi's texts prior to 1881, whereas *Veche* published a caricature which represented the countess in the act of threatening the publisher of the incriminated anthology ("Grafinia S. A. Tolstaia i detskie khrestomatii," *Veche*, 17 August 1908).

42 "Russkie' liudi i iubilei L. N. Tolstogo," *Russkoe slovo*, 1 June 1908.

43 Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 142-144.

44 Letter to Tolstoi signed "A Russian mother," Moscow, 26 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 250/20. Tolstoi's repeated requests to be punished in place of others also aroused the reactions of satirical magazines (see for example the caricatures published in *Knut*, 5, 1908; and *Budil'nik*, 33, 1908). New disputes arose in July due to the article "I Cannot Be Silent" ("Ne mogu molchat") that Tolstoi wrote in reaction to the news, reported in *Russkie vedomosti* of 9 May, of the hanging of twenty peasants in the Kherson province. On 4 July 1908, an edited version of that article was also printed in some Russian newspapers; they were sanctioned for this act, and the full text began to circulate clandestinely.



## 2. FOUR READERS' LETTERS IN AUGUST

The daily, wild press about Tolstoi, his articles, and the forthcoming jubilee aroused great curiosity among the public, but also bewilderment and concern. For example, let us consider four distinct letters which arrived in Iasnaia Poliana in August 1908. The first correspondent is the very A. M. Bodianskii who had been imprisoned on charges of having spread Tolstoi's works: Bodianskii expressed to Tolstoi all his indignation at the clamour that had arisen around his jubilee, and urged him to publicly distance himself from it, and even suggested the words with which he should do it: "I can't stand it! But this time I turn to other recipients. I cannot bear your greetings and good wishes, and my soul hates your praise."<sup>45</sup> The second correspondent, a certain Nikolai Zhegulov from a village in the Nizhnii Novgorod province, sent an ungrammatical letter to Tolstoi on 15 August that joined the chorus of greetings and praise but drew a vital distinction, however, between Tolstoi's 'secular' works and those in which had addressed the religious theme:

... the day of the eightieth year of your earthly life is approaching and everywhere, as can be read in the newspapers, people are preparing to express in their own way their profound respect for your literary works, and exactly for your secular literature you also receive my deepest respect, but this concerns your writings. As for the questions about the Christian religion in your works, you, Lev Nikolaevich, have made a huge mistake in daring to challenge the fundamental religious principles of Christianity. First of all, you have touched one of the Most Holy Christian Sacraments, the Eucharist, and for this they have excommunicated you, it is a pity you have these convictions, and what will become of those who read these works of yours, there are already many people, especially among the youths of Christian families, who are infected by these works of yours.<sup>46</sup>

The reference to Tolstoi's disrespectful attitude toward the Eucharist Sacrament suggests that Zhegulov might have read the novel *Resurrection* (*Voskresenie*) or at least knew the contents of the Decree of the Holy Synod of February 1901. We might surmise that he had merely read it in the newspapers, from which he derived his familiar evaluative stance towards Tolstoi's work (the distinction between the *Anna Karenina*'s or *War and Peace*'s [*Voina i mir*] Tolstoi and the Tolstoi of his moral-religious writings was typical). The same aspects of Tolstoi's ideology that concern Zhegulov are instead exalted by the peasant Mikhail Alekseev, who wrote from St. Petersburg. In his letter of

45 Excerpts from Bodianskii's letter were published together with Tolstoi's reply in *Russkoe slovo*, 13 September 1908.

46 Letter of N. Zhegulov to L. N. Tolstoi, Selo Sosiovskoe, 15 August 1908. GMT OR, f. 1, 254/140.

26 August, Tolstoi's image acquires a sacred aura that does not, however, prevent Alekseev from changing his address over the course of the letter. Although he initially adopts a formal tone, he soon begins addressing Tolstoi by name, achieving a *crescendo* of devotion and filial affection that breaks every social barrier. Recalling Tolstoi's 1901 excommunication, Alekseev uses the same term (*otluchit'*) to describe the Church's attempt to separate Tolstoi from the people:

Great writer of the Russian land, Count Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi, I wish you well for your eightieth birthday. May God keep you healthy for many years to come. Our pastors have excommunicated you from the church and they excommunicate us from you, count, but this gives more glory to you, count, and we Russians love you more and are proud of you, long live Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi for many years to come!<sup>47</sup>

On 21 August, another correspondent, Ivan P. Koshkin, a worker from the Viatsk province, decided to write to Tolstoi after accidentally come across his name:

Lev Nikolaevich! Forgive me if I have the audacity to address you! Not only without knowing you, but also without knowing anything about you. I only know that you are a great man, a great writer, but why you are great and what you write, this I don't know. With what pleasure, with what interest I would read you. Who you are and all your works. But instead I heard about you from the newspaper that they used to wrap the sausage [that I bought]. I heard that it will soon be your birthday. That you are very good, that the whole world knows you. When I studied, I only knew that you were a writer. And I've never read any of your works, thanks to the fact that the teacher didn't give us reading books from the library, while the little ones read everything, and I was stupid not to listen to the younger pupils and I thought that once I finished school I would read everything. But when I finished studying in the rural school I saw that there was no time to read, I was too busy working. And so one ends up knowing nothing and when one sees something one doesn't know what it is, and why, and how. And one doesn't know anything, and one has many questions, but answers—none.<sup>48</sup>

Although Koshkin's letter was dismissed by Makovitskii as "ridiculous,"<sup>49</sup> it offers multiple insights. First of all, it denotes a certain maturity on the part

47 Letter of M. Alekseev to L. N. Tolstoi, St. Petersburg, 26 August 1908. GMT OR, f. 1, 131/38.

48 Letter of I. O. Koshkin to L. N. Tolstoi, Vyatsk Gov., 21 August 1908. GMT OR, f. 1, 158/30.

49 Makovitskii, "Iasnopolianskie zapiski," vol. 3, 186.

of its author, who, although he admits he does not read, seems to be aware of the opportunity for social integration and moral enrichment that reading represents (“when one sees something one doesn’t know what it is, and why and how. And one doesn’t know anything, and one has many questions, but answers—none”). Then, it integrates and adjusts Krivenko’s observations on how the newspaper reader reads, showing how, in lower social contexts, hasty reading was also the necessary consequence of an actual lack of time, and not only a lack of judgement. No less importantly, Koshkin’s letter shows a rather widespread modality, in the Russian society of the time, in which people learnt the news and, in this specific case, learned about Tolstoi. The correspondent not only states that he has never read any of Tolstoi’s writings and that he hardly knows who Tolstoi is, but candidly confesses that he has learned of his importance as a public figure in an absolutely random manner, from a newspaper used as a food wrapper. These ‘random’ events were not even so ridiculous: a study published in *Russkaia mys’* (*Russian Thought*) in 1900, specifically dedicated to working readers, reported that 51.5% of those interviewed had declared that they read newspapers occasionally because they came across some specimens left in restaurants, or because they bought newspaper for uses other than reading—for example, rolling cigarettes.<sup>50</sup>



“Tolstoi was read; Tolstoi is read; Tolstoi will be read” (*Budil’nik*, 24 August 1908, n. 33)

<sup>50</sup> P. Shestakov, “Materialy dlia kharakteristiki fabrichnykh rabochikh,” *Russkaia mys’*, 1 (1900), 178-179.

Returning to the representation of the jubilee in newspapers, the approach of 28 August was marked by a veritable explosion of feuilletons—almost as if their light and joking tone were designed to soothe public tensions made worse after a further warning by the Holy Synod on 22 August.<sup>51</sup> They satirized all the sorts of gifts that were delivered to Tolstoi, or the processions of journalists and curious people who came to Iasnaia Poliana, and certainly not just for their disinterested admiration for the writer: Moscow's *Russkoe slovo* published a rather explicit feuilleton on the economic value of a subject like Tolstoi.<sup>52</sup> Reporting the statements of those jubilee supporters who claimed they wanted to celebrate “Tolstoi the writer” and not “Tolstoi the essayist,” a journalist from the *Kazanskii telegraf* (*Kazan Telegraph*) regretted that Tolstoi was no watermelon that one could cut into halves to satisfy the tastes of both types of admirers of his work.<sup>53</sup> The popular *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (*Petersburg Newspaper*) in turn published a humorous anecdote about Tolstoi's ambiguous position between the role of the media victim and that of the skilled manipulator in search of advertising:

They say that to L. N. Tolstoi in Iasnaia Poliana it is customary to go in pairs.  
 - So that the journey is more cheerful?  
 - No, not for that... One converses with the count, while the other secretly photographs them... Then the latter starts talking, and the first one takes pictures of them...  
 [...] So it's better to go in pairs and with a camera.<sup>54</sup>

Going *en masse* to Iasnaia Poliana numbered among the popular forms of paying tribute to Tolstoi. Stripped of the usual sacred aura,<sup>55</sup> these journeys were alternately presented as picnic trips or tourist excursions. In newspapers, one of the most commonly cited reasons for such journeys was the urgent need to ‘see’ Tolstoi in his environment. Not satisfied with the surrogates that the press provided them, Tolstoi's contemporaries yearned to confront the original version, who in turn, under the distorting lens of the medium, ended up turning into yet another copy with a life of his own.<sup>56</sup>

51 S. I. Pozoiskii, *K istorii otlučeniia L'va Tolstogo ot tserkvi* (Moscow, 1979), 115.

52 See: “Malen'kii fel'eton. Iubileinye podarki,” *Večer*, 25 August 1908; “U grafa L. N. Tolstogo,” *Peterburgskii listok*, 12 August 1908; “Malen'kii fel'eton. V Iasnoi Poliane,” *Russkoe slovo*, 31 August 1908.

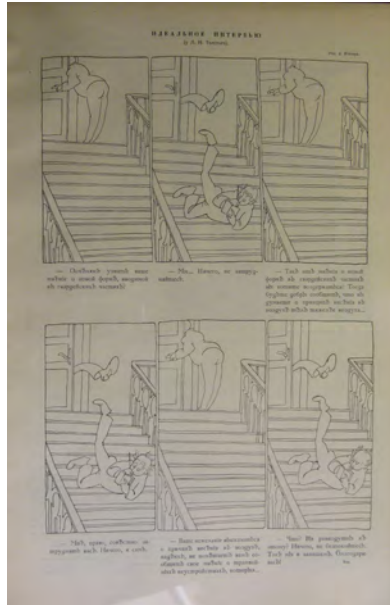
53 Starover, “Mnogo shuma iz nichego,” *Kazanskii telegraf*, 22 August 1908.

54 Chicherone, s.t., *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 21 April 1908.

55 On the image of Iasnaia Poliana in the Russian press cf. R. Vassena, “Nell'occhio dei media. Visioni di Jasnaja Poljana nella stampa russa tra Otto e Novecento,” *Russica Romana*, 23 (2016), 79-102.

56 On the autonomous life of the copy in the age of mass circulation see N. M. Zorkaia, *Unikal'noe i tirazhirovannoe. Sredstva massovoi informatsii i reproduktivnoe iskusstvo* (Moscow, 1981), 13-25. No less interesting are the cases of those who did not want to see Tolstoi

One sees as much not only in correspondence from Iasnaia Poliana and interviews with Tolstoi that began spreading in the 1890s, but also in the parodies of these genres, with reports of visits never paid or interviews never made, which had started appearing in magazines as early as the early 1900s.<sup>57</sup>



“The ideal interview (at Tolstoi’s)” (*Satirikon*, 28 August 1908, n. 21)

In August 1908, for example, a verse parody of correspondence from Iasnaia Poliana was published on *Birzhevye vedomosti*, entitled “At Iasnaia Poliana I was and Count Tolstoi I saw” (“V Iasnoi Poliane byl i grafa Tolstogo videl’”), in which Tolstoi had a farmer replace him, misleading the journalist.<sup>58</sup> A few days later, an anonymous article appeared in the same newspaper entitled “Disagreements of eyewitnesses about Tolstoi” (“Raznoglasiia

in order to preserve their own idealized image of him (cf. I. A. Belousov, *Ushedshaia Moskva. Vospominaniia* [Moscow, 2002], 221), or those who, after seeing him, expressed disappointment (see Z. Gippius, *Zhivye litsa* [Moscow, 1992], 174-176).

<sup>57</sup> Cf. V. Ia. Lakshin (ed.), *Interv’iu i besedy s L’vom Tolstym* (Moscow, 1986). See other examples of fictitious interviews or memoirs about Tolstoi: Teffi, “V Iasnoi Poliane,” *Svobodnye mysli*, 27 August 1907; Don Perets, “Krivoe zerkalo. Ili moi vospominaniia o L’ve Tolstom,” *Teatr i sport*, 3 December 1910. In satirical journals, caricatures of interviews with Tolstoi were popular: see for example “Chto videli i vidiat ‘sobstvennye korrespondenty’ v Iasnoi Poliane,” *Seryi volk*, 8 (1907), 124; “Ideal’noe interv’iu (u L. N. Tolstogo),” *Satirikon*, 21 (1908).

<sup>58</sup> “V Iasnoi Poliane byl i grafa Tolstogo videl’. Shutka,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 22 August 1908.

ochevidtsev o Tolstom”), where the author compared the different versions of Tolstoi’s physical appearance that had been circulating for years. Finally, he wondered: “If these differences are possible now, then what inconsistency of ideas can be expected when the image of L. N-ch becomes semi-legendary?”<sup>59</sup> The theme of Tolstoi’s contemporaneity clearly emerges from an article published in the newspaper *Peterburgskaia gazeta* and significantly entitled “A Pilgrimage to L. N. Tolstoi” (“Palomnichestvo k L. N. Tolstomu”), where the author reports an imaginary conversation with a student:

- You should go for a ride on the Volga now, after the effort you put into your exams –they say to an exhausted young man. It’s excellent for calming your nerves.
- Who cares about the Volga? Just looking at it on the map bores me.
- Well, then, abroad, to Switzerland. How beautiful!
- I’ll still have time to see Switzerland, but now I and four companions of mine—Ivanov, Petrov, Sidorov, Petushkov—have decided to go to Iasnaia Poliana immediately after the exams.
- And why?
- Petushkov goes to beg for a literary blessing; after all, he has been a poet since the fifth grade, while we simply go to see Lev Nikolaevich. In fact, it is strange to be contemporaries of such a great man and to have never looked him in the eye. St. Peter’s Cathedral, the Dresden gallery, Paris and London won’t run away, while we risk not seeing Tolstoi! Were Pushkin’s contemporaries who hadn’t seen him alive happy?<sup>60</sup>

The comparison with Pushkin’s contemporaries helps us to detect the specificity of the Tolstoi case. New technologies only allowed the contemporaries of the latter the opportunity of some intimate knowledge, or at least of an illusion of intimate knowledge with Tolstoi (which was also reinforced by his continuous public declarations); this had the effect of eliminating any physical or virtual barrier that could hinder the realisation of one’s biggest dream—to see “the great writer of the Russian land” with one’s own eyes. Tolstoi’s contemporaries distinguished themselves for their awareness of being, in turn, the protagonists of an unrepeatable historical moment, which obliged them to fix every single detail of the long-awaited meeting in their memory. It was in this vein that Vasilii Rozanov, this time under the pseudonym of V. Varvarin, published in *Russkoe slovo* the memory of his visit to Iasnaia Poliana in 1903; he observed that a Russian who had never seen Tolstoi was like a European who had never seen the Alps, and

59 “Raznoglasiia ochevidtsev o Tolstom,” *Birzhevye vedomosti*, 28 August 1908.

60 Saturn, “Palomnichestvo k L. N. Tolstomu,” *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 6 May 1908.

emphasized the fateful moment when his gaze met that of the writer.<sup>61</sup> For Rozanov-Varvarin, listening to Tolstoi's thought was of secondary importance compared to the urgency of contemplating his figure; more potent than his curiosity for the Iasnaia Poliana environs and even his interest in Tolstoi's now-empty words was his awareness of being a *spectator* to a unique and unrepeatable phenomenon. The articles and supplements that the Russian newspapers dedicated to the jubilee on 28 August 1908—ignoring the campaign for silence that 'the other' Rozanov had launched only a few months earlier—met such people's precise need to 'see' Tolstoi.

### 3. 28 AUGUST 1908: THE NEWSPAPERS AND THEIR PUBLIC

Officially, Tolstoi's Day in Moscow was not celebrated, but Moscow's society expressed their respect for the great writer with many letters and telegrams. Most newspapers dedicated their entire issues to the jubilee. Some newspapers published illustrated supplements that were immediately snapped up. The benches along the boulevards were occupied by many who read the newspapers and looked at the illustrations dedicated to Tolstoi.<sup>62</sup>

When the evening editions of the newspapers reporting on the jubilee were brought in from the capital, the kiosk square was crowded with workers. Newspapers and portraits of L. N. Tolstoi were snapped up [...]. With newspapers in hand, the workers hurried to their villages. In the slums, the lights came on and an ordinary evening suddenly turned into a happy and festive night.<sup>63</sup>

These accounts of a Moscow intent on reading newspapers illustrates the turning point that the date of 28 August 1908 represented in the history of Russian journalism. The newspapers so dominated that whole day that those who could not afford to purchase them found themselves isolated from the world, as the then student and historian Nikolai M. Druzhinin noted in his diary: "Today is the eightieth birthday of Tolstoi. For me it went unnoticed. This morning I had no money to buy the newspaper, and I im-

61 V. Varvarin, "Oдно vospominanie o L. N. Tolstom," *Russkoe slovo*, 11 October 1908. In his memoirs, Tolstoi's secretary, N. Gusev, writes that Tolstoi used to reply to visitors who claimed to have come just to look at him: "Look: I have an ordinary face, two eyes and a nose in the middle..." N. N. Gusev, *Dva goda s L. N. Tolstym* (Moscow, 1973), 361.

62 "Otkliki tolstovskogo dnia," *Golos Moskvy*, 29 August 1908.

63 "Iubilei L. N. Tolstogo," *Golos Moskvy*, 2 September 1908.

mediately felt a sense of isolation from the life surrounding me.”<sup>64</sup> Nearly every newspaper dedicated its issue or a special supplement to Tolstoi, and it would therefore not be possible to list and comment on all of them here. However, it is possible to identify some features common to the various categories of newspapers examined. Even in the media kaleidoscope that fragmented and recomposed the image of Tolstoi in ever different and contradictory ways, a careful analysis can reveal some structural criteria with which the information on Tolstoi was organized in newspapers, and which show how each newspaper tried to provide its public with its own version of Tolstoi—that is, a relatively unitary and coherent one in line with its readers’ expectations and appropriate to their cultural level.

The 28 August 1908 issue of A. S. Suvorin’s conservative St. Petersburg newspaper *Novoe vremia* offered a choice of materials suitable for its typical reader: a sufficiently educated reader probably familiar with Tolstoi’s narrative work and possessed of a reasonable budget (the annual subscription to the newspaper amounted to 14 roubles). In addition to a biographical profile of the writer, the article entitled “Russia and Lev Tolstoi” (“Rossiia i Lev Tolstoi”), summarised the national meaning of Tolstoi, defined as the “creator of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.” Of a similar nature was the article authored by A. S. Suvorin in the “Malen’kie pis’ma” (“Short letters”) column which underlined the significance of Tolstoi as a novelist. While adopting a softer line than his collaborator M. O. Men’shikov (who, a few weeks earlier, had harshly attacked Tolstoi’s article “I Cannot Be Silent”),<sup>65</sup> Suvorin too reduced the significance of Tolstoi’s essayistic production to a mere pastime “for amateurs.”<sup>66</sup>

The same message underlies the supplement to *Novoe vremia* and is communicated to the reader through a process that is no longer inductive but deductive. Among the prime features of contemporary mass journalism, the free supplement had spread to Russia in the 1880s and 1890s to meet the tastes of lower-class readers and increase circulation: the subscriber found in the supplement a pleasant and restorative diversion from the newspaper, thanks to the more visual components that made it accessible even to semi-literate readers. The supplement to the issue of *Novoe vremia* of 28 August had on its cover a portrait of Tolstoi standing near a chair with a cap in his hand, staring at the photographer’s lens with a stern and severe look. In the supplement attached to *Novoe vremia* the textual component was predominant, and did not merely perform a commentary func-

64 E. I. Druzhinina (ed.), “Dnevnik Nikolaia Mikhailovicha Druzhinina,” <http://prozhito.org/notes?date=%221908-01-01%22&diaries=%5B141%5D> (accessed May 5, 2020).

65 M. O. Men’shikov, “Lev Tolstoi, kak zhurnalist,” *Novoe vremia*, 11 July 1908.

66 A. S. Suvorin, “Malen’kie pis’ma,” *Novoe vremia*, 28 August 1908. Suvorin had immediately looked at Tolstoi’s spiritual crisis of the early 1880s with suspicion, dismissing it as a “moment of wavering” (*vikhliatstvo*) and a lordly “eccentricity” (*chudachestvo*) (*Pis’ma russkikh pisatelei k A. S. Suvorinu* [Leningrad, 1927], 58).



tion, as in other cases. The supplement was indeed entirely occupied by the “Memoirs of Count Tolstoi in the Sixties” (“Vospominaniia o grafe L. N. Tolstom v shestidesiatykh godakh”) by T. A. Kuzminskaia (1846-1925), the younger sister of Sof’ia A. Bers-Tolstaia. The first part of the reminiscences had been released in the previous issue of 23 August,<sup>67</sup> and the memoirs of Kuzminskaia published in the 28 August supplement were dedicated to the first years of the marriage between her sister Sof’ia and Tolstoi, of whom the author draws a vivid psychological portrait, with fine literary sensitivity. The conventional depictions of serene and laborious family life at Iasnaia Poliana alternate with reports of episodes about and dialogues with the writer. Kuzminskaia aims to highlight the profound moral stature but also the simple and genuine humanity of the author. The images are likewise designed for this purpose, and they visually fix in the reader’s memory particular sequences from the memoir. The first part is dominated by photographs of the fields around Iasnaia Poliana, as well as inside and outside views of the house. The second part contains images that capture different moments of old Tolstoi’s everyday life: at work in his studio, meeting with peasants and beggars, his work in the fields, his horseback riding, his games of chess, the lunch time, his relationship with his nun sister, but also and above all his relationship with his wife, with whom he is portrayed in several shots. To the reader of *Novoe vremia*, the images of the present-day Tolstoi alternated with oval portraits of Tolstoi at a young age, as if to suggest a harmonious and coherent development of his personality, to deny the theory of a split between the “old” and the “new” Tolstoi.

Equally rich was the content of the main competitor of *Novoe vremia*, the cheaper (7 roubles per year) but authoritative Moscow newspaper *Russkoe slovo* published by I. D. Sytin.<sup>68</sup> Tolstoi had collaborated with Sytin’s newspaper for a decade, as indicated by a page three advertisement, titled “For the jubilee of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoi (“K iubileiu L’va Nikolaevicha Tolstogo”), for the Posrednik editions of the writer’s works. Although considered a popular publication, *Russkoe slovo* addressed relatively educated and middle to upper class audience,<sup>69</sup> hence the certain literary pretentiousness of the contents dedicated to Tolstoi, boasting grandiloquent titles, such as “Tolstoi among the Great of the World” (“Tolstoi mezhdru velikimi mira”) by V. Varvarin and “The Duel of the Giants—Tolstoi and Shakespeare” (“Poedinok gigantov [‘Tolstoi i Shekspir’]”). Among these stood out a long article by the journalist and writer P. D. Boborykin: in “The circle closes” (“Zakonchennyi krug”), he tries to justify the human, spiritual, and artistic parable of Tolstoi. The supplement,

67 This story, also published later the same year in a small volume published by A. S. Suvorin, initiated the successful edition of Kuzminskaia’s memoirs about Tolstoi, which from that moment onward would be published by Suvorin on several occasions until they were collected in the monograph *Moia zhizn’ doma v Iasnoi Poliane: Vospominaniia* (Berlin, 1928).

68 *Russkoe slovo*, 28 August 1908.

69 Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 118.

specifically addressed to the lowest social component of the *Russkoe slovo* audience, was made up exclusively of photographs assembled into thematic sections. In general, the photographs on the pages of early twentieth-century Russian newspapers made the reader feel like a spectator of the social and cultural life not only of Russia but also of Europe: new scientific and technological discoveries, the current fashions, celebrities and glimpses of their luxurious residences, public events, war scenes, natural catastrophes, and victims of homicides offered themselves to the curious gaze of readers who were ready to leave the narrow spaces of their daily reality to immerse themselves in those of a far vaster and more stimulating global society.<sup>70</sup> The photographs could correspond to the textual reports of the related news, or stimulate the reader's imagination more actively. The montage of images saw wide usage, above all in magazines and in supplements. Devoid of captions but arranged according to chronological or thematic criteria, these images created a narrative about the titular topic while still giving the reader freedom to interpret them as they liked. And readers did willfully interpret the photographs of Tolstoi that were reproduced in the periodical press, and sometimes pointed out their inconsistencies. In a letter dated 28 August, a man from Kharkiv, A. Golovin, underscored the paradox between Tolstoi's noble title and the peasant clothing in which he was always portrayed:

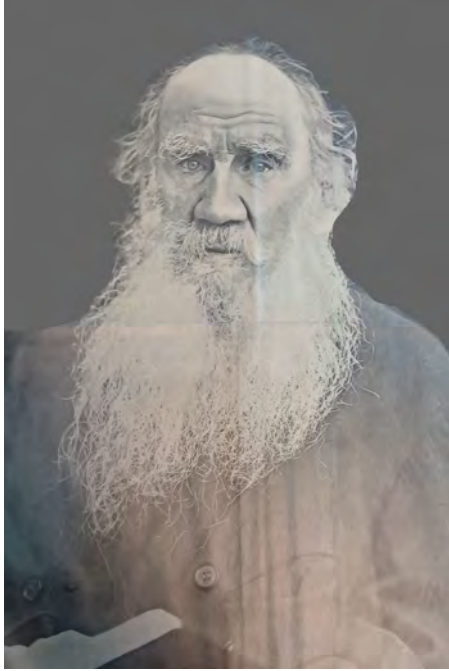
It amazes me that until now you have not yet renounced your title of count, which really does not match your convictions. Of course, it is very interesting when they publish the portrait of a count in a peasant shirt and then they write below: Count L. N. Tolstoi. This shirt is interesting only because it covers the body of a count. On the body of a simple mortal, it would be of no interest.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, the supplement attached to *Russkoe slovo* offered a visual synthesis of Tolstoi's life—sometimes through frames that seemingly sought to reveal his private dimension above all. On the cover there was a giant poster of Tolstoi: a book in his hand, a clear gaze, a frowning forehead; Tolstoi seemed to look the reader straight in the eye. On the second page of the supplement, there were some portraits of the writer. These were arranged in chronological order and accompanied by a brief explanatory key. The final images in this series depicted Tolstoi in his recent state of ill health, and thus, with the turn of a page, the “giant among pygmies”<sup>72</sup> was transformed into a frail and sick old man before the reader's very eyes.

<sup>70</sup> On the role of photographs in early twentieth-century Russian newspapers and magazines see C. Stolarski, “Another Way of Telling News. The Rise of Photojournalism in Russia, 1900-1914,” *Kritika. Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 12, 3 (2011), 561-590.

<sup>71</sup> Letter of A. Golovin to L. N. Tolstoi, Kharkiv, 28 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 144/25.

<sup>72</sup> “Velikan i pigmei. Lev Tolstoi i sovremennye pisateli” was the caption under a famous caricature of 1903 (Iu. I. Bitovt, *Graf L. N. Tolstoi v karikaturakh i anekdotakh* [Moscow, 1908],



Portrait of Tolstoi (Supplement to *Russkoe slovo*, 28 August 1908)

Attached to *Russkoe slovo* was also the weekly illustrated magazine *Iskry* (*Sparks*, price 3 roubles / year, or with *Russkoe slovo* for a total of 9), which greeted Tolstoi's jubilee by dedicating articles to him in three different issues between August and September. On the cover of the 24 August issue, the image of Tolstoi, absorbed and intent on reading, is enclosed in a frame that rests on four books: *War and Peace*, *Childhood and Boyhood*, *Resurrection*, *Anna Karenina*. Inside the supplement, the narrative function was entrusted exclusively to the images, which attempt to offer a comprehensive portrait of Tolstoi through the frame of his manuscripts, a montage of works of art that represent him, and a series of sequences taken from his daily life at Iasnaia Poliana.<sup>73</sup> In the 7 September issue, *Iskry* offered its readers a more intimate and domestic reading of what happened on 28 August, publishing under the title "On 28 August at Iasnaia Poliana" ("28-avgusta v Iasnoi Poliane") a dossier of photographs of Tolstoi in pain, with his leg aching, sitting in a wheelchair and surrounded by his loved ones.<sup>74</sup>

69).

<sup>73</sup> *Iskry*, 24 August 1908.

<sup>74</sup> "28 avgusta v Iasnoi Poliane," *Iskry*, 7 September 1908.



“Lev Tolstoy in different periods of his life” (*Iskry*, 24 August 1908, n. 33)

A representative example from the yellow press is offered by the newspaper *Peterburgskii listok* (*Petersburg Sheet*, 1864-1918, 7.5 roubles for the annual subscription in Petersburg).<sup>75</sup> Printed with a circulation of about 80,000 copies, *Peterburgskii listok* addressed a large audience, ninety percent of whom, according to one of the newspaper’s collaborators, was made up of “patrons of third-rate pubs and taverns, employees, craftsmen and small traders.”<sup>76</sup> Other memoirs suggest that *Peterburgskii listok* was particularly prone to sensationalism and dedicated to gossip—which in a certain way also predetermined its type of audience: “In bakeries, not all, of course, but many were passionate about newspapers. But which newspapers did they usually buy? *Peterburgskii listok* and *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, which almost everyone called ‘The Petersburg Liar’ and ‘The Petersburg Gossip.’”<sup>77</sup> In line with these newspaper features, in the 28 August 1908 issue, after a front page hosting an article with alarmist tones about the spread of epidemics, the second page contained several pieces of content concerning Tolstoy’s jubilee that seemed to cater to a none-too-sophisticated audience: articles ranged from an anonymous and conventionally celebratory article entitled “Tolstoy as an Artist of the Word” (“Tolstoy, kak khudozhnik slova”); to a list of greetings sent to Iasnaia Poliana by various organizations and associations; to a brief memoir by N. N. Kuz’min of his meeting with Tolstoy seven years before entitled “My Encounter with L. N. Tolstoy” (“Moia vstrecha s

<sup>75</sup> *Peterburgskii listok*, 28 August 1908.

<sup>76</sup> S. S. Okreits, “Literaturnye vstrechi i znakomstva,” *Istoricheskii vestnik*, vol. 144, 6 (1916), 30

<sup>77</sup> D. I. Grazkin, *Za temnoi noch’iu den’ vstaval... Vospominaniia starogo bol’shevika* (Moscow, 1975), 74.

L. N. Tolstym”); to the communication of a newspaper correspondent who had once been at Iasnaia Poliana and who now offered the reader a detailed chronicle of Tolstoi’s daily routine—and, per the newspaper’s inclination to scandal, a not precisely idyllic description of the living conditions of peasants at Iasnaia Poliana. The material on the jubilee ended with a contribution entitled “Tolstoi in Anecdotes” (“Tolstoi v anekdotakh”): according to a widespread practice, various kinds of news on Tolstoi were assembled here, strictly without indicating their sources, and casually placed next to the reports of a murder or a cholera epidemic in St. Petersburg. The supplement to *Peterburgskii listok*, in line with the newspaper’s vocation as a champion of the rights of the meekest, emphasized Tolstoi’s “humanitarian side.” The images indeed seem to focus on Tolstoi’s relationship with the poor and the needy: in one photograph, peasant children are shown sitting next to the so-called “tree of the needy” in Iasnaia Poliana, while another drawing immortalises Tolstoi in the act of meeting the poor on his estate’s veranda.



“Tolstoi’s reception of visitors to Iasnaia Poliana” (Supplement to *Peterburgskii listok*, 28 August 1908)

The same desire to offer its readers a bit of everything underlies the 28 August issue of *Peterburgskaia gazeta* (1867-1918) (annual subscription: 7.5

roubles in Petersburg; 9-10 roubles outside Petersburg).<sup>78</sup> This newspaper differed from its competitor *Peterburgskii listok* not only in its less sensational tones but also in its lower circulation (20 thousand copies). The lack of informational rigor that characterised the newspaper is evident right from the front page, which advertises *Iasnaia Poliana*, a magazine published in Petersburg since 1906 that—together with the homonymous publishing house—sold economical editions of Tolstoi's works and boasted a (non-existent) collaboration with the writer.<sup>79</sup> On the second and third pages, there were short notes (mostly initialled or signed using pseudonyms) related to different themes; these included Tolstoi and art ("Tolstoi and Artists. A Conversation with I. E. Repin" ["Tolstoi i khudozhniki. Beseda s I. E. Repinyum"]); "Prince Paul Trubetskoi on Tolstoi. A Conversation with P. Trubetskoi" ["Kniaz' Pavel Trubetskoi o Tolstom. Beseda s P. Trubetskim"]); "Tolstoi on Artists and Talents. From a Conversation with G. G. Ge" ["Tolstoi ob artistakh i talantakh. Iz besedy s G. G. Ge"] and Tolstoi and literature ("Leonid Andreev on Tolstoi. A Conversation with L. Andreev" ["Leonid Andreev o Tolstom. Beseda s L. Andreevym"], "Tolstoi and Kuprin. A Conversation with A. I. Kuprin" ["Tolstoi i Kuprin. Beseda s A. I. Kuprinyum"]). Per the confidential style typical of the yellow press, the *Peterburgskaia gazeta* reported statements about Tolstoi made by different important literary and artistic figures in the form of interviews or anecdotes—without ever specifying the source from which they came, or the precise context of the so-called 'conversation.'

A very different attitude was exhibited by one of these newspapers' less popular<sup>80</sup> Muscovite counterparts of the *malaia pressa*, *Moskovskii listok* (*Moscow Sheet*, 1881-1918), published by N. I. Pastukhov. *Moskovskii listok* almost passed over Tolstoi's jubilee in silence, maybe due to the well-known right-wing sympathies of Pastukhov, who was evidently deferred to governmental and religious authorities' orders of to boycott Tolstoi's jubilee. The only exception was an article entitled "Forcibly Celebrated Anniversary" ("Nasil'no prazdnuemyi iubilei"), which retraced the events of the earlier months and denounced the degeneration of the press. Significantly, precisely a newspaper like *Moskovskii listok* (which, under its founder, had made

<sup>78</sup> *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 28 August 1908.

<sup>79</sup> Following the many letters of protest from deceived readers, on 8 December 1908 Tolstoi wrote a public statement declaring that he had no connection with this publishing house (Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 278-279).

<sup>80</sup> In the 1880s, Pastukhov's newspaper enjoyed some extraordinary popularity among the lower classes, mainly thanks to Pastukhov's novel *Churkin the bandit* (*Razboinik Churkin*), and in the following decade it continued to garner appreciation among clerks, shopkeepers, and servants. However, with the beginning of the new century, *Moskovskii listok* entered a phase of decline, and in fact closed down in 1911 following the death of its founder (Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read*, 129-130).

quality of reportage its main hallmark)<sup>81</sup> defended the dignity and the ethical code of this genre, strongly condemning the media racket around Tolstoi:

The “jubilee” inflation has continued following all the rules of the art of the modern reportage, as if it did not regard L. N. Tolstoi but a *bénéfice* of a fashionable tenor, a “favorite of the public”. A newspaper, for example (*Birzhevye vedomosti*), reported that the shoemakers of St. Petersburg sent Tolstoi boots and a diploma, awarding him the title, theretofore nonexistent, of “Honorary member of the shoe factory”; another newspaper (*Rechʹ*) stated that the “Fars” waiters sent Tolstoi a message and a samovar, while a third newspaper (*Novaia Rusʹ*) drew the following conclusion: if the Petersburg shoemakers and even the “Fars” waiters have sent Tolstoi boots and a samovar, it follows that “all the people” want to take part in the “jubilee” celebration... So, it’s all there, printed out clearly!<sup>82</sup>

Not too different were the contributions published in other pro-government yellow press publications, such as Petersburg’s *Svet* (*The Light*, 1882-1917) and Moscow’s *Veche* (*The Council*, 1905-1910). In the first months of 1908, *Svet* had taken a clear position of disagreement with regard to jubilee initiatives, which it compared to a “political masquerade” that did not do justice to the literary talent of the author of *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*), the only Tolstoi worthy of celebration.<sup>83</sup> In the 29 August 1908 issue, the monarchist and conservative journalist Sergei F. Sharapov dedicated his column “My Diary” (“Moi dnevnik”) to a reflection on the jubilee, noting that, due to Tolstoi’s excommunication, this was a day of mourning and not of joy, and expressing regret for the celebration of Tolstoi not as the author of *Anna Karenina* or *War and Peace* but as a symbol of denial.<sup>84</sup> Similarly, in the monarchist and nationalist newspaper *Veche*, the anonymous article “A Mournful Day” (“Skorbyi den”) expressed regret for the loss of Tolstoi the writer to the deplorable “Tolstoi the philosopher—Tolstoi the godless—Tolstoi the heretic”.<sup>85</sup>

The contents of the most economical newspaper of the time, the *Gazeta-Kopeika* (1908-1918), were of a different tenor.<sup>86</sup> All the images contained in

81 Pastukhov’s reportages stood out for their narrative rhythm, clear style and topicality of the contents, which had to be reliable and personally verified by the reporter. Cf. V. A. Giliarovskii, *Moskva gazetnaia. Druzʹia i vstrechi* (Minsk, 1989).

82 Chelovek shestidesiatykh godov, “Nasil’no prazduemyi iubilei,” *Moskovskii listok*, 28 August 1908.

83 “Kartinki zhizni,” *Svet*, 28 January 1908.

84 S. Sharapov, “Moi dnevnik,” *Svet*, 29 August 1908.

85 “Skorbyi den” *Veche*, 28 August 1908.

86 *Gazeta-kopeika* had been founded only two months before, in June 1908, under the direction of the entrepreneur M. B. Gorodetskii. Makovitskii reports Tolstoi’s positive opinion

the special issue were drawings. Partly inspired by the famous portraits of Iasnaiia Poliana, these drawings proposed to a semi-literate audience an adapted Tolstoi, one split into a series of simple frames that, placed side by side almost as if to simulate slow motion, acquired narrative dignity: the worker (Tolstoi while ploughing the field or sewing boots), the writer (Tolstoi writing), the spiritual guide (Tolstoi the pilgrim), the teacher (the school at Iasnaiia Poliana). The prevalence of the visual component can also also felt in the articles, which are suffused with ubiquitous metaphors and similes: in an anonymous article on the second page, to exalt the universal meaning of Tolstoi, the journalist compares him not only to a sun, but to a whole solar system;<sup>87</sup> in another, signed by A. Khir'iaikov, Tolstoi's teaching is equated with a beam of light that illuminates the way through a dense and dark wood.<sup>88</sup>

**ТАХОТЪ И БОИНИКА.**



...и нечего было говорить ему много. Вы знаете же шло, что, когда человек пишет, он пишет в душе, а не на бумаге. ...

...и нечего было говорить ему много. Вы знаете же шло, что, когда человек пишет, он пишет в душе, а не на бумаге. ...

**Л. Н. Толстой о русских писателях.**

...и нечего было говорить ему много. Вы знаете же шло, что, когда человек пишет, он пишет в душе, а не на бумаге. ...

**Музыка и Толстой.**

...и нечего было говорить ему много. Вы знаете же шло, что, когда человек пишет, он пишет в душе, а не на бумаге. ...




Иллюстрация А. Н. Савицкого

of *Gazeta-Kopeika*, which he began reading in May 1909, although he abandoned it after a few months. Cf. Makovitskii, "Iasnopolianskie zapiski," vol. 3, 419.

87 "S. Peterburg, 28 avgusta," *Gazeta-kopeika*, 28 August 1908.  
88 A. Khiriakov, "Lev' Tolstoi," *Gazeta-kopeika*, 28 August 1908.



*Gazeta-Kopeika*, 28 August 1908

Significantly, the same imagery also occurs in many letters sent to Tolstoi, almost as if, eager to address him in an obsequious manner but devoid of suitable linguistic tools, some readers drew on the simplified rhetoric of mass newspapers, where the most inflated semantic field was that of light/darkness: "I prostrate myself before you, dear teacher. May God grant you health for many years to come! May your genius live and shine with that light that has illuminated your whole life...Let the darkness vanish!"<sup>89</sup> To the same semantic field belongs the image of the sun, which the press had taken up (often in a parodic vein) from an open letter by Sof'ia Tolstaia addressed to the journalist M. O. Men'shikov and published on 17 August in *Russkoe slovo*:<sup>90</sup>

...The time is near when the "Sun of Truth" will rise and illuminate us with its long-awaited light. We sincerely hope that you live to see that happy day and that you may rejoice together with us. A group of workers.<sup>91</sup>

Among the letters sent to Tolstoi for his eightieth birthday, there are many in which the authors also resort to the metaphor of rural work. One letter, signed by some peasants from Vyatsk, states:

Great ploughman and sower of the infinite field of the universe! We are amazed by the bold power of your work in the sacred field which, before you, was a vale of tears. With trepidation we observed how you tilled the soil, where you sow the Word of love. With what skill, with what strength and precision do you eradicate the thorns, thistles, shrubs, useless weeds, the rotten logs and the branches of the centuries-old oaks that suffocate your Seed-Word [...] <sup>92</sup>

Similarly, the media coverage of Tolstoi's jubilee informed the actions of those Russians who, residing in the provinces, far from the vivacity of the

<sup>89</sup> Letter of A. V. Vasil'ev to L. N. Tolstoi, St. Petersburg, 28 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 139/123.

<sup>90</sup> "Pis'mo grafini S. A. Tolstoi," *Russkoe slovo*, 17 August 1908. Tolstaia's letter was the reply to Men'shikov's article "Tolstoi i vlast'," *Novoe vremia*, 10 August 1908. Tolstaia concluded her letter with these words: "Mr. Men'shikov does not understand that, no matter how he stretches and clicks with his tiny poisonous tweezers, he only has the power to blow out the tallow candle in front of him, and not the world-shining sun."

<sup>91</sup> Letter to L. N. Tolstoi signed "A group of workers," Moscow, 28 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 248/142.

<sup>92</sup> Letter to L. N. Tolstoi signed "Peasants from Vyatsk," Vyatsk, 28 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 142/47.

capitals, wished to celebrate it nonetheless. Some materials preserved in the Tolstoi archive suggest that reading newspapers containing news about him was in some cases a family practice shared by parents and children. Two children from Saratov wrote to Tolstoi on 28 August, telling him that their parents had told them about him and rejoiced at his leg having healed—the news had been published in newspapers a few days before.<sup>93</sup> The news about Tolstoi and the telegrams of greetings published in the newspapers put in contact readers who were otherwise physically distant from one another, constituting them in a sort of ‘community of Tolstoi fans.’ The sense of identification could reach extreme levels, as in the case of this reader who signed her letter to Tolstoi with the name of the protagonist of *Resurrection*:

Dear grandfather! Greetings also from Katiusha Maslova. May God give you health and a long, long life. I hope so because I love you, I am grateful to you because you, a highly placed count, have not been ashamed to pity me. You are right: conscience and pain cannot be drowned in wine, and man, however humiliated, will always remain a man. Holy tears flow from my eyes when I read the greetings for you in the newspapers. For you I embrace all those who have understood you and esteem you. I’m not drunk. Forgive my chatter: it is incoherent, but what can one expect from Katiusha Maslova.<sup>94</sup>

The writer’s archive also preserves some pages of the diary of an eleven-year-old girl from Penza who, in her simple, childish language, thoroughly describes the actual ritual that her family had established on 28 August to celebrate Tolstoi at their home:

11 October, Saturday. I forgot to write how we celebrated Tolstoi’s jubilee. As soon as our mother and I woke up, we removed Tolstoi’s portrait from Dad’s desk and hung it between the two windows, above the small table.

Then we went to the garden to get some flowers and wove them into a wreath and placed it around the portrait. Then we took a bust of Tolstoi and put it on the table, and we placed a bouquet of flowers and a larger flower on either side. Next to the table we spread a rug and there we put all the big flowers, then under the portrait we hung small cards and placed a flower next to each card. All those who came to our house that day looked at it in admiration. On that day they sent him telegrams and letters from

93 See for example “Bolezn’ L. N. Tolstogo,” *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, 23 August 1908. Letter to L. N. Tolstoi signed “Arkhangel’skie children,” Saratov, 28 August 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 133/85.

94 Letter to L. N. Tolstoi signed “Katiusha Maslova,” 3 September 1908. Published in Zhdanov, “Iz pisem k Tolstomu,” 377.

all the countries, but he was sick that day. Today, in the newspapers, he thanked all for the letters and gifts.<sup>95</sup>

In this young girl's diary, the celebration of Tolstoi's birthday exhibits three dimensions: an intimate and familial one ("As soon as our mother and I woke up, we removed..."); a community-based ("All those who came to our house that day looked at it in admiration"); and a global one ("On that day they sent him telegrams and letters from all the countries, but he was sick that day."). The distance between the periphery (any provincial house) and the center (Iasnaia Poliana) of this global village is obviated by the newspapers: by reading the news on Tolstoi, the author of the diary and her family overcome the sense of isolation that resulted from living in the provinces.

In the last sentence, the young girl refers to an open letter by Tolstoi which appeared in many newspapers on 8 October and which was also taken up by the provincial newspapers. Of this letter, addressed "to the people and institutions that sent greetings for the day of my eightieth birthday," there are two versions: the one that Tolstoi sent to the editorial offices of newspapers, in which, in a dry and very formal style, he thanks all for the good wishes he had received and makes only a laconic reference to his unheard requests not to celebrate anything; and the one he wrote in the first place. In the original version, much more extensive than the one he sent, Tolstoi dwells on the background of the jubilee, openly declaring that he did not deserve any celebration and saying the following of the celebrations: "Honestly, I can say that lately I was hoping that [...] they would ultimately understand that my desire for some special praise for my person was just a misunderstanding." This "misunderstanding" is a subtext that occurs periodically in the diaries and letters of the late Tolstoi. On more than one occasion, Tolstoi himself identified the main culprit of this misunderstanding between him and the Russian society as located within the newspaper medium itself—specifically in its inaccurate and biased habit of "fabricating" news.<sup>96</sup>

In conclusion, the materials presented here show how in early twentieth-century Russia the transition from a culturally critical public to a "cul-

95 A 10 year-old girl from Penza, 12 October 1908, GMT OR, f. 1, 254/117.

96 Also see a note from 1908 in which Tolstoi denounced the media "muddle" to which his name was subjected, and in which he significantly referred to himself now in the first, now in the third person, as if his own perception of himself were conditioned by the split between the 'authentic' Tolstoi and the media's 'Lev Nikolaevich': "Clear and strong desire to get rid of this whole jubilee affair, which suits me so little. And it would be desirable that no one in this matter let himself be guided by anything other than what I personally stated. A muddle And the muddle is such that the news reported by the newspapers is not only false and exaggerated, but it is often absolutely baseless, and even that which reaches Lev Nikolaevich he is neither able nor wants to answer, to restore the truth of the facts." (Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 78, 114).

ture-consuming public"<sup>97</sup> was taking place. Instead of a forum for discussion and critical confrontation of the public sphere, newspapers represented an arena in which opinions and images were probed, changed, and manipulated, creating "pseudo-events," or pseudo-Tolstois, that the public perceived as real and which it appropriated as a commodity for consumption. The materials analyzed also show to what extent a newspaper reader could change his role from the object to the subject of manipulation, interpreting these "pseudo-Tolstois" to his own liking and reconstructing as many as he liked. This research has exposed other questions in need of further investigation. One of these worried Tolstoi's contemporaries: to what extent did Tolstoi himself consciously use the newspapers to spread his own ideas, and how was this reconciled with his criticism of contemporary civilization and with his purpose, repeatedly stated in the diaries, to strip himself of his own personality? Although Tolstoi despised the newspapers and claimed he only read few of them, his diaries and those of people close to him show that at Iasnaia Poliana the news reported by newspapers was discussed daily, and that Tolstoi himself asked the members of his entourage to update him on any articles concerning him and his writings.<sup>98</sup> So how can we interpret the stern judgements about the periodical press that Tolstoi formulated so clearly in the same years? These questions imply others—in particular those about the relationship between Tolstoi's case and a 'celebrity culture' which found nourishment in Europe's technological and industrial progress of the second half of the nineteenth century. What repercussions did this culture of celebrity have on the traditional writer-reader relationship in Russia, and how did it affect the mechanisms of editorial production and consumption? In Tolstoi's case, the materials collected suggest that many Russian readers of the early twentieth century founded their knowledge of Tolstoi not so much on direct readings of his fiction or essays so much as on the image that the media returned of him—an image so reiterated, edited, and altered that it had completely lost its authenticity.

Becoming aware of the complexity of the relationship between Tolstoi, the media, and the Russian public means rereading his biography and especially the journalistic and narrative works of his last years in the light of the conditioning that he inevitably suffered at the hands of the media, but whose powers he also knew how to exploit. It means promoting sources linked to popular and mass culture and analyzing their role in constructing

---

<sup>97</sup> J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA, 1991), 169.

<sup>98</sup> According to Makovitskii, in 1908-1909 Tolstoi used to read *Novoe vremia*, *Slovo*, *Novaia Rus'*, *Russkie vedomosti*, and sometimes *Gazeta-Kopeika* (Makovitskii, "Iasnopolianskie zapiski," vol. 3, 103, 218, 419, 444). Despite this, many other newspapers were delivered to Iasnaia Poliana every day: *Rus'*, *Golos Moskvyy*, *Russkoe slovo*, *Birzhevyye vedomosti*, *Sibirskie otgoloski*, *Golos Samary*, *Sibir'* (Ibid., 14, 29).

Tolstoi's image, in Russia and abroad, before and after his death.<sup>99</sup> Finally, it means investigating the relationship between the image, or images, of the writer as it was in the consciousness of his contemporaries and his image as it exists today, in a no less mediated and conventional form, as well as the relationship between both images and the possibility of an original, 'authentic' Tolstoi.<sup>100</sup>

---

99 See for example A. Tuliakova's engaging survey "Tolstoi as a hero of pop culture" ("Tolstoi kak geroi pop-kul'tury") in <https://arzas.academy/mag/444-tolstoy> (accessed May 5, 2020).

100 I owe this insight to Denner, "Be Not Afraid of Greatness...": Leo Tolstoy and Celebrity," 618-619.



## Notes on contributors

**Katherine Bowers** is an Assistant Professor at the University of British Columbia. A specialist in nineteenth-century Russian literature, she is working on a monograph about the influence of European Gothic fiction on Russian realism. In addition to genre and narrative, other research interests include the history of technology and imagined geography. Her work has appeared in *Slavic Review*, *Gothic Studies*, and *The Modern Language Review* and she has co-edited the volumes *Russian Writers and the Fin de Siècle: The Twilight of Realism* (2015), *Information and Empire: Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600-1850* (2017), and *A Dostoevskii Companion: Texts and Contexts* (2018).

**Tat'iana Golovina**, PhD in Philology, independent researcher (Ivanovo). Her scientific interests include M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin in the context of world satire; the culture of the Russian noble estate; the history of the Russian reader. From 1982 to 2014, was employed by the Russian Literature Department of Ivanovo State University as an assistant, senior lecturer, associate professor. Author of the book *Saltykov-Shchedrin's The History of a Town: Literary Parallels* (Ivanovo, 1997) and a number of articles about the Russian satirist's oeuvre. Golovina has been studying the archives of Dorozhaev estate since the mid-1980s and has published around 50 articles about the daily and spiritual life of Chikhachev family of landowners in the scientific almanacs and magazines and mass media publications. Golovina is a member of the Society for Study of Russian Country Estates and Ivanovo Regional Local History Society and an active participant of the movement for preservation of cultural heritage.

**Daria Khitrova** is Associate Professor at Harvard University (Slavic Department). More than 20 of her scholarly articles range from Russian poetry to film to the history of dance. Her first book is *Lyric Complicity: Poetry and Readers in the Golden Age of Russian Literature* (University of Wisconsin press, 2019).

**Roman Leibov** is Associate Professor of Russian Literature at the University of Tartu (Estonia). He is the author of "*Liricheskiï fragment*" *Tiutcheva: zhankr i kontekst* (Tartu, 2000); editor of *Pushkinskie chteniia v Tartu. 5: Pushkinskaia epokha*

*v russkii literaturnyi kanon* (Tartu, 2011) and co-editor of *I vremia I mesto: Istoriko-filologicheskii sbornik k shestidesiatiletiuu Aleksandra L'vovicha Ospovata* (Moscow, 2008), *Con amore: Istoriko-filologicheskii sbornik v chest' Liubovi Nikolaevni Kiselevoi* (Moscow, 2010), *Khrestomatiinye teksty: Russkaia pedagogicheskaia praktika i literaturnyi kanon XIX veka* (Tartu, 2013). His fields of interests are the history of Russian literature of the Golden Age, Tiutchev and Russian poetry, theory of literary canon, internet studies and digital humanities.

**Marcus C. Levitt**, Professor Emeritus, University of Southern California, is best known for his research on eighteenth-century Russia and on Pushkin. Broadly speaking, his work has focused on the establishment of a “modern” literature in Russia. His books include *Russian Literary Politics and the Pushkin Celebration of 1880* (1989); *Early Modern Russian Letters: Texts and Contexts* (2009); and *The Visual Dominant in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (2011). He has edited several volumes, including *Early Modern Russian Writers* (Dictionary of Literary Biography, vol. 150) and co-edited studies of Russian pornography, violence, and satirical journalism. He is currently working on a critical edition of A. P. Sumarokov's operas and journalism.

**Damiano Rebecchini** is Professor of Russian Literature at Università degli Studi di Milano. His research interests include Russian literature of the nineteenth century, the Court Culture, and the history of reading in Russia. He is the author of *Il business della Storia. Il 1812 e il romanzo russo della prima metà dell'Ottocento fra ideologia e mercato* (Salerno, 2016) and co-editor of the volume *Reading in Russia. Practices of reading and literary communication, 1760-1930* (Milan, 2014). In recent years, his research has been focusing on the education of Tsar Alexander II. He is also the translator of Dostoevskii's *Crime and Punishment* (Milan, Feltrinelli, 2013) and Gogol's *Petersburg Tales* (Milan, Feltrinelli, 2020).

**Abram Reitblat** is a sociologist of literature. MA in Philosophy (Moscow State University, 1972), PhD in Pedagogy (1982, with a dissertation on *Methods of Readers' Interests Dynamics Studies*). In 1977–2002 he worked as a leading researcher (Department for Sociology of Reading) at the Russian State Library, since 1994 – as a member of the editorial board of the *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie* journal (Moscow). He is the author of *Kak Pushkin vyshel v genii* (Moscow: NLO, 2001), *Ot Bovy k Bal'montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (Moscow: NLO, 2009) and other works in historical sociology of Russian literature.

**Susan Smith-Peter** is professor of history at the College of Staten Island/City University of New York. She has published widely on issues related to Russian regions and regionalism, including *Imagining Russian Regions: Subnational Identity and Civil Society in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).



**Jonathan Stone** is Associate Professor of Russian and Russian Studies and Chair of Comparative Literary Studies at Franklin & Marshall College (USA). He studies early Russian modernism and the print and material culture of the *fin de siècle*. He is the author of *The Historical Dictionary of Russian Literature* and has published articles on Russian Symbolism, Decadence, the history of the book, and Mikhail Bakhtin. His book *The Institutions of Russian Modernism: Conceptualizing, Publishing, and Reading Symbolism* was published in 2017 by Northwestern University Press.

**Roman Timenchik** is Prof. Emeritus at The Hebrew University (Jerusalem). He is the author of “*Pechalnuuiu povest’ sokhranit’. Ob avtore i chitateliakh ‘Mednogo vsadnika’*” (with Aleksander Ospovat, Moscow, 1985, 2nd ed., revised 1987.), *Akhmatova i muzyka* (with Boris Katz, Moscow, 1989), *Poslednii Poet: Anna Akhmatova v 1960-e gody*, in 2 vols. (Moscow-Jerusalem, 2014), *Chto vdrug. Stat’i o russkoi literature proshlogo veka*, (Moscow, Jerusalem, 2008), *Angely. Liudi. Veshchi. V oreole stikhov i druzei* (Moscow, Jerusalem, 2015), *Podzemnye klassiki. Innokentii Annenskii. Nikolai Gumilev* (Moscow, Jerusalem, 2016), *Istoria kul’ta Gumileva*, (Moscow-Jerusalem, 2017). Member of the editorial board of the encyclopedic dictionary *Russkie pisateli. 1800-1917* in 7 volumes (1989-2020), member of the advisory boards in “*Russkaia Literatura*” (St. Petersburg), “*Literaturnyi Fakt*” (Moscow), “*Literaturnoe Nasledstvo*” (Moscow), “*Novaia Biblioteka Poeta*” (St. Petersburg).

**Raffaella Vassena** is Associate Professor of Russian Literature at Università degli studi di Milano. She is the author of *Reawakening National Identity. Dostoevsky’s Diary of a Writer and its Impact on Russian Society* (Bern, 2007), *Dostoevskij post-mortem. L’eredità dostoevskiana tra editoria, stato e società, 1881-1910* (Milan, Ledizioni 2020) and co-editor of *Reading in Russia. Practices of Reading and Literary Communication, 1760-1930* (Milan, 2014). Her fields of expertise are the history of nineteenth-century Russian Literature, the history of reading, Russian journalism in pre-revolutionary period, Russian-Italian cultural and literary relations throughout the twentieth century.

**Alexey Vdovin** is Associate Professor of Russian Literature at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (Faculty of Humanities, Moscow). He is the author of *Nikolai Dobroliubov: raznochinets mezhdu dukhom i plot’iu* (Moscow, 2017), *Kontsept glava literatury v russkoi kritike 1830–1860* (Tartu, 2011) and co-editor of *Khrestomatiinye teksty: Russkaia pedagogicheskaja praktika i literaturnyi kanon XIX veka* (Tartu, 2013). His fields of expertise are the history of Russian literature in the Age of Realism, Russian literary criticism, theory of literary canon, history of Russian novel. His current project is a book on the representation of peasants in nineteenth-century Russian novel.



## TITOLI DELLA COLLANA

| 1 |

Liana Nissim  
*Vieillir selon Flaubert*

| 2 |

Simone Cattaneo  
*La 'cultura X'. Mercato, pop e tradizione.*  
*Juan Bonilla, Ray Loriga e Juan Manuel de Prada*

| 3 |

Oleg Rummyantsev and Giovanna Brogi Bercoff (eds.)  
*The Battle of Konotop 1659: Exploring Alternatives in East European History*

| 4 |

Irina Bajini, Luisa Campuzano y Emilia Perassi (eds.)  
*Mujeres y emancipación de la América Latina y el Caribe en los siglos XIX y XX*

| 5 |

Claire Davison, Béatrice Laurent,  
Caroline Patey and Nathalie Vanfasse (eds.)  
*Provence and the British Imagination*

| 6 |

Vincenzo Russo (a cura di)  
*Tabucchi o Del Novecento*

| 7 |

Lidia De Michelis, Giuliana Iannaccaro e Alessandro Vescovi (a cura di)  
*Il fascino inquieto dell'utopia.*  
*Percorsi storici e letterari in onore di Marialuisa Bignami*

| 8 |

Marco Castellari (a cura di)  
*Formula e metafora.*  
*Figure di scienziati nelle letterature e culture contemporanee*

| 9 |

Damiano Rebecchini and Raffaella Vassena (eds.)  
*Reading in Russia. Practices of reading and literary communication, 1760-1930*

| 10 |

Marco Modenesi, Maria Benedetta Collini,  
Francesca Paraboschi (a cura di)  
*La grâce de montrer son âme dans le vêtement.*  
*Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo I)*

| 11 |

Marco Modenesi, Maria Benedetta Collini,  
Francesca Paraboschi (a cura di)  
*La grâce de montrer son âme dans le vêtement.*  
*Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo II)*

| 12 |

Marco Modenesi, Maria Benedetta Collini,  
Francesca Paraboschi (a cura di)  
*La grâce de montrer son âme dans le vêtement.*  
*Scrivere di tessuti, abiti, accessori. Studi in onore di Liana Nissim (Tomo III)*

| 13 |

Nicoletta Brazzelli  
*L'Antartide nell'immaginario inglese.*  
*Spazio geografico e rappresentazione letteraria*

| 14 |

Valerio Bini, Marina Vitale Ney (eds.)  
*Alimentazione, cultura e società in Africa. Crisi globali, risorse locali*

| 15 |

Andrea Meregalli, Camilla Storskog (eds.)  
*Bridges to Scandinavia*

| 16 |

Paolo Caponi, Mariacristina Cavecchi, Margaret Rose (eds.)  
*ExpoShakespeare.*  
*Il Sommo gourmet, il cibo e i cannibali*

| 17 |

Giuliana Calabrese  
*La conseguenza di una metamorfosi*  
*Topoi postmoderni nella poesia di Luis García Montero*

| 18 |

Anna Pasolini  
*Bodies That Bleed*  
*Metamorphosis in Angela Carter's Fairy Tales*

| 19 |

Fabio Rodríguez Amaya (ed.)  
*La Política de la mirada.*  
*Felisberto Hernández hoy*

| 20 |

Elisabetta Lonati  
*Communicating Medicine.*  
*British Medical Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Reference Works*

| 21 |

Marzia Rosti y Valentina Paleari (eds.)  
*Donde no habite el olvido.*  
*Herencia y transmisión del testimonio. Perspectivas socio-jurídicas*

| 22 |

A.M. González Luna y A. Sagi-Vela (eds.)  
*Donde no habite el olvido.*  
*Herencia y transmisión del testimonio en México y Centroamérica*

| 23 |

Laura Scarabelli y Serena Cappellini (eds.)  
*Donde no habite el olvido.*  
*Herencia y transmisión del testimonio en Chile*

| 24 |

Emilia Perassi y Giuliana Calabrese (eds.)  
*Donde no habite el Olvido.*  
*Herencia y transmisión del testimonio en Argentina*

| 25 |

Camilla Storskog  
*Literary Impressionisms.*  
*Resonances of Impressionism in Swedish and Finland-Swedish Prose 1880-1900*

| 26 |

Maurizio Pirro (a cura di)  
*La densità meravigliosa del sapere.*  
*Cultura tedesca in Italia fra Settecento e Novecento*

| 27 |

Marina Cometta, Elena Di Venosa, Andrea Meregalli, Paola Spazzali (a  
cura di)  
*La tradizione gnomica nelle letterature germaniche medievali*

| 28 |

Alicia Kozameh  
*Antología personal*

| 29 |

Monica Barsi e Laura Pinnavaia (a cura di)  
*Esempi di seconda mano.*  
*Studi sulla citazione in contesti europeo ed extraeuropeo*

| 30 |

Marcella Uberti-Bona  
*Geografías del diálogo.*  
*La traducción en la obra de Carmen Martín Gaité*

| 31 |

Sara Sullam (a cura di)  
*Filigrane*

| 32 |

Damiano Rebecchini, Raffaella Vassena (eds.)  
*Reading Russia. A History of Reading in Modern Russia (vol. 1)*

| 33 |

Damiano Rebecchini, Raffaella Vassena (eds.)  
*Reading Russia. A History of Reading in Modern Russia (vol. 2)*



Scholars of Russian culture have always paid close attention to texts and their authors, but they have often forgotten about the readers. These volumes illuminate encounters between the Russians and their favorite texts, a centuries-long and continent-spanning “love story” that shaped the way people think, feel, and communicate. The fruit of thirty-one specialists’ research, *Reading Russia* represents the first attempt to systematically depict the evolution of reading in Russia from the eighteenth century to the present day.

The second volume of *Reading Russia* considers the evolution of reading during the long nineteenth century (1800-1917), particularly in relation to the emergence of new narrative and current affairs publications: novels, on the one hand, and daily newspapers, weekly magazines and thick journals, on the other. The volume examines how economic and social transformations, technological progress and the development of the publishing industry taking place in Russia gradually led to a significant expansion of the reading public. At the same time, in part due to the influence of new literature reading policies in schools, there was a greater cultural standardisation of Russian society, which was partially opposed by new forms of poetic reading.

*Contributors to volume 2:* Daria Khitrova, Damiano Rebecchini, Abram Reitblat, Jonathan Stone, Roman Timenchik, Alexey Vdovin, Roman Leibov, Susan Smith-Peter, Katherine Bowers, Tat’iana Golovina, Marcus C. Levitt, Raffaella Vassena.



di/segni

**Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Straniere**  
**Università degli Studi di Milano**

**Ledizioni** 



9 788855 261937