

Ed. Veronika Zuseva-Ozkan. *Zhenshchina moderna: Gender v russkoi kul'ture 1890–1930-kh godov: Kollektivnaia monografiia. Gendernye issledovaniia. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2022. 688 pp. Notes. Illustrations. ₺1140, hardbound.*

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This volume, described by its editor as a “collective monograph,” consists of 45 articles by 41 authors devoted to the evolution of the term “gender” in Russian and Soviet culture from 1890 to 1930. With few exceptions, most articles are 10–15 pages in length. They trace the breakdown of the traditional dichotomy of the sexes into a nuanced understanding of personhood (*lichnost'*) where notions of masculinity and femininity do not necessarily coincide with male or female designations based on physical characteristics. As employed here, the term “gender” is seen as culturally conditioned, suggesting fluidity and personal self-fashioning in each subject’s creation of the self. In response to rapid economic, political, and social changes at the border of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Silver Age period advanced the deconstruction of the patriarchal structure of family life and saw the emergence of “the new woman,” a process continuing for nearly two decades following the 1917 revolution. The most famous women writers of this period, Anna Akhmatova and Marina Tsvetaeva, are only peripheral figures in this collection. Instead, many essays rediscover forgotten figures. These articles analyze a full range of materials—not only works of fiction and poetry, but also visual sources, such as drawing and most notably ego-documents such as diaries, memoirs, letters, and marginalia. Many articles present close readings of a particular work, while others produce typologies of women’s roles in a given author’s writings. What gives this hugely diverse volume cohesion is a carefully orchestrated set of linkages by theme or genre from one article to the next which flow in a mostly chronological order.

Articles are divided into four sections corresponding to accepted historical timeframes. Given the impossibility of treating all contributions, I can highlight only a few of the many outstanding pieces in each section. “The border of the centuries: 1890–1905” has three subtitles: “Masculinity and femininity in fiction,” “The construction of the lyrical subject in poetry,” and “The construction of gender in ego-documents and socio-political discourse.” The section begins with the fictional characters of the two dominant male writers of the time: Lev Tolstoi and Anton Chekhov. The first article by Anastasia Rozhkova, a student at the Gor’kii Literary Institute, revisits comparisons of Tolstoi’s “The Kreutzer Sonata” with his wife’s novellas but expands the sources of the couples’ incompatible views to a broader range of other writings, particularly family documents (26–41). The Italian scholar Gloria Politi describes the evolution of female character types in Chekhov’s stories (42–55), concluding that for this author the development of a woman’s personality in her inner world is not dependent on biological sex. These opening articles set a pattern for the volume whose contributors range from well-established Russian scholars of women’s writing, such as Mariia V. Mikhailova, Ol’ga Demidova, and the main editor, Veronika Zuseva-Ozkan, to newer names. The cohort is mainly Russian plus several non-Russians. Mikhailova (who is repeatedly thanked by other contributors for her mentoring and support) in “Girlish dreams and womanly neuroses in ladies’ fulfillment” counterpoints the biographical and fictional stories of two almost unknown writers, “K. El'tsvova,” the pseudonym of Ekaterina Lopatina, and Liubov' F. Dostoevskaia, daughter of the famous novelist. While neither received critical acclaim, Mikhailova’s close reading of their narratives of psychological distress and search for fulfillment, placed in the context

of their literary milieu, convincingly presents a special lens for studying women characters. Turning to lyric poetry, Iuliia E. Pavel'eva examines the literary rivalry of the sisters Mirra Lokhvitskaia and Nadezhda Teffi (82–98). While the latter found fame for her prose, Pavel'eva unmasks Teffi's outright theft of Lokhvitskaia's poetic themes and devices in violation of a family agreement to divide the literary turf. The third subsection broadly covers social activism with an overview of women's rights activists of the 1890's by Violetta Trofimova (114–27), a discussion of the "woman question" in 1903 reviews of the dancer Isadora Duncan (127–43), and concludes with Irina Sinova's discussion (144–57) of the differences in content and viewpoint of women's memoirs. Each memoir centers on finding personal fulfillment in a profession rather than love and so exemplifies the emergence of the "new woman."

The second section, "From the first Russian revolution to October 1917," repeats the previous structure but with greater emphasis on literary genres featuring explications of the feminine in the prose of Fedor Sologub, A.N. Tolstoi, and Aleksandr Kuprin. Kseniia I. Morozova's provocative essay "Between the Mother of God and Venus" deals with the negative image of a mother in A.K. Gol'debaeva's story "Mama left" (183–97). Essays on Anna Mar's "Woman on the Cross" and "Woman in Lilac" by Anna S. Andreeva (211–24) and Viktoriia G. Khruslova (225–33) examine Mar's tragic attempts to break free from patriarchal traditions to find a modern identity, resulting in suicide. Anna A. Orlova returns to the transitional figure of Innokentii Annenskii (234–45). Farida Kh. Israpova examines Nikolai Gumilev's gender imagery in "Alien Sky" (246–61). Ekaterina V. Kuznetsov portrays a different direction in self-transformation: Elizaveta Kuz'mina-Karavaeva's (later known as Mother Maria) adaptation of female role models as lyrical heroines who increasingly reflect her own religious activities (262–86). Of the three articles on drama, Zuseva-Ozkan's comparison of Teffi's play "The Woman Question" with N.N. Urvantsov's "The Fate of a Man" clearly affirms the centrality of the topic at the time.

The fourteen articles in the third section, "New Russia of the 1920–1930s" again focus on prose, poetry, drama, ego documents, and visual culture. Many extend beyond the stated time frame but all examine women's problems in the difficult transition to Soviet life from loss of private space to communal upbringing of children. Writers discussed include Ol'ga Forsh, Konstantin Vaginov, Andrei Platonov, Vladimir Maiakovskii, Larissa Reisner, and Elizaveta Polonskaia. A short final section on Russian émigré women includes individuals such as Nina Berberova and larger sociological issues, such as acceptance and adaptations to new roles and environments abroad. The volume ends with a bon-bon: Tatiana V. Ternopol's tracing of the evolution of Russian women characters in Agatha Christy's detective fiction. Each author's email address is included to facilitate much needed further discussion of these issues.

Alexander Burry. *Legacies of the Stone Guest: The Don Juan Legend in Russian Literature.*

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It is Alexander Burry's contention that Pushkin's "little tragedy," *The Stone Guest*, shaped the afterlife of the Don Juan legend in Russian literature. However, his book pursues dual aims.