

An Ancient in Catherinian Russia: Classical Reception, Sensibility, and Nobility in Princess Ekaterina Urusova's Poetry of the 1770s

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Among the numerous scholarly debates to which the field of eighteenth-century Russian studies has contributed in recent decades, discussions of classical reception and noble culture have been especially productive. Russia's relationship to classical antiquity became a burning issue with the nation's turn to the west in the eighteenth century, and scholars are exploring with great sophistication the complex processes by which Russians of the period responded to Greek and Roman art, literature, and ideas when formulating their personal, political, and cultural identities.¹ This approach has the additional advantage of putting Russian studies in dialogue with a wide range of other disciplines, which offer fascinating parallels to Russia's ambivalent experience of the classics as simultaneously foreign and central to a sense of national culture.² Likewise, interdisciplinary studies of noble culture have transformed our understanding of imperial Russia, refining the foundational work of Iu.M. Lotman and Marc Raeff to demonstrate the vital role played by noble self-fashioning, emotional experience, and literary activities

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1. Zara Martirosova Torlone, Dana LaCourse Munteanu, and Dorota Dutsch, eds., *A Handbook to Classical Reception in Eastern and Central Europe* (Chichester, 2017); Max Kunze and K.Iu. Lappo-Danilevskii, eds., *Drevnost' i klassitsizm: Nasledie Vinkel'mana v Rossii* (Mainz, 2017); Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Vergil in Russia: National Identity and Classical Reception* (Oxford, 2014); Zara Martirosova Torlone, *Russia and the Classics: Poetry's Foreign Muse* (London, 2009); Andrew Kahn, "Readings of Imperial Rome from Lomonosov to Pushkin," *Slavic Review* 52, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 745–68.

2. William Brockliss, Pramit Chaudhuri, Ayelet Haimson Lushkov, and Katherine Wasdin, eds., *Reception and the Classics: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, Eng., 2012); Susan A. Stephens and Phiroze Vasunia, eds., *Classics and National Cultures* (Oxford, 2010); Lorna Hardwick and Christopher Stray, eds., *A Companion to Classical Receptions* (Malden, 2008).

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in the larger cultural processes of the era.³ Studies of the nobility have also fostered greater willingness to include women in our overall understanding of Russian culture and society; women's role as translators of the classics has been recognized, but further work must be done to integrate them better into general accounts of Russian classical reception.⁴

The present article proposes to add a crucial new voice to both these conversations. The most productive female poet of the Russian eighteenth century, as well as the first to write a narrative poem (поэма) and to publish her own poetry collection, Princess Ekaterina Urusova (1747–1817) has figured prominently in accounts of Russian women's writing since the 1990s; a recent English translation of several of her works constituted a major step towards her inclusion in the canon.⁵ A cousin of M.M. Kheraskov, she was acquainted through him not just with his wife Elizaveta, a fellow poet, but also with the Kheraskovs' extensive group of literary friends, including I.F. Bogdanovich, V.I. Maikov, and G.R. Derzhavin.⁶ Urusova's works that apparently circulated before 1772 have yet to be identified.⁷ Between 1772 and 1777 she produced

3. Hilde Hoogenboom, *Noble Sentiments and the Rise of Russian Novels* (Toronto, forthcoming); Andreas Schönle and Andrei Zorin, *On the Periphery of Europe, 1762–1825: The Self-Invention of the Russian Elite* (DeKalb, 2018); Bella Grigoryan, *Noble Subjects: The Russian Novel and the Gentry, 1762–1861* (DeKalb, 2018); Andreas Schönle, Andrei Zorin, and Alexei Evstratov, eds., *The Europeanized Elite in Russia, 1762–1825: Public Role and Subjective Self* (DeKalb, 2016); Irina Reyfman, *Rank and Style: Russians in State Service, Life, and Literature* (Boston, 2012); Michelle Lamarche Marrese, *A Woman's Kingdom: Noblewomen and the Control of Property in Russia, 1700–1861* (Ithaca, 2002); E.N. Marasinova, *Psikhologiya elity rossiiskogo dvorianstva poslednei treti XVIII veka (po materialam perepiski)* (Moscow, 1999); Iu.M. Lotman, *Besedy o russkoi kul'ture: Byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva (XVIII-nachalo XIX veka)* (St. Petersburg, 1994); Marc Raeff, *Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia: The Eighteenth-Century Nobility* (New York, 1966).

4. Wendy Rosslyn, *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness: Translations by Russian Women, 1763–1825* (Fichtenwalde, 2000), 54–59, 68, 118–22. On women's contributions to classical scholarship internationally, see Rosie Wyles and Edith Hall, eds., *Women Classical Scholars: Unsealing the Fountain from the Renaissance to Jacqueline de Romilly* (Oxford, 2016).

5. Amanda Ewington, ed. and trans., *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: A Bilingual Edition* (Toronto, 2014), 59–295; Catriona Kelly, "Sappho, Corinna, and Niobe: Genres and Personae in Russian Women's Writing, 1760–1820," in Adele Marie Barker and Jehanne M. Gheith, eds., *A History of Women's Writing in Russia* (Cambridge, Eng., 2002), 37–61; Wendy Rosslyn, "Making Their Way into Print: Poems by Eighteenth-Century Russian Women," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, no. 3 (July 2000): 407–38; Judith Vowles, "The 'Feminization' of Russian Literature: Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia," in Toby W. Clyman and Diana Greene, eds., *Women Writers in Russian Literature* (Westport, 1994), 35–60. Unless otherwise indicated, translations below are Ewington's when her edition is cited; all other translations are my own.

6. N.D. Kochetkova, "Kniazhna Urusova i ee literaturnye sobesedniki," in N.D. Kochetkova and E.A. Ivanova, eds., *N.A. L'vov i ego sovremenniki: Literaturnye liudi iskusstva* (St. Petersburg, 2002), 94–103 (94–95); Frank Göpfert, "Observations on the Life and Work of Elizaveta Kheraskova (1737–1809)," in Wendy Rosslyn, ed., *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia* (Aldershot, 2003), 163–86.

7. She is noted for her "fine elegies, songs, and other minor poems, which are worthy of praise for their pure style and tender, pleasant depictions" (прекрасныя элегии, песни, и другия мелкия стихотворения, которыя за чистоту слога, нежность и

the four key works explored in this article, but then, for unknown reasons, she stopped writing for almost two decades. She returned to literature with panegyric odes and philosophical verse from the 1790s onward, publishing, for instance, in N.M. Karamzin's almanac *Aonidy* (1796–99).⁸

In what follows, I identify for the first time the European Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns as the essential intellectual framework for Urusova's writings of the 1770s. Urusova's fierce defense of the Ancient perspective and its centrality to her poetic production are unparalleled in eighteenth-century Russian literature. I argue that her adoption of an Ancient position and her innovative reception of Latin literature render her work significant in both literary and socio-political terms. In the literary domain, the fact that Urusova rehearses the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European Quarrel to assert that Russians should imitate the Greeks and Romans directly is contradictory only on the surface and does not simply reflect the typical eclecticism of Russian classicism.⁹ Rather, the Quarrel allows Urusova to conceptualize with exceptional perspicacity the new emphasis on direct imitation of the Greeks and Romans that emerged in Russia in the 1770s. Her understanding of what is really at stake in the Quarrel—not just whether but how we read the classics—helps her to make the interesting case that the culture of sensibility, which likewise rose to prominence in Russia during this decade, ideally equips readers and writers to absorb the classics. In the social and political domain, she skillfully emulates classical intertexts to combine admiration for Empress Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796) as a symbol of Russia's Enlightenment with glorification of the nobility, its privileges, and its role as a bulwark of the state. To do so, she portrays the empress's relationship with her noble subjects as a reenactment of the ancient world's displays of heroic virtue.

In sum, I claim that Urusova's choice to write as an Ancient enables her to use poetry to enunciate original ideas about both literature and

приятность изображения, достойны похвалы), in N.I. Novikov, *Opyt istoricheskago slovaria o rossiiskikh pisateliakh* (St. Petersburg, 1772), 230.

8. Kochetkova, "Kniazhna Urusova i ee literaturnye sobesedniki," 97–98; see also Sandra Shaw Bennett, "'Parnassian Sisters' of Derzhavin's Acquaintance: Some Observations on Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century Russia," in Maria Di Salvo and Lindsey Hughes, eds., *A Window on Russia: Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, Gargnano, 1994* (Rome, 1996), 249–56 (250–51); N.D. Kochetkova, "Urusova Ekaterina Sergeevna," in A.M. Panchenko et al., eds., *Slovar' russkikh pisatelei XVIII veka*, 3 vols. (Leningrad/St. Petersburg, 1988–2010), 3:296–99; and Mary Zirin, "Urusova, Ekaterina Sergeevna," in Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal, and Mary Zirin, eds., *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers* (Westport, 1994), 683–84.

9. Marc Raeff, "On the Heterogeneity of the Eighteenth Century in Russia," in R. P. Bartlett, A. G. Cross, and Karen Rasmussen, eds., *Russia and the World of the Eighteenth Century* (Columbus, 1988), 666–80, and "The Enlightenment in Russia and Russian Thought in the Enlightenment," in J. G. Garrard, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Russia* (Oxford, 1973), 25–47; W. Gareth Jones, "A Trojan Horse within the Walls of Classicism: Russian Classicism and the National Specific," in A. G. Cross, ed., *Russian Literature in the Age of Catherine the Great* (Oxford, 1976), 95–120. On Russian classicism, see Ilya Serman, "The Eighteenth Century: Neoclassicism and the Enlightenment, 1730–90," in Charles A. Moser, ed., *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), 45–91; and Andrew Kahn, Mark Lipovetsky, Irina Reyfman, and Stephanie Sandler, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York, 2018), 203–25.

politics: first, to formulate a unique concept of classical reception in Russia's age of sensibility and, second, to promote a strong alliance between an enlightened ruler and a powerful, ethically worthy nobility. I adopt the methods of classical reception studies delineated by Lorna Hardwick and Zara Torlone: rather than try to situate Urusova's writings within a homogenizing vision of the classical tradition, I explore how Urusova responds to the particularities of Enlightenment Russia by rereading the classics.¹⁰

The Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns Redux: Conceptualizing Classical Reception in the Age of Sensibility

Russia's relationship to classical culture was a pressing question for writers in the 1770s. After several decades of intensive westernization begun by Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725), elites in Catherinian Russia shifted from playing catch-up with Europe to seeking their distinctive place as one European nation among many.¹¹ One way to assert that independence was to demonstrate that Russia did not need to go through Europe to access classical antiquity, but rather could trace its cultural lineage directly to the ancient world. The Russo-Turkish War of 1768–74 catalyzed this development, as the Russian navy sailed for Greece and raised the possibility of literal rather than imaginary contact with the classical past. As Andrei Zorin has argued, writers performed important symbolic work when, in response to the war, they created a discourse that conflated Russia's ties to Byzantium as the source of the Orthodox religion with a vision of Catherinian Russia as antiquity revived. They thereby prepared the mythology that would fuel Catherine the Great's Greek Project when it took shape at the end of the decade.¹² Dominating Russian foreign policy in the 1780s, this scheme aimed to conquer Greece and Constantinople from the Ottoman Empire and to found there a restored Orthodox empire, in which ancient Greek culture would be resurrected under Catherine's grandson Constantine (1779–1831).

The extensive translation and imitation of ancient epic in the 1770s exemplified this drive to affirm Russian ties to classical antiquity through literature.¹³ The decade began with the publication of the first six books of the first Russian translation of the *Aeneid*, V.P. Petrov's *Enei. Geroicheskaia poema Publii Vergiliia Marona* (Aeneas: A Heroic Poem by Publius Vergilius Maro, 1770, 1781–86).¹⁴ Then, in 1776–78, Petr Ekimov published the first

10. Lorna Hardwick, *Reception Studies* (Oxford, 2003), 1–11; Torlone, *Russia and the Classics*, 8–10.

11. Schönle and Zorin, *On the Periphery of Europe*, 33–39.

12. Andrei Zorin, *By Fables Alone: Literature and State Ideology in Late-Eighteenth–Early-Nineteenth-Century Russia*, trans. Marcus C. Levitt with Nicole Monnier and Daniel Schlaffy (Boston, 2014), 24–60. See also Erin McBurney, "Picturing the Greek Project: Catherine II's Iconography of Conquest and Culture," *Russian Literature* 75, no. 1–4 (2014): 415–43, and Asen Kirin, "Eastern European Nations, Western Culture, and the Classical Tradition," in Stephens and Vasunia, *Classics and National Cultures*, 141–62.

13. On translation and the eighteenth-century origins of Russian classical scholarship, see E.D. Frolov, *Russkaia nauka ob antichnosti* (St. Petersburg, 1999), 46–111.

14. Zara Martirosova Torlone, "Vasilii Petrov and the first Russian translation of the *Aeneid*," *Classical Receptions Journal* 3, no. 2 (2011): 227–47 (234).

printed Russian translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.¹⁵ Whereas Ekimov's work influenced N.I. Gnedich's 1829 translation of the *Iliad*, which is still used in Russia today, Petrov's *Aeneid* elicited very negative responses from fellow writers. Most notably, a member of Kheraskov and Urusova's circle and the versifier of a translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1763, 1775–79), V.I. Maikov, composed a mock-heroic poem, *Elisei, ili razdrzhennyi Vakkh* (*Elisei, or Bacchus Angered*, 1771), which parodied the comically poor style of Petrov's translation.¹⁶ A Greek churchman in Russian service, Eugenios Voulgaris, may also have completed in the 1770s his translation of Virgil's *Georgics* into Homeric Greek, which appeared in 1786 and preceded his similar translation of the *Aeneid* (1791–92).¹⁷ Crucially, Kheraskov's *Chesmesskii boi* (*The Battle of Chesme*, 1771) and *Rossiada* (1779) proposed a Russian equivalent to the classical epic: if the nation hoped to claim glory alongside Greece and Rome, it had to have its own epic emulating Homer and Virgil. This return to ancient texts in the 1770s asserted strongly Russia's place as heir to the classical tradition.

A newfound confidence with respect to the ancient world coincided with a sense that Russia was now participating actively in the full gamut of contemporary European cultural movements. Another member of Kheraskov's circle, I.F. Bogdanovich, published in 1778 the first version of what would become *Dushen'ka: Drevniaia povest' v vol'nykh stikhakh* (*Dushen'ka: An Ancient Tale in Free Verse*, 1783), an imitation of Jean de La Fontaine's *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon* (1669) and the most extraordinary example of the Rococo in Russian literature.¹⁸ Bogdanovich's elegant and delightfully witty play with classical myth, interwoven with Russian folkloric motifs, confirms Russia's successful assimilation of both the classical canon and European *galanterie*. It also sets new developments in motion, since, from K.N. Batiushkov's *Rech' o vliianii legkoi poezii na iazyk* (*Speech on the Influence of Light Poetry on Language*, 1816) onwards, *Dushen'ka* has been considered the founding text of Russian light poetry. Concurrently, the 1770s mark the beginning of the Age of Sensibility in Russia, with the emergence of Sentimental poets like M.N. Murav'ev, whose "Ekloga" (*Eclogue*, 1771) imitating Virgil was one of his first original works.¹⁹ Russian literature was becoming ancient and modern all at once.

15. Petr Ekimov, trans., *Omirovy tvoreniia*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1776–1778); A.N. Egunov, *Gomer v russkikh perevodakh XVIII-XIX vekov* (Moscow, 1964), 40–64. The first translation of both Homeric epics, by K.A. Kondratovich in the 1750s–1760s, remained in manuscript.

16. Torlone, "Vasilii Petrov," 238.

17. Stephen K. Batalden, *Catherine II's Greek Prelate: Eugenios Voulgaris in Russia, 1771–1806* (Boulder, 1982); Sophia Papaioannou, "Eugenios Voulgaris' Translation of the *Georgics*: An Introduction to the First Modern Greek Translation of Vergil," *Vergilius* 54 (2008): 97–123 (118–19), and "Sing It Like Homer: Eugenios Voulgaris's Translation of the *Aeneid*," in Susanna Braund and Zara Martirosova Torlone, eds., *Virgil and His Translators* (Oxford, 2018), 151–65.

18. Andrew Kahn, "Russian Rewritings in the Eighteenth Century of La Fontaine's *Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*," *EMF: Studies in Early Modern France* 8 (2002): 207–25.

19. Andrew Kahn, "Russian Literature between Classicism and Romanticism: Poetry, Feeling, Subjectivity," in Paul Hamilton, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of European*

To position herself within this bubbling literary environment, Urusova turned to the European Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Called by Joan DeJean “the most significant Culture Wars of modern times,” the Quarrel touched every mode of intellectual and artistic production and played a major role in structuring Enlightenment debates about everything from government to aesthetics.²⁰ The Moderns contended that classical authors belonged to a bygone era, worthy of historical study but inappropriate as models in an age of scientific progress and the modern nation-state; the Ancients maintained, on the contrary, that the classics remained essential guides for literary inspiration and the cultivation of virtue. Although Modern values are often assumed to have triumphed, the Ancients proved the more influential authors, counting among their ranks Nicolas Boileau, Jean de La Fontaine, and Jean Racine.²¹ Russians did not replay the entire debate as it had unfolded in the west, but ideas and critical language derived from the Quarrel saturated Russian classicism: the questions of whom to imitate and how to do so are vital in a literary system predicated on the emulation of models in pursuit of ideal beauty.²² Like Urusova, a few other authors revisited the Quarrel in the 1770s. In 1770, V.I. Maikov worked on, but did not publish, a translation of the fifth canto of *Le Lutrin* (The Lectern, 1683), a mock-heroic poem by the leading French Ancient, Nicolas Boileau; Maikov substituted Russian works,

Romanticism (Oxford, 2016), 493–511 (494–96); N.D. Kochetkova, *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma (Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniia)* (St. Petersburg, 1994), 8; V.D. Rak, “Mikhail Nikitich Murav’ev,” in Marcus C. Levitt, ed., *Early Modern Russian Writers, Late Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit, 1995), 233–39.

20. Paddy Bullard and Alexis Tadié, introduction to Paddy Bullard and Alexis Tadié, eds., *Ancients and Moderns in Europe: Comparative Perspectives* (Oxford, 2016), 1–16 (5); Joan DeJean, *Ancients Against Moderns: Culture Wars and the Making of a Fin de Siècle* (Chicago, 1997), ix; Dan Edelstein, *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago, 2010), 116; Marc Fumaroli, “Les abeilles et les araignées,” in Anne-Marie Lecoq, ed., *La Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes: XVII^e-XVIII^e siècles* (Paris, 2001), 7–218; Ourida Mostefai, “Finding Ancient Men in Modern Times: Anachronism and the Critique of Modernity in Rousseau,” in Bullard and Tadié, *Ancients and Moderns in Europe*, 243–56; Elena Russo, *Styles of Enlightenment: Taste, Politics, and Authorship in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore, 2007).

21. Bullard and Tadié, introduction to *Ancients and Moderns in Europe*, 6; Alain Viala, “Les Palmarès de la Querelle,” in Louise Godard de Donville, ed., *D’un siècle à l’autre: Anciens et Modernes* (Marseille, 1987), 171–80 (178).

22. Kahn et al., *A History of Russian Literature*, 205–8. On the Quarrel in Russia, see L.V. Pumpianskii, “Trediakovskii i nemetskaia shkola razuma,” *Zapadnyi sbornik* 1 (1937): 157–86 (157–59); Karen Rosenberg, *Between Ancients and Moderns: V.K. Trediakovskij on the Theory of Language and Literature* (PhD diss., Yale University, 1980), and “The Quarrel between Ancients and Moderns in Russia,” in A. G. Cross, ed., *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century* (Newtonville, Mass., 1983), 196–205; V.M. Zhivov, “Tserkovnoslavianskaia literaturnaia traditsiia v russkoi literature XVIII v. i retseptsiia spora ‘drevnikh’ i ‘novykh,’” in L.A. Sofronova, N.M. Kurennaiia, and N.V. Zlydneva, eds., *Istoriia kul’tury i poetika* (Moscow, 1994), 62–82; and V.M. Zhivov and B.A. Uspenskii, “Metamorfozy antichnogo iazychestva v istorii russkoi kul’tury XVII-XVIII vv.,” in *Antichnost’ v kul’ture i iskusstve posleduiushchikh vekov: Materialy nauchnoi konferentsii*, 1982 (Moscow, 1984), 204–85 (271–73n31a). On eighteenth-century Russian literary quarrelling, see Irina Reyfman, *Vasilii Trediakovskiy: The Fool of the “New” Russian Literature* (Stanford, 1990), 57–69.

including Petrov's translation of the *Aeneid*, for the books Boileau mocks.²³ N.D. Kochetkova also notes the existence of a polemic about the Ancients and Moderns in the journal *Utrennii svet* (Morning Light) in 1777.²⁴

Urusova's work stands out for her inventive and intensive use of the Quarrel to reflect on the juncture at which Russian literature found itself in the 1770s. She proclaims the need to build direct connections between Catherinian Russia and the ancient world, and, by imitating Latin texts, she shows in practice the classics' enduring importance as literary and moral models. She thus helps to turn Russia into a recreation of the ancient world and thereby to prepare the mythology of the Greek Project. Yet her theory of classical reception goes further still by arguing that the best readings and imitations of the classics dovetail with the eighteenth-century culture of sensibility. Adopting an Ancient position is essential for this: she rejects the hyper-scientific Modern approach to reading the classics as historical artifacts, preferring the Ancients' aesthetic admiration for Greek and Roman texts. The subjectivity of the latter view allows her to link imitation with sensibility: only those guided by their sensitive hearts will adequately appreciate the classics and be able to emulate them. Uniquely for Russian literature, then, Urusova uses the Quarrel to frame a comprehensive notion of Russia's literary position in the 1770s, expressed through highly original poetry.

In 1773, she published a brief programmatic statement of her Ancient position in the aptly named journal *Starina i novizna* (Old and New). The poem was unsigned, but it appeared alongside the work to which it responded, an epistle by Kheraskov addressed to "K.n.zh.n. K.t.r.n. S.r.g.v.n. R.s.v." For anyone familiar with the literary elite and its concerns at the time, there would have been no mistaking the identity of the poets or their desire to situate the problem of imitation within the opposition between Ancients and Moderns.²⁵ While Kheraskov's epistle is ostensibly a standard rehearsal of the classicist *ars poetica*, cataloguing the genres available to a prospective poet, on closer consideration the poem suggests an Ancient agenda. Whereas A.P. Sumarokov's "Epistola o stikhotvorstve" (Epistle on Poetry, 1748) follows Boileau's *Art poétique* (1674) in including modern writers and genres (from Torquato Tasso and Ludovico Ariosto to ballads and sonnets), Kheraskov lists only genres known to the Greeks and Romans.²⁶ M.V. Lomonosov is the only modern writer cited; he figures as an exponent of the ode and as the uncontested founder of modern Russian literature (a role usually played in the writings of both Ancients and Moderns in France by François de Malherbe).²⁷ This tacit

23. Maria Di Salvo, "V.I. Maikov na puti k russkoi iroi-komicheskoi poeme," in Alberto Alberti, Maria Cristina Bragone, Giovanna Brogi Bercoff, and Laura Rossi, eds., *Italia, Russia e mondo slavo. Studi filologici e letterari* (Florence, 2011), 49–59; M. Schrubá, "Russkaia bitva knig: Zametki o 'Naloe' V.I. Maikova," *XVIII vek* 21 (1999): 185–95.

24. N.D. Kochetkova, "Nemetskie pisateli v zhurnale Novikova 'Utrennii svet,'" *XVIII vek* 11 (1976): 113–24 (122).

25. "M.kh.l. M.t.v.v.ch. Kh.r.s.k.v.," *Starina i novizna* 2 (1773): 203–6.

26. On Sumarokov and imitation, see Amanda Ewington, *A Voltaire for Russia: A.P. Sumarokov's Journey from Poet-Critic to Russian Philosophe* (Evanston, 2010), 5.

27. M.M. Kheraskov, "K.n.zh.n. K.t.r.n. S.r.g.v.n. R.s.v.," *Starina i novizna* 2 (1773): 199–203 (202).

self-positioning in Kheraskov's poem is rendered explicit in Urusova's. She lists some of the proposed ancient models and explains why she cannot follow each one. She rejects Anacreontics because she has no inclination to write them—not an unexpected choice for an unmarried woman. She turns down Sappho because she feels incapable of equaling the Greek poet: “But my gift does not bid me / Sing with her. / It cannot compare / With her tenderness / And my discordant song / Would soon be noted.”²⁸ She thus voices the position of the extreme Ancients who claimed that the classics could not be matched even by the most assiduous emulation. To compensate, Urusova playfully opts to imitate the classics at second-hand and thereby flatters her mentor that he has successfully rivalled his model in his epic, *The Battle of Chesme*: “Kh**, you bid me / Imitate Homer / . . . / Homer extolled Troy for us; / You sang the Battle of Chesme. / . . . / Allow me to imitate / Your triumphant verse.”²⁹ The final line reiterates the same point: “I attain Parnassus. / Kh** is my model.”³⁰ Celebrating Russia's naval victory in the Mediterranean in July 1770, Kheraskov invokes Homer and Greek antiquity, which offer both a literary model and a literal depiction of the Greek and Turkish coasts as the scene of battle.³¹ *The Battle of Chesme* thus epitomizes the literary effort to interweave the classical past and the Russian present. Far from signaling hesitation about her stance as an Ancient, Urusova's poem casts her alliance with Kheraskov as a joint effort to emulate the classics well. She recognizes Kheraskov's credentials as a good Ancient and asserts her allegiance to the same ideals.

Despite her pose as a novice in her epistle to Kheraskov, Urusova had already published the previous year a notable experiment in imitation of the classics: “A Letter to Petr Dmitrievich Eropkin, composed by Princess Ekaterina Urusova in Moscow” (1772), a poetic epistle about the suppression of the 1771 Moscow Plague and riots.³² The “Letter” is a rendition of a set piece from Latin literature, the description of a plague, in which Urusova embedded a panegyric ode to Catherine the Great; she was the first Russian woman to attempt both genres. Three of the most illustrious Latin poets vied one another to produce such episodes in verse: Aeacus' narration of the plague on Aegina in Book 7 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* reworks the animal epidemic in Book 3 of Virgil's *Georgics*, as well as the latter's predecessor, the plague that concludes Lucretius' *De rerum natura* (which is in turn based

28. “Но с нею воспевати / Мне дар мой не велит. / Не может он сравняться / Со нежностью ея, / И станет отличаться / Нестройна песнь моя.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 76–77.

29. “Гомеру подражати, / Х** мне велишь. / . . . / Гомер вспевал нам Трою, / Ты пел Чесмесский бой. / . . . / Позволь мне подражати / Торжественным стихам.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 74–75.

30. “Парнасса досязая, / Х** мне пример.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 76–77.

31. A.V. Zapadov, *Poety XVIII veka. A. Kantemir, A. Sumarokov, V. Maikov, M. Kheraskov: Literaturnye ocherki* (Moscow, 1984), 200.

32. *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu, sochinennoe kniazhnoi Ekaterinoi Urusovoi v Moskve* (Moscow, 1772). On this epidemic, see John T. Alexander, *Bubonic Plague in Early Modern Russia: Public Health and Urban Disaster* (Baltimore, 1980), and Marcus C. Levitt, “The Icon that Started a Riot,” in *The Visual Dominant in Eighteenth-Century Russia* (DeKalb, 2011), 195–221.

on Thucydides' account of the Athenian plague of 430 BC).³³ Urusova may have been familiar with all three: her thorough familiarity with Virgil will be demonstrated below in the discussion of *Polion*, while her knowledge of Ovid is evident in her later *Heroides*. She wrote the "Letter to Eropkin" at a moment of heightened Russian attention to the *Metamorphoses*. While the early 1760s witnessed the publication of parts of Maikov's verse translation and of imitations by Bogdanovich and Kheraskov, the first complete prose translation by G.V. Kozitskii appeared in 1772–74, followed by Maikov's versified text of Books 1–8 in 1775–79.³⁴ In Russia as in western Europe, Lucretius' atheism meant most writers avoided citing him openly, and no Russian translations of his work were published in the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, Urusova may well have encountered him, perhaps in one of two French prose translations released in 1768.³⁵ A.I. Liubzhin asserts that Kheraskov's didactic poem "Plody nauk" (The Fruits of Learning, 1761) is in places a response to Lucretius.³⁶

Urusova's poem was not the only poetic epistle written about the events in Moscow, but it is distinctive in its use of classical intertexts.³⁷ In it, she not only seeks to show that classical models can make sense of life in Catherinian Russia and that a female author can do so effectively; she also inaugurates her characteristic blending of classical imitation with an insistence on sentiment. While she eschews the Roman poets' enumerations of the plague's physical symptoms, probably as inappropriate for the dignified odic style of her poem, she shares with Lucretius a focus on the psychological and moral aspects of the plague.³⁸ She joins him in underscoring the familial drama of loss: just as Lucretius laments that "[s]ometimes you might see the lifeless bodies of parents lying upon their lifeless children, and contrariwise children yielding up their life upon the bodies of mother and father," Urusova remarks on the tragedy of younger generations dying alongside the old: "Parents lost their children, wives their husbands, / Infants died in

33. M. A. J. Heerink, "Ovid's Aeginetan Plague and the Metamorphosis of the *Georgics*," *Hermes: Zeitschrift für klassische Philologie* 139, no. 4 (2011): 464–72.

34. Marcus Levitt, "'Metamorfozy' Ovidiia v russkoi literature XVIII veka—pro et contra," in N.Iu. Alekseeva and N.D. Kochetkova, eds., *Litterarum fructus: Sbornik statei v chest' Sergeia Ivanovicha Nikolaeva* (St. Petersburg, 2012), 142–53 (144–46).

35. Natania Meecker, *Voluptuous Philosophy: Literary Materialism in the French Enlightenment* (New York, 2006), 17–58. It is unknown whether Urusova read Latin, but she undoubtedly knew French. On the bilingualism of the eighteenth-century Russian elite, see Derek Offord, Lara Ryazanova-Clarke, Vladislav Rjéoutski, and Gesine Argent, eds., *French and Russian in Imperial Russia*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 2015).

36. A.I. Liubzhin, *Rimskaia literatura v Rossii v XVIII-nachale XX veka: Prilozhenie k "Istorii rimskoi literatury" M. fon Al' brekhtha* (Moscow, 2007), 58. See also Andrew Kahn, "Epicureanism in the Russian Enlightenment: Dmitrii Anichkov and Atomic Theory," in Neven Leddy and Avi S. Lifschitz, eds., *Epicurus in the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2009), 119–36.

37. See, for example, V.I. Maikov, "Pis'mo Ego Siiatel'stvu Grafu Grigor'iu Grigor'evichu Orlovu na otbytie Ego iz Sanktpeterburga v Moskvu vo vremia zarazitel'noi v nei bolezni, dlia istrebleniia onyia," in *Sochineniia Vasiliia Maikova ili sobranie ostroumykh, satiricheskikh, zabavnykh poem, navstvennykh basen i skazok, teatral'nykh i drugikh ego liricheskikh tvorenii* (St. Petersburg, 1809), 268–70.

38. Diskin Clay, *Lucretius and Epicurus* (Ithaca, 1983), 262–63.

their fathers' arms."³⁹ Echoing Lucretius' condemnation of those who forget their responsibility to care for others, Urusova declares indignantly that "no one then dared to help anyone, . . . / Everyone avoided everyone else; . . . / Everyone forgot both duty and love."⁴⁰ This emphasis on the family and on the people's inadequacies of feeling and sympathy sets the stage for the exchange of sentiment that constitutes the main action of the poem. The image of the empress is emphatically maternal and domestic, in keeping with Sentimental preferences: the odic formula designating the empress as "Россов мать" (mother of the Russians) is reinvigorated in this portrayal of Catherine, whose sole wish is to save her "любезных чад" (beloved children).⁴¹ Only her subjects' alarm for her welfare prevents her from travelling to Moscow to rescue them; she greets the news that her policies have ended the plague with an outward manifestation of feeling, crying "tears of joy upon hearing it."⁴² In Urusova's first known published work, therefore, she occupies the Ancient position by reading her world through a lens both classical and sensitive.

Having laid the groundwork, Urusova makes the case for the Ancients most forcefully and overtly in her remarkable narrative poem in five cantos, *Polion, or The Misanthrope Enlightened* (1774). The first edition was published anonymously, but a revised version of the "Letter to Eropkin" was included at the end of the volume and referred readers back to the name on the 1772 pamphlet.⁴³ *Polion* offers an allegorical account of the *Bildung* of the young eponymous hero. His initial schooling in a temple representing "грубое и неблагоприятное воспитание" (crude and unreasonable education) turns him into a misanthrope who sees only deception and vanity in social life and who, like a modern-day Hippolytus, scorns the charms of love.⁴⁴ He flees the city for his estate, where his attempts to modernize agricultural practice cause only harm, ruining the pastoral idyll in which his serfs had been living. But one day the god of Love shoots a golden arrow into the heart of the recalcitrant Polion, who then falls in love with Naida, who is both a flesh-and-blood woman and an allegorical representation of "дух разумения" (the spirit of understanding). She rapidly re-educates Polion, letting him glimpse the temple of "Здравый

39. "Родители детей, жены мужей теряли, / Младенцы на руках отцовых умирали." Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 4; Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura*, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, revised Martin Ferguson Smith (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 587.

40. "Друг другу помощь дать никто тогда не смел, . . . / Чуждались всякого, . . . / И должность и любовь тут каждой позабыл." Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 4; Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, 587.

41. Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 9.

42. "[С]лезы радостей то слыша проливала." Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 9.

43. *Polion ili prosvetivshiisia neliudim, poema* (St. Petersburg, 1774). The "Pis'mo Eropkinu" appears on pages 57–64; this second redaction can be found in F. Göpfert and M. Fainshtein, eds., *Predstatel'nitsy muz: Russkie poetessy XVIII veka* (Wilhelmshorst, 1998), 155–59.

44. Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 80 (my translation).

Разсудок” (Sound Reason); he ceases to be a misanthrope and restores the pastoral bliss of life in the countryside.⁴⁵

The crux of any interpretation of *Polion* lies in defining what is wrong with Polion’s initial education and right about his re-education. While Judith Vowles interprets the poem as a rejection of Church Slavonic, ecclesiastical, all-male culture in favor of female-centric *préciosité*, Marcus Levitt has pointed out that the text does not support this reading.⁴⁶ By contrast, there is ample textual evidence to suggest that the problem with Polion’s first education lies in its approach to the classics. In good classicist fashion, the first canto includes an extended catalogue of authors whom Polion and his teachers are unable to understand. Unlike the more famous catalogues in V.K. Trediakovskii’s “Epistola ot rossiiskii poezii k Apollinu” (Epistle from Russian Poetry to Apollo, 1735) and Sumarokov’s “Epistle on Poetry,” Urusova’s list features not a single modern author. She enumerates only Greeks and Romans: Homer, Plato, Pindar, Anacreon, Cicero, Virgil, and Ovid. Polion’s transformation is described specifically in terms of learning to appreciate ancient texts. In the Temple of Crude and Unreasonable Education, “[t]hey thought the divine Homer was sleeping. / They took his verses for fables. / They heard neither his greatness nor his truth.”⁴⁷ In Naida’s Temple of Sound Reason, by contrast, “Everything that we call invention and fable / Shone there naturally and unadorned: / They clearly understood / Aeolus’s stormy cave of winds, / Homer’s Ulysses descending into hell, / The gods’ discord over the battle of Troy, / Their wounds, and the speech of their heroic steeds.”⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the allegorical figures inhabiting the first temple embody the combativeness and vanity regularly associated with the pedant and the critic in early modern European literature: they “approached Wisdom along crooked paths;” “Arguments flew about, breathing fire;” “There stood Envy with a club, / Inflamed by the pleasure of destroying people.”⁴⁹ For her part, Naida instructs Polion to forget pedantic rules: “Chase the darkness of that former education from your thoughts. / Forget their names, order, interpretation.”⁵⁰ Polion finds enlightenment and self-knowledge by replacing pedantry with a sensitive, aesthetic appreciation for the classics.

45. Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 122–23, 144–45.

46. Vowles, “The ‘Feminization’ of Russian Literature,” 45–47; Marcus C. Levitt, “The Polemic with Rousseau over Gender and Sociability in E.S. Urusova’s *Polion* (1774),” *The Russian Review* 66, no. 4 (October 2007): 586–601 (588).

47. “Там спящим кажется божественный Омир, / За баснословие стихи его приемлют, / Ни важности его, ни истинне не внемлют.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 84–85.

48. “Все то, что вымыслом и баснями зовут, / Сияет без цветов в природных видах тут: / Там ветров бурная Еолово пещера, / И в ад Улиссово хождение у Гомера, / За брань Троянскую между Богов раздор, / Их раны, и коней геройских разговор, / Имеют чистое свое знаменованье.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 146–47.

49. “К Премудрости идут кривыми там стезями;” “Там споры дышущи огнем, вокруг летают;” “Там Зависть палицей стоит вооруженна, / К погибели людей охотою разженна.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 80–81 (translation modified).

50. “От мыслей отгони науки прежней тму; / Забудь их имена, порядок, толкованье.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 142–43 (translation modified).

Polion's two educations map precisely onto the two camps in the English Battle of the Books as described by intellectual historian Joseph Levine. He explains that what separated the two camps was not mere preference for ancient or modern authors. Both sides believed that ancient literature had value, but they disagreed on how to assess it. According to Levine, the Moderns were "modern" in applying the developing techniques of modern philology and textual criticism to classical works and mining them for historical information. By contrast, the Ancients rejected these new techniques as pedantry, averring that the texts of classical antiquity should be judged only according to refined taste. For the Ancients, the classics should not be treated as dead objects of study, but rather used as sources of inspiration and models for new works that emulate their elegance and imaginative power.⁵¹ This is precisely what Urusova tells her readers: Polion must relinquish the Moderns' pedantry and adopt the Ancients' more emotional and immediate connection with the classics.

An intriguing parallel for Urusova's poetic invention can be found in the works of Jonathan Swift, whose intervention on the side of the Ancients, "The Battle of the Books" (1704), lent its name to the English Quarrel. Although the "Battle" was not translated into Russian in the eighteenth century, a French translation of *A Tale of a Tub*, to which the pamphlet was appended, was on sale in Russia already in 1749.⁵² Like Urusova, Swift associates the Moderns with destruction and gloom: their emblem, the spider, is "swollen up to the first Magnitude, by the Destruction of infinite Numbers of *Flies*, whose Spoils lay scattered before the Gates of his Palace, like human Bones before the Cave of some Giant."⁵³ This image of desolation evokes both the temple where Polion is first educated and the disastrous effects of his attempted modernization of his estate. Swift contrasts the spider with the bee, who knows how to experience the beauty in nature, that is, in ancient texts: using an image traceable to Horace and many other ancient and modern writers, the bee asserts, "I visit, indeed, all the Flowers and Blossoms of the Field and the Garden, but whatever I collect from thence, enriches my self, without the least Injury to their Beauty, their Smell, or their Taste."⁵⁴ Urusova's opposition between the devastation caused by Polion's first education and the pastoral benevolence of the second transposes Swift's distinction between the Modern spider and the Ancient bee into the more dignified iconography of classical allegory. Another possible allusion to Swift can be found in the description of the Temple of Crude and Unreasonable Education. Urusova writes of "Astrologers / . . . / Counting with their gaze the planets' paths. / But as soon

51. Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, 1991), 44–46.

52. Iu.D. Levin, "Ranee vospriatie Dzhonatana Svifta v Rossii," in M.P. Alekseev, ed., *Vzaimosviazi russkoi i zarubezhnykh literatur* (Leningrad, 1983), 12–44 (18).

53. Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, ed. Marcus Walsh (Cambridge, Eng., 2010), 149. The passage is present in Jonathan Swift, *Le Conte du tonneau, contenant tout ce que les arts, et les sciences ont de plus sublime, et de plus mystérieux. Avec plusieurs autres pieces très curieuses. Par le fameux Dr. Swift. Traduit de l'anglois*, trans. Justus van Effen, 2 vols. (The Hague, 1721), 2:75–76.

54. Swift, *A Tale of a Tub and Other Works*, 150; *Le Conte du tonneau*, 2:81.

as they lift their eyes toward that place, / The thickened clouds descend over their heads: / Concealing the orbits of the Luminaries, they bring darkness to their eyes.”⁵⁵ These blind Astrologers suggest a rather less grotesque version of the inhabitants of Laputa in *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726), who stare at the heavens and cogitate so much that they are unable to see what is in front of them.⁵⁶ *Gulliver’s Travels* appeared in a Russian translation from the French in 1772–73; the translator, E.N. Karzhavin, worked in the College of Foreign Affairs and in the Society Dedicated to the Translation of Foreign Books alongside Bogdanovich and V.G. Ruban, two literary associates of the Kheraskovs.⁵⁷ It is thus entirely possible that Urusova was aware of Swift’s work. These intertexts would help to explain why the allegory in *Polion* corresponds so closely to the English configuration of the controversy.

The interpretation of classical fables, which Urusova places at the heart of *Polion*’s re-education, was a key bone of contention in the French *Querelle* and featured in Russian critical discourse as well. In effect, Naida’s temple solves the problem that the great female defender of the Ancients in France, Anne Dacier, set out to resolve with her translation of the *Iliad* in 1711. Responding to the supposed unacceptability of Homer’s fables to the modern reader, Dacier mentions some of the same examples that appear in *Polion*, such as the talking horses and the wounds and caprices of the gods; she, like Urusova, insists that Homer’s “fictions have been drawn from truth.”⁵⁸ The first article in Russia’s first private literary journal, Sumarokov’s *Trudoliubivaia pchela* (The Busy Bee, 1759), addresses precisely this issue: in “O pol’ze mifologii” (On the Usefulness of Mythology), the future secretary of Catherine the Great, G.V. Kozitskii, rejects the primacy of science and defends the value of ancient fables.⁵⁹ Urusova had likely been discussing this problem with Kheraskov: in his epistle of 1773, he tells her that although Homer’s tales “are reputed among the ignorant to be fables,” the Greek bard “sang of sacred mysteries in [describing] the Trojan war.”⁶⁰ The two poets were interested not only in the

55. “Астрологи, / . . . / Счисляя взорами течение планет. / Но только лишь они свой взор туда возводят, / Сгустившись облака на их главы низходят, / Скрывая бег Светил, являют мрак очам.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 82–83.

56. Part 3, chapter 2. In French, see *Voyages de Gulliver*, trans. Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines, 2 vols. (Paris, 1727), 2:16.

57. Levin, “Ranee vospriiatie Dzhonatana Svifta v Rossii,” 26–27.

58. “[S]es fictions sont tirées du sein de la Verité.” Anne Dacier, *L’Iliade d’Homère, traduite en français avec des remarques*, rev. ed., 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1712), 1:ix-x, xxi-xxii.

59. G.V. Kozitskii, “O pol’ze mifologii,” *Trudoliubivaia pchela* 1 (January 1759) (reprint St. Petersburg, 1780): 5–33. On Sumarokov’s journal, see Marcus C. Levitt, “Was Sumarokov a Lockean Sensualist?,” in *Early Modern Russian Letters: Texts and Contexts* (Boston, 2009), 158–72, and “Zhurnal A.P. Sumarokova ‘Trudoliubivaia pchela’: Kompozitsiia i napravlenie,” in A.Iu. Veselova and A.O. Demin, eds., *Dar druzhestva i muz: Sbornik statei v chest’ Natal’i Dmitrievny Kochetkovo* (Moscow and St. Petersburg, 2018), 69–77. On the Quarrel’s significance for Russian views of classical mythology, see Zhivov and Uspenskii, “Metamorfozy antichnogo iazychestva,” 234–41, and Marcus Levitt, “O pol’ze mifologii: Mifologicheskie suzhety sumarokovskikh oper,” in Petr Bukharkin, Ulrike Jekutsch, and Evgeniy Matveev, eds., “Blessed Heritage:” *The Classical Tradition and Russian Literature* (Wiesbaden, 2018), 27–35 (29–31).

60. “Который баснословным, / В невежестве слывет. / . . . И таинства священны / В Троянской брани пел.” Kheraskov, “K.n.zh.n. K.t.r.n. S.r.g.v.n. R.s.v.,” 200.

characteristically Ancient technique of reading the classics for moral exempla, but also in learning how to encode moral truths in their own writings.

In this context, what sets Urusova's approach apart is her seamless blending of the signature language of sensibility with the refined sense of taste that the Ancients applied to the classics. Aphorisms such as "If one wishes to enter the temple of wisdom, / Let the heart go first—'Tis not reason that improves us" apply both to moral conduct and to readings of ancient texts.⁶¹ The pedants in the Temple of Crude and Unreasonable Education eliminate feeling from classical texts, especially the sweetness and tenderness of sensibility: "there sweet Cicero lost his charm / . . . / Everything that Anacreon sang tenderly . . . / There, they considered all that trifling empty words."⁶² Polion must fall in love with Naida before he can understand ancient fables: sentiment and the classics could not be more closely linked. In this, Urusova offers a curious counterpart to other Russian Sentimentalist women writers: while Urusova does invoke feminine closeness to nature, authentic feeling, and domesticity, these qualities are not her sole claim to authority, as they were for other female writers.⁶³ Instead, by turning to the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns, she enrolls both the supposedly feminine values associated with Sentimental writings and the supposedly masculine authority of the classics to support her literary efforts. She thereby manages to express her views on subjects well beyond the purportedly feminine sphere, formulating a unique response to an exhilarating moment in Russian literary history. Gitta Hammarberg has shown that the pastoral idyll was both a favorite genre of the Russian Sentimentalists and a meeting point between that movement and classicism: by linking Sentimental pastoral bliss with understanding the classics, Urusova proves highly aware of Russia's place at a literary crossroads.⁶⁴ She argues that direct, sensitive engagement with the classics constitutes the essential paradigm for the future not just of Russian literature, but also of Russian society.

Nobles as Ancients in Catherinian Russia

Not content merely to theorize about imitating the classics, Urusova models for her readers how to see Catherinian Russia as the ancient world restored, using classical intertexts to express her views about contemporary Russian society. Politically, her Ancient allegiances allow her to balance two potentially contradictory positions: an endorsement of Catherine the Great's public image as an Enlightenment ruler, on the one hand, and promotion of

61. "Когда премудрости, кто в храм войти желает, / Пусть сердце наперед, неразум исправляет." Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 88–89.

62. "[С]ладкий Цицерон лишился там прятства, / . . . / Все то, что с нежностью певал Анакреон, / . . . считали там безделкой пустословы." Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 86–87.

63. Ursula Stohler, *Disrupted Idylls: Nature, Equality, and the Feminine in Sentimentalist Russian Women's Writing (Mariia Pospelova, Mariia Bolotnikova, and Anna Naumova)*, with translations by Emily Lygo (Frankfurt-am-Main, 2016).

64. Gitta Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin's Sentimentalist Prose* (Cambridge, Eng., 1991), 44. On Polion as pastoral, see Levitt, "The Polemic with Rousseau over Gender and Sociability," 593–601.

the nobility as feudal landowners and defenders of the Russian state, on the other. Envisaging the ruler as a symbolic source of wisdom and focal point of the nation's loyalty and international image, Urusova calls on ancient models to present the ruler and the nobility as jointly cultivating values such as honor, duty, and service to the fatherland.

Framing the "Letter to Eropkin" with a classical plague description serves multiple political purposes. It is in part a modest cover for a panegyric of Catherine the Great, necessary because no woman had yet ventured to write a solemn ode in Russian. Many elements recall the stylistics and tropes of the ode, including a personified Moscow addressing the empress, relatively high-style language, although without excessive Slavonicisms, and the apotheosis of Catherine as a "Богиня" (goddess) and a Christ-like savior: "By her are we saved and by her are we reassured, / By her laws are we freed from death."⁶⁵ Urusova's appeal to the classics gives her the authority, despite her gender, to speak on public issues in the quintessentially public form of the ode. Simultaneously, she thereby evokes classical examples of heroic devotion to the state. By addressing the poem not to Catherine but to P.D. Eropkin, the local official in charge of containing the epidemic, Urusova exalts the nobility alongside the monarch. The opening and closing apostrophes to Eropkin portray his heroism and that of Catherine's favorite whom she sent to intervene on her behalf, G.G. Orlov, as a necessary counterpart to the ruler's glory. Urusova treats the suppression of the plague and riots as a display of selflessness by both sovereign and nobility: when Catherine offers to sacrifice herself for her people, the nobility step in to replace her, leaving Catherine in her rightful place as the symbolic source of the nobility's virtuous sentiments.⁶⁶ By emulating classical heroism, Eropkin participates in the empress's role as savior: Urusova tells him, "You are always the true protector of the common good / And in your official duties the executor of the laws; / You have saved our lives many times."⁶⁷ By crafting this Russian plague description in heroic hexameters, Urusova implicitly compares the Moscow tragedy favorably with its classical antecedents; this move offers enlightened Russians a remedy for the embarrassment that such medieval problems as plague and superstition-driven riots could cause. She also creates a sense of complicity with the small group of highly educated readers who could decode the classical allusions: the ruler and nobles who could perceive the ancient frame of reference were expected to share equally the ethical ideals of selflessness and service.

Allusions to classical texts likewise saturate *Polion*. Urusova's comment that Polion's first teachers "thought the divine Homer was sleeping" is an overt paraphrase of Horace's famous comment in the *Ars poetica* that even Homer nods. Another classical reference hidden in plain view holds the

65. "Мы Ею спасены и Ею ободренны, / Ея законами от смерти освобождены." Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 5, 7.

66. The image of the heroic sovereign cultivating her subjects' heroic virtues was central to Catherine's self-fashioning. See Kelsey Rubin-Detlev, *The Epistolary Art of Catherine the Great* (Liverpool, 2019), 151–57, 172–77.

67. "Ты общих благ всегда сам истинный рачитель / И в должности своей законов исполнитель; / Не однократно ты жизнь нашу сохранял." Urusova, *Pis'mo Petru Dmitrievichu Eropkinu*, 10.

key to *Polion*: the name of the eponymous protagonist. Although the name Polion has puzzled researchers, it is not unique in eighteenth-century Russian literature: sometimes spelled with a second “l,” it appears, for instance, as a pastoral name in an anonymous idyll, “Damet,” published after Urusova’s poem in 1775.⁶⁸ In discussions of Urusova, only one scholar, Wendy Rosslyn, has accurately translated the name as the equivalent of the Latin *Pollio*.⁶⁹ And indeed, in 1807, more than thirty years after the publication of Urusova’s poem, A.F. Merzliakov used the name *Pollion* in the first complete Russian translation of Virgil’s *Eclogues*.⁷⁰ *Pollion* appears in the Fourth Eclogue, which Virgil addressed to his patron, Gaius Asinius *Pollio*, predicting that the birth of a baby boy will herald the return of the Golden Age. Modern scholarship generally identifies this mysterious child as the desired son of Mark Antony and the future Augustus’s sister, Octavia, who in the end bore Antony only daughters; their marriage resulted from the Pact of Brundisium between Antony and Octavian, which raised fleeting hopes for the pacification of Rome’s internecine troubles and which *Pollio* helped to negotiate in 40 BC.⁷¹ This view of the child’s identity and therefore of the poem’s political significance was not prevalent in the eighteenth century; accordingly, it is unsurprising that Urusova ignores it and opts instead to reinvent the allegory to suit eighteenth-century Russian realities.⁷² Since Merzliakov’s was the first Russian version of this eclogue, Urusova presumably relied on one of many French translations.⁷³

The Fourth Eclogue provides the essential intertext for interpreting Urusova’s allegory. In it, Virgil predicts that the child will witness, and indeed

68. Joachim Klein, *Puti kul’turnogo importa: Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka* (Moscow, 2005), 185. Judith Vowles proposes breaking the name into the syllables “pol + i + on,” which translates to “the sex and he.” Vowles, “The ‘Feminization’ of Russian Literature,” 45.

69. Wendy Rosslyn, *Anna Bunina (1774–1829) and the Origins of Women’s Poetry in Russia* (Lewiston, 1997), 98.

70. A.F. Merzliakov, trans., *Eklogi P. Virgilia Marona* (Moscow, 1807), 29–38. On Merzliakov and the *Eclogues*, see Andrew Kahn, *The Classical Roman Tradition in Russia c.1750–1840: Studies in Its Sources and Character* (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1992).

71. Wendell Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil: Eclogues* (Oxford, 1994), 121–22.

72. Alongside the Christian identification of the child with Jesus as the Messiah, Marcellus (Octavia’s son from a previous marriage), Drusus (Augustus’s stepson and possible biological child), and a son of *Pollio* himself were candidates frequently cited by eighteenth-century commentators. See, for example, *Eclogues de Virgile. Traduction nouvelle, avec des notes historiques et critiques. Où l’on a inséré les endroits que Virgile a imitez de Théocrite. Avec un discours sur la poésie pastorale. Par M. Vaillant* (Paris, 1724), 134–39; Pierre-François Guyot Desfontaines, ed. and trans., *Les Œuvres de Virgile traduites en français, le texte vis-à-vis la traduction, ornées de figures en taille-douce, avec des remarques*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1743), 1:48–62; and *Les Œuvres de Virgile, en latin et en français*, rev. ed., 4 vols. (Paris, 1769), 1:38–39.

73. Besides the scholarly editions cited above, a possible source might be Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset’s fairly free imitation in French alexandrines, since Gresset inserts a reference to naiads absent in the original: Jean-Baptiste-Louis Gresset, *Les Poésies de M. G.* (Blois, 1734), 61–67 (63). However, naiads feature also in Urusova’s late lyrics “Ruche” (The Brook, 1796) and “Stepnaia pesn” (Song of the Steppe, 1798–99), so Naida’s name may reflect simply the poet’s personal affinity for these water nymphs. Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 278, 288.

bring about, a new Golden Age, in which “the earth untilled will pour forth its first pretty gifts, gadding ivy with foxglove everywhere;” as the child matures, “slowly will the plains yellow with the waving corn, on wild brambles the purple grape will hang.”⁷⁴ In this light, Urusova’s otherwise strange preoccupation with Polion’s effect on nature becomes explicable. If Polion is the young man who ought to reinstate the Golden Age and summon forth the riches of nature, his false education means that, at first, he does the reverse. His introduction of modern technological innovations and work ethic into his serfs’ pastoral world forces nature to withdraw her favors: “The gardens and the grape vines were no longer to be seen. / . . . / Polion choked everything else with wild grass alone / And deprived all nature of life.”⁷⁵ Naida’s teachings allow Polion to fulfil his calling and restore the Golden Age, at least on his own estate. When Polion decides “[t]o give the meadows back their flowers; not to disturb the shepherdesses,” nature pours forth her bounties unbidden: “When they learned that there was no longer moaning in his villages / Pomona and Ceres came back to him: / They set up their throne in his fields / And yellow ears grew there. / Fruit grew on the trees.”⁷⁶ Urusova’s use of the pastoral as a genre is an indicator of her overall design to rework Virgil’s Fourth Eclogue in creating *Polion*.

As Stephen Lessing Baehr has noted, this eclogue was a frequent intertext in eighteenth-century Russian panegyric, since Virgil associates the renewed Golden Age with the return of Astraea, goddess of Justice and obvious analogy for Russia’s four female monarchs.⁷⁷ Unsurprisingly, therefore, Urusova’s Naida bears an uncanny resemblance to the public persona of Catherine the Great. Polion’s effusive admiration for Naida’s estate designates her as Astraea and hints at the regal associations of her domains: “Here I see happiness crowned. / All people have peace written on their faces. / . . . / Everywhere the age of Astraea has vanished, but here it continues.”⁷⁸ Naida’s behavior matches Catherine’s famous ability to flatter her visitors and nobility by interacting with them on apparently equal footing: she welcomes Polion to her home by saying, “Let us here abandon rank. / I have called you here as a friend, not as a slave.”⁷⁹ The phrase “Let us here abandon rank” recalls the first of the rules of behavior that Catherine hung in her Hermitage (built

74. *Virgil*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, revised G. P. Goold, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1999–2000), 1:51.

75. “Невидно там садов, ни виноградных лоз, / . . . / Единым былием другое задушил, / И жизни Полион природу всю лишил.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 108–9 (translation modified).

76. “Цветы отдать лугам, пастушек не смущать. / Узнав, что больше нет в его селеньях стона, / Пришли к нему опять Церера и Помона: / Оне в поля его престол перенесли, / И класы желтые на нивах возрасли, / Плоды на деревьях.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 150–51 (translation modified).

77. Stephen Lessing Baehr, *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture* (Stanford, 1991), 45.

78. “Мне зрится щастие ходяще здесь в венце, / У всех написано спокойство на лице; / . . . / Везде Астреин век исчез, но здесь он длится.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 138–39 (translation modified).

79. “Оставим здесь чины, . . . / Тебя как друга я, не как раба, звала.” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 138–39.

1764–75), “Оставить все чины вне дверей” (Leave all ranks at the door).⁸⁰ Even the theme of love, which pervades *Polion* and which has been interpreted as signaling the need for feminine influence, is explicable with reference to Catherine’s political image. Richard Wortman has identified love as a defining theme of Catherine’s “scenario of power,” or the discursive and visual means by which she represented her power and formulated her relationship with the Russian ruling elite.⁸¹ Naida’s lessons in love reflect Catherine’s performance of love for her subjects and for the common good: she tells Polion, “I was never an enemy to my neighbor / And I employed this secret for happiness: / I cherish their blessings as my own. / . . . / Who filled your blood with such poison—/ The notion that the human race is unworthy of love?”⁸² Urusova’s poem intriguingly reorganizes the standard character structure of didactic political novels set in the classical world, such as François de Salignac de La Mothe-Fénelon’s *Les Aventures de Télémaque* (1699), Jean-François Marmontel’s *Bélisaire* (1767), and Kheraskov’s *Numa Pompilii* (1768). Rather than depict a mythological female or elite male figure advising a male (future) sovereign, Urusova identifies the sovereign with the mythological female advisor and shows her instructing a young nobleman. Besides accounting for the ambiguity of Naida as both woman and allegorical figure, this choice shifts attention away from the monarch alone and onto the relationship between the empress and her noble subjects.

Polion’s characterization as a misanthrope may point towards yet another connection with Catherine. Alongside references to Molière’s comedy, *Le Misanthrope, ou l’Atrabilaire amoureux* (The Misanthrope, or the Melancholic in Love, 1666), and to Rousseau’s defense of Molière’s *Alceste* in the *Lettre à D’Alembert sur les spectacles* (Letter to D’Alembert on the Theater, 1758),⁸³ another possible intertext can be found in the so-called polemic between Catherine’s ground-breaking satirical journal *Vsiakaia vsiachina* (All Sorts, 1769) and N.I. Novikov’s *Truten’* (The Drone, 1769–70). Although this skirmish over the nature of satire has traditionally been read as a serious challenge to Catherine by Novikov, it can also be seen, more probably, as a staged debate designed to attract readers and to model journalistic argumentation on literary topics.⁸⁴ A key letter published in *All Sorts* connects the problem of satire to proper social conduct: it portrays an encounter between a misanthrope and a polite group of interlocutors exemplifying ideal sociability. Just like Polion before his reformation, the misanthrope in *All Sorts* mercilessly criticizes society: “He saw vices everywhere, where other people. . . could scarcely discern weaknesses, and weaknesses that are very ordinary among human

80. Image reproduced in Kahn et al., *A History of Russian Literature*, 247.

81. Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1995–2000), 1:113.

82. “Я ближним никогда злодейкой не была, / И тайну к щастию сию употребила, / Что благо я свое во благе их любила; / . . . / Кто сеял у тебя отраву ту в крови, / Что человеческий не стоит род любви[?]” Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 140–41 (translation modified).

83. Levitt, “The Polemic with Rousseau over Gender and Sociability,” 590–91.

84. W. Gareth Jones, *Nikolay Novikov: Enlightener of Russia* (Cambridge, Eng., 1984), 26–27.

beings.”⁸⁵ The fictional sender of the letter, Afinogen Perochinov, concludes by enunciating several rules to which he and his polite friends agree after meeting the misanthrope, beginning with “1) Never call weaknesses vice. 2) Maintain love for humanity on all occasions.”⁸⁶ Naida’s teachings, as we have seen, are based on love for humanity; when Polion asks her to teach him “Как тех людей любить, которы развращенны” (to love depraved people), Naida’s first words are: “Прости им слабости” (Forgive their weaknesses).⁸⁷ There are no manuscripts to prove whether Catherine wrote Afinogen Perochinov’s letter, but it is closely enough related to texts she did write that the article has been printed among her works.⁸⁸ In any case, her participation in *All Sorts*, officially edited by G.V. Kozitskii, was an open secret. In this light, *Polion* presents Urusova as Catherine’s ally and a fellow promoter of refined sociability among the nobility.⁸⁹ This might be one reason why the poem apparently garnered the empress’s approbation.⁹⁰

It is here that Urusova’s defense of the Ancients meets her argument for sociability traced by Marcus Levitt. In France, the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns was intimately related to the rise of salon culture. Urusova’s identification of pedantry with the Moderns might in this respect seem surprising, since they are often associated with the elegant laypeople who populated the salons of Paris and competed with university-based, classically trained scholars for recognition as the ultimate literary authority. In reality a standard debating topos on both sides, accusations of pedantry allowed writers to define their aesthetic positions more precisely, with the Ancients often winning over at least a segment of salon opinion.⁹¹ The European Quarrel did not oppose the friends and enemies of Enlightenment sociability, but rather unfolded within its typical settings and modes of discourse for the benefit of a sophisticated reading public.⁹² By reviving the Quarrel in Russia, Urusova patriotically implies that Russia’s leader and nobility possess the necessary education and social refinement for Ancient perspectives to be meaningful to them.

That said, it is arguably quite significant that the enlightened Polion does not return to the city, where he would have found not just urban sociability,

85. “Везде он видел тут пороки, где другие. .на силу приглядеть могли слабости, и слабости весьма обыкновенныя человечеству.” *Vsiakaia vsiachina* no. 53 (1769): 141.

86. “1) Никогда не называть слабости пороком. 2) Хранить во всех случаях человеколюбие.” *Vsiakaia vsiachina* no. 53 (1769): 142.

87. Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 142–43.

88. A.N. Pypin, ed., *Sochineniia imperatritsy Ekateriny II na osnovanii podlinnykh rukopisei*, 12 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1901–1907), 5:299–300, 331.

89. On imperial policing of elite sociability, see Igor Fedyukin, “Sex in the City that Peter Built: The Demimonde and Sociability in Mid-Eighteenth Century St. Petersburg,” *Slavic Review* 76, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 907–30.

90. M.N. Makarov, “Materialy dlia istorii russkikh zhenshchin-avtorov,” *Damskii zhurnal* 29, no. 7 (February 1830): 98.

91. Fumaroli, “Les abeilles et les araignées,” 37–38, 48–49, 87; Jocelyn Royé, *La Figure du pédant de Montaigne à Molière* (Geneva, 2008), 194–96.

92. Larry F. Norman, *The Shock of the Ancient: Literature and History in Early Modern France* (Chicago, 2011), 71–73.

but also government service. Catherine-Naida appears not as a tsaritsa, but rather as a neighboring noble landowner. The empress cultivated this image, too: in 1774, the year in which *Polion* was published, Catherine made a grand gesture in which she depicted herself as a Russian landowner. To encourage the nobility of Kazan' to crush the Pugachev Rebellion (1773–74), Catherine wrote an open letter to General A.I. Bibikov, who was leading government troops against the rebels. She declared that, “яко помещица той Губернии” (as a landowner in the province), she would set the example by donating recruits, equipment, and horses from the Crown's local estates to the military corps of the Kazan' nobility.⁹³ The letter was read aloud to the assembled nobles in the area and therefore became widely known. By alluding to Catherine's alter ego as a landowner, Urusova similarly underscores the ties that bind the empress and her nobility: the empress's role is to help nobles take advantage of the freedom from mandatory government service granted in 1762 and live idyllic lives on their estates. Urusova advocates the nobility's absolute authority on their estates as a parallel to the empress's authority over Russia; while she condemns Polion's attempted reforms for bringing suffering on the peasants, her solution to the exploitation of serfs is to maintain the peasantry's traditional way of life, and she asks the empress to support these policies. She presents the ethical lessons to be learned from correct reading of the classics as necessary for this collaboration: Catherine/Naida as a moral exemplar helps her nobles to feel their duties to society, including both service and land ownership.

Urusova expands on the question of noble duty in her collection of dramatic epistles in verse, the *Heroides Dedicated to the Muses*. Capping off Urusova's defense of the Ancients, the *Heroides* appeared anonymously in 1777, but a notice published promptly in N.I. Novikov's *St. Petersburg Scholarly Notices*, pretending to respect the author's feminine modesty, declared, “we can say only that these *Heroides* came from the same pen as the poem *Polion*, or *The Misanthrope Enlightened*.”⁹⁴ Whereas Virgil's presence in *Polion* has been overlooked for two and a half centuries, here the classical model is by design impossible to miss. Urusova's poems were the first imitation of Ovid's *Heroides* by a Russian woman and, as Yuliya Volkhonovych has shown, the most original and extensive engagement of any Russian writer with the genre.⁹⁵ Again addressing both literary and political concerns, Urusova confirms the productivity of ancient models by blending the Ovidian form with the language of sentiment to explore the ethical self-fashioning of the nobility in Catherinian Russia.

93. M. Poludenskii, ed., “Podlinnyia bumagi, do bunta Pugachova otnosiashchiiasia,” *Chteniia v imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh pri Moskovskom universitete* 2 (1860), part 5, 31–92 (65).

94. “[Т]олько сказать мы можем, что сии Ироиды проистекли от одного пера с Поемою Полионом, или просветившимся нелюдимом.” E.S. Urusova, *Iroidy muzam posviashchennia* (St. Petersburg, 1777); *Sanktpeterburgskiiia ucheniia vedomosti* 6, no. 22 (June 2, 1777): 174–76 (175).

95. Yuliya Volkhonovych, *Russian Heroides, 1759–1843: Translations and Transformations* (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 2014), 12.

Making the most of a genre that represents conflicting emotions, Urusova turns away from Ovid's emphasis on the anger and despair caused by betrayal; her primary subject is "the drama of duty, virtue, and love," the basic components of sentimental writings that Hilde Hoogenboom has demonstrated to be particularly associated with noble identity in Russia.⁹⁶ Each epistle creates a different configuration of those three elements. For instance, an unusual epistle from a man to another man, "Promest to his friend," repairs the wrong done to women in Book 2 of the *Aeneid*, when Aeneas forgets about his wife, Creusa, who consequently perishes in the burning Troy. Urusova replaces Aeneas with a conscientious heroine: "There it was young Aeneas, saving Anchises; / And here Floriza was saving her father from ruin."⁹⁷ When Promest intervenes, he saves both the old man and the young woman, and subsequently marries her. Promest's emotional identification with Floriza's and her father's suffering transforms the ancient story so that duty, virtue, and love can be reconciled.

The image of the ruler remains central: as Andrew Kahn has shown, although Urusova embraces sensibility more heartily than the empress ever did, her praise of Catherine in the proem prepares the reader to view the *Heroides* as participating in Catherine's Enlightenment project to reconcile passion and reason.⁹⁸ Classical motifs combine with sentimental values to guide the text's portrayal of the noble-sovereign relationship. In an exchange of epistles based on a recent Russian tragedy, A.A. Rzhevskii's *Podlozhnyi Smerdii* (The False Smerdis, 1769), the future Darius the Great claims that love, law, and duty demand that he murder the false Smerdis, who has usurped the Persian throne and tyrannically taken Darius's beloved Fedima as his wife. In her reply, the virtuous Fedima retorts that love and duty can diverge: since hearts are not bound in marriage "[ч]тобы они закон, и долг позабывали" (so that they might forget law and duty), "должность брачную я свято соблюдаю" ([she] will sacredly observe [her] matrimonial duty) despite her love for Darius.⁹⁹ She agrees with Darius's view, however, that rulers must model virtue for their subjects: "Only he who sows virtue among his subjects through example / Can be master of scepter and hearts alike."¹⁰⁰ The potential political risks of denouncing a usurper (like the empress herself) are diffused by recalling Catherine's public image as a cultivator of noble virtue and therefore someone deserving of her subjects' love. In form and content, then, the *Heroides* expand on the lessons of *Polion*, arguing for an ethical bond between the ruler and the nobility shaped by sensitive engagement with the classics.

96. Hilde Hoogenboom, "Sentimental Novels and Pushkin: European Literary Markets and Russian Readers," *Slavic Review* 74, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 553–74 (570).

97. "Там был младый Еней, спасающий Анхиза; / А здесь отца спасла, от гибели Флориза." Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 212–13.

98. Andrew Kahn, "Russian Elegists and Latin Lovers in the Long Eighteenth Century," in Thea S. Thorsen, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Latin Love Elegy* (Cambridge, Eng., 2013), 336–47 (340–42).

99. Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 168–69, 182–83.

100. "Тот Скиптра и сердец бывает лишь владетель, / Примером в подданных кто сеет добродетель." Ewington, *Russian Women Poets*, 180–81 (translation modified).

Introducing their *History of Women's Writing in Russia* (2002), Adele Marie Barker and Jehanne M. Gheith observe that “the act of omitting [women writers] from a history of Russian literature leaves one with a radically incomplete picture of Russia’s literary life during the formative years of its development.”¹⁰¹ Princess Urusova’s writings of the 1770s perfectly illustrate that point, shedding new light on multiple key cultural phenomena of the period. By making the most powerful argument for the Ancients in eighteenth-century Russian literature, Urusova helped to reimagine Catherinian Russia as a reincarnation of the ancient world, paving the way for the formulation of the Greek Project at the end of the decade. She innovatively modelled how a direct return to the classics could be combined with the latest European fashion for sensibility. Responding at the same time to the uncertainty that reigned between the 1762 emancipation of the nobility and the 1785 Charter to the Nobility that confirmed their rights and role in the state, Urusova used these literary frameworks to imagine the monarch and the nobility jointly exalted by their sense of duty and cultural refinement. Fascinatingly, it was a woman contemplating the image of a female ruler who found in the typically male-dominated world of the classics the ideal model for thinking about both literature and society.

101. Barker and Gheith, introduction to *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*, 2.