2014

"Russia is a European State" : Gender and Publicity in Early Imperial Russia

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<https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.117>

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“Russia is a European State”:
Gender and Publicity in Early Imperial Russia

by

William Forrest Holden

An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

and

History

Thesis Adviser

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2014

Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to my wonderful professors and colleagues for my work on this thesis. First I would like to thank the faculty of the Russian program: Professor Sandra Freels, Professor Anna Alsufieva, Professor Nila Friedberg and Professor Olesya Kisselev. Without your dedicated work and innovative curriculum, I would never have attained the language skills necessary for this project.

The training in the humanities and critical thinking that I received in the Honors College has been life-changing and indispensable. In particular, I would like to thank Professor Kathleen Merrow and Professor Lawrence Wheeler for their careful attention to my writing and for their gracious willingness to help me engage with complex issues of history, literature, and theory.

My advisor in the Department of History, Professor ChiaYin Hsu, worked tirelessly with me on this project. Her comments and constructive criticism made this project much better than it ever could have been without her guidance. My second reader, Professor Thomas Lockett, also deserves thanks for his comments and advice, which were central in the shaping of my argument.

Special thanks also to my friends and colleagues who were willing to discuss these issues with me at length. I am particularly grateful to Jennifer Corbridge, Joseph Van der Naald, and Katey Maya Dare Pillars for their patient discussions, and for their help in fleshing out my understanding of critical theory and problems of gender.

Finally, I have undying gratitude for my many parents, whose support was absolutely essential to my education: Bruce, Carolyn, Garnet, Jack, and Ryan. You are all wonderful.

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Introduction

Paradoxically, the idea that the Russian Empire was European and the idea that there was a specifically “Russian” characteristic expressed by it both emerged in the eighteenth century. The sweeping reforms of Peter I in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the adoption of western European technology, institutions, and cultural practices. These shifts entailed the rejection of Muscovite customs through measures such as forcing the men of the nobility to shave their beards and ending the seclusion of elite women. These reforms allowed the Russian state to enter into European geopolitical contests; at the same time, they compelled the elites of the Russian Empire to distinguish themselves from France, the German states, the Swedish Empire, and England. The Petrine adoption of western European political and cultural forms also introduced the ideas and intellectual outlook of the Enlightenment to the educated elite of the Russian Empire. Regarding the educated and governing elites’ view of the state, eighteenth-century Russian discourses of the monarch’s legitimacy often drew on a notion of the “general will” that reflected Enlightenment ideals. In turn, Russian rulers began to appeal to “the people” (*narod*), and to “the public” (*publika*) in order to justify the absolute power invested in the autocrat.

The importance of the notion of “the public” in the history of France, England and Germany has been explored at length by Jürgen Habermas in his *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962). According to Habermas, “the public” became the central backdrop for political discussion with the advent of “horizontal economic dependencies,” which arose as a result of the increasing dynamism and

pervasiveness of the market economy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹ These horizontal economic dependencies, in contrast to the vertical economic structure of the feudal estates, opened up a space for rational-critical debate between subjects who understood themselves, in some sense, as equals. Ultimately, this space would become the basis of the modern liberal constitutional state and parliamentary politics, as it allowed for the “general interest” of the population to be articulated through reasoned debate.

The extent to which such a public sphere might have existed in the Russian Empire has plagued historians as a result of the predominance of vertical economic relationships of dependence such as, for example, the institution of serfdom, which was maintained until 1861. In addition, the absolute power of the autocrat was upheld until the early twentieth century. How could there be a public when the educated elite was dependent on the tsar for the maintenance of its position? How is it possible to speak of a “public sphere” in an empire where there was no economic base for the elite—as there was for the bourgeoisie in western Europe—to speak for the “general interest” of the population?

Yet Catherine II flaunted her Enlightenment credentials. She corresponded with Voltaire and Diderot, and sought to apply the principles of the Enlightenment, expounded by thinkers like Montesquieu, in her governance; her policies were aimed at the creation of a “Third Estate” in Russia. Rather than asking about her “sincerity” in adopting Enlightenment-oriented programs, this study investigates the ways in which the discourses of legitimacy that served Catherine’s reign made use of Enlightenment ideals.

¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), 15.

This essay will trace the discourses of legitimacy that arose in the eighteenth century to justify the autocratic rule of monarchs after Peter I. Discourses referring to hereditary right to the throne, or dynastic discourses, were often employed by Elizabeth I, Peter III, and Paul I. In contrast to the dynastic discourse of legitimacy, discourses of progressive reform were deployed by monarchs from the time of Peter I onward. This reformist discourse—referring to the notion that the Tsar embodied the will of “the people” and acted to ensure historical progress—based legitimacy on the sovereign’s capacity to better the general weal, not on bloodline. Originally employed by Peter I, this second discourse was also central to the reigns of Elizabeth I and Catherine II. Catherine, born a foreign princess, had no recourse to discourses of hereditary right, having come to power through a palace coup that resulted in the death of Peter III, her husband and a direct descendent of Peter I. In her reign, discourses of reform, which drew heavily on Enlightenment ideals, provided the basis of her legitimacy. She represented herself as worthy of the absolute power invested in her because of her competence, her ability to reform, and the strength of her progressive vision. She, more than any other monarch of the eighteenth century, sought to personify “the will of the people.”

Many of her reforms and actions reflected both Enlightenment principles and efforts at state-building; the effect of these reforms was to foster the institutions of public life. Catherine allowed private publishing; she attempted to engage in public dialogue with her contemporaries through publishing her own works anonymously; she endeavored to grant more rights to the nobility as an estate, and she did so also to bind its members more closely to the capital. Under her rule, the Russian Empire vastly expanded, and she justified military conquest by referring to the civilizing mission of

progress; the Russian Empire was to bring Enlightenment outward to its periphery. For a state as large as the Russian Empire, as Catherine saw it, absolute monarchy alone could provide a leader whose passions were sufficiently tempered by reason and education, and who was capable of carrying out extensive reforms.

Arguably, Catherine's promotion of conceptions of a dynamic autocrat-reformer, following on the Petrine discourses of reform, encouraged a growing view of Russian "backwardness" as a positive difference—a blank slate to be inscribed by the monarch for the common good. The writer Nikolai Karamzin, for example, saw the power invested in the autocrat as a bulwark against the social degeneration and public disorder he associated with western Europe's market economy and the French Revolution. This discourse of monarchical legitimacy based on reform was paradoxical and two-sided: it pointed to accelerated efforts to transform the Russian Empire through an appeal to the ideals of the Enlightenment, thus casting Russia as more European than Europe, the source of those ideals. But Russia was also seen as different from Europe by educated Russians, who hoped that the former's unique character could help it to avoid the social upheaval that they observed in western Europe. This paradox of seeing Russia as both European and uniquely Russian is captured in Catherine's "Instructions to the Legislative Commission" (1767), an assembled body of representatives from nearly all estates, in which she both insisted that "Russia is a European State," and defended a political system that, in her view, was uniquely suited to Russia: autocracy.

Regarding her self-representation as autocrat, Catherine relied, in part, on classical models of gender. She identified with masculine characteristics when it served her purpose, and with feminine ones when it was advantageous to do so, such as when

she aimed to soften the expansionist violence of her reign by showing herself to be gentle, caring, and motherly. As a partly unintended result of her efforts to foster public life through promoting print culture and literary discussions, the ideals represented by the conjugal family gained increasing importance for the elite, who increasingly characterized women as the gentle counterpart—and the opposite—of men. As I shall show, a highly gendered discourse of the family—similar to that identified with the European bourgeoisie—became central to the representation of the Russian monarchy and the idealization of social relations in the Russian Empire over the course of the eighteenth century, despite a lack of horizontal economic dependencies. The emergence of conceptions of gender and family shaped by the European bourgeois understanding of the “public sphere” among the educated nobility and literary elite suggests that such a sphere—in which the educated elites tested new ideas and forged consensus views among themselves—also existed around Catherine’s time. This public sphere, unlike that described by Habermas in France, Germany or England, did not arise from the sphere of economic activities, nor from the state’s guarantee of property rights. In this Russian sphere for the expression of opinion, explicitly political views were curtailed, especially those challenging the autocracy. But opinions and ideas that were not overtly political were freely exchanged. Such was the case with the literary works and private writings that contributed to the idealization of the patriarchal conjugal family, which came out of the European bourgeoisie’s attempt to define a private, intimate sphere set apart from the public, impersonal sphere. Although not explicitly political, elite ideas and opinions about gender and family nevertheless carried political significance. Built on conceptions that insisted on a clear division of male and female traits, these ideas and opinions served

to delegitimize Catherine's rule after her death by making a woman's assumption of male traits more questionable. From that point forward, deviations from the ideal of the patriarchal conjugal family, which Catherine came to represent, became less acceptable.

This essay draws on a variety of sources in order to trace the emergence of the patriarchal conjugal family in the public sphere of the Russian Empire. I make use of poetry, *belles lettres*, and memoirs. The last of these are particularly useful: like literary works they were aimed at a public audience, but they also reflected the views of those beyond the small circle of the literary elite. My use of these memoirs is less concerned with whether or not the events depicted within them "really" happened. Instead, I consider the ways these in which these works deployed different models of gender and gender roles in order to trace the relationship between gender construction and the emergence of the subjectivity of the private individual that was, as Habermas suggests, integral to the workings of publicity.

Publicity, here, and in the title of this essay, refers to the German *Öffentlichkeit*, the "public sphere" of Habermas's title. This word can be translated into English as "the public sphere," or as "publicity," denoting the quality, or characteristics, of a space of "unrestricted public discussion."² The corresponding term in Russian is *obshchestvennost'* (publicness), related to *obshchestvo* (society). But in the eighteenth century, most references to "the public" in Russian took the form of the loan word *publika*, from the French word *le public*. For the subtitle of this essay, I choose the term "publicity" in order to emphasize the gendered *characteristic* of the public sphere, in Russia as in western Europe. By tracing the connections between the emergence of the

² Thomas McCarthy, introduction to Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, xii.

public sphere and certain models of gender in the Russian Empire, I hope to demonstrate that they are, in fact, interdependent notions.

Theories of the Public Sphere and the Patriarchal Conjugal Family

For Habermas, the modern public sphere was born in the absolutist courts of France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As the result of an evolving relationship between private and public spheres, the “bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public.”³ The precursor of this public sphere can be traced back to the early market capitalism of the thirteenth century.⁴ The subsequent growth of towns and the “rise of long-distance trade” restructured the social relations of western European society by separating the commercial sphere from the direct prerogative of the state. By the sixteenth century, “commercial exchange developed according to rules which certainly were manipulated by political power,” but apart from the state’s direct control of the economy, “a far-reaching network of horizontal economic dependencies emerged that ... could no longer be accommodated by the vertical relationships of dependence characterizing the organization of domination in an estate system.”⁵ As the economic interests of merchants—that is, the emerging bourgeoisie—became identified with those of society, their desire for economic security came to be understood as the “general interest.”⁶ In order to provide this guarantee of security, and ensure the expansion of foreign trade under mercantilist principles, the states of western Europe greatly increased the size and influence of their bureaucracies.⁷ Habermas calls this new centralizing state founded on bureaucracy “the sphere of public authority.” With the emergence of this “public

³ Habermas, 26.

⁴ Ibid., 14.

⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁷ Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 43.

authority,” those subjects of the state whose economic interests were identified as the “general interest” were now seen as “private people... because they held no office, [and] were excluded from any share in public authority.” In the communications of the state, directed at what it saw as the representatives of society’s interests, these private people, “as the addressees of public authority, formed the public.”⁸

But, according to Habermas, the emerging bourgeoisie saw itself as being at odds with the state, and found its continued subjugation to the sphere of public authority increasingly arbitrary. By the eighteenth century, a “clearly demarcated sphere of ‘good society’”—consisting of a sociability shaped by the court nobility and bourgeois notables—formed “an enclave within a society separating itself from the state.”⁹ At the same time, “[c]ivil society came into existence as a corollary of a depersonalized [that is, bureaucratized] state authority,” representing the “private” sphere of commodity exchange.¹⁰ Derived from “good society” and civil society, the “bourgeois public sphere” emerged as separate and opposed to the “public authority” of the state. Through their opposition to the public authority, the bourgeois strata came “into an awareness of itself... as the public of the now emerging *public sphere of civil society*.”¹¹ This perceived adversarial relationship between the “public” and “public authority” defined what came to be called the “bourgeois public sphere”—or, simply, the “public sphere”—as “a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion.”¹²

⁸ Habermas, 18.

⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹¹ Ibid., 23. Emphasis in original.

¹² Ibid., 25-26.

In the bourgeois public sphere, public opinion was formed through the “use of reason” manifested through “rational-critical public debate,”¹³ and was the product of private people whose relationship to each other was characterized by a sense of equality based on the “parity of the educated.”¹⁴ Despite this notion of parity, the bourgeois strata that made up the “public” in reality consisted of people from diverse social backgrounds, including “doctors, pastors ... professors ... scribes,” those described as “the people,” as well as officials of the state and officers of the army.¹⁵ The instrument for the communication of public opinion was “the commercialization of cultural production,”¹⁶ in particular that of literature. The medium for public debate was the press. In turn, literary production and the press both marked the presence of a reading public and spurred its growth. In this context, fiction began to emerge as a bourgeois literary form. According to Habermas, the new genre of the “psychological novel” allowed the reader “to enter into the literary action as a substitute for his own, to use the relationships between the figures, between the author, the character and the reader as substitute relationships for reality.”¹⁷ That the psychology of discrete and private individuals could be considered equivalent and even exchangeable demonstrates the extent to which the bourgeois view of the market—into which all participants supposedly entered as equals to engage in competition—endowed literature with a similar presumption of equivalency among readers.

¹³ Ibid., 27-28.

¹⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹⁶ Ibid., 38.

¹⁷ Ibid., 50.

Habermas finds in the “patriarchal conjugal family”¹⁸ a key division between public and private life that structured the bourgeois public sphere, for only the patriarchs of bourgeois families took part—as equal participants—in the rational-critical exchange of the public sphere. This public sphere, based on subjective equivalency between the heads of families, “flowed from the wellspring of a specific subjectivity [that came out of] the sphere of the patriarchal conjugal family.”¹⁹

The head of the bourgeois family in western Europe combined the role of “property owner with that of ‘human being,’”²⁰ for the intimacy of the family served to cultivate his personality, which would in turn serve as the moral basis for his rational-critical exchange in the public. The notion of the intimacy of the family undergirded that of the “private autonomy” of its members, although it did so by “denying [the family’s] economic origins.” The family seemed to the bourgeois self-understanding “to be established voluntarily and by free individuals and to be maintained without coercion.” The “lasting community of love” between husband and wife underpinned the private realm of intimacy as well as the independence of the head of the family—the husband—who entered into the public. But this “independence of the property owner... was complemented by the dependence of the wife and children on the male head of the family.”²¹ At the same time, the private, domestic sphere became clearly separated from the public one. Marriage, now a contractual arrangement between a man and a woman, came to be seen as founded on mutual and consensual love, and provided the rationale for the gendered division of the domestic sphere from the public sphere. According to

¹⁸ Ibid., 44.

¹⁹ Ibid., 43.

²⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

²¹ Ibid., 47.

Habermas, “the conjugal family’s self-image of its intimate sphere collided with the real functions of the bourgeois family,” which were based on “the reproduction of capital.” Authority in the family was a decisively male characteristic, as was the public exercise of rational-critical faculties.²²

Since the publication of Habermas’s work, scholars have both criticized and refined his formulation of the patriarchal conjugal family. For Habermas, the emerging bourgeoisie claimed authority for itself by presenting the head of the family as the ideal of an autonomous individual, and the “structural transformation” that occurred was a divestment of power from the vertically organized sphere of aristocratic society to the horizontally organized patriarchal conjugal families of the bourgeoisie. The gendered division of the public and private spheres was part of the process of this transformation. To scholars such as Joan Landes, however, Habermas’s work offers an inadequate account of “the relation of the public sphere to women and to feminism.”²³ In Landes’s view, the gendered division that corresponded to the formation of new institutions of power and publicity in the eighteenth century were not a symptom of the structural shift of publicity, but rather integral to its social-historical trajectory. In particular, she has in mind the absolutist courts of France, epitomized by that of Louis XIV, and the way that the absolute power of the French monarch functioned “to ‘domesticate,’ even un-man, those who ought to have been his peers.” This was how the absolutist court was seen by

²² Ibid., 46-47.

²³ Joan Landes, *Women in the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 7. By Feminism, Landes refers not to a specific moral-ideological position, but rather to the historical phenomenon of feminist political advocacy which, in her view, was made possible by the social shifts that occurred over the course of the French Revolution and throughout the 1790s.

the revolutionaries, “who celebrated the virile constitutions of republics and despised the ‘effeminized’ status of men under absolutism.”²⁴

Seen in this light, the sphere of public authority that preceded the bourgeois public sphere was always already gendered. The aristocratic salon, as a venue for rational-critical debate prior to the rise of the bourgeois public, “was set apart from [other spheres of cultural production]... by its pronounced feminine character.”²⁵ Another scholar, Dena Goodman, emphasizes the role of women in the salons in her claims that the challenge to the absolutist court expressed through them “was not to nobility itself or even to the monarchy’s cooptation of it,” but rather against the notion of “birth as the basis of nobility.” Promoting intellectual and literary endeavors, the aristocratic salons “asserted the idea that nobility could be acquired, and that the salonnières were instrumental in helping the initiate to do so.”²⁶ In Landes’s view, women’s dominance of the salon brought on a potent reaction, for “the secret power of bourgeois... universalist rhetoric may be seen to derive from the way it promised to empty out the feminine connotations (and ultimately, the women as well) of absolutist public life.”²⁷ The eighteenth-century appeals to honesty, to transparency and to bourgeois civility were thus seen as masculine in character, in contrast to the feminine traits associated with dissimulation, which bourgeois men believed to permeate the salon. In this way, the overthrow of French absolutism also ushered in a new “symbolic order of nature... in which all differences were fixed, and where the sexes were positioned in their proper

²⁴ Ibid., 21.

²⁵ Ibid., 40.

²⁶ Dena Goodman, “Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22, no. 3 (1989): 331.

²⁷ Landes, 40.

places within the contrasting but mutually interdependent spheres of public and domestic life.”²⁸

Thomas Laqueur’s work on the cultural history of sexual difference is also instructive for understanding the problems of gender raised by Habermas’s theory of the formation of the public sphere. Laqueur sees a sharp break in the social construction of the body in precisely the period when the bourgeois public sphere arose. It was then that “sex as we know it was invented.”²⁹ Accord to Laqueur, before the Enlightenment, and dating back to ancient Greece, there was no precise distinction between sex and gender, but rather “[w]hat we call sex and gender [were] in the Renaissance bound up in a circle of meanings from which escape to a supposed biological substratum is impossible.”³⁰ This pre-modern understanding of sexual difference in bodies, which Laqueur calls the “one sex model,” referred to “vital heat” as the main differentiating force between male and female bodies. Vital heat, not measurable but visible in the manifestations of sexed bodies, would either cause genitals to extrovert over the course of their development, thereby forming a male body, or, in lesser quantity, leave the genitals inside the body, thereby rendering it female. In this understanding of sexual difference, first articulated by the Greek philosopher Galen (c. 129-217 CE), “the vagina is imagined as an interior penis, the labia as foreskin, the uterus as scrotum, and the ovaries as testicles.” As Laqueur writes, this view of anatomy positioned women as “inverted, and hence less perfect, men.”³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 46.

²⁹ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 149.

³⁰ Ibid., 128.

³¹ Ibid., 26-28.

In the eighteenth century the one sex model was largely replaced—though never entirely eliminated—by a “two sex model” based on the idea that male and female bodies were biologically distinct, rather than unequally developed forms of the same body. Even with the vast anatomical discoveries accomplished during the Renaissance, under the one sex model “the assertion that in generation the male was the efficient and the female the material cause was, in principle, not physically demonstrable; it was itself a restatement of what it *meant* to be male or female.” By contrast, the two sex model “provided a naturalistic explanation and justification for the social status of women” by turning “[t]he womb, which had been a sort of negative phallus [into] the uterus.” Thus, eighteenth-century scientific discourse “fleshed out, in terms acceptable to the new epistemology, the categories ‘male’ and ‘female’ as opposite and incommensurable biological sexes.”³²

But Laqueur does not mean to say that the discourse of one sex was usurped entirely by the discourse of two sexes in such a remarkably short period of time. As he writes, “[o]ne sex... did not die. But it met a powerful alternative: a biology of incommensurability in which the relationship between men and women was not inherently one of equality or inequality but rather of difference that required interpretation.” Henceforth, the two sex model would compete with the one sex model as an explanation for the physical, social and political difference that was visible between men and women. “Sex, in other words, replaced what we might call gender as a primary foundational category. Indeed, the framework in which the natural and the social could be clearly distinguished came into being.”³³

³² Ibid., 152-154

³³ Ibid., 154.

Since the social and political superiority of men over women could no longer be understood as an unequal manifestation of “vital heat” in bodies, Enlightenment writers drew on the two sex model’s reference to biologically determined difference as an explanation for the inferior social status of women. Linking biology to nature, they invoked the latter “to justify [men’s] dominance of the public sphere, whose distinction from the private would increasingly come to be figured in terms of sexual difference.” Since the process of the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century is almost precisely contemporaneous with the epistemological dominance of the two sex model:

The promises of the French Revolution—that mankind in all its social and cultural relations could be regenerated, that women could achieve not only civil but personal liberties, that family, morality, and personal relations could all be made afresh—gave birth not only to a genuine new feminism but also to a new kind of antifeminism, a new fear of women, and to political boundaries that engendered sexual boundaries to match.³⁴

Unlike Habermas, Laqueur and Landes view the emergence of the discourse of incommensurable difference between the sexes as inextricable from the history of the formation of the public sphere.

³⁴ Ibid., 194.

The Public Sphere in the Russian Context

Habermas's claim that the notion of subjective equivalency had permeated and restructured the culture and politics of western Europe presents a serious problem for the student of Russian history. First, the "horizontal economic dependencies" which Habermas views as the basis for the formation of a public sphere in Western Europe were clearly lacking in the vertically ordered and highly stratified Russian society, as the empire's subjects were "assigned to a particular legal category or status" that was defined by privileges and "activities proper to that estate."³⁵ The status of the small population of registered townspeople—the social group that perhaps most resembled a nascent bourgeoisie by their occupation—was hereditary,³⁶ making it unlikely for them to grow into a numerically significant stratum. Politically, the autocratic government might be seen as more likely to prohibit than foster public debate, since "all that was not specifically authorized was forbidden, and only that could be done which was specifically authorized."³⁷ Literary production and other cultural endeavors of the eighteenth century were often directed by the state. At the same time, the educated elite seemed to have been more concerned with adopting the "standards set by the foreigner and his culture," than to express their independence.³⁸ Given these differences from the conditions of western Europe, it is not surprising that Habermas denies the possibility of a public sphere in Russia, as he sees the adversarial relationship between the sphere of public

³⁵ Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 79.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-91.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁸ Hans Rogger, *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 51-52.

opinion and the sphere of public authority as a necessary criterion for the emergence of a bourgeois public.³⁹

Recent scholarship, however, has taken a different approach. Cynthia Whittaker, for example, argues that the praise and justification literature celebrating the eighteenth-century sovereigns played an analogous function to the expression of public opinion in western Europe, as this literature opened up a “dialogue between ruler and ruled.”⁴⁰ This literature of praise, as it implored the monarch to adopt reforms, often put forward the writer’s own agenda. This literature thus constituted a public debate in which some of the empire’s subjects exercised their rational-critical faculties under the guidance and supervision of the tsar, whose legitimacy was, in turn, confirmed by the writers. In this way, these writers also helped to define the autocrat as the personification of popular will, and to define her/his mission as reform. According to Whittaker, eighteenth-century writers “viewed public praise as a formal method for approving policies, and the practice of commending monarchs as a moral obligation to steer the course of government.”⁴¹ Similarly, “eighteenth-century belletrists obsessively portrayed ideal rulers in order to suggest universal criteria by which rulers should be judged.”⁴² Since the readers of this praise and advice literature were not only monarchs but also a wide circle of educated elites, the dialogue that was conducted through this literature was not only one between monarch and subjects; it was also a public dialogue among the educated.

The legacy of Peter I was a reoccurring theme for writers of the eighteenth century. As Vera Proskurina points out, the “concept of *the brilliant accomplishment* of

³⁹ Cynthia H. Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy: Eighteenth-Century Rulers and Writers in Political Dialogue* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 159.

the deeds which Peter I *had begun* became one of the most popular poetic formulas in Catherine's time."⁴³ By the same criterion, however, the failure to pursue particular policies of reform could result in the monarch's being re-cast as a despot, the "bad tsar," or "an immoral sovereign" who "threatened to corrupt the state and cause the decline of Russia."⁴⁴ This judgment was directed against Peter III to justify his overthrow in 1762.⁴⁵

Other recent historians criticize Habermas's dismissal of the possibility of a public sphere in the Russian Empire. Douglas Smith, in his study of Freemasonry in Russian during the eighteenth century, concluded that "Russia, like other European countries at the time, was forming a civil society or 'public sphere' beyond the realms of state, church, and family."⁴⁶ For Smith, the historical processes that Russian society underwent were similar to those in Western Europe. These included "the growth of the absolutist state, and the development of economic and commercial activity" around the turn of the eighteenth century, as well as the rapid dissemination of Enlightenment ideas and Western European practices, which, in regards to Russia, is often referred to as "Westernization."⁴⁷ Alexander Martin, suggesting the presence of a public sphere located between the "government" and "society," points to the efforts of Catherine II to "stimulate participation in government by society."⁴⁸ Turning to literature, Andrew Kahn notes that the Russian literary elite both constituted a public, and worked—for the consumption of

⁴³ Vera Proskurina, *Creating the Empress: Politics and Poetry in the Age of Catherine II* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 12. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁴ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 166.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁶ Douglas Smith, *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1999), 6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁴⁸ Alexander Martin, *Enlightened Metropolis: Constructing Imperial Moscow, 1762-1855* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 33.

this public, that is, itself—to construct discourses framed by what they thought were the desirable features of a political structure suited to the Russian Empire.⁴⁹

These recent findings on the presence of a public sphere in eighteenth-century Russia remain controversial, however. Andreas Schönle takes on this question by investigating the formation of the private sphere in his article “The Scare of the Self.” Suggesting the absence of a public sphere that allowed for open and independent debate, Schönle asserts that the cultivation of the private autonomous individual self was compromised by various cultural and political aspects of eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century Russia. He claims that for the literary elite and the educated members of the nobility, “[t]he necessity to follow etiquette, to speak the right language and the right idiom, to wear the right fashion, and to affect the right taste... tended... to obliterate whatever sense of private self could unify the personality.”⁵⁰ The sense of privacy was, moreover, not permitted to develop, both because of autocratic state—which failed to establish property and individual rights—and the elite’s desire to strengthen the nobility’s corporate identity at the expense of privateness and individual autonomy.⁵¹ In a statement reminiscent of a common view that Russia’s Europeanization was superficial, Schönle states that “the philosophy of the individualist modern self that underlies privacy rights remained only skin-deep” in the Russian Empire.⁵²

My thesis takes up the question of publicity in the Russian Empire by examining the construction of gender in several eighteenth-century texts, ranging from advice and

⁴⁹ See Andrew Kahn, “Nikolai Karamzin’s Discourses of Enlightenment,” in Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, ed. Andrew Kahn (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003). This is the meaning of Kahn’s conclusion that Karamzin’s *Letters* “speaks as a European text to a European readership.”

⁵⁰ Andreas Schönle, “The Scare of the Self: Sentimentalism, Privacy, and Private Life in Russian Culture, 1780-1820,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 4 (1998): 730.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 746.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 746.

celebratory literature to travelogues and personal memoirs that explored private feelings. By focusing in particular on how these works depicted gender roles in relation to the family and domesticity, I intend to show that Russian educated elites were actively engaged in articulating their social ideals. How they did so suggests the presence of a public that bore the characteristics described by Habermas, even if this Russian public—the eighteenth-century educated elites—did not express its views in an explicitly political and adversarial manner with regard to public authority.

Background: The Petrine Reforms and Their Effects on Monarchical Legitimacy

Peter I's reforms were numerous and far-reaching. He radically restructured the navy and army, the noble estates, and the bureaucracy in order to accommodate the military needs of his time. Reflecting the radicality of his reforms, the iconography of the sovereign was also reimagined in his reign. Rather than embodying the "divine right" to rule, the figure of the tsar was redefined under Peter as a monarch whose authority was derived from his "divine duty" to serve the state. According to Whittaker, the representation of the autocrat under Peter "demystified the monarchy by making it less a divine calling than a normal job." Whereas the concept of divine right draws on a theologically justified discourse of legitimacy, the notion of divine duty legitimizes the monarch by referring to secular criteria such as competence, ability, and deeds, which "squarely contradicted [the] divine right theory" of legitimacy. By Peter's reign, the absolute power invested in the figure of the tsar was justified by his ability to bring about progressive reforms.⁵³

Peter's emphasis on tying the monarch's authority to his ability to implement reforms was intertwined with the portrayal of the monarch as a servant of the state. As Whittaker notes, "by cast[ing] himself as subordinate to the state," Peter opened up a space in which the similarity of the sovereign to his subjects was asserted.⁵⁴ At the same time, the equality of his subjects among themselves was affirmed by the institution of the Table of Ranks. This system of promotion replaced birth and social status with merit as the primary criterion for recruitment for state service and advancement in rank. The Table of Ranks, in theory, permitted anyone who was capable, regardless of social origin, to

⁵³ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 39.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 82.

rise to the top of the bureaucracy and the military. Further diminishing the significance of birth, the Table of Ranks allowed members of non-noble estates who rose above certain positions to acquire the status of hereditary nobility.

But even as the servant of the state, the sovereign was always elevated above his subjects, who served the autocrat. The tsar was “the engineer of the universe” who “put ... in motion” the “new machine” of the progressive state, and “gave it direction and purpose.”⁵⁵ But this new discourse of legitimacy endorsed by Peter was not entirely accepted by the elite. The power of the dynastic discourse of legitimacy—indeed, it was this discourse that gave support to Peter’s bid for the throne—had not ceased to be resonant. In 1722 Peter attempted to eradicate the notion of legitimacy based on hereditary succession with his decree entitled “The Right of the Monarch’s Will to Designate an Heir to His Throne,” which abolished primogeniture as the basis for accession, and allowed the monarch to choose his successor based on merit and dedication to reform. But here, Peter “committed an error of judgment by thinking reform could replace the most universal legitimization of rule,” and in the power struggle that ensued after his death, dynastic discourse ultimately triumphed.⁵⁶

Peter failed to appoint a successor before his death, and his wife acceded to the throne as Catherine I in 1725, hailed by supporters as the continuation of Peter’s legacy. After her death in 1727, Peter I’s grandson, Peter II, took the throne. A sickly man, he died in 1730, making way for Anna I, the daughter of Peter’s half-brother, Ivan V. The Petrine reforms had made the nobility’s privilege dependent on state service, and state service, in turn, was the primary precondition to gaining social status under Peter’s rule.

⁵⁵ Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State*, 207.

⁵⁶ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 52.

However, “[a]fter the death of Peter I in 1725, the gentry concentrated their efforts on the attainment” of “security and leisure.”⁵⁷ When Anna took power in 1730, the nobility saw their chance to recover the privileges of their estates that had been removed by the Petrine reforms. Anna re-enshrined dynastic legitimacy as the basis of her rule.

But the Petrine reforms also had important implications regarding gender. Peter mandated that noble women, previously confined to specific quarters at home, be brought out of seclusion. This was part of his general program to weaken the nobility, for by bringing women into public spaces he “undermined the authority over sexual relationships” claimed by the heads of noble families. He also weakened the likelihood for members of the nobility to form alliances through marriage ties by requiring a brief period of betrothal before marriage, “during which time the affianced had the option to break off the engagement.”⁵⁸ By bringing women into public spaces, Peter “presented them as embodiments of Westernized nobility, both at official functions and at the less formal *assemblei*.” This reform coincided with the emergence of a new femininity in late seventeenth-century France, in which “the devotion to the world of the sublime and genteel... took the form of worship of idealized feminine forms.” According to Richard Wortman, women in Russia, as in France, from this point on “represented love as supreme beauty, tamer of discord, the inspiration for a poetry of terrestrial bliss. Woman represented man’s higher faculties rather than the snares of the passions. Marriage

⁵⁷ Richard Pipes, “The Background and Growth of Karamzin’s Political Ideas Down to 1810,” in *Karamzin’s Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia: A Translation and Analysis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 10.

⁵⁸ Nancy Shields Kollman, “The Seclusion of Elite Muscovite Women,” *Russian History* 10, no. 2 (1983), 186.

became the consummation of love rather than the acceptance of divinely ordained paternal authority.”⁵⁹

Neither dynastic legitimacy nor the discourse of progressive reform necessarily excluded women from positions of power. Women could be the direct descendents of the divinely ordained monarch, but they could also prove themselves to be competent in their deeds. Nevertheless, a woman in power needed to go to great lengths to justify her rule in the terms of either discourse. The discourse of one sex allowed for greater flexibility in the representation of a female monarch, since she could be *like* a man according to her inner virtue. On the other hand, the emerging two sex model figured women as gentle, caring, and maternal. This discourse could be used to soften the real violence that goes along with sweeping reforms and imperial expansion. The women who ruled in the eighteenth century drew on both the one sex model and the two sex model, on both dynastic and reforming discourses of legitimacy, to justify their power.

The one sex model remained resonant among eighteenth-century Russian elites. The female monarchs after Peter I drew from both sex models to establish their legitimacy. Anna (r. 1730-1740), Elizabeth I (r. 1741-1762), and Catherine II (r. 1762-1796) each justified their reigns through progressive reforms, but at the same time they presented themselves as the “mothers” of their subjects, whose caring and maternal natures necessitated and softened sometimes brutal measures. As Wortman shows, “[i]t is no accident that women rulers proved able to fuse the personae of conquering and conserving monarchs, for only they could claim to defend Peter’s heritage without

⁵⁹ Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, vol. I, From Peter the Great to the Death of Nicholas I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 55-56.

threatening a return to his punitive fury,” a masculine trait.⁶⁰ The ability of female monarchs to pull from competing models of sexual difference no doubt helped to sustain their rule.

Anna’s rise to power in 1730 was supported by members of the high nobility, who believed she would relinquish the absolute right to rule claimed by Peter I and share power with them. Upon taking power, however, she turned against her initial supporters and allied herself with the faction of the nobility that supported absolute monarchy. Subsequently, Anna’s self-representation relied on her pursuit of the “general good,” and her claim to resist the “specific interests of the aristocrats.” The idea of a monarch who pursued the general interest, an image first championed by Peter I, was thus solidified in the figure of Anna, but this time, with a maternal twist.⁶¹ After Anna, Elizabeth and Catherine followed a similar pattern, using their status as the second sex, and the feminized notions of purity, gentility and passionlessness that went with it, to justify their autocratic rule. Nevertheless, they often represented themselves as androgynous figures, not entirely defined by an image of domestic femininity.

When Elizabeth I, Peter I’s daughter, took the throne in 1741 she drew on both reformist and dynastic discourses of legitimacy. In so doing, she justified her coup against the child-tsar Ivan VI (r. 1740-1741), whose reign was dominated by the regency of Ernst Johann Biron, a German from Courland and a close advisor of Anna I. Biron came to stand for the detested “rule of foreigners,” and was a symbol of deviation from Peter’s program of reform during the reign of Ivan VI.⁶² Contrasting her reign against that of Anna and Biron, Elizabeth’s rule made use of “layers of legitimacy,” projecting

⁶⁰ Ibid., 55-56.

⁶¹ Ibid., 85.

⁶² Rogger, 22

the “interlocking images of Peter’s direct offspring and of a Petrine-model reforming tsar.”⁶³ The period of Biron’s regency brought with it a reconsideration of the memory of Peter I. Biron, a widely despised foreigner, was contrasted against an increasingly positive image of Peter, the Russian tsar who pursued the interests of the Russian Empire, not its German neighbors. According to Hans Rogger, “[f]rom that time on, a protest against foreigners and their role in Russia was no longer automatically synonymous with the wish to undo the work of modernization and reform which Peter had begun. Instead, it could be made in his name and in defense of his ideals.”⁶⁴ From the time of Elizabeth’s coup, reforms in the image of the European states could be made in the defense of a specifically Russian character. Among other ideas, the image of the feminine, maternal, and gentle woman—like Elizabeth—could be rallied to the cause of anti-foreign domination.

Elizabeth’s rule was justified by her position in the dynastic family, as Peter’s daughter, but tied into this dynastic legitimacy was also a promise to continue in the spirit of his reforms. The Petrine reforms had increased the size and the education of the elite, which had more and more been inculcated with the ideals of the western European Enlightenment. In this context, the odic tradition became central to the public exercise of rational-critical faculties in Imperial Russia. On the one hand, odes extolled the supreme figure of the monarch, but on the other hand, “as in other European states, the panegyric also served as a tactful form of instructions.”⁶⁵ The monarch accepted praise from her subjects through odes, but she was also expected to listen to the advice put forward, reflecting a tacit recognition of the tsar’s legitimacy being contingent on the support of

⁶³ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 84.

⁶⁴ Rogger, 32-33.

⁶⁵ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 85.

the elite. The writer and educator Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) proves especially interesting here because the reforms that he promoted in his odes were profoundly tied with the Enlightenment programs of western Europe.

Lomonosov embodied the upward mobility made possible by the Petrine reforms. Although born a free peasant, he had access to primary education and in 1736 left for Germany under the sponsorship of the Academy of Sciences, created by Peter.⁶⁶ For the remainder of his career, he would advocate for the benefits of the Petrine Reforms, particularly regarding education, which “urgently needed defending.”⁶⁷ In his poem, “Ode on the Day of Accession to the All-Russian Throne of Her Majesty the Sovereign Empress Elizabeth Petrovna in the Year of 1747,” the tension between the exercise of rational-critical faculties and the performance of formal submission to the tsar is palpable. He reinforced the dynastic legitimacy of Elizabeth’s rule by emphasizing her connection to Peter, for example, when he wrote that, “When she [Elizabeth] acceded to the throne, / As the almighty gave her the crown / You [the land] became Russia once again.” In the same stanza, he described Elizabeth kissing Russia while saying, “I have had enough of these victories... for which streams of blood are spilt. / I rejoice in the happiness of Russians (*rossov*), / I would not trade their tranquility / For all the West and all the East.”⁶⁸ Although Elizabeth’s legitimacy was represented here as dynastic, and seemingly unassailable, Lomonosov nevertheless introduced a note of caution, implying

⁶⁶ Robert Johnston, “‘An Original Champion of Enlightenment’: M.V. Lomonosov & Russian Education in the 18th Century,” in *The Varied Pattern: Studies in the 18th Century*, edited by Peter Hughes and David Williams (Toronto: A.M. Hakkert, 1971), 374-375.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 377.

⁶⁸ Mikhailo Lomonosov, *Zhizneopisanie, Izbrannye trudy, Vospominaniia sovremennikov, Suzhdeniia potomkov, Stikhi i proza o nom* (Moskva: Sovremenik, 1989), 293-294.

that a monarch bent on warmongering would suffer the loss of trust of “Russians” whose happiness and tranquility she would compromise. His support was not unconditional.

Lomonosov repeatedly referred to the sciences (*nauki*) in the poem, promoting the expansion of education which, in his view, had been neglected since the death of Peter I. “Be silent, fiery sounds / And stop disturbing the world (*svet*): / Here on earth (*v mire*) the sciences will spread / As Elizabeth decreed.”⁶⁹ Alluding to the time before Peter I, Lomonosov wrote, “Back then the divine sciences / Through mountains, rivers and seas, / Extended their hands to Russia, / Saying to this monarch: / ‘We, with extreme eagerness, are prepared / To give to the Russian race the new / Fruits of the finest minds.’ / The monarch summoned them / Indeed Russia was awaiting / The benefit of their labors.”⁷⁰ Not only did Lomonosov draw a direct political connection between Elizabeth and her father, but he made clear in his poem that education was one of the prerequisites for that connection being drawn. Ultimately, support for the sciences promised glory for Russia: “Oh you [the sciences], whom / The fatherland from its depths awaits / And wishes to see such as you, / Whom it summons from foreign countries (*stran*) / O, your days are blessed! / Dare now, heartened, / Show through your endeavor (*rachen'em*), / That the Russian land (*rossiiskaia zemlia*) could give birth / To our own Platos / And quick-witted Newtons.”⁷¹

Although, as mentioned, the dynastic discourse of legitimacy was invoked in Lomonosov’s ode, the reformist discourse of legitimacy was privileged. He tactfully referred to a kind of subjective equivalency between himself and the monarch by referring to the Petrine doctrine of merit as the justification of power. Referring further to

⁶⁹ Ibid., 295.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 296.

⁷¹ Ibid., 300-301.

the importance of the sciences, he wrote that they “nourish the young, / Give comfort to the old,” and they “are beneficial everywhere / Among crowds (*narodov*) and in deserted [places], / Amid city noise and in solitude, / In sweet leisure and at work.” The next and final stanza returned to Elizabeth: “For You [*Tebe*], o Source of mercy, / O angel of our peaceful age! / ... / The Creator will preserve You, / Unhindered (*bespretknovenno*) in all paths [You take] / And He will render your life blessed, / As the scope (*chislo*) of Your munificence.”⁷²

With these two final lines, which suggested that the blessings of Elizabeth’s reign would be matched by her generosity in supporting the sciences, Lomonosov hinted that the ultimate judgment had yet to be cast by God, despite the effusive praise that he laid at her feet. Lomonosov’s ode carried the message that without sufficient attention to a proper program of reform, the legitimacy of Elizabeth’s reign would be threatened. Describing the paths that Elizabeth would take as “unhindered,” Lomonosov tacitly showed his support for the monarch’s absolute rule, for, as the embodiment of the will of the people, she had the power to pursue any particular program. But she was also warned against ignoring his advice. In the end, Elizabeth’s deeds would be the basis of her judgment. As Whittaker points out, “[s]ometimes monarchs follow advice.”

Lomonosov’s calls for promoting in education were heeded, and Elizabeth decreed the founding of Moscow University in 1755 and the Academy of Fine Arts in 1756. Elizabeth claimed that she was “rushing to propagate all useful knowledge... for the common good, in imitation of Peter, the *obnovitel’* [reformer] of our country.”⁷³

⁷² Ibid., 302.

⁷³ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 86.

Lomonosov's ode included effusive praise, but that does not exclude the possibility of the presence of political dialogue. The use of praise itself can vary, and in this case, a discussion of the advisability of military campaigns and education is certainly present. The fact that they are contained in a panegyric does not necessitate that they were hollow proclamations. On the contrary, what is present in this ode is a very carefully framed public use of the rational-critical faculty.

Monarchical Legitimacy under Catherine II

Indeed, Peter was increasingly seen as the founder of a new country, one who renewed Russia, and the Moscovite habits and practices he sought to eliminate became more alien to the elites of the Russian Empire. When Catherine II acceded to the throne in 1762, the discourse of the reforming tsar was once again deployed. A German princess with no hereditary claim to the throne, she could draw only on the reformist discourse of legitimacy. Peter III, her husband, was deposed in a coup led by Catherine, and denounced as a despot in an era when despotism and monarchy were far from synonymous. Peter, the nephew of Elizabeth I, was well positioned to claim dynastic legitimacy, being both related to Peter I and having been legally appointed as the heir by Elizabeth. He failed, however, to establish an alliance with the nobility, and to represent himself as the embodiment of consensus and popular will.⁷⁴ Thus, when Catherine deposed him and took power, the coup was acclaimed “as an act of heroic deliverance.”⁷⁵

Catherine, if only by necessity, was the ultimate reforming tsar. Her coup was presented in her accession manifesto as “the dawn of a new age,” with a renewed focus on progress and the implementation of reforms as the only basis of legitimacy. Her self-representation as a reformer took the form of her well-publicized endorsement of Enlightenment thought. Her strength and competence as a reformer, as well as her decisiveness and ability to articulate the proper reforms for the Russian Empire, were no doubt seen as masculine characteristics. But Catherine, as Elizabeth, “exemplified male as well as female qualities, both prowess and graciousness.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁵ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 110.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 111.

Catherine's self-representation was androgynous. References to gender in her memoir—aligned with the one sex model—appeared in her recurring discussions of horseback riding. She frequently depicted herself reading and riding in her leisure time, and these two activities were often brought up together.⁷⁷ She understood horseback riding as an inherently masculine activity. According to her memoir, Empress Elizabeth “exclaimed in astonishment” upon seeing Catherine ride, remarking “that it was impossible to mount more skillfully.” On learning that Catherine was riding on a woman's saddle, the Empress reportedly said, “one would swear that she is on a man's saddle.”⁷⁸ For Catherine, riding was also a refined activity, not part of the base and cruel practice of hunting so enjoyed by men. “To tell the truth, I cared not at all for hunting, but I passionately loved horseback riding... Also during this time, I always had a book in my pocket; if I had a moment to myself, I used it to read.”⁷⁹

Pairing reading with horseback riding in reminiscences of her youth, Catherine suggested that reading was, like riding, a masculine activity. Moreover, by insisting on her penchant for reading, Catherine presented herself as a rational individual committed to self-cultivation. She described being exposed to the works of Voltaire, Baronio, Montesquieu, and Tacitus, during a bout of illness. She wrote that “[p]erhaps” her “despondent frame of mind at the time” made her receptive to these thinkers. Suggesting that having read their work in her youth prepared her for the gravity of her task as monarch, she continued: “I began to see more things with a black outlook and to seek the causes that really underlay and truly shaped the different interests in the affairs that I

⁷⁷ Catherine II, *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, trans. Mark Cruse and Hilde Hoogenboom (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 29, 52.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

observed.”⁸⁰ As Catherine described it in her memoir, reading led her to look outward—a masculine response—to affairs that she “observed.” In her case, her memoir seemed to insist, reading did not point to an inward turn toward domesticity, as it would for women who read to become good wives.

Catherine’s reign lasted over thirty years, during which she managed to obtain the general cooperation of the educated elite, yet the legitimacy of her rule remained precarious. Her foreign origin and lack of blood ties to the preceding monarchs put particular pressure on her and her supporters to justify her reign by emphasizing the reformist discourse of legitimacy, which allowed them to redefine the line of succession as one based on competence, and to present Catherine as the true successor of Peter I, the tsar-reformer. In order to justify her coup, Catherine issued two manifestos immediately after her accession. As Whittaker put it, Catherine’s manifestos argued that “Peter [III], while legally appointed, had betrayed his office by pursuing despotic policies that placed the Russian state and tradition in jeopardy.” In light of this betrayal, “the elite had agreed to transfer loyalty to Catherine in the expectation that she would better fulfill the conditions of the contract between ruler and ruled.”⁸¹

Reformist legitimacy in Catherine’s reign took the form of an appeal to the public. Her memoirs expressed her concern, as his spouse and on his behalf, that Peter III would “perhaps never recover” from his low standing in “public opinion.”⁸² This public was decisively Russian, and it was Peter’s alienation from a “Russian” culture which also served to legitimize her coup, for “[h]e felt that he had not been born for Russia, that he

⁸⁰ Ibid., 138.

⁸¹ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 99.

⁸² Catherine II, *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, 102.

did not suit the Russians nor the Russians him.”⁸³ Thus Catherine, through her reformist program, came to represent herself and her program as distinctly Russian, despite her German origin. By representing herself as a good tsar, in contrast to the despotism of Peter, she became Russian in the eyes of the public.

In order to avert the fear of despotism, advocates of autocratic rule often emphasized the “rule of law, a combination of *Rechtsstaat* and *Ständestaat*.”⁸⁴ The former of these terms refers to the limitation of governmental—or monarchical—power in accordance with clearly articulated rules. *Ständestaat* is a related concept, but refers to power invested in a particular group that embodies the general good. For Catherine, the *Stand* (status or estate) that could speak for the country as a whole was the nobility. This preference was shown by her interest in formally defining the nobility’s right through such measures as the Charter to the Nobility (1785). Catherine’s efforts to develop a literary public can be seen, in relation to this preference, as attempts to encourage self-cultivation among members of the nobility. In Catherine’s view, the autocrat, invested with absolute power though she might be, “acted within limits.”⁸⁵ Since the seventeenth century autocracy had been justified in that “the monarch alone could rise above group interests and rule for the ‘common good.’”⁸⁶ Catherine likewise saw the place of the autocrat as elevated above petty group interests, and her duty as that of advancing progress, as she herself would be subordinated to reason.

Catherine’s self-representation as tsar-reformer helped to define the notion of “public opinion” as a consensus of the nobility and as the assent of the popular masses.

⁸³ Ibid., 165.

⁸⁴ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 105.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 112.

⁸⁶ Cynthia Whittaker, “The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth-Century Russia,” *Slavic Review* 51, no. 1 (1992): 81.

Descriptions of her coronation, for the first time in Russian history, recorded shouts of “hoorah!” from the masses assembled in the audience, meant to demonstrate the love of “the people” for the new Empress.⁸⁷ Those on the periphery of the Empire, not civilized enough to appreciate her rule, were expected to learn from her example, and she was expected to provide a model of moral and civic cultivation.⁸⁸

The discourse of empire was invariably invoked in relationship to the taming of nature. As Schönle shows, Catherine and Prince Grigorii Potemkin, a close advisor to the Empress, spent a great deal of time and effort designing and constructing gardens in the Crimean Peninsula after its annexation. According to Schönle “the garden... became a master trope of [the] model of multicultural coexistence” that was required for the stewardship of this newly conquered Islamic people.⁸⁹ Gardens represented the “combination of orderliness and freedom,” the same notion inscribed in the figure of the autocrat under Catherine. The reforming tsar would insure the orderliness of society by pursuing the proper policies with the ultimate goal of promoting the general interest. As Schönle points out, the gardens built in Crimea were “rigorously structured,” yet were built in such a way that “enable[d] its visitors to roam around freely.”⁹⁰ By ordering and taming the passions of self-interest, the absolute power invested in the autocrat would guarantee freedom to those who had been sufficiently morally cultivated; subjugation to the monarch, paradoxically, was the price of freedom. The role of the state, of the Empire, and of the autocrat was to impose order and civilization on a world that, left unchecked, would tend toward disorder and social disintegration. Catherine reconciled

⁸⁷ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 114.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 120.

⁸⁹ Andreas Schönle, “Garden of the Empire: Catherine’s Appropriation of the Crimea,” *Slavic Review* 60, no. 1 (2001): 6.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

absolute authority with Enlightenment calls for dignity through her focus on the law, and the “self-limited exercise of power.”⁹¹ Just as the state needed to tame the threat of nature against civilization, the moral cultivation of the person of the monarch was necessary to stave off passion, which, without vigilance, would overcome reason. The size and scope of the Russian Empire, massive as it was, was used to argue for the importance of this concept. Catherine, in her memoirs, expressed concern over the inability of Peter III to manage his landholdings in Germany, since “they were only a small sample of what he would one day have to manage when the Russian Empire passed to him.”⁹²

The garden represented the notion of autocracy as a whole. As the upheaval following the death of Peter I demonstrated to the Russian elite, the absolute authority of the autocrat was needed not only for preventing social and political disorder but also for installing the rule of law. This notion of the efficacy of autocracy for achieving the common good was extended into the realms of scientific knowledge and territorial expansion. Territorial expansion was seen as the taming of nature—as Schönle shows—and, according to Willard Sutherland, science became a key instrument of territorial expansion, providing the means for “knowing the ‘land’ and the ‘people’ and managing their interrelationship effectively.” Under Catherine, “[g]eography, ethnography, history, and archeology... [became] part of a common project of knowledge, and the acquisition and use of this knowledge [became] a prerequisite for ‘persons charged with the state’s administration.’”⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid., 105

⁹² Catherine II, *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, 165.

⁹³ Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 64-65.

An analysis of the discourses of legitimacy deployed by Catherine demonstrates the extent to which her reign necessarily involved itself with a larger body of the population than the Empress and her immediate supporters. Because she lacked any hereditary ties to previous tsars, Catherine had to present herself according to the reformist discourse that was available to her. In this way, important aspects of the Enlightenment—such as territorial expansion and scientific discovery—became central aspects of her legitimacy.

The Reforms of Catherine II

Catherine's reformist credentials necessarily had to be matched with deeds. The Legislative Commission of 1767 is an example of Catherine's attempt to base the relationship between the autocrat and society on legal principles. As Catherine envisioned it, this commission "was to be much larger than any of its eighteenth-century predecessors, and the elected deputies themselves were to take part in drafting the code." The deputies of the commission were to "explain the needs and problems of their communities, and to take part in the preparation of a new code of laws" based on the Empress's instructions.⁹⁴ Her instructions to the commission, the *Nakaz*, provided the rational and moral principles on which a new legal code was to be based, rather than prescriptive laws.⁹⁵ In the *Nakaz*, Catherine insisted that "true End of Monarchy" is "[n]ot to deprive People of their natural Liberty; but to correct their Actions, in order to attain the *supreme Good*."⁹⁶ Liberties, however, could not be given to the entire population, since subjects' reason and virtue first had to be cultivated, under the guidance of the reforming tsar. Regarding the premise of her own rule, Catherine emphasized restraint, for the autocrat should understand her own place and act "with self-limited and defined powers," overseeing the machinery of the state.⁹⁷

In addition to the attempt to establish clear legal principles, the development of literary activities emerged as a priority of Catherine's reign, as evidenced by her decree of 1783 which granted individuals the right to use a printing press without direct governmental permission. During this period the number of books being printed and sold

⁹⁴ Madariaga, 139.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 151.

⁹⁶ Catherine II, "Instructions," in *Readings in Russian Civilization: Volume II, Imperial Russia, 1700-1917*, edited by Thomas Riha (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 253. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁷ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 114.

skyrocketed, and the reading public vastly expanded.⁹⁸ Her reign also saw an increase of concerns over establishing linguistic standards and the creation of a literary language, as shown in various attempts at producing a comprehensive compilation of Russian grammar.⁹⁹

Isabel de Madariaga notes that “[i]n very few cases did the nobility rise to the formulations of their views in abstract political terms. This can be explained by the low cultural level, even illiteracy, still typical of the provincial noble...”¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, it was precisely this difference between the noble estate of the Russian Empire and the educated classes of western Europe that compelled Catherine to promote publishing and literary culture. Madariaga’s view that “the Legislative Commission was not intended to represent ‘the people’, let alone ‘the will of the people’”¹⁰¹ does not account for the way that eighteenth-century theories of autocracy understood the role of “the people.” As we have seen, Catherine’s first priority upon accession was to secure the support of the elite. Yet the support of the elite in an “elective monarchy” served as evidence that “[t]he people decided to choose another [monarch], with Catherine the embodiment of their will.” Elective monarchy here is not meant in the literal sense, but rather is meant to designate the sovereign whose reign is justified by popular consent and who embodies the consensus of the elite. Public opinion, then, was personified in Catherine herself—much more so than under Elizabeth—and it was her *duty* to the state (as opposed to divine mandate) to enlighten her subjects. “Election—the ‘love’ of the people for her and

⁹⁸ Gary Marker, *Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 105, 160.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 195. For a detailed discussion of the debate over a literary language, see Hans Rogger’s “Towards a National Language,” ch. III of *National Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, 85-125.

¹⁰⁰ Madariaga, 142.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 143

their ‘clear desire’ that she rule—provided Catherine the only basis for claiming to be a ‘true sovereign.’”¹⁰²

The seeds of subjective equivalency that had been laid by Peter I had begun to take root under Catherine’s stewardship, and further, her legitimacy was contingent on a program of reform which sought to expand the institutions of the public sphere, represented primarily by literary culture. It is therefore understandable that under Catherine, by way of literary works, many of the ideas associated with the western European public sphere also permeated Russian society, such as those concerning subjective equivalency and domesticity.

Another measure, the Statute on Provincial Administration in 1775, gave the nobility increased power in the provinces, although it did so by imposing on them legally binding responsibility, and by tying the provincial nobility more closely to the court’s interests. The Charter to the Nobility in 1785 abolished corporal punishment for the nobility, an exemption regarded as a privilege.¹⁰³ This expanded on the trend of increasing privileges for the nobles estates set by Peter III, who had issued a manifesto in 1762 freeing the noble elites from mandatory state service “on condition that they volunteered for service in time of war.”¹⁰⁴

Likewise in 1785, a measure was put forward aimed at establishing a new estate of “townspeople,” the Charter to the Towns. By this Charter, freed or escaped serfs living in provincial towns were enrolled in this estate, and this was done in connection with Catherine’s intention to encourage the formation of a “third estate” in the Russian

¹⁰² Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 101

¹⁰³ Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966), 97.

¹⁰⁴ Madariaga, 22.

Empire.¹⁰⁵ Although the Charter failed to create such an estate, merchants in the Russian Empire began to achieve greater social mobility by the second half of the eighteenth century. David Ransel, for instance, argues that a kind of “social elite” was formed “across class lines” thanks to “regular administrative, business and social interaction.” Using the Tolchenov family from the Moscow region as an example, Ransel argues that whereas earlier merchants had interacted mainly with “close relatives, business associates and the local clergy,” by Catherine’s time their social circles had “expanded to include an increasing number of noble officials and their families.”¹⁰⁶

Catherine’s relationship to the institutions of civic life saw two phases: the first, spanning from her accession and through the 1780s, was one of active support. The second phase, beginning in the late 1780s and continuing until her death, was one of ambivalence and sometimes repression. Catherine’s support for institutions of public life during the first period of her reign had far-reaching consequences. Coinciding with her promotion of publishing and literary life, Freemasonry emerged as a major influence among Russian elites. The first Masonic lodges in the Russian Empire were founded between 1750 and 1770. After 1770 there was “a dramatic increase in Masonic activity”: by 1790 between ninety and more than one hundred lodges were established. Although St. Petersburg and Moscow were the main hubs of Masonic activity, “more than half of all lodges were located in dozens of provincial cities and towns, particularly in ports where expatriate foreigners introduced their native habits and customs.”¹⁰⁷ Catherine II disliked Freemasonry, but nevertheless she chose to express this view as an equal

¹⁰⁵ Robert E. Jones, “Jacob Sievers, Enlightened Reform and the Development of a ‘Third Estate’ in Russia,” *Russian Review* 36, no. 4 (1977): 425-426.

¹⁰⁶ David Ransel, “The Diary of a Merchant: Insights into Eighteenth-Century Plebian Life,” *Russian Review* 63, no. 4 (2004): 603.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Working the Rough Stone*, 19.

participant with respect to other writers in the elite literary circle, publishing and staging her anti-Masonic plays anonymously. Although the “outpouring of public praise” that greeted her plays suggests that it was “no secret” who had authored them, the act of publishing her work anonymously gestured toward an emerging public sphere that was separating itself from the state.¹⁰⁸

The second phase of Catherine’s relationship to institutions of civic life began with the French Revolution, which marked a serious turning point in Catherine’s view of the advisability of her Enlightenment-influenced reforms. A series of events, including the beheading of Louis XVI in 1793, tempered her optimism on the subject of popular will; the civic and moral virtue of the population had clearly been overestimated, and the role of the autocrat was now to rein in the passions of the public.¹⁰⁹ This period saw Catherine’s “gradual withdrawal of support from institutions of public life,” such as literary journals and public theater.¹¹⁰

Catherine’s engagement with literary figures of her day extended far and wide. Historians have often interpreted Catherine’s writings as commands to her subjects on how to engage in *belles lettres*, but this historiographical position has been challenged, particularly by W. Gareth Jones. Pointing to her debate over the nature of satire with Nikolai Novikov, a litterateur and publisher active during Catherine’s reign, Jones suggests that this episode demonstrated Catherine’s active engagement—without threat of punishment—with writers during the period before the French Revolution.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 149.

¹⁰⁹ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 172.

¹¹⁰ John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 61.

¹¹¹ W. Gareth Jones, “The Polemics of the 1769 Journals: A Reappraisal,” *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 16, no. 3-4 (1982): 441.

Catherine viewed her role in the literary sphere as one of arbitration, not direct supervision. According to Jones, for most of Catherine's reign the sovereign was seen as an ally to literary production, even for those with whom she disagreed.¹¹²

Although Catherine never abandoned the right as Empress to intervene in public discussions of policy, her self-representation emphasized non-coercive involvement with public debate. In order to maintain the image of the tsar-reformer, so central to her legitimacy, Catherine acted as a mediator in civic life, careful not to be construed as a tyrant. In this capacity, her reforms were aimed at fostering those institutions of civic life that were associated with the ideals of the Enlightenment.

¹¹² W. Gareth Jones, *Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 61.

Gender and Civic Life during Catherine's Reign

The development of civic life in the Russian Empire had its consequences for gender as well as literature. In a letter to Voltaire, Catherine articulated her domestic vision for women of the empire, writing that “[w]e educate them with a view to making them the delight of their future families; we want them to be neither pruders, nor coquettes, but agreeable young ladies, capable of raising their own children and running their own homes.”¹¹³

Marriage for love obtained a newfound cultural value, and while “[m]arriages were sometimes arranged for interest (*raschet*),” it was recognized that they “were not ideal,” although “such marriages were not shameful” during this period.¹¹⁴ The reforms of the era had opened space for the privileged formation of the patriarchal conjugal family. As John Randolph shows in his study of the Bakunin family, “[a] new politics of private life was thus emerging in Tver Province by the time the Bakunins moved there in the early 1780s.” The rural estates were endowed with a new prestige, gaining an association with civic and moral cultivation. This was closely linked with the notion of empire, for during this period the elite “overcame their traditional suspiciousness of idle nobility to try to take advantage of the platform rural towns and estates offered for expanding the reach of imperial culture and its scenarios of power.”¹¹⁵

During Catherine's reign, Tver was “a laboratory for imperial politics. Specifically, the government wanted to work out mechanisms whereby the state could

¹¹³ Robin Bisha et al., *Russian Women, 1698-1917: Experience and Expression* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 167-68. Cited in John Randolph, *The House in the Garden: The Bakunin Family and the Romance of Russian Idealism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 34.

¹¹⁴ Jessica Tovrov, “Mother-Child Relationships among the Russian Nobility,” in *The Family in Imperial Russia: New Lines of Historical Research*, ed. David Ransel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 19.

¹¹⁵ Randolph, 38-39.

enlighten the provinces—that is, mobilize them in pursuit of power, productivity, and increased prosperity.”¹¹⁶ The intimate life of the family, able to serve as an enlightening example to others, was understood by the autocrat as an avenue toward bringing the provinces more closely under the fold of the St. Petersburg administration. According to Randolph, “Catherine the Great and her advisers encouraged noble families to see their provincial private lives as an extension of the world of power and culture they had earlier known in the capitals.”¹¹⁷ Yet as Randolph points out:

If, as seems to be the case, the domestic enlightenment for which the Bakunin family became so famous found its first inspiration in the civic idealism of the Catherinean era, there was certainly no guarantee that the moral dramas the family produced would conform to official expectations, or present roles that fit so comfortably within the empire’s existing social and political order.¹¹⁸

Catherine’s memoirs, written after the French Revolution, worked to circumvent a discourse that would have positioned her primary duty as one of domesticity and would have figured women as inappropriate for the role of the autocrat.

Catherine’s primary obligation, in her view, was not to love and obey her husband. She recalled thinking to herself as early as 1744 that she was “more or less indifferent” to Peter III, but “not to the crown of Russia.”¹¹⁹ Describing the days leading up to her wedding, Catherine wrote that she “grew more deeply melancholic” during this period. “My heart did not foresee great happiness; ambition alone sustained me. At the bottom of my soul I had something... that never for a single moment let me doubt that

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 31.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 24.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁹ Catherine II, *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, 13.

sooner or later I would succeed in becoming the sovereign Empress of Russia in my own right.”¹²⁰

Positive references to marriage for love are scarce in the memoir. On one occasion she remembered an acquaintance being married in 1753. According to Catherine, her friend “was very pleased about this, and I was too; they married for love.” Her joy, however, immediately gave way to moral judgment. “But the truth was that this virtuous woman, who had loved her husband so much, had conceived a passion for Prince Peter Repnin and a quite marked aversion for her husband.”¹²¹ For Catherine, marriage for love was unstable and represented a victory of passion over reason. The female subject’s duty, then, was not defined by her particular function in and relationship to the family; beings were to be judged according to their inner virtue, regardless of biological sex. Thus, despite Catherine’s insistence on her obedience to her husband, she summarized her thought process leading up to the coup of 1762 as follows: “To put it more clearly, it was a question of perishing with him, or by him, or else of saving myself, my children and perhaps the state from the disaster that all this Prince’s moral and physical faculties promised.”¹²²

As a woman, her civic duty is tied into a larger structure which includes the sphere of public authority as well as any domestic domain. The gendered division of the public from the private, one in which women’s legitimate power must remain circumscribed firmly within the private bounds of domesticity, was clearly not operative in Catherine’s memoirs, although they were entrenched in her political program from the beginning of her reign and throughout the 1780s. Her memoirs, written after the French

¹²⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹²¹ Ibid., 128.

¹²² Ibid., 183.

Revolution, mark an effort to defend a discourse of gender which allowed her to legitimize herself, and the one sex model is clearly dominant over the two sex model in the anecdotes of her memoirs.

Unintended Consequences: Gender and Literature among the Educated Elite

But Catherine's ambivalence regarding the discourse of the two sex model did not extend to the writers of the 1790s. Major literary figures of that decade, such as Alexander Radishchev (1749-1802) and Nikolai Karamzin (1766-1826), viewed feminine domesticity as natural and essential to the demands of any properly formed political program. These authors provide a particularly interesting point of contrast in light of the fact that they both published travelogues during the French Revolution: Radishchev's *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* (1790) and Karamzin's serialized *Letters of a Russian Traveller* (1791-1792). Yet as is well know, Radishchev was publicly condemned and sentenced to death, although his sentence was commuted, while Karamzin's *Letters* launched what would be remembered as an illustrious literary—and later, academic—career.¹²³

In order to understand the contours of the Russian civic life under Catherine's reign, we must examine the case of Radishchev and his public condemnation. What line, exactly, did Radishchev cross when he published *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*? Allen McConnell views Radishchev's "enthusiasm for popular revolutions in seventeenth-century Britain and contemporary America" as the cause of Catherine's harsh reaction.¹²⁴ During the French Revolution, Catherine also had Novikov arrested and imprisoned on account of his publications.¹²⁵ But Novikov had been directly engaged in a long-standing and somewhat confrontational debate with Catherine, and he seemed an

¹²³ The most authoritative biography of Radishchev remains Allen McConnell, *A Russian Philosophe: Alexander Radishchev, 1749-1802* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964). For an analysis of Karamzin's literary career, see Anthony Cross, *N.M. Karamzin: A Study of His Literary Career, 1783-1803* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971).

¹²⁴ McConnell, *A Russian Philosophe*, 89

¹²⁵ Jones, *Nikolay Novikov*, 206-215.

obvious scapegoat. Radishchev, on the other hand, was not especially well known, and he himself condemned the ongoing events in France, where “everyone... is talking about liberty, when license and anarchy have reached the utmost possible limits.”¹²⁶

Radishchev used the language of freedom in a way that undermined the reformist discourse of legitimacy that underlay Catherine’s reign; having no recourse to dynastic legitimacy, she took this threat very seriously.

In *Journey*, one of the narrator’s childhood friends declares that a “citizen,” regardless of social origins, “is and will always remain a man; and so long as he is a man, the law of nature, as an abundant wellspring of goodness, will never run dry in him, and whosoever dares wound him in his natural and inviolable rights is a criminal.”¹²⁷ For Radishchev, the subject’s morality could not be guided by the autocrat. Morality was an innate principle, and any deviation from it, even that sanctioned by the authority of the state, was a violation of nature. Expressing Radishchev’s view that serfdom was such a violation, the narrator asks:

What was the impelling force that caused men to establish a social order and voluntarily restrict their freedom of action? Reason will say, ‘Their own good’; the heart will say, ‘Their own good’; the incorruptible civil law will say, ‘Their own good.’ We live in a society which has already passed through many stages of progress; therefore we have forgotten its original condition. But consider all new nations... in a state of nature. First, they regard enslavement as a crime; second, they subject only criminals or the enemy to the yoke of slavery. If we keep these concepts in mind, we will realize how far we have strayed from the aim of society, how far removed we still are from the ideal of social happiness.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Alexander Radishchev, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, trans. Leo Wiener (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), 186.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 103

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 145-146.

Radishchev was as critical of social inequality in general as of serfdom, and in his view, any attempt to institutionalize social difference constituted a step away from nature and a perversion of it. But Radishchev was also writing firmly within the sentimentalist tradition, which helped to entrench the two sex model by imagining the figure of the woman as a symbol of purity and tender innocence. What is most interesting about *Journey* is that its call for a return to nature entailed a turn to gender roles that resembled those of the patriarchal conjugal family. This view of nature and gender redefined civilization—represented in particular by city life and urbane, elite men who corrupt the purity of women—as a repressive force that curtailed the blossoming of true feelings that nourished the individual’s development. In *Journey*, when the narrator meets a peasant girl, Anna, she is immediately suspicious of him, but he reassures her, “I’m not a scoundrel and do not mean to insult or dishonor you. I love women because they embody my ideal of tenderness.” Radishchev’s narrator continues, “but most of all I love village or peasant women, because they are innocent of hypocrisy, do not put on the mask of pretended love, and when they do love, love sincerely and with their whole hearts.”¹²⁹ When Anna tells the narrator that her suitor, whom she is prevented from marrying by his greedy landlord, is planning to travel to St. Petersburg to look for work, the narrator exclaims, “do not let him go, dear Anyutushka, do not let him go! He will be going to his ruin. There he will learn to drink, to waste his money, to eat dainties, despise farm work, and worst of all, he will stop loving you.”¹³⁰ Radishchev’s prescribed return to nature thus positions the purity of private rural life in opposition to the degradation of public urban life. The figure of the innocent woman is threatened by civilization itself, and this

¹²⁹ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 137. “Anyutushka” is a diminutive form of “Anna” and refers to the same character.

purity, compromised by the perversion of the natural order that is autocracy, must be defended. Already, the two sex model operates in the imaginary of nature. A proto-nationalist tone is also present here, as the lower classes of the country are clearly identified as having more “Russian” characteristics, as opposed to the effete nobility of the cities.

Nikolai Karamzin, another writer heavily influenced by the sentimentalist tradition, also demonstrated a strong attachment to the two sex model. His depiction of the dichotomy of nature and civilization, however, was much more amenable to the reformist discourse of legitimacy so coveted by Catherine. For Karamzin, the threat of nature overcoming civilization, leaving only a bestial, anarchic disorder, necessitated a strong civilizing hand on the part of the elite. Only through self-conscious force can the subject recreate the world in his image, which will allow him to triumph over the chaos of nature. Karamzin stressed the ability of experience to tame passion and organize the subject’s impressions of the world. In *Letters*, upon arriving in London, the traveler asks the reader: “What if I had arrived in England straight from Russia without... visiting Germany, Switzerland, France? I think that the picture of England would have made an even stronger impression on my feelings and would have been much more novel.”¹³¹ For Karamzin, controlling the strength of impressions is vital because, as Vladimir Bilenkin puts it, “only reason can conceive absolute totality, which nature cannot provide nor the imagination apprehend.”¹³² Whereas Radishchev’s *Journey* links the state of nature to authenticity in contrast to deceitful artifice, Karamzin’s *Letters* refer to the journey that

¹³¹ Nikolai Karamzin, *Letters of a Russian Traveller: A Translation, with an essay on Karamzin’s discourses of Enlightenment*, trans. Andrew Kahn (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003), 454.

¹³² Vladimir Bilenkin, “The Sublime Moment: *Velichestvennoe* in N.M. Karamzin’s Letters of a Russian Traveler,” *Slavic and East European Journal* 42, no. 4 (1998): 608.

preceded his arrival in London in order to suggest that his experience helps to control his passion. For Karamzin, in Schönle's words, "[t]he business of art is not to gesture at something that exceeds it."¹³³ Karamzin's opposition of reason to nature and his celebration of reason's triumph over nature had especially poignant ramifications in the Russian context, since the ability of the monarch to progressively reform society was the basis of legitimacy for the autocracy. As Whittaker points out, Russian thinkers of the eighteenth century "imagined monarchs fighting a constant battle between the forces of virtue (often, truth or reason) and passion."¹³⁴

Karamzin's insistence that mankind had the ability to triumph over the forces of nature became especially significant in his comparison of Peter I to Louis XIV. Contemplating a monument to the French king, he remarks that, "[h]is [Louis XIV's] subjects glorified Louis; Peter glorified his subjects... The former I respect as a strong king; the latter I esteem as a great man, a hero, a benefactor of mankind—and as my own personal benefactor." He describes the statue of Peter I in St. Petersburg, commissioned by Catherine and completed in 1782, and extols the rough stone base, "since this stone serves as a stirring image of the state Russia was in before the times of her transformer." Finally, he uses the humanity of Peter to glorify Catherine II. "No less pleasing to me is the short, powerful and allusive inscription: *Catherine the Second to Peter the First*. What is written on the monument of the French king I did not read." The torch of progress that was ignited by Peter I was thus passed by Karamzin to Catherine II. Peter, unlike Louis, is more man than king, but this status merits his comparison with a "radiant god of light" who "illuminated the deep darkness around himself," in contrast to Louis

¹³³ Andreas Schönle, *Authenticity and Fiction in the Russian Literary Journey, 1790-1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 67.

¹³⁴ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 151.

XIV, who only “partly facilitated the successes of the enlightenment.”¹³⁵ For Karamzin, autocracy was the safeguard of reason and temperance against the overwhelming force of passion, and it was the autocrat—specifically in the discourse of subjective equivalency—that ensured the continued beneficence of civilization.

It is with this in mind that the traveler offers a scathing portrait of English society during his trip to London. Describing a member of parliament, he addresses the reader directly:

You, my friends, are acquainted with the history of this man, who for several years played a famous role in England; he was the terrible opponent to the ministry—to parliament itself—and the idol of the people. But notwithstanding his pretensions to patriotism, he thought solely about his personal gains and behaved like a scourge only in order to receive a lucrative position...¹³⁶

Karamzin’s view of nature was used to dismiss the political system of England, based on constitutional monarchy, as a threat to civic virtue. For him, the threat of untamed nature overcoming civilization necessitates protection by the strong hand of the enlightened autocrat.

Karamzin saw in England the result of the lack of restraints on the passions that were unleashed by the predominance of market forces. In the same letter, entitled “Parliamentary Elections,” the traveler goes on to describe almost total social disorder in England, in which “a person will never be imprisoned on the suspicion that he is a thief; it is necessary to catch him in the act and to provide witnesses; otherwise you are in for trouble if you should bring an accusation against him without unassailable legal

¹³⁵ Karamzin, 232-233.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 418.

proof.”¹³⁷ He also condemns the excesses of the French Revolution, exclaiming that “[o]nce people have become convinced that virtue is necessary for their own personal happiness, then the Golden Age will begin, and man will enjoy the peaceful benefaction of life under every government.” Only through discipline and careful taming of the passions could society progress. Finally, the traveler invokes the divine order that inscribed autocracy: “Let us give ourselves and entrust ourselves, my friends, to the power of providence, whose plan is determined, and who holds in his hand the hearts of rulers—and that is enough.”¹³⁸

For Karamzin, the goal for Russia was not to become more like western Europe, although both Russians and western Europeans shared an attachment to the notions of progress and to the importance of establishing social order in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Russians like Karamzin saw in the autocracy a promise of progressive change without the threat of social degeneration (as described in England) or a complete breakdown of social order (as described in France). For Karamzin, civic life in Russia needed to be defended from the forces of self-interest associated with the market. As Kahn points out, by “privileging the patriarchal and emphasising uxorious subordination,” Karamzin “makes a plea for a new dynamic” against the notion that “new hierarchies in the commercial sphere [must] correspond to analogous domestic hierarchies.” In Karamzin’s view, healthy civic life depends on “sociability, as practiced and regulated in close familial relations honed by an intelligent spouse,” and his observations of western European civic life revealed to him a dangerous inattention to the

¹³⁷ Ibid., 420-421.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 265.

institution of the family. As Kahn describes it, Karamzin viewed the family as “corrective and inter-dependent part” of a properly functioning public.¹³⁹

The patriarchal conjugal family was central to Karamzin’s view of the importance of civilization. For him, the family was the setting for moral and civic cultivation, and he contrasted the morality cultivated by the family to the arbitrary forces of the market in western Europe. He shared with Radishchev a fear of the perversion of nature by civilization, and the events in France became for Karamzin a vivid example of that perversion. Thus, Karamzin “forges an association between the family and nature” in order to undercut the notion, already gaining ground in western Europe, that “the rise of the bourgeois economic model... enhances in parallel the world of the family, giving importance to individual relations within an economic and social unit that is further reinforced by emotional and kinship bonds.” The vice and social degeneration that was visible in the urban areas of western Europe could be combated only by the social structure of the family, for “[r]egulation by the public sphere of sexuality protects the private world of the family, the natural locus of affections” from “the spread of depravity.”¹⁴⁰ This is why Karamzin was so insistent about the domestic role of women, who must hold the family together. As he wrote in letter 150, “Domestic Life”:

I have always thought that the furthest successes of Enlightenment should bind people more to domestic life. Is it not spiritual emptiness that attracts us to dissipation? The first business of true philosophy is to turn a man to the unchanging pleasures of nature. When the head and heart are occupied at home in a pleasant manner; where there is a book in hand, a sweet wife nearby, beautiful children around, would one wish to go to a ball, or to a large dinner?¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Kahn, 512-513.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 511-512.

¹⁴¹ Karamzin., 429.

Women, however, were prevented from reaching this domestic bliss by an aristocratic public that lacks innocence, purity, and honesty. “First the young wife wishes simply to have the general regard for her beauty or gracefulness in order to justify the husband’s choice (so she thinks); but then a desire is born in her to please one connoisseur more than another... to intrigue, to attract, to give hope.” This leads to disastrous effects, “and then—Poor husband! Poor children!” Nevertheless, it is “[s]he herself” who “is unhappiest of all.” The misplaced faith in self-interest in the socio-economic structure of western Europe is not only a threat to autocracy; it is a threat to the family itself. “I am speaking about women,” Karamzin writes,

because it is more pleasant to my heart to be occupied with them...but most of the blame, without any doubt, is on the side of men, who are unable to use their morals for mutual happiness and prefer to be obnoxious slaves rather than intelligent, polite and charming masters of the tender sex that was created to charm and not to rule (for strength has no need for charm).¹⁴²

Catherine’s approbation of a gendered division of domestic and public life was thus a reflection of this emerging discourse of feminine domesticity. Radishchev himself made no explicit claims regarding the inability of women to rule, although Karamzin did. The latter’s understanding of the relationship between nature and civilization promoted autocracy as a desirable political model. In any case, the enlightened character of the autocracy and the sovereign was not up for debate, but Catherine was willing to engage on the issue of gender, re-asserting a flexible representation of sex against the increasingly rigid discourse that had taken hold of figures like Radishchev and Karamzin. Catherine’s memoirs can be understood as an attempt to assert her role as

¹⁴² Ibid., 429.

autocrat, outside of the bounds of domesticity, and to defend her right to rule as a woman in a time when public debates increasingly brought into question women's ability to do so.

Radishchev envisioned that through reason and "mutual feeling" mankind could return to a "natural" state of universal brotherhood. For him, the autocracy represented a distortion of nature that was aligned with the darkness and superstition condemned by Enlightenment thinkers. Karamzin, on the other hand, saw political stability and social order as entirely contingent on civilization's ability to fend off the powerful forces of nature. For him, creating a reading public would help tame the passions of uncultivated human nature, as literature was to lead the reading subject toward an appreciation of beauty that would nevertheless be contained within the bounds of reason. Karamzin's views thus fell in line with those of Catherine, whose reforms were aimed, in part, at the expansion of the reading public. Radishchev's crime was not criticizing serfdom; it was questioning the cosmology and philosophy of history that supported the image of the reforming tsar as the center of progress and authority. With *Journey*, Radishchev transgressed the boundary of the Russian public sphere, and this was the source of his condemnation.

Catherine's public condemnation of Radishchev is often seen as evidence of the lack of a "public sphere" in the Russian context. He was initially sentenced to death, and he was stripped of his status as a nobleman. But Catherine took heed of the limitations imposed on her by the law, and changed his sentence to ten years of exile labor in Siberia. Catherine's legitimacy was too dependent on her image as a reforming tsar, and ultimately, she had to reckon with the ban on corporal punishment established by her

Charter to the Nobility in 1785. Radishchev was made to appear publically in chains, “a mark of humiliation,” and was kept in his fetters throughout his journey to Siberia.¹⁴³ Indeed, this would seem to represent an intervention by an autocrat into the world of letters, and it is a sure breach of any principle of subjective equivalency. Nevertheless, attention to how constructions of gender in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Russian Empire shaped the reading public demonstrates the extent to which the exchange of ideas and the shaping of opinions were no less dynamic than they were in western Europe, at least by the time of Catherine’s reforms. Exploring not only the social but also the political implications of the dominance of the two sex model shows the inadequacy of an approach that is attentive only to the relationship between the autocrat and her subjects.

Karamzin and Radishchev shared something important: the patriarchal conjugal family was for both of them a relationship inscribed in nature. The discourse of incommensurable sexual difference had so taken hold by the 1790s that two thinkers with diametrically opposed views of the proper relationship between civilization and nature both located the patriarchal conjugal family squarely in the realm of the natural. No matter how fiercely Catherine attempted to reassert the viability of the one sex model in her self-representation, incommensurable difference had taken hold to the point that her androgynous presentation on the basis of the one sex model could no longer work to establish her reformist legitimacy. The Russian Empire would never again have a woman as sovereign.

¹⁴³ Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia’s Illiberal Path* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 39.

Civic life in the Russian Empire evolved differently from that in western Europe. Catherine retained the authority of the sovereign to intervene and repress opinion. Nevertheless, through active dissemination of literary exchanges certain kinds of consensus views developed over which Catherine had no control, particularly with regard to gender and the family. The emergence of these consensus views on gender demonstrates the effective existence of a public sphere in this period. This is because these views, which developed in the Russian context in connection with ongoing discussions over the nature of publicity and privateness, came to be disseminated in a way that was largely due to the educated elite's own activities. Further, demonstrating their power over political authority, these consensus views on gender and family, based on the two sex model, came back to discredit Catherine and her legacy by infusing the discourses of legitimacy after her reign with constructions of gender that made domesticity the only conceivable role for women.

Monarchy after Catherine II

Upon Catherine's death in 1796, her son came to power as Paul I. During Catherine's reign, Paul had been closely associated with Nikita Panin, a figure who was involved in Catherine's coup in 1762 and whose extensive network of loyal supporters formed something of an opposition to Catherine's political program during the 1780s. Paul and Panin also shared close ties to the Freemasons, who excluded women from their membership. Throughout Catherine's reign, both were implicated in attempts to make use of connections with elites in western and northern Europe in order to undermine Catherine's power at home.¹⁴⁴ Many major literary figures, including Nikolai Karamzin and Nikolai Novikov, also shared close ties—if not membership—with the Freemasons, and it is clear that this political tie to oppositional figures such as Panin was part of Catherine's sometimes hostile relationship with Masonic writers, including her condemnation of Novikov.¹⁴⁵

Paul's accession represented a re-eruption of the discourse of dynastic legitimacy in the Russian Empire. He was the son of Catherine, but more significantly, Paul was the great-grandson of Peter I and the son of Peter III. His accession was initially greeted with a positive reception on the part of the nobility, who had been displeased with Catherine's increasingly reactionary politics after the beheading of Louis XVI. For the elite, Paul represented "Masonic ideals of political morality," and whereas Catherine's attitude in the 1790s had been seen as unpredictable and capricious, Paul's self-representation as masculine and decisive boded well. Not only in his rhetoric, but legally,

¹⁴⁴ David L. Ransel, *The Politics of Catherinian Russia: The Panin Party* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 255.

¹⁴⁵ K.A. Papmehl, "The Empress and 'Un Fanatique': A Review of the Circumstances Leading to the Government Action Against Novikov in 1792," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 68, no. 4 (1990): 665.

he reconstituted autocratic legitimacy as dynastic in his new succession law, which reestablished primogeniture for the throne for the first time since the reign of Peter I, with preference for male over female heirs.¹⁴⁶ His relationship with the nobility eventually soured however, as the latter came to dislike his authoritarian rhetoric and his dismissal of their role in the legitimization of the monarch's power; his succession law was also designed to prevent an intervention on the part of the elite in the accession of a hereditary heir.¹⁴⁷

A coup in 1801 brought to power Paul's son—and Catherine's grandson—Alexander I. Paul had come to be seen as a tyrant, whom the nobility “felt obliged to stop” according to their notions of duty to the state and to society.¹⁴⁸ Alexander's reign entailed a rejection of the authoritarian representation of monarchy espoused by Paul, but nevertheless it was not a return to the discourse of monarchy promoted by Catherine. When Alexander issued an accession manifesto on the first day of his reign, it “did not emphasize the break with the previous reign. Indeed, responsibility for the death was assigned to the ‘Divine Fates’ that had brought an end to his father's life ‘suddenly with an apoplectic stroke.’ The new emperor proclaimed that he was ascending the throne by heredity.”¹⁴⁹ With this continued deployment of the discourse of dynastic legitimacy, certain aspects of the representation of monarchy that came into being under Paul were retained by Alexander, particularly regarding gender and the family.

The new emphasis on primogeniture as the basis of legitimacy under Paul also reconstituted the representation of monarchy on the basis of the two sex model. In the

¹⁴⁶ Russel E. Martin, “‘For the Firm Maintenance of the Dignity and Tranquility of the Imperial Family’: Law and Familial Order in the Romanov Dynasty,” *Russian History* 37, no. 4 (2010): 395.

¹⁴⁷ Whittaker, *Russian Monarchy*, 181-182.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁴⁹ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 194.

public institutions created under Catherine, her son Paul and her grandson Alexander had been educated in a way that “had impressed them with their obligation to act as men, following the examples of the great leaders of history.”¹⁵⁰ When Paul came to power in 1796, the “imperial family,” suddenly alive with symbolic power, “attended a ceremony of disinterment of Peter III,” where “Paul staged the posthumous coronation of Peter III by placing the imperial crown on his dead father’s casket. Then the imperial family returned to the Winter Palace,” where they “lifted Catherine’s corpse” and “conferred [a] small crown on the head of Catherine, the same crown that Peter the Great had placed on the head of Catherine I.”¹⁵¹ The androgynous image so carefully cultivated by Catherine the Great, in which she could represent simultaneously her masculinity and femininity, was thus ritually effaced immediately upon her death. The program of reform pursued by Catherine, one which emphasized the family as the basis of society and which strove to cultivate domestic virtue in women, overpowered her self-representation as an androgynous, competent ruler.

The legacy of Catherine’s gender representation would continue to act as a negative model of gender transgression for future generations of Russians. As Wortman shows, Empresses of the nineteenth century, in Russia and elsewhere, “became symbols of royalty’s adoption of the familial values of the middle class.” In the nineteenth century, where the image of the imperial family became so intertwined with monarchical legitimacy, Catherine’s consistent recourse to a one sex model in her public legitimization came to represent a threat to the moral cultivation of the body politic.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 169.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁵² Richard Wortman, “The Russian Empress as Mother,” in David Ransel, ed., *The Family in Imperial Russia: New Lines of Historical Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 60-61.

Indeed, Catherine became of symbol of gender transgression throughout Europe, and was immortalized as the inspiration of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* in 1870, where the "specifically Slavic fantasy" of "the personification of voluptuous cruelty" took its inspiration from the eighteenth-century empress.¹⁵³

The "imperial family," from Paul's time forward, became central to the representation of power in Russian Monarchy. This process entailed a transition whereby the empress was conceived not "as a political rival," but as "a helpful member of the imperial family."¹⁵⁴ In contrast to Catherine, who took care to keep her son and grandson apart lest they form a political alliance against her, Paul mandated frequent gatherings where the entire imperial family was presented to an audience. Birthdays and name days of members of the imperial family were publically celebrated as "imperial days," and the highly formal etiquette of these functions was "devised by the empress," Paul's wife.¹⁵⁵

The centrality of the family in representations of the monarchy extended into the reign of Alexander I, and went hand in hand with an increased valorization of the family. The writer Sergei Glinka (1774-1847), who operated the periodical *Russian Messenger* from 1808 until 1812, understood women "as an important barometer of society's health," and the extent to which their "domestic, familial" virtues were cultivated determined the extent to which the body politic was functioning properly. He viewed the "modest, nurturing," and "maternal" qualities of women as the primary barrier against the

¹⁵³ Larry Wolff, "My Most Cherished Fantasy," introduction to Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, trans. by Johann Neugroschel (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), ix-x.

¹⁵⁴ Wortman, "The Russian Empress as Mother," 62.

¹⁵⁵ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 188.

dangers of “fashion” and “passions,” and saw the disintegration of the family in revolutionary France as the cause of the country’s descent “into barbarism.”¹⁵⁶

To sum up, monarchy after Catherine’s death tended to include the image of the imperial family in its representations of legitimacy. This was due in part to the institutions of civic life fostered by Catherine, but was also a result of the public discussions regarding civic virtue and moral cultivation that had become widespread among the elite. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the notion of feminine domesticity had permeated the representation of the court, and future empresses would represent that domesticity to the public. Indeed, feminine domesticity came to be identified as a national characteristic, and appeals to that domesticity were deployed by Russian thinkers to differentiate themselves from those of western Europe.

¹⁵⁶ Alexander Martin, “The Family Model of Society and Russian National Identity in Sergei N. Glinka’s Russian Messenger,” *Slavic Review* 57, no. 1 (1998): 39.

Some Perspectives on Feminine Domesticity

Many noble women had also come to understand their social role as primarily domestic and maternal by the time of Alexander's reign. The ideals of femininity extolled by figures like Radishchev and Karamzin had been largely adopted by the nobility, who began to see the family as the source of a distinctly Russian moral principle. The memoirs of Anna Labzina, for example, documented her internal struggles over her relationship with her husband, a lecherous and impious man. She viewed obedience to her husband as her domestic duty, while at the same time insisting that "no one can force love."¹⁵⁷ Nevertheless, she recorded heeding her mother's advice to "[l]ove your husband with a pure and fervent love, obey him in everything; you will not be submitting to him but to God, for God has given him to you and made him your master."¹⁵⁸ Her memoirs reveal the extent to which the valorization of women's domesticity had been adopted by a relatively unknown, provincial noblewoman. The text, written around 1810, but documenting events during Catherine's reign in the 1770s and 1780s, reflects the shifting cultural construction of domesticity, femininity, and the family after Catherine's death.

Born in 1756 near Ekaterinburg, she married twice, but her memoirs document only her first marriage to Alexander Karamyshev, a well-educated nobleman who worked for the College of Mines.¹⁵⁹ She was a member of the middling nobility; her family was of relatively modest means, and they did not enjoy especially close ties to the court. Her

¹⁵⁷ Anna Labzina, *Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memories of Anna Labzina 1758-1821*, ed. Gary Marker and Rachel May (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 46.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁵⁹ Gary Marker and Rachel May, "The Memoires of Anna Labzina: An Introduction," in *Days of a Russian Noblewoman: The Memoires of Anna Labzina, 1758-1821*, trans. by Gary Marker and Rachel May (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), vii-viii.

memoirs reflect strong tension between her domestic duty to obey her husband and her belief in marriage as consensual union between man and woman. She believed that love should be authentic, yet marriage seemed to have given love's authenticity a different meaning. She claimed that although she was not naturally inclined to love her first husband, she put forward her best effort to gain his love, which resulted in his beginning "to behave better and more affectionately toward me." On her part, Labzina asserted that she too "started to love him."¹⁶⁰

As an obedient wife, her happiness was increasingly identified with the family's domicile. After having settled into a new home, Labzina was ecstatic to see that her husband had built a new garden outside of their house, writing, "I began to thank my husband and was so joyful at this unexpected event that I didn't believe it myself: was I dreaming?" Her excitement was also driven by display of their domestic tranquility, and she related with glee that "the people walking by all stopped and looked at it with amazement."¹⁶¹

She also exhibited a kind of authority within the home, and the bedroom that she shared with her husband was represented as a private space. When one of her husband's friends—a superior by social status—inappropriately approached her in her bedchamber, she asked him, "have you forgotten where you are? How dare you come in here, where no one is allowed but my husband and me!" She was also perturbed that she could be implicated in morally questionable activities, telling her husband's friend, Nartov, that although he had corrupted her husband, "you may not show disrespect to me!" Nartov was indignant, and demanded that Karamyshev reprimand his wife. Labzina's position in

¹⁶⁰ Labzina, 49.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 72-73.

the house, however, endowed her with domestic authority, and she fired back, “I know very well with whom I am speaking. We have a higher authority to whom I can turn, who is also superior to you!” The superior authority here refers, of course, to God, but was also, apparently, meant literally. In the following passages she successfully petitioned Prince Potemkin in order to avoid any wrath from Nartov.¹⁶² Her appeal to domestic authority was also tied to a belief that women had an innate understanding of morality that was specifically feminine. Her husband was annoyed by her moralistic reprimands against his sexual activities, and she described him telling her that “it was those stupid women who raised you who gave you these ideas, and your head is filled with every kind of nonsense.” Labzina replied indignantly to him, saying “[y]ou say that the stupid women who raised me taught me this stupidity. So be it! May the Lord help me carry out all their lessons.”¹⁶³

By 1810, when Labzina wrote her memoir, this association between women and an innate understanding of morality had begun to be identified with the Russian national character, and the notion of feminine domesticity was deployed in order to differentiate Russia from western nations. Sergei Glinka’s *Russian Messenger*, published during the period when Labzina wrote her memoirs, reimagined the pre-Petrine period as a time of domestic bliss in which “tsars, nobles, peasants, young people and women had all understood their duties to one another and to God.”¹⁶⁴ He admonished aristocratic women who failed to breastfeed their children, claiming that this was a symptom of “subservience to ‘fashion’ and ‘passions,’” and believed that maintaining a domestic role

¹⁶² Ibid., 75-77.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 106-107.

¹⁶⁴ Martin, “The Family Model of Society and Russian National Identity in Sergei N. Glinka’s *Russian Messenger* (1808-1812),” 40.

for women would lead to the cultivation of virtue in the Russian Empire.¹⁶⁵ In Glinka's view, the influence of the French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century were to blame for this moral degeneration in the Russian Empire, even as the values that he prescribed "sound suspiciously like the values advocated by Enlightenment thinkers."¹⁶⁶ The valorization of domesticity was, for Glinka, the key to combating unwanted foreign influence.

Labzina seemed to share this suspicion of foreign culture as a threat to the virtues of domesticity when she alluded to a new kind of book that had begun to circulate, and that threatened to corrupt and demoralize. She noted that up until a certain time "I had never had the misfortune of reading a novel (*roman*), and I didn't even know the word."¹⁶⁷ A well connected superior of her husband, and a mentor figure to Labzina, once warned her to "[b]eware of reading novels. They will not do you any good and they can bring you harm."¹⁶⁸ This admission of her lack of interest in novels can be understood in relation to her self-conscious rejection of the western-style courts of Russian monarchs, where "the animating myth of Russian monarch from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth centuries associated the ruler and the elite with foreign images of political power."¹⁶⁹ Her resistance to the novel takes on a native, anti-foreign quality. The domestic function of the family was no longer viewed as a foreign import on which subjects of the Russian Empire felt compelled to model themselves. On the contrary, Labzina's role as a woman *safeguarded* the authentic, virtuous Russian character from a corrupting, foreign influence.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 33.

¹⁶⁷ Labzina, 52.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁶⁹ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 5.

Glinka's primary reason for defending the institution of the family had to do with his conception of a social order based on a united and organic society. He attributed the alienation of the noble estate from the peasantry to moral degeneration. The *Russian Messenger*, therefore, aimed "to speak to all strata of society."¹⁷⁰ For Glinka, "the only good society was one governed by kind, humane individuals, not one ruled by impersonal laws or institutions."¹⁷¹ In the absence of a discourse of social difference that viewed the elite as innately and naturally superior, the moral cultivation of the family was necessary in order to bring society into an organic unity, where the nobility would act as a moral example for the lower classes. This is why, although Glinka refused to own serfs, he never questioned the viability of the autocracy as the best form of government for the Russian Empire. With the proper moral cultivation and with the inclusion of the cultivation of domestic virtue, the Russian Empire would prosper where western Europe had descended into chaos.

It is important to note here that Labzina's memoirs were meant as an instruction. Thus, Labzina's depiction of herself as a passionless, virginal being—in contrast to her lecherous husband—fits squarely into the framework of the two sex model that defined the private counterpart to the bourgeois public sphere of Russia's western neighbors. Indeed, her passionlessness was morally good. Recalling her time visiting an estate, Labzina remembered, "how contented my heart was then! My conscience did not reproach me for anything. Even my thoughts were pure, and my husband's shameful transgressions against me affected me less. It made me joyful to know that he could not

¹⁷⁰ Martin, "The Family Model of Society and Russian National Identity in Sergei N. Glinka's *Russian Messenger* (1808-1812)," 47.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

reproach me for anything.”¹⁷² The memoir then ended with an explosive monologue in which she declared that she would leave her husband because of his indiscretions. “My main fault,” she wrote, “has been that I have put up with everything... And after all of this he says he loves me! I find this kind of love incomprehensible. At least I do not know how to love in this way!”¹⁷³ Although she does seem to have extended her identity beyond that of the good wife who is ultimately only obedient to her husband, her memoirs as a whole portrayed her view of domesticity as the primary point of interest in her life. If the events depicted in this text had seemed to Labzina entirely trivial and unsuited for a reading public, it seems odd that she should have taken the time to write them, particularly considering the almost complete absence of memoirs in Russia written by women.¹⁷⁴ Given her ascetic tendencies, it is doubtful that she conceived of her reading and writing as an act of “conspicuous consumption,” as Habermas describes pre-modern literary exchange based on patronage networks.¹⁷⁵ Indeed, Marker and May claim that “by the time she wrote the memoir she clearly saw her story as an important moral lesson for others.”¹⁷⁶ It was this sort of moral example, that of a feminine privateness, that in Glinka’s view would offer the reading public an opportunity for moral and civic cultivation in the body politic.

Andreas Schönle argues that the literary and intellectual production of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries bore witness to what he has called “the scare of the self,” in which the notion of the private self never fully

¹⁷² Labzina, 94.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁷⁴ Marker and May, xii-xiii. Only one autobiographical text would have been available to Labzina, that of Nataliia Dolgorukaia, from 1767.

¹⁷⁵ Habermas, 38.

¹⁷⁶ Marker and May, xvii.

developed, leaving the civic life of the Russian Empire distinct from that of western European states in its lack of regard for individual rights, such as security of property and person. According to Schönle, the strict prescriptive norms of social etiquette and the constant self-policing of fashion and affect “tended... to obliterate whatever sense of private self could unify the personality.”¹⁷⁷ Focusing on sentimentalist travelogues—like those of Radishchev and Karamzin, he posits that the political imaginary was “swept by a dream of communalism” where the “community is no longer an organism that fosters the emergence of individual talents and aspirations but one that levels velleities of singularity. Along with the sense of individual selfhood goes the need for privacy.”¹⁷⁸

As Schönle quite aptly points out, no legal safeguards for property, the basis of the private sphere’s interest in the public, emerged in the Russian Empire.¹⁷⁹ Yet as we have seen, figures like Karamzin and Radishchev viewed the family itself as a safeguard against and excessive valorization of privateness, which opens the door to self-interest. As an analysis of gender in the Russian Empire shows, the call for an “informal collective” does not necessarily preclude a sense of domestic privacy. Historians of western Europe often argue that the arbitrary power invested in the autocrat of the Russian Empire hampered the proper functioning of the public sphere. But many eighteenth-century Russian voices such as those of Karamzin and Catherine believed that only autocratic power, subjugated to education and reason, could correct the arbitrary power of market forces, which, if left unchecked, risked causing social and cultural degeneration.

¹⁷⁷ Schönle, “The Scare of the Self,” 730.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 740.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 728.

Schönle references Denis Fonvizin's play *The Minor* (1782), in order to argue that "the nobility's right to privacy against encroachments by the state collided with the right of individuals or groups to be protected against invasions of their private spheres by representatives of the nobility." Yet, as he also points out, the entire play revolves around the state intervening in a situation where a young woman demands to exercise her right to honest love. "Sofiia," the young woman, "sees her privacy, notably her freedom to choose her own husband, endangered by Mrs. Prostakova, who wants to force Sofiia to marry her son. To uphold her privacy, Sofiia needs and ultimately receives help from the state in the guise of Pravdin, who is dispatched by a state commission to confiscate Mrs. Prostakova's estate."¹⁸⁰ Yet this valorization of the family points precisely to the indigenous character of the Russian public sphere. In the words of Kahn, for example, Karamzin's position "reverses a conclusion of Habermas." For Kahn, Karamzin's text works to argue "that the natural economy of the affections as embodied in familial relations should be the paradigm for social interaction," which clearly complicates Habermas's claim that the patriarchal conjugal family arose as a response to the new horizontal economic dependencies of the emerging market economy.¹⁸¹ Fonvizin's play demonstrates the important role of the family in regards to the public sphere for thinkers of this period; as the source of domesticity and civic virtue, the state had to intervene to safeguard society against passion and self-interest.

In the Russian Empire, one of the effects of the Napoleonic Wars, which ended in 1815, was a further entrenchment of the ideals of domesticity among the Russian elites and across class boundaries. In order to maintain loyalty and raise morale among soldiers

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 729.

¹⁸¹ Kahn, 512-513.

and officers in the war, Alexander I was compelled to call “on the principle of popular sovereignty... to rally national feeling against Napoleon’s forces.” The bourgeois ideals of honesty, transparency and modesty increasingly worked their way into representations of monarchy, and “an affection of simplicity and equality replaced resplendent majesty as a royal ideal.” Such ideals were no longer conceived as innate in rulers, but as cultivated virtues which would be copied from the example of the monarch. According to Wortman, these virtues were “demonstrated in the monarch’s private life, and particularly in the realm of the family,” further drawing on the dynastic discourse of legitimacy to shore up the example of moral virtue from above.¹⁸²

As Labzina’s memoirs show, a sense of “self” was clearly operative at the level of gender identity, and her understanding of her own role in society was very much defined by her status as a woman: domestic, moral, and passionless. The extent to which the valorization of domesticity had permeated the Russian Empire by the reign of Alexander I is demonstrated in the memoirs of Nadezhda Durova (1783-1866), who disguised herself as a man in order to fight in the Napoleonic Wars. The memoirs detail Durova’s transgression of prescribed gender roles. Durova came from the provincial nobility in the Smolensk region.¹⁸³ Although her family ran an estate, the Durovs were rather insignificant in the political sphere. This was typical for much of the nobility during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. According to Madariaga, “the provincial nobility lived perhaps in a little ‘nest’ or group of houses in a village of which they each owned a small share... [T]heir dwellings were often little more than wooden huts, with

¹⁸² Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 249.

¹⁸³ B.V. Smirenskii III, “Nadezhda Durova,” introduction to *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, ed. T. Zhuravlev (Kazan: Tatarskoe Knizhnoe Izdatel’stvo, 1966), iii.

two low dark rooms; walls and ceilings had no form of decoration other than... icons.”¹⁸⁴

Her family had financial troubles, and her father remarked that if she had been born a boy, “I shouldn’t have to worry about my old days; he would be my staff in the evening of my days.”¹⁸⁵ She began an unhappy marriage at the age of sixteen, and ran away from home without the permission of her husband at the age of twenty three in order to join the military.

The text of *Cavalry Maiden* was completed in 1836.¹⁸⁶ It documents her experiences—some of which are verifiable—fighting in campaigns against Napoleon in Prussia, Lithuania and in European Russia. It also includes unverifiable anecdotes and stories that she heard along the way, one of which will be discussed later, and which were probably subject to literary embellishment if they had any basis in fact at all. In 1836, Durova had her manuscript sent to Alexander Pushkin through a family member.¹⁸⁷ It seems that she sent it not out of an expectation that it would be published, but rather out of a hope that Pushkin would use the material to create “something quite entertaining for our countrywomen [to read].”¹⁸⁸ To her surprise, Pushkin offered to publish the manuscript at his own expense. In a letter to Durova’s uncle, Pushkin expressed his confidence that “the *Notes* in their entirety will likely meet with success after I announce (*potrubliu*) them in my journal,” for he found the writing to be “delightful, lively, original, [and] its style beautiful. Its success is without doubt.”¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁴ Madariaga, 81.

¹⁸⁵ Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden: Journals of a Russian Officer in the Napoleonic Wars*, trans. Mary Fleming Zirin (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 8.

¹⁸⁶ Mary Fleming Zirin, “Nadezhda Durova, Russia’s ‘Cavalry Maiden,’” introduction to Nadezhda Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden*, xviii.

¹⁸⁷ A.S. Pushkin to V.A. Durov, 17 and 27 March, 1836, in Durova, *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, 181.

¹⁸⁸ N.A. Durova to A.C. Pushkin, 5 August, 1835, in Durova, *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, 178.

¹⁸⁹ A.S. Pushkin to V.A. Durov, 17 and 27 March, 1836, in Durova, *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, 181-182.

Durova was flattered by Pushkin's praise of her work, but she voiced concern over his plan to publish the *Notes* under her birth name, Nadezhda Durova. She was hoping that the manuscript would be published anonymously so that it would not be publicly known that she was a woman, or that she was personally connected to the story, claiming that "the public (*publika*) doesn't know anything [about the *Notes*]." Referring to Pushkin by his patronymic, she wrote that "[t]he name by which you called me, gracious sir Alexander Sergeevich, in your forward, makes me uneasy. Is there not some way to alleviate this sorrow?" Instead of her name, she asked that the *Notes* be published as those "of a Russian Amazon, known under the name of Alexandrov."¹⁹⁰ But Pushkin was insistent, and urged her to "be brave—enter the literary vocation as valiantly as you did the [military] one that brought you fame."¹⁹¹

What is most striking about these letters is the fact that both Durova and Pushkin continually used masculine proper names, adjectival forms and pronouns in reference to Durova, despite the fact that Pushkin was aware of her biological sex. Pushkin always addressed Durova as "Alexander Alexandrov" in correspondence about her work, which frankly discussed her adoption of a male identity when she left to join the military. Pushkin's only references to Durova's legal name were made in regard to attribution of authorship upon publication. The *Notes* themselves consistently evoked tension between masculine and feminine pronouns and their qualifiers. Durova, as narrator, used only feminine adjectives in reference to herself, except where she related direct quotes or dialogue with others, in which case she referred to herself using masculine forms, as she would have in real life.

¹⁹⁰ N.A. Durova to A.S. Pushkin, 7 June, 1836, in Durova, *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, 182.

¹⁹¹ A.S. Pushkin to N.A. Durova, c. 10 June, 1836, in Durova, *Zapiski Kavalerist-Devitsy*, 183.

Recounting the first time she returned from the army to visit her father, Durova wrote that the servants at her family home were confused by her use of masculine forms in reference to herself. The servant kept calling Durova “miss,” according to *Notes*, and then as an aside to herself the servant interjected, “[m]aybe you shouldn’t call her ‘miss’ anymore. Well, it’ll take a while to get used to.” A moment later, the servant asked Durova, “But what do they call you now, miss? I can hear that you don’t talk the way you used to.” Durova responded, “[c]all me just what every one else does,” prompting the servant’s flustered reply, “[b]ut what are the others going to call you, ma’am—sir! Excuse me...” The servant used the formal second person pronoun, *vy*, the standard, and non-gender specific form for addressing a superior, which allowed the servant to not choose the gender by which she referred to Durova in direct conversations. Her father continued to refer to her using feminine forms, but her younger brother, by Durova’s account, was unsure of how to respond to the situation: “He had spent a long time conferring with Nanny about the proper way to greet me: should he just bow or kiss my hand? When Nanny told him he should do whatever he wished, he came running at once and threw himself into my arms.”¹⁹²

Durova’s rejection of a femininity that would have circumscribed her role as entirely domestic does not take the form of Catherine’s, who was able to represent herself as androgynous and who could deploy both masculine and feminine characteristics in her self-representation. Durova, by contrast, was obligated to choose between two poles of incommensurable difference. On the one hand, she operated socially as a man, and this masculine position was maintained in society even by those who knew of her biological sex. This is in contrast to Catherine, who was referred to by feminine pronouns. On the

¹⁹² Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden*, 80-81.

other hand, it was always known, and it was a source of discomfort for those who knew, that Durova was a woman beneath her masculine presentation. These anxieties produced by the discrepancy between Durova's sex and gender would not have been possible up until the rise of the two sex model in the eighteenth century. As Laqueur demonstrates, no distinction between social gender and biological sex was imaginable under the one sex model, since the body itself was a representation of status, not defined by its difference from the other sex. This novel demarcation of biological sex from social gender went hand in hand with new political representations that arose with literary discourses promoting the patriarchal conjugal family. The notion of incommensurable biological difference was also a precondition for the new cultural and political significance of love, which redefined the family by positing that the union of man and wife must be uncoerced and consensual. As Laqueur points out, claims of the political, social and cultural significance of love are "immediately met by the counterargument that someone has to be in charge of the family and that someone is the male, because of his 'greater force of mind and body.'"¹⁹³ Durova could earn a masculine social position through her literary adeptness, her courage on the battlefield and her self-presentation as a masculine subject, but for those who knew of her biological sex, culturally defined gender could never override nature.

The notion of marriage for love, with its myriad political implications under the two sex model, was a consistent theme in Durova's memoirs. Interestingly, the narrative in the *Notes* does not directly reflect the biographical facts of her childhood. She failed to include any description of her marriage at the age of sixteen, or the child that she gave birth to during those years. Durova's narrative inaccurately states that she ran away from

¹⁹³ Laqueur, 194.

home at age sixteen, the year that she was married, rather than at the age of twenty three, the year that she left her husband to join the army. According to Mary Zirin, Durova in her presentation as a man consistently lopped “seven years off her own age, her mother’s and even that of her faithful steed Alcides.”¹⁹⁴ Durova thus went to great lengths to erase the part of her life where she took on the prescribed social position of a woman in the patriarchal conjugal family.

Durova made repeated references to marriage for love in her memoirs. The passages about her early youth, “My Childhood Years,” positioned the consensual love between her parents in opposition to the compulsion to marry against one’s will that was typical of previous generations, identified with an archaic and tyrannical past. Durova’s mother fell in love with Captain Durov when she was fifteen, but “this was not the choice of her father, a proud, arbitrary Ukrainian *pan* [an honorific address].” As Durova writes, “[m]y grandfather ruled his family with an iron hand: any order of his was to be blindly obeyed, and there was no possibility of either placating him or changing any of his announced intentions.” In defiance of Durova’s grandfather, her mother ran away to marry her true love, Durova’s father.¹⁹⁵

Much later in the text, when Durova described her passage through Kazan after retreating East from Napoleon’s army, she related a story told to her by a local Tatar. She introduced a secondary narrator, Jakub, who sang a song about someone named Khamitulla. When Durova inquired, Jakub told her that Khamitulla was a young man who was his close friend. Khamitulla, Jakub told Durova, fell in love with a young woman named Zugra. “Zugra was a tall, swarthy, stately Tatar girl, with black eyes and

¹⁹⁴ Zirin, “Nadezhda Durova, Russia’s ‘Cavalry Maiden,’” xx.

¹⁹⁵ Durova, *The Cavalry Maiden*, 1

brows... the blackness of Zugra's eyes and brows was somehow a captivating black! Something in them made Khamitulla's heart ache cruelly." Durova interjected a note of confusion into the narration of this story: "But, Jakub," she said, "how did your Khamitulla manage to see his beloved? After all, your Tatar girls are hidden from men." Jakub replied: "But not from those whom they seek to please; then they are very skillful in letting themselves be seen. It was enough that Khamitulla could tell the charming blackness of his Zugra's eyes and brows from twenty other pairs of eyes and brows which were just as black."

In Durova's account, Khamitulla became determined to have Zugra, even though her father refused to consider their marriage. The two defied the authorities in their tribe and ran away together to live in the woods. Because they lacked the approval of the tribe, a formal, legal marriage was impossible. After Zugra's father rallied a band of armed men to find his daughter and kill her abductor, Khamitulla decided that they must part in order to preserve their lives. At the end of the story, Zugra offered an emotional monologue:

Let us submit to our fate for a time, my sweet friend. Let us part until you find a place where we can once again be together. I will go to my father, but not to my husband, not for anything! He is no husband to me! They did not ask my consent. Let my father return the *kalym* [dowry]. I am yours, yours forever. I have had no other husband.¹⁹⁶

The focus on "consent" in this passage figures love as a symbol of freedom and as an escape from paternal authority. The principle of consent in love, introduced to Russia by Peter I, transcended paternal authority and customary law in this anecdote. Durova's story showed that Zugra's father could not determine who her true husband would be;

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 160.

only her heart could. The use of Tatar society as the setting for this tale adds another dimension to Khamitulla's and Zugra's rejection of paternal authority; the tyrannical, hierarchical paternalism of "Eastern" tradition is contrasted against the transparent, honest emotions of the contemporary generations of European Russia, who had made a clear break from the practices of their ancestors. European Russia was here represented as more civilized than the Tatars at the empire's periphery, especially if this tale is contrasted with the story of Durova's parents. Whereas the principle of consensual love drove Durova's parents to run away together, they were not hunted down and killed. In Durova's view, these Enlightenment notions of love had yet to spread from the center of the empire to its periphery, even though the Tatars, whom she orientalized, desired the same freedom.

But Durova herself was not so infatuated with this notion of love. Indeed, toward the end of her memoirs she often mocked it. After the victory over Napoleon, Durova's regiment was sent back to Russia from Holstein. A group of women followed along, "all of them fully expecting to marry the men they follow." One member of her squadron, a "Pel.," was mocked for his insistence that "his Phillida is following him under the spell of an unconquerable love for him. We listen and can hardly restrain our laughter. An unconquerable love for Pel., a balding scarecrow, comical and stupid. Perhaps it is some kind of enchantment—*nothing could be more handsome than his froggy eyes!*"¹⁹⁷ But it would be a mistake to read this passage as a dismissal of the importance of the ideal of love. Durova's mocking attitude perhaps stemmed from a feeling of discomfort at the absurdity of the ubiquitous discourse of sincere love. She saw that these women had a material interest in marrying well-connected Russian soldiers, and her criticism was

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 188-189. Emphasis in original.

aimed at the men who, in their masculine honesty, readily believed that they were sincerely loved.

In the same chapter, she mocked another comrade, a K., for his love of a young woman named P. “Comical news! K. is in love!...On the way he told me that... P.... is never out of his mind; and, finally, that he sleeps all the time from love and sorrow.” Durova had little sympathy for his predicament, writing, “I found all this extremely comical, but since I was alone, I somehow was able to keep from laughing...” K. then brought Durova with him to meet P. at her family’s estate. Durova sensed a contradiction between K.’s apparent conviction that his love was sincere and the way that he actually related to P. “[I]t is evident that K.’s love is no joking matter,” she wrote, in reference to how quickly he summoned the sergeant-major upon his arrival in the squadron to harness horses in order to visit P. As they traveled toward the estate, Durova was relieved, albeit perplexed that K., rather than obsessively talking about P., discussed “everything good and bad except the subject which I thought must be engaging his mind and heart.” Upon meeting her, Durova was amused by P.’s unattractiveness, describing her appearance as having “the bold mien of a grenadier... which pleased me greatly. If I were K., I too would choose her for my life’s partner and love her just the way he does: I would come to see her without hurrying to arrive, sleep the entire way, and wake up at the front door.”¹⁹⁸

Durova sought to “escape the sphere prescribed by nature and custom to the female sex,”¹⁹⁹ and she succeeded in doing so. Nevertheless, the ways in which she transgressed gender norms in the Russian Empire reveal her attachment to certain notions of gender, family, and love that were thoroughly embedded in the discourse of two sexes.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 191-192.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 9.

Her gender presentation did not reflect a negotiation of masculine and feminine characteristics, although this is the discourse of sex deployed by figures like Catherine II, who would have seemed an obvious model for escape from the bounds of feminine domesticity. Her critique of love, too, reveals that she viewed consensual love as a backdrop against which she put forward her critique of dishonesty. The story of her parents and the tragic story of Khamitulla and Zugra serve as a contrast to what she saw as the deceitful and self-interested deployment of the language of love.

Her erasure of her marriage in the memoirs further illuminates her attitude toward gender. Rather than justifying her having left home without her husband's permission, she completely effaced her married life. In her memoirs, she appeared as though she had never married at all, and she addressed only her father's disappointment at her having left home, despite the fact that she no longer lived with him when she ran away to enlist. Unlike Labzina, for whom a wife's duty to her husband was intertwined with the notion of conjugal love, Durova seems to have had no such attachment to the notion of obedience. Although she did not fulfill the prescribed domestic role of a woman, her views reveal a construction of gender that was shaped by the discourse of the two sex model, even if elements of the one sex model remained. This last point, however, is not unique to Russia, as Laqueur points out. The idea of the two sexes never entirely displaced that of one sex, rather, it competed with it for primacy in the field of gender determination. Durova's attitude reflected the triumph of the two sex model, even though she succeeded in escaping her biologically determined destiny.

The works of Labzina and Durova have serious implications for Schönle's argument regarding the "scare of the self." Schönle sees Russian authors in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as tending to promote the corporate identity of the nobility at the expense of individual privacy. He asserts, therefore, that no real sense of privateness ever emerged among the literary elite. He buttresses this assertion by observing that private property rights in the Russian Empire were not established at this time. Labzina, however, certainly understood her home as private, and her social role as a domestic one within the patriarchal conjugal family and within the home. Durova, too, had a feminine private self beneath her masculine presentation; hence, her reluctance to publish her *Notes* under her real name. Neither her identification with the corporate group of the nobility, nor the actions of the state, suppressed Durova's sense of privacy. Both Durova and Labzina saw themselves as individuals in relation to a certain set of social conventions, to be sure, but these conventions were, in turn, shaped by individuals who cultivated their privateness. Labzina's and Durova's senses of self depended on and was constituted by a morality of love as the basis of marriage, and by conventions surrounding gender roles in the family. Clearly, The ideology of subjective equivalency—that is, the equivalency of *masculinized* subjects defined against a femininity that was seen as incommensurably different—deeply penetrated the consciousness of the educated elites of the Russian Empire, and acted as a foundation of cultural production from the Catherinian period onward.

Conclusion

It is clear that in the mid- to late-eighteenth century in the Russian Empire the patriarchal conjugal family began to emerge as a strong cultural force and as a social unit that was understood as an integral part of the body politic. This process in many ways paralleled the roughly contemporaneous shifts in the western European understanding of gender, as documented by Thomas Laqueur and Joan Landes. The economic structure and political system of the Russian Empire differed from those of western Europe, but noting the economic and political differences alone is insufficient for understanding the extent to which parallel cultural processes were unfolding in Russia as in France, Germany, and England. In the case of Russia, as we have seen, the patriarchal conjugal family not only came to be identified as an important cultural institution, but was also deeply entangled with discourses of monarchical legitimacy and imperial expansion, and remained so in the nineteenth century.

The process of this entanglement spanned decades. The reforms instituted by Peter I at the beginning of the eighteenth century set into motion a series of cultural shifts, such that the basis of the autocrat's legitimacy was from that point onward dependent on the sovereign's ability to pursue a program of progressive reform. Catherine II drew heavily on this reformist discourse of legitimacy, which was, perhaps, a necessity for her, as she was not connected to the Romanov line by heredity. When the motif of the imperial family erupted as an important image of power and legitimacy beginning with Paul, the discourse of reformist legitimacy was retained, not rejected outright. But the one sex model of gender deployed by Catherine was eroded by the

dominance of cultural ideals embodied by the patriarchal conjugal family, which in turn became a legitimizing scenario for displaying monarchical power.

The autocrat retained—and made use of—the prerogative to condemn dissidence, and to condemn those of the empire's subjects who expressed political views that challenged the autocracy. This was evident in the cases of Novikov and Radishchev. Nevertheless, the extent to which the two sex model became widely accepted among the elite of the Russian Empire was not subject to the monarch's control. Ultimately, the discourse of the patriarchal conjugal family would function to erode the representation of legitimacy on which Catherine II depended. Ideas about the status of women and their role in public life brought forth lively discussions that were not directed by the autocrat. The use of the rational-critical faculties in the public sphere of the Russian Empire was highly restricted with regard to political matters—although the extent of this restriction has sometimes been exaggerated—but members of the public would freely debate the meaning of civic virtue, of moral and civic cultivation, and the role of domesticity. These issues, in turn, became integral to the discourses of legitimacy that the monarchy was compelled to use in order to justify its power.

By investigating the question of the public sphere in the Russian context, this essay argued that although the economic development of the Russian Empire diverged from that of western Europe, the ideological consensus that emerged out of the public sphere in western Europe also framed the formation of publicity in Russia. The ideological components of bourgeois publicity that the Russian educated elites embraced to articulate their own social ideals—for example, the role of women in the public, the role of the family in moral cultivation, and the role of privacy in the development of

public exchange—show that the economic circumstances particular to western Europe were not a necessary condition for the formation of public life.

As the patriarchal conjugal family increasingly came to represent a specifically Russian national character, the family itself became a symbol of the cultural inheritance of Russia that was protected from the onslaught of self-interest, passion, and fashion, and such symptoms of unrestrained market forces were contrasted against the power of the autocrat to carry out reforms in pursuit of the general good. The structural differences between the Russian Empire and western Europe, while obvious, did not prevent the emergence of a Russian public sphere that resembled the European one in its most central aspect—the fostering of rational-critical debate. Privatness, the family, the two sex model—all of these culturally defined notions emerged more or less in parallel in eastern as in western Europe. The development of public life in the Russian Empire was very much a part of the processes defining publicity that emerged around the eighteenth century.

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