

"The women question" in the life and works of Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin

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**‘THE WOMAN QUESTION’
IN THE LIFE AND WORKS OF
ALEKSEI SERGEEVICH SUVORIN**

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PhD Thesis

QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the influence of ‘the woman question’ on the life and writings of Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin (1834–1912), an eminent journalist, publisher and editor of the newspaper *Novoe vremia*. My research is based on Suvorin’s previously unexamined contribution to public debate on this question and also includes an overview of his fictional work. The thesis represents a case study and brings to light material critical to Suvorin’s biography. This is important because Suvorin’s personal case exemplifies the difficulties which up-and-coming men of the intelligentsia encountered in responding to the rapid and drastic social changes to which they were exposed, and in particular to the redistribution of influence and authority between men and women. Based on documentary sources and in particular on new archival material the thesis analyses the extent to which Suvorin’s life was affected by his relationship with strong and domineering women and examines the impact of these biographical factors on his writings. This case study provides an important insight into the development of the Russian liberal idea commonly referred to as the ‘emancipation of women’.

The thesis is organized into an Introduction followed by three chapters, a Conclusion, a Bibliography, and an Appendix. Developing my argument, I apply a chronological principle, dividing Suvorin’s life and works into three periods presented in chapters 1–3; these periods can be matched up in approximate terms with the three stages of the women’s movement in Russia. The first period starts in 1858 and ends in 1873, the turning point in Suvorin’s life and career; within this period the women’s movement in Russia had worked out its ideology and some tactical moves. The second period (1874–1890) covers Suvorin’s career successes and his concomitant midlife crisis; during this time, the women’s movement was also experiencing a crisis of its own. The third period (1891–1912) marks Suvorin’s personal decline against the rapid politicization of the Russian women’s movement. In the Conclusion section I develop an overview of the contribution which Suvorin made to the emergence of ‘public opinion’ in late Imperial Russia and I end by attempting a definition of his ideological position within the context of Russian liberal thought. The material analysed in the thesis makes it possible to place Suvorin amongst the so-called conservative liberals, at least as regards his views on the emancipation of women. The Appendix includes translations of the Russian quotes used in the main text of the thesis.

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Abbreviations

- ed. — edinitsa khranenia (storage unit)
F. — fond (fund)
IRLI — Institut russkoi literatury (Institute of Russian Literature, SPb)
L., l. — list (folio)
L. — Leningrad (in bibliography)
M. — Moscow (in bibliography)
op. — opis' (inventory)
OR — otdel rukopisei (manuscript department)
NLO — Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie (magazine New Literary Review)
P. — pis'ma (letters)
PSS — polnoe sobranie sochinenii (complete works)
PSSP — polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem (complete collection of works and letters)
RGALI — Rossiiskii arkhiv literatury i iskusstva (Russian State Archive for Literature and Arts)
RGB — Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka (State Russian Library, Moscow)
RNB — Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka (National Russian Library, Saint Petersburg)
SPb — Saint Petersburg (in bibliography)

In transliterating Russian titles and names, I use the Library of Congress system, except in the cases of well known persons (e. g. Dostoevsky), and I change the old-style orthography to conform to modern usage.

INTRODUCTION

§ 1

The work of this thesis and the subject which it addresses — ‘*The Woman Question*’ in *the Life and Works of Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin*¹ — has its origins in extensive archival research which I carried out as an assistant to Professor Donald Rayfield while we prepared Suvorin’s Diary for publication.² In the absence of a full documented biography of Suvorin, our attempts to fill the biographical gaps had revealed a series of intriguing woman-related episodes in his life which I found impossible to ignore. On the face of it, their regularity seemed to indicate that key moments in Suvorin’s life were profoundly influenced, even determined, by women; and yet Suvorin had the reputation of a self-made man. Pursuing enquiry and wishing to discover what lay behind this to my mind salient influence, I came to review Suvorin’s life through the lens of ‘the woman question’. This angle proved relevant and rewarding, in part because Suvorin’s life overlapped chronologically with the onset and massive development of the emancipation of women in Russia (from mid 19th — to the beginning of the 20th century). The data obtained and analysed has allowed me to formulate my thesis which I intend to support in the present work.

In exploring ‘the woman question’ in Russia I will use the terminology suggested by historian Irina Iukina in her fundamental study *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti* (Saint Petersburg, 2007) According to her, the terms ‘the woman question’, ‘the women’s movement’, ‘emancipation/liberation of women’, ‘feminism’ can be considered rough synonyms despite individual nuance. These terms are distinguished from the term ‘the feminist movement’, since the latter suggests an organized social formation with an established ideology. Furthermore, the social phenomena concerned are consecutive in time: ‘the women’s movement’ in Russia refers to a **first stage** movement which spans the period between 1858 and 1905, while ‘the feminist movement’, or the **second stage**, lasted from 1905 to 1918.

¹ Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin (1834–1912), an eminent journalist, publisher and editor of the newspaper *Novoe vremia*.

² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina: Tekstologicheskaja rashifrovka* N. A. Roskinoi. Podgotovka teksta D. Rayfielda i O. Makarovoi (M., London, 1999, 1st ed., 2000, 2nd ed.).

The first stage is of particular interest to me, since it coincides with Suvorin's life. This period is divided into three phases: the *latent phase* (from the 1850s to the beginning of the 1860s), the *active phase* (from the 1860s till the end of the 1880s), and the *institutional phase* (from the end of the 1880s till 1905). A more detailed account of each phase will be given in the relevant chapters, although it is worthwhile here to quote a summary of the first stage made by Iukina: 'Over half a century (1858–1905) of the women's movement, Russian society saw a change in the system of values, norms and expectations as regards women, particularly in relation to women's employment, education, and their marriage and family practices'.³ The second stage of the women's movement (1905–1918) is the feminist one; it has an established ideology, it becomes a part of a general political process and is aimed at changing society's gender system and bringing about the equal status of men and women.⁴ This stage is only considered here inasmuch as Suvorin, seriously ill by that time and dead by 1912, could react to this or that feminist event.

There is a vast literature on Russian feminism and considerable credit for its study should be given to the Western researchers, since they 'were not limited by "the solely correct" theory and methodology',⁵ i. e. Marxism-Leninism. The classical work in this genre is the monograph *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (1st edition: Princeton, 1978) by Richard Stites. This book, along with Iukina's recent monograph summing up pre-Revolutionary, Soviet, and post-Soviet studies both in Russia and in the West, form my primary source on this subject. I have also taken into account various aspects of women's liberation dealt with in books and papers which are included in the Bibliography.

The woman question incorporated a number of issues, the most topical being the education of women, their employment rights, professional career, social activity, political rights, personal freedom, matrimonial relations, as well as birth control and prostitution. All these problems were widely discussed and led to a dramatic divergence of opinion which resulted in the emergence of conservative, liberal, and radical views on

³ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti* (SPb, 2007), p. 216.

⁴ See for example, Y. Hirdman, 'The Gender System', in *Moving on: New Perspective on the Women's Movement* (Aarhus University Press, 1991), pp. 208–220.

⁵ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 43.

women's liberation. All three conceptions had an impact on state policy, on the press, and on belles-lettres. Iukina locates the genesis of these debates in the 1830–1840s, i. e. in the period preceding the women's movement proper; she links their origin with the growing self-awareness of the individual in Russian society: 'Assertion of respect for the natural rights led the Russian intellectual elite to the very brink of the problem of female individual autonomy and women's rights'.⁶ Still constricted by patriarchal discourse, 'the ideologues of the 1840s' were unable to offer concrete ways of changing the dependence of women upon men; however, their contribution to the development of female identity should not be underestimated.⁷

Conservative discourse was aimed at keeping women within the family circle, and it cultivated the image of woman as the guardian angel of the family hearth; the notion of women's freedom was seen by the conservatives as 'the right to debauchery'. Radical discourse was the very opposite of the conservative in demanding total freedom for women in all spheres of life. As for liberal discourse, its primary goal was women's education, followed by their professional self-determination. At the same time, liberals were noticeably reticent in their views of women's emancipation: 'Lofty ideas of women's liberation would come into conflict with their own notion of women, and there were no appropriate behaviour patterns in social life'.⁸ Being unable to give up the main patriarchal totem of femininity, liberals were trying to compromise by, for example, offering women the duty of 'responsible maternity'.⁹ Another popular subject of liberal discourse was the complementarity of the sexes, which posited that social progress would arise from the fact that man's 'brain and strength' were harmoniously supported by woman's 'heart and love'.¹⁰ The ambivalence of liberal discourse enabled its opponents to appropriate some liberal ideas for their own strategic ends, which hindered the

⁶ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 71.

⁷ Cf.: I. Savkina, 'Krizis identichnosti: muzhskaia i zhenskaia versii. Dnevniki i pis'ma Aleksandra i Natal'i Gertzenov (1841–1846)', in *Zhenshchina v rossiiskom obshchestve*, 3 (2000); Eadem, *Razgovory s zerkalom i Zazerkal'em: Avtodokumental'nye zhenskie teksty v russkoi literature pervoi poloviny XIX veka* (M., 2007), p. 313–397.

⁸ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 89.

⁹ One of the chief ideologists of the women's emancipation, surgeon Nikolai Pirogov, pursued these ideas in his article 'Voprosy zhizni' which was published in the magazine *Morskoi sbornik* in 1856.

¹⁰ The magazine *Russkii pedagogicheskii vestnik* published a series of articles on this subject.

crystallization of a distinct liberal ideology with regard to gender.¹¹ American historian Laura Engelstein attributes the ambivalence of liberals to the specific development of the Russian mentality: ‘As part of their precocious acquaintance with the Western critique of bourgeois culture, Russians (having read Charles Fourier and John Stuart Mill) distrusted bourgeois values of sexual propriety well before anything resembling an economic middle class had emerged. <...> As a result, neither their feminism, their concepts of manhood, nor their understanding of class precisely fitted the Western standard’.¹²

Particularly controversial was the question of a woman’s personal freedoms, including her sexuality and the right to be in command of her own body. Originally raised in the 1830s and 40s with the Russian publication of George Sand’s novels, this question spawned the movement of ‘George-Sandists’, or advocates of the ‘freedom of the heart’ (among them were Aleksandr Herzen, Dmitrii Pisarev, and Vissarion Belinskii). In the press, the topic ‘provoked anger and denunciation’¹³ and was harshly censored after the defeat of the French Revolution in 1848, although it left its trace in literature, for instance, in the novels *Kto vinovat?* (1845) and *Soroka-vorovka* (1848) by Herzen, *Polin’ka Saks* (1847) by Aleksandr Druzhinin, *Naprasnyi dar* (1842) by Elena Gan, *Oshibka* (1849) by Evgeniia Tur etc. Later this question surfaced in the 1860s, at the onset of the Great Reforms, the fundamental modernization of Russian society and the beginning of its transition from feudalism to some form of capitalism. Friedrich Engels commented on this coincidence: ‘It is a curious fact that with every great revolutionary movement the question of “free love” comes in to the foreground. Among one set of people it appears as revolutionary progress, as the shaking off of traditional fetters, which are no longer necessary; for others, it seems a welcome doctrine, comfortably legitimating all sorts of free and easy practices between man and woman’.¹⁴

The set phrase ‘sexual question’ (*polovoi vopros*) was coined to refer to the issue of female sexual freedom, which, according to several researchers (Igor Kon, Richard

¹¹ See discussion covering a later stage of the women’s movement in V. Leonov, ‘Èkspluatatsiia muzhskikh strakhov: Gazetnaia kompaniia protiv zhenskogo dvizheniia v Rossii 70–80-kh godov 19 veka’, in *Gendernoe ravnopravie v Rossii* (SPb, 2008), p. 164–166.

¹² L. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*. (Ithaca and London, 1996), p. 4.

¹³ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 78.

¹⁴ F. Engels, ‘The Book of Revelation’, in K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Religion* (M, 1957), p. 127.

Stites, Peter Møller, Laura Engelstein et al.) became particularly topical starting from 1890, with the publication of Leo Tolstoy's novella *Kreitserova sonata*. This piece gave rise to a wide and intense discussion of marriage, family, and sexual morals and led to the unanimous conclusion that marriage as an institution was in acute crisis. In subsequent years, this discussion was taken over by the Silver Age philosophers, who elevated 'the sexual question' to metaphysical heights.¹⁵ After the Revolution of 1905, which brought about political reaction and social apathy, 'the sexual question' transformed into decadent erotic practices.

Some researchers, however (e. g. Eleonora Pavliuchenko, Boris Paramonov, and Semen Ekshtut), place the origin of 'the sexual question' to the 1860s: 'It was the first — and failed — attempt at a sexual revolution in Russia. <...> It was not without reason that the sexual question was taken up by the generation of the sixties in the guise of "the woman question". Such treatment was inadequate and full of compromise, as it occurs in any social movement subject to cultural suppression: they wanted to talk about sex, but they talked about women's rights instead.'¹⁶ The range of possible solutions of 'the sexual question' was very wide. For example, the political leaflet *Molodaia Rossiia* (1862) suggested the most radical measures: 'We demand the total liberation of women, <...> we demand the abolition of marriage as a highly immoral phenomenon, which is inconceivable within the ultimate equality of genders, we demand therefore an abolition of the family, which hinders personal development...'¹⁷ In his novel *Chto delat'? Iz rasskazov o novykh liudiakh* (1863), which became a life manual for the generation of the sixties, Chernyshevsky presented an efficient *ménage à trois*, while in his real life he encouraged his wife to promiscuity.¹⁸

'New Russian women', indeed, enthusiastically followed the way suggested to them. The age-long patriarchal model of the Russian family was substantially eroded. The women who adopted emancipation ideas no longer wanted to stay with their

¹⁵ See: O. Matich, *Erotic Utopia: the Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Wisconsin University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ B. Paramonov, 'Golaia koroleva: Russkii nihilizm kak kul'turnyi proekt', in *Konets stilia* (M., 1997), p. 66.

¹⁷ See: *Politicheskie protsessy 60-kh godov* (M., L., 1923). p. 267.

¹⁸ See: I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 119–125 ('A Licence for Adultery'); V. Shchukin, 'Blesk i nishcheta "pozitivnoi erotologii": K kontseptsii liubvi u N. G. Chernyshevskogo', in *Voprosy filosofii*, 1 (2002).

husbands, particularly where ideological differences occurred (Elizaveta Salias de Turnemir, Mariia Trubnikova, Elena Konradi). Common-law and sham marriages became widespread (Liudmila Shelgunova, Mariia Bokova, Sofii Kovalevskaia); some women even rejected marriage altogether (Nadezhda Stasova, Mariia Tsebrikova, Anna Shabanova).¹⁹

However, this resolutely militant activism of women in matters of private life proved to be startling even for those men who sided with them ideologically. This was particularly true in relation to the radical ‘new women’ — nihilists — who shocked society not only with their behaviour, but also with their appearance. It was to be expected that female nihilists met with antagonism and condemnation in conservative circles; but at the same time, ‘the involvement of women in the nihilist movement had also scared the gurus of “the woman question” of the 1840s, those who only yesterday accompanied them in search of a new destiny for women (Dostoevsky, Nikolai Pirogov)’.²⁰

Among those frightened ‘gurus’, there were quite a number of *raznochintsy*, for whom ‘the sexual question’ had a special meaning. This marginalized group which consisted of educated commoners of various ranks and social origin suffered from emotional and psychological inferiority complexes which resulted in a lack of self-confidence, in indecisiveness and timidity, particularly in relations with women: ‘They experienced agonizing bouts of unfulfilled sexual desire, upon which they reflected in their diaries and letters.’²¹ As Kon states, the *raznochintsy*’s embarrassment in ‘the sexual question’ had some social consequences: ‘It ought to be emphasized that the suspicious-circumspect attitude to sensuality among the men of the 1860s <...> was not a simple

¹⁹ See for example: T. Bogdanovich, *Liubov' liudei shestidesiatykh godov* (L., 1929); O. Bulanova-Trubnikova, *Tri pokoleniia* (M.; L., 1928); E. Barteneva, ‘E. I. Konradi’, in *Zhenskoe delo*, 1 (1899); N. Shelgunov, L. Shelgunova, M. Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia* (M., 1967); S. Kovalevskaia, *Vospominaniia. Povesti* (M., 1974); V. Stasov, *Nadezhda Vasil'evna Stasova: Vospoinaiia i ocherki* (SPb, 1899); Zh. Kulish, *M. K. Tsebrikova — obshchestvennaia i literaturnaia deiatel'nost'* (Voronezh, 1988); I. Iukina, ‘Dokor Shabanova’, in *Kharizmaticheskie lichnosti v istorii Rossii* (SPb, 1997).

²⁰ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 136.

²¹ T. Pecherskaia, ‘Russkii demokrat na rendez-vous’, in *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 11 (1991), p. 41. See also: B. Korman, *Lirika Nekrasova* (Izhevsk, 1978), pp. 63–64; I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism*, p. 69–70; T. Pecherskaia, *Raznochintsy shestidesiatykh godov XIX veka: Fenomen samosoznaniia v aspekte filologicheskoi germenetiki* (Novosibirsk, 1999). On self-awareness of *raznochintsy* see: E. Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), p. 63–70.

manifestation of personal psychosexual problems, but also a very clear-cut ideology.²² Being in diametric opposition to the conservatives ideologically, the *raznochintsy* concurred with them in their views on female sexuality: ‘While the conservative-religious critic censured eroticism for contradicting religious dogmas, the revolutionary populists simply could not make it fit within the normative canon of a person called upon to give up all his energy for the struggle to liberate the working classes.’²³ The radicals started to preach asceticism both in life (v. Znamenskaia commune lead by Vasilii Sleptsov²⁴) and in literature (v. Rakhmetov in Chernyshevsky’s novel), while conservative writers reacted to the dangerous trends with anti-nihilist novels such as *Vzbalamuchennoe more* (1863) by Aleksei Pisemskii, *Nekuda* (1864) by Nikolai Leskov, *Marevo* (1864) by Viktor Kliushnikov, and *Sovremennaia idilliia* (1865) by Vasilii Avenarius.

In the 1860s and 70s, men’s embarrassment at the advances made by women in their emancipation brought forth a stream of fiction (first and foremost by Turgenev, Goncharov, and Pisemskii) in which a strong and active woman was opposed to a man lacking character despite having some talent. Contemporary feminist critics have thoroughly analysed these works and have come to the conclusion that such an opposition was symptomatic: ‘The inadequacies and weaknesses of some male protagonists find their complementary awesome strengths in the young heroines of Russia.’²⁵ According to Barbara Heldt, such a heroine represents ‘a terrible perfection’, while Rosalind Marsh points out that ‘an entirely positive view of the idealisation of women characters by Russian male writers overlooks the fact that idealisation may be merely the other side of the coin of the denigration of women.’²⁶ Working on the same idea, Heldt comes to a sweeping conclusion: ‘It should be possible to speak of misogyny of fiction as another facet of male imaging of women, one which extends from, rather than opposes itself to,

²² I. Kon, *The Sexual Revolution in Russia: From the Age of the Czars to Today* (The Free Press, 1995), p. 29–30.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²⁴ See for example: K. Chukovskii, ‘Istoriia sleptsovskoi kommuny’, in Kornei Chukovskii, *Liudi i knigi* (M., 1960); E. Zhukovskaia, *Zapiski. Vospominaniia* (M., 2001).

²⁵ B. Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Indianapolis, 1992), p. 12. Alternatively, J. M. Heith introduced an opposition ‘Superfluous man and the Necessary Woman’, see her *Finding the Middle Ground: Krestovskii, Tur, and the Power of Ambivalence in Nineteenth-Century Russian Women’s Prose* (Evanston, IL, 2004), pp. 129–155.

²⁶ R. Marsh, ‘An Image of Their Own? Feminism, Revisionism and Russian Culture’, in *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 8.

the image of perfection. <...> Misogyny in its undiluted form constitutes a none too small and chronologically very persistent stream in Russian literature.’²⁷ Other scholars of the women’s movement, who have analysed both earlier and later literary works, reached the consensus that Russian writers had been originally prone to distinct misogyny, which had its root in Byzantine cultural and religious traditions and was supported by the moral canon of *Domostroi* in medieval Russia.²⁸

The practice of identifying cases of misogyny in literature (as well as in art as a whole) is not a new one; it is widely represented in numerous western studies.²⁹ However, insofar as one can judge by the mentioned sources, none of these properly define the concept of misogyny. More often than not the term ‘misogyny’ (hatred of women) is used as a synonym for the term ‘gynophobia’ (fear of women). Thus, discussing the misogyny of Russian male writers, Heldt uses epithets such as ‘threatening’, ‘awesome’, ‘dangerous’, ‘menacing’ in relation to the female characters created by these writers. Even the title phrase —‘Terrible Perfection’ — contains the concept of ‘fear’ and not ‘hatred’. In her concept of misogyny, Katherine Rogers also includes such negative emotions as ‘hatred, fear or contempt of womankind.’³⁰

Hatred of women as a universal male ‘prejudice’ is thoroughly examined in the monograph *Misogyny: The Male Malady* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001) by the anthropologist David Gilmore. For the purpose of his study, Gilmore defines misogyny as ‘an unreasonable fear or hatred of women that takes on some palpable form in any given society,’³¹ apparently presuming that the negative emotions of ‘fear’ and ‘hatred’ are causally (though not necessarily) linked³². The author defines his approach as ‘an eclectic

²⁷ B. Heldt, *Terrible Perfection*, p. 25.

²⁸ See for example: J. Andrew, *Women in Russian Literature, 1780–1863* (New York, 1988); see also the bibliography in B. Heldt, *Terrible perfection: Women and Russian Literature*, p. 162–163 and the bibliography in R. Marsh, ‘An Image of their Own? Feminism, Revisionism and Russian Culture’, in *Gender and Russian Literature: New Perspectives*, p. 33–41.

²⁹ See for example: K. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature* (University of Washington Press, 1966); *Misogyny, Misandry, and Misanthropy*, ed. H. Bloch and F. Ferguson (University of California Press, 1989); *Misogyny in Literature*, ed. K. Auckley (New York, 1992); B. Dijkstra, *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality and the Cult of Manhood* (New York, 1996); *Misogynism in Literature: Any Place, Any Time*, ed. B. Zangen (Frankfurt am Main; New York, 2004).

³⁰ K. Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate*, p. XII.

³¹ D. Gilmore, *Misogyny: The Male Malady* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 9.

³² The causal relation between fear of women and hatred of them had already been stated by Marcus Tullius Cicero in his *Tusculanae Quaestiones* which was written as early as in 45 B. C.: ‘...exisitque morbus, &

combination of prior propositions with a few additions’ and comes up with his own vision of misogyny based on four principal ideas: ‘Freudian castration anxiety, behaviourist frustration-aggression theory, psychic-dependency theory, and the notion that all men experience regressive impulses.’³³ By contrast, the Jungian scholar Wolfgang Lederer in his book *The Fear of Women* concentrates on the title concept only, showing that ‘precarious oscillation between love and fear’³⁴ in men’s feelings towards women may lead to pathological consequences. Finally, it is worth mentioning that as early as in 1932, the fear of women as a male psychological complex was defined and analysed by Karen Horney³⁵. Disputing Freud’s theory of the male castration complex as the basis of gynophobia she presents her counter-arguments: ‘[man’s] original dread of women is not castration anxiety at all, but a reaction to the menace to his self-respect.’³⁶ As far as my research is concerned, I shall adopt Horney’s premise, which seems the most productive: ‘May this not be one of the principal roots of the whole masculine impulse to creative work — the never ending conflict between the man’s longing for the woman and his dread of her?’³⁷ In this reading, although it may have roots in a sense of physiological inferiority, the male fear of women leads to compensatory strategies in the social and cultural arena, which is what will interest me in the case of Suvorin.

Challenging the usage of the term ‘misogyny’ in literary studies, literary critic Elena Baraban characterizes it as an example of the ‘final vocabulary’ deployed by feminists, i. e. as one of the basic concepts which cannot be questioned and asks to be considered true by default: ‘The final vocabulary of feminism monopolizes literary criticism and predetermines its results. It makes it impossible for critics to dissociate

agrotatio: quae auelli inveterata non possunt: eique morbo nomen est <...> Gloria cupiditas, ut mulierositas, ut ita appellem eam, que Grece filogineia dicitur, <...> agrotationesque nascuntur quae autem his sunt contraria, ea nasci putantur a metu, ut odium mulierum... (M. Tullii Ciceronis, *Tusculanarum quaestionum* (Antverpiae, 1591), p. 114 (for translation see Appendix: 32*).

³³ D. Gilmore, *Misogyny*, p. 225.

³⁴ W. Lederer, *The Fear of Women* (New York, 1968), p. vii.

³⁵ K. Horney, ‘The Dread of Woman: Observations on a Specific Difference in the Dread felt by Men and by Women for the Opposite Sex’, in *Feminine Psychology* (New York, 1967), pp. 133–146.

³⁶ K. Horney, ‘The Dread of Woman’, p. 140.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

themselves from their conceptual framework, to consider it with irony and doubt, and thus to make it more adequate for their analysis.’³⁸

The differentiation between, and precise usage of, the concepts of ‘misogyny’ and ‘gynophobia’ provide a coherent basis for the study both of a literary work and its author. Thus, Tolstoy’s misogyny is thoroughly and convincingly analysed by Daniel Rancour-Laferriere in his book *Tolstoy on the Couch: Misogyny, Masochism, and the Absent Mother* (New York, 1998)³⁹. Taking as an example the gynophobia of Nikolai Fedorov and Nikolai Berdiaev and analysing its roots in their traumatized childhood, Tat’iana Osipovich followed suit with her re-interpretation of Silver Age philosophy.⁴⁰ A substantial reconsideration of the relationship between Chekhov’s life and works was carried out by Mikhail Zolotonosov in his recent book *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storonu printsipa zhenofobii* (Moscow, 2007). According to the author, Chekhov’s gynophobia should be deduced from the ‘libido saving’ idea, a sexological theory⁴¹ popular in male bourgeois culture of the mid 19th century: ‘Hypersexual since his adolescence, Chekhov appears to be deliberately gynophobic. <...> ...[D]espite his numerous love affairs with nearly all the women he encounters, Chekhov develops a narcissistic fixation and suffers from the fear of permanent sexual relations, of long-term commitment, and of a family life which can drain the energy he needs for his writing.’⁴² Gynophobia, as well as misogyny can be analysed not only on the level of the individual, but also as a social and/or psychological trend. Thus, the history of western Philosophy has been approached as an intellectual history of misogyny.⁴³

³⁸ See: E. Baraban, ‘Zametki na poliakh feministsskoi kritiki russkoi literatury’, in *Gendernye issledovaniia*, 9 (2003), p. 115.

³⁹ See also by Rancour-Laferriere: *Out from under Gogol’s Overcoat: A Psychoanalytical Study* (Ann Arbor, 1982); *Tolstoy’s Pierre Bezukhov: A Psychoanalytic Study* (Bristol Classical Press, 1993).

⁴⁰ T. Osipovich, ‘Pobeda nad rozhdением i smert’iu, ili Zhenofobiia russkoi utopicheskoi mysli na rubezhe 19–20 vekov’, in *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’*, 4 (1994).

⁴¹ According to the influential French sexologists of the time Antoine Émile Jozan and August Debay whose books were published in Russia, a man’s body has a certain amount of ‘vital energy’, which should be sparingly used. Sexual activity is seen as a most dangerous way of wasting this energy, the result being mental and nervous debility. See M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storonu printsipa zhenofobii*, p. 7, 80–85.

⁴² M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov*, p. 4. Cf. an undistinguished approach to misogyny/gynophobia in A. Malkin, *Semiotics of Misogyny Through the Humour of Chekhov and Maugham* (The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992).

⁴³ See for example: L. Coole, ‘Origin of Western Thought and the Birth of Misogyny’, in *Women in Political Theory: From Ancient Misogyny to Contemporary Feminism* (New York; London, 1993), p. 4–18; B. Clack, ‘Misogyny in Philosophy’, in *Misogyny in the Western Philosophical Tradition: A Reader*

Within the context of the ‘woman question’, gynophobia could be interpreted in terms of Michel Foucault’s theory of power relations. Here I am following the approach of Laura Engelstein. Building upon Foucault’s theory⁴⁴ in her fundamental study *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia*, the author analyses the relationship between the sexual behaviour of various social groups and the liberal reforms introduced in Russia in mid 19th century. Within the period which is of particular interest to me, since it coincides with the first stage of the women’s movement (i. e. from 1860s to the end of the 19th century), the author concentrates on professional discourses, namely medical and legal ones, to show that in a bourgeois society, those state functions that regulate individual lives are being redistributed and assigned to the class of professionals. The author notes that ‘like their liberal analogues in Western Europe, the Russian reformers were swayed by their social values (whether openly acknowledged or un-self-conscious) and often defaulted on the consistent application of their own standards,’⁴⁵ her message being that the development of new forms of public awareness is a complicated and a controversial process.

The women’s movement as part of a major liberalization process aims at the redistribution of gender roles in all facets of the public sphere. In a patriarchal society, this suggests a total reshaping of the male power hierarchy, the handover of some authority to women and, ultimately, a parity between men and women in exercising power. Within the constraints of this process, changes in consciousness of men and women occurred at a different pace. This difference was noted by those who witnessed the process of female emancipation: ‘It is not surprising that those strong female characters appeared; what is surprising is the lightning speed of their development. <...> Within some 10–20 years, the women of the 60s have changed beyond recognition.’⁴⁶ In contrast, the refashioning of male identity has not led to similarly fundamental and expeditious changes of attitude in matters of gender: ‘Those men who were ready to break down all the pillars of religion, philosophy, and politics, just halted with timidity

(Macmillan, 1999), p. I–VIII; S. Zhrebkin, ‘Gendernaia problematika v filosofii’, in *Vvedenie v gendernye issledovaniia* (SPb; Khar’kov, 2001), pp. 390–426.

⁴⁴ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York, 1978–1986).

⁴⁵ L. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ N. Kotliarevskii, *Kanun osvobozhdeniia (1855–1861): Iz zhizni idei i nastroyenii v radikal'nykh krugakh togo vremeni* (Petrograd, 1916), p. 414.

before the phantom of women's parity in family, society, and state.'⁴⁷ At the level of the collective unconscious,⁴⁸ an impending loss of male power could possibly incite the archetypal *horror feminae*⁴⁹ which causes gynophobic (and/or misogynistic) trends and attitudes in the public consciousness to arise, especially on the level of discursive practices.

Within the present work, I will heuristically differentiate between the concepts of 'misogyny' and 'gynophobia', relying on their dictionary definitions, as well as on the difference between the underlying concepts of 'hatred' and 'fear' (while bearing in mind the causal link between them). The data on Suvorin's life and works available to me suggests that his views on women are characterized by gynophobia, which reveals itself firstly in his treatment of the 'woman question' in his journalism and also in the recurrent character of the 'odd woman', which he explored in his fiction and plays. The fear of women played a certain role in bringing together Suvorin and Chekhov, which can be observed in Chekhov's letters to his patron. Finally, gynophobia as a feature of Suvorin's mentality took its toll on his personal life and affected (often fatally) his relations with women. At the same time, Suvorin's relationship with women, both in real life and as expressed in his writings, does not amount to the hatred that defines misogyny, which is why it is useful, for the purposes of this study, to differentiate strictly between gynophobia and misogyny. Indeed, hatred of women is too strong and too coarse a category to aptly characterize the ambivalent feelings Suvorin experienced for women,

⁴⁷ N. Kotliarevskii, *Kanun osvobodzheniia*, p. 420.

⁴⁸ In this case, as I see it, this Jungian term appears to be more adequate than 'cultural/historical unconscious' term which Foucault's derived from it. According to Foucault, cultural/historical unconscious deals with subject areas generated by various scientific discourses. The concept 'collective unconscious' is being widely used in modern cultural, historical, literary and other studies. Cf.: "...a mix of idiosyncrasies presented by *Novoe vremia* which is seen as a common denominator of the Russian masses, as a collective unconscious of the Russian society" (E. Tolstaia, *Poëtika razdrzheniia: Chekhov v kontse 1880-kh — nachale 1890-kh gg.* (M., 2002), p. 65). This concept has alternative denominations. Thus, Iurii Lotman talks about a 'psychological stratum' which determines patterns of historical and social behaviour (see Iu. Lotman, 'Dekabrist v povsednevnoi zhizni: Bytovoe povedenie kak istoriko-psikhologicheskaiia kategoriiia', in *Literaturnoe nasledie dekabristov* (L., 1975), p. 25). The concept 'collective unconscious' can be an integral part of the relatively new concept 'mentality', even though the latter has not been clearly defined yet: it can be used in a wide range of meanings, for example as a synonym of the concept 'social conscience' or as a way to describe some simple mental reactions. By common consent, this fuzziness ('plasticity') in definition of terms can lead both to their vulnerability and a wider methodological capacity. For further constructive discussion of this problem see: N. Avtonomova, *Otkrytaia struktura: Iakobson–Bakhtin–Lotman–Gasparov* (M., 2009), pp. 395–417.

⁴⁹ Cf. archetypes (according to Jung) *phallus* as a symbol of power and *vagina dentata*.

the tangled bundle of admiration, sympathy, envy, fear, resentment, dependency, etc. which he harboured for women. All in all, Suvorin — a colourful and prominent personality who revealed himself at length in word and deed — provides a good case for the study of the *raznochintsy's* mentality in general and their response to women's liberation in particular, a process which proved to be full of controversy and fraught with danger.

For the sake of fairness it should be noted that for a woman emancipation was not a smooth passage either. Its flaws were noticeable for contemporaries; for example, historian Nestor Kotliarevskii observed: '...as regards personal and family morals, as well as some areas of social labour, <...> she ['the new woman'] had gained a place next to her male partner and she had contributed a lot of nervousity, boldness, and at times some oddity and eccentricity to their joint work.'⁵⁰ In the mid 1870s, official Western medicine characterized changes in women's behaviour as hysteria and offered some ways of treating it; later this phenomenon was described by Foucault as the 'hysterisation of the woman's body.'⁵¹ In Russia of those days, female hysteria had not yet been properly studied yet, although psychiatry, then in its infancy, had attempted to relate social and psychological changes. Thus the famous psychiatrist Ivan Merzheevskii, discussing the Great Reforms of the 1860s, concludes that their rapid implementation 'caused increased mental effort and overreaction, increased anxiety and an increased strain of psychic mechanisms which eventually suffered from the damage.'⁵²

Analysing the period between the two Russian revolutions, which coincides with the second stage of the women's movement, i. e. the feminist movement, Engelstein looks at the discourses of journalism and belles-lettres, including women's writing. Paying special attention to pulp fiction ('boulevard literature') and particularly to the successful love novel *The Keys to Happiness* (1909) by Anastasiia Verbitskaia, Engelstein registers a fairly negative reception among liberal critics, who perceived 'the

⁵⁰ N. Kotliarevskii, *Kanun osvobozhdeniia*, p. 416.

⁵¹ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (*The Will to Knowledge*), p. 104. See also: J. Carroy-Thirard, *Le mal de Morzin: De la possession à l'hystérie (1857–1877)* (Paris, 1981); G. Didi-Huberman, *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge, Mass., London, 2003); I. Zhrebkina, *Strast': Zhenskoe telo i zhenskaia seksual'nost'* (SPb, 2001), part I: 'Izobretenie isterichki', pp. 12–81.

⁵² I. Merzheevskii, *Ob usloviakh, blagopriiatstvuiushchikh razvitiuu dushevnykh i nervnykh boleznei v Rossii i o merakh, napravlennykh k ikh umen'sheniiu* (SPb, 1887), p. 7.

challenge posed at once by the appeal of cheap entertainment and by the emergence of women and female sexuality into respectable public space thanks to the power of the modern commercial economy.’⁵³ Finally, Engelstein concludes that ‘the sexual question’ epitomized all the paradoxes and contradictions of Russian liberalism and its activists: ‘Avid for modern subjecthood yet unable to establish the kind of disciplinary authority with which to ensure pre-eminence in a world of unstable hierarchies and competing individualities, they *feared* (italics are mine — *O. M.*) the disorder — and even the pleasures — that desire can bring.’⁵⁴

§ 2

‘*The Woman Question*’ in the *Life and Works of Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin* is both a case study and material for his biography. A prominent public figure of his time, Suvorin shortly after his death in 1912 was consigned to oblivion by Vladimir Lenin in his critical two-page article with the significant title of ‘Kar’era’. Stigmatized by the Bolshevik leader as an opportunist, renegade, reactionary, and a paragon of sycophancy, Suvorin was practically neglected by official Soviet academia for the following 80 years, though Lenin had made an appropriate observation: ‘Through his entire life, Suvorin embodied and reflected a very interesting period in the history of Russian bourgeois society.’⁵⁵ The only exceptions were his Diary, published in 1923 with severe cuts and ideologically correct amendments⁵⁶, and the collection *Pis'ma russkikh pisatelei k A. S. Suvorinu* (L., 1927) with an interesting if tendentious selection of letters.

A monograph published in 1972 by the American scholar Effie Ambler represented the long-awaited breakthrough. Interestingly, in her title *Russian Journalism and Politics: The Career of Aleksei S. Suvorin (1861–1881)* she also referred to the key concept of career, which Lenin had singled out. Drawing mainly on published sources, the author traced Suvorin’s evolution from a nihilist to a reactionary. Five years later, the journal *Voprosy literatury* published an article by Inna Solov’eva and Vera Shitova

⁵³ L. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness*, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁵⁵ V. Lenin, *PSS*, vol. 22, p. 43. (The article was published in the newspaper *Pravda* 18.08.1912).

⁵⁶ *Dnevnik A. S. Suvorina* / Redaktsiia, predislovie i primechaniia M. Krichevskogo (M.; Petrograd, 1923).

entitled ‘A. S. Suvorin: Portret na fone gazety’. In a manner surprisingly tolerant for a Soviet publication the authors attempted to develop a philosophical and psychological interpretation of Suvorin’s ideological ambivalence: ‘What was objectively an apostasy, was subjectively self-discovery and self-fulfillment.’⁵⁷ Another twenty years later, in the post-Soviet era, Efim Dinershtein published the book *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelavshii kar'eru* (M., 1998). Not meant as a coherent life history, this study — a series of essays based on a great deal of archival material — offers a thorough analysis of Suvorin’s main public persona, that of journalist and publisher. Concentrating on Suvorin’s conformism which, according to the author, was camouflaged by his apparent ‘versatility’, the author arrived at the conclusion that Suvorin had finally become a hostage to his own habit of compromising.

Further attempts to study various aspects of Suvorin’s political views were made in a series of postgraduate theses⁵⁸, which may be summarized by the following quote: ‘one should state that Suvorin’s views were obscure, controversial, and eclectic; their evolution was affected by his personal complexity and by the historical conditions of post-reform Russia.’⁵⁹ Lidiia Azarina, whose thesis studied Suvorin as a literary critic, came to a similar conclusion: ‘...it is possible to talk about certain aesthetic views of Suvorin; however, they do not form an integral entity. It is difficult to uncover the philosophical foundation of his literary criticism, if there was any at all.’⁶⁰ My thesis does not intend to disprove these prior studies, but to demonstrate how the contradictions and ambiguities of Surovin’s ideological positions hark back to his fraught relationship with women. In particular, I describe how ‘the woman question’ provides the intermediary link between his personal life and his ideological stances. Implicit in this approach, therefore, is the premise that Suvorin’s response to the women in his life and, more abstractly, to ‘the woman question’ informed in crucial ways both his personal life and his ideological development.

⁵⁷ I. Solov'eva, V. Shitova, ‘A. S. Suvorin: Portret na fone gazety’, in *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1977), p. 168.

⁵⁸ T. Shishkina, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie vzgliady A. S. Suvorina: 1860–1870-e gg.*: Diss. ... kand. ist. nauk (Saratov, 1997); L. Khutorova, *A. S. Suvorin: Sud'ba i vzgliady*: Diss. ... kand. ist. nauk (Kazan', 2001); L. Ostapenko, *Gazeta A. S. Suvorina “Novoe vremia” v obshchestvenno-politicheskoi zhizni Rossii*: Diss. ... kand. ist. nauk (N. Novgorod, 2002).

⁵⁹ L. Khutorova, *A. S. Suvorin: Sud'ba i vzgliady*, p. 216.

⁶⁰ L. Azarina, *Literaturnaia pozitsiia A. S. Suvorina*: Diss. ... kand. filol. nauk (M., 2008), p. 193.

Following the well-known dichotomy by Boris Tomashevskii, there is every reason to believe that Suvorin is a ‘writer with biography’⁶¹, that is, a person who both reflected his time and strongly influenced Russian social life. Indeed, Suvorin is both typical of his time and full of antinomies. The plot of his life is representative of that of the *raznochintsy* (although it was crowned with outstanding success), while his self-actualization and the trajectory of his views deviate from both the liberal and radical ideologies of the generation of the 1860s. My thesis suggests that it is precisely what appear to be idiosyncratic features of his mindset that hold wider relevance; in that they exemplify the contradictions of the general mass consciousness of the period. Suvorin interests me therefore not so much as an extraordinary and individually peculiar personality, but rather as a representative of the middle-class ideological mainstream that emerges in the wake of the Great Reforms.

Suvorin himself phrased his ideological stance by way of a negative definition, i. e. in a manner not unlike that of a nihilist (apparently, his pen-name *Neznakomets* is not accidental). Thus, at the very beginning of his career, having just been commissioned as a literary critic by the Moscow magazine *Russkaia rech'*, he confesses the following in a private letter: ‘As regards my beliefs, I belong neither to constitutionalists, nor to “the reds”, nor to the party of Katkov, nor to the party of Chernyshevsky, nor to the party of *Vremia*.’⁶² However, he dissociated himself from nihilists straight away: ‘I am an overly modest and right-minded person, <...> I have never been a nihilist and will never be one’.⁶³ With time, as an editor of his own newspaper, Suvorin used the same technique very openly, perhaps defiantly: ‘The very words “liberal”, “conservative”, and “radical” disgusted me, <...> I just could not join a party and go with the stream, observing all the party rules: I felt like breaking those rules, and I was breaking them.’⁶⁴ Furthermore, his

⁶¹ This dichotomy is further developed by Iurii Lotman in his article ‘Literaturnaia biografiia v istoriko-kul'turnom kontekste: K tipologicheskomu sootnosheniiu teksta i lichnosti avtora’, in *O russkoi literature* (SPb, 1997). An example of a writer ‘without biography’ can be seen in Viktor Burenin, Suvorin’s close friend and colleague.

⁶² A. S. Suvorin, ‘Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule’: Publikatsiia M. Semanovoi, in *Ezhegodnik rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo Doma na 1979 god* (L., 1981), p. 145. Letter of 21.09.1861. *Vremia* was a magazine published in 1861–1863 by Mikhail Dostoevsky; it belonged to the Slavophile (‘Return to the Soil’) movement.

⁶³ *Sankt-Peterburgskii vedomosti*. 11.01.1870.

⁶⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 14.01.1879.

‘negative identity’ was gathering force: ‘I am not an editor of a political newspaper, I am not an economist — I am only fascinated by literature.’⁶⁵

However, Suvorin’s open declaration of his ideological neutrality had a very personal underpinning which again revealed itself in a private letter: ‘What I’ve always been envious of was an independent and original mental attitude which does not conform to any proper canon. <...> My humble education has always prevented me from approaching those people, but I have always felt a strong affinity for their original views and their intellectual temerity. This is the reason why I am so full of controversy: I cannot put up with a certain template, but I am not smart enough to think of something original.’⁶⁶

Presumably because of this inferiority complex, which is typical of the *raznochintsy*, Suvorin was unable to build up a more or less consistent ideology. Suvorin was still suffering from this complex at the very height of his career: ‘I feel so utterly miserable with all my contradictions which I cannot get rid of. <...> People keep reassuring me that I have attained power, and having power, I must endure it. To hell with power! <...> I have always hated flattery, because I have never thought highly of myself. These days, with all these attacks upon me, I often think that I have got that high undeservedly, and I hide in my office and my bedroom to cry over it now and again.’⁶⁷

Having offered its readers ‘an outspoken editorial position’⁶⁸ (*otkrovennoe napravlenie*), Suvorin’s *Novoe vremia* acquired a reputation as ‘the first principally unprincipled newspaper’⁶⁹ which nevertheless enjoyed an enormous popularity. The publisher was aiming at ‘the man in the street’ — a person with the same *raznochintsy* background that produced Suvorin himself — and at the newly-evolved lower middle class (*petit bourgeoisie*). Appealing to his audience, Suvorin unwittingly (yet fairly correctly) makes use of the concept of ‘public mentality’: ‘...there is an average person, a good and honest worker, <...> and even more so, there is something that is superior to any individual. There is *the mind of the entire people*; there is tradition, there is

⁶⁵ OR IRLI. F. 8671/XLIXb.48. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k K. A. Skal'kovskomu. L. 1. Letter of 18.08.1890.

⁶⁶ OR IRLI. F. 268. Arkhiv Suvorinykh A. S., A. A., M. A. Ed. 17. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k S. N. Shubinskomu. L. 29. Letter of 18.06.1886.

⁶⁷ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 334. Entry of 18.04.1899.

⁶⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 29.02.1876.

⁶⁹ V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, ‘V svoem dome (A. S. Suvorin)’, in *Sovremennyi mir*, 9 (1912), p. 322.

continuity, *the spirit of the nation*.⁷⁰ Trying to infuse his readers with social self-confidence, Suvorin offers them a self-justification, which was apparently derived from his personal experience: ‘An average, a mediocre man with his ordinary mind is not doing any harm; it is a wise guy who is harmful, the one who is trying to go off the right track, to tower above his fellows, while having neither brains nor talents for that. It is these people who go wrong and do all sorts of foolish things that cannot be repaired.’⁷¹ Soviet researchers have given Suvorin high credit for his contribution to the ‘mass psychology’ of the period and for the methods he applied in his newspaper for shaping the social mindset of his age: ‘Instead of an average liberal journalist, there appeared a manager, a guru, and a genius of the everyday consciousness.’⁷²

The story of Suvorin’s life is indeed the story of his extraordinary career: it took him 3 years only to progress from provincial teacher to contributor to major metropolitan newspapers. According to my argument, Suvorin’s career was determined and guided by his first wife, Anna Ivanovna Baranova. After her tragic death, female interference (for example, ‘the case of Nastasia Kairova’) caused other episodes in Suvorin’s life to acquire the status of ‘biographical facts’ (as defined by Grigorii Vinokur⁷³).

Tracing the influence of ‘the woman question’ on Suvorin’s life and work involves exploring the relationship between Suvorin’s life and his writings. The joint study of a person’s life and work and their cross-impact is a traditional method in biography, although this approach still remains controversial.⁷⁴ Different kinds of

⁷⁰ *Novoe vremia*. 15.02.1890. Italics are mine — *O. M.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² I. Solov’eva, V. Shitova, ‘A. S. Suvorin: Portret na fone gazety’, p. 168.

⁷³ Cf.: ‘To become a biographical fact, a historical fact (an event) should be experienced by a person in one form or another. <...> Such an experience is an inner form of a biographical structure, and thus is carrying a specific biographic meaning and contents’. (G. Vinokur, *Biografiia i kul'tura* (M., 1997), p. 44.)

⁷⁴ See discussion: J. Clifford, *From Puzzles to Portraits: Problems of a Literary Biographer* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1970); I. Nadel, *Biography: Fiction, Fact, and Form* (Macmillan, 1984); D. Novarr, *The Lines of Life: Theories of Biography, 1880–1970* (Purdue University Press, 1986); N. Denzin, *Interpretative Biography* (Sage Publications, 1989); V. Valevskii, *Osnovaniia biografiki* (Kiev, 1993); Iu. Lotman, ‘Literaturnaia biografiiia v istoriko-kul’turnom kontekste: K tipologicheskomu sootnosheniiu teksta i lichnosti avtora’, in *O russkoi literature* (SPb, 1997); *Writing the Lives of Writers*, ed. W. Gould and Th. Stanley (St Martin’s Press, 1998); D. Ellis, *Biography and the Search for Understanding* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000); S. Tridgell, *Understanding Our Selves: The Dangerous Art of Biography* (Peter Lang, 2004); A. Kholikov, ‘Pisatel’skaia biografiiia: Zhanr bez pravil’, in *Voprosy literatury*, 6 (2008).

biography — be it literary, popular, or academic⁷⁵ — are characterized by different proportions of these two components, but the boundaries between these types of biography can be quite blurred. A more productive way of writing a biography is to treat it ‘not just as a set of facts or a chain of events, but also as a plot incorporated in someone’s writings.’⁷⁶ The basis of this approach to biography was developed by Grigorii Vinokur, Lidiia Ginzburg, and Iurii Lotman and it puts particular emphasis on cultural and psychological research methods. These methods allow us to see how ‘a person’s psychological potentialities are realized in terms of existing cultural codes, and at the same time, existing cultural codes are rearranged in accordance with his predispositions.’⁷⁷

The genre of biography is now developing so as to integrate, to a degree, with other disciplines, such as analytical psychology,⁷⁸ philosophy, and theology, although an essential reservation always remains: in the final analysis, any of these methods ‘is unable either to separate “reality” and “literature”, culture and personality, or to merge them together in a universal reconstruction.’⁷⁹ Accordingly, within this genre, it appears productive to use the so-called ‘auto-documents’, i. e. private letters, diaries, and memoirs which ‘are more serviceable in revealing a personality in all the complexity of its mental condition.’⁸⁰

Such integrated genre has produced some very interesting works, for example *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* by Irina Paperno (Stanford, 1988); *Chekhov — s glazu na glaz: Istoriia odnoi oderzhimosti (Opyt fenomenologii tvorchestva)* by Savelii Senderovich (SPb, 1994), *Poëtika razdrazheniia: Chekhov v kontse 1880-kh — nachale 1890-kh godov* by Elena Tolstaia (M., 1994),

⁷⁵ O. Sobolevskaia, ‘Biografiia’, in *Literaturnaia ènsiklopediia terminov i poniatii*, ed. by A. Nikoliukin (M., 2003), p. 91.

⁷⁶ I. Kazakova *Filosofiia igry: V. V. Rozanov — zhurnalist i literaturnyi kritik (Po materialam gazety A. S. Suvorina ‘Novoe vremia’)* (M., 2001), p. 9.

⁷⁷ I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), p. 3.

⁷⁸ See: L. Ginzburg, ‘Chelovecheskii dokument i postroenie kharaktera’, in *O psikhologicheskoi proze* (L., 1981); A. Elms, *Uncovering Lives: The Uneasy Alliance of Biography and Psychology* (Oxford University Press, 1994); N. Shumskii, *Vrubel’: Zhizn’ i bolezni* (SPb, 2001); I. Sirotkina, *Diagnosing Literary Genius: A Cultural History of Psychiatry in Russia, 1880–1930* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

⁷⁹ I. Paperno, *Semiotika povedeniia: Nikolai Chernyshevskii — chelovek epokhi realizma* (M., 1996), p. 9.

⁸⁰ T. Pecherskaia, ‘Istoriia literatury 1860-kh godov: Problemy izuchennosti i izucheniiia’, in *Gumanitarnye nauki v Sibiri*, 4 (1998).

Avtorskoe povedenie v russkoi literature: Seredina 19 veka i na podstupakh k nei by Aleksandr Faustov (Voronezh, 1997), *Strannyi Turgenev: Chetyre glavy* by Vladimir Toporov (M., 1998), *Raznochintsy shestidesiatykh godov XIX veka: Fenomen samosoznaniia v aspekte filologicheskoi germenevtiki (memuary, dnevniki, pis'ma, belletristika)* by Tat'iana Pecherskaia (Novosibirsk, 1999), *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storonu printsipa zhenofobii* by Mikhail Zolotonosov (M., 2007).

Adopting this method, I use Suvorin's biographical material and his oeuvre in their available integrity. Biographical materials include the private correspondence of Suvorin and that of a third party, along with other 'auto-documents' — autobiographies, diaries, and memoirs. The bulk of correspondence represents my own archival findings, so they are now being brought into the public domain for the first time. I conducted my research in RGALI, as well as in the manuscript departments of IRLI, GPB, and RNB which hold both Suvorin's personal archives and other personal archives containing documents relating to Suvorin. For example, a valuable source kept in IRLI is the Diary of the writer and Suvorin's close friend Sofiia Smirnova-Sazonova; unfortunately, I was given access to it only up to the year 1896, in view of a pending publication of the diary. I also regret the absence of some other sources, for example Suvorin's letters to Chekhov, Leskov, Elena Likhacheva, Nastasia Kairova, Elizaveta Shabel'skaia et al. which either went missing or were deliberately destroyed.

One of my chief sources is Suvorin's diary. As with many intimate documents, its survival is a matter of chance. Being terminally ill (Suvorin knew he was dying of throat cancer), he nevertheless did not take care to destroy it. Upon his death, a stringed and sealed cache of notebooks was discovered in the safe of the Volga-Kama commercial bank. Suvorin's son Mikhail kept it there till 1918; subsequently the diary came into possession of the journalist Iurii Sosnitskii, who was also manager of the *Novoe Vremia* bookstore. Later on, another journalist, Mikhail Krichevskii, by accident came across it while sorting out the library of the deceased Sosnitskii. Krichevskii was the first one to bring the Suvorin diary into the public domain. About two thirds of the diary, with many errors and little commentary, were published in 1923; omissions were made to avoid censorial prosecution. This version was the basis for French, German and Polish editions in the 1920s. Ten pages were published in English in the *Dublin Review* in 1924. This

defective edition was reprinted in 1992, with still further errors, but no corrections. The latest version, which came out in 1999, is based on the transcript of Natalia Roskina and verified against the surviving manuscripts of Suvorin diary and against the relevant archival material.⁸¹

There is enough evidence to show that the diary is an incomplete set and it is difficult to say whether a greater or a smaller part of it has survived. For example, its earlier fragments are just a pile of loose pages — one might suggest that this part was separated from its binding and blank pages in order to be taken to a safer place (after the Revolution of 1917, Suvorin's family emigrated to the West). On the other hand, Suvorin was by no means a careful diarist, and he treated his notes with some self-scorn: 'All this, all my notebooks, disorderly, unsystematic, are not meant for publication. They can be destroyed without leaving a trace.'⁸² Apart from the corpus of the main diary, the Suvorin archive in RGALI contains a number of notebooks and memory pads with autobiographic fragments, recollections, diary entries, covering the periods between 1860–1880,⁸³ 1890–1900,⁸⁴ and 1900–1912.⁸⁵ Being undated, these fragments were not included into the final, published version of the diary.

The boundary dates of the 'master diary' span 40 years (1873–1912), though in actual fact the diary only covers 20 years with no entries for 1874, 1876–1883, 1888–1892, 1894, 1895, 1905, 1906, 1908 and 1910; the total amount of entries being 569. Over the 20 year period, only the diaries for 1893, 1896, 1897, 1901, 1902 and 1904 have survived in their integrity, leaving the rest as accidental fragments. Apart from Suvorin's inconsistency with his notes, we can also assume some interference — whether external or by his own hand. As to the reasons explaining the diary gaps, opinions differ. Krichevskii attributes them to the author's reluctance to document certain episodes of his life.⁸⁶ Roskina maintains that the author himself weeded his notebooks: for example,

⁸¹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina: Tekstologicheskaja rashifrovka N. A. Roskinoi. Podgotovka teksta D. Rayfielda i O. Makarovoï (M., London, 1999, 1st ed., 2000, 2nd ed.).*

⁸² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*. Entry of 27.09.1900.

⁸³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 141.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, ed. 142.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, ed. 138.

⁸⁶ See: 'Neskol'ko svedenii o samom dnevnike', in *Dnevnik A. S. Suvorina / Redaktsiia, predislovie i primechaniia M. Krichevskogo (M.; Petrograd, 1923)*, p. 378.

there is no diary for 1905 (the year of the first Russian revolution) that might have contained notes compromising Suvorin's general political stand⁸⁷.

Some researchers hold it that Suvorin actually started his diary on arrival in Moscow from Voronezh in 1861, when he was employed to work for the magazine *Russkaia rech'*, i.e. more than ten years before the beginning of the now published diary.⁸⁸ Suvorin himself seems to imply as much in the Afterword of 1909 to his first book *Vsiakie*: 'I entitled this trifle "a novella". As a matter of fact, this is not true. This is not a novella at all, but just notes, *diary fragments* (italics are mine — *O. M.*), written at random, impressionistically, and pieced together for the sake of the plot.'⁸⁹ As Galina Dragan sees it, certain book passages are direct quotes from Suvorin's diary: Chernyshevsky's civil execution (disguised in Suvorin's book under the name of Samarskii), an account of a literary meeting at Mikhail Katkov's in 1861, the political gatherings of students, fires in Petersburg, as well as a visit to Timofei Granovskii's grave.⁹⁰ Dragan also believes that 'the early' diary was destroyed by his family because of its many intimate references — Suvorin's family life was full of drama and tragic episodes. She is also inclined to think that retrospective entries in Suvorin's later diaries duplicate his earlier entries (23.05, 30.05, 13.09, 22.10 for 1896; 18.02 for 1897, 7.12 for 1904, 15.05 for 1907). I am unable to accept this view due to Suvorin's repeated comments on the casual nature of his notes and his lack of scrupulousness in maintaining his diary. (One of the visitors to Suvorin's office recalls: 'All his books and papers are in a mess; it is difficult to imagine such chaos.'⁹¹) Perhaps it would be more reasonable to speak not of 'the early diary' but of 'protodiaries' and 'quasidiaries' numbering 400 pages of illegible, undated and fading texts that are kept in RGALI with very little chance of publication.

One can only regret the absence of significant sections of Suvorin's diary, for there is some circumstantial evidence indicating their unquestionable value. Thus, in the letter of Mikhail Chekhov to his brother Anton of 22.01.1900 there is a long quote from a

⁸⁷ N. Roskina, 'Ob odnoi staroi publikatsii', in *Voprosy literatury*, 6 (1968), p. 250.

⁸⁸ G. Dragan, 'Dnevnik Suvorina kak istoricheskii dokument', in *Vestnik MGU*, Ser. 8: Istorii, 3 (1983), p. 57–67; G. Krasnov, 'Iz zapisok A. S. Suvorina o Nekrasove', in *Prometei*, 7 (1969).

⁸⁹ A. S. Suvorin, *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni*, 2nd ed. (SPb, 1909), p. 314.

⁹⁰ See: G. Dragan, 'Dnevnik Suvorina kak istoricheskii dokument', p. 48.

⁹¹ G. Vollan, 'A. S. Suvorin', in *Golos minuvshago*, 8 (1914), p. 158.

missing diary fragment by Suvorin, which refers to Chekhov's talks with the publisher Marx over selling his copyright for his entire oeuvre:

...Yesterday the old man read me his diary about you. <...> As regards his impatient waiting for your reply to his telegram about his offer of 20–25 thousand, I quote from memory (I cannot guarantee the accuracy):

January 17th. I sent Chekhov a telegram (contents follow). Continued with notes about Sergeenko, Marx et al. Fairly interesting.

January 18th. No reply from Chekhov.

January 19th. Still no reply from Chekhov. I am concerned.

January 20th. Still no reply from Chekhov.

January 21st. Finally received a telegram from Chekhov which says (contents follow). I find it cold, and I think Chekhov is insincere.⁹²

Surviving diaries also bear the traces of censorship, very likely self-inflicted: 13 pages were very obviously torn out and some 120 lines crossed out; 2 entries have no endings. The cuts are mostly related to fairly important episodes in Suvorin's life, like his visit to Leo Tolstoy (07.06.1887) or the death of his son-in-law Aleksei Kolomnin (08.12.1900). They also include some gossip with his friend Vasilii Krivenko (08.02.1893), his habitual speculation on death (05.09.1893) or his thoughts on the activity of Sergei Vitte, his confidant and a member of Cabinet (24.03.1899). In crossing out unwanted passages, Suvorin was not quite consistent; sections that were struck out in some parts of the diary have parallels in other parts of it.

As regards their genre, surviving diary fragments can only be classified with some reservation. Thus, relying on the defective version published by Krichevskii, Oleg Egorov characterizes it as a diary 'of the second half of one's life', when 'having entered the last phase of his life, the journalist was looking for a way to put himself right with posterity; he did not want to sink into the grave with the bad name he earned with the progress-minded public.'⁹³ Egorov's observations lead him to the conclusion that 'Suvorin's chronicle undoubtedly belongs to a political genre, since its main material refers to domestic politics.'⁹⁴ This is certainly true — and yet it is also true that his diary

⁹² See: A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 9, p. 281.

⁹³ O. Egorov, *Dnevniky russkikh pisatelei 19 veka: Issledovaniie* (M., 2002), p. 245.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

imagery is created by way of a feuilleton technique, which allows for the inclusion of paradoxes, basic sensations, and impressions, and a 'bare' factual aesthetics. In this sense, 'political' bits of Suvorin's diary could be seen as drafts for his newspaper articles: 'In many cases a diary entry is written as a live reportage; taken as whole, they create a kaleidoscope of life.'⁹⁵ Last but not least, the diary is full of gossip, jokes, and spicy stories compromising some famous public and political figures. Nevertheless, Krichevskii feels impelled to warn his audience: 'A great deal of the Diary is dedicated to purely family affairs, which were fairly tangled and would upset the old man, so he would start grumbling. Where possible, we omitted these entries altogether, since the reader is now hardly interested in Suvorin's family story.'⁹⁶ Having been restored in the latest version of 1999, these entries have extended the length of the diary by one third and are now an extremely important source for Suvorin's biography.

Suvorin's oeuvre consists of his journalism, his literary and drama criticism, and his fiction (early poetry, translations in verse and in prose, short stories, plays, and novels). Already Suvorin's contemporary critics treated it as a whole, blaming him for the 'journalism' of his plays and novels. Suvorin, too, considered himself primarily a journalist: 'I am a journalist and very seldom a writer; my plays and my prose <...> were born by accident.'⁹⁷ The number of texts written by Suvorin over 54 years of his creative life can hardly be established; but even the rough numbers are very impressive: thus, in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, he authored some 400 feuilletons, while in *Novoe vremia*, his *Malen'kie pis'ma* alone amount to 730. As a man of letters, Suvorin wrote three novels, two dozens of short stories and novellas as well as fifteen plays; some of these only exist in proofs and have never seen the light of day.

Suvorin's favourite genre, the feuilleton, is of particular interest to me, since it is spontaneous, ephemeral and deals with the burning issues of the day. Suvorin himself provided the following definition: '...a feuilleton is a great help to a leading article; for a busy person, concerned about the petty details of life, it presents in a light form what he

⁹⁵ O. Egorov, *Dnevniky russkikh pisatelei 19 veka*, p. 247.

⁹⁶ 'Neskol'ko svedenii o samom dnevnike', in *Dnevnik A. S. Suvorina / Redaktsiia, predislovie i primechaniia M. Krichevskogo*, p. 12.

⁹⁷ F. Fidler, *Iz mira literatorov: Kharaktery i suzhdeniia* (M., 2008), p. 96. Entry of 13.05.1892.

has no time for or can't be bothered to read about in a serious form'.⁹⁸ The lightness and simplicity of the material were achieved by a special form of the feuilleton, with which Suvorin had been experimenting throughout his journalistic career. Trying to win his readers' confidence, Suvorin dressed his feuilletons as private genres, entitling them *Letuchie zametki i vyderzhki iz dnevnika*, *Zametki otryvochnogo cheloveka*, *Otkrytoe pis'mo*, *Dnevnik nervnogo cheloveka*, *Pis'mo k drugu*, and, finally, *Malen'koe pis'mo*. I shall concentrate on Suvorin's feuilletons, since they give insights into his technique for popularizing 'the woman question'. However, my observations suggest that Suvorin's choice of subject was dictated by his personal issues, a view which can be supported by relevant episodes from his life. Suvorin himself disclosed the psychology of his journalistic writing: 'You lose everything, you throw everything out of yourself, you scrape your heart, you thoroughly clean out your head...'⁹⁹ I shall also include an analysis of Suvorin's fiction and drama insofar as they originate from his personal experience and are the result of his reflection upon 'the woman question'.

Taking into account all the above facts, arguments and considerations, my central argument is as follows: Suvorin's involvement with the 'woman question' was originally provoked by his first wife, a strong-willed and domineering person. Encouraged by her, but still sharing some patriarchal views, Suvorin was simultaneously pursuing two conflicting lines in his journalism, alternating progressive and conservative approaches to women's liberation. This ambivalence, as I see it, had a tragic impact on his family life: trying to keep a patriarchal family, Suvorin at the same time encouraged his wife to independence. Taken too far, 'freedom of the heart' resulted in a disastrous love affair and Suvorin's wife was killed by her lover. Driven to the verge of suicide, Suvorin never fully recovered from this profound shock. The aftermath was a lurch into gynophobia, an attitude that may account for his failed second marriage and subsequent preoccupation with the moral aspects of women's liberation and related issues, particularly marital fidelity, premarital sex, promiscuity, hysteria, etc. These ideas were transposed into Suvorin's fictional work and embodied into a series of 'odd' female characters in his

⁹⁸ A. S. Suvorin, 'Ėlegiia na temu "Proshchaius', angel moi, s toboiu"', in *Ocherki i kartinki: Sobranie rasskazov, fel'etonov i zametok* (SPb, 1875), p. 316.

⁹⁹ A. S. Suvorin, 'Nechto o fel'etoniste', in *Ocherki i kartinki: Sobranie rasskazov, fel'etonov i zametok*, p. 307.

short stories, plays and his novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*. Suvorin's gynophobia is well substantiated by the relevant passages in his Diary; his incidental involvement with some 'odd' women in his real life can also be explained by his fatal submissiveness to women. Suvorin's gynophobia may also have been caused by his known sexual problems. But his personal case provides insights into the difficulties which rising men of the intelligentsia encountered in responding to the rapid social changes to which they were exposed, and in particular to the on-going redistribution of male and female influence and authority.

The thesis is organized into an Introduction, three chapters, a Conclusion, a Bibliography, and an Appendix. Developing my argument, I apply a chronological principle, dividing Suvorin's life and works into three periods, which — to a certain approximation — can be matched to the three phases of the women's movement in Russia. The first period ends in 1873, the turning point in Suvorin's life and career; within this period the women's movement in Russia had worked out its ideology and some tactical moves. The second period covers Suvorin's career successes and his concomitant family crisis; during this time, the women's movement was also experiencing a crisis of its own. The third period marks Suvorin's personal decline against the rapid politicization of the Russian women's movement.

In the **first chapter**, I present 'the woman question' in its initial formulation and Suvorin's contribution to public debate on this question. Within the chosen period (1858–1873), I trace the influence of the 'the woman question' on Suvorin's life and writings, particularly his early works (*Vsiakie, Nedel'nye ocherki i kartinki, Milliard v tumane.*) Since this chapter deals with the most dramatic episode in Suvorin's life, the murder of his wife, I provide detailed biographical material, drawing on my own archival findings and the relevant newspapers. This chapter traces the ways in which Suvorin's first wife encouraged him to support the emancipation of women, his ambivalence in this regard, and the beginning of a backlash against progressive views on 'the woman question' following the family tragedy. It also demonstrates that Suvorin's stance on 'the woman question' was complicated by his perception of his inadequate social standing, as a man from a provincial family of common decent.

In the **second chapter**, I describe the current state of 'the woman question' for the given period (1874–1890) and trace the evolution of Suvorin's views on 'the woman

question' towards gynophobia and its reflection in his writings (*Nedel'nye ocherki i kartinki, Strannaia zhenshchina, Medeia, Tat'iana Repina, The Diary*). This chapter also contains some unpublished archival material dealing with Suvorin's second marriage, particularly his family crisis which is linked to some of Suvorin's fictional work. I look as well into Suvorin's relations with Anton Chekhov who made his debut in Suvorin's newspaper *Novoe vremia* with a series of misogynistic short stories. This chapter demonstrates how Suvorin's reputation as a conservative, evidenced by his increasingly traditional views on gender roles, grows out of his marital problems and his inability to carve out a satisfactory role for himself in his family.

In the **third chapter**, I analyse the state of the women's movement in the pre-revolutionary years up to the death of Suvorin (1891–1912) and the ways in which the crisis of that movement affected Suvorin's views. Sources include *Malen'kie pis'ma* supported by some episodes of Suvorin's life dealing with 'odd' women. I also examine Suvorin's epistolary dialogue with Chekhov on various aspects of the 'the woman question' (inasmuch as it can be reconstructed). I touch finally and briefly upon Vasili Rozanov's contribution to the newspaper *Novoe vremia*. Particular attention is paid to Suvorin's novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'* (and in all its versions, i.e. the initial short story, the novella, the novel, and the play); this work supposedly epitomized Suvorin's antifeminist views, for all their discrepancy.

In the Conclusion I develop an overview of the contribution which Suvorin made to 'public opinion' as that was assessed by his contemporary supporters and opponents; and I end by attempting a definition of his ideological position within the context of Russian liberal thought.

The Appendix includes translations of the Russian quotes used in the main text of the thesis. My decision to use certain longer Russian quotations (as long as a paragraph in length) is designed to preserve the authenticity of Suvorin's style and to evoke as well a general *esprit du temps*.

CHAPTER I

This chapter covers the period from the beginning of the 1850s to 1873. In Suvorin's biography, this period was marked by an important phase of personal growth followed in turn by a 'blitz-like' career ascent, as well as by a tragic experience, the death of his first wife. As regards 'the woman question', the women's movement emerges visibly only at the end of the 50s (the beginning of the active phase) after a phase of latency. The start of the movement is accompanied by heated discussion in Russian periodicals of every ideological description.

The debate on the 'woman question' was conducted on a national scale; it produced a record number of publications on various women's topics and participation in the debate became 'a benchmark test for a progressive writer'.¹ The pitch of the debate was set by a fundamental article by Mikhail Mikhailov 'Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve', which was published in 1860 in three issues (No 4, 5, and 8) of the journal *Sovremennik*. According to the revolutionary democrat Nikolai Shelgunov, the article caused 'an earthquake' and its author won fame as 'the creator of the woman question'.² In his article, Mikhailov described women's emancipation as 'one of the most prominent and characteristic phenomena of our times'³ and offered a new concept of women's education. In the journal discussion of this period, the problem of women's education was pivotal, although other related topics figured, notably woman's right to work and her social roles.⁴

¹ N. Solov'ev, *Mill, Comte i Buckle o zhenskom voprose* (M., 1870), p. 5.

² N. Shelgunov, L. Shelgunova, M. Mikhailov, *Vospominaniia* (M., 1967), vol. 1, p. 121.

³ M. Mikhailov, 'Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve', in *Sovremennik*, 4 (1860), p. 473.

⁴ See for example: D. Matskevich, 'Zametki o zhenshchinakh', in *Sovremennik*, 3 (1850); N. Pirogov, 'Voprosy zhizni', in *Morskoi sbornik*, 9 (1856); 'Zhaloba zhenshchiny', in *Sovremennik*, 5 (1857); G. Appel'rod, 'Obrazovanie zhenshchin srednego i vysshego sostoianii', in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, (1858); M. Vernadskaiia, 'Zhenskii trud', in *Ekonomicheskii ukazatel'*, 60 (1858); E. Tur, 'Zhenshchina i liubov' po poniatiiam Michelet', in *Russkii vestnik*, 21 (1859), book 56; A. Kh-va, 'Pis'ma k russkim zhenshchinam: O neobkhodimosti vysshego obrazovaniia dlia zhenshchin', in *Vospitaniie*, 1 (1860); A. Piatkovskii, 'O pravakh i znachenii zhenshchiny v sem'e i obshchestve', in *Damskii vestnik*, 1 (1869); N. B-ia, 'Zametki o nastoiashchem vospitanii zhenshchiny i vliianii ego na zhizn' semeinuiu i obshchestvennuiu', in *Russkii pedagogicheskii vestnik*, 11 (1860); N. Leskov, 'Russkie zhenshchiny i emansipatsiia', in *Russkaia rech'*, 44, 46 (1861); A. Dmokhovskii, 'O pravakh zhenshchiny v Rossii', in *Biblioteka dlia chteniia*, 7 (1862); A. Gieroglifov, 'Obshchestvennoe prizvaniie zhenshchiny', in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 8 (1863); Iu. Zhukovskii, 'Zatrudneniia zhenskogo dela', in *Sovremennik*, 13 (1863); N. Shelgunov, 'Zhenskoe bezdel'e', in *Russkoe slovo*, 7 (1865); V. Sleptsov, 'Zhenskoe delo', in *Zhenskii vestnik*, 1 (1866); A. Leo,

As a result, the women's movement became a reality of Russian social life; its organizational bodies started to take shape and ways of treating some vital women's problems were specified. In terms of theory, the period saw the development of a language in which the process of women's liberation could be framed, defined and discussed; while at the level of practical matters, the first women's societies were organized and the first women's educational courses were opened. With the first women's societies, the first activists of the movement arrived on the scene.⁵

Examining a fragment of Suvorin's biography against this background, I intend to trace his response to 'the woman question' at the beginning of his journalistic career; to determine his role in the debate on 'the woman question'; to establish the influence of the emancipation process on his personal life; and to examine the way in which the liberation of women reverberated in Suvorin's fiction.

§ 1

The moulding of Suvorin's personality spanned the decade stretching from the mid 1850s to the 1860s. It was the period of the Great Reforms introduced by the Emperor Aleksandr II. Marked by the liberation of the serfs, the decade witnessed an unprecedented 'bourgeois' modernization of Russian society as regards its financial system, its local administration, legal system, press and censorship, and the system of education. It was the spring of the Russian liberal movement, characterized by an uplifting of the public mood and a vigorous advance of public thought: 'Everything that had existed traditionally and was formerly accepted without criticism came up for rearrangement. Everything — beginning with theoretical peaks, religious views, the basis of the state, and the organization of society, all the way to quotidian customs, to clothing, and to hair styles.'⁶

Social changes undoubtedly left their imprint on Suvorin, but they left their mark on a personality, mentality and character already shaped by the social milieu of his

'Sovremennyi vopros o pravakh zhenshchiny', in *Vestnik Evropy*, 5 (1869); N. Strakhov, 'Zhenskii vopros', in *Zaria*, 1–2 (1870); 'Pozitivisty o zhenskom voprose', in *Delo*, 12 (1872) et al.

⁵ See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, pp. 147, 212–213.

⁶ Op cit: T. Bogdanovich, *Liubov' liudei shestidesiatykh godov* (L., 1929), p. 6. (The author cites recollections of N. Annenskii.) Translated by Irina Paperno, in I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), p. 5.

childhood and his adolescence. Suvorin was the grandchild of a serf and the son of an officer who had received his captain's rank for zealous twenty-five year long service. After retirement, Sergei Dmitrievich Suvorin ran a small peasant farm in the village of Korshevo, in the Bobrovskii administrative subdivision (Bobrovskii *uezd*) in Voronezhskaia *guberniia*. There were nine children in the family and a strict patriarchal order was maintained. Sergei Dmitrievich was a devout believer, who introduced his children to religious books only. In his later years, Suvorin recollected: 'Until I was 12 years old, I did not read anything at all: no fairy tales, and no stories or novels either <...> In our house, there was only one book — the Gospel.'⁷ Disobedience led to harsh punishment: on one occasion his father whipped the six-year-old Suvorin so severely that he had convulsive fits. Suvorin was very attached to his mother⁸ and cherished her memory: 'I loved my mother very much. <...> She was illiterate, but she brought up all nine of us, fed and clothed us and no one died in childhood or in adolescence either <...> She dedicated her life to her children and to them alone'.⁹

In 1845, as he had reached officer rank, Suvorin's father was promoted from peasantry to hereditary gentry. This made it possible for Aleksei to enter a prestigious educational institution, and as an adolescent — now without his mother's care — he began studies at the Mikhailovskii Cadet Corps in Voronezh. Having relocated to Voronezh, Suvorin experienced a cultural shock: 'I found myself in surroundings utterly new to me. <...> I couldn't walk on the parquet floor, I'd never slept in a proper bed, <...> never seen a water-closet, never tasted a dinner like that... <...> All my classmates were of fine breeding... <...> I couldn't properly stand up, or sit down, and my speech was full of peasant words'.¹⁰

⁷ Op. cit.: B. Glinskii, 'Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin: Biograficheskii ocherk', in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 9 (1912), p. 21.

⁸ In his reminiscences, Suvorin describes certain episodes of early life which some might regard as a 'gift' to the psychoanalyst; I quote them without comment: 'My mother breast-fed me herself, and after 14 months gave birth to my brother, Peter <...> I suckled my own and my brother's milk dry. My mother breast-fed me for more than two years. As a firstling, I was petted and coddled... <...> We all slept in one room. At first, I slept with my mother and later with my father and brother.' (Op. cit.: B. B. Glinskii, 'Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin', p. 7.)

⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina: Tekstologicheskaiia rashifrovka N. Roskinoi. Podgotovka teksta D. Rayfielda i O. Makarovoi.* (M., London, 2000), p. 89–90. Entry of June 1887.

¹⁰ Op. cit.: B. Glinskii, 'Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin', p. 8.

Suvorin's classmates ridiculed Suvorin's peasant manners; however, he compensated for an inevitable sense of social inferiority with notably diligent studies: 'I showed an aptitude for learning; my diligence was a mere result of my injured pride.'¹¹ The study programme, according to Suvorin, was not simply a matter of military training, but was altogether better than that, with particular emphasis on the Arts. Suvorin was eagerly trying to catch up with his education; and first started writing his own material at this time. His first work was a story about a character 'John Lackland' which he was inspired to write following a history lesson. At the age of 14, Suvorin encountered the world of theatre; he took part in amateur plays and also tried his hand as a playwright: '*Novice in Love* was the first play I saw on stage, and immediately I started to write my own plays; but it never went further than a title, a list of characters, and a set description.'¹²

Suvorin's first 'romantic encounter' or sentimental experience is poorly documented, although it is already obvious that with women he is at this stage timid and faint-hearted: 'At Kolin'i's [Suvorin's classmate], I met a beautiful young lady who was the daughter of the dramatic actress Mochalova, and I fell in love with her. But my love was so timid and reserved that Mashen'ka didn't even suspect it.'¹³ The young cadet failed to compromise his chastity even in Petersburg where he was transferred for further training: 'I went for a walk with a young lady along a garden path. <...> I liked that young lady very much indeed. After Mashen'ka Mochalova, with whom I was in love at the age of 14, she was the first girl that I talked to for any length of time without embarrassment. At that time I was 17. Mashen'ka Mochalova and that unknown young lady formed my sum total as regards experience with women.'¹⁴ Suvorin confided another touching episode to Lev L'vovich Tolstoy while discussing his novel *Poisk i primirenie*:

1.1 19-ти лет я тоже влюбился в Татьяну, но она была девка, а не баба. Мы виделись ночью, с большими предосторожностями и опасностями, целовались, но больше и не думали, ибо,

¹¹ Op. cit.: B. Glinskii, 'Aleksii Sergeevich Suvorin', p. 8.

¹² Ibid., p. 11. *Novice in Love* is a vaudeville by N. Korovkin.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 13.

представьте себе, мы даже не знали, что надо делать. По крайней мере, я не знал, да, думаю, и она тоже — ей было лет 17. Она и теперь жива и мы, стариками, как-то раз вспоминали эту идиллию.¹⁵

Suvorin regards chastity and continence as a special merit; he considers it expedient to inform the readers of his autobiography about this:

1.2 Никогда во всю мою жизнь я не был в публичном доме и только лет уже 55-ти посетил один из этих домов в Париже, просто в качестве журналиста. <...> Я узнал женщину только тогда, когда женился, и если прожил так долго, то вероятно, потому, между прочим, что никогда не имел дела с этими рассадниками ужасных болезней, коротающих человеческую жизнь¹⁶.

Suvorin originally encountered his first wife, Anna Ivanovna Baranova, while she was still a baby: ‘In Berezovka, my parents got to know Ivan Timofeevich Baranov, my future father-in-law. He was a clerk in the Berezovka office, and I remember that we visited their hut with my mother: and there in a cradle was a baby girl, my future wife.’¹⁷ In 1853, Suvorin retired from his military career with the lowest civil rank, that of *kollezhskii registrator*.¹⁸ Having no money to go to Moscow University, Suvorin returned to his native province in Bobrov. There, in January of 1857, he got married to Aniuta — as he would later call her; she was 17, he was 24. Their first daughter Aleksandra was born in 1858. At that time Suvorin was teaching history and geography at Bobrov college. He also worked as personal assistant to Marshal of Nobility, Vasilii Tulinov, and took his first steps as a man of letters. His further career was determined in large measure by Aniuta.

Suvorin himself, who never overcame his timidity and hesitation, repeatedly admitted that his wife was a very strong-willed and decisive person:

1.3 Не будь Анюты, которая подбивала меня, ободряла и вообще имела на меня большое влияние, я, вероятно, так в Боброве и просидел бы целую жизнь. Когда мне предложили перейти из

¹⁵ OR GPB, F. 115 (Arkhiv A. E. Burtseva), ed. 66. A. S. Suvorin. Pis'ma k L. L. Tolstomu. 1898–1907. Letter of 20.06.1901.

¹⁶ *Novoe vremia*. 12.08.1912.

¹⁷ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 91. Entry of June 1887.

¹⁸ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2. ed. 684. Attestat A. S. Suvorina o sluzhbe, nagrazhdeniakh i brakosochetaniakh. Rukopisnaia kopiia 1861 g., zaverennaia i dopolnennaia notariusom v 1888 g. L. 1.

бобровского уездного училища в воронежское, я мимоходом сказал об этом Аняте. А она заставила меня ехать в Воронеж и хлопотать.¹⁹

In Voronezh, a provincial capital, and while working as a teacher, Suvorin branched out into literature and established friendly relations with the local intelligentsia, particularly with the circle of the famous historian Nikolai Vtorov.²⁰ In 1860, Suvorin's first son, Mikhail, was born. Earning his daily bread, the young father rushed from one private lesson to another, occasionally visiting a bookstore run by the poet Ivan Nikitin. Aniuta would follow him with his lunch: 'so as not to waste his time on a journey home which was far from the town centre.'²¹

We have samples of Suvorin's first writing endeavours of that time, in the metropolitan press. Having started out with translations of Pierre Béranger published in light magazines,²² he continued with dramatic and poetic sketches in the piquant satirical magazine *Vesel'chak*, edited by Osip Senkovskii, amongst others. (Senkovskii was famous under the penname Baron Brambeus.) Titles of Suvorin's publications, 'Nachitannaia uezdnaia dama'²³ and 'Dvorianka',²⁴ indicate an interest in female characters, expressed of course in the satirical style of the magazine, which welcomed its readers '...to laugh with us, to laugh at us, at them, at yourselves, at everything, just for the sake of laughing'.²⁵ The heroine of the first sketch, 'a nervous' Salamandra Andreevna, delivers high-flown speeches about her love for nature and faints at every opportunity. The heroine of the second sketch, an impoverished noblewoman Mariia Prokhorovna Zheltokuzova, is 'a thin and scraggy' lady who enjoys a secret tippie and is anxious to marry off her daughter to a wealthy old merchant. Her daughter Niurasha, who

¹⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 213. Entry of 23.03.1896. Suvorin also included a memorable episode about his wife in his official autobiography: 'I remember how horrified I was when I saw little Aniuta, my future wife, playing with grass-snakes. She cuddled them, kissed them, and they twined round her arms and opened their mouths, and she put her little finger inside.' (*Novoe vremia*. 12.08.1912)

²⁰ See: O. Lasunskii, 'I. S. Nikitin i molodoi A. S. Suvorin', in *'Ia Rusi syn!': K 150-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia I. S. Nikitina* (Voronezh, 1974), pp. 45-61.

²¹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 213. Entry of 23.03.1896.

²² The poem 'Uznik' was published in the magazine *Moda (Zhurnal dlia svetskikh liudei)* 15.02.1858, the poem 'Klara' — in the magazine *Vaza (Literaturno-khudozhestvennyi zhurnal svetskikh novostei, mod, domashnego khoziaistva i rukodelii)* 18.03.1858; the poem 'Roza' — *ibid.* 21.05.1858.

²³ *Vesel'chak: Zhurnal vsiakikh raznykh strannostei, svetskikh, literaturno-khudozhestvennykh i inykh*, 35 (1858).

²⁴ *Vesel'chak*, 36 (1858).

²⁵ See *Vesel'chak*, in *Ėntsiklopedicheskii slovar', izd. F. Brokgauza i I. Efrona* (SPb, 1892), vol. 11, p. 101.

‘deports herself as a rule décolletée’, is conducting an affair with a minor official Lukovkin, but on the other hand looks forward to her agreed marriage: ‘I’m going to marry him. It’s a good job that he’s old: I’ll make good use of his lolly.’²⁶ In the poetic drama ‘Bor’ba’,²⁷ a hopelessly stilted piece, Suvorin portrays the eternal conflict between a wife who dreams of a new outfit and her harassed husband, who resorts in the end to bribe-taking; here is a fragment:

1.4 Она (*сильно взволнована*)
Нет, я уверена, что он не купит шляпки, —
Напрасно только я лишь расправляю лапки
И ожиданием бессмысленно томлюсь...
<...>
Я знаю — хороша — поклонники найдутся,
За взгляд единый мой, пожалуй, подерутся,
И купят кринолин, накидку и бурнус. —
Ты это намотай, дружок, на ус.
<...>
Он (*входит задумавшись*)
...Брать или не брать — вот в чем вопрос!
Что благороднее — сносить ли брань и крики
Враждующей жены, или отбросить честь
И убеждения и кончить миром...

The magazine *Vesel'chak* could only hold out for a year and was closed at the beginning of 1859 failing to find subscribers. Suvorin, seemingly inspired by his first success, decided to take independent action and make himself known in the capital. In 1860 in Petersburg he published his first book, entitled *Drama Konkurentsii*.²⁸ On page 3, there is a passage that reads:

1.5 Брошюра № 1. Выпуск брошюры № 2-й последует через два месяца и в таком периодическом порядке будет продолжаться до 1861 года. Издатель лично, без сотрудничества, предполагает, во-первых, познакомить публику с отечественной промышленностью и действительным кредитом и, во-вторых, испытать, имеет ли место литературный труд вне пресса журналов. А. Бобровский²⁹.

The beginner writer staked a solid claim: he announced himself a publisher with plans for a serial publication, ready to tackle urgent and serious topics, while preserving

²⁶ *Vesel'chak*, 36 (1858), p. 209.

²⁷ *Vesel'chak*, 44 (1858), p. 353.

²⁸ See: O. Makarova, ‘Pervaia kniga A. S. Suvorina’, in *Kniga: Issledovaniia i materialy* (M., 2010), vol. 92 (forthcoming).

²⁹ A. Bobrovskii — one of Suvorin’s early pennames.

the independence of his literary work. To bring this large-scale plan to life, a modest teacher needed financial help and it seems probable that his project was supported by Marshal of Nobility Vasilii Tulinov; for, having tested Suvorin as secretary, Tulinov subsequently entrusted the young man with the cataloguing of his vast personal library. According to Suvorin, 'Tulinov had some connections in Petersburg',³⁰ and this suggests that it was indeed Tulinov who was mediator in publishing Suvorin's book and who also sponsored it. Suvorin himself was in reduced circumstances: after his father's death in 1856, his numerous relatives found themselves poorly provided for; nor had Aniuta brought any dowry. As recorded in Suvorin's personal documents, 'neither he nor his wife had anything by way of inherited or acquired property'.³¹

To promote trade and credit relations, Suvorin placed the setting of his play in 18th century Warsaw. Exploiting age-old anti-Polish attitudes, he made the Warsaw authorities the epitome of evil, opposed by the unswerving honesty of the Ukrainian landowner Smelenko, the incarnation of a healthy economic principle. Sincerely wishing to promote trade, Suvorin allowed himself some bold words: 19 lines of his drama in eight pages were replaced by suspension points, which indicate censor's cuts. Nevertheless, Suvorin's play ends with a triumph of good over evil. However, as far as I can make out, 'brochure No 2' never saw the light of day. Suvorin's attempt to take the capital by storm had failed, and the author, suffering from *raznochintsy* ambition, preferred not to mention this failure in later life.³²

§ 2

Realizing that 'literary work without the pressure of magazines' was barely possible, Suvorin changed his tactics and from 1861, he started to contribute to serious periodicals as a prose writer. Of particular interest are his three short stories: 'Chernichka',³³ 'Soldat da soldatka',³⁴ and 'Alenka',³⁵ which were approved for publication by Ivan Nikitin,

³⁰ Op. cit.: B. Glinskii, 'Aleksii Sergeevich Suvorin', p. 15.

³¹ RGALI, F. 459, op. 2, ed. 684, l. 1.

³² The first book by Suvorin is mentioned in specialised sources only: I. Masanov, *Slovar' psevdonomov russkikh pisatelei, uchenykh i obshchestvennykh deiatelei*, in 4 vol (M., 1956–1960), vol. 1, p. 161; *Ukazatel' zaglavii proizvedenii khudozhestvennoi literatury: 1801–1975*, in 8 vol. (M., 1985–1995), vol. 3, p. 111, No 6718.

³³ *Voronezhskaia beseda*, 11 (1861).

³⁴ *Sovremennik*, 2 (1862).

Nikolai Nekrasov and Andrei Kraevskii respectively. Suvorin undoubtedly derived material for his stories from the peasant milieu which he knew so well; and all three of his stories are variations on a theme, namely Karamzin's thematic formula '...for even peasant women know how to love!'³⁶ But these stories by Suvorin are hardly serious evocations of the fallen woman; it is more likely that the fledgling author intended to amaze the metropolitan reader with exotic portrayals of village sexual mores.

Indeed, the debut story 'Chernichka' was immediately noticed: the newspaper *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* called the story 'a remarkable work which depicts an entirely new side of peasant life.'³⁷ The dictionary definition of the word 'chernichka' reads: 'a peasant woman, who has chosen not to marry either by vow of her parents or by her own vow and who lives a cloistral life'.³⁸ However, Suvorin provides a different gloss: by 'chernichki' he means 'a special caste of peasant maid, lovers of free unmarried life, which they often try to disguise with a showy piety. <...> Their huts are a shelter for libertines of both sexes.'³⁹ Moreover, Suvorin's story was prototypic: 'In fact, this is a true story which actually happened in Korshevo, although in my version the story is slightly embellished'.⁴⁰ But contrary to his own derogatory definition of 'chernichka', which suggests the discovery of a novel variety of peasant prostitute, Suvorin chooses to romanticize his story and to relate it as a *skaz*.⁴¹

The narrator of the story is a 'chernichka' herself, 'plump, beautiful, and dark-browed' Mariia. Obligated to flee her house because of her despotic father, Mariia finds refuge with the 'chernichka' Praskov'ia, where she starts an affair with a married man, forest-guard Ivan. Mariia has a daughter by Ivan and later moves to a town where she settles down with her father (they forgive each other); her house is apparently purchased

³⁵ *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 7–8 (1863).

³⁶ N. Karamzin, *Bednaia Liza*, in N. Karamzin, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, in 2 vol. (M.; L., 1964), p. 607.

³⁷ Op. cit.: V. Anderson, 'Predislovie', in A. Suvorin, *Rasskazy* (SPb, 1913), p. VIII.

³⁸ See: M. Gromyko, 'Chernichki', in *Sviataia Rus': Bol'shaia èntsiklopediia russkogo naroda (Russkaia narodnaia zhizn')* (M., 2009), p. 889; see also: L. Tul'tseva, 'K ètnopsikhologicheskoi kharakteristike odnogo tipa russkikh zhenshchin: Khristovy nevesty (chernichki)', in *Muzhchina i zhenshchina v meniaiushchemsia mire: Meniaiushchiesia roli i obrazy* (M., 1999), p. 286–292).

³⁹ Op. cit.: V. Anderson, 'Predislovie', in A. Suvorin, *Rasskazy* (SPb, 1913), p. VIII.

⁴⁰ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 53. Entry of 22.02.1884.

⁴¹ Suvorin's story was left out by researchers. See for example, O. Matich, 'A Typology of Fallen Women in 19th Century Russian Literature', in: *American Contributions to the Ninth International Congress of Slavists* (Columbus, Ohio, 1983), vol. II, pp. 326–343; A. Zholkovskii, 'Topos prostitutitsii v literature', in A. Zholkovskii, M. Iampol'skii, *Babel' / Babel* (M., 1994), p. 317–369.

with money earned by her ‘professional’ activity. Ivan, whose marriage proves childless, visits them in town, and these episodes complete the picture of a perfect harmony. The author sympathizes with his heroine, possibly because she has managed to contrive a kind of family life, remaining true to patriarchal canons. Realizing the importance of his chosen subject, Suvorin at the same time admits that he has failed to examine it properly: ‘I failed to capture life, I depicted it the way I felt it, but at that time I felt it wrongly, in too young and bookish a way’.⁴²

The story ‘Soldat da soldatka’ which was published soon after ‘Chernichka’, is fairly naturalistic in style, unlike ‘Chernichka’, and already shows a gynophobic feature. The heroine of the story, soldier’s wife Duniashka, who provides sexual services for all the village men, at the same time intimidates them with her independence, her cunning and her sexual power:

1.6 Дуняшка эта жила в свое удовольствие, значит, под началом ни у кого не состояла, и такая, братцы шельма была, что сладу никакого с ней не было. Потому первое — щеголиха, другое — ненасытная душа. <...> Ты лучше и губы не расставляй — она и завтра у те вымозжит что ни на есть, и всё, братцы мои, одной лаской, — замучит те лаской, а вымозжит⁴³.

Not only her clients disapprove of Duniashka, but also the author himself; implying that without male patriarchal control, women easily yield to sinful temptation and become dangerous; however, this idea is borrowed directly from *Domostroi*. The male disposition to yield to temptation Suvorin passes over without comment, whilst Duniashka earns a severe punishment: she dies of consumption just before she sets off to visit her husband in the Caucasus.

The story ‘Alenka’, according to Suvorin, was approved for publication by Dostoevsky himself.⁴⁴ The heroine of the story, a serf girl, falls victim to her lecherous master and loses interest in mundane life. She sees mystical apparitions, and one of these takes bodily form as a wandering preacher. While listening to him reading the Gospel, Alenka succumbs to religious ecstasy and gives herself bodily to the prophet (Suvorin

⁴² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 53. Entry of 22.02.1884.

⁴³ A. Suvorin, *Rassказы* (SPb, 1913), p. 90.

⁴⁴ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 53. Entry of 20.08.1899. The story was planned for publication in the magazine *Vremia* (edited by the Dostoevsky brothers) which was closed by censorship in April 1863.

does not spare erotic details). Alenka's master sets her free, but the author leaves her to freeze to death under a tree on her way to town, which is to say on the way to her 'new life'. Since Alenka is not, on the face of things, guilty of any deliberate sinning, Suvorin's finale suggests an author hard pressed to decide the future of a religious fanatic.

As a preliminary conclusion, I may state that this very early stage of Suvorin's writings is already marked by an interest in female characters. Besides some unoriginal caricature portrayals of women designed to please the undemanding audience of light magazines, Suvorin is trying to examine less typical, and even fairly original, female characters, employing material which is well known to him and which reflects his peasant background. However, he stays within limits set by the traditional patriarchal dispensation on female behaviour: a woman who reins in her sexuality and returns to family life wins approval, whilst a woman who rejects moral stricture and enjoys her sexual freedom is punished.

Apart from his first attempts at fiction, Suvorin also tried his hand at journalism. Thanks to the good offices of a lecturer at the Voronezh Cadet Corps, Mikhail De-Pule, Suvorin began contributing to the Moscow magazine *Russkaia rech'* with regular reports entitled 'Bibliograficheskie zametki' and 'Provintsial'naia khronika', the latter including some notes on women's education: Suvorin argued in favour of women's 'gymnasia' in provincial towns⁴⁵. The publisher of the magazine *Russkaia rech'* was Countess Elizaveta Salias de-Turnemir, an emancipated woman (she was dubbed the Russian George Sand), separated from her husband; she was an active participant in the debate on 'the woman question'⁴⁶ and was besides a close friend of 'the infernal nihilist' Apollinaria Suslova.⁴⁷ The countess soon invited Suvorin to Moscow to take up the post of magazine secretary and literary critic. The offer was tempting, but Suvorin had to choose between his well-established life in Voronezh and starting again from scratch in Moscow. Suvorin was

⁴⁵ *Russkaia rech'*, 5, 31 (1861).

⁴⁶ See, for example, 'Zhizn' George Sand' (1856); 'Miss Bronte, ee zhizn' i sochineniia' (1858); 'Zhenshchina i liubov' po poniatiiam Michelet'; 'Po povodu romana V. Krestovskogo "V ozhidanii chuda"' (1861), all in *Russkaia rech'* etc. On E. Tur see: J. Gheith, *Finding the Middle Ground: Krestovskii, Tur, and the Power of Ambivalence in Nineteenth-Century Russian Women's Prose* (Northwestern University Press, Illinois, 2004), pp. 29–51, 83–102, 129–154.

⁴⁷ See on her: L. Saraskina, *Vozliublennaia Dostoevskogo. Apollinariia Suslova: Biografiia v dokumentakh, pis'makh, materialakh* (M., 1994).

hesitant, so the countess prompted him: ‘Why don’t you take advice from your wife. It is important particularly in material matters, because lack of money will fall on her in the first instance.’⁴⁸ Again, it was Aniuta who dispelled her husband’s doubts: ‘My wife, who was notable for her strong character, insisted on moving to Moscow; so I moved there at the end of June 1861.’⁴⁹

Moving from Voronezh to Moscow was an important step in Suvorin’s ascent from Korshevo peasantry to the world of the metropolitan literati. Suvorin’s doubts were perhaps not only material and pecuniary: apart from his familiar way of life, he had to leave behind his provincial mentality and to adopt new codes of conduct, all in the effort to compete with renowned journalists who were, after all, broadly educated people with a high social status. It seems that Suvorin was still suffering from an inferiority complex as a provincial, and one of his *Pis'ma iz provintsii* inadvertently gives away his anxiety:

1.7 “Провинция — ужасная вещь!” — сказал еще Белинский. Она действительно ужасная вещь в том отношении, что <...> часто из порядочного человека сделает либо тряпку, никуда не годную, либо гибкую лозу. Гибкость — одно из главнейших свойств провинции и естественно вытекает из неустановившихся убеждений, из бесхарактерности.⁵⁰

However, later in Suvorin’s life, as we shall see presently, this very flexibility, applied in matters of ideology and expressing itself in his writings, was to assume a central importance and to issue in great material success.

In Moscow, Suvorin found himself in the thick of literary life, acquiring many useful and interesting contacts. He also tried to get rid of his provincial complexes: ‘I recollect Suvorin, Aleksei Sergeevich, as a young man; he was shy but talkative.’⁵¹ Countess Salias de Turnemir impressed Suvorin as an outstanding personality: ‘I am living at the countess’s in Sokol’niki. This woman simply delights me. <...> She talks a lot and she talks well, and if she gets inspired she changes completely and talks with

⁴⁸ RGALI, F. 459, op. 1, ed. 3763. Pis'ma E. V. Salias-Turnemir, de k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 27.

⁴⁹ A. Suvorin, ‘Ot avtora’, in *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni*: 2nd ed. (SPb, 1909), p. X.

⁵⁰ *Russkaia rech'*, 18 (1861), p. 288.

⁵¹ A. Pleshcheev, *Chto vspomnilos'*, in 3 vol. (SPb, 1914), vol. 3: *Aktery i pisateli*, p. 5.

incredible passion.’⁵² Yet, in half a year *Russkaia rech’* went downhill for lack of subscribers and in January 1862 it was closed. Suvorin was panic-stricken:

1.8 Я, как человек вовсе не привыкший к самодеятельности, как человек, который прежде всего любит, чтобы его поставили на ноги, подперли подпорками со всех сторон и сказали: «ну, вот, теперь стой же так!», я, как такой слабый и нерешительный человек, начинаю приходить в немалое отчаяние, потому что после закрытия газеты не знаю, куда мне деваться и что мне делать.⁵³

Hard times fell upon the Suvorins. Leo Tolstoy, who wished to help Suvorin out, recommended him for a teacher’s position in Tula, but Suvorin refused: ‘To be frank with you, I wouldn’t really like to relocate to Tula, because I am not at all a pedagogue. I have worked as a teacher for five years and have never felt any avocation for this...’⁵⁴ To keep his head above water, Suvorin resorted to hack work — his wife gave him a hand making fair copies and selflessly assumed the weight of domestic cares: ‘From Davydkovo [Moscow suburb] Aniuta, at that time pregnant with Lelia [Aleksei, their third child], would walk to Moscow to pawn our silver, of which we had very little, and on her way there, she would take off her shoes so as not to wear them out.’⁵⁵ Suvorin was clearly moping:

1.9 Не раз в последнее время приходило мне на ум сожаление о покинутом Воронеже, о тамошней жизни и деятельности. <...> Литературный труд мне сильно надоел в последнее время. Не иначе как с отвращением я принимался за него....⁵⁶

His wife never got tired minding the family: ‘At that time, Aniuta was attending midwifery courses and managed both courses and our children well; she had to hire a cook but that was all. She herself tidied up rooms and washed floors. Once Bogdanov [Suvorin’s acquaintance] caught her doing this and she laughed as she told me how embarrassed she became.’⁵⁷ At the time, midwifery courses were the only educational

⁵² A. Suvorin, Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule, publikatsiia M. Semanovoi, in *Ezhegodnik rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo Doma na 1979 god* (L., 1981), p. 164–165. Letter of 25.12.1861.

⁵³ A. Suvorin, Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 164–165.

⁵⁴ OR Gosudarstvennogo muzeia L. Tolstogo. T.s. 189. 46. Letter of October 1862. On relations of Suvorin and Tolstoy see: E. Dinershtein, A. S. *Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar’eru* (M., 1998), p. 194–206.

⁵⁵ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 211. Entry of 23.03.1896.

⁵⁶ A. Suvorin, Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 165.

⁵⁷ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 213–214. Entry of 23.03.1896.

provision for women which allowed professional training and Aniuta immediately seized the opportunity. However, Suvorin was ready to turn back:

1.10 Знаете, я готов переехать в Воронеж, ей-Богу, готов! <...> Напишите мне, возьмут ли меня в [кадетский] корпус, если я весной перееду в Воронеж. <...> Москва ничем не привязывает меня, на Петербург я и глядеть не хочу.⁵⁸

But fate — presumably not without some help from Aniuta — had made entirely different arrangements. Thanks to his wide circle of friends and his reputation as a promising journalist, Suvorin simultaneously received invitations from two Petersburg newspaper editors — from Andrei Kraevskii (*Golos*) and from Valentin Korsh (*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*). Once again, confronted with a difficult choice, Suvorin ‘vacillated between Korsh and Kraevskii and finally, in December 1862, moved to Petersburg and started working for Korsh’⁵⁹ where he was offered better financial terms. Since Kraevskii and Korsh were competitors, Suvorin had some problems. In a dispute with *Golos*, he distorted the reasons for his refusal to work for Kraevskii, arguing that *Golos* (Kraevskii’s newspaper) was subsidised by the government and was therefore politically biased, and that this was precisely the reason why he had chosen *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* instead of *Golos*. Kraevskii, under assault, did not hesitate to publish Suvorin’s private letter to him, which revealed the actual financial reasons for Suvorin’s refusal to work for him: ‘It was awful. I was completely at a loss.’⁶⁰ Suvorin was compromised, and his wife tried to vindicate her husband: ‘Aniuta went to the editors of *Golos* and demanded that they show her my original letter to them. And they showed it to her.’⁶¹ Aniuta was presumably embarrassed. The conflict was not patched up, and Suvorin was very upset about his blunder: ‘I was totally shattered.’⁶² However, this episode does vividly demonstrate the stamina of Suvorin’s wife: the 22-year-old provincial was brave enough to stand up for her husband and recklessly set off to sort matters out with hard-boiled metropolitan publishers.

⁵⁸ A. Suvorin, Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 171.

⁵⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 210. Entry of 23.03.1896.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

The editor of *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* put a heavy load on his new employee: ‘In the newspaper, I was an editorial secretary, I read proofs together with Korsh, I proof-read ads, I wrote notes, I started a column “Khronika”, I wrote feuilletons and theatre reviews, I visited censors with banned articles etc.’⁶³ The work day was tightly scheduled, and to do everything in time, Suvorin asked his wife to give him a hand: ‘I set off for the office at 10 in the morning and came back at 5 in the evening and had dinner; then at 8 in the evening they would bring ads, and I edited them, often together with Aniuta, and then at 10 I set off for the office again, where I worked till 2 or 3 in the morning, and sometimes even longer.’⁶⁴

As usual, Suvorin complained about his life: ‘I am busy all day long, but with work that seems to be pointless and unavailing. <...> Too bad, Mikhail Federovich, too bad.’⁶⁵ Yet he was now aware that there was no turning back: ‘Still, I would not return to the provinces — no desire whatsoever. There is a chasm between me as a provincial and me as a Petersburg person’.⁶⁶ Life changes also affected Suvorin’s wife, which her friends noticed immediately: ‘Now that Anna Ivanovna has become a Petersburgian egotist <...> she will not remember her old friends...’⁶⁷

Anna Ivanovna, who passed the survival test in both Russian capitals side by side with her husband, was indeed an extraordinary woman. From a merchant’s family, she was trying to break away from provincial society. This opportunity came with her marriage to a young journalist who was very much up-and-coming.⁶⁸ Suvorin’s fast-moving career — it took him 3 years to progress from provincial teacher to major metropolitan newspaper contributor — should be credited in part to his wife. We may speculate that she was motivated not only by conjugal devotion, but also by a strong desire for self-fulfilment — in the middle of the 19th century, as the women’s liberation movement grew in strength, this was a fairly typical pattern. There is every reason to

⁶³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 210. Entry of 23.03.1896.

⁶⁴ A. Suvorin, Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 210–211.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178, 180.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁶⁷ RGALI, F. 459, op. 1, ed. 2533. Pis’ma E. V. Markovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L 4. Letter of 23.05.1867.

⁶⁸ An appropriate question: did Aniuta marry Suvorin out of rational calculation rather than love? On women’s moral preference in similar situations see, for example: Kotliarevskii, N. ‘Ocherki iz istorii obshchestvennogo nastroyeniia 60-kh gg.: Zhenskii vopros v pervoi ego postanovke’, in *Vestnik Evropy*, 2 (1914), p. 251.

believe that her initiation into liberal ideas took place with her husband's knowledge and consent. When still in Bobrov, he had access to the vast library of Vasili Tulinov and could read banned books by Aleksandr Herzen; in Voronezh, he collaborated with liberal metropolitan journals and feverishly tried to catch up with his education. Apparently, Aniuta turned out to be an extremely shrewd reader and an equally capable student. Recollecting those times, Suvorin writes 'we', apparently having his wife in mind as well: it is not simply Suvorin alone that studied and worked, but rather the pair of them as a team:

1.11 Работая в «Санкт-Петербургских новостях» и в «Вестнике Европы», нельзя было писать всякий вздор, нельзя было не знать того, о чем пишешь, нельзя было обнаружить невежества по части исторических, историко-литературных и тому подобных фактов. А это заставляло учиться и читать, читать, читать, целую пропасть книг читать и изучать языки: французский, немецкий и английский. Мы учились и работали. Очень трудно было.⁶⁹

While Suvorin presumably read some of the feminist literature, in his personal life he had started a traditional patriarchal family — assuming the role of a breadwinner with his wife having a child every other year ('I am rather too prolific'⁷⁰). But as for Aniuta, now a midwife, she could leave the family circle and be of use to society while making some money for the household. Straight away the newly acquired skills proved very handy: 'Volodia [their third son] was born without difficulty. It was at night, around 10 or 11. I went to the maternity hospital to fetch a midwife, and it was far away. When I got back, Aniuta had already given birth; her course mate Kolomiitseva assisted her.'⁷¹

§ 3

Suvorin's work for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* was fairly productive: between 1863 and 1874 he published over 400 feuilletons and numerous sketches. His contemporaries assessed his work according to the party to which they belonged. Suvorin's closest colleague, Boris Glinskii, wrote about his triumph as a feuilleton-writer and clearly indicated his audience:

⁶⁹ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 62. L. 4.

⁷⁰ A. Suvorin, Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 139. Letter of 9.08.1861.

⁷¹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 207. Entry of 23.03.1896.

1.12 [Незнакомец] ... сумел переместить центр тяжести из неуклюжих тогдашних передовиц в область живого, остроумного фельетона, где, как в калейдоскопе, перед обывателями запестрели страницы отечественной жизни, имена, факты, печальная действительность, политика, обывательщина, где раздался веселый смех, будящий, бодрящий, зовущий от мрака к свету, дразнящий перспективами лучшего будущего и отмечающий все, что пришло в ветхость и негодность⁷².

In contrast, Petr Boborykin, holding Suvorin in low regard, was harshly critical:

1.13 Корш в своих корректных «С.-Петербургских ведомостях» завел себе также воскресного забавника, который тогда мог сказать про себя, как Загорецкий, что он был «ужасный либерал». <...> Все, кто жадно читал втихомолку «Колокол», — довольствовались въявь и тем, что удавалось фельетонисту «Петербургских ведомостей» разменивать на ходячую, подцензурную монету.⁷³

These extreme accounts meet where they confirm Suvorin's outward lightness in the treatment of serious subjects formerly (and formally) more appropriate to leading articles. This was beneficial for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, which experimented with different genres in search of a wider reading public, though Suvorin's Sunday feuilleton, which admittedly enhanced the newspaper's popularity, was following the old tradition of Osip Senkovskii (Baron Brambeus) with his cynical principle: 'Write cheerfully, offer the public only what its stomach will digest. The public gets constipation from ideas, particularly liberal ones.'⁷⁴ As early as the mid 1850s, Suvorin was an avid reader of Senkovskii's feuilletons, grudging no sum for his subscription to the magazine *Syn Otechestva*⁷⁵ to which Senkovskii contributed as a columnist. Presumably he studied and learned from Senkovskii's writing technique, which was pinpointed by critics:

⁷² Op. cit.: B. Glinskii, 'Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin', p. 22.

⁷³ P. Boborykin, *Vospominaniia*, in 2 vol. (M., 1965), vol. 1, p. 284. Zagoretskii is a character from comedy by Griboedov *Gore ot uma*.

⁷⁴ Op. cit.: V. Botsianovskii, 'O. I. Senkovskii', in: *Éntsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, izd. F. Brokgauza i I. Efrona (SPb, 1900), vol. 58, p. 532. Initially feuilleton, conceived as a 'light' talk with readers about current events and important issues, appeared in the newspaper of Faddei Bulgarin *Severnaia pchela* in 1825. However, Bulgarin's hideous reputation and posthumous oblivion must be the reason why not only Suvorin's contemporaries, but also modern research, avoid drawing parallels between Suvorin and Bulgarin. Incidentally, Bulgarin steered his newspaper towards commercial success, and his target audience was 'the middle estate', in other words, readers from petty official and petty bourgeois circles. On Bulgarin see: A. Reitblat, 'Predislovie', in *Vidok Figliarkin: Pis'ma i agenturnye zapiski F. V. Bulgarina v III otdelenie* (M., 1998). This subject deserves separate and serious examination.

⁷⁵ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 99. Entry of 8.02.1893. The catalogue of Suvorin's library in his later life included complete works by Senkovskii as well as the recollections of his wife: *Sobranie*

1.14 В своих критических статьях он балагурит, нередко довольно пошло, изощряет свое остроумие не только над авторами книг, но и над читателями, притом в такой форме, что читатель всегда недоумевает, где кончается шутка и как действительно смотрит на тот или иной вопрос сам барон Брамбеус⁷⁶.

Without doubt, Suvorin inherited the feuilleton manner of Baron Brambeus and used it generously in his later journalism. Posing as a scoffer and even as a ‘vulgarizer’, Suvorin succeeded in creating an ambiguous effect, so that it was impossible to work out exactly what was being ridiculed by the author: a progressive idea itself or its vulgarization.⁷⁷ For Suvorin, this device proved convenient in disguising of the fuzziness and instability of his ideological stance; switching registers and changing his masks, he could also maintain the interest of the most diverse reading audience.

The first major contribution by Suvorin to *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* that caught readers’ attention was his feuilleton-novel *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni*, which ran from July 1865 to the end of the year. The author confided to his close friend that this work was improvised: ‘I wrote and I am still writing this piece in a strange way: having finished the first chapter, I did not know what would follow, and I still do not know now what the continuation will be or how I am going to finish it.’⁷⁸ Indeed, Suvorin failed to bring the novel to a conclusion: according to the editor, it was becoming ‘unprintable’ and its publication was terminated at chapter sixteen.

The main idea of the author was: ‘...to erase some dark paint put on the so-called nihilists by such scoundrels as Leskov (Stebnitskii), who is a first-class thief and a regular beast, and whom I studied in detail in Moscow, at Salias’s.’⁷⁹ In other words,

sochinenii. Senkovskogo (Barona Brambeusa), in 4 vol. (SPb, 1858); *Senkovskii (Baron Brambeus): Biograficheskie zapiski ego zheny* (SPb, 1858), in: *Katalog russkikh knig biblioteki A. S. Suvorina* (SPb, 1913).

⁷⁶ V. Botsianovskii, ‘O. I. Senkovskii’, p. 532.

⁷⁷ Cf. an appropriate remark by Lidiia Ginzburg: ‘Great ideological movements have not only their vulgarizers but also their parasitical following, which transforms their ideas into a fad or game’ (L. Ginzburg, ‘The “Human Document” and the Construction of Personality’, in *On Psychological Prose* (Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 43. Translated by J. Rosengrant.

⁷⁸ A. Suvorin, Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 181. Letter of 21.09.1865.

⁷⁹ Ibid. During the first few years in Moscow, provincials Suvorin and Leskov stuck together, both being challenged by the problem of self-assertion in the metropolitan educated milieu: ‘At that time [1861] I was awfully shy and modest and I listened to Leskov as if he was an oracle’ (Op cit.: B. Glinskii, ‘Aleksii Sergeevich Suvorin’, p. 29). Throughout their later lives, relations between the two men of letters were difficult. See: O. Maiorova, ‘K istorii pozhiznennogo dialoga: Iz perepiski N. S. Leskova s

Suvorin's novel was supposed to counteract a series of anti-nihilistic novels like *Vzbalamuchennoe more* (1863) by Aleksei Pisemskii, *Nekuda* (1864) by Nikolai Leskov, *Marevo* (1864) by Viktor Kliushnikov, *Sovremennaia idillia* (1865) by Vasilii Avenarius and others. Suvorin's satirical pen was primarily targeted on Leskov's novel *Nekuda*, which was scorned both by radical and liberal critics, who labelled the author as an anti-nihilist and a retrograde. Suvorin's overall verdict on the novel was extremely stern: 'Mr Stebnitskii wrote a caricature of events and characters in our life. He wrote it because he was unable to understand either life or characters due to his backwardness.'⁸⁰

Having set his mind on publishing his own novel as a book, Suvorin ended this work by adding some fifteen chapters and restoring the censor's cuts. The printing — 1500 copies — was complete by the end of March 1866; but the book never saw the light of day. On the 4th of April, the very day when the novel was sent to the Censorship Committee, the revolutionary terrorist Dmitrii Karakozov made an attempt upon the life of the Emperor Aleksandr II. Duly alarmed, Suvorin rushed out a loyal letter to the Head of the Interior, Petr Valuev, asking him to withdraw the novel from circulation:

1.15 Все сословия слились в одном чувстве преданности к государю и радости его спасению. Но при этом обнаружилось и некоторое разъединение, весьма естественное в такие напряженные минуты: никакому сословию, никакому кружку не хотелось, чтобы злодей принадлежал к их среде, и все стали указывать друг на друга; многие говорили, что злодей помещик или подкуплен помещиками. При этих толках, которые были слышны уже вечером 4 апреля, мне показалось совершенно несвоевременным выпускать мою книгу, в которой были резкие осуждения помещиков известной партии. <...> Я писал эту книжку с целями совершенно благонамеренными.⁸¹

The letter was left without reply, the book was confiscated and the author found himself in the dock, becoming the hero of the first ever 'book trial' in Russia.⁸² After a scrutinising analysis of the text, the Petersburg District Court passed a severe sentence:

A. S. Suvorinym, in *NLO*, 4 (1993), pp. 78–101. See also: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelavshii kar'eru*, pp. 218–230.

⁸⁰ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, 11.09.1864. In his later life, Suvorin would several times reprint *Nekuda* in his publishing house, not to mention the first complete life-time collection of Leskov's works.

⁸¹ A. Suvorin, *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni*, p. XVI–XVII. Further reference to this book is given at the end of each quote in brackets; 'A' stands for Appendix.

⁸² See also: P. Reifman, 'Zapreshchennaia kniga A. S. Suvorina (Iz istorii literaturno-obshchestvennoi bor'by 1860-kh godov)', in: *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo universiteta*, No. 251: *Trudy po russkoi i slavianskoi filologii*, vol. XV: *Literaturovedenie* (Tartu, 1970), p. 350–356; E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelavshii kar'eru*, p. 23–28.

Suvorin was condemned to two months in jail; the book was condemned and destroyed. The degree of severity can be attributed to the tense public atmosphere following Karakozov's crime, and indeed Suvorin's case turned into something of a show trial.

Together with his barrister Konstantin Arsen'ev, Suvorin lodged an appeal, which was upheld and the sentence was shortened to three weeks in a guard-room. The strictness of the sentence was mitigated thanks to the ambiguous narrative strategies of the author, which had caught the eye of a censor:

1.16 Автор рассматриваемого произведения был весьма увертлив в способе выражения, старался проводить свои мысли преимущественно посредством намеков и недомолвок, оставил в свое оправдание разные оговорки и как бы благонамеренные рассуждения с целью избежать обвинения в прямом одобрении сопротивления правительству. (A: 75)

Highlighting the author's reservations and hints mentioned by the censor, the barrister Arsen'ev quoted Suvorin to prove his good faith without doubt; arguing, for example, that the female protagonist Liudmila Ivanovna 'is portrayed by the author as a person existing in our life and times but not deserving any sympathy at all; <...> in many cases the author had actually *denounced* those extremes that certain women go to' (A: 30–31). In turn the Censorship Committee's accusations, supported by the District Court, were based, partially, on the notion that Suvorin *had glorified* 'the ideas about morals and sexual relations in vogue in the circle of "the so-called nihilists"' (A: 73, italics in both cases are mine — *O. M.*).

This ambiguity allowed Suvorin to stay 'between genres'. My reading of the book suggests that having initially conceived the idea of exonerating nihilists from severe criticism by conservative men of letters, Suvorin, as he developed his story, arrived at a parody of the anti-nihilistic novel; that is, he did exactly what he blamed Leskov for. However, while the anti-nihilistic novel proper is quite consistent in unmasking the ideological insolvency of the 'new people,'⁸³ Suvorin's novel seems to play a double game. For example, Suvorin combines an apologetical defence of Samarskii (Chernyshevsky):

⁸³ See, for example, V. Terekhin, '*Protiv techenii*': *Utaennye russkie pisateli (Tipologiya antinihilisticheskogo romana)* (M., 2002), pp. 61–81.

1.17 Трудно было найти человека более честного, более готового на всякое доброе дело, более преданного тем убеждениям, которые он старался проводить в своей литературной деятельности и которых держался в жизни. (113)

with a caricature of the nihilist Il'menev (the main character), who appears in the first pages as a sloppily dressed person with a black beard and long hair. Ex-student of a theological seminary, and subsequently student at the Medical Academy (he had arrived in Petersburg on foot and with empty pockets), Il'menev keeps going by giving private lessons. In Moscow, he lives with a fake passport, strewing revolutionary leaflets throughout the city, and is concerned with getting money for revolutionary purposes. However, Il'menev fails to apply his 'moral strength' in Russia and at the end of the novel he departs to America, to start a new life as a wood-cutter.

In *Vsiakie*, Suvorin tries to keep the constellation of characters traditional to the nihilistic novel. Il'menev's antagonist is prince Shchebynin, who had experimented with nihilism, been disappointed by it and plunged into 'a slough of cruelty, cold debauchery, and emptiness' (65). This useless aristocrat is also opposed to a promising young nobleman Vasilii Privalov, who shows a great desire to go to the University (his mentor was Il'menev). The set is made complete with an invisible character, Koval'skii, who flees Petersburg with the wife of prince Shchebynin, apparently to take part in the Polish uprising.

The novel depicts not only male, but also some female nihilists, which makes it possible to discern Suvorin's attitude to the 'new women'. The set of female characters includes Liudmila Ivanovna and Masha Kuznetsova. The first is an emancipated woman of liberal cast, while the second is a radical. Masha is a back-stage character, though the plot is focused on her. Starting with a medical course at a University, she then secretly marries prince Shchebynin, has a child by him, then drifts together with Koval'skii and elopes with him to Berlin, where he abandons her so that she has to 'sell herself.'⁸⁴ Finally, Masha, just like Il'menev, finds a better place over the ocean, joining the American army as a nurse. Masha is opposed to her namesake — the aristocratic young and pretty Mary Privalova. However, she is a promising type: on the sly she reads the

⁸⁴ This plot mimics the life story of Liudmila Shelgunova and Aleksandr Serno-Solov'evich; See: T. Bogdanovich, *Liubov' liudei shestidesiatykh godov*, p. 35–50.

books 'which aristocratic girls are not supposed to read'. Just like her brother, Mary is coached by Il'menev. She herself is ready to fall in love with her mentor, but he, with very bad timing, departs for America. To flesh out the picture, Suvorin introduces two incidental characters: the brunette Porokhova, who boils down a crow to study its skeleton, and the blonde Ol'ga Alekseevna, who is restless in her efforts to get her husband out of prison.

Though Suvorin claims that when writing his novel he 'did not care too much about his characters' features' (V), Liudmila Ivanovna shows clear signs of careful elaboration. However, unlike Suvorin's loose peasant women who seem quite true to life, the urban *émancipée* seems less authentic, and appears rather to be an idealized compilation of all possible types of the 'new woman'. It is very clear that Suvorin acquired relevant material from literature on 'the woman question' (not to mention Chernyshevsky's novel *Chto delat'?*), as he displays sound reading in the area.

Liudmila's business-like character and efficiency is stretched beyond reasonable limits: half-English on her mother's side (and a follower of English emancipation ideas), Liudmila translates novels and gives private lessons, painting portraits in between times and also manages to work part-time in a printing house. But her main efforts are devoted to 'improving the lives of needy girls and women.' She works in a girls' school, helps to start a sewing workshop, and even suggests opening general stores. She also hatches plans for a 'women's-only savings bank', and for a printing shop and yet again for lodgings reserved for women and girls. In the none too distant future she envisages publishing a magazine on woman's matters. Being loaded excessively with all these feminist cares and concerns, Liudmila hardly helps drive the narrative forward. Unlike the authors of anti-nihilistic novels, Suvorin removes the dark paint when he presents a liberated woman, but he cannot present his character in action: Liudmila only moves from one place to another to engage in ideological disputes with other characters.

Liudmila's morals are impeccable. Thus, she rejects the idea of a commune à la Sleptsov because it attracts people 'who combine lofty words with low instincts' (168). Since in her view woman's business should be minded by women only, she brushes aside even nihilists, particularly those who 'wouldn't mind using the freedom between men and women to enjoy a piece of cheesecake' (170). Equally excluded are 'silly' female

nihilists, ‘whose nihilism is nothing but a constant stream of lovers’ (54). However, Suvorin endows Liudmila with the capacity for strong feelings. In full compliance with her lofty pre-election and bearing a strong resemblance to Turgenev’s Elena Stakhova, she talks about Samarskii:

1.18 Другого человека я не знаю, который оставался бы так верен своим убеждениям везде и всегда. <...> Вы спрашивали давеча, любила ли я кого — вот кого я любила, до страсти любила! Если б он мне слово сказал, я бы все отдала ему (87).

However, there is no love-match for Liudmila among the ‘new people’: the radical Il’menev is in love with the radical Masha Kuznetsova. Still, towards the end of his novel Suvorin hastens to seal her fate — and quite comfortably. Liudmila attracts the agreeable young aristocrat Vasilii Privalov. Perhaps it was in exactly this kind of union — of a moderate *émancipée* and a progressive aristocrat — that Suvorin envisaged some potential for social reform. Having paired off all the deserving characters and paying no heed to the rest, Suvorin addresses the censor in his penultimate chapter:

1.19 Добрый читатель и ты, почтенный цензор, по обязанности пробегающий эти страницы, — вы у пристани. Через несколько минут, со спокойной совестью, вы сможете сказать: книжка благонамеренная. <...> Все обстоит благополучно, можешь сказать ты и пустить мою повесть гулять по свету или лежать под слоем пыли на полках книжных лавок (208).

However, Suvorin’s hopes of censorial good will proved unjustified, and his book was not permitted either to appear or to gather dust on the censor’s bookshelves — on the 17th of June 1867, the Chief Department for Press informed the public prosecutor that the book *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni* had been destroyed by order of the Petersburg Crown Office. However, Suvorin’s bitter experience turned out to be a blessing in disguise: his rating as a progressive soared and Nikolai Nekrasov commemorated the destroyed novel in the poem *Propala kniga!*

Thus, Suvorin’s feuilleton-novel, which was conceived as an attempt to exonerate nihilists demonised by retrograde authors, was converted after Karakozov’s shooting into an anti-nihilistic novel by the author himself in his letter to the Head of the Interior. Though Suvorin did point out that his novel offered a rather mild treatment of the subject when compared to Leskov and Co: ‘I deemed it expedient to present a person who is

honest and is sincerely devoted to his convictions, and to use his case to show all the futility and inapplicability of ideas which are so dear to him'.⁸⁵ However, by force of historical circumstances, the judicial authorities nevertheless qualified the novel as a species of 'anarchic propaganda'; and so the novel was considered to be extremely nihilistic. Suvorin's barrister had partially succeeded in proving the authorities wrong by highlighting some anti-nihilistic aspects of the novel, but this saved neither the book, nor the author. After three weeks in custody, Suvorin made a confession: 'Despite my term in prison being short, I nevertheless learnt how tough it is to be deprived of freedom' (XXIII). But his true attitude to nihilists Suvorin finally revealed in a private letter:

1.20 Этот негодяй Каракозов испортил нам всем жизнь. До этого жилось лучше, покойнее, верилось в будущее. Теперь вера не оставила еще нас, всех нас, желающих более или менее блага родине, вера не оставила нас потому, что добрее и лучше царя нам, конечно, не дожидаться. <...> Нигилисты всегда были мне не по нутру, но теперь они стали противней всякой горькой редьки, и бессодержательность их выразилась необыкновенно ясно.⁸⁶

Five years later Suvorin would refuse to recognize Nihilism as a social phenomenon and would be annoyed to find his name mentioned together with the ardent revolutionary Nikolai Shelgunov:

1.21 У нас, собственно говоря, никаких нигилистов не было, а были теории, что бывало всегда, то есть, что молодое поколение шло дальше отцов и предъявляло к жизни бóльшие требования. <...> Я самый скромный и благонамеренный человек, в политических «интригах» никогда не участвовал, прокламаций не только не писал, но не читаю их даже тогда, когда они появляются в «Московских ведомостях», «измены» никакой не затевал, нигилистом не был и не буду.⁸⁷

Still later, Suvorin would turn his back on the epoch-making novel *Chto delat'?* by Chernyshevsky, a novel which, along with other nihilistic works, had supplied him with a fair amount of material for his own creation *Vsiakie*: 'I have not read this novel to the end, just fragments. <...> I thought the novel was boring and affected.'⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See: *Shestidesiatye gody* (M.; L., 1940), p. 406: A letter by Suvorin to the Head of the Interior.

⁸⁶ A. Suvorin, Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 182. Letter of 13.05.1866.

⁸⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 11.01.1870.

⁸⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 11.03.1879.

Suvorin clearly did not expect such a powerful political reaction to his own writings and he must have experienced a crisis of some kind. We may assume that this crisis involved a crisis of political vision, whatever ambivalence underlay that vision in the first place. Last but not least, apart from political confusion, he had to support his growing family in a metropolis:

1.22 Я знаю, что я пустой — у меня ничего не осталось, мне освежиться надо, и я жажду освежения, но не знаю, когда я освежусь. Когда я писал «Аленку» <...> я выложил весь запас наблюдений, который у меня оставался; я сознавал, что у меня ничего не оставалось, и потому ничего не писал, ничего даже не пробовал писать. «Всяких» я стал писать по настоятельной просьбе приятелей, но они надоели мне <...>. Наконец, четверо детей и пятый к новому году⁸⁹ заставляют меня писать. Голь плодовита и хитра на выдумки. Подозреваете ли вы, что я уже больше году пишу журнальные и библиографические заметки в «Русском инвалиде» с подписью А. И—н и перестал уже краснеть за то, что сужу обо всем. Это грустно, но жить надо, дети есть просят.⁹⁰

§ 4

Having moved to Petersburg, the Suvorins became friendly with the Likhachevs: Vladimir Ivanovich, a lawyer and a liberal public figure, contributed articles on legal matters to *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, while Elena Osipovna was in charge of the newspaper's Italian section. Apart from that, in *Otechestvennyye zapiski* she was running a feminist column — their family friend Saltykov-Shchedrin nicknamed her 'the mistress of the woman question.'⁹¹ The alliance of the Likhachevs and the Suvorins promised to be lasting and fruitful: while the men considered the prospects of starting a joint newspaper or a magazine, the women discussed the burning issues of emancipation and were looking for a worthy occupation. The result was a family enterprise that met the interests of both parties — *Izdatel'skaia artel' E. O. Likhachevoi i A. I. Suvorinoi*.⁹² The partners started their publishing list with books in their own translation, and since their names appeared on book covers side by side, they implied that the merchant's daughter

⁸⁹ By the end of 1865 Suvorin's son Valerian was born. The emphasis in quotes here and further is author's, unless stated otherwise.

⁹⁰ A. Suvorin, Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule, p. 181. Letter of 21.09.1865.

⁹¹ V. Unkovskii, 'M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin i ego sem'ia po rasskazam moego ottsa i lichnym vospominaniiam', in *M. E. Saltykov-Shchedrin v vospominaniakh sovremennikov*, in 2 vol (M., 1975), vol. 2, p. 318.

⁹² See details in E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru*, pp. 30–35.

Aniuta Baranova of low rank was equal in her command of French, German and English to the baroness née Kosinskaia, a brilliant graduate of the Smol'nyi Institute. The plans of the newly-hatched publishers were ambitious: 'Under the general title "Biblioteka dlia samoobrazovaniia" we intend to publish a number of books which may be of use in a family education, particularly, in the education of girls.'⁹³

The liberal press generally approved of the Likhacheva and Suvorina undertaking, particularly praising their translations. However, three out of six published books were persecuted by censors and banned from circulation in educational establishments. The Head of the Interior Petr Valuev regarded the books published by Likhacheva and Suvorina as 'promoting revolutionary ideas and methods.'⁹⁴ Moreover, the Chief of Petersburg Police, Fedor Trepov, in his report to Aleksandr II ranked the two business women (along with Nadezhda Stasova, Mariia Trubnikova, and Elena Konradi) among leaders and instigators of 'the so called women's movement'. The authorities were worried that these activists frequented the newly opened public courses for women (*Alarchinskii zhen'skie kursy*), undoubtedly, enhancing 'a corporative spirit among girls.'⁹⁵ From this one may conclude that the energetic Aniuta did not confine herself to her publishing business but intended to continue her education, possibly having in mind the medical department of the Petersburg University; it was, after all, originally through medical careers that women succeeded in gaining equal rights with men. Together with Likhacheva, Suvorin's wife had become not only a participant, but an activist of the women's movement and fell under the suspicion of the protective bodies. Suvorin's relations were proud of his wife's achievements: 'I am so happy that your studies do not seem to you so difficult. God willing, you will not fall behind the rest.'⁹⁶

Having disowned the nihilists and dissociated himself from Chernyshevsky, Suvorin nevertheless, under Aniuta's influence, adopted a feminist family model; a model which the progressive writer had, of course, advocated in his novel and which he

⁹³ Op. cit.: I. Birenbaum, 'Izdatel'skaia artel' E. O. Likhachevoi i A. I. Suvorinoi (60–70-e gg. 19 v.)', in *Rol' knigi v demokratizatsii kul'tury* (L., 1987), p. 76.

⁹⁴ Op. cit.: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru*, p. 35.

⁹⁵ Op. cit.: G. Tishkin, *Zhenskii vopros v Rossii: 50–60-e gody XIX v.* (L., 1984), p. 197.

⁹⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2. ed. 1148. Pis'mo E. V. Markovoi k A. I. Suvorinoi. L. 2ob. Letter of 6.11.1867.

now put into practice in his own life. Aniuta shared family leadership⁹⁷ and read progressive literature; she received professional training and started her own business; finally, she joined the women's movement. In sum, she took the path of the 'new women' and adopted their typical features:

1.23 Она догнала своего учителя, который стал теперь ее товарищем. Она прочла те же книжки, что и он, училась у тех же наставников, ближайших сотрудников «Современника» и «Русского слова», она попыталась — и нередко успешно — завоевать себе экономическую независимость, приписалась к разным «делам» — практическим, ученым, литературным, в которых шла не на помочах, а более или менее самостоятельно; работала на педагогическом поприще и наконец перестроила свою семейную жизнь на новых началах. Во всем она стремилась быть личностью, не подчиненной, имеющей свою ценность, — началом активным, а не пассивным.⁹⁸

As the husband of a progressive wife, and as a liberal journalist, Suvorin could not stand somewhat aloof from the debate on 'the woman question' just at the moment when that debate reached its peak. Suvorin seemed rather to assume the role of an observer, a commentator and at times a detached judge of the women's liberation process; and he started his regular contribution to *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* with publications on this subject. Prior to his signature feuilleton *Nedel'nye ocherki i kartinki* which he started in December 1866, Suvorin had been involved in polemics concerning women's education and their right to work. Thus, in the article *Letuchie zametki i vyderzhki iz dnevnika*, he is fairly objective about the Petersburg *Obshchestvo zhenskogo truda* and the difficulties it experienced.⁹⁹ Presenting his material as a dispute between supporters and opponents of the emancipation of women, Suvorin declares his neutrality: 'I am quoting this without comments, without any special personal sympathy with either party.'¹⁰⁰ At the end of his feuilleton, Suvorin is seriously concerned about discrimination against women in payment for the work that they are allowed to do:

⁹⁷ Cf. the entry from Chernyshevsky's diary: 'Other people must demand things from me, and then I will do everything that is required of me. I must be subordinated to someone... In the family, my role must be that usually played by a wife, whereas my wife must be able to be the head of the family.. (Op.cit: I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), p. 96.)

⁹⁸ N. Kotliarevskii, 'Ocherki iz istorii obshchestvennogo nastroeniia 60-kh gg.', p. 227.

⁹⁹ The *Obshchestvo* was split by a conflict between followers of moderate and radical trends in the women's movement. See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 177.

¹⁰⁰ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 7.03.1865.

1.24 В конце концов хотелось бы узнать: разрешатся ли благополучно те недоразумения, которые возникли в Обществе женского труда, и скоро ли разрешатся? Конечно, приятно удовлетворить собственному самолюбию, но было бы еще приятнее, если б например девушки, живущие перепиской бумаг по 5 коп. с листа, питающиеся Бог весть чем, — могли получать более благодарную работу¹⁰¹.

Advancement of women in the labour market met with resistance from conservative circles; so the problem of women's employment required strenuous effort on the part of activists. Now, writing in his permanent column *Nedel'nye ocherki i kartinki*, Suvorin suggests his own, paradoxical way of settling the problem. Wearing the mask of irony, Suvorin suddenly becomes very critical of women, or of those who allegedly do not wish to work at all; suggesting the conclusion that all women without exception should go to work; and this idea converts Suvorin to the radical agenda. But the piece is ironical and so Suvorin seems to mock that same agenda:

1.25 Не справедливо ли было бы мужчинам искать эманципации от женщин, а не наоборот? <...> Само собою разумеется, что как теперь мужчины ищут эманципированных женщин, так тогда женщины будут увиваться и заискивать около эманципированных мужчин. Фабричная промышленность разовьется еще сильнее, ибо женские туалеты по необходимости, чтобы привлечь к себе внимание эманципированных мужчин, должны быть изящнее, блестящее, пышнее. Билеты в лотереях будут раздавать мужчины... <...> Вынимать торопливо кошельки станут также и мужчины, и женщины... Вот в чем и весь вопрос; мы добрались до самой сути дела. Вынимать кошельки может только тот, у кого есть благоприобретенные деньги; в настоящее время женщины об этом не заботятся, или заботятся мало, ибо на то есть папаши, мужья, любовники; эманципированные же мужчины не станут давать женщинам денег, и женщины принуждены будут обратиться к энергичному труду, от слов перейти к делу. Таким образом, к обоюдной пользе, будет решен женский вопрос и восстановится то равновесие интересов, о котором так хлопочут теперь эманципированные женщины¹⁰².

Suvorin is nevertheless keen to show his involvement in the women's movement: 'Yesterday I was at a debate on the woman question, but I failed to derive anything instructive from it.'¹⁰³ Moreover, he takes a live interest in the history of Russian women,

¹⁰¹ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 7.03.1865.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 11.12.1866. Suvorin uses the spelling 'эманципация' ironically and 'эмансипация' seriously.

¹⁰³ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 19.02.1867.

and he writes at length on this subject, emphasizing that historically speaking, emancipation had had a beneficial influence on woman's nature:

1.26 Возвращаясь к 18-му веку, я полагаю, что всякий, «проходивший историю» не по учебнику, согласится со мной, что русские женщины никогда не были так эмансипированы, как именно в течение этого века, который может быть назван «царством женщин». <...> Я совершенно убежден, что в стремлении женщин подражать мужской действительности есть своя хорошая сторона: женщина могла выработать себе крепкую волю и железное здоровье, которыми так редко отличаются современные нам женщины; нервные припадки и женские болезни были в прошлом веке, по всей вероятности, редкостью, а не повседневным явлением, как в настоящее время¹⁰⁴.

Since the positive side of emancipation ('strong will and robust health') has not been shown in modern women, Suvorin seeks and finds the source of error; this passage alludes to the famous pamphlet by M. Shcherbatov *O povrezhdenii nraov v Rossii* (1786):

1.27 Но эмансипация женщин совпала у нас с сильным развитием роскоши, которая при отсутствии образования повлекла за собой явления печальные. <...> Роскошь прежде всего породила разврат, страшную распущенность в отношениях полов между собою. <...> А где же следы их [женщин] деятельности, где характеры, проявившиеся какими-нибудь возвышенными делами, полезной деятельностью? Одна княгиня Дашкова и остается; все остальное проявилось только в «свободе чувственности». Замечательно, что до настоящих дней мы никак не хотим отличить «свободу чувства» от «свободы чувственности», и жертвой последней делалось немало юных россиянок¹⁰⁵.

'Freedom of sensuality' or, in conservative terms, 'the right to debauchery' is a principal conservative argument militating against liberation of women. Habitually adhering to patriarchal canons, Suvorin would always side with conservatives in this area of polemic. However, his criticism of free love is now directed at the newly emerging women's press; Suvorin seems to see a growing female influence on public opinion:

1.28 Мы написали все предыдущее, конечно, в поучение настоящему, и думаем, что настоящее во всяком случае лучше прошедшего: если тогда решилась отравиться от любви одна женщина, то теперь целый «Женский вестник» ежемесячно принимает яд и мучится в корчах и последних

¹⁰⁴ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 19.03.1867.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

предсмертных содроганиях. Яд принимают они вследствие сильной, ничем не удовлетворяемой любви к человечеству...¹⁰⁶

A week later, giving a positive account of the play by Dumas-fils, *Les idées de madame Aubray*, a play which calls for tolerance towards women ‘with a past’, Suvorin presents a very conservative view of emancipated women, as if for the sake of some counterbalance: “‘A woman with ideas’ is a disease of our times, as is well known, something like the Antichrist before Doomsday — at least this is the way many men see them.”¹⁰⁷

Alternating his tactics in the treatment of ‘the woman question’, Suvorin demonstrates that he is definitely master of this subject. He apparently considers himself so competent in this area that he goes as far as teaching moral lessons, rebuking upholders of women’s emancipation for their frivolous attitudes. His stinging tongue caricatures a woman’s desire for education:

1.29 Видится мне <...> барыня. Чего-чего она не передумала, чего-чего не переделала, а все как-то не спорится, все как-то словно дела нету. «Не понимает меня муж, никто не хочет понять моих стремлений. Счастливые мужчины! Они самостоятельны, они свободны, у них столько дела, столько развлечений!.. Ах, если б родилась я мужчиной!» И ходит барыня по комнате взад и вперед, бледная, встревоженная, и все думает о том, отчего не родилась она мужчиной. Села. Посидела-посидела, опять встала и пошла... Пристально поглядела на улицу, потом на портрет мисс Блэкуэл, потом сыграла какую-то дребедень на фортепиано, взяла Жорж-Санда и стала читать. Страницу прочитала — взяла Байрона — опять читает, взяла Эленшлегера — и у того страницу прочитала, понимая с пятого на десятое. Словно экзаменует себя барыня: много ли, мол, я знаю? Отвечает сама себе: много, одних языков — косой десяток. Опять заходила и думает: «А дела мне нету, никакого дела. Мне скучно, тоскливо, никто меня не понимает, нигде родной души не найду». <...> И не поймет никак барыня, что ей потому и скучно, что за многое берется она, а ничего основательно не знает. Всё с пятого на десятое...¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 19.03.1867. *Zhenskii vestnik* was a feminist magazine published in Petersburg in the period 1866–1868; its publications were aimed at improving woman’s condition including her education; it also wanted ‘to indicate those branches of labour where women could be useful to family and society.’ The magazine was famous for its denouncing materials about ‘age-long male supremacy’, but on the whole it provoked criticism from both left and right; the liberals blamed the editors of the magazine for their pretentiousness. See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, pp. 120–121.

¹⁰⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 25.03.1867.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.06.1867.

True, the path of women's emancipation was thorny and unexplored; however, Suvorin is convinced that it is women who are to blame for their failures, because they lack energy, courage, and moral strength. This attitude reflects a hidden polemic with Dmitrii Pisarev who had famously advanced a slogan which was supported by all liberals, namely: 'Woman is not guilty of anything.'¹⁰⁹ Arguably suffering himself from a lack of energy, courage, and moral strength, Suvorin seems to ignore the objective reality of female life in Russia and, perhaps unconsciously, transfers or projects his personal defects onto the female sex:

1.30 Говорят: лбом стену не прошибешь, и это совершенно справедливо, но наши женщины, стонущие о женском труде, по большей части боятся и подойти к стене, да попробовать, нельзя ли ее повалить, нельзя ли проделать в ней отверстие чем-нибудь другим кроме лба, благо в настоящее время есть столько орудий, пригодных для такой несложной работы. Наши женщины, стонущие о труде, по большей части белоручки, ничего не знающие, ни к чему не приготовленные, лишенные и общего, и специального образования. А те, которые выдадутся из них, глядишь, с высоты величия посматривают на своих сестер. <...> Вы хвалитесь *умственным трудом*... <...> Велика важность написать компиляцию! Нет, вы попробуйте <...> сделать нечто такое, что доказывало бы, что у вас есть энергия и мужество, что вы действительно способны занять совершенно независимое положение среди мужского царства, что между вами есть такие женщины, как Биар, Бэкер, Милль, Эмма Эсмонд, Блэкуэл, княгиня Дашкова — тогда разговор будет совсем иной. Нравственная сила всегда внушает почтение... А какая у вас, у современных русских женщин, нравственная сила, позвольте спросить? Громадное большинство из вас кроме романов ничего не читают, даже тех, которые слывут под именем образованных, собьет с толку всякое поветрие, заставит забыть долг бриллиантовая брошка, подкупят совесть ластивые комплименты, запугает какой-нибудь пошляк, обладающий зычным голосом...¹¹⁰

In his criticism Suvorin is strict, but not constructive; courses of action are suggested which he himself poorly comprehends. His instructions for women come down in the end to the basic principles of the Protestant work ethic:

¹⁰⁹ D. Pisarev, 'Zhenskii tipy v romanakh i povestiakh Pisemskogo, Turgeneva i Goncharova', in *Sochineniia*, in 4 vol. (M., 1956), vol. 3, p. 212. Pisarev insisted that the blame definitely lies with men: 'Men both oppress women and slander them. <...> ...[O]ur writers berate women for their frivolity and their futility, which is supported by the nature of our society, and men only are guilty in this as the only active members of this society.' (Ibid., pp. 211–213.)

¹¹⁰ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 18.06.1867.

1.31 Говорят: надо ободрять женщин, не бросать в них упреков, не язвить насмешками их начинания. Все это бесподобно. Но я желаю знать, сколько таким женщинам лет, которых надо ободрять, которые боятся насмешек и упреков? <...> Плохи же те начинания, плоха та нравственная сила, которая в эти годы еще ступить не умеет... Серьезный, упорный труд, нравственная чистота и твердость сильнее всего на свете... Если же начинания являются относительно стрижки волос, мужских ухваток, поверхностной болтовни о разных книжках — то овчинка не стоит выделки. «Но начинания, новые веяния всегда сказываются угловато, — скажут нам. — Масса увлекается вздором, наружностью, отчего внутренняя жизнь становится еще пустее». В таком случае позвольте уж указывать на эту пустоту, на эти соображения, на жалкое обезьянство, — чтобы жертв было меньше...¹¹¹

Suvorin is very accurate in detecting problem zones in the social status of women, notably economical dependence on a husband. According to him, the solution lies with women's education only, and now he sides with liberal views on the emancipation programme:

1.32 Да и вступив в брак, женщина, получившая такое посредственное образование, какое дается у нас, не в состоянии быть надлежащей помощницей мужу, если последний не обладает приличным капиталом. Все это, без сомнения, известно всем и каждому, но тем печальнее, что, зная все это, мы не принимаем решительно никаких мер для того, чтобы дать нашим дочерям такое образование, которое не ставило бы их в исключительную зависимость от брака¹¹².

Suvorin should be given his due: he closely watched the progress in the women's labour market and was quick with his feedback on all recent developments. However, he tends to avoid a thorough analysis of difficulties arising, and his response does not go further than some general criticism:

1.33 Женщина действительно нуждается в работе, ищет ее и не находит по большей части; журналистика говорила много об этом предмете, говорила даже дельно, если исключить несколько слишком горячих статей и весь «Женский вестник». Сказано было столько, что оставалось ждать начинаний, практических применений. И они явились. Явилась женская переплетная и исчезла, явились наборщицы и исчезли, явилось Общество покровительства женскому труду и переминается с ноги на ногу, явилось Филантропическое общество попечительства гувернанток, а о

¹¹¹ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 18.06.1867.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 20.08.1867.

существовании его едва ли кому известно, а о деятельности едва ли и самим членам известно. <...> Будущность русской женщины завешена еще грубой материей, сквозь которую ничего не видно¹¹³.

Suvorin's feuilletons dealing with 'the woman question' were to raise a keen response in women: they engaged in a correspondence with him, and Suvorin would carry over this debate into his regular column. However, the main point of his polemic would be to instil in the public mind the idea that women were not up to serious emancipation work, since they abused the very idea of 'women's work':

1.34 Я <...> подобно корреспондентке, готов сказать, что «женщина с характером и с желанием работать никогда не останется без дела», но я всегда думал и думаю, что, во-первых, женщин с характером сравнительно с женщинами, нуждающимися в работе, слишком мало, во-вторых, очень часто одного характера недостаточно, чтобы достать работу, в-третьих, слишком много женщин, болтающих о труде и ничего не делающих. Они своей болтовней, пустотою, иногда и цинизмом сделали для многих самое слово «женский труд» лишенным смысла и вызывающим только улыбку недоверия. «Женский труд» сделался в их устах неприличным каламбуром, и они сыпали анекдотами двусмысленного свойства, как скоро вы заикались в пользу женщин¹¹⁴.

Suvorin shows some grasp in his diagnosis of the current situation in women's employment; he also claims to know the right way to settle 'the woman question'. His manner of arguing is to cite the commonplace and this allows him, despite his criticism, to pose as an advocate of woman's advancement and emancipation:

1.35 Женский вопрос не вошел еще в общественное сознание и, надо полагать, перейдет только тогда, когда на образование женщин будет обращено серьезное внимание и когда отрадные явления в женском мире и женской действительности не будут только исключением¹¹⁵.

Suvorin is consistent in his support of women seeking medical education, arguing in favour of special colleges for female doctors (9.01.1868; 14.07.1868; 29.12.1868; 25.01.1870; 2.04.1872) and harshly criticizing opponents (9.02.1869). He is broad-minded enough to reject a common view on the supposed anatomical difference between the male and female brain, arguing against professionals (16.06.1868), and even goes so far as to take up serious medical issues, writing, for example, about puerperal fever and

¹¹³ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 3.12.1867.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 10.12.1867.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

providing relevant practical advice (15.03.1870). The likely explanation for Suvorin's positive attitude towards women in medicine is the influence of his wife, who could have encouraged him to address some problematic questions and offered her help in tackling professional matters. At some point Suvorin suggests that the women's education should be universal: 'The need of a technical school [for women] offering instruction in trade, handicraft, and arts is even more compelling.'¹¹⁶ However, Suvorin continues to fear that women's education will eventually develop on too large a scale and will damage the initial women's mission, i. e. childbirth. Thus, while praising Nadezhda Suslova who was the first woman to receive a degree in medicine in Switzerland, he prejudges those women who might like to follow her example:

1.36 Многие из наших соотечественниц тоже направили свои стопы в этот швейцарский город (Цюрих); но если они воображают, что дело это также легко, как чтение популярных физиологических книжек, то было бы во сто крат лучше, если б они остались дома и, заключив супружеские узы со своими соотечественниками, подарили бы родине, вместо незрелых плодов науки, здоровых младенцев, из которых могли бы выйти преполезные граждане¹¹⁷.

This declaration caused an outburst of indignation and an avalanche of letters to the editor. But Suvorin preferred to hurl further invective, rather than to explain or to apologize, apparently assuming that offence is the best defence:

1.37 Оказалось, что соотечественницы обиделись, и одна из них, впрочем, в Цюрих не едущая, но считающая себя призванною не столько для рождения детей, сколько для рождения публицистических статей, решила принять обиженных под свое покровительство и готовит статью, в которой ставит вопрос: «Что лучше — иметь детей или учиться», решая его, разумеется, в пользу того, что лучше учиться, чем иметь детей. По моему же крайнему разумению подобный вопрос мог зародиться только в голове достаточно праздной и достаточно свихнувшейся¹¹⁸.

Polemics with female readers lasted for nearly a year, and Suvorin more than once had to come up with excuses: 'I only mean that you should study well and with a purpose, and should not study poorly and without a purpose.'¹¹⁹ Suvorin, who assumed in

¹¹⁶ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 9.01.1868.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 25.03.1868. On Suslova see for example: È. Pavliuchenko, *Zhenshchiny v russkom osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii ot Marii Volkonskoi do Very Figner* (M., 1998), Name index.

¹¹⁸ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 7.04.1868.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.04.1868.

this debate a critical and defensive attitude, suddenly expressed an extreme conservative view of co-education, possibly revealing his fear of female sexuality:

1.38 ...Совместное учение мужчин и женщин признано не совсем удобным. По моему мнению, его и следует признать таковым, как в интересах успехов обоих полов, так и в интересах родителей, которые, конечно, с бóльшим спокойствием станут отпускать своих дочерей в аудитории исключительно женские, чем в аудитории смешанные. Быть может, это оскорбительно для юношей и девиц, как факт недоверия к их... как бы выразиться? — ну, просто к нравственности; но не должно забывать, что самая подкладка нашей жизни, наши предания отнюдь не ручаются за то, что всякий молодой человек, сидя рядом с молодой девушкой, только о науке и будет помышлять, не обращая ни малейшего внимания на хорошенькое личико, на красивые руки, на свежий девичий голос¹²⁰.

One of Suvorin's feuilletons, *Pis'mo k Vere Aleksandrovne Liadovoi*, in which he rebuked an operetta singer for her frivolous photographs ('...you exposed your very ungraceful leg above your knee...')¹²¹ caused a severe critical rejoinder from the democratic journal *Delo* summing up Suvorin's views on 'the woman question'. The authors of the journal had been keeping a close eye on Suvorin's writings; and they now summarized the way in which '...Neznakomets had been flirting with the woman question, mixing it up in his buffoonish sketches with polemic against policemen, ignorant doctors, post office clerks and similar people, all deprived by nature or by life.'¹²² Suvorin's critics are strongly convinced that

1.39 ...женский вопрос давно уже вышел из сферы теории на практическую почву, и потому не нужно особенного ума и добросовестности, чтобы считать его не утопией, а жгучей потребностью нашего времени. Никто из сколько-нибудь порядочных людей не станет отделяться балаганными шуточками и пошленькими инсинуациями, когда он встречается с этим вопросом в журналистике. Но для Незнакомца, как видно, это новая вещь, и в этом отношении он стоит на одинаковой ступени развития с бушменом (137).

Suvorin's opponents discerned his tactics in the treatment of 'the woman question' without fail: 'He is consistent only in his inconsistency' (137). 'The evasive

¹²⁰ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 23.06.1868.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 17.11.1868.

¹²² 'Zhenshchina pered sudom g. Korsha i Neznakomtsa', in *Delo*, 12 (1868), pp. 132–141. Further page references are given in the text.

advocate of the woman question' (137) was resolutely denounced for his desire to gratify 'the whims of public morality' (135). In the heat of polemic Suvorin's critics called him 'a halfwit with ass's ears' and advised him to withdraw from discussion of topics 'which are in no way his business' (141). They concluded with a threat of professional ostracism:

1.40 Теперь понятно, почему вы и только вы смогли с такою наглостью отнестись к г-же Лядовой в вашем злосчастном письме. Оно вытекает из всего того, что вы болтали прежде о женской личности; оно логически завершает собою все ваши фельетонные скандалы, которые, к сожалению, так долго спускала вам лучшая часть нашей журналистики (141).

The tough sentence might well have damaged Suvorin's reputation, and he was compelled to write a lengthy conciliatory reply in which he answered all accusations point by point, admitting that he had treated some women's matters 'in a jocular way'. Attempting to justify himself, he appeals to common sense and tends to generalize his arguments; he writes about 'people at large', i. e. about the average man who, unlike progressivists, may not be able to see the importance of 'the woman question':

1.41 Сводя счеты за прошлый год, я не могу не остановиться на вопросе женском, тем более что господа вроде Пятковского и Минаева и некоторых сотрудников «Дела» не стыдятся утверждать, что я будто бы постоянно заявлял ненависть к женскому образованию. <...> ...Неужели в самом деле может существовать вопрос о том, что лучше — рожать детей или учиться? Мне кажется, что как женщина, так и мужчина призваны на то и другое, что любовь и, как следствие ее, рождение детей, всегда существовала и существовать будет, что были и есть женщины весьма образованные, не стыдившиеся ни любить, ни рожать, ни воспитывать детей, что образованные матери лучше необразованных и пр. и пр. <...> Я не отрицаю, что могут быть женщины, которых совершенно поглотит наука, и о любви они никогда не задумаются; но ведь такие женщины, как и такие мужчины — исключения, и потом довольно странные исключения, а мы говорим о массе¹²³.

Assuming that his publications add a valuable critical dimension to the debate on 'the woman question', Suvorin does not want to abandon his peculiar feuilleton manner, which he had inherited from Baron Brambeus:

1.42 Я, стало быть, виноват в том, что с женщинами говорил на том же языке, на котором привык говорить со всеми. В этом отношении я исправиться не могу и не желаю исправляться, потому что

¹²³ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 29.12.1868.

уважаю женщин более тех моих противников, которые считают своей обязанностью обращаться к женщине как к нежному цветку, который от неосторожного прикосновения сейчас завянет и аромат свой потеряет¹²⁴.

Now that Suvorin saw himself among the supporters of women's education, he would — contrary to his own gynophobic view — level his criticism against Shtern, the editor of the newspaper *Domashnii doctor*, for his attacks on women studying medicine. He reproaches Shtern for his belief that 'women studying together with male students are preventing the latter from doing serious work, since they incite all sorts of amorous ideas.'¹²⁵ However, Suvorin failed to hold out in the vanguard of progress for long: within a few months he put on his fool's cap again and exploded with a jeering feuilleton in which he indicated the only possible way forward for women's liberation:

1.43 Г. [педагог И. И.] Паульсон объявляет о возобновлении курсов для женщин, желающих эманципироваться. Неужели эманципироваться?.. Вот чего я никогда не мог уразуметь достаточно; скажу более: я думаю, что женщина всегда останется женщиной. <...> Этот, быть может, несколько легкомысленный взгляд на женщин не мешает мне, однако же, смотреть на дело и с философской точки зрения. В идее я признаю всякие принципы, не только либеральные, но даже радикальные. <...> Но практика идет у меня своим чередом. Я обворожу женщину своими прогрессивнейшими взглядами на женский вопрос, но про себя думаю: «Бедная овца! Ты не знаешь, что говорят история и опыт. Никогда, ни в каком обществе, ни в какую эпоху женщина не освобождалась ни посредством ума, ни посредством своего образования, ни посредством своей добродетели; но всегда, в самые варварские эпохи, во времена господства затворничества, она освобождается... посредством распутства. Истинно свободная женщина — куртизанка. <...> У женщины честной нет даже тех прав, какими владеет мужчина; куртизанка обладает даже привилегиями. Честная женщина погибла, если она изменяет мужу; куртизанка любит как владычица, как деспот, для которого закон не писан. И сколько честных женщин завидуют куртизанке! И нельзя не завидовать... Как честный человек, если б я имел детей, то желал бы только одного: чтоб дочери мои были красавицами. Если б это чарующее качество было у них, я приготовил бы им блестящие карьеры. Все, что может очаровывать: грации, музыка, остроумие, танцы, совершенство и крепость форм — все это я развил бы в них, и когда им сравнялось бы семнадцать лет, я призвал бы их к себе, изобразил бы им историю куртизанки и благословил бы на этот путь... Отцы, не возмущайтесь! Помните, что у меня нет детей»¹²⁶.

¹²⁴ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 29.12.1868.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.02.1869.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.09.1869.

It is not very likely that the author, who had an eleven-year-old daughter, would actually be dreaming of securing the ‘brilliant’ career of courtesan for her. However, under the guise of a bumptious and irresponsible windbag, Suvorin is able to instil in his readers’ minds the idea that women’s liberation gives her rights to unlimited sexual freedom in the first place. Suvorin’s keynote mantra, namely that ‘a liberated woman is dangerous’ starts to sound in his feuilletons with growing persistence.

However after three weeks, Suvorin — now in serious mode — hastens to respond to a newly published Russian translation of *The Subjection of Women* by John Stuart Mill, a universal feminist guide. This book proclaimed equality of the sexes and urged women to seek not only economical, but also political independence; it was greeted with enthusiasm by feminists of both sexes and with hostility by their antagonists. A vigorous discussion followed, and Suvorin did not want to stand aside. But as can be seen from the following fragment, he is still somewhat sceptical regarding polemic *apropos* ‘the woman question’; and is now moreover critical towards ‘manly woman’, although fairly recently he had condemned the female sex for their lack of energy and courage. The ‘manly woman’ reveals Suvorin’s gynophobia, now manifesting itself unambiguously:

1.44 Наши женщины решительно зачитываются Миллем. Вот уж именно одолжил он их книгой, которая должна сделаться не только настольной, но в некотором роде катехизисом. И в самом деле, аргументация Милля так же убедительна, как геометрическая теорема, и так же ясна, как дистиллированная вода. Не знаю, насколько окажет она влияния на взаимные отношения супругов и на правительственные постановления, но уверен, что она положит предел той болтовне, в которой так часто упражнялись мужественные женщины и женственные мужчины, стараясь доказать равенство полов и право женщин на все те профессии, которые открыты мужчине. В теории вопрос должно считать поконченным; остается практика, которая, к сожалению, заставлена еще шлагбаумами; чтоб поднять их, надо больше труда и усилий, чем на постройку железных дорог, которые повсюду устранили шлагбаумы с часовыми¹²⁷.

Maintaining a liberal tone, Suvorin now supports the idea that women should engage in teaching at universities; he even blames their critics, and ridicules the gynophobia of the ‘administration’, i. e. the gynophobia of official conservative circles:

¹²⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 28.09.1869. Suvorin had the book by John Stuart Mill in his library, which is documented in: *Katalog russkikh knig biblioteki A. S. Suvorina* (SPb, 1913).

1.45 ...Я слышал даже, что дозволено одной женщине прочесть несколько лекций о методах преподавания маленьким детям. Можете себе представить — женщина на кафедре! Этого в мирное время многие переварить у нас не могут <...> Дело другое — женщина на сцене, женщина на эстраде, женщина в цирке, на лошади. Там женщина показывает или себя самое, или свое искусство; себя самое или свое искусство показывать она может, но показывать свое знание, поучать — это противоестественно и, по выражению многих, на это не хватает ее физических сил. Кто знает? Я об этом ничего не знаю, но мне приятно думать, что администрация покончила с напрасными страхами и полезное считает полезным во всякое время¹²⁸.

As a preliminary conclusion, we can say the following: that at the beginning of his journalistic career, and over five years of debate on ‘the woman question’, Suvorin had developed a characteristic tactic of alternation. Employing this tactic, he alternates liberal and conservative views with considerable agility, the latter often disguised as irony or satire or even as provocation. Since he signed both his liberal and conservative texts as *Neznakomets*, democratic circles labelled Suvorin as a conservative and an opponent of women’s liberation. However, Suvorin wholeheartedly encouraged women’s education and even joined the Society for support of needy female students of medical and pedagogical courses.¹²⁹ Suvorin’s conservatism disguised as irony was mainly focused on women’s personal freedom. My suggestion is that this is in reality a defence mechanism of a sort, and one which indicates a gynophobic inclination; the latter manifested itself not only in Suvorin, but eventually in liberal discourse with respect to the women’s emancipation process.

§ 5

In the meantime, Aniuta’s health was failing, and the doctors recommended treatment abroad. Suvorin said goodbye to his readers, telling them on May 17th 1870 that ‘Neznakomets was leaving for ‘the delusive West’. The trip abroad stretched the family budget and had Suvorin considering additional means of supporting his family. On their return, he turned for help to a close acquaintance of his, the editor of the journal *Vestnik Evropy*, Mikhail Stasiulevich:

¹²⁸ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 25.01.1870.

¹²⁹ See: O. Bulanova-Trubnikova, *Tri pokoleniia* (M.; L., 1928), p. 111.

1.46 Что мне делать прикажите, а делать мне необходимо, ибо ресурсы нужны; под бременем расходов я просто изнемогаю и иногда предаюсь малодушному отчаянию. Тысячи планов вертятся в голове, но ни за один из них приняться не могу — отсутствие инициативы, во-первых, во-вторых, ежедневные заботы и работа для ежедневных потребностей отнимает всякую возможность приняться за что-нибудь долговечное и прочное¹³⁰.

However, Suvorin was hatching his own plans as regards the future of his journalistic career:

1.47 Мне серьезно приходит в голову издавать русскую газету в Берлине, спокойную, строго-конституционную, уважающую монархический принцип вообще и царственную русскую династию в особенности, но зато уж не щадящую ничего другого и свободную от переговоров и <нрзб> Похвиснева и Комп. Берлин — чудесное место для такой пропаганды, если только держаться в известных пределах и если берлинское правительство не вышлет по просьбе петербургского. Конечно, это фантазия, но если б я был одинок, без семьи, я не задумался бы это сделать¹³¹.

Possibly this declaration of loyalty to the Tsar was meant in case of perustration. In any event, Suvorin's letter coincides with the political trial of Sergei Nechaev; one of the suspects in this case was Vera Zasulich. Suvorin allowed himself only a muffled reference to this trial: while greeting Mariia Bokova (Sechenova) who received a doctoral degree in medicine from Zurich University, he shows his disapproval of women's political activity:

1.48 Пожелаем [успеха] и мы, читатель, всем русским женщинам, которые идут мимо разных политических прожектеров и направляют свои стопы туда, где ждет их упорный труд и многотрудная и полезная деятельность на пользу нашего бедного Отечества¹³².

Suvorin soon made another attempt at writing a longer piece in his peculiar genre of feuilleton-novel. While planning this new novel, Suvorin was quite open about certain practical considerations:

1.49 Настоящее время — трудное время, а если прибавить ко всему этому дороговизну квартир и дров, то даже можно сказать, что время оно труднейшее. В это-то трудное время <...> всего удобнее

¹³⁰ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 346. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k M. M. Stasiulevichu. L. 5. Letter of 13.07.1870.

¹³¹ Ibid. L. 6. Pokhvisnev Mikhail (1811–1882) was a head of the Chief Directorate for press in 1866–1870.

¹³² *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 13.07.1871.

обратиться к роману, не к художественному роману, на который у меня не хватит силенок, <...> а к роману-фельетону, где рядом с вымышленными лицами будут выступать и живые люди, под их собственными именами и фамилиями. Это должно оживить роман несказанным образом, сделав из него нечто такое, чему имени нет; будет это роман, фельетон, исторический эскиз, мемуары, ни то ни сё, водевиль, — все, что хотите. Я не гонюсь за формой — для меня самое важное — интерес романа для читателей¹³³.

Having entitled his new opus *Milliard v tumane: Roman-fel'eton, bez nachala i kontsa*,¹³⁴ Suvorin lasted out for only seven issues (24.10.1871–9.01.1872). After nineteen short chapters the unfolding narrative terminates exactly at the novel's turning point, when the future of a grandiose commercial project — 'the founding of a company for purchasing more efficient factories' — is about to be decided. The title of the novel was borrowed from a famous manufacturer and publicist Vasilii Kokorev. In 1859, in his pamphlet under the same title, he suggested a plan for the liberation of the serfs by way of redemption money provided by merchants. Kokorev's plan gave rise to a heated discussion which was promptly curtailed by the authorities; but the phrase *milliard v tumane* survived, giving a nickname to Kokorev and acquiring the meaning of 'an enticing non-thing'. Apparently, Suvorin's choice of the title was a bad move. Five chapters before the premature end of the novel, he introduced a new character, the millionaire Petr Petrovich Dubrovin, who was to play a key role in the commercial project. Dubrovin's prototype — right up to his facial likeness and speech manner — was the renowned entrepreneur, landowner and railway contractor Petr Ionovich Gubonin. Having been sharply sceptical of the commercial project throughout the previous chapters of his novel, Suvorin found it difficult to continue the story now that it featured an important person with whom the author had lately formed a close business relationship in real life.¹³⁵ In the penultimate chapter, Suvorin hastened to express a telltale reservation: 'By no means can I be considered a novelist whose writings require an ending.'¹³⁶

¹³³ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 24.10.1871.

¹³⁴ Cf. with the title of novella by O. Senkovskii: *Zapiski domovogo: Rukopis' bez nachala i kontsa, naidennaia pod gollandskoi pech'iu vo vremia perestroiki*.

¹³⁵ Suvorin indirectly helped Gubonin to obtain concession for building horse tramways in Petersburg by discrediting Gubonin's competitor in his feuilleton. See on that: E. Dinershtein, A. S. Suvorin: *Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru*, p. 46–48.

¹³⁶ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 28.12.1871.

So, as with the novel *Vsiakie*, the story of the unfinished book repeated itself, though this time not for censorship reasons but rather because the author's business interest intervened. True, while building up his story, Suvorin seems to observe the rules of the genre, introducing some thirty characters (some of them vanish into thin air, while others change their names). There is a scandalous episode which involves a duel between a man and a woman, but again this has no ending. There is also a promising sub-plot which concerns a central female character, Miss Mary, a graceful blonde with blue eyes. Working as a governess for an important civil servant, Debriagin ('unofficially' she was either a friend, or a lover, or a wife to him), Miss Mary passes herself off as an English lady, 'though she had a perfect command of English, French, and Russian'. Suvorin rates Mary as a 'new woman', but 'of a very special cast':

1.50 Несмотря на свою молодость, она давно порешила со всеми вопросами, прямо или косвенно касающихся женщин, и порешила с ними резко, не прибегая ни к каким уступкам и соглашениям. Если б она откровенно рассказала нам свою жизнь, если б разъяснила стремления, то, конечно, она ужаснула бы нас глубиной своей испорченности, своего полного нравственного растления.¹³⁷

Very conveniently, Suvorin has at his disposal Mary's diary, and its fragments represent the penultimate, eighteenth chapter. The entries selected by Suvorin convince us that Mary, having acquainted herself with various theories of women's liberation, then accepts or rejects them depending on whether the next stage of liberation envisioned would be women's supremacy over men:

1.51 Будучи совершеннее и сложнее мужчины по своему организму, женщина должна быть совершеннее его и в интеллектуальном отношении. И женщине легко это сделать потому, что она созревает раньше и меньше чувствует потребности в физических удовольствиях, чем мужчины. <...> Придет время, когда женщина станет впереди мира, и тогда он увидит, как жалки все эти создания фантазии, увлекшие массы. Настоящую цивилизацию, созданную мужским умом, должна заменить цивилизация будущего, или женская цивилизация...¹³⁸

Mary does not take female nihilists seriously:

¹³⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 9.12.1872.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.12.1871.

1.52 Красота и изящество — оружие в руках умной женщины для умных целей... <...> Лишать себя волос, делаться неряхой, копировать мужчину — это так же остроумно и зрело обдуманно, как если бы пошли солдаты на неприятеля безоружные.¹³⁹

The perfect role model for Mary is a courtesan:

1.53 Кое-что выработано куртизанкою весьма порядочно, но многое еще требует усовершенствования, тонкости ума, гимнастики. *Се que femme veut, Dieu le veut* — это я понимаю... У древних были элевзинские таинства, к которым допускались только посвященные ... [*пропуск в тексте с пометкой Суворина: «Нельзя разобрать»*] Представляю себе женщину вполне развитую, задающуюся разумными целями и стремлениями, думающую не об одном своем мамоне. Представляю ее себе в роли куртизанки [*пропуск в тексте с пометкой Суворина: «Тут хотя можно разобрать, но цинизм не выражений, а мыслей не позволяет мне разбирать»*] Традиция женщин XVIII столетия, собиравших вокруг себя все лучшее и наиболее развитое — забыта за революцией. Это жаль. Революция была тормозом для женского вопроса, что бы там ни говорили...¹⁴⁰

So, according to Suvorin, Mary represents ‘a great modern woman’ and surely embodies his worst fears as regards the likely development of women’s liberation. For Mary is an example of the female liberated both mentally and bodily and with a burning desire to surpass the male, and indeed ‘to saddle and ride him’. Between the lines of the novel, Suvorin’s gynophobia shines through and indeed recurs in subsequent feuilletons. Thus despite his personal hostility towards Saltykov-Shchedrin,¹⁴¹ Suvorin finds a kindred soul among his characters, namely the unscrupulous windbag Teben’kov from *Blagonamerennye rechi*, who perceives woman’s lack of learning as her ‘loyalty’:

1.54 ...Согласен ли г. Щедрин с героем «Благонамеренных речей», Тебеньковым, в том, что женский вопрос решен уж “Прекрасной Еленой”, или не согласен? Не знаю, как г. Щедрин, но я совершенно согласен с Тебеньковым. Пусть назовут меня вандалом, но это — сама истина, остроумнейшая, чудеснейшая истина... Скажите, ради Бога, в чем же женский вопрос заключается,

¹³⁹ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 28.12.1871.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ In his harshly critical review of Saltykov’s piece ‘Pis’ma iz provintsii’, Suvorin identified him as a writer ‘without any settled or deeply considered political or social theory’; and he also stigmatized *Istoriia odnogo goroda* as ‘the ugliest caricature’ and blamed the author for having no ‘moral idea’. (See: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelavshii kar'eru*, p. 48–51.) Saltykov never forgave Suvorin his tough criticism and reciprocated with hostility: ‘There is a deep stagnation in our literature. The proof is that currently such scum as Suvorin play the first fiddle. <...> What we have is a realm of scoundrels who are eager to sell their souls for peanuts.’ (See: M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 20 vol. (M., 1976–1977), vol. 18, book. 2, p. 89. Letter to A. M. Zhemchuzhnikov of 31.08.1871.)

если не в том решении его, которое сделала прекрасная Елена? Из-за чего бьются передовые умы, какие предрассудки хотят они уничтожить, на что употребила свой огромный талант Жорж Занд? Сведите все подробности, все задачи к простейшему виду — и получите то решение, которое так основательно и смело сделала прекрасная Елена. Разве поступок ее не величайшее проявление личной свободы? <...> Тогдашние мужчины чудесно поняли все громадное значение протеста женщины-царицы, ибо начали продолжительную, ужасную войну, кончившуюся истреблением того города, в который бежала со своим возлюбленным смелая царица. Естественно, что после такого скандала мужчины усилили свою власть над женщинами и деспотствуют над ними до настоящего времени. Скажу прямо: этот деспотизм продолжится до того времени, когда все женщины не усвоят себе истинного значения поступка прекрасной Елены и не последуют ее примеру. Только тогда настанет женское освобождение, и только тогда восторжествует женский труд на всех поприщах¹⁴².

However, Suvorin takes off his fool's cap yet again to engage in a fierce discussion on women's education with prince Meshcherskii, styled 'a gloomy publicist of the woman question' for his extreme conservative views, and now editor of the newspaper *Grazhdanin*.¹⁴³ Suvorin seems to use every occasion to support the studying woman. Informing his readers about a big anonymous donation to women's courses, he remarks with appreciation:

1.55 Начало серьезному медицинскому образованию женщин закладывается, и есть полное основание верить, что в недалеком будущем русским женщинам нечего будет искать знаний в немецких университетах. Они бились недаром, недаром не уставали они преследовать образовательные цели, несмотря на град насмешек и оскорблений: постоянство почти всегда награждается¹⁴⁴.

However, in his next instalment, Suvorin breaks into irony again, now targeting the entire liberal camp of supporters of women's emancipation:

1.56 «Если не о чем говорить, то о женском вопросе», — замечает обыкновенно один из моих приятелей. Оно и действительно, очень хороший вопрос и всегда новый. Иногда мне кажется, что его выдумали собственно для журналистов, но я тотчас же отрицаю эту мысль, как оскорбительную

¹⁴² *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 25.03.1873.

¹⁴³ See on him: T. Zhuravleva, 'Kniaz' Meshcherskii o zhenskom voprose vo vtoroi polovine 19 veka, in <http://conservatism.narod.ru/tzhurav/woman.rtf>; M. Leonov, 'Èkspluatatsiia muzhskikh strakhov: Gazetnaia kompaniia protiv zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii 70–80-kh godov 19 veka', in *Gendernoe razvitie v Rossii* (SPb, 2008), pp. 164–166. According to Leonov, Meshcherskii's campaign had led to the temporary closure of Higher women's courses.

¹⁴⁴ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 2.04.1872.

для прогресса нашего времени, и соглашаюсь, что женский вопрос потому неистощим, что он есть мерило, насколько человечество продвинулось вперед в своем развитии¹⁴⁵; другими словами, насколько мужчины свили веревки на свои ожирелые шеи. Но я избегаю говорить об этом вопросе по некоторым причинам. Ни один благоразумный человек не станет спорить, что мужчины, стоящие за так называемый женский вопрос, — самые добродетельные овцы во всемирном стаде, которым женщины должны бы курить фимиам. Впрочем, мало сказать «добродетельные овцы»; это — самоубийцы, это — овцы со слезами радости на глазах стоящие у порога бойни и говорящие с самоотвержением: «убейте нас поскорее, потом зажарьте и подайте нас скушать милым женщинам». Понятно, что говоря подобные ужасы, я разумею конечный результат, т. е. то отдаленное время, тот новый геологический период, когда женщины победят нас с помощью изменников-мужчин и обратят в своих рабов. <...> Вам известно, что я принадлежу к поклонникам женского вопроса в его естественном развитии. На то я и умеренный либерал, чтоб все умеренно-либеральное одобрять и поощрять; но я вместе с тем принадлежу к тем умеренным либералам, которые не скрывают ни от себя, ни от других конечных результатов. <...> Соображая все это, я и говорю, что конечный результат женского вопроса будет гибелен для мужчин, а потому те из них, которые теперь воюют против «отсталых» взглядов на женщин, выют сами на себя веревку, ибо несомненно, что все то, что выдумал мужчина для своего спокойствия и отдохновения — все это сокрушится как сделанное не в интересах женщин. Я мог бы нарисовать картину этого крушения, но боюсь за бедные головы тех, которые и без того уже весьма опасаются женского вопроса, хотя серьезно опасаться его можно разве только лет через пятьсот: до тех же пор мы будем еще властвовать и покорять под ноги свое женское племя...¹⁴⁶

Although Suvorin changes his conservative mask for a moderate liberal one, the apocalyptic picture of women's victory over men he is portraying speaks for itself. However, his bravado may once again reflect an underlying gynophobia; the more so in that he writes about those 'who fear the woman question very much.' Mimicking the liberal discourse on emancipation, Suvorin suggests some practical ways of implementation:

1.57 Но женское племя могло бы и в настоящее время показать себя с весьма выгодной стороны и даже заслужить признательность потомства... <...> Женщины должны стараться в настоящее время о том, чтобы мужчины делали поменьше нехороших дел <...> Разумеется, мужчина — конечно, мужчина более или менее деликатный — начнет сначала резоны выставлять: надо бить его по этим резонам... <...> Не худо бы составить оборонительное женское общество для этой цели, назвав его

¹⁴⁵ An ironical allusion to the famous words by Nikolai Solov'ev that 'the woman question' was 'a benchmark test for a progressive writer'.

¹⁴⁶ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 15.10.1872.

«Женское общество для взаимного пособия и для укрощения мужчин». Я вполне убежден, что деятельность этого общества была бы благотворнее всех существующих ныне обществ¹⁴⁷.

In a week's time Suvorin would touch upon the woman topic again in his feuilleton and would draw a colourful portrait of a modern woman. The feuilleton in question is certainly unusual, if not ominous: it takes the form of Suvorin's posthumous farewell. Imagining that he is dead, Suvorin watches the key figures of his feuilletons coming to pay their last tribute at his coffin, among them an official from a local administration, a justice of the peace, 'a pale young man', and 'an eminent academic'. Second in the queue to Suvorin's coffin was 'the Russian woman':

1.58 В комнате термометр разом повысился на десять градусов. <...> ...В комнату вошла женщина и принесла с собою это тепло. Русская женщина — самая теплая женщина. При жизни я любил русскую женщину не меньше чаю; после смерти я ее благословляю, как говорится, на подвиг жизни. Самая теплая женщина — вместе с тем — самая передовая. Я любил ее всегда: и тогда, когда она носила длинные волосы, и тогда, когда она стала стричь их; если б я пожил дольше и дождался того времени, когда она станет брить их — я любил бы ее бритую. Я любил ее и тогда, когда она была скромна и послушна своему мужу на глазах его и шалила за глазами; я любил ее и тогда, когда она перестала слушать мужа и, отбросив скромность, сказала ему: «Мой друг, я люблю другого, а потому оставайся здесь, я же пойду туда!» И ушла, плавно, не торопясь, не ломая рук, не приходя в пафос, не говоря длинейших монологов, — потому что самая теплая женщина вместе с тем и самая простая. <...> Да, я любил ее, эту простую, теплую и передовую русскую женщину, любил всегда, на всех путях ее развития — и тогда, когда она читала Дюма и Поль-де-Кока, и тогда, когда она, краснея, жадно проглатывала анекдоты в «Топографической анатомии» Гиртля, предпочитая их всем романам. Я любил ее и тогда, когда, в отчаянии после долгой, молчаливой думы, она искала выхода в разврате, и тогда, когда она приставляла дуло пистолета ко рту и падала бездыханная и обезображенная; я любил ее всегда — и когда защищал ее, и когда смеялся над нею. <...> Поэтому напрасно упрекали меня философы либерализма в том, что сегодня я говорил одно, сегодня нападал на женщину, а завтра защищал ее. О, будь же благословенна ты, теплая русская женщина, всегда, отныне и навеки, стремись и стучись в полной надежде, что отверзятся двери тому, кто стучится. Прощай!¹⁴⁸

This bizarre farewell curiously coincided with the fact that in the next year of 1873, Suvorin left off 'the woman question' in his feuilletons for a while. Suvorin's

¹⁴⁷ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 15.10.1872.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.10.1872.

declaration of love for woman in general, for all its irony, immediately evokes his own wife, who was undoubtedly a straightforward, 'warm', and progressive woman. Having given her his blessings from his coffin, in a year's time Suvorin, by cruel decree of fate would change places with his wife, the unfortunate and doomed Aniuta.

§ 6

On September 19th 1873, Suvorin's wife was shot by her lover Timofei Komarov who immediately killed himself on the spot. The shooting took place late at night at the Hotel Belle-Vue. Suvorin was at home expecting his wife to return, when a messenger arrived with the horrible news from the hotel. Suvorin rushed to the hotel and found his wife still alive:

1.59 Она лежала на диване и, увидев меня, сказала: «Голубчик, миленький, простите меня, я вас обманула». <...> Я стал спрашивать ее, что случилось, и по выражению лица ее видел, что она удивлена, что я ничего не знаю. <...> Она умирала. Тяжко вздохнула два-три раза, и глаза ее остановились на мне. Я сидел около нее на полу. <...> Я был совсем потерян. <...> Я просил, чтобы меня отвезли к Лихачевым¹⁴⁹.

The tragic story immediately got into newspapers, though its coverage aroused protests from the progressive press.¹⁵⁰ Reporters savoured the details and speculated about the cause:

1.60 Вероятнее всего, что причиною убийства была безнадежная любовь Комарова, который, убедившись в том, что не встречает взаимности, в порыве бешенства решил покончить с собою и с несчастной женщиной, ни в чем не повинной. <...> Анна Ивановна оставила пятерых детей, которым еще так необходимы ее постоянные заботы и попечения. <...> Это была замечательно хорошая и умная женщина¹⁵¹.

However, this seemingly banal case of adultery hid something important:

1.61 По осмотре комнаты, где совершилось это происшествие, на столе найдено запечатанное без адреса письмо, в котором г. Комаров просит никого не винить в сделанном им убийстве и

¹⁴⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 73. Entry of 2.05.1887.

¹⁵⁰ See: E. Konradi, 'Glasnye dramy intimnoi zhizni', in *Nedelia*, 39 (1873); 'Iz khroniki samoubiistv', in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 10 (1873), pp. 261–262. See also: I. Paperno, *Samoubiistvo kak kul'turnyi institut* (M., 1999), pp. 102–106.

¹⁵¹ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 23.09.1873.

самоубийстве и не доискиваться причины, побудившей его на такой поступок, так как тайна эта известна только ему да его жертве¹⁵².

The Suvorin family drama aroused much sympathy amongst fellow writers. Nekrasov offered Suvorin money for a trip abroad. Dostoevsky carped at the tactless gang of scribblers in the newspaper *Grazhdanin* (later, he allusively referred to the incident in his novel *Podrostok*).¹⁵³ Tolstoy learnt the news from Kramskoi, as he sat for a portrait by him and wrote to Nikolai Strakhov asking for details: ‘What a significant event!’¹⁵⁴ Turgenev, seriously alarmed, wrote to Iakov Polonskii from Paris: ‘Suvorin’s disaster shocked me. <...> I feel very sorry for Suvorin. Can he recover? If you see him, please offer him my sincere sympathy.’¹⁵⁵ However, Saltykov-Shchedrin, perhaps out of rancour, felt no pity for Suvorin:

1.62 Кони как прокурор вел это дело, и Суворин приходил к нему с просьбой рассказать всю правду. Кони, понятно, скрывал. Суворин был близок к самоубийству. Бывало, сидит в гостиной у Кони и изливает свои муки Щедрина, тот слушает с участием, но чуть Суворин уйдет, издевается над ним и ругает его¹⁵⁶.

The murder of Suvorin’s wife and the suicide of her lover was investigated by the brilliant young lawyer Anatolii Koni — at that time already a public prosecutor at the Petersburg District Court. Koni later acquired a reputation as a ‘psychologist-lawyer’ and again an ‘artist-lawyer’. At this time he showed great compassion for the bereaved widower and in his letter to Suvorin (professionally naming no names) tried to offer his own vision of the fateful event:

1.63 ...Страшное несчастье, постигшее Вас и Вашу семью, — есть дело слепой, неотвратимой и несокрушимой судьбы, связи обстоятельств, в которых Ваша личная воля ничего не могла, управлять которыми она никогда не имела бы сил, отворотить которые она никогда не получила бы возможности. Посмотрите на распределение ролей в Вашей драме. — Вы человек добрый, слабый, гуманный, доверчивый, реалист в деле чувства и идеалист в деле чувственности (не сердитесь за

¹⁵² *Peterburgskaia gazeta*. 24.09.1873.

¹⁵³ ‘Stolpy peterburgskogo radikalizma’, in *Grazhdanin*, 1.10.1873; F. Dostoevsky, *PSS*, in 30 vol. (L., 1972–1999), vol. 13: *Podrostok*, p. 445. (In his earlier versions of the novel Dostoevsky directly referred to the episode in the hotel Belle-Vue. See: Vol. 16, p. 195, 374.)

¹⁵⁴ L. Tolstoy, *PSS*, in 90 vol. (M., 1928–1964), vol. 62, p. 50.

¹⁵⁵ I. Turgenev, *PSSP*, in 28 vol. (M., 1965–1968). P., vol. 10, p. 156, 164.

¹⁵⁶ K. Chukovskii, *Dnevnik: 1901–1929* (M., 1997), p. 69. Entry of 27.07.1914.

откровенность?) — одним словом, теоретический человек <...>. Она — сильная, господственная натура, у которой уже раз жизнь уходила из-под ног и к которой она опять прихлынула, оставив неприкосновенно душу и возбудив — болезненно и упорно — телесную сторону... Затем он — этот уклонившийся от правосудия убийца. <...> Литературный прихлебатель, человек сомнительной учености и сомнительных средств к жизни, без труда в настоящем, без планов на серьезное будущее — Гейдельбергский обольститель в прошлом. <...> И такой человек, такой паразит встретил Вас и ее. Вас — занятого и доверчивого, ее, по-видимому, огражденную от него собственною нравственною высотой, но болезненную, волнующуюся, неровную. Такие люди скоро отбирают силу. — Его терпят, его переносят, он становится своим человеком; его слушают; — он объясняется в любви; его просят о той или другой услуге — он становится образцовым лакеем; — его бьют — и он возвращается, готовя и подбирая материал для новой пощечины. А между тем он строит целое здание на своей «доказанной» преданности, он вызывает искусно и коварно сострадание, которое так часто у женщин связано с более сильным чувством, — он не стремится даже подняться до женщины, — он, являясь всегда приниженным, но верным, бедным, но преданным, и стоя там, где-то внизу, стягивает к себе женщину. Игра его верна — чувство деликатности и вежливости подскажет первый шаг, сострадание подвинет на второй, а искусно раздраженная и больная физическая природа доделает все сама. Зато какая это будет победа! Она — гений-охранитель и руководитель человека замечательного по таланту и литературной самобытности — пойдет за ним, она — существо благородное и умное — признает его хоть на время своим владельцем, — отдаст ему свое гордое сердце — и озарит его, пошляка и мертвеца, лучами своей личности. <...> Это уже не тот паразит, тот, кто подчинил себе такую жену такого мужа, и такое обольщение, конечно, не чета Гейдельбергскому. — И вот пущены в ход все средства, — отуманено все трезвое в женщине и вызваны все нелепые стремления и все полусознанные инстинкты в женщине. Победа, по-видимому, верная. Но в решительные минуты — живые силы в душе ее берут верх над всем, старое чувство, долг и сознание своих обязанностей берет верх над полу-привязанностью и полу-состраданием, и сражение, давно подготовленное и искусно веденное, проиграно. Что же остается? Цель не достигнута, — она не унилась до него, — подняться до нее сил нет, — отъезд и разлука оповещены, да и необходимы, пожалуй, — а приходится опять вести прежнее существование жалкого паразита, оплеванного и презираемого. Но так жить нельзя, нужен исход самолюбию, нужна возможность быть чем-нибудь, кем-нибудь, но только не нулем. А в сердце висит злоба и мщение, за даром испытанное унижение, за потраченный донжуанственный труд, — злоба против всего того и всех тех, кто молчаливо, ео ipso, сам собою удержал и удерживает ее. — Мстить надо, — громко и так, чтобы остался на нем известный ореол. <...> Что могли Вы сделать против такого человека? <...> Могли ли помешать ему разыгрывать свои вариации на болезненной природе и доброте Вашей жены? <...> Нет, дорогой Алексей Сергеевич, — Вы были и должны были, по моему мнению, быть бессильны в этих обстоятельствах. В Вашу жизнь как клин вошел злой и пагубный человек, и не в ваших силах было отворотить катастрофу, которая вызывалась условиями жизни и

свойствами этого человека. Больно и прискорбно, что он с Вами встретился и притом в особой обстановке, — но раз он встретился, не от Вас зависело устранить окончание его земного поприща в том виде, как оно, благодаря ему и исключительно ему — произошло¹⁵⁷.

In the final analysis, this rhetorically immaculate and faultlessly grounded argumentation (with its beautiful artistic finish) can be reduced to the trivial version promoted by the newspaper pen-pushers: the rejected lover kills his beloved in a fit of pique. But in Koni's letter, we can find some non-trivial information which he had drawn, apparently, from his long and circumstantial conversations with Suvorin. If we compare this information with Suvorin's diary, we can conclude that Aniuta's love affair with Komarov had started three years earlier: 'My recollections about Aniuta — out trip to Switzerland in 1870, <... > where the Likhachevs lived at the time. <...> We set off from Piermont¹⁵⁸ where Aniuta had been receiving her treatment. It was my first time abroad. Together with Aniuta, we visited Berlin, Piermont, Cologne, Frankfurt am Main, Heidelberg, Wiesbaden, Lucerne.'¹⁵⁹

So it was then when 'a wedge cut through their family' and Aniuta 'lost her footing'. However, their marriage survived and life returned to normal, though it is difficult to say whether the family had actually kept its balance: Koni insists that Aniuta had 'a sickly', 'unbalanced', and 'nervous' nature. In his letter, there is an accurate assessment of roles in Suvorin's family. Koni unconditionally sees Aniuta as a family leader: 'she is a guardian genius and leader of a remarkably talented person', 'a strong and domineering personality'. Also Koni seems to have no doubts that Suvorin was 'kind, weak, and trusting'; though of more importance is his delicate description of Suvorin as 'an idealist in sensual matters', which can be attributed either to Suvorin's relative lack of sexual experience or to his deliberate continence due to overwork, or perhaps to some male problems. (In that respect, as Koni insists, Komarov was more successful, because he was able to 'morbidly and persistently, arouse Aniuta's bodily instincts'.) The main idea of Koni's letter is to alleviate Suvorin's agony by shifting the blame onto Komarov's shoulders, thus excusing Aniuta's conduct, and also to highlight

¹⁵⁷ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 1949. Pis'ma A. F. Koni k A. S. Suvorinu L. 1–5. Letter of 2.11.1873.

¹⁵⁸ Bad Piermont was a famous spa in Germany specialising in gynaecological, cordial and endocrine diseases.

¹⁵⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 136. Entry of 30.04.1893.

the ill-will of fate. But fifteen years later Suvorin still tormented himself with memories, leaving desperate notes in his diary: ‘She was asking forgiveness, but the guilt was mine; formally she was guilty, but in fact it was entirely my fault.’¹⁶⁰ The next two lines in this entry are heavily smeared.

For Mikhail De-Pule, Suvorin’s acquaintance from Voronezh, Suvorin’s fault in his family tragedy was clear and obvious:

1.64 Ты вот теперь говоришь, что Суворин был обманут женою. <...> Верно, но, знаешь ли, кто тут опять виноват? — Он! Что такое Анна Ивановна? Вероятно, добрая, простая, но самая заурядная женщина. Он ее выучил языкам — прекрасно и очень умно! Он возвел ее в передовые, — смешно и глупо! Он же, этим возведением и чином, развратил ей душу, ее нравственные понятия¹⁶¹.

Are we then to blame this father of a large family, ‘an idealist in sensual matters’, for granting his wife ‘freedom of the heart’? No documental evidence to that effect has been found;¹⁶² there is only a bitter confession in Suvorin’s diary: ‘I have always been unable to prevent anything, and this is my grief, this is my curse.’¹⁶³ However, another question arises: is it possible that ‘the conservative’ dimension of Suvorin’s feuilletons was suggested by his family situation? Hypothetically, one might easily assume that a strong and independent wife herself decided on her degree of freedom, while her husband, having no influence on her because of his weak character, sublimated his suspicions and his fears in newspaper texts. Those texts could also reflect the spouses’ divergence of views as regards woman’s personal freedom.

In the Suvorin family model, De-Pule saw a dangerous result of women’s emancipation (which he understood as a sexual liberation of women, in other words, as ‘the riot of flesh’). According to him, the next stage would be social anarchy:

1.65 Печальна будет судьба нашего общества, если жизнь его будет слагаться по типам четы Сувориных. Жалкое, несчастное положение, в котором все внутреннее, духовное, погнило или

¹⁶⁰ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 73. Entry of 2.05.1887.

¹⁶¹ RGALI, F. 1129 (De-Pule, M. F.), op. 1, ed. 9. Pis'ma M. F. De-Pule k L. N. Pavlenkovu. L. 85ob. Letter of 20.02.1874.

¹⁶² Contrary to Suvorin, Chernyshevsky in his letters to his wife insisted that she should ‘take care of hygiene’ implying a regular sexual life for her in his absence; he also develops some peculiar sexual theories in his diary. (See I. Paperno, *Chernyshevsky and the Age of Realism: A Study in the Semiotics of Behavior* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 119–125 (‘A Licence for Adultery’).

¹⁶³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 72. Entry of 2.05.1887.

поломано! <...> Современные прогрессисты и передовые — сволочь, жаждущая одного разрушения. <...> Буйство одной плоти приводит к явлениям, какие мы видели во Франции, при господстве коммуны, когда женщины, как бешеные фурии, бегали по улицам с керосиновыми лампами и поджигали город¹⁶⁴.

Indeed, on the surface, Suvorin's story is fairly typical of its times, considered as the story of a 'new woman' trying drastically to change her life, including family relations. There are enough cases showing exactly that pattern (for example, the families of Aleksandr Herzen and Nikolai Ogarev, Nikolai Nekrasov with Ivan and Avdot'ia Panaev, Elena Maikova and Fedor Liubimov¹⁶⁵, Nikolai and Liudmila Shelgunov with Mikhail Mikhailov¹⁶⁶), though in most cases the wife made her choice in favour of a more ideologically advanced personality. It is also true that public opinion tended not to distinguish the causes of family break-ups in any very careful way. But on the whole, the 'liberation of flesh' aroused suspicion even among fairly broad-minded people. One of the 'new women' and an active member of the women's movement Elena Shtakenshneider wrote in her diary:

1.66 Я в то время искала идеал женщины и неудивительно, что почти остановилась на Шелгуновой. Говорю «почти», потому что несмотря на все заражающие их восторги, несмотря на всю мою жажду идеала и способность поклонения, меня смущал дух критики, и я не могла приобщиться взгляду Шелгуновой на эмансипацию женщин. Ее свободные женщины были Панаева, какие-то француженки, с которыми она познакомилась в Париже. <...> Иногда восхваление их доходило до того, что меня высылали из комнаты, чтобы удобнее было исчислять их подвиги по пути прогресса.¹⁶⁷

However, Anna Ivanovna Suvorina, as I see it, could hardly have moulded herself deliberately as 'a woman with tendencies'. She was a tireless toiler, a loving mother of five and a reliable help for her weak-willed husband. It is obvious that the distance from

¹⁶⁴ RGALI, F. 1129, op. 1, ed. 9. Pis'ma M. F. De-Pule k L. N. Pavlenkovu. L. 83, 83ob Letter of 2.02.1874. Even later, De-Pule argued against female sexual freedom not only in his private correspondence, but also in press. See for example: M. De-Pule, 'Nigilizm kak patologicheskoe iavlenie russkoi zhizni', in *Russkii vestnik*, 11 (1881), pp. 93–97.

¹⁶⁵ See for example: O. Chemena, *Sozdanie dvukh romanov: Goncharov i shestidesiatnitsa E. P. Maikova* (M., 1966), p. 114.

¹⁶⁶ See for example: T. Bogdanovich, *Liubov' liudei shestidesiatykh godov* (L., 1929); N. Shelgunov, L. Shelgunova, M. Mikhailov, *Vospomonania*, in 2 vol. (M., 1967).

¹⁶⁷ E. Shtakenshneider, *Dnevnik i zapiski: 1854–1886* (Newtonville, 1980), p. 344. Entry of 4.12.1864.

rural Berezovka to metropolitan Petersburg required a number of hurdles to be cleared, be it in the form of class prejudice, cultural difference, or intellectual challenge, or simple physical strain. All of that presumably led to her health failures, nervous breakdowns, and fatigues, which Suvorin, himself in need of support, was hardly able to prevent. He was no help to his wife:

1.67 В покойной жене моей я потерял чрезвычайно много: сам по себе человек бесхарактерный, далеко не энергичный человек, я брал у нее именно то, что мне недоставало и чего у нее было в избытке¹⁶⁸.

The existing biographies of Suvorin inform us of his life after Aniuta's death. But there are episodes in that life after Aniuta when Suvorin found it excruciatingly hard to make the right decision, and if he had been directed by his strong-willed wife, his life might have taken a different turn. Vasilii Rozanov recollects that in his office, Suvorin prominently displayed an enormous portrait of his first wife,¹⁶⁹ and Aniuta's shadow haunted him till the end of his days. When Suvorin's children by both his marriages squabbled over their inheritance in front of their mortally ill father, Aleksei, the second son by Aniuta, wrote to him with bitterness and reproach:

1.68 За эти три года переговоров я чувствовал, как росла во мне вражда к тебе. <...> Я чувствовал, что заболеваю духовно, теряя власть над собою. Если бы была жива моя мать, она остановила бы тебя и удержала бы и меня от ошибок, которые, конечно, делал и я.¹⁷⁰

* * *

The time span which I have examined in this chapter, from the beginning of the 1850s to 1873, is very important, because it provides a better understanding of Suvorin's personal development; and that personal development went along with his rapid career growth. Earlier stages of Suvorin's life, i. e. his peasant childhood with his further training at the Voronezh Cadet Corps, his teaching experience and subsequent branching out into journalism are fairly compatible with the career of a *raznochinets*. However, in the case

¹⁶⁸ OR RNB. F. 847, ed. 700. L. 3. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k N. V. Shakhovskomu.

¹⁶⁹ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine* (M., 1992), p. 82.

¹⁷⁰ RGALI, F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4155. Pis'ma i telegrammy A. A. Suvorina k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 332. Letter of 25.05.1911.

of Suvorin, who was not free from what we crudely identify as 'inferiority complex', we see a career determined and guided in very large measure by his first wife, Anna Ivanovna Baranova; a wife who herself made an extraordinary social transition from low rank merchant milieu to the metropolitan intellectual elite, and who made an impression as well in business activities and who distinguished herself not least by her participation in the women's movement.

Having started his literary career as a satirist and then as a writer examining the mores of rural life, Suvorin eventually found his avocation in journalism. His contributions to the newspaper *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* ensured his swift and conspicuous success, particularly after a court trial which banned his book *Vsiakie: Ocherki sovremennoi zhizni*. Suvorin was acknowledged as the creator of a new newspaper genre, the social feuilleton, which aimed at the public at large and which was, in theory, free of any political commitment.

The beginning of Suvorin's career coincided with the onset of women's emancipation in Russia, and the aspiring journalist took an active part in the debate on 'the woman question'. In this debate, he alternated two divergent ideological lines: while as a liberal he supported women's education, a clear engine of freedom, he also, as a conservative, rejected the idea of woman's personal and sexual freedom. Suvorin's conservatism, disguised as ironic or even provocative commentary on 'the woman question', was also designed to attract the less demanding reading public. This surface contradiction reflected Suvorin's inner moral conflict: a devotee of enlightenment and education, he nevertheless stuck to patriarchal views on family life, assigning to woman the role of a child-bearer and rearer of children and no more. Moreover, he was seriously concerned and alarmed by the prospect of woman's sexual freedom, which he associated with prostitution and which, according to him, would inevitably result in the collapse of male civilization, rather than lead to equality of the sexes. I have suggested that Suvorin's anxiety can be identified as a species of gynophobia, and this intriguing condition expressed itself and became the more noticeable in his journalism and fiction.

'The woman question' had a tragic impact on Suvorin's personal life. Having adopted the ideas of female freedom and independence, Suvorin's wife died at the hand of her lover in adultery, and Suvorin, suffering from remorse, was driven to the verge of

suicide. The scandal around the murder of Suvorin's wife endangered his career, while the absence of her support negatively affected his subsequent life.

CHAPTER II

This chapter covers the period from 1874 to 1889. In Suvorin's life, these 15 years were replete with events and with emotional disturbance. In 1876, Suvorin became owner, publisher and editor of the newspaper *Novoe vremia* and dedicated the rest of his life to this enterprise. Achieving brilliant professional and material success, Suvorin nevertheless found himself profoundly unhappy in his private life: his second marriage practically collapsed; and besides this, he lost two sons and a daughter by his first marriage and a son by his second marriage.

As regards 'the woman question', the given period was marked by a slowing down of the national debate; while at the same time the language of the woman's press started to take shape. Among other results of this period was a network of women's organisations, as well as the growing participation of women in revolutionary activities. However, with insufficiently developed ideology and an absence of properly coordinated action, the women's movement experienced a crisis, which occurred at the end of the 1880s. The crisis signalled the completion of the second (active) phase of the women's movement, which had started in the 1860s. It is important to note that within the period concerned, particularly after the murder of the emperor, Aleksandr II, in March of 1881, with a political reaction to follow, Russian society experienced a general despondency and a social mood which was 'shifting and uncertain,'¹ and which manifested itself both in the press and in belles-lettres. In his newspaper Suvorin avoids commenting upon the trial of *Narodnaia volia* activists as well as other political issues, leaving this to other journalists. Simultaneously, Suvorin's interest for fiction rekindles, and in his prose he starts to examine the theme of 'odd women'.

In this chapter, I shall use new archival material, mainly private correspondence and the diary of Sofiia Smirnova-Sazonova, to recreate previously unknown episodes of Suvorin's life; and in particular, his second marriage and his conflict with his business partner Vladimir Likhachev. I also present a survey of Suvorin's journalistic techniques, which enabled him to turn *Novoe vremia* into the most popular Russian daily newspaper. Further, I take a look at Suvorin's relations with Chekhov and explore the intimacy of

¹ See, for example: G. Novopolin, *V sumerkakh literatury i zhizni: V 80-kh gg. (1881–1895)* (SPb, 1913).

their friendship, suggesting certain reasons for this intimacy. In my analysis, I cite and draw upon certain fictional pieces by Suvorin which are virtually unknown, and I draw also upon his newspaper feuilletons. I intend to place particular emphasis on his changing attitudes to the ‘woman question’ and to determine the influence of personal misfortunes on his fiction.

§ 1

Shortly after losing his wife, Suvorin was left without a job. In 1874, the editor of *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, Valentin Korsh, was removed from his post for pursuing an ‘antigovernment line’. The authorities were particularly unhappy with various feuilletons by *Neznakomets* (i. e. Suvorin), whom the Minister of Education, Dmitrii Tolstoy, named a ‘dubious literary character’, and the entire editorial board was forced to resign. Suvorin found temporary refuge with the newspaper *Birzhevyye vedomosti*, his earlier attempts to set up as a contributor to the magazine *Otechestvennyye zapiski* run by Nekrasov having failed.² He managed, however, to continue his publishing activity by compiling some of his recent writings into a book, which he issued in 1875 under the title *Ocherki i kartinki*. The book sold out very quickly; so within a month Suvorin had to prepare a second, enlarged edition. He had high hopes of this publishing enterprise:

2.1 Я предполагаю издать несколько выпусков, помещая в каждом из них, кроме того, что читателями когда-то было прочитано, и заметки по текущим современным вопросам и событиям. Каждый выпуск будет состоять из трех отделов: 1) рассказы и повести; 2) фельетоны за прошлые годы, более или менее исправленные и приведенные в порядок и 3) текущие заметки по тем вопросам, которые будут ко времени³.

However, the book was crucified by the magazine *Russkii vestnik*⁴ and the project as a whole did not continue. The book is interesting for its contents, particularly for undated pieces; these are pieces valued by the author, although not themselves dated newspaper publications. One of these undated pieces, ‘Something on a columnist’, is of

² It was Saltykov-Shchedrin who objected to Suvorin’s contribution to the magazine. See: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru* (M., 1998), pp. 43–44.

³ *Ocherki i kartinki: Sobranie rasskazov, fel'etonov i zametok Neznakomtsa* (A. Suvorina) (SPb, 1875), 2nd ed., p. 3. Further page references are given in the text.

⁴ See: A. [V. Avseenko], ‘Literaturnye efemeridy’, in *Russkii vestnik*, 9 (1875), pp. 476–509.

particular interest. It starts as an obituary of an anonymous journalist who has ‘died of a stroke’. The text that follows and the absence of an addressee (Suvorin never hesitated to become personal), suggest, to my mind, a metaphorical self-obituary on the author’s part.⁵ It is possible in this text to detect some details of Suvorin’s life, as well as his emotional state, while he was trying to cope with the aftermath of his wife’s murder and his unemployment:

2.2 Много лет он аккуратно являлся в воскресные дни и тешил свою публику в весьма распространенной газете⁶. Теперь он лежит без движения, без языка, такой же бедный, как был десять лет тому назад⁷, вернее сказать — лежит как нищий, у которого болезнь отняла последнее средство к существованию. <...> В последнее время говорили, что он исписался⁸. Это страшное слово для журналиста <...> Долго ли исписаться <...> в вечной погоне за куском хлеба⁹, при неуверенности в завтрашнем дне! <...> Из маленького царька обратиться в ничто, из видного поденщика спуститься в подвалы — можно и с ума сойти, и нервный удар получить. Лучше умереть¹⁰ вовремя, умереть с достоинством... <...> и не дать скалящему зубы самодовольству предлога к обидной насмешке или обидному сожалению¹¹. (306, 308)

An appropriate sequel to this mournful text is a farewell which Suvorin bade to his readers; he entitled it ‘Elegiia na temu “Proshchaius’, angel moi, s toboiu”’ and published it on 29.12.1874 in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* when leaving the newspaper. Here one also finds signs of despair and of the hopelessness experienced by Suvorin:

2.3 Целый месяц разговоров, переговоров, споров, невыносимых волнений, борьбы с самим собой, бессонных ночей... <...> Голова кругом ходила, я не знал, что делать, на чем остановиться. Я изучал советы и красноречие друзей и приятелей своих, и все-таки ничего не видел перед собою,

⁵ Suvorin was obsessed by the idea that he would die of a stroke; this topic often occurs in his diary.

⁶ Cf. Chapter 1, p. 49: ‘Korsh got himself a Sunday clown for his oh-so-proper *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*...’ (Boborykin)

⁷ In 1864, Suvorin started his work in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*.

⁸ Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote to Nekrasov about Suvorin: ‘You can judge by Suvorin’s recent feuilletons that he is very frivolous and that he has written himself out.’ (See: M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 20 vol. (M., 1976–1977), vol. 18-2, p. 111. Letter of 10.06.1872.

⁹ Cf. ‘*Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* with Korsh as an editor had just started to compete with *Golos*, thanks to the pert and biting talent of Suvorin, who at the time lived in poverty, surviving by his Sunday feuilletons only.’ (See Kniaz’ V. V. Meshcherskii, *Vospominania* (M., 2001), p. 297.)

¹⁰ Cf. Chapter 1, p. 80, Chukovskii’s diary: ‘Suvorin was close to suicide’.

¹¹ Indication of Suvorin’s morbid reaction to public discussion of his wife’s murder.

кроме тумана, в котором нельзя различить с надлежащей ясностью ни лиц, ни костюмов, ни положений. <...> Я решил остаться «не у дел», я решил ждать у моря погоды. (314, 320)

These two pieces side with the story entitled ‘Strannaia zhenshchina: Otryvki iz neizdannoi povesti’. This last may be regarded as another attempt by Suvorin at fictional treatment of the modern emancipated woman, now undertaken with more realism (when compared to the Liudmila Ivanovna of *Vsiakie*) and with a dramatic touch. Also, while in his feuilletons ‘educated maidens’ were a constant object of Suvorin’s irony, now the author seems genuinely to sympathize with his heroine.

The protagonist of Suvorin’s ‘unpublished novella’, significantly called Anna Ivanovna, the name of his first wife, is an extraordinary woman, endowed with intelligence, talent, energy, and beauty. Unfortunately, she cannot find her place in life. Her marriage to a university professor had not made her happy: ‘I felt I was just as clever as he was, that I could learn what he knows, that I could do what he does, and I was angered by the unjustness of fate that had made me a woman.’ (88) Having buried her husband, who dies of cholera and leaves her without means with a small daughter to support, Anna Ivanovna is nevertheless ‘nearly happy’ with her newly acquired freedom. But for all her talents — she can translate from three languages, she can write compilations, make clothes and needle lace, retouch photographs and make wax flowers — she is confronted everywhere by male hostility and resistance:

2.4 ...И на улице, и дома, и в литературе, везде оскорбление, то прямое, то снисходительно-ироническое. Вам, мужчинам, и без способностей, без ума, всюду свободный вход, нам — и с умом, и со способностями надо еще позволения испросить на право предъявлять их... (91)

Anna Ivanovna sees no way out of this humiliating situation:

2.5 Что мне в этой трескотне фраз о женском вопросе, когда дела нету и когда на мое дело смотрят как на патологический продукт. <...> ...Я женщина! Между негром и ребенком — вот ей место. <...> ...Какие женские способности лучше всего вознаграждаются? Лживость, притворство, отсутствие всяких нравственных начал вместе с отсутствием всякого образования, хитрость, плотоядность, качества искусной обольстительницы... Куртизанка — вот перед кем становятся на колени, кому курится фимиам, кому лучше всего платят. (92)

These words about a courtesan strongly recall Suvorin's ironic feuilletons; but in this passage, straight from character Anna Ivanovna's mouth, they reverse their connotation. Suvorin enhances dramatic effect: if it were not for her daughter, Anna Ivanovna would be ready to kill herself. Anna Ivanovna develops her ideas in talks with 'a grey-haired old man', Lomakin, who sincerely wishes her well but is not able to offer her help, apart from some commonplace comfort: 'You should pull yourself together, and you should restrain your temper. <...> There are other things in life which are worth living for.' (94–95) There is another character in the novella, the bachelor Kopylov, whose views of women are in unison with those of the heroine:

2.6 Я знаю только, что женщины, даже замечательные, не камень, и, растаяв перед каким-нибудь мужчиной, иногда не только не замечательным, но даже совсем плохеньким, выходят замуж и делаются матерями, хозяйками, погружаются во все мелочи жизни и, разумеется, не могут культивировать свои таланты, которые так и гибнут, не расцветая. Это нива, побитая градом... (81)

Despite the fact that the plot of the story might well have taken an interesting turn — the bachelor, 'who had experienced neither real love, nor real grief,' (82) is getting interested in this extraordinary woman — Suvorin preferred to leave his novella unfinished; he does not know what to do with his heroine, so she goes away to Munich.

Although there were, in fact, quite a few women around him who did actually gain professional success in a male dominated world, Suvorin wants to explore a female type which is extraordinary but who fails significantly to realize herself in life. We may cautiously surmise that Suvorin's heroine is a female option of the 'superfluous man', now brought forth by woman's emancipation;¹² an analogous social product of the same or similar underlying historical variables. However, Suvorin seems at the same time to imply that this kind or type of woman is 'a strange one', a strange or questionable social product, since it appears that she wishes to reject her original purpose of wife and mother. According to Suvorin, this results in a certain mental instability; so his novella may arguably be considered an attempt to diagnose and objectify the 'hysterisation of the

¹² Attempts to classify female types of the emancipation period have been made in: A. Rosenholm, *Gendering Awakening: Femininity and the Russian Woman Question of the 1860s* (Helsinki, 1999), Chapters IV, IX, X; S. Slavskaya Grenier, *Representing the Marginal Woman in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature: Personalism, Feminism, and Polyphony* (Greenwood Press, 2001), pp. 103–104; 139–140; 156–157.

woman's body' as described by Michel Foucault (see Introduction, p. 18). Throughout his narration, Suvorin goes to some lengths to pinpoint hysterical features in Anna Ivanovna. He introduces her with an episode from her youth: avoiding confrontation with her parents, Anna agrees to marry a wealthy person with whom she is not in love. However, during the wedding ceremony, she 'gives a harsh negative reply' to the priest's question, rushes out of the church and throws herself onto the snow in a plainly hysterical fit: 'They put her in the carriage by force and took her home. <...> She was on the brink of madness and endured a serious illness.' (84) Equally strange is the joy which she feels at her husband's death, which seems to grant her freedom but in fact proves of no use: 'I languish and cannot focus on anything; it's even worse now.' (89) Anna Ivanovna's portrait is full of hysterical features: her speech manner is 'jumpy' and 'spiteful'; her voice 'brakes with emotion'; as she speaks, she 'gesticulates briskly'; her eyes are 'flashing', she laughs with 'a nervous and forced laughter.' Talking to Lomakin, Anna Ivanovna 'suddenly broke out into hysterical laughter and buried her face in her arms.' Suvorin finishes his novella with the wrathful monologue of his heroine:

2.7 Тяжко жить... <...> ...душа болит, ум работает, знаний жаждешь... И что же? Над тобой смеются, тебе ноги подставляют, тебе предписывают невозможные вещи, тебя сажают в клетку с золотыми прутьями или... Нет, я не могу больше. Это невыносимо, это — каторга (96).

Anna Ivanovna makes a histrionic exit: 'She seized my hand, as if she wanted to add something, but then she suddenly tightened her lips, withdrew her hand abruptly and left.' (96)

Suvorin, who had learnt a bitter lesson from women's emancipation, seems to warn the other half of mankind against a fatal mistake and wants to return women to the family hearth. However, along with his warning, he also wants to communicate the idea that for a talented and intelligent woman, marriage may also prove destructive. Since the 'fragment' genre allows Suvorin to avoid direct answers, that is, to abstain from mere 'prattle on the woman question', the reader is left wondering: what kind of choice is there for a modern woman? The sombre tone of Suvorin's novella may also reflect his own difficulties in choice of partner; which brings us to what happened when Suvorin, having

barely recovered from the extraordinary death of his first wife, began his search for a new *mère de foyer*.

§ 2

Suvorin was not short of candidates. By 1874 he was already acquainted with his daughter's classmate Anna Ivanovna Orfanova (1856–1936), scion of an impoverished noble family,¹³ who was by 22 years his junior. Anna Ivanovna's young age and her particular emotional temperament — she seemed to immediately conceive a passion for him — aroused Suvorin's hopes; it also, perhaps, alarmed him:

2.8 Голубок мой беленький со сросшимися бровками <...> Ваш голос — золото и состояние, если Вы его мало-мальски обработаете, в провинции Вы и теперь с ним нашли бы и известность, и деньги. А Вы только дурите и задолбили себе только одно: ничего не хочу, ничего мне не надо. <...> Говорят, что любовь делает человека энергичнее, бодрее, и для любимого человека все готов сделать. Но в Вас я вижу противоположное: Вы раскисаете, томитесь, мучаетесь понапрасну. Ну же, Нюсенок милый, хоть немножко понатужьтесь и докажите, что Вы не капризный ребенок, а женщина¹⁴.

At the same time Suvorin had an eye to Sofiia Ivanovna Smirnova (1852–1921), a talented young writer and something of a charmer. Smirnova was an upholder of women's emancipation; besides, she had carved out a career for herself and moved from Moscow province to Petersburg.¹⁵ They became acquainted in 1875 at the Likhachevs' and entered into a friendly correspondence that was only interrupted by Suvorin's death. On its own, this correspondence is worth an epistolary novel.¹⁶ As I discovered from Smirnova's later diaries, Suvorin was indeed in love with her, but 'he admitted that nothing came of it'.¹⁷ According to Suvorin, Smirnova had a strong resemblance to his first wife¹⁸ and perhaps for this reason, which is to say out of fear that the story of his

¹³ This family also produced the populist writer Mishla (Mikhail Orfanov), 1848–1884.

¹⁴ OR IRLI. F. PI, op. 25. ed. 146. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k ego neveste, vposledstviu zhene Anne Ivanovne. 1874–1886. L. 5ob–6.

¹⁵ In her debut novel *Ogoniok* which was published in 1871 in the magazine *Otechestvennye zapiski*, Smirnova attempted to track further the lives of protagonists of Chernyshevsky's novel *Chto delat'?*

¹⁶ There are 149 letters from Suvorin to Smirnova-Sazovova kept in OR IRLI and 142 letters from Smirnova-Sazonova to Suvorin kept in RGALI, all in all amounting to some 500 pages or more.

¹⁷ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 25. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. L. 253. Entry of 14.01.1895.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ed. 22. L. 41.

first marriage would repeat itself, he refrained from marrying an emancipated woman. In his letters Suvorin addresses Smirnova as ‘my dove, my dearest friend’, and over thirty years his affectionate and at times sad tone never changes:

2.9 Хочу сказать еще раз, что душа моя так полна Вами, что там нет места ни для чего прочего. <...> Постоянно только одно: влечение к Вам. До невероятного просто: минуты, кажется, нет, когда бы не думал о Вас, когда бы не воображал Вас возле¹⁹.

Smirnova reciprocated with feeling:

2.10 Вы мне как-то сказали шутя, что Ваш единственный родственник это я, и меня это ужасно тронуло. <...> Вы знаете, что я до глупости к Вам привязана. Ни время, ни расстояние не может изменить моего чувства к Вам. <...> Вообще, между нами удивительная гармония. Я думаю, что никто Вас так не понимает, как я²⁰.

In 1877, soon after Suvorin’s wedding, Sofiia Smirnova married the actor Nikolai Sazonov, who was tormented by jealousy of Suvorin till his own death in 1902.

One of Suvorin’s confidants in delicate nuptial matters was the journalist Bogdan Gei, future executive secretary of the *Novoe vremia* editorial office. ‘A trusted friend and an excellent adviser’, as Suvorin called him, Gei was earnestly trying to sort out a mixed Suvorin female entourage and was running suitor’s errands: ‘I visited Anna Ivanovna in Lesnoe four times: what a live wire, but this is all I can say.’²¹

Giving due weight to Gei’s taste and opinion, Suvorin nevertheless made his own effort to evaluate the available candidates, and even shared his doubts with his fiancée. His message was that in his future wife he would like to see ‘a guardian angel’, which is what his first wife was for him:

2.11 Благоразумие говорит: не надо, не думай о ней! Какая она тебе, а ты ей пара? Ведь у нее — «волнение крови молодое, — но дни бегут, и стынет кровь», а у тебя? Одиночество, тоска, мечты о своем угле, о своем милом человеке, который будет возле тебя, любящий, нежный, преданный, ангел-хранитель, который облегчит жизнь и ее заботы, при котором будет работаться легко и

¹⁹ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 217. Pis’ma A. S. Suvorina k S. I. Smirnovoi (Sazonovoi). L. 32, 35ob. Letters of 6.05.1881 and 8.05.1881.

²⁰ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 3754. Pis’ma S. I. Sazonovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 28, 46, 69. Letters of 4.01, 12.08.1894 and undated.

²¹ Ibid., op. 1, ed. 875. Pis’ma B. V. Geia k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 8. Letter of 27.06.1875.

весело, который рассеет печаль, утешит поцелуями, поддержит крепкою надеждою на жизнь, беззаботным, радостным взглядом на будущее²². Да разве ангелы-хранители есть? <...> Надо покориться судьбе, надо забыть, помучаться, чтобы не мучаться потом, закалиться в своем одиночестве и твердо и раз и навсегда сказать молодому счастью: прости! Оно не для тебя, и если оно мелькнуло на горизонте твоей жизни, на вечернем горизонте, то это случай; будь доволен прошлой минутой, не проси у судьбы счастья и успокойся. Родной мой, милый чудесный Нюсенок, как бы я хотел быть молодым, здоровым, свежим! Как желаю я Вам счастья, Боже мой! Как желаю!²³

Tormented by indecision, Suvorin opened his heart to Turgenev: ‘What a wretched state when you hit forty! You might feel young at heart, but your body is old; you long for your days of youth, you long for gusts of passion — well, the chance would be a fine thing! You’ve got nothing, you can’t even fall in love, you can only fall in love with your mind, but what kind of love is it?’²⁴ The writer’s reply may not have been a consolation to Suvorin: ‘Indeed, after forty life is hardly full of joy, particularly during the first decade. But later, influenced by a cold draught from the grave, a man does cool down.’²⁵

In any event, the cold draught from the grave did not prevent Suvorin’s occasional flirting and nor did it prevent his gathering materials for his writing:

2.12 Много я тут наслаждался игрой, пробыв три дня в деревне, в 40 верстах от Курска, у одной девицы, которую Нюся боится не без основания. Если б пожил я у нее еще несколько дней — роман вышел бы, но я убежал до окончания, доведя, однако, его до половины. Любопытно, согласитесь, для писателя встретить степную 23-летнюю красавицу и сделаться предметом ее обожания.²⁶

Gei, very much in sympathy with Suvorin, did not hesitate to reject all those deemed to be the wrong match; he seems to hint that even Anna Ivanovna is not really

²² Suvorin borrowed his vision of the ideal wife from Belinskii: ‘A woman is a guardian angel to a man at all stages of his life... <...> ...[I]t is her and solely her, who, at his mature age, is the radiant guiding star of his life, his support, a source of light for him and a source of strength which never lets his heart turn cold, stale, and weak. <...> A woman’s lot is to arouse the heart’s energy in men, the heat of his noble passions, to maintain his sense of duty and his quest for the lofty and the great... <...> She is a man’s consoler in his disasters and his griefs, she is his pride and joy...’ (V. Belinskii, ‘Zhertva: Literaturnyi èskiz. Sochinenie g-zhi Monborn’, in V. Belinskii, *PSS*, in 13 vol. (M., 1953–1959), vol. 1, p. 224.

²³ OR IRLI. F. PI, op. 25, ed. 146. L. 9. Suvorin quotes from a poem *Demon* by Lermontov.

²⁴ Op. cit: I. Turgenev, *PSSP*, in 28 vol. (M., 1965–1968), P., vol. 11, p. 468. Letter of 19.02.1875.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 52. Letter of 14.03.1875. Turgenev readily caught up with a congenial topic. See: V. Toporov, *Strannyi Turgenev: Chetyre glavy*. (M., 1998), pp. 54–102.

²⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 246. Pis’ma A. S. Suvorina k A. P. Kolomninu. L. 1ob. Letter of 8.06.1875.

the best choice either. His interesting sociological analysis of marital rapport provides a good illustration of the difficulties *raznochintsy* encountered in their private lives, namely, the absence of a socially and intellectually adequate female contingent (see Introduction, pp. 11–12). Gei's interpretation is not devoid of misogyny: as with Suvorin, he finds 'hysteria' in women who search freedom and he is somewhat sceptical as regards women's education:

2.13 Надеюсь, что Вы пропишите своей курской девице надлежащую рацею. Или все правда, что она Вам писала, и тогда она самая бесцветная девушка, не пользующаяся и сотой долей той самостоятельности, которой она хвасталась. <...> ...Если 22-летняя девушка тотчас поступает так, как поступила курская девица, то это доказывает или душевную трусость, несвойственную протестанткам вроде тех, какой она себя рисовала, или же просто тщеславие; если выйдет удачно — хорошо, не сойдет — можно всю вину свалить на Вас. Но если курская девица все это выдержала, то она скверная истеричка, ну ее к шуту. <...> Прошлогодние девицы не выдерживают никакого сравнения с Лидией Ивановной. Та хоть выбилась из своей среды, достигла самостоятельного существования <...> прошла много порогов, а эти полубарские девушки палец о палец не ударят, бесцельно и бездельно проводят свой девичий век, а между тем желают вкусить запрещенного плода в романтической обстановке. <...> Что же Вы можете ожидать от барышень? Поддержку своим стремлениям, совет, подмогу? Никогда. Исправное ведение хозяйства? К стыду их и это сомнительно. Остается брачное ложе: а если это единственное содержание «современных» девиц, которые нисколько не совершенны, а более или менее обтесанные мещанки, с гимназическим присутствием образования, то Вы вправе требовать от своей жены по крайней мере редкостную красоту, это вечно существенное содержание женщины, когда нет ни выдающегося ума, ни таланта. Что за проклятый рок тяготеет над литераторами, учеными и вообще людьми интеллигенции, где один — всё, а другая половина ничего, нуль, а еще чаще отрицательная величина. Купец берет капитал, аристократ — племенную телку, тоже с состоянием, помещик — новое поместье, крестьянин и мещанин — работниц, только люди интеллигентные обыкновенно связываются с претенциозной швалью, вроде курской девицы, а в лучшем случае с детьми природы. Те женщины, которые на что-нибудь вдохновляли тружеников пера и ума, больше были двадцатые или тридцатые по числу; жены же попадают им в удел такие, что смотрят на своих мужей, двигающих отечество, как на беспомощных кропателей. Правда, Ваша роль — публициста первостепенного и чуть ли не единственного, блестящая, и самая обыденная жена будет видеть ее и хвастаться Вашими перьями; но что она Вам даст? Будет останавливать, охлаждать пыл Вашего таланта, учить осторожности и мелкой расчетливости²⁷.

²⁷ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 875. Pis'ma B. V. Geia k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 8–9. Letter of 27.06.1875.

Unfortunately, we have no information regarding Lidiia Ivanovna²⁸, and little or nothing as regards the ‘Kursk maiden’, although in his diary Suvorin does mention what well may be the maiden’s initials: ‘Today’s letter from N. A. What sort of devilry is this? There is nothing apart from an unpleasant pinching feeling. As if someone was putting a yoke round your neck and you feel like you can’t avoid it, and you dread it. Nusia was right when she told me: “No one will ever love you like I do”’.²⁹ In the meantime, Suvorin’s doubts were becoming really serious, and he confided them to Anna Ivanovna, warning her that he might not in the end be a potent husband:

2.14 Когда любят, то жалеют, и самая любовь очень часто вырастает из чувства сожаления к человеку, в особенности часто это бывает со стороны женщин. Так, я думаю, что Ваша любовь ко мне выросла отчасти из чувства сожаления — Вы не могли не заметить во мне тоски одиночества, несмотря на то, что я никогда один не оставался, — отчасти из чувства поклонения моей особе, пользующейся известной репутацией. «Такой умный и любит меня» — эту фразу Вы сами часто говорили мне. Вы любите не просто Алексея Сергеевича, как любят Ивана Ивановича, Петра Павловича, а Алексея Сергеевича известного, о котором и пишут, и говорят. Если б мы с Вами сошлись совсем, Вы — я в этом уверен и на это имею основательные данные — Вы скоро бы готовы были променять меня на другого, совсем неизвестного, но более молодого и здорового, который мог бы отвечать на страсть страстью, а я этого не могу.³⁰

‘An excellent adviser’ Gei tried to avoid the risk of assuming full responsibility and advised Suvorin controversially:

2.15 Анна Ивановна писала Вам четыре раза и, по-видимому, Вы не получили ни одного письма; между прочим, два из них послала в один и тот же день. <...> Во всяком случае, Вы не можете жаловаться на нее: Вы безусловно располагаете ею. Если сами перед собой убеждены, что с нею приобретете личное счастье, то действуйте, нимало не медля. <...> Только прежде надо взглядеться, как бы вместо ожидаемого счастья не вышла скучная и глупая канитель самого обыденного свойства. That is the question.³¹

The more Anna Ivanovna insisted on a wedding, the more doubtful and cautious Suvorin grew: ‘The prospect of our marriage frightens me, I must confess; it affects so

²⁸ There is a possibility that Gei erroneously called Sofiia Ivanovna Smirnova ‘Lidiia Ivanovna’.

²⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 17–18. Entry after 25.06.1875.

³⁰ OR IRLI. F. PI, op. 25, ed. 146. L. 10. Letter of 24.06.1875.

³¹ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 875. L. 8.

many interests and will cause a lot of confusion among you, me, and my children. To live the way you have planned — would that actually be possible? Not only will I be eaten alive, but you will as well.’³²

There was another *chargé des affaires* — Suvorin’s future son-in law Aleksei Kolomnin — who was simultaneously courting Suvorin’s daughter Aleksandra. Being in close touch with both girls, he shared Suvorin’s doubts about his choice and allowed himself to conspire somewhat against Anna Ivanovna as well as blackmailing the bridegroom. Suvorin received a full account of current events in Kolomnin’s letters to him. Thus, having quoted Anna Ivanovna’s question: ‘Should a young girl marry a person who compares marriage with a chain round his neck, even if she is completely in love with him?’³³ — Kolomnin without the faintest hesitation lets Suvorin know his reaction:

2.16 Я, разумеется, отвечал мгновенно, что не должна, понимая очень хорошо, в какую сторону клонятся эти вопросы. <...> По мнению Анны Ивановны, ей остается только два исхода: или самоубийство, решиться на которое у нее не достанет духу, — или отдаться первому встречному, чтобы затем жить с Вами, не стесняя Вас узами брака. Насколько одно лучше другого — это вопрос. В ее словах проглядывало что-то вроде обдуманного — и это обстоятельство, признаюсь, смутило меня до некоторой степени...³⁴

Kolomnin shared his thoughts regarding the prospects of Suvorin’s marriage and stuck to his guns without sparing Suvorin’s feelings:

2.17 Пожалуйста, не думайте, что говорить, по возможности, хладнокровно все то, что я ей говорю о бессмыслии ее любви к Вам, — ничего не значит, нет, эта штука нелегкая, особенно, когда меня винят, что приходится бить в самую чувствительную струну и разбивать дорогую мечту. Впрочем, я стою всегда на твердой почве, ибо доказываю Нюсе, что в ее любви кроется гибель Вашей славы и Вашей репутации, — а этот аргумент для нее имеет большое значение³⁵.

Suvorin agreed with Kolomnin and wrote him longwinded letters trying to prove himself wrong rather than his correspondent:

³² OR IRLI. F. PI, op. 25, ed. 146. L. 18ob. Letter of 1.08.1875.

³³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 1903. Pis’ma A. P. Kolomnina k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 1ob. Letter of 10.06.1875.

³⁴ Ibid. L. 1ob., 2, 2ob.

³⁵ Ibid. L. 7–7ob.

2.18 Кашу я заварил такую, что решительно теряюсь, как ее буду расхлебывать, а расхлебывать придется непременно. Черт с младенцем связался! И всего печальнее, что младенца никак не убедишь, что пути из этого отнюдь не выйдет, ни для черта, ни для младенца. <...> Вы, хотя и вправе смеяться надо мной, но понимаете, что положения ее и мое скорее носят на себе трагичный, чем комичный поворот, а я трагедии боюсь — довольно ее! — для себя, и ей ни за что на свете ее не желаю. <...> Она, как все любящие, верит, что это нечто вечное и неизменное, и страшно тяжело ей будет, когда она увидит, что это «вечное» проходит, уменьшается, исчезает, заменяется равнодушием. <...> Я ей всегда это говорил. На страсть надо отвечать страстью — а где мне ее взять? <...> Вы понимаете, что я себя ни с кем не хочу сравнивать, но на нас, писателях, есть такая полоса, что между нами очень мало людей, пользующихся семейным счастьем. Когда мозг работает, когда голова занята предметами совсем неинтересными для женщин, когда чем больше работает голова, тем меньше желаний известного рода, женщине весьма простительно предпочитать нам первого встречного кобеля. <...> Нюся, к тому же, ровно ничем не интересуется, что не входит в область любви. Вводить ее в ту область, где мы празднуем, труд едва ли благодарный и даже возможный. Мне казалось иногда, что она сама понимает, что любовь ее — не совсем прочное чувство, что это — порыв, дикий, бурный, что она боится, как бы он не прошел и торопится поэтому взять совсем любимого человека. Он упирается — это раздражает ее, волнует, увеличивает желание. А всего лучше было бы подождать; всего лучше было бы, если бы она вступила в консерваторию, занялась своим образованием³⁶.

Suvorin's doubts and apprehensions concerning his own sexual potency may possibly indicate the influence of the popular 19th century theory of 'vital energy' promoted by the French medical scholars Auguste Debay and Antoine Émile Jozan.³⁷ In their books, which were also published in Russian translation,³⁸ they interpreted, in an up-to-date vocabulary of what was then modern sexology, the idea of 'sexual exhaustion'; this latter being a throw-back to the sexual phobia of antiquity. As Michel Foucault reveals, 'These solicited fears seem to have been the "naturalistic" and scientific legacy, in medical thought of the 19th century, of a Christian tradition that consigned pleasure to the realm of death and evil.'³⁹ According to Debay and Jozan, 'the vital energy' is of the same quality for all psychic mechanisms fuelled by it; this energy is

³⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 246. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. P. Kolomninu. L. 2. Letter of 8.06.1875.

³⁷ Mikhail Zolotonosov used this theory to reinterpret some aspects of Chekhov's biography; see: M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storony printsipa zhenofobii* (M., 2007).

³⁸ See for example: A. Debay, *Gigienicheskie sovety dlia predokhraneniia organizma ot istoshcheniia* (SPb, 1863); Ém. Jozan, *Prezhdevremennoe istoshchenie cheloveka, zavisiashee ot boleznei polovykh organov i mochevykh putei u muzhchiny i zhenshchiny* (M., 1868); A. Debay, *Brak i bezbrachie vo vsekh polovykh i moral'nykh proiavleniakh* (M., 1869).

³⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (Penguin, 1987), vol. II: The Use of Pleasure, p. 16.

drawn from one reservoir which is not bottomless.⁴⁰ Thus, the energy which is necessary for mental activity (for creative work, career etc) can be channelled into sex, and vice versa. In this respect, Suvorin's letter to Kolomnin is very close to an actual quotation from Debay's book:

2.19 ...Чрезмерные умственные занятия, глубокие размышления, продолжительное бодрствование, упорные напряжения мысли, сосредоточивая все жизненные силы в мозгу, лишают этих сил половые органы, которые приходят в истомление и мало-помалу теряют свою способность к оплодотворению. Таким образом, мы обыкновенно встречаем ученых, пораженных анафродизией, и идиотов, обладающих чрезвычайной половой производительностью.⁴¹

Suvorin, it seems, had adopted the theory of 'vital energy' and deemed it applicable to his own life. He was about to make another spurt forward in his career and also to start a family, so he interpreted his fear of failure in either area in terms of 'vital energy', which in his case was running fairly low. As Zolotonosov argues, the need to save 'vital energy' for one's mental rather than bodily life results in gynophobia, all the more so when a career-minded intellectual encounters a sensual woman who does not share his intellectual pursuits. In this sense, Anna Ivanovna Orfanova was the opposite of Suvorin's first wife, Anna Ivanovna Baranova, and appears to have been a destructive element in his life.

The romance with Niusia developed mostly by correspondence, since in the summer of 1875 Suvorin was touring around the Caucasus inspecting spa resorts. However, his fear of failure was already taking its toll on his health:

2.20 ...Вот задача: меня хватил паралич, небольшой пока, но все же скверный; правый глаз, правая щека и правая половина языка отказались служить; <...> губы одеревенели и раскрываются наискось. <...> Случилась эта авария 3-го дня, без всяких приготовительных работ и предостережений, если таковыми не считать следующего: с самого приезда в Пятигорск я начал чувствовать себя плохо, нервы расстраивались, одышка, слабость; я переехал в Железноводск; в первое время я поправился, но потом слабость возобновилась, стала мучить лихорадка; меня перетащили в Кисловодск в знаменитый Нарзан; после нескольких ванн — паралич⁴².

⁴⁰ See on this: M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov*, p. 7.

⁴¹ A. Debay, *Brak i bezbrachie vo vsekh polovykh i moral'nykh proiavlenniakh*, pp. 233–234.

⁴² RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 246. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. P. Kolomninu. L. 3. Letter of 23.06.1875.

On top of that, Suvorin's inner struggles appear to have paralyzed his will. Fully aware that his coming marriage must surely have a fatal importance, he seems nevertheless unable to draw back from what may seem a futile game:

2.21 Относительно Нюси многое хотелось бы сказать, да не могу много писать. <...> Сиделкой при себе я не желаю ее сделать, да и она не вынесет этой «бесподобной» роли; а при падении нервной системы и при параличах хотя бы местных, согласитесь, любовью заниматься не совсем удобно. С Нюсей же только этим и можно заниматься. <...> Натура она горячая, чувственная страшно; стремление к наслаждению неодолимое; отсутствие воспитания разленило ее; она ни за что приняться серьезно не может; голова развита в одну сторону, именно в сторону неограниченной свободы; будь она красивее, она сделалась бы известной кокеткой <...>. Пусть подвернется кто-нибудь на мое место, только подойдет к ней — и вы увидите, как она быстро охладает. <...> Соблазнительного в ней, т. е. в Нюсе, — пропасть. Вы поверите мне, если я скажу, что то нервное расстройство, которое я теперь ощущаю и даже ощупываю, отчасти результат той борьбы с самим собою, которую я вел. <...> Вы упрекаете меня в том, что я непоследователен в своих письмах к ней, но ведь Вы поймите, наконец, что я раздваиваюсь, что я благограумен сегодня и неблагограумен завтра, а когда неблагограумен, то думаешь: к черту все приличия и связи, хоть несколько дней, да счастья! А там что будет со мной, с ней, с ее родными — не все ли это равно? Жизнь и так уходит, а тут рассуждаешь⁴³.

In the end, Suvorin does indeed marry but does so under the pressure of his fiancée and not quite willingly and hardly rationally. Perhaps, because of his future wife's youth, he fostered some illusions: he would be the real master of the household, he would assume responsibility for future family life; he would, after all, mould his wife to the patriarchal pattern in which he believed. But it is beyond doubt that a vital — and a fatal — decision in Suvorin's life was again dictated by a woman. The story repeated itself when it came to deciding on his next career move.

§ 3

By that time, in the mid 70s, the idea of a new paper shared with Vladimir Likhachev was taking its final shape: the purchase of the newspaper *Novoe vremia* was in process of negotiation, the search for necessary finance was underway, and the editorial staff were being selected. Suvorin was finding it extremely hard to take this decision. There were

⁴³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 246. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. P. Kolomninu. L. 3–4ob. Letter of 23.06.1875.

obvious material reasons for this indecision — notably, the need to make a substantial upfront payment; but it was Suvorin’s intrinsic lack of confidence and familiar indecision that proved to be an obstacle. His hesitancy was effectively ended by the Likhachevs: Vladimir Ivanovich assisted him in obtaining the required sum, while Elena Osipovna literally pushed him to make the last move. Later, Suvorin documented this episode in his diary:

2.22 Когда все уже было кончено, и мне надо было ехать в Главное управление по делам печати, чтоб подписать условие <...> я не решался. Елена Осиповна настойчиво прогнала меня из своей гостиной, где я излагал ей свои опасения и боязнь⁴⁴.

In this diary fragment, Suvorin gives Elena Likhacheva her due, for she was indeed a clever, strong, and determined woman: ‘*Novoe vremia* was purchased solely thanks to her, that is, thanks to her persistence.’⁴⁵ Suvorin’s appreciation wouldn’t fade with time, and marking a tenth anniversary of his newspaper, he sent Likhacheva, no longer his friend, a warm letter:

2.23 И вот сегодня я Вам пишу со всею искренностью моего сердца, которое как ни изжилося, ни истрепалось, но в нем все-таки еще осталось то главное, чем я жив и что спасало меня. И это хорошее в моем сердце громко говорит за Вас и об Вас и громко благодарит Вас за то искреннее участие Ваше во мне, которым я когда-то пользовался. <...> Без Вашего участия не было бы у меня газеты...⁴⁶

The year of 1876, a leap year, was a turning point in Suvorin’s life: on February 29th, the first issue of the newspaper *Novoe vremia* saw the light of day. Starting his newspaper, Suvorin was undoubtedly going to build on his success in *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, for *Neznakomets* had already been well known to a wide public. However, he was fairly vague about his new editorial stance: ‘Ours is an outspoken position. <...> We conceived this position to oppose the radical, liberal, and conservative positions.’⁴⁷ Immediately, both from left and right, came a deluge of accusations claiming a lack of principle on the part of the editor and his new newspaper. Defending himself,

⁴⁴ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 479. Entry of 7.12.1904.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 272. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k E. O. Likhachevoi. Letter of 1886.

⁴⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 29.02.1876.

Suvorin insisted: ‘They tell us that we have not yet made any uniform for ourselves, that is, we have no editorial position. But we are not going to make a uniform, for any uniform is too tight for us.’⁴⁸

It is clear that Suvorin’s wish to enhance his journalistic success was also prompted by his grave personal situation. Prior to purchasing *Novoe vremia*, Suvorin was in a deplorable moral state: he had to endure the murder of his first wife and the explosion of press reports that followed; his job had gone, and not just any job but one which had made him famous in the capital city. To boot, he had five mouths to feed, not to mention numerous needy relations back in Voronezhskaia gubernia. (Censor Aleksandr Nikitenko in his own diaries styled him ‘the poorest of the poor *literati*.’⁴⁹) Also, with a wedding in store, he must have been planning, as the head of a traditionally patriarchal family, to produce more children. One should also take into account his *raznochinets* need to assert himself. In 1913, a year after Suvorin’s death, Vladimir Korolenko would make a similar, although critical assessment of his motives:

2.24 Ироническое божество, которое управляло его жизненной ладьей в самые трудные для русской печати времена, — называлось не корыстолюбием. Это была только «жажда наибольшего возможного успеха»... Этим определилось всё. Чтобы ладья не потерпела неожиданного крушения (как аренда «Петербургских ведомостей»), — было необходимо облегчить ее от груза каких бы то ни было устойчивых и требовательных убеждений... Чтобы при этом она имела успех и у «общества», — нужно было не бороться со взглядами большинства, а плыть по течению этих массовых взглядов, направляя ладью в срединное русло, угождая переменчивым взглядам толпы...⁵⁰

Virtually no one remained indifferent to Suvorin’s success and an array of clashing opinions emerged. However, both Suvorin’s critics and apologists admit in the first place that he had a talent not only to pick up and express public moods, but also to influence and develop both mood and opinion at a ‘public’ level. He was an ‘opinion former’.⁵¹ As regards colleagues and like-minded peers, Suvorin’s perceived lack of clear

⁴⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 12.12.1876.

⁴⁹ A. Nikitenko, *Dnevnik*, in 3 vol. (M., 1956), vol. 3, p. 259.

⁵⁰ V. Korolenko, ‘Ob odnoi staroi knizhke: K godovshchine smerti A. S. Suvorina’, in *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 8 (1913), p. 361–362.

⁵¹ It should be noted that those attempting to determine the influence of *Novoe vremia* on the general public are using a wide range of terms, which are related, whether directly or not, to the notions of ‘mass

political principle was interpreted in fairly lenient and positive terms. According to the journalist Aleksandr Amfiteatrov, Suvorin's position represented a natural ideological evolution on the part of certain *raznochintsy* of the 60s:

2.25 Шестидесятная закваска, быть может, назло им самим, делала их скептиками в идеях, которыми самонадеянно дышало поколение, воспитанное реакционными 80-ми годами. То, что молодой редакции казалось непременною программю, скептикам-индифферентам старой представлялось не более как пробным опытом... Это была и хорошая, и дурная сторона стариков. Хорошая потому, что препятствовала им доходить до абсурдов, до которых сгоряча, идя по прямой линии чисто умозрительной и притом априорной политики, договаривались сотрудники-восьмидесятники. Дурная потому, что поддерживала в них способность к импрессионистическим компромиссам, которые так удобно приспособляли каждую идею к обстоятельствам, что она не могла дойти ни до категорического торжества, ни до категорического крушения. <...> Старики, и во главе их сам А. С. Суворин, от подобных острых и тяжких переломов были застрахованы именно своим скептическим импрессионизмом, поразительно отзывчивым и зыбким и с широчайшей амплитудою. В ней преоригинально встречались и предобродушно уживались «увенчание здания» с анархизмом, религиозный идеализм с нигилизмом 60-х годов и воинствующий национализм с самым широким, культурным космополитизмом⁵².

Both Suvorin's contemporaries and those later researchers who have concerned themselves with Suvorin's ideology unanimously admit that *Novoe vremia* gained an immediate popularity due to its 'militant nationalism', as Amfiteatrov defines it. The term refers to the newspaper policy towards the Slavic uprisings in the Balkans of 1875–1876 and again to its stance during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877: '...the aggressive and optimistic nationalism of *New Times* touched a responsive chord among many readers.'⁵³ Suvorin's competitors did not hesitate to hurl rebukes, although he was brave enough to go to the front as a correspondent: 'You, Mr Suvorin, were a dirty little nihilist behind other people's backs, and now suddenly you are a zealous patriot. In other newspapers

consciousness/unconsciousness', 'public consciousness', and 'public opinion'; cf.: 'public views', 'views of the crowd', 'everyday consciousness', 'expectations, hopes of the public', 'people's mind', 'people's spirit' etc. Thus, according to Elena Tolstaya, *Novoe vremia* was perceived as 'a common denominator of the Russian masses, as a collective unconscious of Russian society' (E. Tolstaia, *Poëtika razdrzheniia: Chekhov v kontse 1880-kh — nachale 1890-kh gg.*, p. 65).

⁵² A. Amfiteatrov, 'Oklevetannyi Chekhov', in *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebja i dlia mnogikh*, in 2 vol. (M., 2004), vol. 2, pp. 475, 476.

⁵³ E. Ambler, *Russian Journalism and Politics: The Career of Aleksei S. Suvorin, 1861–1881* (Detroit, 1972), p. 155.

you preached “the worse it gets — the better”, and now in your own newspaper you celebrate the greatness and glory of Russia.’⁵⁴

Novoe vrenia was gaining strength in the 80s, the period marked by political reaction and social apathy. One of the most hostile of Suvorin’s critics, Nikolai Abramovich, tends to attribute Suvorin’s success to this factor in particular, although he also admits that Suvorin showed great talent in developing a close team of journalists so that their output suited the medley of tastes characteristic of the growing petit bourgeois audience.⁵⁵ Abramovich seems particularly concerned by the efficiency of Suvorin’s journalistic techniques:

2.26 Один из лучших фельетонистов своей эпохи, подлинная журнально-общественная сила, Суворин выступил в «Новом времени» в эпоху журнального безвременья, когда сходили в могилу могикане радикальной общественности, а главное, когда в общественных настроениях ослабли и замирали боевые мотивы предшествующих десятилетий. <...> «Новое Время» выделялось среди органов ежедневной прессы определенностью, редким единством и железной сплоченностью своих больших, средних и совсем ничтожных дарований. Оно сумело создать вокруг себя нечто вроде морального гипноза <...> среди «ведомственного» и просто обывательствующего читателя. <...> Ее [газеты] успех и крупное общественно-политическое значение объясняется не только указанной цельностью общего ее облика, но главное — нашим обывательским испугом, нашей моральной стабильностью и слабостью. <...> «Новое Время» — факт нашей действительности, одна из сторон ее, один из документов нашей психологии, один из показателей нашей недейственности и моральной пассивности⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Op. cit.: *Novoe vrenia*. 2.10.1877. In this issue Suvorin denies the accusations of Vasilii Poletika, the editor of the newspaper *Birzhevye vedomosti*, who attributed to Suvorin a fairly cynical phrase: ‘If the war starts, I’ll come through, if it doesn’t start — I’ll go under.’

⁵⁵ On general trends as regards the development of the reading market in Russia see for example, J. Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Culture, 1861–1917* (Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 109–165. Regrettably, Suvorin is not among the author’s topics; he just mentions him in passing as ‘a conservative journalist’ (p.110); on cultural preferences of a petit bourgeois reader see: B. Holmgren, *Rewriting Capitalism: Literature and The Market in Late Tsarist Russia and The Kingdom of Poland* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998), pp. 5–13; on readership of the second half of the 19th century see: A. Reitblat, *Ot Bovy k Bal’montu i drugie raboty po istoricheskoi sotsiologii russkoi literatury* (M., 2009), pp. 15–37.

⁵⁶ N. Abramovich, *‘Novoe vrenia’ i soblaznennyye mladentsy* (Petrograd, 1916), pp. 6, 11, 13. For the sake of fairness, it should be added that due to his progressing mental illness, Abramovich was more and more obsessed with the idea that Russia was heading for a catastrophe. He thought that ‘big newspapers’ such as *Novoe vrenia* and *Russkoe slovo* had acted to demoralise both Russian literature and Russian society. (See: ‘Abramovich N.’, in *Russkie pisateli: 1800–1917 (Biograficheskii slovar’)* (M., 1992), vol. 1, p. 18.

As *Novoe vremia* was attracting more readers, it aroused the interest of higher ranking officials. As regards its influence on the public, the newspaper was also winning a competition with *Moskovskie vedomosti*, edited by Mikhail Katkov. Yet another opponent of Suvorin, Petr Struve, reaches what seems to be an involuntary conclusion when he admits the distinctive excellence of *Novoe vremia*:

2.27 Тяжелая, давящая поступь скучного и нудного шульмейстера «национальной политики» — Каткова раздробилась на грациозные, ласкающие взор, мягкие пируэты легиона нововременцев. Катков был властной натурой, он был <...> «указующим» перстом, <...> рядом с которым правительство являлось только исполнительной властью. Совсем не то — эластичное, многоголосое «Новое время». Иногда и оно принимало и принимает катковские аллюры сурового «спасителя отечества». Но у него это были именно только аллюры, рассчитанные на самых глупых из глупых⁵⁷.

Still, at the very beginning of its existence, *Novoe vremia* was actually affected by censorship for its rather outspoken publications: there were a number of governmental ‘warnings’ and more than once the newspaper suffered a temporary ban on its street sales. Having experienced the pressure of ruling circles, Suvorin eventually managed to strike a balance in their relationship. As Amfiteatrov states, Suvorin ‘was of course a monarchist and a great master in compromising with the government; he would strike patriotic chords in all registers, like a brilliant virtuoso.’⁵⁸ However, Suvorin’s preference was a lively dialogue with his readership. Already in his first leading article, he states that ‘the objective of a daily newspaper is not to lead public opinion, but to create it, to elaborate it while working together with all the best people.’⁵⁹ Although Suvorin was trying to combine the interests of higher and lower spheres, he exhorted his reader ‘to seek support and advice’ in the general public opinion, which ‘often enlightens the Monarch; it is a reliable help to Him, for it is a strict and a self-denying judge of those

⁵⁷ P. Struve, ‘Fiziologiya odnogo prevrashcheniia: “Neznakomets” i “Novoe vremia”’, in *Rech'*, 27.02.1909, pp. 251–252; On Suvorin and Katkov see: V. Vetlugin [V. Rozanov], ‘Suvorin i Katkov’, in *Kolokol*, 11.03.1916.

⁵⁸ A. Amfiteatrov, ‘Tiazhkaia nasledstvennost’’, in A. Amfiteatrov, *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebja i dlia mnogikh*, vol. 2, p. 74.

⁵⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 29.02.1876.

who execute His will.’⁶⁰ Struve asserts that Suvorin was able to manipulate public opinion on a very large scale:

2.28 Общественное влияние независимого публициста он променял на влияние газетного антрепренера, приспособляющего общественное мнение к меняющимся воззрениям и потребностям сил, стоящих вне общества и диктующих ему свою волю. <...> Создавать нужный для внеобщественных сил суррогат общественного мнения для того, чтобы, будучи органом бюрократии, являть из себя орган общественный, — это не так просто. <...> Суворин <...> опираясь на монопольные условия концессионной системы <...> создал целую фабрику общественного мнения⁶¹.

Suvorin’s contemporaries, who witnessed the arrival of new social groups in Russian society, took pains to identify his contribution to ‘public consciousness’. In 1875, upon the publication of the book *Ocherki i kartinki*, the revolutionary democrat Nikolai Shelgunov left a derogatory comment on the author’s free-and-easy style and comments as well as on his target audience:

2.29 Фельетон, как бы он ни был серьезен, всегда немножко арлекин, а в колпаке у него всегда найдется колокольчик. <...> ...Ясно, что его [Суворина] теперешний читатель, этот интеллигент-плутократ, делец и практик, литератор и ученый, потешается и развлекается остроумием Апраксина двора⁶².

However, with time, as the middle class in Russia grew in number and started to become more of an active player on the Russian social stage, Shelgunov entirely changed his view of Suvorin and his journalistic manner, while he also agreed that the press should communicate with a mass readership:

2.30 «Новое время», действуя в качестве барометрического указателя, обнаруживает перед обществом возможности для тех или других его чаяний, ожиданий и надежд <...> Обращение <...> «Нового времени» к «среднему человеку» нельзя не приветствовать <...> Г. Суворин совершенно справедливо замечает, что у нас есть средний человек, есть хороший и честный работник и что

⁶⁰ *Novoe vremia*. 1.01.1879. Suvorin quotes Vasilii Zhukovskii (see ‘Podrobnyi plan ucheniia gosudaria velikogo kniazia, naslednika tsesarevicha. 1826’, in *Russkaia starina*, 27 (1880)).

⁶¹ P. Struve, ‘Fiziologiia odnogo prevrashcheniia: “Neznakomets” i “Novoe vremia”’, p. 252.

⁶² N. Shelgunov, ‘Tepereshnii intelligent’, in *Delo*, 10 (1875), p. 79. Apraksin yard is a shopping arcade in the centre of Petersburg; according to Shelgunov, its ‘wittiness’ reflects the mentality of trades people; there is also an allusion to the popular satirical novel by Nikolai Leikin *Apraksintsy. Stseny i ocherki* (1863).

именно этот-то средний человек и создал Россию, пробил для нее пути жизни и выработал то, что называется умом всего народа и народным духом⁶³.

Elaborating upon this idea, the Soviet researchers Solov'eva and Shitova interpret Suvorin's success in terms of social psychology: 'Instead of an average liberal journalist, there appeared a manager, a guru, and a genius of the everyday consciousness. <...> Suvorin started to employ mass psychology in private or rented flats and not in the streets or squares. This was the style of his work.'⁶⁴ Although Suvorin's journalistic tactics, namely, the ways in which he sought to influence public opinion and 'mass consciousness', have been assessed, to a degree, by post-Soviet historians, this rich issue has not yet received proper and adequate attention.⁶⁵ In the end what we find are only brief comments made in passing: 'Having made his *Novoe vremia* an organ of the Russian philistine, Suvorin contrived to engage in skillful polemics exactly at this philistine, narrow-minded level.'⁶⁶ Many of Suvorin's contemporaries reacted negatively to his technique:

2.31 В петербургской печати пальма первенства <...> бесспорно и безапелляционно принадлежит Алексею Сергеевичу Суворину, который в своих «Маленьких письмах» с неподражаемым искусством воплотил гоголевского, или мнимого «реvizора». Посмотрите, с каким апломбом, с какую неподдельной развязностью реvizует он всевозможные в мире вопросы. Ему все понятно и доступно, все ему известно; во всем он компетентен; каждому он умеет указать, каждого поучить, как надобно дело делать и куда нужно идти...⁶⁷

However, to counterbalance this reproof, philosopher and journalist Vasiliï Rozanov finds arguments to justify Suvorin's journalistic methods: '...the contemplation of death and immortality combined with, let's say, "who fell off the trapeze bar in the circus" is absolutely effective, necessary, and powerful.'⁶⁸ Devoted to his patron,

⁶³ N. Shelgunov, *Ocherki russkoi zhizni* (SPb, 1895), pp. 906, 968.

⁶⁴ I. Solov'eva, V. Shitova, 'A. S. Suvorin: 'Portret na fone gazety', in *Voprosy literatury*, 2 (1977), pp. 168, 175.

⁶⁵ See for example: S. San'kova, *Ideologiia rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo natsionalisma vtoroi poloviny 19 – nachala 20 vv.: Istoriograficheskii aspekt: Avtoref. dis. ... d-ra ist. nauk* (M., 2009), p. 42.

⁶⁶ V. Kel'ner, *Chelovek svoego vremeni: M. M. Stasiulevich (Izdatel'skoe delo i liberal'naia oppozitsiia)* (SPb, 1993), p. 199.

⁶⁷ D. Il'ovaiskii, *Melkie sochineniia, stat'i i pis'ma: 1857–1887* (M., 1888), part II, p. 277.

⁶⁸ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine* (M., 1992), p. 42.

Rozanov reinterprets ‘the outspoken editorial position’ of *Novoe vremia* in his own, perhaps idealized manner:

2.32 Ничего — *специального*, ничего — *частного*, ничего — *личного*, ничего — *особенного* и *партийного*; вся — для *всей России*, для «целой России», обобщенно — что «требуется народу и государству», требуется «русской истории, как она *сейчас живо совершается*»: вот лозунг и молчаливо принятый всеми сотрудниками маршрут⁶⁹.

The historian Svetlana Makhonina suggests that in the 19th century a periodical publication tended to maintain its integrity, while Suvorin was the first to break with this tradition. His *Novoe vremia* appeared to be of a new ‘informational’ type of newspaper, which found its niche between a ‘quality’ newspaper (e. g. *Russkie vedomosti*) and a tabloid (e. g. *Kopeika*).⁷⁰ In effect, this fact was already stated by Rozanov as early as in 1913; he said that Suvorin would hardly have gained such a powerful response in his readers if he had been addressing them ‘from the pages of a mass lowbrow paper or from a honoured academic press organ.’⁷¹

Quite a few opinion-makers found Suvorin’s newspaper appealing: ‘Suvorin. There is some insincerity and some vilification (I am railing at him for his feuilletons, almost every one, reading them and loving it)⁷² — Dostoevsky put in his diary. Saltykov-Shchedrin, Suvorin’s fierce opponent, would remark with disappointment: ‘...the public does not even read newspapers, only the impudent *Novoe vremia*.’⁷³ Ivan Aksakov wrote to Suvorin: ‘I am not sure about your subscribers, but I am very pleased with your newspaper. It is very lively and responsive, one could hardly do better. Although you are a bit too abusive.’⁷⁴ Suvorin’s barrister Konstantin Arsen’ev recollected: ‘Everyone berated the unprincipled and “outspoken” *Novoe vremia*, but at the same time everyone was reading this lively, perky, interesting, and satisfying newspaper, so that by 6 pm in the Nevskii Prospect it would already be sold out, although they printed it in two printing

⁶⁹ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*, p. 43.

⁷⁰ S. Makhonina, *Istoriia russkoi zhurnalistiki nachala 20 veka* (M., 2004), p. 82–89.

⁷¹ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*, p. 41.

⁷² F. Dostoevsky, *PSSP*, vol. 24, p. 130.

⁷³ M. Saltykov-Shchedrin, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 20 vol. (M., 1976–1979), vol. 19, book 1, p. 30. Letter to Pavel Annenkov of 1.11.1876.

⁷⁴ See: *Pis'ma russkikh pisatelei k A. S. Suvorinu* (L., 1927), p. 12. Letter of 6.02.1881.

houses in a number of copies unprecedented for the Russian press.’⁷⁵ Zinaida Gippius, who was loyal to Suvorin, remarked: ‘Everyone reads *Novoe vremia*, but as for writing about it, that is absolutely “not done”.’⁷⁶

The first issue of Suvorin’s newspaper came out on St Cassian’s day — the supposedly unhappy last day of February, in the leap year of 1876. However, by the end of the next month the newspaper print run more than doubled — from 1562 copies to 3500 copies, while by the end of the same year it increased by ten times and reached 15 thousand copies.⁷⁷ As in the not too distant past, Suvorin found himself out in front. Having secured his popularity with a wider public, he must have also discovered the boundless power of the printed word. However, the germ of this idea harks back to the very beginning of Suvorin’s career:

2.33 Замечаете ли, как повторяют все наши журналы — они уже высказались, и поверьте, что все они падут, безусловно падут, если не захотят нюхать в воздухе и не будут в состоянии развить своего обоняния до того, чтобы оно сделалось чутким⁷⁸.

§ 4

In order not to fall at the first hurdle in what would be a long race, Suvorin immediately picked up some exciting topics of the day to convert them into his next feuilleton-novel which he entitled *Novoe vremia* by *Neznakomets and Co.* Among his characters were a courtesan, Anna Nikolaevna, a drug-addict, Balunskaiia, an army officer, Nikolev, a concessionaire, Dubanin (another allusion to Petr Gubonin), a journalist and a double convert, Ivan Ivanovich Shmul’. The novel is full of action; the setting now an aristocratic salon, now a stock exchange, now a dubious boudoir. For Suvorin the female readership was paramount and he set himself to winning that audience, addressing his women readers in a confidential tone:

⁷⁵ K. Arsen’ev, *Za chetvert’ veka (1871–1894)* (Petrograd, 1915), p. 100.

⁷⁶ Z. Gippius, *Sobranie sochinenii* (M., 2002), vol. 6, p. 165.

⁷⁷ See: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelaivshii kar’eru* (M., 1998), p. 55; Idem, ‘A. S. Suvorin i ego gazeta’, in *NLO*, 15 (1995), p. 184; see also: L. Reynolds, *The News under Russia’s Old Regime* (Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 74–77.

⁷⁸ A. S. Suvorin, ‘Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule’, in *Ezhgodnik rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo Doma* (L., 1981), p. 142. Letter of 28.09.1861.

2.34 Любопытные читательницы, конечно, трепещут от нетерпения и поскорее жаждут узнать те интересные вещи и приключения, которые должны последовать с Николевым у Балунской. Мы сами, обуреваемы жаром романиста, жаждем рассказать эти интересные приключения. Но к сожалению, против своей воли, должны отложить этот рассказ до другого раза: мы пишем не просто роман, а роман-фельетон и обязаны подчиняться не ходу своего авторского вдохновения, а влиянию событий и случаев дня. Вот почему в нижеследующей главе мы не сможем удовлетворить нетерпеливую жажду читательниц: мы перенесем наш рассказ на другую почву. Читательницы, впрочем, не должны негодовать на нас: через несколько времени мы опять вернемся к “дикой даме” и смеем уверить, что кроме нее выставим целый ряд лиц и событий — спиритов, спириток, потребителей хашиша (будет великолепное изображение их видений: это уже “заказано” одному из членов-авторов нашей К^с); магнетизеров, магнетизерок, ясновидящих и пр., не говоря уже о дамах, занимающихся разными концессиями⁷⁹.

However this novel, just like *Milliard v tumane*, would be broken off. Suvorin would start experimenting with various genres, trying new columns like *Nabroski o sovremennikakh*, *Iz zapisok ipokhondrika (melankholika)*, *Iz zapisok otryvochnogo cheloveka*, *Dnevnik nervnogo cheloveka*, *Pis'mo k drugu* and others, before locating his universal signature genre in *Malen'koe pis'mo*. At that time in Russia, the Austrian writer Leopold von Sacher-Masoch was achieving enormous popularity, his central characters, of course, a domineering woman and a weak submissive man.⁸⁰ Suvorin tried to get in touch with him via Turgenev, who currently lived in Paris: ‘I like this gentleman a great deal, although they should not compare him to you; he is rather colourful, but his palette is coarse and he seems to heap all his colours on private parts.’⁸¹ Turgenev was evasive in his reply:

2.35 Что касается до Сахер-Мазоха — то я, полагаю, он очень будет рад вступить с Вами в сношения. <...> Я с ним не знаком лично — и, признаюсь, небольшой охотник до его романов. В них слишком много «литературы» и «клубнички» — две вещи хорошие — но при излишнем пережевывании нестерпимые⁸².

⁷⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 2.04.1876.

⁸⁰ On reception of Sacher-Masoch in Russia see: L. Poluboiarinova, *Leopold von Sacher-Masoch — avstriiskii pisatel' epokhi realizma* (SPb, 2006); on the influence of Sacher-Masoch on Chekhov see M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storony printsipa zhenofobii* (M., 2007).

⁸¹ Op. cit.: I. Turgenev, *PSSP*, in 28 vol.; *P*, in 13 vol. (M., 1965–1968.), vol. 11, p. 600.

⁸² I. Turgenev, *PSSP*. P., vol. 11, p. 251. The western critics named Sacher-Masoch ‘a German Turgenev’.

Apparently, the juicy bits were snatched from Suvorin midway: the magazine *Delo* was quicker in securing the copyright of Sacher-Masoch's novels, not to mention numerous book editions. However, Suvorin himself tried his hand at a spicy topic. In RGALI, there are newspaper proofs of an unpublished novella, which is dated by the 70s; its title is *Strannoe proisshestvie: Povest' na sovershenno novuiu temu*.⁸³ As I see it, Suvorin should be credited with introducing a lesbian theme into Russian literature.⁸⁴ The novella is set in Germany in a Russian boarding house; the protagonist is a depressive Ivan Petrovich Kalinin, who has been abandoned by his wife, who shortly thereafter dies of typhoid. Despite the interest Kalinin arouses in two deserving young women, Anna and Margarita, he tries to take his own life, but survives. The plot gains some pace when a distinct young female couple enters, friends Ol'ga and Nadezhda. Both have fled their parental nest to start a new life in Petersburg, where they settle down together. A mannish Ol'ga 'looks like a nihilist', smokes cigarettes, and is rude in her speech manner; she is in love with Nadezhda and is jealous of anyone, man or woman, who comes anywhere near her paramour. In the meantime, Kalinin takes a fancy to Nadezhda and invites her to follow him to Paris. There follows a scene of jealousy: Ol'ga tries to strangle her lover, but the reader is left wondering whether or not she succeeds.

The novella, in typical Suvorin's manner, was left unfinished. However, Suvorin should be given his credit for artistic flair: he makes contextually appropriate use of a female nihilist, who establishes herself as a 'manly type': 'Women's nihilism is an attempt on the part of a woman to win equal rights with men by way of rejecting her sex, to overcome that sex considered as a set of symbols.'⁸⁵ However, while researchers

⁸³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 7. A. S. Suvorin. *Strannoe proisshestvie (Povest')*. Granki, rukopis' s pravkoi avtora. 1870-e gg.

⁸⁴ Dan Healy dates the development of lesbian subculture in Russia to the end of the 70s; however, he does not mention any literary work on this subject within this period. See: D. Healy, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp. 50–73.

⁸⁵ See I. Iukina, 'Nihilistki', in *Zhenshchiny v sotsial'noi istorii Rossii* (Tver', 1997), p. 50. Cf. A. Rosenholm, who believes that '...the New Woman imagined as an androgynous neutrum without female contours', see: *Gendering Awakening: Femininity and the Russian Woman Question of the 1860s*, p. 239. Cf. an image of a nihilist woman as seen by her contemporary: 'Just take a look at her: man's overcoat, man's hat, dirty petticoats, ragged dress, sallow or greenish complexion, her chin forward... <...> A hermaphrodite in appearance, a Cain's daughter by nature' (N. Tsitovich, *Otvety na pis'ma uchenym liudiam* (Odessa, 1878), p. 26.

attribute a largely aesthetic nature to the women's nihilism,⁸⁶ Suvorin seems to look a bit further. In a manly nihilist woman he anticipates a possible gender change and a new set of gender roles which may prove dangerous for men. Suvorin's apprehension found its way into this interesting novella, but he had second thoughts about publishing it in the open press.⁸⁷ In three decades' time, the subject of the transsexual evolution of a woman nihilist ('she is not a Madonna, but a petty officer'), would be given a thorough consideration by a regular contributor to *Novoe vremia*, the philosopher Vasilii Rozanov.⁸⁸

Thanks to connections among lawyers, Suvorin had gained access to court rooms. To attract more readers he started a regular column *Kriminal'naia khronika* offering coverage of scandalous court trials. As for himself, he became involved in the *cause célèbre* of 'an odd woman' Nastas'ia Kairova (1844–1888). Kairova was an actress and a journalist who tried to kill her lover's wife by cutting her throat with a razor.⁸⁹ The jury acquitted her on the grounds of her unbalanced mental state — the evidence was provided by psychiatrists who had been observing Kairova for ten months in a lunatic asylum. Suvorin happened to be one of those whose backstage activities (exploiting a certain alignment of interests⁹⁰) led to Kairova's acquittal. During the investigation Suvorin took up with Kairova and had the misfortune to become an object of her affections. A serious neurotic, Kairova pestered him with letters laying claims both to Suvorin and to a secretary's position in *Novoe vremia*. Her scheming went so far as to accompanying Suvorin to the seat of the Balkan war in 1876 and, critically, entering into an open conflict with the Likhachevs, Suvorin's business partners. The result was catastrophic: the Likhachevs withdrew from business (Suvorin had to buy out their share) and they severed their friendship with him. This fatal episode supplies further evidence confirming Suvorin's inability, arguably gynophobic, to cope with a domineering and emotionally

⁸⁶ I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 133.

⁸⁷ Suvorin was not free of homophobia either; in his diary, one can find disparaging passages about homosexuals, for example as regards prince Vladimir Meshcherskii or the Head of the Interior, Vladimir Lamsdorf (see: *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergevicha Suvorina*, p. 486).

⁸⁸ See V. Rozanov, *Liudi lunnogo sveta: Metaphizika khristianstva* (SPb, 1913), pp. 51–54.

⁸⁹ See: O. Makarova, "'Sud'ba kakim-to rokovym obrazom stavit menia poperek Vashei dorogi...': "Delo Kairovoi" i ego sled v biografii A. S. Suvorina', in *NLO*, 75 (2005), pp. 92–120.

⁹⁰ Kairova was the common law wife of a famous playwright Fedor Koni (1809–1879), whose son, the lawyer Aleksei Koni, was friendly with Suvorin, while Vladimir Likhachev was the Chairman of the Petersburg District Court.

unbalanced woman. In his diary entry of 7.12.1904, recollecting the story of his acquiring *Novoe vremia* and his subsequent rupture with the Likhachevs, Suvorin reaches a grim conclusion: 'It's all a woman's fault, in all places and at all times.'⁹¹

In the mid 70s, the debate on 'the woman question', having served its purpose, was gradually winding up, although certain practical issues, having to do with a woman's legal status and her role in social production, relocated to the women's press and to the professional press. As regards the daily press, 'the woman question' was still fairly popular and remained a touchstone of the political and ideological commitment of an author. In his own newspaper, Suvorin did not abandon the topical question, though, true to himself, he vacillated between liberal and conservative views and, if need be, frivolously blended them. We find him, on one occasion, donning his fool's cap to produce a scoffing misogynistic passage in his column *Zapiski melankholika*, perhaps reflecting his predicament with Kairova:

2.36 Я ненавижу этих ученых женщин — это женское тело, женская душа, сдавленные корсетом непереваримых и неприложимых знаний; это — тело, чувствующее себя в перемежающейся лихорадке, для которой нет лекарства, это — душа с придавленными порывами, это — нечто среднее между немецким ученым и Магдалиной, кающейся в том, что она женщина. Когда я вижу таких женщин, я говорю им: «Какая вы умная, какая вы хорошая, как основательно вы рассуждаете, сколько свету вносите в нашу серую жизнь!» Но про себя я думаю: «Несчастливая! Лучше бы тебе пойти замуж за сапожника и целый век нюхать запах юфти, чем запах науки!»⁹²

In alternation with the conservative scoffer, the liberal Suvorin is preoccupied with woman's sexual and reproductive health, which is particularly at risk during her marriage; his second message is an allusion to his own unfinished novella 'Strannaia zhenshchina': a talented woman is wasted in her married life. This loyalty to women was prompted or evoked by sad news regarding the death in labour of a talented young journalist Sofiia Briullova, the daughter of a famous historian Kavelin:

2.37 Но для женщин и любовь нередко носит в себе задаток смерти, и любовь влечет за собою болезнь и страдания, которых не ведает мужчина. Там, где он срывает только цветы наслаждения, женщина нередко пьет и яд, который преждевременно сводит ее в могилу. <...> Сколько раз

⁹¹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 480.

⁹² *Novoe vremia*. 28.11.1876.

слышали вы, что такая-то и такая-то девушка представляет собой что-то необыкновенное, резко выдающееся среди своих сверстниц, полное энтузиазма, идеальных порывов, таланта, любви к знанию; сердце ее, казалось, устроено вовсе не для личного счастья, вовсе не для того, чтобы распуститься в семье, ум ее так широко захватывал, что он необходим был бы для целого общества; и вот проходят несколько лет, и или все это исчезает, порывы иссякли, любовь к знанию, требующая досуга, не могла быть удовлетворена, женская личность опустилась, измельчала, или вы слышите нечто подобное удару, так неожиданно разразившемуся над этой покойницей, которую теперь так оплакивают⁹³.

However, before long, *Novoe vremia* would start publishing a malicious lampoon by Ivan Polikarpov directed at female doctors, midwives and students, a novella entitled *Zapiski cheloveka 'tryn'-trava'*. The name of its protagonist, Doctor Samokhvalova-Samoliubova, has an immediate link to Varvara Kashevarova-Rudneva. She was the first woman to receive a doctoral degree in medicine in Russia, and had met with the fierce resistance of male colleagues in the course of her career. After severe criticism from the liberal camp, *Novoe vremia* offered an unconvincing excuse, insisting that the author intended nothing more than salubrious preventive criticism:

2.38 ...изобличить лицемерие и ложь таких личностей, которые, прикрываясь кличками «новых», «ученых», эманципированных женщин, мало того, даже прикрываясь учеными званиями, добытыми ими не трудом и учением, а посредством интриг и пройдошества, в существе дела позорят своим поведением и «новые принципы», или исповедуемые по наружности, и то ученое звание, которое они, так сказать, похитили себе, не имея на него настоящего права.⁹⁴

The lampooned target of the novella did not buy this excuse: on the contrary, she sued *Novoe vremia* for libel and won the case.⁹⁵ Having paid court fees and fines, Suvorin took what seemed to be a safer and more lucrative path: he started to publish a scandalous novel by Émile Zola, *Nana*, which described the adventures of a courtesan.

⁹³ *Novoe vremia*. 09.10.1877. Cf.: I. Turgenev, 'Iz pis'ma v redaktsiiu "Vestnika Evropy" po povodu smerti S. K. Briullovoi', in *PSSP, P.*, vol. 14, p. 235.

⁹⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 9.09.1879.

⁹⁵ Kashevarova-Rudneva's barrister was Petr Aleksandrov (who also was a barrister in the case of Vera Zasulich). The court found all the defendants guilty of defamation. The author of the novella, Ivan Polikarpov, spent three months in a guard-house. See: S. Dionesov, *V. A. Kashevarova-Rudneva — pervaiia russkaia zhenshchina — doctor meditsiny* (M., 1965), p. 81.

§ 5

A year after he purchased *Novoe vremia*, on January 28th 1877, Suvorin married Anna Ivanovna Orfanova. The Suvorin family grew: in 1877, his daughter Anastasia was born, in 1879 his son Boris, and then in 1881 his son Grigorii. However, after six months of marital life Suvorin could see that his dream of a ‘guardian angel’ was unrealistic and unattainable. Again, the ‘excellent adviser’, Bogdan Gei, tried to find arguments to console Suvorin, but on the whole he failed to provide anything:

2.39 Я уверен, Анна Ивановна не удовлетворяет Вас во многом, особенно теперь; это, однако, вне всякой связи с чувством, а чувствами ее Вы владеете вполне, все они сосредоточены на Вас, и один Вы центр этих чувств; она живет и бредит Вами. Ваш выбор был удачный, по моему мнению. Из всех женщин, которые прошли с 1875 года мимо Вас по сегодняшний день, одной Смирновой можно дать предпочтение. Она была бы «достойная» представительница Вашего редакторского дома, она вела бы в нем строгий порядок, она могла бы обмениваться с Вами мыслями обо всем, она любила бы Вас и Вы бы ее любили. Но не так бы она Вас любила, как Анна Ивановна, и не так свободно бы чувствовали бы Вы себя с ее любовью. Много уже перегорело в ней, многое уже затерто годами и думами, и скорее она нуждается в том, чтобы ее разогрела юная любовь, чем сама способна на это. <...> Затем Смирнова ограничивала бы Вашу свободу и предъявляла бы к Вам немало чисто внешних требований, которые Вы исполняли бы и с которыми, пожалуй, и сжились бы под конец, но подчас они горько отзывались бы на Вашей натуре. Теперь Вы неограниченный монарх в своем доме и почти Бог, тогда бы были бы хозяин и муж сознающей себя жены, а это не все равно, теперь Вы уз брака, мне кажется, не чувствуете, тогда чувствовали бы. <...> Но Анна Ивановна не образованна, не представительница дома, не товарищ, друг, советник в трудах. И куда ни помотришь, литераторы, публицисты, философы, художники, словом, весь этот свободный мир по большей части так женат, три четверти так. <...> Сдается мне только, что вообще мало женщин, способных быть им товарищами и советниками...⁹⁶

Gei’s arguments seem evidence to the contrary. To his mind, Suvorin was lucky to be ‘a monarch’ in his own house — but this role was hardly appropriate for Suvorin who was in need of guidance himself; so Sofiia Smirnova would still have been the best choice. The only advantage attaching to Anna Ivanovna was her young age (and her sexuality), but, for Suvorin, it was already a cause for concern well before his marriage.

⁹⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 875. Pis'ma B. V. Geia k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 23ob, 24, 24ob. Letter of 8.08.1877.

Gei's view of Anna Ivanovna agrees with the evidence of someone who had brought up Suvorin's older children:

2.40 Анна Ивановна Суворина, или, как ее в семье называли, Нюся, была очень милая и симпатичная женщина, но <...> никакой роли в семье не играла, была как-то совсем незаметна, вероятно, благодаря своему характеру. Как она сама мне говорила, она настолько не имела значения, что ей не удавалось даже заказать себе платье по вкусу, предметом ее вожделения в момент нашего разговора был черный атласный капот, и вот и этого она не могла для себя устроить, несмотря на бросавшиеся кругом деньги⁹⁷.

However, Anna Ivanovna's 'low profile' was deceptive: according to Amfiteatrov, she originated from a 'temperamental and restless family.'⁹⁸ There is no doubt that the young wife found it hard to get on with the adult children by Suvorin's first marriage, and she asserted herself using purely 'feminine' schemes and devices. Suvorin's elder daughter, Aleksandra, who was Niusia's friend, complained to her father: 'Niusia did her best to make you feel jealous (she would not admit this), and now she is not happy at all with what she has done.'⁹⁹ After three years of marriage and despite two small children, Suvorin felt miserable and not at all secure in his family life:

2.41 Я соскучился, хотя и знаю, что не весть какие радости ждут меня дома. И первое всего я знаю, что все пойдет по-старому, т. е. каждый будет норовить в свой угол и все будут смотреть заговорщиками, точно у каждого или великая мысль в голове, или великая скорбь. <...> Как вообразишь себе эту любезную картину, <...> так становится невыносимо противно¹⁰⁰.

Anna Ivanovna made full use of her feminine devices, intimidating Suvorin's mother and being rather manipulative as regards her husband to the point that he had to explain himself in writing: 'I did not mention this [his mother's complaints of bullying] because sometimes I am afraid of you myself: if I say something you do not want to hear, you burst into tears, as if I meant to hurt you.'¹⁰¹ Suvorin's family problems affected him so much that his family correspondence seems to spill over onto the pages of his

⁹⁷ RGALI. F. 1357 (Kolleksiia memuarov i dnevnikov), op. 1, ed. 233. Sakharova Elizaveta Konstantinovna (Markova). *Vospominaniia*. L. 38.

⁹⁸ A. Amfiteatrov, 'A. I. Suvorina', in *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebja i dlia mnogikh*, vol. 2, p. 18.

⁹⁹ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 1910. Pis'ma A. A. Kolomninoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 50ob.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, op. 2, ed. 356. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. I. Suvorinoi. L. 1, 1ob. The letter of 17.09.1879 was written from Biarritz.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, ed. 356. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. I. Suvorinoi. L. 2.

newspaper. In his column *Iz zapisok otryvochnogo cheloveka*, and having started in a somewhat jocular tone, Suvorin breaks out into a misogynistic monologue, with reference to the theory of ‘vital energy’ and with allusion to Arthur Schopenhauer, whose book of aphorisms had its place on Suvorin’s bookshelf:

2.42 У нас и во всем человечестве масса предрассудков. <...> Вот еще предрассудок — женщины. Сколько лжи и лицемерия в отношении к ним печати и мужчин. Их якобы все защищают. Обидеть женщину. Как можно, какой ужас — обидеть женщину. Женщину? Точно дело идет о маленьком ребенке, о существе бессильном и до такой степени ничтожном, что оно обороняться не может. Искренности в этих негодованиях и криках — на медный грош. Женщина была раба и работою остается, а мужчина своим стремлением защитить ее только прикрывает лицемерие и позолачивает пилюлю. Зато когда начинают откровенничать в мужском круге насчет женщин — только одно тело и остается, только об нем и все рассуждения. Но женщинам, вероятно, это нравится: мне кажется иногда, что и сами они в себе ничего так не ценят, как тело, что они напрашиваются на обобщения такого рода: все женщины на один салтык. Одни делают романы и пишут романы, а другие только делают. Потом начинается градация: у одних длинные, состоятельные романы, со страданиями и тревогами, с муками любви, с дружбою, с жертвами, у других — маленькие, хорошенькие, физиологические, без всяких мук и страданий, но с ваннами, банями, маскарадами, шампанским и водкой. И сии последние всегда счастливее первых: самое скверное, что их ждет — это пресыщение, но для женщин это не вредно... <...> Беда только, если натолкнется на них какая-нибудь недюжинная натура, сердечная, нервная. Замучат и в гроб вколотят. Среди таких женщин есть ужасно безжалостные, деревянные какие-то. Кроме похотей своего тела у них ровно ничего нет, и во имя этих похотей вали все, подтачивай всякую жизнь, бери из нее все, что нужно тебе, и бери вволю¹⁰².

This vehement harangue evolves into what sounds like an indictment of marriage as an institution, one portrayed as leading to the mutual destruction of husband and wife. Suvorin, whose marriage was hanging by a thread, unintentionally sides with the most radical democrats, who after all demanded the abolition of marriage ‘as a highly immoral phenomenon’¹⁰³ (although the radicals made such abolition a *conditio sine qua non* of the total liberation of women):

2.43 Да и мужчины же дураки. Всякий женатый человек непременно глупеет даже с хорошей женой. Это закон природы и государство это приняло, покровительствуя брачное сожительство. У женатого горизонты сейчас же суживаются, делаются пошловатыми, мысль становится боязливее,

¹⁰² *Novoe vremia*. 15.02.1881.

¹⁰³ See: *Politicheskie protsessy 60-kh godov* (M.; L., 1923). p. 267.

консервативнее, приниженнее. Хорошая, умная женщина если и влияет хорошо на мужчину, то всегда в ущерб его развитию, если она его жена. Она начинает за него мыслить и голова его охотно уменьшает энергию работы. У великих людей не было великих жен, у великих жен — великих мужей. Совсем несовместимые величины. Оно и понятно: если самая честная любовь открывает душу страстишкам, то брак открывает ее страстишкам вашей жены, ее честолюбие, ее тщеславию и проч. Но мужчина еще может выплыть, платя дань браку, женщина — никогда. Если умная и талантливая женщина вышла замуж — поставь крест на своем развитии, на своем таланте, на своей будущности. В лучшем случае она возьмет на себя часть умственной работы мужа и уменьшит его энергию, в худшем — разменяется на медные деньги в тех противоречиях, которые дает брак. В сущности — ни себе, ни ему...¹⁰⁴

In terms of the theory of ‘vital energy’ which is threading the text, marriage appears more destructive for a man than for a woman. Woman as ‘carnality’, who marries out of vanity, who drains her husband’s energy, who cheats on him without any remorse, and who will soon drive him to the grave to inherit his money — all this evokes Anna Ivanovna, a portrait of passing verisimilitude painted by Suvorin’s gynophobic hand.

Suvorin felt drawn to Sofiia Smirnova-Sazonova, which resulted in numerous long and regretful letters to her. Now that it is too late, he attempts a declaration of love:

2.44 ...Я и хотел бы Вас часто видеть, но как-то ужасно неловко становится. <...> Вы когда-то говорили, что я натура неглубокая. Это весьма вероятно, но во всех нас глубина весьма относительная. Я знаю только, что никогда не мог быть с какою-нибудь пустотою; призрачно, <1 нрзб> ли, но я наполнял ее постоянно; во мне нервы начинают ходить так, что я не знаю, куда деваться. Немало глупостей совершено мною вследствие того и немало вреда себе я сделал, именно тем, что призрачностью замазывал действительную пустоту. Об этом я бы мог написать целую повесть. Я Вас знаю все-таки мало, даже очень мало, но Вы всегда мне напоминали нечто весьма любезное, теплое, милое. <...> Несколько часов прошло после того, как я это Вам написал, и показалось мне все это глупо. Точно любовную переписку захотел человек завести, и забил фонтаном каких-то откровенных фактов и фраз... <...> Надо бросить эти пустяки, надо бросить эти строки. Потом жаль стало: что, ее убудет, что ли, если она все это прочитает... <...> Хочется сказать несколько простых, горячих, искренних слов, без смысла и значения, но прямо от всеглупейшего сердца...¹⁰⁵

In her diary, Smirnova-Sazonova keeps a chronicle of Suvorin’s family conflict:

¹⁰⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 15.02.1881.

¹⁰⁵ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 217. Pis’ma A. S. Suvorina к S. I. Smirnovoi (Sazonovoi). L. 9, 9ob, 10, 10ob. Letter of 23.02.1881.

2.45 28.04.1881. Уезжаем из Петербурга. <...> Провожают нас Суворин и Крылов. <...> Суворин привез Любе [дочери] на дорогу конфет. Обещает приехать к нам в Крым. Его все в Париж посылают к Шарко, а ему не хочется. <...> Сцена с Николаем. **04.05.1881.** Получила письмо от Суворина такого рода, что Николай просит положить этому конец; иначе говорит, что это с моей стороны недобросовестно. **14.05.1881.** Еще письмо от Суворина, что-то дикое, несвязное, наводит меня и Николая на мысли, что у него не все в порядке. **25.09.1882.** Суворины живут в Ялте; у них все не ладно. Анна Ивановна живет в проходной комнате. **25.10.1882.** Анна Ивановна говорит, что если была бы богата, дала бы Толстому несколько тысяч, чтобы он приделал новый конец к Анне Карениной, где она оставалась бы жива. **09.02.1883.** У Суворина по-прежнему ад в доме. <...> Суворин написал завещание, по которому большую часть отдает дочери и ее детям. Это все Коломнин устроил. Анна Ивановна стала делать выкидыши, чтобы не родить. Как она, бывало, беременна, так Коломнин настраивает Суворина на то, что это не его дети. Сцены ревности! А все расчеты: больше детей, меньше наследства. Сыновья Суворина от первой жены тоже против Анны Ивановны и заодно с Коломниным. **12.03.1883.** Были Суворины. Он рассказывает сюжет своей новой пьесы с Потемкиным, а она как в Париже шляпки покупала. **19.06.1883.** Чай пили у Сувориных. <...> Анна Ивановна опять свое, что если б у нее муж был такой, как Коломнин, то он в один месяц накупил бы ей бриллиантов и бархатных платьев, что она желала бы хоть на месяц сделаться его женой. А он ей: «Да, то есть вы желали бы обобрать меня»¹⁰⁶.

Suvorin was so preoccupied with his family troubles that in his literary criticism he could not help using telltale figures of speech drawing parallels to his own bitter experience:

2.46 Порядочную женщину никогда так не идеализировали, как идеализировал Дюма кокотку. Не то она, порядочная женщина, выродилась, не то она слишком порядочна, чтобы из-за нее стрелять и стреляться? Действительно, не есть ли проза порядочная женщина? Поэзия ведь только в движении, в нервности, в страсти, в порывах, в томлениях. У девушки есть поэтический период, когда любовь просыпается и манит ее неизвестными чарами, сообщая и ее чарам, и ее задумчивости, и ее веселости отпечаток поэзии. Но когда девушка становится женщиной, поэзия если и остается, то принимает тихий и грациозный оттенок, переходящий постепенно в прозу. Брак — могила любви. Это давно кто-то сказал, стало быть, и могила поэзии. Когда в женщине блеснет снова поэзия, когда глаза ее засветятся особенным блеском, маня к себе и обещая, когда снова являются порывы то беспричинная грусть, то беспричинная веселость, она хочет любить *другого*, если уже не любит. А ведь это уже не порядочная женщина, ибо порядочность, по общепринятому мнению, составляют верность мужу, верность долгу, заботы семейные, обязанности матери и жены.

¹⁰⁶ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 3. L. 124, 136, 163; Ed. 4. L. 120, 181; Ed. 5. L. 173, 175, 228; Ed. 6. L. 21.

<...> Стало быть, порядочная женщина непременно прозаична, а потому из-за нее не стреляют и не стреляются. А счастье-то, настоящее счастье, тихое, задушевное, спокойное счастье — не в прозе ли оно? <...> Но это так редко, так редко. Боже, отчего это так редко?¹⁰⁷

However, Suvorin did not confine himself to literary speculation. After a prolonged break, he returned to writing, the first result being *Medea: Drama v chetyrekh deistviakh v stikhakh i proze* written in co-authorship with Viktor Burenin. The authors gave the following reasons for choosing an ancient drama: ‘...in a less complicated culture, certain issues may be treated in a straightforward and even bold way.’¹⁰⁸ Still, the main reason must have been the protagonist, an extraordinary and powerful woman, who was worth exploring with ‘the woman question’ in mind; the authors actually admitted their feminist intentions:

2.47 Нам кажется, в легенде о Меее сказался народный разум, выразились желания резко поставить вопрос о детях и о положении женщины, <...> но для нас важно то, что Медея является здесь необыкновенно сильною натурою. <...> Несмотря на то, что этот гениальный драматург [Еврипид] не любит женщин и драмы его полны выходов против них, он создал такой могучий образ этой женщины, что другого подобного мы не знаем во всей всемирной литературе. Необыкновенный ум, решительная логика, адская сила воли, любовь, не знающая предела, но вместе с тем исполненная нежности, сильный протест против порабощения женщин — все это выразилось в этом образе. Читаешь эту драму, и наталкиваешься на мысли Гамлета, Чацкого, на проповедь защитников женщин в их борьбе за права слабого пола¹⁰⁹.

A prominent liberal journalist, Nikolai Mikhailovskii, was suspicious of these lofty ideas, discerning a diversionary entertainment aspect of the play: ‘...concentrating on personal morals, the authors divert attention from politics.’¹¹⁰ However, he had to admit that the authors had succeeded in tackling some topical moral issues of the day: ‘For all that, to protect wedlock and to reject “theories of free love” was not a bad idea really.’¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 10.07.1883.

¹⁰⁸ A. Suvorin, V. Burenin, ‘Predislovie’, in *Medea: Drama v chetyrekh deistviakh v stikhakh i proze* (SPb, 1883), p. I.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. I, II, IV.

¹¹⁰ N. Mikhailovskii, ‘Pis’ma postoronnego v redaktsiiu “Otechestvennykh zapisok”’, in *PSS*, in 8 vol. (SPb, 1908), vol. 5, p. 743.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 742.

The authors tried to make their play intelligible to as wide a public as possible; Suvorin explained their idea in his newspaper:

2.48 Нечего, конечно, говорить о том, что мы придали Медее и современные черты и хотели придать ей даже русские черты. Оттого наша Медея понятна толпе, большинству публики. В этом ее недостаток как литературного произведения, но в этом ее сценическое достоинство. А мы писали для сцены, мы хотели дать материал для *русских* трагических актрис¹¹².

Medea's part was written with a famous tragic actress, Pelageia Strepetova, in view. Suvorin praised her to the skies in *Novoe vremia*. Besides, Strepetova was a family friend and this fact did not escape the notice of Smirnova-Sazonova:

2.49 **5.11.1882.** Была у Стрепетовой, где встретила Анну Ивановну... <...> Своим приходом я, должно быть, помешала их интимной беседе со Стрепетовой насчет Коломниных. При мне Анна Ивановна в откровенности не пускается... **18.11.1882.** Была у Стрепетовой. Там Анна Ивановна <...> приехала за приказаниями, не нужно ли Стрепетовой чего-либо в газете, статью, мол, или какую-нибудь заметку не прикажете ли?¹¹³

In the course of life, Strepetova had endured many hardships and was a woman of an equally difficult and tempestuous nature.¹¹⁴ In his theatrical reviews, Suvorin showed appreciation: 'Half of her artistic life has passed; a life in which she has battled like no other actress; surviving mental illness; fighting for the public's love... <...> I cannot think of anyone whose situation is more tragic.'¹¹⁵ Strepetova's life experience showed in her theatrical character. The playwright Aleksandr Ostrovskii gives his professional opinion: 'As a natural born talent, she is unique and phenomenal... Her best parts are women of the lower and middle classes; her pathos is a simple and strong passion; her triumph is revelation of the natural instincts in woman.'¹¹⁶ Smirnova-Sazonova confirms this in her diary:

¹¹² *Novoe vremia*. 22.02.1883.

¹¹³ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 5. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. L. 16, 17, 36.

¹¹⁴ Cf.: 'By the age of thirty, Strepetova's nervous irritability was bordering on outright hysteria' (R. Ben'iash, *Pelageia Strepetova* (L., 1967), p. 196).

¹¹⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 18.12.1881.

¹¹⁶ A. Ostrovskii, 'Zapiska po povodu proekta "Pravil o premiiakh imperatorskikh teatrov za dramaticheskie proizvedeniia"', in *PSS* (M., 1949–1953), vol. 12, p. 282.

2.50 13.02.1883. [Премьера «Медеи»] Сбор около половины. Зато прием на три тысячи! Вызовы, топот, маханье платками, сначала одной Стрепетовой, а потом и Суворину. Суворин страшно боялся и не хотел выходить, думал, что его ошибают. <...> На меня игра Стрепетовой производит впечатление глубокой провинции. Хлопает себя по ляжкам, делает прыжки на сцене и неестественным голосом кричит. <...> А публика неистовствует, ей этого и нужно»¹¹⁷.

‘Protest against the enslavement of women’ in Strepetova’s interpretation, which was likely to have been encouraged by the authors, resulted in her ‘odd’ behaviour on stage, and the critics qualified Medea as ‘a sickly woman suffering from hysterical fits.’¹¹⁸ Besides, as ‘an extraordinary strong personality’, Medea provoked her husband to monologues which declared a strictly conservative attitude to women; to which were added certain obviously misogynistic tirades which cannot be found in the original text by Euripides:

2.51 Она тем больше ненавистна мне,
Чем тверже сознаю, что я обязан
Ей многим. Нет, не должен никогда
Мужчина призывать жену на помощь,
И женщины с мужским умом и силой
Нам нужно избегать. Пусть в муже видит
Жена защитника, отца детей
И не имеет права говорить:
«Я помогла тебе, спасла тебя я».
Прости покой и счастье для того,
Кому жена товарищ, равный в силе:
Тогда любовь и ласки обратятся
В обязанность, и нежная покорность
Исчезнет, уступая недоверью,
Тогда соперника в жене встречает муж,
А меж соперников возможно ли согласие?¹¹⁹

The play met the authors’ expectations and was popular with the public: in 1883 there were 11 performances in Petersburg, while in Moscow there were 9.¹²⁰ Inspired by his successful theatrical debut, Suvorin would further exploit what had, after all, proved a rewarding subject, focusing in his creative writing on the strong, passionate, and domineering woman. The subject would also continue to interest him as a journalist.

¹¹⁷ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 4. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. L. 178; ed. 5, l. 182, 183.

¹¹⁸ *Sufler*. 14.11.1883.

¹¹⁹ A. Suvorin, V. Burenin, *Medea*, p. 25. In the *Medea* of Euripides as translated into Russian by Innokentii Annenskii no similar monologue can be found. (See Evripid, ‘Medea’, in *Tragedii*, in 2 vol. (M., 1999), vol. 1, pp. 62–122.)

¹²⁰ *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, in 7 vol. (M., 1980), vol. 6, p. 472.

Thus, he devoted one of his *Pis'ma k drugu* to the novel *The Revolt of Man* by Walter Besant. The novel is set in the 21st century which is already the era of women's domination. Preoccupied with their careers, women get married fairly late, but they have the right to choose a husband; so they prefer only young and handsome men. Men refuse to reciprocate women's affection, so the population on Earth is now receding 'at a staggering speed'. This situation leads to a governmental crisis, and men break out in a revolt which only terminates when everything 'returns to normal', i. e. men restore their supremacy. 'One can draw any kind of moral, but this fiction is not devoid of zest and is also appropriate for our times,'¹²¹ Suvorin concludes in his review. Since he took the effort to read a book written in English, there is evidence that he was indeed considering the prospect of female social domination. However, his reluctance to accept this idea and his apprehension are again disguised as irony:

2.52 Конечно, женщины воображают, что если бы они стали управлять государством, то дела пошли бы гораздо лучше. <...> Если б удалось стать на место мужчин и забрать весь ход жизни в свои руки, то человечество выработало, глядишь, нечто совсем новое и столь же тонкое, ароматное и изящное, как они сами. Женщины, вероятно, и замышляют это — дай Бог им здоровья, ибо иначе чем объяснить их желание учиться, их конкуренцию с мужчинами на путях практического приложения науки к жизни? Поверь, что тут тонкий расчет, и его надо иметь в виду¹²².

§ 6

Concerned about men losing control over women, Suvorin was failing to set his own personal life aright. Family discord would send him into prolonged spells of depression and this topic would run throughout his diary:

2.53 08.02.1884. Конечно, иначе домашняя жизнь устроилась бы, если б кто-нибудь ее хотел устроить. Но все расстраивают, а не устраивают, и я верчусь, как жернов, может быть, без пути перемалывая жизнь других, и себя самого толку в ступе. **22.02.1884.** Иной раз только хочется какой-нибудь бескорыстной, ангельской любви, на какую способна была бы разве мать и дочь, пожалуй. Была же Антигона. Эта любовь убаюкивала бы, утешала, предупреждала, отстраняла все неприятное, умела бы вовремя явиться, вовремя уйти, умела бы быть необходимой, умела бы разговорить, утешить, развеселить. <...> Анна Ивановна совсем перестала ходить обедать.

¹²¹ *Novoe vremia*. 17.07.1883.

¹²² *Ibid.*

Посмотришь у других — совсем не так. Семьи нет у нас; у нас гостиница, и хозяйки нет, а есть экономка. **28.02.1884.** Я ужасно старею и скверно старею, той эгоистической старостью, которая брюзжит и желает неизвестного, в сущности, желает того, чего и получить никак нельзя — силы, здоровья и бодрости. **1.03.1884.** Мне было как-то совсем не по себе. Меланхолия полная. **24.03.1884.** В будущий вторник хочу ехать за границу. Смертельно не хочется, точно едешь на тот свет¹²³.

Eventually, Suvorin did not go abroad but he instead took his family to a famous Russian spa. Once there, he immediately came under the observation of Smirnova-Sazonova:

2.54 31.05.1885. Первое, на что я столкнулась в Железноводске, была семья Сувориных. Они обедают в вокзале, занимая целый табльд'от; их что-то человек 10: гувернантки, тетки, ребята. <...> Сама Анна Ивановна одета как Серполетта в пунцовой шелковой кофте и в юбочке до колен. <...> Сам Суворин в Эссентуках с Коломнинными. У Александры Алексеевны сахарная болезнь. **1.06.1885.** Встретилась на улице с Сувориным. Он только что приехал из Эссентуков, вылезал из коляски. Хандрит, хочет опять поехать в Петербург. **13.06.1885.** Суворин бессменно состоит при жене: провожает ее в ванну и к Маринскому источнику¹²⁴.

Suvorin's holiday reports to *Novoe vremia* mirrored his family problems and a growing animosity towards his wife:

2.55 Железноводск — женское царство, можно сказать, царство психопаток. <...> Цель тут общая — наслаждение, любовь, заинтересованы обе стороны в достижении ее, мужчина и женщина; это не то что на войне, где противники, нападая, ищут смерти друг друга; тут противники ищут жизни, радости, лучшего удовольствия, какое только природа может вложить в человека; сопротивляющаяся женщина сопротивляться может только во имя долга, а когда его нет — расстаться с ним очень легко, ибо долг — очень тяжелая вещь — всякая цель сопротивления исчезает. Кто усвоил себе эти правила, тот не стесняется и срывает цветы удовольствия всюду. <...> Весь репертуар <...> [женщин] заключается почти в одной любви и легких разговорах, подкрашенных любовью. Небо не наказывает их за любовь так, как наказывает иногда мужчин. Блестящие Дон Жуаны, покорители сердец, приезжают сюда без ног, с расстроенным мозгом в позвоночнике, и их возят в креслах по парку и в ванны. <...> Дон Жуаны же в юбке совсем не

¹²³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, pp. 49, 51, 52, 54, 61.

¹²⁴ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 10, *Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi*. L. 28, 31, 32, 55. Serpoletta is a saucy maidservant, a character in the operetta by Robert Planquette *Les cloches de Corneville*.

подвержены этому риску и весело проводят время, меняя любовников и приезжая на воды для уловления сердечных удовольствий, которые укрепляют их нервы более, чем всякие воды¹²⁵.

Reference to the female Don Juan is not a mere metaphor: Suvorin's long-time suspicion of his wife's infidelity had finally been justified. The betrayed husband tried to sort it out with his wife in writing; Suvorin spent long hours over draft letters which survived in the archive:

2.56 В последнее свидание с тобою ты меня поразила откровенностью, ты никогда прежде так откровенна не была, и хотя эта откровенность не в мою пользу, тем не менее, она все-таки лучше скрытности и фальши. Ты решительно заявила, что ни к каким жертвам не способна, что тебе необходима любовь, что ты могла бы еще мириться со своим положением, если б я сделался тем же, чем был года три назад. Это значит потребовать невозможного, значит почти все равно, что умирающему сказать: какого черта ты лежишь, встань и пляши¹²⁶.

Assuming that a young sensual woman would in any event seek sexual gratification, Suvorin is primarily concerned about his own reputation. He fears any public discussion of his private and family affairs, having experienced such discussion following the murder of his first wife:

2.57 Зимой я получил о тебе такое письмо, разумеется, анонимное, что в негодовании разорвал его и бросил в камин... <...> Я, впрочем, могу сказать о себе совершенно твердо, ибо это я доказывал на деле, что я могу помириться с неверностью жены. Труднее помириться со скандалом с выставкой на посмеяние, что вот, мол, рогатый муж. Но рогатых так много, что предпочтительнее сознавать себя им, чем воображать себя столь прельстительным, что жена тебе верна, хотя она дует в хвост и в гриву. По видимости можно помириться даже с тем, что жена приносит тебе чужих детей, от любовников, но внутри себя с этим помириться невозможно. Это подло вдвойне — подло относительно мужа и подло даже относительно законных детей. <...> Любовник только наслаждается и палец о палец не ударит для тех детей, которых он делает и которых навязывает на шею им же обманутому мужу. <...> Кто же разберет, когда живешь с мужем и любовником — ведь не записываешь этих удовольствий¹²⁷.

Fully realizing that there is no way to bring his family life back to normal, Suvorin insists on divorce:

¹²⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 16.07.85.

¹²⁶ RGALI. F. 459. op. 2, ed. 356. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k A. I. Suvorinoi. L. 3. Letter of 4.06.1885.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, l. 3ob., 4, 5.

2.58 ...перспектива чужого ребенка — она бросает меня в трепет и негодование. С этим ни за что помириться не могу, об этом не могу думать без ужаса. <...> Выход один — разойтись. И при этом у тебя все выгоды, потому что перед тобою целая жизнь, а у меня ровно ничего, кроме смерти. Я прошу тебя об этом серьезно подумать, даже переговорить с твоими близкими. <...> Что я тебе стал невыносимым — ты это после сказала мне, хотя в мягких выражениях. Пошлой и глупой роли я играть не хочу и не могу. <...> Я не могу жить среди этой вражды, фальшивых отношений, оскорблений, сплетен и клеветы. <...> В Петербурге тебе так хорошо будет на свободе и при тамошней полной свободе нравов и любви, что, пожалуй, лучшего момента для расставанья и выбрать мудрено¹²⁸.

Some peculiar circumstances of Suvorin's marriage are revealed as well as the way that his in-laws treated him:

2.59 Я ее [*мать Анны Ивановны*] мало знал до тех пор, пока она не написала мне одного письма на Кавказ, еще в 1875 г., когда наши отношения с тобой только что начинались. <...> Она мне писала между прочим, чтобы я сделал тебе предложение для формы, чтобы тебя успокоить только, обмануть, что она сознает, что ты мне не пара, как и я тебе, но что она постарается, после этого предложения, устроить так, что мы разойдемся и что этим ее письмом я могу воспользоваться как документом, объявив, что я сделал предложение только для виду, по просьбе матери. <...> Затем мне попадали в руки некоторые письма ее к тебе, как и твои к ней. <...> По ее письмам и твоим, в особенности в последние годы, я видел, что я нахожусь в фальшивом положении, что меня едва терпят, что ждут моей смерти, что заботятся о духовном завещании. В одном письме мать твоя говорила, как следует забрать меня в руки, как она поступила бы на твоём месте с таким старым мужем.¹²⁹

As further draft letters show, the stumbling block in Suvorin's marriage was its sexual side. Fully adhering to the theory of 'vital energy', Suvorin tries to convince his wife that by the age of 50, his energy reserve, particularly as regards sex, has run out and that Anna Ivanovna is unable to make good any loss:

2.60 Твои чисто женские качества и таланты всегда имели для меня второстепенное значение, а теперь они потеряли для меня все значение, и понятно почему: этими качествами необходимо пользоваться, а я пользоваться ими не могу уже. Я стар и болен, и после жизни, исполненной страшного и изнурительного труда, <...> мне хотелось бы приятного покоя. Этого покоя я не нахожу и не найду его. <...> Ты мне давала в изобилии то, что я не мог брать, что мне было даже в

¹²⁸ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 356. L. 5.

¹²⁹ Ibid., l. 10ob, 11.

тягость — извини за откровенность — и ты мне мало давала того, что в тебе было и есть для меня самого дорогого, самого незаменимого никем — ума и таланта¹³⁰.

With his energy drained away, Suvorin entangles himself in a myriad of fears. Suffering from profound depression, he sees in his life only the expectation of death:

2.61 Я или с ума схожу, или уже сошел с ума. Но во всяком случае выслушай меня. Это необходимо. Говорить я не могу. Ты не любишь читать писем, но это последнее <...> Вчерашнее пребывание твое здесь мне ясно показало, что ты не хочешь жить со мною, что ты тяготишься моей обстановкой, что все твои симпатии вне меня. <...> Ты сама знаешь, что с тех пор как я лишил себя постельных удовольствий, ты значительно поздоровела, у тебя нет головных болей, ты перестала жаловаться на боли в ногах. Ты, стало быть, выиграла; от одного ли этого, или от чего другого еще — я доискиваться не буду. Я первый рад этому, хотя неравнодушен же я совсем к женским прелестям, мне даже иногда хочется ласки, и ты не знаешь, что мне самому стоила та суровость моя с тобою, на которую ты жаловалась. Была ли она искренняя или тут было насилие над самим собою, — ты ведь этим вопросом не задавалась, а я это знаю. Боязнь иметь детей от любовников, даже боязнь иметь детей от себя самого, ибо я знаю, что это могут быть только слабые, болезненные дети, вот это ставит вопрос между тобою и мною <1 нрзб> и его можно решить так или иначе: не иметь больше детей и дожидаться моей смерти, пользуясь относительною свободою своих привязанностей, или разойтись¹³¹.

Feeling that he was trapped, and willing to sever the ties of a sham wedlock, Suvorin was ready to compromise. With divorce procedures complicated, humiliating, and requiring a guilty party, Suvorin was even prepared to admit guilt:

2.62 Ведь ты же сама говорила не раз, что не я женился на тебе, а ты меня на себе женила, стало быть, не могу же я считать за что-нибудь особенное, что ты вышла за меня замуж. Ты ошиблась и горько писала матери, что она тебя мало секла. Но ведь и я ошибся, уж во всяком случае не менее тебя. <...> Но за мной есть вот какое преимущество: я предлагал тебе не один раз развестись, предлагал самое честное средство покончить раз и навсегда наши счета. Почему ты не принимала этого? Дети. Но дети были бы вполне обеспечены, и я сохранил бы за собою право только видеть их. Не хочешь скандала? Но разве лучше то, что есть и что хорошо известно не одним нам с тобою? Мне больше не жениться, и ту комедию, как она ни унизительна и ни скверна, которая требуется для развода, я, разумеется, принял бы на себя. Ты была бы совершенно свободна, ты избавилась бы самым честным образом от мучений, на которые постоянно жалуешься и мне и другим, от

¹³⁰ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 356, l. 9, 12.

¹³¹ Ibid. L. 6, 7ob.

необходимости, всегда горькой и обидной, всегда лгать и обманывать, а я избавился бы от твоих упреков, от твоей вражды, которая так ярко сказалась в твоих последних письмах¹³².

The family, falling apart, saw a number of successive disasters: in 1885, four-year old Grisha died of diphtheria and Suvorin's favourite Aleksandra — of diabetes. Shortly before her death, she greatly distressed her father by eloping from her husband, Kolomnin, with her lover Nikolai Kholeva. Very close to Suvorin, Kolomnin shared his sorrows with his father-in-law:

2.63 Александра Алексеевна — невменяема. <...> Г. Холева, который не считает нужным верить в серьезность положения Александры Алексеевны, будет весьма легко пользоваться ее невменяемостью, ибо вопросы о чести отходят на задний план, когда выступают на первый план животные страсти.¹³³

These tragic events seemed to deepen the family crisis, and there were a lot of rumours spreading around. Smirnova-Sazonova was making regular entries in her diary:

2.64 06.09.1885. Была в ложе у Сувориных; имела очень глупый вид, заговорила было об их потере, но они разговор замяли, а я соболезнования выражать не умею. Анна Ивановна в трауре. Суворин, видимо, больше жалеет сына, чем дочь. **11.10.1885.** Холева после смерти Коломниной надел креп на рукав и с грустью на лице рассказывает знакомым о своей связи с ней. **02.12.1885.** Я ездила к Суворину объясняться по поводу постоянных нападок его газеты на Николая. <...> Суворин дал мне «честное слово, что ничего подобного больше не повторится» и уверял меня, что я единственная женщина, о которой он сохранил до сей минуты самые чистые воспоминания. Уже прощаясь со мной в передней, он сказал мне по-французски, что его семья распадается. Я сначала не поняла, но слухи, которые в этот же вечер принес мне Николай из-за кулис, объяснили мне все. Суворин ревнует к кому-то жену, по ночам у них происходят страшные сцены. В одно утро он встал взбешенный и увез ее на 2 недели в Москву. **24.12.1885.** Суворин намекает на свои семейные неприятности, на отношения к жене; говорит, что он на эту тему будет писать пьесу. <...> Анна Ивановна ходит совсем потерянная, с посоловевшими глазами¹³⁴.

When in Moscow, Suvorin went to see a play by Ippolit Shpazhinskii *Prostaia istoriia*. The only entry he made in 1885 in his diary is a comment on this play. It was a play about adultery and Suvorin did not like it: ‘...the author’s sympathy is with a

¹³² RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 356. L. 12, 12ob.

¹³³ Ibid., op. 1, ed. 1904. Pis'ma A. P. Kolomnina k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 131–132ob.

¹³⁴ OR IRLI. F. 285, ed. 9, Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. L. 293, 359, 464, 465; Ed. 11. L. 33.

woman.’¹³⁵ However, he writes at length analysing the play in detail and focuses on a character that is ‘a sample of a doormat, a weak-willed person henpecked by a wife who has lovers and affairs.’¹³⁶ Suvorin draws a conclusion which has a definite personal underpinning:

2.65 Нет ничего хуже бесхарактерных людей, и никого так не обманывают и не проводят, как их. <...> Все жены обманывают мужей, а муж всегда либо смешон, либо казнен автором как негодяй. <...> Любовь — важное, верховнейшее право, и против нее никто ни слова. Дела, семья, дети — все это вздор. Прекрасно¹³⁷.

Adultery was masterfully portrayed in Suvorin’s own short story ‘Tragediia iz-za pustiakov: Rasskaz starogo kavalerista’. He published this story in the Christmas issue of *Novoe vremia* to conclude the difficult year of 1885. The betrayed husband in this story, Petr Il’menev, is perhaps pathetic, but he is merely lurking in the background, while the focus of the narration is his beautiful wife, Iuliia, manipulating two lovers. One of her lovers dies of asphyxia in her wardrobe where he is hiding from a husband who has chosen to return at an inopportune moment. Iuliia’s servant helps her to get rid of the corpse but then, resorting to blackmail, induces her to sex. Suffering humiliation, Iuliia poisons him, and her second lover helps her to dispose of the servant’s body in a pond.¹³⁸ Suvorin’s story delighted Nikolai Leskov:

2.66 Суворин меня очень обрадовал: рассказ его в рождественском номере исполнен силы и прелести и при том — смел чертовски. Это написано так живо и сочно, что брызжет на читателя не только горячею кровью, но даже и спермой... По смелой реальности и верности жизни я не знаю равного этому маленькому, но превосходному рассказу. Я думаю, что если бы он не сам написал этот мастерской рассказ, то он бы отказался его напечатать¹³⁹.

Leskov did not hesitate to congratulate the author on his authorial success suggesting that Suvorin had finally found his key genre:

¹³⁵ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Svorina*. P. 62. Entry of 6.11.1885.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Suvorin’s story is based on an archetypal plot which is well-known since the 18th century. For comparative analysis see: ‘Psikhologicheskii rasskaz A. S. Svorina s siuzhetom: zhenshchina, zadokhnuvshiiisia liubovnik i vymogatel’-kamerger’, in V. Vinogradov, *Siuzhet i stil’* (M., 1963).

¹³⁹ N. Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 11 vol. (M., 1956–1958), vol. 11, p. 306. Letter of Leskov to S. N. Shubinskii of 26.12.1885.

2.67 Рассказ Ваш действительно превосходен. Вы до него ничего столь хорошо не написали. Вы посмотрите-ка за собою: не это ли и есть Ваш жанр, до которого Вы вон когда только докопались!... Это очень глубоко, умно и сильно сделано¹⁴⁰.

According to Leskov, Suvorin's story surpassed even some classic examples of psychological realism:

2.68 В этом рассказе материала художественного на целую повесть, в которой анализа можно было обнаружить столько, сколько его не обнаруживал нигде Достоевский. И притом — какого анализа? — не «раскопки душевных нужников» (как говорил Писемский), а погружение в страсть и в казнь за нее страстью же (страстью лакея). Это не «пустяки», а «преступление и наказание» по преимуществу¹⁴¹.

It was only a month since Suvorin had taken the playwright Shpazhinskii to task for being too tolerant to an unfaithful wife; now he wholeheartedly puts all the blame on the erring woman alone; his attitude is conspicuously stern and relentless. Leskov seems to disagree with such treatment of the female character:

2.69 Лакей у Суворина недостаточно чувствуется читателем, — его тирания над жертвою почти не представляется, и потому к этой женщине нет того сострадания, которое автор непременно должен был постараться вызвать, как по требованию художественной полноты положения, так и потому, чтобы сердцу читателя было на чем с нею помириться и пожалеть ее, как существо, оттерпевшее свою муку. По крайней мере, я так чувствую, а может, и он тоже. Иначе все как-то легко сошло... Очень уж легко¹⁴².

Leskov attributes Suvorin's rather unequivocal condemnation to his inexperience as a writer and to a lack of talent. Indeed, in this respect Suvorin and Dostoevsky are hardly comparable. However, unlike Leskov, Suvorin must have felt differently: he thinks he knows from his life experience that woman is a traitor by nature. She is also destructive: she can easily ruin her family and she thinks nothing of killing a man. Besides, she can involve a man in her crimes and get away unpunished, feeling no guilt or remorse at all. As Viktor Vinogradov noted, in Suvorin's story, we find 'a trace of

¹⁴⁰ N. Leskov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 11, p. 308. Letter of Leskov to A. S. Suvorin of 28.12.1885.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p 306. Letter of Leskov to S. N. Shubinskii of 26.12.1885.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 307. Letter of Leskov to S. N. Shubinskii of 26.12.1885.

deeply personal expression.¹⁴³ It is also obvious that Suvorin's sympathy is with the husband, because he, Suvorin, had found himself in a similar situation: '...would Petr Petrovich, her husband, challenge him [his wife's lover] to a duel? Not likely, since apart from risking his life, he might risk his reputation, the reputation of his wife, her happiness, and the happiness of their children.'

At the beginning of 1886, Suvorin published a book by Konstantin Skal'kovskii (under the penname -?-) entitled *O zhenshchinakh: Mysli starye i novye*. Thoroughly misogynistic, the book caused indignation in the press and was rebuked as 'a pornographic reader'. In his *Novoe vremia*, Suvorin published a long review of Skal'kovskii's book attempting to pacify public opinion and to divert attention from the original idea of the book; he even presented the author as a moralist:

2.70 Автор отнесся отрицательно к женщинам, к их эмансипации, к нарушению семейного долга, к любовным шашням, ко всему тому, что так приятно нарушить и нарушение это занести в кодекс своих прав и обязанностей¹⁴⁴.

Suvorin made another paradoxical statement explaining the author's contempt for women: 'We would like to add still another reason, although it is fairly obvious: the author loves women and all that he has said about them results from the fact that he has loved a great deal.'¹⁴⁵ This statement allowed Suvorin to move to the discussion of love versus marriage considered as a contradiction, a subject which concerned him greatly. Although Suvorin agrees to differentiate 'love in its sublime intentions from love in its most base motives', he primarily understands love as a sexual instinct. According to Suvorin, this instinct somehow originates from woman and it is destructive by nature: 'The struggle of women against men for their freedom started precisely with Eve... <...> In this struggle, the main, and perhaps exclusive, drive was love.' Evolving his argument Suvorin seems to anticipate Leo Tolstoy in his treatise 'What is Art' (1897), inasmuch as he condemns any art which instils the idea that the sexual instinct prevails over morals:

¹⁴³ See: V. Vinogradov, 'Psikhologicheskii rasskaz A. S. Suvorina s siuzhetom: zhenshchina, zadokhnuvshisya liubovnik i vymogatel'-kamerger', p. 159.

¹⁴⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 17.02.1886.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

2.71 Любовь проповедуется в романе, повести, драме, комедии, опере, балете, проповедуется в живописи, скульптуре, во всех искусствах, она проповедуется природой, она наполняет собой вселенную. Где проповедуются воздержание, мораль, семейные обязанности? На одного такого проповедника тысячи проповедников другого рода, проповедников женской красоты, ее пластики, обаяния ее, очарования, соблазна. <...> Преступления, мотивами которых была любовь, постоянно оправдываются и судом, и общественным мнением... <...> Понятно, что нарушение верности, измена мужа или жены являются пред нашими внутренними очами совершенными пустяками¹⁴⁶.

Suvorin draws what appears to be a gynophobic conclusion: ‘This is the reason why the power of women will only get stronger;’ and this outcome is all the more inevitable since the only means of curtailing this elemental force involved, i. e. marriage, is no longer efficient in modern society:

2.72 Брак есть дисциплина любви. Дети налагают серьезные обязанности на мать и отца. Но стремление выйти из этой дисциплины остается и часто оправдывается многими причинами; когда-то эти стремления скованы были железными цепями и цепи рвались от прикосновения любви, теперь это — нитки, порвать которые ничего не стоит, и они действительно рвутся или открыто, или тайно, и будут рваться более и более¹⁴⁷.

As if suddenly aware that moralizing of this sort is not quite appropriate in a reviewing a light-minded book ‘which reads nicely and easily,’ Suvorin draws yet another conclusion, now changing register for a grim irony which, arguably, conceals his gynophobia:

2.73 Чего же беспокоиться? Все идет как по маслу, и никакими книгами о женщинах ничего не сделать, потому что ничем нельзя уничтожить тесный союз между мужчинами и женщинами, заключаемый против мужчин же, для победы над ними, и мужчины сдаются.

In the same year of 1886, Suvorin published a completely different book by Fedor Bulgakov (under the penname –!) entitled *Za zhenshchin: Trezvyie mysli i veskie fakty*.

¹⁴⁶ *Novoe vremia*. 17.02.1886. Cf.: ‘...it is sensuality, the lowest [feeling] (accessible not only to all men but also to all animals) which forms the chief subject matter of works of art of recent times. From Boccaccio to Marcel Prévost, all the novels, poems, verses invariably transmit the feeling of sexual love in its different forms. Adultery is not only the favourite, but almost the only theme of all the novels. A performance is not a performance unless, under some pretence, women appear with naked busts and limbs. Songs and romances — are all expressions of lust, idealised in various degrees. (‘Chto takoe iskusstvo?’ in L. Tolstoy, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 22 vol. (M., 1978–1985), vol. 15, p. 103; translated by A. Maude (see: L. Tolstoy, ‘What is Art?’ (New York, 1904), pp. 77–78.)

¹⁴⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 17.02. 1886.

The Bulgakov volume was conceived as a rejoinder to the book by Skal'kovskii, and as 'a speech in defence of women.' However, Bulgakov made a reservation, writing that he 'yields the "market" palm' to Skal'kovskii. Which was exactly the case: Skal'kovskii's book was reprinted eleven times, while Bulgakov's book — only twice; Suvorin benefiting again from his conservative antifeminist stance.

§ 7

On the first of May 1887, Suvorin's twenty-two year old son, Volodia, committed suicide. In his last note, he claimed that no-one was guilty of his death and that the idea of killing himself had been haunting him for a long while because 'he found little interest in the life around him.'¹⁴⁸ Suvorin received many hints that his son had been mentally ill, but long after Volodia's death he was still sharing his sorrows with his diary, accusing solely himself and grieving that there had been no-one there to correct his own fatherly shortcomings:

2.74 Я никогда не размышлял, не умел или некогда было. Несчастья должны были научить меня и не научили. Если бы кто-нибудь был, кто бы мне советовал, кто бы меня подталкивал, указывал на мои ошибки, бранил бы меня, спорил — никого никогда не было¹⁴⁹.

Suvorin was increasingly preoccupied with his solitude: 'There is no mistress near me, no manager of my house, so it is a soulless place and a house without a soul means disaster, and this disaster is hanging over me, and I dread to say this.'¹⁵⁰

Within a year (on the 8th of August 1888), Suvorin lost his son, Valerian, who was of the same age as Volodia, to diphtheria. (A sickly young hunchback, he had damaged his back in childhood in an accident on a swing.) There were only two survivors out of Suvorin's five children by his first marriage.

Fate allowed Suvorin a consolation: already at the end of 1885 he had made the acquaintance of Anton Chekhov and now cherished his young talent with a fatherly care. 'Suvorin's love for Chekhov was utterly exceptional,'¹⁵¹ Vasilii Rozanov noted, speaking

¹⁴⁸ *Russkie vedomosti*. 4.05.1887.

¹⁴⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 75, 76. Entry of 3.05.1887.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80. Entry of 29.05.1887.

¹⁵¹ V. Rozanov, *Mimoletnoe* (SPb, 1994), p. 113.

as an outside observer. Anna Ivanovna also had warm feelings towards this charismatic Muscovite and regarded her husband's attitude to Chekhov favourably:

2.75 Мы с Чеховым быстро подружились, никогда не ссорились, спорили же часто и чуть не до слез — я, по крайней мере. Муж мой прямо обожал его, точно Антон Павлович околдовал его. Исполнить какое-нибудь желание его, не говоря о просьбе, для него было прямо одно удовольствие.¹⁵²

When Chekhov died, Suvorin also admitted his love for him:

2.76 Я любил его как человека больше, чем как писателя. Он был мне родным по душе, по происхождению. <...> Я ему обязан, и он мне обязан, мы обязаны друг другу, потому что мы были родные по душе. Я давал ему свои знания литературные, особенно по иностранной литературе, свой опыт, иногда советы, а он «молодил» мою душу, как я выражался¹⁵³.

This mutual affinity, which seems to have energized both parties, was apparently a key factor in the friendship which developed between Suvorin and Chekhov despite twenty six years of difference in age. There is an obvious similarity in their backgrounds (a thorny path from provinces to capital city, the burden of a big family), in their addictions (foreign travel, walks around cemeteries, theatre) and also in their rhetoric as regards ideology. At the age of twenty seven, having just found a job with the magazine *Russkaia rech'*, Suvorin wrote to his Voronezh acquaintance De-Pule: 'As regards my beliefs, I belong neither to constitutionalists, nor to "the reds", nor to the party of Katkov, nor to the party of Chernyshevsky, nor to the party of *Vremia*.'¹⁵⁴ And here is the young Chekhov at twenty eight writing to Pleshcheev (in view of the ideological conflict which occurred in the journal *Severnyi vestnik*): 'I am neither liberal, nor conservative, nor gradualist, nor monk, nor differentist.'¹⁵⁵ However, while claiming his political neutrality Suvorin tried to disguise his confusion and his indecision as a *raznochinets*: '...I am not sure if I can explain to what party exactly I belong. As you know, there is not too much

¹⁵² A. Suvorina, 'Vospominaniia o Chekhove', in *A. P. Chekhov: Zateriannye Proizvedeniia. Neizdannye Pis'ma. Novye vospominaniia. Bibliografiia* (Petrograd, 1925), p. 185.

¹⁵³ Op. cit: A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 2, p. 492. Letter of Suvorin to V. Doroshevich (1904).

¹⁵⁴ A. S. Suvorin, 'Pis'ma k M. F. De-Pule', in *Ezhegodnik rukopisnogo otdela Pushkinskogo Doma*, p. 145. Letter of 21.09.1861.

¹⁵⁵ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 2, p. 327. Letter of 4.10.1888. Translated by Michael Heim, in *Anton Chekhov: Life through Selected Letters and Commentary*, (Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 109.

logic in my words, and my mind cannot concentrate on one subject only.’¹⁵⁶ Unlike Suvorin, Chekhov was definite in his goals: ‘I would like to be a free artist, and that’s all.’¹⁵⁷

Chekhov was shrewd enough to discern Suvorin’s ability ‘to scent the air’:

2.77 В искусстве он изображает из себя то же самое, что сеттер в охоте на бекасов, т. е. работает чертовским чутьем и всегда горит страстью. <...> Будучи беден теориями, он поневоле должен был развить в себе то, чем богато наделила его природа, поневоле он развил свой инстинкт до размеров большого ума¹⁵⁸.

For Suvorin, Chekhov appeared an embodiment of the common sense, of all those life norms that he advanced and propagated in his newspaper:

2.78 Он не любит ни фраз, ни нытья, ни отчаяния, и является другом самых обыкновенных людей... <...> У него все самое обыкновенное, заурядное, общечеловеческое... <...> Он сам будто хочет сказать, что надо жить просто, как все, и вносить свои лучшие силы, лучшие намерения в развитие этой простой, обыкновенной жизни, а не тратить их на подвиги несоразмерные и без пути не стремиться зажигать моря¹⁵⁹.

Chekhov found Suvorin’s invitation to write for *Novoe vremia* flattering and hastened to bow and scrape before him: ‘How refreshing and inspiring for me as a writer has been the kind attention of a person as experienced and talented as yourself.’¹⁶⁰ The two started a correspondence, they visited one another, they enjoyed intimate conversations and their acquaintance grew eventually into a friendship which lasted fifteen years. The convincing evidence of their closeness is the great number of letters written by Chekhov to Suvorin (339 letters survive), as well as the swiftness shown by Suvorin in retrieving his own letters to Chekhov upon his death (they disappeared without trace). It is clear that ‘it would be a corruption of truth to disregard the importance of Chekhov’s letters, particularly to the editor of *Novoe vremia*. <...> Far more often than to others, Chekhov talks to Suvorin about serious, necessary, and

¹⁵⁶ A. S. Suvorin, ‘Pis’ma k M. F. De-Pule’, p. 145.

¹⁵⁷ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 2, p. 327.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 297. Letter to I. L. Leont’ev-Shcheglov of 18.07.1888.

¹⁵⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 6.02.1889.

¹⁶⁰ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 1, p. 202. Letter of 21.02.1886.

psychologically important issues which are of primary significance for a biographer.’¹⁶¹ And there is no doubt that Suvorin’s letters to Chekhov could very well have been equally important.

Over six years of contributing to *Novoe vremia*, Chekhov published 37 short stories in the newspaper as well as the novella ‘Duèl’, which also appeared there; and it is worth noting that his work was not in any way of inferior quality. He was fairly open-hearted about this in his letter to Suvorin:

2.79 Дать Вам рассказ, который кажется мне гадостью, я не могу ни за какие блага в мире, иначе бы я сандалил в Вашей газете каждую неделю и имел бы деньги. Как Вам угодно, но и будущие времена я стану держаться той же политики, т. е. не посылать Вам того, что мне противно. Надо ведь хоть одну газету щадить, да и свою нововременскую репутацию беречь. А «Петербургская газета» все съест¹⁶².

Among stories which Chekhov considered ‘not wholly disgusting’, of particular interest here are those with a gynophobic or an antifeminist tendency. On the whole, researchers agree that ‘...in the 1880s, in Chekhov’s short stories there emerges an imagery which conveys the fear of woman’s power over man;’¹⁶³ he also seems to be concerned about ‘a modern woman with her psychological and sexual aberration.’¹⁶⁴ The fact that Chekhov supplied *Novoe vremia* with stories of this sort may suggest a certain solidarity of budding author and popular newspaper editor in their attitude to ‘the woman question’, or to be more precise, to ‘the sexual question’. As Zolotonosov argues, the theory of ‘vital energy’ which Chekhov put into practice in his life and his consequent ‘rational’ savings on sex, had engendered his own particular ‘gynophobia’. Apart from that, ‘...behind those discussions on gender subjects there were troubles experienced by Chekhov in working out his matrimonial strategy. His imagination prompted him that an ideal variant would be a small-sized “baby-wife”. <...> However, Chekhov had not arrived at any definite conclusion; he channeled his discussion into his prose.’¹⁶⁵ Thus, the result of his broken engagement to Dunia Ėfros was ‘Tina’, a short story about a

¹⁶¹ A. Izmailov, *A. Chekhov: Biografiia* (M., 2003), p. 368.

¹⁶² A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 3, p. 104. Letter of 26.12.1888.

¹⁶³ M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov: Po tu storony printsipa zhenofobii*, pp. 30–44; see also E. Tolstaia, *Poètika razdrazheniia: Chekhov v kontse 1880-kh — nachale 1890-kh gg.*, pp. 17–54.

¹⁶⁴ E. Tolstaia, *Poètika razdrazheniia*, p. 34.

¹⁶⁵ M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov*, p. 39.

domineering and sexually-minded Jewish woman. In his story ‘Na puti’, Chekhov summarized his current idea of woman and suggested his own way of solving the problem of sexual authority:¹⁶⁶

2.80 ...женщина всегда была и будет рабой мужчины... <...> Она нежный, мягкий воск, из которого мужчина всегда лепил всё, что ему угодно. <...> Беззаветная, преданная раба! <...> Благородное, возвышенное рабство! <...> В нем-то именно и заключается высокий смысл женской жизни!¹⁶⁷

This text alludes to Suvorin’s dictum in his feuilleton *Iz zapisok otrvychnogo cheloveka* of 15.02.1881 which he wrote in the time of his grim family conflicts: ‘Woman was always a slave and a slave she remains; and a Man when he aspires to the role of her defender only covers up his hypocrisy and gilds the pill.’ (see p. 119). It is difficult to confirm definitively that Chekhov was aware of this piece by Suvorin; however, in Chekhov’s letter to his brother Aleksandr there is a convincing evidence that, as early as 1883, he not only took a keen interest in the problem of the male-female relationship, but also intended to contribute to the working through of that problem:

2.81 Я разрабатываю теперь и в будущем разрабатывать буду один маленький вопрос: женский. Но, прежде всего, не смейся. Я ставлю его на естественную почву и сооружаю: «Историю полового авторитета». <...> Женщина — везде пассивна. Она родит мясо для пушек. Нигде и никогда она не выше мужчины в смысле политики и социологии. <...> ...На поприще творчества она гусь. <...> Задача, как видишь, слишком солидная, не похожая на <...> наших женских эмансипаторов-публицистов и измерителей черепов¹⁶⁸.

The very last cut in Chekhov’s letter was made by Soviet editors of the complete academic collection of his works, which suggests that the author had used an obscene word indicating his actual attitude to the advocates of women’s liberation.

The History of the Sexual Authority has never been written; however, in Suvorin, Chekhov found a concerned and a congenial sparring partner with an interesting sexual anamnesis to boot. Suvorin was undoubtedly worried about his sexual problems and this showed in his voyeuristic diary entries registering cases of outstanding sexual potency:

¹⁶⁶ M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov*, p. 17.

¹⁶⁷ A. Chekhov, *PSSP*, vol. 5, p. 472.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 63–64. Letter of 17 or 18.04.1883.

2.82 **28.02.1884.** Сегодня был Григорович <...> Он сам себя называет «величайшим блядуном», и когда говорит об этом, то говорит с какой-то яростью. «Когда мне женщина понравится, я хотел бы ее свернуть в крендель, измять, истормошить, захватать. Они это очень любят. Чем больше мнешь и яришься, тем им приятнее». Знаток. **22.11.1886.** Маслов рассказывал об одной молодой женщине, дочери губернского предводителя дворянства, которая в Ялте в нижнем этаже «России» жила. Она постоянно была с мужчиной лет 40. В 12 часов лакеи смотрят в окно (занавеска не доходила до подоконника), в комнату освещенную, — а там оба голые, любовник и любовница, упражнялись, причем она всеми силами и средствами старалась его возбудить¹⁶⁹.

Chekhov tried to relieve Suvorin's inferiority complex by some educational reasoning:

2.83 Женщины, которые употребляются, или, выражаясь по-московски, тараканятся на каждом диване, не суть бешеные, это дохлые кошки, страдающие нимфоманией. <...> Распутных женщин я видывал и сам грешил многократно, но Золя и той даме, которая говорила Вам «хлоп — и готово», я не верю. Распутные люди и писатели любят выдавать себя гастрономами и тонкими знатоками блюда; они смелы, решительны, находчивы, употребляют по 33 способам, чуть ли не на лезвии ножа, но все это только на словах, на деле же употребляют кухарок и ходят в рублевые дома терпимости. Все писатели врут¹⁷⁰.

Chekhov also took a sincere interest in Suvorin's writings and was willing to discuss these writings in his letters. On December 20th 1888 in *Novoe vremia*, Suvorin published his own short story 'Istoriia odnoi nochi'; again, its heroine is an adulteress merrily sowing death. However, in this case, which contrasts with 'Tragediia iz-za pustiakov', the plot goes beyond the family circle. Avdot'ia Iakovlevna is a married woman with exceedingly free morals who is driven 'by passionate impulses'; she arrives at a spa by way of 'a pleasant pastime'. There, she quickly seduces a young man, Vasili Svobodin, although this young man has a fiancée, a very young and innocent girl, Katerina. Wishing to break off his rapidly burdensome new liaison with Avdot'ia, Svobodin provokes Avdot'ia to a bout of fierce jealousy. In revenge, Avdot'ia, taking advantage of the darkness, shoots Katerina to death and then deftly covers up her tracks.

¹⁶⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Segeevicha Suvorina*, p. 56, 65.

¹⁷⁰ Op. cit.: A. Chudakov, 'Neprilichnye slova i oblik klassika', in *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 11 (1991), pp. 55–56. Letter of 24 or 25.11.1888.

Later, she summons Svobodin to her place and confesses the murder to him, thus binding him morally hand and foot. Svobodin does not dare to inform against her for fear of making his affair with the murderess public, but also because he may himself fall under suspicion, especially if Avdot'ia refuses to confess. The only feeling Svobodin now has for Avdot'ia is hatred: 'She is a dreadful woman. And he cursed her, and he burnt with anger, and his own feeble impotence oppressed him. She should be killed, killed, killed...'

As with Leskov, Chekhov discerned 'a personal expression' that permeated the story and he gave Suvorin his due: 'In your "Istoriia odnoi nochi" such a lot of great stuff is heaped up. Although one stumbles over it occasionally, one reads it with interest and with a great sympathy towards the author.'¹⁷¹ In this letter, Chekhov seems to follow up a conversation on touchy issues started by Suvorin; and being at one here with his patron, he also finds women guilty:

2.84 Вы говорите, что женщины из сострадания любят, из сострадания выходят замуж... А мужчины? Я не люблю, когда реалисты-романисты клеветают на женщину, но и не люблю также, когда женщину поднимают на плечи <...> и стараются доказать, что если она и хуже мужчины, то все-таки мужчина мерзавец, а женщина ангел. И женщина, и мужчина пятак пара, только мужчина умнее и справедливее¹⁷².

Although the context is discussion of Chekhov's play *Ivanov*, his reference to Suvorin's words evokes Suvorin's letter to his fiancée Anna Ivanovna Orfanova of 24.06.1875: '...I believe that your love for me grew partially from pity — you could not have missed the anguish of my loneliness' (see p. 98). One can assume that literary conversations with Chekhov led Suvorin to provide some personal examples; Chekhov must have accepted them with a delicate consideration and added them to his writer's treasury. Having been invited to Suvorin's house, Chekhov was able to keep his family under sharp observation, registering both comic and tragic sides of their life. Chekhov's relations and friends received regular reports about his stays with the Suvorins; particularly colourful was his portrait of Anna Ivanovna:

¹⁷¹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 3, pp. 104–105. Letter of 26.12.1888.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

2.85 Поселяюсь у Суворина — это стеснит меня немало. <...> До обеда — длинный разговор с тете Сувориной о том, как она ненавидит род человеческий, и о том, что сегодня она купила какую-то кофточку за 120 р. <...> От обеда до чая хождение из угла в угол в суворинском кабинете и философия; в разговор вмешивается, невпопад, супруга и говорит басом или изображает лающего пса;

У нас с Сувориным разговоры бесконечные. Сувориха ежечасно одевается в новые платья, поет с чувством романсы, бранится и бесконечно болтает. Баба неугомонная, вертлявая, фантазерка и оригиналка до мозга костей;

[Письмо из Феодосии] Суворина <...> обладает необыкновенным талантом без умолку болтать вздор, болтать талантливо и интересно, так что ее можно слушать весь день без скуки, как канарейку. <...> По вечерам сидит на песке у моря и плачет, по утрам хохочет и поет цыганские романсы;

Две недели, прожитые у Суворина, прошли как единый миг. <...> Всё, что говорил он мне, было очень интересно. Опыт у него громадный. Анна Ивановна угощала меня пощечинами, нравоучениями и шартрезом.¹⁷³

Being in close contact with his patron and apparently knowing the story of Suvorin's marriage, Chekhov seems to have amended his matrimonial strategy, have convinced himself that 'a baby-wife', if overly sensual and moreover unbalanced, might prove positively dangerous. But still, he remained attracted by the *femme fatale*: according to Zolotonosov, 'they both lure and scare Chekhov; in his life, he cautiously plays with them choosing them as sexual partners <...> but he avoids any long and serious commitment.'¹⁷⁴ In one of his letters to Suvorin, Chekhov made what seemed a provocative claim:

2.86 На меня от скуки нашла блажь: надоела золотая середина, я всюду слоняюсь и жалуясь, что нет оригинальных, бешеных женщин... Одним словом, а он, мятежный, бури ищет! И все мне в один голос говорят: «Вот Кадмина, батюшка, вам бы понравилась!» И я мало-помалу изучаю Кадмину и, прислушиваясь к разговорам, нахожу, что она в самом деле была недюжинной натурой¹⁷⁵.

On the 4th of November, 1881, the actress Evlaliia Kadmina, passionate but neurotic and pathologically narcissistic, had tried to kill herself directly on stage. Taking

¹⁷³ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 2, p. 213–214 (Letter to M. P. Chekhov of 14, 15 or 16.03.1888); p. 296 (Letter to M. P. Chekhova of 14.07.1888); p. 299 (Letter to the Chekhovs of 22–23.07.1888); vol. 3, p. 95 (Letter to I. L. Leont'ev (Shcheglov) of 20.12.1888).

¹⁷⁴ M. Zolotonosov, *Drugoi Chekhov*, p. 27.

¹⁷⁵ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 3, p. 74. Letter of 18.11.1888.

poison while acting, she failed to finish the play and died a few days later. Her tragedy was seen by many as a ‘gratuitous outburst of hysterical temperament.’¹⁷⁶ Turgenev responded to this event with a novella *Klara Milich*, while Suvorin, having dubbed Turgenev’s piece ‘a sheer pearl,’¹⁷⁷ then followed his example and wrote ‘a comedy in four acts’, *Tat’iana Repina*.¹⁷⁸

§ 8

The original title of Turgenev’s novella was *Posle smerti*; this was changed to *Klara Milich* by the editor for purposes of publication. Pavel Annenkov in his letter to Turgenev was highly critical of this tampering with the author’s intentions: ‘I am so angry with Stasiulevich¹⁷⁹ for changing the title of your novella. He does not realize, the stupid ass, that a *nominal* title indicates the author’s intention to present a certain *type*; while your idea is not in any way a *type*, but rather a rare and remarkable mental case.’¹⁸⁰

Suvorin had similar problems with his title: ‘My play was written in 1886 and was sent to the censors under the title *Okhota na zhenshchin*. In my opinion, this title conveyed the main idea of the play, but it was not approved by the censor, so I changed it first to *Muzhchiny i zhenshchiny* and finally to *Tat’iana Repina*.’¹⁸¹ However, the new title, now standing for ‘a type’ and not for ‘a case’, must have influenced the future of the play. It took the play two years to get to the stage, and in the meantime, Suvorin had considerably recast it: ‘...I have written several scenes anew, and have added new characters; in a word, hardly a page has been left as it was published in 1886.’ (I)

Actually, there is no ‘hunt for women’ as such in this play. This phrase occurs overtly only once, in depicting the main character, Petr Sabinin, a broken landlord, featherbrain and womanizer: ‘*Chasse aux femmes*, the hunt for women — it’s a famous

¹⁷⁶ See for example: K. Skal’kovskii, *V teatral’nom mire* (SPb, 1889), p. XVIII.

¹⁷⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 3.01.1883.

¹⁷⁸ See: J. Buckler, ‘Her Final Debut’: The Kadmina Legend in Russian Theatre, in *Intersections and Transpositions: Russian Music, Literature, and Society* (Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 225–252; ‘*Tat’iana Repina*’: *Two Translated Texts: The 1888 Four-Act ‘Tat’iana Repina’ by Aleksei Suvorin and Anton Chekhov’s 1889 One-Act Continuation; With an Introduction and Appendices*, translated and edited by J. Racin (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, 1999).

¹⁷⁹ Mikhail Stasiulevich, the editor of the journal *Vestnik Evropy*. Turgenev’s novella was published in the first issue of 1883.

¹⁸⁰ Op. cit.: I. Turgenev, *PSSP*, vol. 13. (M., L., 1967), p. 578.

¹⁸¹ A. Suvorin, *Tat’iana Repina: Komediia v 4 deistviakh*, 4-e izdanie, ispravlennoe (SPb, 1911). p. I [Predislovie avtora]. Further page references are given in the text.

sport and a very nice one...' (72) And there is another 'expert in the woman department', impresario Matveev, who on one occasion refers to the phrase and plays with it; to his mind, 'a woman is just like a playful doe; she hides from the hunter in the woods, but in such a way that the hunter tracks her down without fail. Now she sticks out her foot, now she moves her shoulder, now she tilts back her head so as to expose her bosom: shoot me, I am not looking...' (33) This phrase had no follow-up, so both fragments are perhaps leftovers from the previous version of the play.

But the real hunter's chase in the play is the useless Sabinin. He is pursued by two remarkable women: by a wealthy young widow, Vera Olenina, and also by an actress, Tat'iana Repina. Their rivalry leads to an actual skirmish, and the story ends with Repina's suicide during a performance. This tragic event is both the climax of the play and its final scene. Thus, while Kadmina's death inspired Turgenev to write a subtle and mystical filigree piece which portrays the posthumous obsession of Aratov with the actress Milich, Suvorin preferred to show the actual death on stage.¹⁸² One of the reviewers made a caustic but reasonable remark on Suvorin's play: 'In the provinces, one can easily play the last scene only and with one sole character, Tat'iana Repina. <...> Along with the death scene, her monologue would be enough to last for nearly an hour...' ¹⁸³

The play was staged by Aleksandrinskii Theatre in Petersburg on the 11th of December 1888 and received a great deal of press. The play caused strong interest partially due to the fact that its author was a journalist and also the publisher of a popular newspaper, a man who had made many enemies; so the reviewers seized the opportunity to square personal accounts with Suvorin. On the whole, reviews were rancorous and charged Suvorin with putting on a 'drama feuilleton', or *un feuilleton parlé*:

2.87 Представьте себе газетный фельетон в лицах, подчас остроумный, подчас скучный, в котором легким, живым языком разговор идет о женщинах, об искусстве, о Декамероне, о Петербурге, Москве, провинции, о жидках, банкирах, деньгах, о жизни и смерти, о любви и ненависти, о прессе, о

¹⁸² Kadmina's death was also portrayed in a sketch *Ia zhdu, eshche est' vremia* (1881) by Petr Sokal'skii, in a poem *Pevitsa (Pamiati Kadmino)* (1881) by Sergei Andreevskii, in a short story *Muzh pevitsy* (1883) by Vladimir Kunitskii, in an essay *Tetral'nyi kharakter* (1884) by Nikolai Leskov, in a play *Evlaliia Ramina* (1884) by Nikolai Solovtsov, in a short story *Poslednii debiut* (1889) by Aleksandr Kuprin, and in an opera *Klara Milich* (1907) by Aleksandr Kastal'skii.

¹⁸³ *Moskovskie vedomosti*. 23.01.1889.

Бисмарке, и гипнотизме и о чем там еще — и вы получите понятие о суворинской «Татьяне Репиной»¹⁸⁴.

Suvorin's journalistic manner showed up in the play so vividly that in one provincial theatre the actor who played the part of the journalist Adashev, made himself up as Suvorin himself. It helped that Suvorin had filled his play with personal traces; thus, Adashev arrives to the town where Repina lives on his way to Crimea: he is heading there 'to repair his nerves'; he no longer gets involved in love affairs: 'I am afraid I have gotten old: I've hit forty'; his journalistic creed is familiar: 'we pry into everything and we also set up our sail to every wind.' Behind his words, one can clearly see the eclectic ideology of *Novoe vremia*:

2.88 Ни перед чем не отступать, за все браться, все решать — вот наш девиз. Нам нипочем государственный гений, мы даем советы министрам, разрубаем Гордиев узел, как Александр Македонский, разжигаем страсти, плачем о нуждах народа... (39)

Suvorin's technique of manipulating public opinion is presented in plain text:

2.89 А мы все-таки создатели общественного мнения! Мы подносим свое кушанье, свою газету добрым людям за чаем или кофеем, утром, когда голова их отдохнула после сна, когда мозг их свеж и особенно восприимчив. Мы тут-то его и начинаем своими статьями, и читатель этой начинкой живет до следующего утра... Да-с, мы — великая сила, новая порода! (41)

Finally, Adashev, while posing as a 'progressivist', nevertheless addresses Tat'iana Repina in a didactic monologue, a speech which reveals Suvorin's conservative dimension in his attitude to women's liberation, and in his concern, arguably women-invalidating, with women's mental health:

2.90 Нервный век! На женщин особая полоса нашла. Бросились в науку, в социальные вопросы, на сцену. Вон из семьи, на выставку, на показ, в конкуренцию с мужчинами... Бегают за жизнью, рвут ее, хотят все большего и большего, и нервы становятся, как лохмотья нищего... День да мой! Какая-нибудь известность, хоть известность кокотки — все-таки лучше скромного прозябания... (46)

¹⁸⁴ *Volzhskii vestnik*. 28.01.1889.

According to critics, Adashev as well as other characters were fairly close to parody or even caricature, while ‘...the heroine, the actress Tat’iana Repina, was portrayed by the author very skilfully. Tat’iana Repina is a passionate, nervous woman, who is longing for a tempestuous life but who does not find a space in which to apply her remarkable energy.’¹⁸⁵ This is a positive view of Suvorin’s heroine, but it is rather an exception. The majority of reviews saw Tat’iana Repina as ‘a deranged woman’, a typically morbid by-product of the emancipation process:

2.91 Татьяна Репина <...> совершенно выбилась, что называется, из всякой нравственной узды и стала вполне законченным типом очень в последнее время распространенного в нашем обществе сорта человеческих субъектов обоого пола, именуемых психопатами. <...> Это лицо со всеми даже мельчайшими штрихами типа всесовершеннейшей психопатки воспроизведено <...> с изумительнейшей точностью¹⁸⁶.

Indeed, throughout the play, Repina time and again shows her ‘highly-strung nerves’, her behaviour offering a clinical picture of hysteria: she slaps Sabinin in his face and next throws her arms around his neck; she splashes a rich banker, Zonnenshtein, with champagne from her glass; she turns up at the place of her rival Olenina to make a public claim on her lover. She is a provocative person: ‘I can’t help quarrelling with people. I do not know whether I bother people, or people bother me.’ (35) Her inability to fully realize herself on stage makes her miserable: ‘There are no plays where I can let myself go, love, be jealous, curse, through myself all over the stage in a rage, growl and bite... (43) Repina is also looking for strong passions in her real life: ‘Oh, what a life I’ve lived! Love, hatred, anger, fame, debauch... <...> I want to lose my mind! (37, 45)

The news that Sabinin is about to abandon her pushes Repina towards suicide. This happens at the end of Act Two, although in Act One it is already clear that their relationship is doomed. Repina knows that Sabinin is courting Olenina: ‘I am in your way... Why stand on ceremony with an actress... Olenina will give you money, she will support you! (17) In Act Three Repina’s behaviour is that of a person who wants to put an end to it all: she is overwrought, drinks too much, smashes glasses, laughs through tears, and finally, in theatrical and exhibitionistic manner, gives away her intention:

¹⁸⁵ *Volzhskii vestnik*. 28.01.1889.

¹⁸⁶ *Moskovskie vedomosti*. 23.01.1889.

2.92 Знаете, что мне в голову приходит... Если бы какая-нибудь актриса приняла настоящего яду на сцене и стала бы умирать... <...> Судороги мучили бы ее, она бы кричала, билась в отчаянии, задыхалась бы от страданий, и стон раздавался бы по театру... <...> Посмотрела бы я, что бы вы запели... (112, 113)

Critics thought this peculiar character created by Suvorin so convincing they apparently forgot about the real-life prototype: 'Tat'iana Repina is not just a figment of Suvorin's imagination. More like a real woman that he knows very well.'¹⁸⁷ And indeed, examples are not far to seek. There is no doubt that Suvorin had at least partly in mind Nastasia Kairova, 'a woman of passion' with suicidal propensity to boot.¹⁸⁸ Then again, at home, his extravagant wife Anna Ivanova made many a scene, and Suvorin was unlikely to forget her premarital threats to commit suicide if he failed to marry her. We remember here that Anna Ivanovna was a failed singer still trying to appease her theatric ambition: 'She dreams to be on the stage. She asks Nikolai [Sazonov, an actor] to rehearse parts with her in secret.'¹⁸⁹ Yet again there was the vehement Pelageia Strepetova who went too far in her familiarity with Suvorin and was overly eager to get the part of Repina: as a result she left empty-handed. Smirnova-Sazonova documented the story of their particular estrangement:

2.93 9.04.1883. Говорили о Стрепетовой. Суворин говорит, что она бесит его своей фамильярностью. **26.11.1884.** Была Стрепетова. Ее ненависть к Савиной все растет. Последнее время она не бывает у Сувориных, потому что там хвалят Савину. **19.11.1886.** Пьесы [«Татьяна Репина»] нет, а есть только роль. [Суворин] Хочет отдать ее Савиной, а жена и Стрепетова делают ему сцены. **6.12.1886.** Стрепетова года два или три не была у нас, вдруг приехала. Николай самым наивным тоном спрашивает, отчего она не играет Татьяну Репину. Она рассказывает, как жила летом у Сувориных, как они с Анной Ивановной чуть не каждый день ссорились. Теперь, когда Суворин отдает роль Савиной, она сказала Анне Ивановне: «Ваш муж подлец!» Та вскочила: «Ну, уж это слишком!» **13.12.1886.** Третьего дня Суворин объявил, что отдает роль Татьяны в очередь

¹⁸⁷ *Moskovskii listok*. 23.01.1889.

¹⁸⁸ Kairova not only tried to kill the wife of her lover, but also attempted to kill herself: 'Depression and the futility of my life often made me think and say that it would be best to put an end to it all. There were moments when I seriously and persistently tried to poison myself...' See: OR IRLI. F. 268 (Arkhip Suvorinykh A. S., A. A., M. A.), op. 1, ed. 28. Pis'ma N. A. Kairovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 15. Letter of 6.06.1876.

¹⁸⁹ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi, ed. 2. L. 29. Entry 16.03.1878.

Савиной и Стрепетовой, а нынче другая новость: он совсем не дает пьесы. **1.01.1888.** Стрепетова говорит Николаю, чтобы он больше не заискивал с ней, что она с Сувориными разошлась¹⁹⁰.

Eventually the part of Repina went to Suvorin's new favourite, Mariia Savina, the star of Aleksandrinskii Theatre. She did her best to comply with the author's ideas:

2.94 Татьяна Репина, по-моему, опять-таки не трагическая фигура, а характер, тип. Это — в полном смысле дитя актерской богемы. Татьяна — одна из тех русских провинциальных актрис, про которых говорят: «Это фейерверк, а не женщина!» Вся ее жизнь — показная, что и составляет главное основание этой роли... Она и умирает, так сказать, напоказ...¹⁹¹

Savina made Repina's injured pride a keynote of her part, although she treated her character with some irony and condescension. However, she was tempted by the melodramatic finale of the play: 'Reality oozing from the stage is really impressive. Her death is awe-inspiring. In the last scene, her dead body in an armchair staring stonily ahead looks exactly like a corpse,' wrote Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko to Aleksandr Sumbatov-Iuzhin.¹⁹²

In Moscow the first night performance of Suvorin's play took place on the 16th of January, 1889; Repina's part was played by Mariia Ermolova. The play caused an even greater sensation than in Petersburg; although its success was due partly to the injured pride of *an actress*. Ermolova, enjoined at rehearsal to appear more convincingly dead in her armchair, was overly compliant, no doubt from pique, and remained 'dead' when the curtain having fallen was raised during applause. The author, finding his earlier exhortations taken too far in this way, had to perform a symbolic resurrection of the 'dead' actress on stage. This became a talking point, it seems, and promoted the production. History has preserved documentary evidence in an inscription Suvorin left on the copy of the play he gave to Mariia Ermolova:

2.95 Помните, когда на репетиции я Вам сказал, что Вы последнюю сцену играете слишком нежно, что это противоречит словам Репиной, когда она говорит о действительной смерти актрисы на сцене, Вы мне сказали с довольно злым выражением в лице: «А, Вы хотите, чтобы я по-

¹⁹⁰ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi, ed. 5. L. 276, 294; ed. 12. L. 28, 55, 67; ed. 13. L. 144.

¹⁹¹ Op. cit.: *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, in 7 vol. (M., 1980), vol. 6, p. 211.

¹⁹² Ibid.

настоящему умирала, извольте!» В первое представление я следил за Вашей игрой в этом акте, стоя в глубине ложи. Вы становились нервнее и нервнее. Искренно-страдальческие ноты вырывались из Вашей груди. <...> Во всей фигуре, в поднятых кверху руках, в надрывающих душу звуках голоса столько борьбы со смертью, столько захватывающего трагизма, что зрительная зала замерла от ужаса и жалости. Несколько человек бросились к вам, стараясь удержать, — Вы бились в их руках в конвульсиях, и стонущую, поднятую на руках, Вас переносят в кресла. Публика не выдержала! Произошло почти единственное в театральных летописях: зрительный зал обратился в сцену, а сцена в зрительный зал. Раздались истерические рыдания и крики в ложах и партере; партер обернулся лицом назад, выходили мужчины и женщины из партера и лож. Актеры остановились. Я видел только испуганных актеров и недоумевающих на сцене, видел, как Вы поднялись с кресла и упали среди невообразимого шума, слез и рыданий публики. Я бросился на сцену и целовал ваши холодные, как лед, руки. Еще со слезами в горле, в сильном еще возбуждении Вы мне сказали: «Ну, довольны?» — «Это ужасно, так нельзя, но это бесподобно, совершенно!»¹⁹³

Critics also appreciated the shock effect the final scene produced on the public:

2.96 Г-жа Ермолова в заглавной роли комедии — прямо-таки такая артистка, какой никогда и никто еще не видывал на русской сцене. Ее игра в последнем акте в полном смысле слова — гениальнейшее творчество, до колоссальности которого не доходили даже такие звезды драматического искусства, как Рашель, Ристори, Сара Бернар. Недаром в первое представление «Татьяны Репиной» во время заключительной сцены последнего действия шесть дам были вынесены из лож и партера в сильнейших припадках истерики¹⁹⁴.

The play proved to be a strong stimulant even outside the theatre hall. Chekhov reported this in his letter to Suvorin:

2.97 Какая-то психопатка-провинциалка со слезами на глазах бегала по Третьяковской галерее и с дрожью в голосе умоляла показать ей Татьяну Репина*, [*родительный падеж — *примеч. Чехова*] про которую она много слышала, и от которой ей хотелось бы разразиться истерикой¹⁹⁵.

Chekhov came to Petersburg to see Suvorin's play on stage, but he also assisted in staging *Tat'iana Repina* in Moscow: he conducted talks with actors about the casting, he was present at rehearsals and he sent detailed accounts to Suvorin. He also amended the

¹⁹³ Op. cit.: R. Ostrovskaja, M. Varlamova, O. Veize, *Mariia Ermolova* (M., 2001), p. 119, 120.

¹⁹⁴ *Moskovskii listok*. 23.01.1889.

¹⁹⁵ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 3, p. 147. Letter of 8.02.1889.

text of the play trying to suppress Suvorin's by now notorious dramatic 'journalism'; his criticism was mild and diplomatic:

2.98 Недостатки Вашей пьесы непоправимы, потому что они органические. Утешайтесь на том, что они являются у вас продуктом Ваших положительных качеств; Я прочел снова Вашу пьесу. В ней очень много хорошего и оригинального, чего раньше не было в драматической литературе, и много нехорошего, например язык; У Вас есть то, чего у других нет. Пока мы не разошлись или не умерли, я бы с удовольствием эксплуатировал Вашу силу; я бы украл у Вас то, чем Вы пользуетесь¹⁹⁶.

The promised 'theft' did indeed take place. Having borrowed the title of his play from Suvorin as well as some characters, Chekhov wrote a burlesque epilogue to Suvorin's play entitled *Tat'iana Repina: Drama v odnom deistvii*.¹⁹⁷ Chekhov's piece alludes to Turgenev's *Klara Milich*, and he actually realizes Tat'iana's words on her posthumous existence: 'I would rise from my grave to curse you all... <...> I would walk among you like a ghost...'¹⁹⁸ The setting of Chekhov's play is a church where Sabinin is marrying Olenina; during the wedding ceremony there appears 'a woman in black', and Sabinin, horrified, takes her for Tat'iana's spectre. The finale is a counterpoint of the wedding ceremony and the talk in the crowd, and their admixture, in effect a cacophony, creates a vivid comical effect. However, if the talk in the crowd is singled out, it is there that Chekhov's ironical commentary on Suvorin's entire play emerges. Apparently influenced by the actual performance of Suvorin's play with its excessively histrionic ending, Chekhov, who was eschewing gaudy dramatic effects in his own plays, could not resist this cryptic, but poignant antiphon:

2.99 (*Слышится стон*)

- Не понимаю, зачем это сюда истеричных пускают!
- С кем это дурно?

¹⁹⁶ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 2, p. 281. Letter of 30.05.1888; vol. 3, p. 98, 91. Letters of 23.12.1888, 15.11.1888.

¹⁹⁷ See detailed analysis in: A. Dolinin, 'Parodiia li "Tat'iana Repina" Chekhova?' in *A. P. Chekhov: Zateriannye proizvedeniia. Neizdannye pis'ma. Vospominaniia. Bibliografiia* (L., 1925), p. 59–84; E. Smirnova-Chikina, 'Tat'iana Repina Antona Chekhova', in *V tvorcheskoi laboratorii Chekhova* (M., 1974), p. 108–117; V. Gottlieb, *Chekhov and Vaudeville: A Study of Chekhov's One-Act Plays* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 113–146; 'Tatyana Repina': *Two Translated Texts: The 1888 Four-Act 'Tatyana Repina' by Alexei Suvorin and Anton Chekhov's 1889 One-Act Continuation; With an Introduction and Appendices*, translated and edited by J. Racin (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, 1999).

¹⁹⁸ A. Suvorin, *Tat'iana Repina*, p. 115.

- Ее ведут, а она не хочет... Кто она? Тссс!
- А вчера в Европейской гостинице опять отравилась какая-то женщина.
- Да. Говорят, жена доктора какого-то.
- Отчего, не знаете?
- С легкой руки Репиной это уж четвертая отравляется. Вот объясните-ка мне, батенька, эти отравления!
- Психоз. Не иначе.
- Подражательность, думаете?
- Самоубийства заразительны...
- Сколько психопатов этих развелось, ужас!
- Репина своею смертью отравила воздух. Все барыни заразились и помешались на том, что они оскорблены.
- Даже в церкви отравлен воздух. Чувствуете, какое напряжение?
- Докторшу вскрывали?
- Нет еще. Говорят, муж бросил. А ведь Сабинин тоже Репину бросил! Правда это?
- Да-а...
- Я помню, как Репину вскрывали...

Furthermore, if one puts together all the lines of ‘the woman in black’, the result is a comical apotheosis of female hysteria:

2.100 Да ма в черном (*выходит из-за колонны, пошатываясь*). Кто здесь? Уведите меня... уведите... (*Стонет.*) Я сестра офицера Иванова... сестра. Я отравилась... из ненависти... Он оскорбил... Зачем же он счастлив? Боже мой... (*Кричит.*) Спасите меня, спасите! (*Опускается на пол.*) Все должны отравиться... все! Нет справедливости... Из ненависти... Все должны отравиться... (*Стонет и валяется по полу.*) Она в могиле, а он... он... В женщине оскорблен Бог... Погибла женщина... (*Рвет на себе всё и кричит*). Спасите меня! Спасите! Спасите!.. (*Занавес*)

Dispatching his impromptu piece to Suvorin, Chekhov called it ‘a cheap and useless gift’; he also recommended that Suvorin throw the proffered epilogue into the fireplace without reading it. But Suvorin’s *Tat’iana Repina* brought in some profit: in Petersburg, there were four performances over two weeks, while in the next year of 1889 there were 13 performances; in 1889 in Moscow, there were 15 performances. Later, the play was staged in the provinces and was a great success thanks to its spectacular finale. The part of Tat’iana Repina was in the repertoire of all the major provincial actresses.¹⁹⁹ Again, the intuition of a journalist had served Suvorin well. He shared his triumph with the star of the Moscow stage Mariia Ermolova:

2.101 Может быть, ни Вам не придется уже больше дать такой сильный образ, ни мне сыграть так, но этого вечера достаточно на всю жизнь. Это были минуты полного удовлетворения. А разве этого мало? Пусть говорили про Вас, что возмутительно писать такие сцены, — а про меня, что возмутительно так играть, но мы с Вами царствовали тогда над толпой и сделали из нее, что хотели!²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ See: S. Danilov, *Russkii teatr v khudozhestvennoi literature* (L., 1939), p. 154.

²⁰⁰ Op.cit.: R. Ostrovskaia, M. Varlamova, O. Veize, *Mariia Ermolova*, p. 120.

* * *

The segment of Suvorin's life which I have examined in this chapter, from 1874 to 1889, was very dramatic. Losing his job and compromised by the scandalous murder of his first wife, Suvorin had to start his life from scratch. He had considerable professional success: in a mere three years a jobless journalist turned into the editor of the most popular Russian daily newspaper, *Novoe vremia*. With his newspaper, Suvorin very appropriately filled a niche in the press market, targeting the incipient Russian middle class as readership; this readership base of course included the *raznochinets* substratum, which had produced Suvorin himself. Suvorin qualified his newspaper as 'a parliament of opinions' and in the very same issue he could publish articles of conflicting ideological bent, thus provoking polemics on a wide range of social issues. By general consent, Suvorin's newspaper not only reflected the public consciousness, but also proved to be a powerful instrument in the active shaping of public opinion. Suvorin thus figures in a development which shows most clearly in the following century, the active manufacture of consent on a mass scale. As for its printing technique, sales network, and advertising, *Novoe vremia* already matched the standards of the 20th century press. This applied also to the working conditions for journalists.

Although in the mid 1870s the debate on 'the woman question' was slowing down, Suvorin tended to return to this subject in his publications, where he skilfully applied his tried and trusted technique of alternation: switching between liberal and conservative positions, as we have seen. Reluctant to discuss the participation of women in politics, Suvorin channelled his discussion of 'the woman question' into his fiction and concentrated on new female types which originated in the emancipation process. Thus, he outlines a portrait of the 'superfluous woman' in his unfinished piece 'Strannaia zhenshchina'; he also attempts to show the evolution of a nihilist into a female homosexual ('Strannoe proisshestvie'); he updates *Medea* by Euripides and interprets the heroine as a woman who can commit a cruel crime while protesting against her dependence on a man. With the success of his *Medea*, Suvorin discovered a new kind of public, namely the theatre audience, which proved to be responsive to his trade-mark journalistic methods, which here means material easily understood by laymen together with spectacular, even provocative effects.

Suvorin's prose fed upon his personal problems and primarily upon his disastrous marriage to Anna Ivanovna Orfanova. Having married a young and sensual girl, Suvorin failed both as a husband and as a sexual partner, although he anticipated the likeliness of this failure well before his marriage. The infidelity of Suvorin's wife brought his second marriage to the verge of divorce, at the time an exceptional event accompanied by complicated and humiliating legal procedures; and it projected into his journalism, imparting a clear misogynistic streak to his newspaper publications. In 1885, which proved to be the most critical year for his marriage, Suvorin, according to Leskov, seemed to find his 'key' genre: he wrote a vivid and powerful short story 'Tragediia iz-za pustiakov' featuring a young adulteress who manipulates two lovers and thinks nothing of killing a man. Female infidelity which involves murder is further examined in Suvorin's short story 'Istoriia odnoi nochi' (1888), and this clear trend may arguably be read as a sublimation of Suvorin's real-life gynophobia, which is to say his fear of the powerful, domineering, sensual, and often unbalanced female.

In the time-span examined in this chapter, female influence yet again seemed to govern Suvorin's life: the newspaper *Novoe vremia* was acquired due to the insistence of Elena Likhacheva, while the fatal conflict between Suvorin and the Likhachevs (Suvorin's business partners) was provoked by the journalist Nastasia Kairova; and numerous problems in Suvorin's life were caused by the actress Pelageia Strepetova. Gynophobia proved to be a point of commonality, even bonding, in Suvorin's friendship with Anton Chekhov; their discussion of 'the woman question' (including 'the sexual question') can be followed and traced in their correspondence, in short fiction that Chekhov contributed to *Novoe vremia* and also in Suvorin's showy play *Tat'iana Repina* which caused a sensation thanks to a skilful and realistic presentation of a 'new' female type, the talented hysterical woman who is unable to control herself and who in this case commits suicide on stage.

CHAPTER III

This chapter spans the period from the end of 1889 to 1912. By 1889 Suvorin had become a most notable and influential public figure. He already was the owner of the first publishing concern in Russia at the level of holding company. Apart from the newspaper *Novoe vremia*, he published a supplement *Vechernee vremia*, as well as newspapers *Zemledel'cheskaia gazeta* and *Telefon 'Novogo vremeni'*, magazines *Istoricheskii vestnik*, *Literaturnyi zhurnal*, *Zhurnal Teatra Literaturno-khudozhestvennogo obshchestva*, *Shakhmaty*, and also annual reference books *Vsia Rossia*, *Ves' Peterburg*, and *Vsia Moskva*. His individual publishing house was also flourishing, featuring a series *Deshevaia biblioteka*; books issued reaching millions in print run. Book and newspaper sales in railway kiosks throughout most of Russia brought Suvorin a handsome profit. Apart from publishing, Suvorin was the owner of the first private theatre in Russia. His name was widely associated with success and wealth, although in fact the financial aspect of his gigantic *ménage* was very poorly managed.¹

However, this wealth did not make Suvorin happy. His family was shaken by conflicts and there were fights for access to money; his sons tried to pursue their own publishing projects at their father's expense; his wife had grown used to a comfortable life and did not confine herself to family duties. Suvorin was suffering from depression which was noticeable to people around him and which he tried to dispel by travelling abroad, by writing, and by his theatre. With the arrival of the 20th century, Suvorin was of course getting older, his health was failing him and his empire increasingly escaped his control, bringing him less income; and with the onset of the Russian revolutions his newspaper started to lose its popularity and became unprofitable. In 1912 Suvorin died of throat cancer, and the revolution of 1917 put an end to his newspaper as well as to his entire publishing business.

The decline of Suvorin's empire kept pace with the steady growth of the women's movement. By that time, the social base of the women's movement had attracted and involved tens of thousands of educated women of the new generation; a collective

¹ See: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru* (M., 1998), p. 277–300.

women's identity of a new sort was taking shape.² Having survived the crisis at the end of the 1890s, a crisis caused by the absence of ideology, the women's movement by 1905 had completed the third phase of its development. This resulted in something like a settled social structure of the movement, for example in established leaders, a front rank of active members as well as recognized clients. From 1905, there opened a new, clearly feministic stage of the movement which set itself the goal of attaining political equality and which advocated equal suffrage and the right of women to participate in governmental bodies. The feminist movement reached this goal in 1917.

In the period concerned and at the level of discourse, 'the woman question' was marked by an important event, the publication of the provocative novella *Kreitserova sonata* by Leo Tolstoy. The novella gave rise to an intense discussion of morals, both public and personal, with respect to the so-called 'sexual question' (*polovoi vopros*). At the turn of the century, the philosophers of the Silver Age took up the debate and extended 'the sexual question' into the realm of metaphysics. After the first Russian revolution of 1905, which caused political reaction and a general mood of social apathy, 'the sexual question' became associated with erotic practices of a decadent sort, while professional medicine launched a campaign for sexual continence. It is important to add that the growing political activity of women provoked or incited a distinct misogynistic drift in most official discourse associated with 'the woman question'.

In this chapter, I intend to trace Suvorin's participation in the discussion of *Kreitserova sonata* and in the debate on 'the sexual question' as a whole. I also involve Suvorin's fictional work (both published work and unpublished texts kept in the archives), and I shall pay particular attention to his short story 'V kontse veka', which was subsequently turned into a novel *V kontse veka: Liubov'* and finally into a play *Vopros*. Within the context of 'the sexual question', I examine Suvorin's collaboration with the philosopher Vasilii Rozanov. Additionally, the topic of Suvorin's theatre and its repertoire is briefly touched upon. Drawing from a private correspondence and also from the diaries of Sofiia Smirnova-Sazonova, I recreate certain telling episodes in Suvorin's life which were influenced and affected by domineering women; these episodes also help

² See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti* (SPb, 2007), pp. 220–225.

to delineate a picture of Suvorin's depression. This depression took a morbid turn and seriously complicated his life.

§ 1

In the summer of 1889, while Suvorin was touring Europe and was sending his *Malen'kie pis'ma* on the French parliamentary elections to *Novoe Vremia*, Leo Tolstoy was completing his novella *Kreitserova sonata*. This piece had undergone nine revisions, but well before reaching its final version, it became a sensation and was illegally circulated (in manuscripts and in lithographed reproduction) with an added subtitle: 'The Story of a Husband Who Killed His Wife'. Upon his return to Russia, Suvorin caught the Kreutzer fever and turned for help to the author himself:

3.1 Мне очень хочется прочесть Вашу повесть, которую читали здесь у Кузьминских и о которой я много слышал. Вы знаете, как я люблю Ваши вещи, а эта вещь особенно интересует меня. Когда-то Вы ее напечатаете, пожалуй, и не дожدهшься. Вам бы только написать, что я могу ее взять на один день у Кузьминских³.

Suvorin read the text immediately upon receipt and responded enthusiastically:

3.2 Все мы изгадились, изоврались, исфарисействовались, но, когда я чувствую, что в каждом слове глубокая правда, которая меня потрясает, и потрясает так, что я жалею о том, что не было такой книги, когда я был молод, что такая книга спасла бы меня от многих гадостей, которые я наделал, то как я могу говорить, что тут какой-то цинизм и даже посягательство на чистоту нравов? Я Вам говорю, что ничего подобного вы еще не писали, ни в одном Вашем сочинении нет такой нужной для всех правды, так изумительно просто выраженной⁴.

Censors banned the novella from publication. It was only on the 3rd of May 1891 that Tolstoy's wife, after an audience with the Tsar Aleksandr III, managed to obtain permission to include the novella in the 13th volume of Tolstoy's collected works to come out in June 1891. In the meantime, this novella, which undermined all conventional views on marriage, family, and love, gave rise to a wide discussion, although it could not be

³ OR Gosudarstvennogo muzeia L. N. Tolstogo. C-189. 46. Letter of 21.11.1889.

⁴ Ibid. Letter of 12.12.1889.

mentioned and quoted openly for censorship reasons.⁵ According to the writer's aunt, Aleksandra Tolstaia, '...even the most important political events could not have had a more powerful impact on the public.'⁶ As a number of researchers (for example, Engelstein, Møller, Kon, Stites) maintain, this discussion highlighted 'the sexual question' and not only became 'a self-consciously defined cultural issue', but also spilled over into professional medicine, turning into a campaign for sexual continence.⁷

Suvorin's reaction to the novella is very interesting: the work immediately evoked his own first marriage, which had ended with the murder of his unfaithful wife. Although Anna Ivanovna Baranova died by the hand of her lover, and not by any act of the cuckolded spouse, Suvorin seems never to have recovered from this tragedy. Even after 15 years, he made some vague reference to 'nasty things' and seems to confess that in one way or another (by act or omission) that he was bound up with the death of his first wife. On the other hand, for Suvorin, the novella also evoked his second marriage. Anna Ivanovna Orfanova, who stopped having children after 5 years of marriage and who tormented her husband with her infidelity, made an empty shell of their wedlock and made Suvorin a miserable and depressive person.

Being thoroughly impressed by the novella and finding it congenial to his beliefs, Suvorin joined the public discussion without hesitation. On dispatching his letter to Tolstoy, he published his *Malen'koe pis'mo* in *Novoe vremia*, arguing that a woman who evades childbirth inevitably succumbs to sexual indulgence, which in its turn leads to psychopathic personality disorders:⁸

3.3 Назначение женщины — быть хозяйкою в доме и матерью. Это прежде всего и лучше всего. <...> “Zwei Kindersystem” и проч. только извращают женский организм и вырождают его; та нервность, та психопатия, те изнурительные болезни и крайняя раздражительность, которые

⁵ For a detailed account of the discussion see: P. Møller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata: Tolstoy and the Debate on Sexual Morality in Russian Literature in the 1890s* (E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 128–163.

⁶ See: L. Tolstoy, *PSS*, in 90 vol. (M., L., 1928–1958), vol. 27, p. 588.

⁷ See, for example: L. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca and London, 1996), pp. 218–225.

⁸ Just like Tolstoy, Suvorin holds what might be considered a dilettante view on the causes of female hysteria and ignores contemporary scientific opinion, which tends to attribute this problem to sexual unfulfilment. These aspects of *Kreutzerova sonata* are thoroughly analyzed in: D. Rancour-Laferriere, *Tolstoy on the Couch: Mysogyny, Masochism and the Absent Mother* (Macmillan, 1998), pp. 58–93.

отличают современную женщину не у нас одних, а всюду в образованных слоях, лежат в значительной степени в этом добровольном извращении женского организма и его назначения⁹.

Having published twenty issues of his *Malen'koe pis'mo* on various topics from January to April in the new year of 1890, Suvorin announced that he was going to stand in for Viktor Burenin (who was making a trip abroad), to preserve the continuity of his Friday *Kriticheskie ocherki*. Returning to the proven genre of the feuilleton — allowing more scope for discussion — Suvorin took the opportunity to interpret the paradoxical Tolstoyan preaching of chastity for both men and women outside and even inside marriage.¹⁰ Suvorin's reflection upon this issue lasted for six weeks and resulted in eight full length feuilletons, thus presenting what is the longest piece in his journalism *apropos* 'the woman/sexual question'.

In his first two feuilletons entitled *Mnogozhenstvo ili edinozhenstvo?*¹¹ Suvorin insists on premarital chastity for young people of both sexes and also argues in favour of a 'proper and hygienic marital life'. According to Suvorin, chastity has its grounds in Darwin's theory: 'Knowledge and science advocate continence and a rational compliance with nature's laws; if these laws are broken, mankind degrades, gets neurotic, feeble-minded, and invertebrate.' Suvorin continues with what seems to be a bold propaganda move — by linking science and religion, he enhances his argument for an audience which is religious *en masse*: 'The Gospel preaching of marriage, of bodily purity and purity of heart, are now confirmed in the light of science.' However, Suvorin's next logical move takes a gynophobic turn: within evolutionism he discovers the theory of 'vital energy' which he had adopted as early as the 1870s: 'Herbert Spencer qualifies the energy spent on vice as a useless discharge.' Suvorin makes his argument more accurate: 'Affected by sexual excess, man's energy expires exactly when he needs it most.' Then he breaks into a passionate misogynistic tirade showing who is to blame for the man's wasted energy:

⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 29.12.1889.

¹⁰ Apart from the book by P. Møller, see the discussion of Tolstoy's idea of 'the radical chastity' in: A. Mandelker, *Framing Anna Karenina: Tolstoy, the Woman Question, and the Victorian Novel* (Columbus, 1993), pp. 30–33; O. Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Wisconsin University Press, 2005), pp. 46–56.

¹¹ *Novoe vremia*. 13.04.1890; 20.04.1890. His title Suvorin borrowed from a Norwegian writer Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson; see: P. Møller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 140.

3.4 Странная вещь: точно женщина и в самом деле мешает мужчине, точно она стала ему на пороге и не дает подняться духом, точно мужчина, гордый своим умом, своими дарованиями, своими стремлениями, чувствует себя привязанным к земле, к низменной пошлости женщиною. <...> Мне вспоминается выражение Бальзака, который сказал: «одна ночная оргия с женщиной берет столько сил, что их хватило бы на целый том». <...> Мужчина не может не сознавать, что высокие подвиги и помыслы разбиваются от соприкосновения женщин. <...> Что расслабляет человека, делает его праздным, вялым, ничтожным, безвольным, связано с женщиной¹².

Suvorin enlists the support of a rather reputable authority: ‘...and one of the greatest minds of our time, Schopenhauer, analysed woman with the cruelty of a misogynist.’ This same cruelty Suvorin finds in Tolstoy, as he writes about Tolstoy’s development as a writer and compares him with Turgenev:

3.5 Тургенев рисует любовь мягкими, поэтическими красками и занимается преимущественно тем временем, когда она развивается и растет. <...> У Толстого, напротив, вопрос о семейной жизни на переднем плане. <...> Толстой берет их [героев] именно в то время, когда Тургенев бросает <...> и начинает свой беспощадный анализ их жизни, доводя их иногда до гроба этой прозаической тропею. Если внимательно проследить сочинения Толстого, то его идеи о любви и браке можно изобразить лентою, цвет которой из розового становится черным по мере того, как накапливается ряд годов жизни автора, зреет его анализ, и исчезают иллюзии. Он мало держит читателей в поэзии любви, в ее радостях <...> и как будто торопится отравить ее страданиями и проявлениями животной страсти¹³.

The entire history of civilisation was assessed in misogynistic terms in the next of Suvorin’s feuilletons. Entitled *Что такое романтическаиа лиубов’?* it contained a critical analysis of the book *Romantic Love and Personal Beauty: Their Development, Causal Relations, Historic and National Peculiarities* by the American musician and critic, Henry Finck. Following the author’s scheme, Suvorin traces the history of romantic love from antiquity to modernity. He agrees with Finck’s argument that romantic love was impossible in those societies when women were paternalized, as in Ancient Greece or in Europe of the Middle Ages. However, Suvorin finds no other fault with paternalism and even speaks of its benefits:

¹² *Novoe vremia*. 20.04.1890.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 13.04.1890.

3.6 А вся эта [греко-римская] культура, все это высокое напряжение творческой деятельности <...> народилась и выросла совсем без романтической любви, почти при рабстве женщин, без всякого их участия в общественной жизни. Женщина рожала, кормила детей, вела домашнее хозяйство, <...> а все государственное и общественное дело, все то, где требовалась высокая мысль, разум, талант, гений, инициатива, высокое искусство — все это исполнил один мужчина...

In conclusion, he asks himself a question which enables him to return to the painful subject of woman's independence: 'Has humankind advanced more since woman liberated herself than it did while she was still a slave?'¹⁴ For Suvorin, the answer is self-obvious: 'Aspiring humankind is still too far from its ideal, and woman is still too far from man. Women's civilisation has not yet started.'

The book by Finck must have prompted Suvorin to consider this topic in the Russian historical context. His next feuilleton was entitled *Ocherk istorii russkoi zhenshchiny*,¹⁵ now after a book by the Russian historian, Serafim Shashkov. Having mildly reproached the author — 'When you read historians of Russian womankind, you notice that their goal is not history at all, but the promotion of liberal ideas' — Suvorin arrives at an optimistic conclusion: 'On the whole, our history is not stained by any particular hatred of women or by their enslavement.' Suvorin believes that Russians do not shun romantic love, which originates with Zhukovskii and Pushkin and is primarily rooted in countryside: 'Pushkin's Tat'iana, Turgenev's Liza, and Tolstoy's Natasha — they are all product of the country life. <...> Even Moscow has figured as country rather than city. The real city was Petersburg only.' However, the influence of the city on the history of Russian womenfolk, in Suvorin's opinion, had been a pernicious influence:

3.7 Петербург начал в шестидесятых годах и клеветы на историю русских женщин, и поднял так называемый женский вопрос. Он провозгласил, что русская женщина — раба, что она принижена, она кукла, она должна сознать свои права. О семье, о женщине как матери, как хозяйке, говорилось с презрением и негодованием.

At a distance of three decades the liberation of women is seen by Suvorin as a false step of History:

¹⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 4.05.1890.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.05.1890.

3.8 Появилась необыкновенная путаница в понятиях и правах. Начались фиктивные браки, девушки побежали от родителей, жены от мужей, мужья от жен... <...> Сколько тут было драм и слез, сколько разочарований! <...> Для этого времени еще не настала история, но когда она настанет, ее нельзя будет читать без негодования...

Now Suvorin changes his mind about women's education, a cause which he sincerely supported in the 60s; and his changed attitude is outwardly negative: '...the other side of the coin [i. e. women's education] was so ugly and the number of victims so great that, on the whole, the effort was not worth these miniscule results; results which might have been gained anyway and in a healthier form...' Suvorin's inevitable corollary is a claim regarding one supposedly disastrous outcome of women's emancipation, namely, the new sexual freedom allegedly enjoyed by women. Nearly a year prior to the publication of *Kreitserova sonata* he comments on the female right to birth-control and his argument comes very close to the text of Tolstoy's novella. Tolstoy's ideas are congenial to Suvorin because he had found himself in a similar situation in his own marriage:

3.9 Право наслаждения без обязанностей и без детей — вот та проповедь, которая показалась увлекательной для женщин, ибо осуществление этого идеала, т. е. неимение детей, приравнивало женщину к мужчине, даже ставило ее выше мужчины, т. е. свободнее его, ибо мужчина все-таки не мог сбросить с себя бремени работы для поддержания себя и своей половины, а половина могла только любить, любить и изменять¹⁶.

Suvorin does not openly confront Tolstoy's idea of total asceticism; however, his forecast for civilisation (seen through the lens of Darwin's theory) is even more dreadful and doom-laden than Tolstoy's, and he finds it important to share this forecast with his reader:

3.10 Отсюда уже недалеко до дальнейшего шага, когда брак можно совсем побоку, и начнется настоящая вражда, последняя вражда за существование между мужчиной и женщиной — и они поедят друг друга. Поэтому когда Толстой говорит, что мир может прекратиться от воздержания и целомудрия, то это не особенно страшно: он прекратится мирно и тихо. <...> Но прекратиться во вражде, в борьбе за существование — это нечто вроде пришествия Антихриста.

¹⁶ See Suvorin's letters to his wife in 1885 (chapter. 2, p. 127).

In 1872, while writing for *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, Suvorin jocularly predicted that women's liberation would result in the fall of male civilisation and the enslavement of men. But the current forecast seems to frighten him and, rather unexpectedly, he suggests a way out, giving a last chance to women. Suvorin's final conclusion echoes Tolstoy's treatise *Tak chto zhe nam delat'?* (1886) and like Tolstoy in his closing passage, Suvorin addresses women, beseeching them to restrict their mission to child bearing and rearing:

3.11 Мир спасется тою женщиною, которая будет исполнять божеские законы, а не тою, которая станет презирать их и заботиться исключительно о самой себе... <...> Если бы женщины понимали все, что заключается в домашней сфере, никогда бы не потребовали они для себя никакой другой сферы деятельности. <...> Что бы женщина ни выдумала, что бы она ни произвела в сфере умственного и артистического труда, все-таки лучше детей она ничего не выдумает¹⁷.

Again, in his last feuilleton, Suvorin takes stock of women's struggle for their rights and does them an injustice, closing his eyes to the obvious achievements of women's emancipation. Implicitly, his only concern seems to be yet again, the 'vital energy' which was wasted by women in their useless pursuits:

3.12 Женщины и девушки 60-х годов, так много жертвовавшие собою на алтарь политики и Амура, не произвели решительно ничего выдающегося ни в литературе, ни в искусстве, ни в науке, ни в своем верховном призвании, т. е. не родили ни одного замечательного человека, но, вероятно, много слабых, ничтожных и больных людей, нимало не думая о том, что они в каждом ребенке пускают в мир целые поколения¹⁸.

Participating in a wide public discussion on public and personal morals, Suvorin must have been aware of his role as the editor of a newspaper with the biggest print-run in Russia. Assuming a serious moral responsibility for his ideas, he directly addresses his readers, encouraging them to independent thinking but also offering them some discreet and judicious guidelines:

¹⁷ Cf.: 'Such women who fulfil their mission [of child bearing and rearing] reign over men, and serve as a guiding star to mankind; such women form the public opinion and prepare the coming generation; and therefore in their hands lies the highest power, the power to save men from the existing and threatening evils of our time. Yes, women, mothers, in your hands more than in those of anyone else lies the salvation of the world.' (L. Tolstoy, *Sobranie sochinenii*, in 22 vol. (M., 1978–1985), vol. 16, pp. 392–393.) Translated by A. Maude, in L. Tolstoy, *What Then Must We Do?* (OUP, 1950), p. 173.

¹⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 25.05.1890.

3.13 Несомненно, однако, что средний русский человек распространился по русской земле, распространился работник полезный, знающий цену и силу интеллигентного труда. <...> Он стал недоверчиво относиться к разным якобы бесспорным положениям и увлечениям историческим и экономическим. <...> Русская мысль бесспорно начинает работать самостоятельно. <...> Но в этой средней полосе русского самосознания <...> едва ли старые заветы гармонично слились с новыми.

On the whole the debate around *Kreitserova sonata* had a conservative drift and the tendency was to defend marriage as an institution, family values, and childbirth. In his newspaper Suvorin also entreated the public to observe ‘old canons’ (*starye zavety*) and what is more, he displayed his conservative views openly, without resorting to any stylistic devices like irony. However, he is trying now to merge ‘old canons’ with new ones, in effect he is attempting to modernize conservatism. It is obvious that Suvorin was spurred by Tolstoy’s novella, but he must also have been influenced, if through a glass darkly, by evolutionary theory of the time, and in particular by popularizations suggesting ‘degeneration’ of the human race; the latter interpreting sexual dissipation as a sign of ‘degeneration’.¹⁹ Accordingly, if tortuously, women’s emancipation which seems to ensure sexual freedom for woman, is presented by Suvorin as an abnormal phenomenon.

Pursuing his conservative line, Suvorin welcomed to *Novoe vremia* one of the most odious of Russian journalists, Aleksandr D’iakov (pen-name Zhitel’), and allowed full newspaper space for his misogynistic attacks. As Aleksandr Amfiteatrov commented, ‘he [D’iakov] was an extremely difficult person, morbidly suspicious, bitterly quarrelsome, ridden you might almost say by some kind of psychosis and sometimes insufferable.’²⁰ In 1891, D’iakov published a collection of his feuilletons from *Novoe vremia* as a book entitled *Nashi damy*, and even in his obituary critics could not find a good word for him:

3.14 Еще больше озлобления и страстности <...> Дьяков высказал, касаясь вопроса о разложении семьи. <...> Житель обличает современную русскую женщину, обвиняя ее в продажности, в жажде низменных наслаждений, в неверности мужу и в бесчисленном множестве пороков. <...> Требуя

¹⁹ Besides Darwin and Spencer, whom Suvorin quotes in his feuilletons, he also kept in his private library the books by B. A. Morel (*Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés malades*, 1857), as well as by H. Maudsley whose book *Organic to Human: Psychological and Sociological* was published in Russian in 1886 under the title *Nasledstvennost' v zdorov'e i v bolezni*.

²⁰ A. Amfiteatrov, ‘Anton Chekhov i A. S. Suvorin: Otvetnye mysli’, in *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebia i dlia mnogikh* (M., 2004), p. 471.

безусловной верности и покорности от жены, он не предъявлял никаких требований к мужу, а на всякое проявление женской самостоятельности Дьяков смотрел крайне подозрительно²¹.

Suvorin also discussed *Kreitserova sonata* with Chekhov. He even wrote Chekhov's immediate reaction to the novella down in his notebook: 'This is so good that I shall definitely marry — to kill my wife.'²² However, having visited Sakhalin, Chekhov changed his view on Tolstoy's piece: 'Before my trip *Kreitserova sonata* was a great event to me, but now I find it ridiculous and incoherent. Either I have grown up after the trip, or have gone mad — God knows which!'²³

In the meantime, Tolstoy received countless responses to his novella, as well as requests to clarify his position. For this purpose, he wrote *Posleslovie k Kreitserovoi Sonate*, which was published together with his novella in the 13th volume of his collected works. Suvorin, now able to discuss the novella openly, dedicated his *Malen'koe pis'mo* No LIV to it. Tolstoy's new piece, in which the writer identifies Pozdnyshv's ethics with his own views, gave rise to bewilderment on the part of Suvorin and to a rejection of the work: 'To begin with, why did he write it at all? <...> To clarify *Kreitserova sonata* and to make it more influential? But I really think that Count Tolstoy has achieved the opposite effect.'²⁴

Providing his readers with a summary of *Posleslovie*, Suvorin openly repudiates Tolstoy's idea of radical chastity, now considering sexual love as a saving grace for humankind. Like Tolstoy, he draws his counter-arguments in the religious doctrine:

3.15 Если в основе христианства лежит любовь к ближнему, любовь к людям, то не может лежать в нем отчаяние за род человеческий. А допуская, что половая любовь есть падение, грех, отступление от христианского учения, надо допустить, что Христос совершенно отчаивался за человечество и не видел для него другого пути, кроме самоуничтожения. Я не могу себе представить ни чувством, ни рассудком, что Христос явился на землю для того, чтобы сказать людям, чтобы они как можно скорее помогли друг другу уничтожиться...

²¹ Pl. Krasnov, 'Satirik npravov (A. D'iakov)', in *Trud: Vestnik literatury i nauki*, 28 (1895), pp. 213–214.

²² I. Gitovich (author and complier), *Kratkaia letopis' zhizni i tvorчества A. P. Chekhova*, in www.chekhoved.com/biblio?chapter=2625247

²³ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 4, p. 147. Letter of 17.12.1890.

²⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 5.02.1891.

On the whole, Suvorin is greatly disappointed in the *Posleslovie*, because like many others, he tends to distinguish between Tolstoy as a writer and Tolstoy as a thinker:²⁵

3.16 ...Вся повесть казалась мне шедевром по форме и по содержанию. Я чувствовал всю ту правду, которую Позднышев говорит о воспитании, о женщинах, о браке. <...> Но, чувствуя эту фактическую правду, даже пораженный ею, я отметал все крайние выводы Позднышева... И вот вдруг Толстой подтверждает своим «Послесловием» мнение архиепископа Никанора, что автор «Крейцеровой сонаты» «влагает ему (Позднышеву) в уста не что иное, как свои возлюбленные, известные толстовские идеи...»

Suvorin reproaches Tolstoy for associating himself with his protagonist, but he refuses to concede that his novella could have biographical features:

3.17 Автор «Крейцеровой сонаты» — счастливейший человек не потому только, что высоко стоит среди мировых писателей, но и потому, что семейная жизнь его одна из счастливейших. Желать больше счастья, чем он всегда его имел, было бы бессовестно, по крайней мере, с точки зрения среднего человека. И если Толстой говорит, что брак есть падение человека, что безбрачие и уничтожение рода человеческого является высшим идеалом человека, то ему решительно никто не поверит...

In fact, Suvorin was well received in Tolstoy's house and was likely to know what was going on in Tolstoy's family behind the façade. Still it is not quite clear why he chose to widely advertise Tolstoy's family happiness.²⁶ Perhaps Suvorin was, after all, insufficiently informed about Tolstoy's family situation, but what seems to be more probable is that it was more important for Suvorin to cultivate Tolstoy's image as the head of a quintessentially patriarchal landed family, which is happy by definition and which he had so ardently defended in his recent feuilletons.

²⁵ Suvorin insisted on this distinction more than once: '...for me as for the Russian people *en masse*, he [Tolstoy] seems to be admirable and pleasing not as a religious preacher but as a great artist' (*Novoe vremia*. 8.03.1895).

²⁶ On biographical features of the novella see D. Rancour-Lafferriere, *Tolstoy on the Couch*, pp. 190–191; V. Zhdanov, *Liubov' v zhizni L'va Tolstogo* (M., 1993), p. 206; W. Shirer, *Love and Hatred: The Troubled Marriage of Leo and Sonya Tolstoy* (London, 1994), p. 129; L. Smoluchowski, *Lev and Sonya: The Story of the Tolstoy Marriage* (New York, 1988), p. 155. In 1892, insulted by her husband's piece, Sofiia Tolstaia wrote a novella *Ch'ia vina? Po povodu 'Kreitserovoi sonaty'*.

Chekhov rejected *Posleslovie* too, but unlike Suvorin, he had no doubts that Tolstoy drew his material from his family life:

3.18 Толстой отказывает человечеству в бессмертии, но, боже мой, сколько тут личного! Я третьего дня читал его «Послесловие». Убейте меня, но это глупее и душнее, чем «Письма к губернаторше» [письма Гоголя к А. О. Смирновой-Россет], которые я презираю²⁷.

As it can be seen from their correspondence, no further discussion of *Kreitserova sonata* followed. However, Suvorin must have agreed with Chekhov and intended to take his disagreement with Tolstoy even further: some newspaper proofs survive, in which Suvorin dubs *Kreitserova sonata* as ‘a cry from Tolstoy’s own heart and from his own weakened body.’ He no longer considers *Kreitserova sonata* as an original and novel piece, because ‘one can find similar ideas in certain sects without so much as leaving Moscow.’²⁸ Still, *Kreitserova sonata* did Suvorin a good turn, since it allowed him to enlighten the mass reader on a number of important moral issues as well as to observe what are, arguably, certain extremes in Tolstoy’s philosophy. However, Suvorin refused to disseminate his ideas any further and turned down the offer, made to him by Vladimir Chertkov, to publish his feuilletons as a book:

3.19 Вы любезно предложили издать несколько моих статей, в которых я говорю о целомудрии. Я не считаю их стоящими отдельного издания. Кроме того, по мере позднего, к сожалению, знакомства с историей христианства, я нахожу, что вопрос целомудрия такой же сложный и неразрешимый вопрос, как вопрос о царствии небесном. Кто может производить здоровых детей, тот да производит их, нимало не смущаясь, и да воспитает из них хороших граждан²⁹.

§ 2

There is reason to assume that *Kreitserova sonata* affected Suvorin deeply and that, under the influence of that dark novella, he found similarities in his own family life. His depression was noticeable to people around him, particularly to Sofiia Smirnova-Sazonova. Their friendly relations resumed after a short break:

²⁷A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 4, p. 277. Letter of 8.09.1891.

²⁸Op cit.: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru* (M., 1998), p. 200.

²⁹RGALI. F. 552, op. 1, ed. 2657. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k V. G. Chertkovu. L. 16–16ob. Letter of 5.07.1892.

3.20 Встретила на Невском Суворина, с которым мы не виделись несколько лет. Он только что вернулся из Феодосии, жалуется на скуку, на одышку, на то, что ко всему равнодушен. <...> Прощаясь, повторил мне опять, что сохраняет обо мне самые лучшие воспоминания³⁰.

Suvorin tried to dispel the gloom by writing. As always, he shared his ideas with Chekhov, who was ever willing to comment and encouraged Suvorin to continue:

3.21 Напрасно Вы бросили Марину Мнишек; из всех исторических блядишек она едва ли не самая колоритная. А что касается ее отношения ко всему русскому, то ведь на это начхать можно. Русские сами по себе, а она сама по себе, да и слишком она баба и мелка, чтобы придавать значение ее воззрениям³¹.

This idea of casting an exceptional woman as a protagonist, discussed between the two, evolved into the play *Tsar' Dmitri Samozvanets i tsarevna Kseniia*. It was documented by Smirnova-Sazonova in her diary: '[Suvorin] was talking to [Mariia] Ermolova about his newly conceived play, *Samozvanets*.³² However, the play was put aside for a few years, since it required a thorough study of the relevant historical period. Another Suvorin's project proved to be more urgent. An idea of this project can be glimpsed from his long feuilleton *Nasha poeziia i belletristika*, in which he critically analyzes the entire Russian literature of the day:

3.22 Что за герои и героини у наших писателей? <...> Ничего нового не встретишь, всё погудки на старый лад. <...> Беллетристы просто не знают много такого, что знать им следует... Наука физиологии, патологии, психологии остается им неизвестна... <...> Мир болезненно-нравственных явлений, странный, разнообразный мир нашим беллетристам <...> мало известен <...>. То, что наука признала уже не предрассудком народным, не пустым суеверием, а действительно жизненным явлением, болезненным или вызываемым особенным свойством человеческой природы (гипнотизм, внушение и проч.), <...> у беллетристов продолжает быть предрассудком, и они упражняются в насмешках над ним³³.

This feuilleton was seen as a literary manifesto of sorts. According to certain modern researchers, 'it was a benchmark for *naturalistic* literature, just as Merezhkovskii

³⁰ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 18. L. 382. Entry of 20.10.1890.

³¹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP. P*, vol. 3, p. 291. Letter of 25.11.1889.

³² OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 18. L. 96. Entry of 9.02.1891.

³³ *Novoe vremia*. 11.05.1890.

will soon have defined the objectives for *modernistic* literature (italics are the author's — *O. M.*).³⁴ Suvorin suggested some ideas for renovating literature, one of them being his advice to authors 'to choose a certain corner as a speciality and to try to become if not a master, then at least a good worker in it.'

It appears that Suvorin himself had chosen one of those corners and had decided to contribute to literature by plunging into 'the world of morbid moral phenomena.' Picking up the fashionable literary ideas of the closing 19th century, Suvorin sat down to write a short story with a relevant title: 'V kontse veka (*Fin de Siècle*)'. This formula was in the air and, indeed, had already served as a title for Dmitrii Merezhkovskii's poem *Konets veka*; by that very time his collection of poems was at Suvorin's printing house. (Suvorin took a keen interest in Merezhkovskii and regarded him with favour, while in *Novoe vremia*, Viktor Burenin, Aleksandr D'iakov and Fedor Bulgakov methodically and ruthlessly attacked both Decadence and Symbolism with their scathing satire.³⁵)

Suvorin's story, while still a manuscript, was read by Chekhov. In his letters to the author, he analysed the story very thoroughly and suggested improvements. Initially, co-authorship was considered: 'You said that we would write the story together. If this is the arrangement, then do not finish it and leave a little bit for me.'³⁶ Assessing the story, Chekhov did not stint on praise and even advised the author to build on his success:

3.23 Теперь я понимаю, почему Вы плохо спите по ночам. Если бы я написал такой рассказ, то не спал бы десять ночей подряд. <...> И страшно, и со спиритизмом согласно. <...> Идея рассказа хороша, содержание фантастично и интересно. Вы напишите десяток таких страшных рассказов, выйдет книжка, которая не залежится³⁷.

The story was published in the Christmas issue of *Novoe vremia* on December 25th 1891 as 'a Christmas tale' aiming not only to attract as many readers as possible but

³⁴ See: *Russkaia literatura rubezha vekov (1890-e — nachalo 1920-kh godov)*, ed. by V. Keldysh et al. (M., 2000), book 1, p. 229. The authors mean a lecture by D. Merezhkovskii 'O prichinakh upadka russkoi literatury' (26.10.1892, 8.12.1892), which was later published as a book *O prichinakh upadka i o novykh techeniakh russkoi literatury* (January 1893).

³⁵ On relations between Suvorin and Merezhkovskii see, for example, E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelavshii kar'eru*, pp. 367–371.

³⁶ A. Chekhov, *PSSP. P.*, vol. 4, p. 308. Letter of 30.11.1891. The end of the story written by Chekhov and offered to Suvorin in his letter of 13.12.1891 is missing.

³⁷ A. Chekhov, *PSSP. P.*, vol. 4, p. 323. Letter of 13.12.1891; P. 329. Letter of 15.12.1891.

also to shock them. And indeed, Suvorin obtained the desired effect. A day after, the famous artist Il'ia Repin hastened to share his opinion with the author:

3.24 Вчерашняя повесть³⁸ Ваша производит сильное впечатление. Тут много художественности, глубины мысли и чувства. По богатству ситуаций, по изяществу эта вещь выдается из современной литературы. <...> Только я не выношу этой перемеси фантастического с реальным... <...> И, мне кажется, Вы умышленно, по какому-то принципу (*fin de siècle*) переплетаете то серьезное, глубокое чувство правды жизни, которым Вы полны, Вы завертываете его в изношенные лохмотья романтизма. Эти когда-то прекрасные материи никого уже теперь не прельщают. Разве только что перекрашенные в модные цвета необыкновенных оттенков, в Париже, они появились на плечах декадентов³⁹.

In principle, the Christmas tale genre suggests a mixture of fantasy and reality, although Suvorin's story, which has no happy ending, exceeds the conventional limits of the genre and delivers what has been termed 'its antagonistic variety'⁴⁰: the tale is dark and ends tragically. Repin, however, a profound realist himself, was quick to spot artificiality in all those fantastical, mystical and even gothic twists of plot which pervade the story. The rich decadent setting employed was needed to construct the protagonist, Varvara Sergeevna Murina, and Suvorin now continued to examine his favourite type, the so-called 'odd woman', under the cover of mysticism.

Indeed, Varia is a visionary with strong spiritual talents, expelled from a convent 'on suspicion of being possessed' and believed by peasant women to be a witch. She communicates with her guardian angel, eavesdrops on conversations of the dead at a cemetery and is able to separate from her astral body; she also has a suicidal propensity and mood swings amounting to hysterical fits. When she first meets the other protagonist, Andrei Mikhailovich Vitalin, he is greatly attracted:

3.25 Варенька ему чрезвычайно понравилась и показалась девушкой из ряда вон по уму, образованию, оригинальности, независимости взглядов и увлекательному красноречию. Она знала ботанику, отличала геологические пласты, многое знала из астрономии, химии, писала стихи, в которых не было ни слова о любви, но много о природе, о небе, о любви к человечеству.

³⁸ The story makes up 13 full newspaper columns (or nearly two pages), comprises 8 chapters and can be regarded as a novella.

³⁹ I. Repin, *Pis'ma k pisateliam i literaturnym deiateliam: 1880–1920* (M., 1950), pp. 84–85. Letter of 26.12.1891.

⁴⁰ See: E. Dushechkina, *Russkii sviatochnyi rasskaz: Stanovlenie zhanra* (SPb, 1995), pp. 142–149.

Vitalin, a tall and handsome blond of high administrative rank, is 35 years of age, but already, despite his surname suggesting ‘vitality’, is depicted as a man ‘with a tired face and an absentminded look’. He is exhausted by life and by women: ‘he had lost count of his loves, and the longer he lived, the easier it was for him to start an affair.’ However, having fallen ‘madly’ in love with Varia and seeking reciprocity, Vitalin meets resistance:

3.26 О браке она говорила с ненавистью и клялась, что никогда ни один мужчина не будет иметь чести называться ни ее мужем, ни ее любовником. Больше дружбы она ничего не может дать, да чтобы и в дружбе главенствовала она, потому что она считает себя умнее всех мужчин и призвана совершить что-то необыкновенное и великое.

Varia fails to explain what her mission amounts to, but she has no doubts: ‘A woman ought to rule the world.’ However, in a short while and with a full measure of banality, she falls into a trap set by Vitalin:

3.27 Увидев, что никакие соблазны не действуют на Вареньку, что о браке она и думать не хочет, он в одну из тех минут, о которых говорится, что человек не владеет собой, воспользовался правами близкого человека и друга, и Варенька стала его любовницей.

For Varia, the aftermath of this love affair proves catastrophic, since her virginity had figured, in her own mind heretofore, as a token of her great mission. Vitalin notes the change in Varia: ‘She could no longer sing, her ability to mesmerize was gone, she was no longer the restless person of old, she had lost interest in everything that excited her earlier.’

Varia’s condescension as regards men turned into hatred: ‘I am pure bitch. If I could, I’d just wipe men out. I’d use a gun on the lot of you!..’ Varia parts with Vitalin without regret and leaves for Nancy and then for Paris, to study hypnotism at Jean-Martin Charcot’s clinic. She returns to Saint Petersburg as ‘half actress, half cocotte’ and enjoys success in high society. Vitalin fails to restore his relationship with her, because she attempts to fulfill her great mission in a radically new way: she evolves ‘a brave plan to become the wife or lover of a powerful and tremendously rich man and to direct his activities for the benefit of the people and enlightenment.’ At the same time, Varia suffers from her sinful life, and when she sees Vitalin, she shares her indignation with him:

3.28 Мы дикие и подлые... Есть семья, мы ею не занимаемся, нет семьи — мы устраиваем себе семью из любовников и всякой ничего не делающей и скучающей дряни. <...> Я не хочу этого. Или обо мне станут кричать по всему миру, или я умру...

Having finished her passionate speech, Varia leaves Vitalin's flat 'without shaking his hand.' In a few hours, he gets the message that she 'is dying.' Rushing to her flat, Vitalin finds her wounded; to his question: 'Who shot you?' she replies: 'It was you'. Investigators cannot determine whether they are dealing with an attempted murder or with an attempted suicide, because Varia refuses to answer questions, and Vitalin becomes a suspect. Vitalin's boss, a minister, has to interfere to hush up the affair. A year having passed, Vitalin finds out that Varia, since decamped, has died abroad, allegedly of consumption. He tries to distract himself by taking up Spiritism and involves himself in numerous love affairs. Eventually he chooses his boss's daughter, Natasha, and decides to marry her. Natasha, who knows about his affair with Varia, feels sorry for Vitalin: 'That strange and wild woman, who died under suspicious circumstances, couldn't understand and appreciate him, she did nothing but exhaust him.'

Equally suspicious things begin to happen to Vitalin. He is visited by a ghost, 'a small lady in black,' who roundly accuses him: 'You loved too much, too much... You will pay for that. <...> I shall take your life, like you took mine.' Vitalin is having auditory hallucinations; then a book he is reading is mysteriously replaced with a different book; finally Varia comes to him in a dream as a spectre and tells him the story of her murder. She was shot, it now appears, by her cousin Murin, 'a pure and loving person' (studying to become a priest), who had lost hope of saving her from her wanton life. The wound was not in fact life-threatening, but Varia, unable to overcome her 'sinful and mean intentions,' aggravates her wound and dies from complications. Varia tells him that her death ought to lie heavy on his conscience, as he was guilty of her fall and had delivered her to ultimate perdition:

3.29 Ты взял меня обманом и силою, когда я не думала о любви... <...> Во мне лежали другие великие силы, и они росли для блага людей... Я была бы такою женщиной, какие рождаются веками, и ты убил во мне эти великие силы, разбудив, развив во мне страсть, которая поглотила их.

Finally, Varia attempts to strangle Vitalin and he wakes up in horror. A little later, he receives a parcel with ‘a beautifully crafted’ female skeleton and beneath it finds a letter from Varia. Having repeated her accusations — ‘I was born to make the world happy, but you took everything from me and you took everything from yourself’ — and having called him a coward, she suggests that he put her skeleton in his bedroom. Vitalin follows her request in order to test his courage. The skeleton watches Vitalin and Natasha making love and comes to life, gaining flesh everywhere except on its hands which remain ‘bony limbs, ugly pendants.’ Having given Vitalin a good whack on his head with the bony pendant, Varia takes him to the frozen Neva River. Suddenly, she grows ‘long white wings’⁴¹ and crying ‘You are a nothing, a nothing!’ she flies away, ‘quicker than the wind.’ Chasing her, Vitalin disappears without trace.

In the abstract then, the public was again presented, now in colourful gift wrapping, with a ‘conservative’ set of views on woman’s place in a man’s world. An extraordinary woman, who thought that she was destined to make the world happy, succumbs, predictably, to carnal desire and turns into an ‘ordinary wench’. She rejects marriage (the only path to salvation, according to Suvorin), whilst the alternative, existence as ‘an educated cocotte’, drives her to suicide. Suvorin clearly indicates that a woman’s ambition to surpass a man is entirely fatal. For all the heroine’s talents, any sympathy for her on the author’s part is difficult to detect, although he allows her revenge upon Vitalin for the ‘taking of her virtue’ and she drowns him in the Neva. The decadent setting of the story seems to overshadow its moral, although a new topic, that is of female chastity, begins to show, obviously prompted by the debate around *Kreitserova sonata*.

Suvorin followed Chekhov’s advice to continue his writings on unusual subject-matter of this kind and recycled this particular short story of 8 chapters into a novel of 21 chapters. Entitled *V kontse veka*, it was published in installments in the Saturday supplement to *Novoe vremia* appearing over three months, from December 12th 1892 to March 20th 1893. As a result, a mystical short story was converted into a novel of ideas. Suvorin’s cherished thoughts about the virtues of chastity and Christian marriage were

⁴¹ Apart from ‘the lady in black’ and posthumous phantoms, clearly evoked by Turgenev’s novella *Klara Milich*, Suvorin exploits another Turgenev image, namely, the mythical winged woman Ellis, from the novella *Prizraki* (1864), and what is more, does so for the second time: initially, he had used it in his feuilleton *Neobyknovennoe puteshestvie* (1875), borrowing Ellis to travel around Europe and to visit historical spots and famous personalities.

put into the mouth of a priest to be, Aleksei Vladimirovich Murin, and fortified with extended quotes from Plato, Tertullian, St John the Theologian, Blessed Jerome, Friedrich Schleiermacher, David Friedrich Straus, Ernest Renan and others.

Chekhov, who was reading the novel as it appeared, encouraged the author with great enthusiasm:

3.30 Ваша повесть мне чрезвычайно понравилась. Я прочел ее в два присеста с тем вниманием и интересом, с каким читаются одни только захватывающие вещи. В ней очень много свежего, нового и чертова пропасть умения⁴².

However, moving from compliments to delicate criticism, Chekhov found some faults in the novel composition: ‘It is obvious that you approached your novella at least twenty times; it is like an even and picturesque road which is broken off by twenty tunnels.’⁴³ Chekhov found the novel interesting exactly because in his mind, its purpose was ‘to frighten the reader and to wreck the nerves.’ For that very reason, he protested against Suvorin’s attempts to weight his novel with moralizing:

3.31 Первая часть до появления молодого Мурина показалась мне замечательной по оригинальности, и я чуть не заревел от ужаса, когда явился церковник Мурин и своим целомудрием никому ненужным и неинтересным, заслонил и затуманил образ грешной, но единственной в нашей литературе Вари. <...> ...Целомудренный Мурин не колоритен, да и не верит ему читатель, так как он ничего еще не испытал и не имеет истинного представления о грехе, а стало быть, и о страдании. Легко тому рассуждать о целомудрии, кто еще ни разу не спал с женщиной!⁴⁴

Chekhov suggested a radical amendment to the novel, namely an excision of the character Murin, the preacher of chastity:

3.32 Так вот — нельзя ли вместо Мурина выпустить Виталина? Пусть Виталин в конце застрелится, но это все-таки лучше, чем Мурин. Да Вы и сами чувствуете в Мурине что-то не то, так как разговор его с Варей самое неинтересное место во всей повести... <...> Ему не поверят, и всё то, что он говорит, отнесут к Вашему желанию высказаться и припишут Вам⁴⁵.

⁴² A. Chekhov, *PSSP., P.*, vol. 5, p. 89. Letter of 6.07.1892.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

Following Chekhov's advice, Suvorin did excise 'a tirade about Tolstoy', but kept intact Murin's discourse on German theologians, which spanned two chapters. Suvorin had thoroughly read up for his novel, and Smirnova-Sazonova documented this fact in her diary: 'Now he only reads philosophy and theology, Schleiermacher and someone else. We talked about hypnotism, about miracles and mysteries. Suvorin does not believe in God, but he believes in three candles.'⁴⁶

Suvorin's contemporary, critic Akim Volynskii, treated Suvorin's theological studies and their reflection in the novel with irony: 'This novel is not a novel, but some learned treatise on a religious subject.'⁴⁷ On the whole, Volynskii concentrated on the anti-Semitism in Suvorin's novel and skipped the analysis of its artistic merits:

3.33 О самом романе мы скажем немного. Г. Суворин не обладает талантом художника и потому неудивительно, что произведение его не отличается никакими сколько-нибудь заметными беллетристическими достоинствами. <...> Вся суть романа — в его многочисленных цитатах из отцов церкви, в той веренице чудес, которые проходят перед глазами читателя. Гипнозизм, духовидение, возвышенные рассуждения на серьезные темы — вот что придает пикантность новому произведению г. Суворина⁴⁸.

However, researchers of subsequent centuries have managed to read some serious religious ideas into the novel. For instance, Gennadii Shaliugin found an idealistic interpretation of *fin de siècle* and its problems based on the 'Tolstoyan-cum-evangelical idea of "active love" as a road to world salvation,'⁴⁹ while Natalia Starygina discovered 'a fictional implementation of the biblical motif "to fall in order to ascend."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 20. L. 477. Entry of 26.03.1892. See also a later Suvorin's confession in his *Malen'koe pis'mo*: 'I am a poor Christian and perhaps not a Christian at all (*Novoe vremia*. 26.02.1901.); Dmitrii Merezhkovskii recalled a somewhat heretical saying of Suvorin's: 'The Devil only knows whether God exists.' (Op. cit.: E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru*, p. 320.) In Russian folk belief, three candles lit together are endued with magical power. It seems likely that the diarist is observing a contradiction of belief on Suvorin's part in religious matters; moreover, a contradiction which bears structural comparison to contradictions elsewhere in his system of beliefs.

⁴⁷ <A. Volynskii>, 'V kontse veka, liubov'. Roman A. S. Suvorina', in *Severnyi vestnik*, 8 (1893), p. 74.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴⁹ See: G. Shaliugin, 'A. P. Chekhov i "bol'shaia" gazetno-zhurnal'naia pressa 80–90-kh gg. 19 v.': Dis. ... kand. filol. nauk (M., 1979), pp. 179–184.

⁵⁰ See: N. Starygina, *Russkii roman v situatsii filosofsko-religioznoi polemiki 1860–1870-kh gg* (M., 2003), pp. 328–331.

Suvorin's novel was also seen as a debate with the ideology of Turgenev's novel *Nakanune*, and specifically with its concept of female behaviour.⁵¹ According to Elena Nymm, Suvorin contrasts Varia, who came to hate Vitalin after sex with him, with Turgenev's Elena Stakhova, who in the same sort of situation, only grew more confident in her love for Insarov and followed him to Bulgaria. However, in this case the researcher does not seem to consider the asymmetry of male characters: while Elena Stakhova says 'Take all of me' to her highly moral revolutionary hero, Varia almost by accident becomes the victim of a worthless womanizer. It is also important that Varia's high mission does not suggest any male participation in whatever high project is attempted.

It is crucial to note, however, that none of the mentioned modern researchers has read the novel to the end. They all deal with a version of the novel which was published in 1893 as a book entitled *V kontse veka, liubov'* immediately after the newspaper publication and fully duplicating it. In the newspaper version the novel ends as Varia, recovering from a wound inflicted by a fanatic nun,⁵² goes abroad with her father. Suvorin had not finished any of his plotlines, but yet again had simply interrupted or relinquished his narration, although in this present case, he offered an explanation: 'Editor's note. Due to A. Suvorin's departure abroad, a continuation of the novel *V kontse veka*, which will form an independent section, is postponed until further notice.'⁵³

Being the owner of the relevant publishing house and also of a print-shop, Suvorin could apparently afford to issue his unfinished novel as a separate book. In 1893, the novel came out in two identical editions, the second having a slightly modified title: *V kontse veka. Liubov'*. On the whole, the novel saw six reprints, with the third, revised and enlarged version appearing only in 1898; this subject will be further examined below.

§ 3

Patronizing Suvorin the writer, Chekhov also gave him a piece of medical advice: 'I would not recommend any remedy for boredom and a bad mood other than the writing of

⁵¹ See: E. Nymm, 'O literaturnoi pozitsii Suvorina', in *Russkaia filologiia* (Tartu, 1999), vol. 10, pp. 79–85.

⁵² This scene is depicted by Suvorin with great vividness: the nun Serafima, sneaking into Varia's room at dawn, seems sexually attracted to her; in the event, she has a hysterical fit and, as if trying to exorcise some devil which possesses Varia, attacks the unfortunate woman with a knife.

⁵³ *Novoe vremia*. 20.03.1893. Cf. the entry in Suvorin's diary of 19.03.1893: 'Tomorrow, I am setting off for Venice. My fellow traveller is Dmitrii Grigorovich' (*Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 109).

plays and novellas.’⁵⁴ However, depression was haunting Suvorin, and this was documented by Smirnova-Sazonova: ‘Tonight at Suvorin’s. <...> Suvorin is in a state of melancholy. <...> Suvorin says that I bear a strong resemblance to his first wife.’⁵⁵ Smirnova, whose marriage to Nikolai Sazonov was far from blissful, was willing to share with Suvorin:

3.34 Если Вы будете не в духе и будете ломать мебель и бросать вещи на пол, я Вам помогу. Такое настроение мне тоже знакомо, но одной как-то совестно приводить его в исполнение, а вдвоем можно. Вообще, между нами удивительная гармония. Я думаю, что никто Вас так не понимает, как я. Недаром наша дружба выдержала 17-летнее испытание, и я имею от Вас жетон за долготелную верность⁵⁶.

Suvorin’s diary also reveals his feelings:

3.35 Что это за жизнь, которую я провел? Вся в писании. Блестки счастья, да и то больше того счастья, которое дается успехом удачной статьи, удачной пьесы, а простого истинного счастья, счастья любви, почти не было⁵⁷.

As usual, Suvorin tried to dispel his gloom in foreign travel and most of the year 1893 he spent in Europe. But there he was also feeling unsettled and his diary notes are punctuated with complaints about physical distress and loneliness. When in Milan, Suvorin went to see a play by Henrik Ibsen *The Master Builder*. Leaving a note in his diary, Suvorin clearly views Ibsen’s play through the prism of his own ideas regarding a woman’s place in a man’s life and also, presumably, with his own personal experience very much in mind:

3.36 Гильда — необыкновенная девушка. Мне кажется, необыкновенные девушки и женщины существуют только в романах и драмах. Мужчина-автор ищет вечно идеалов, хочет “построить” женщину на свою статью, дать ей ум, фантазию, крылья, но в действительной жизни — самки и ничего больше, подчиненные существа, которые сами по себе ничто или очень мало, но которые нужны для того, чтобы воодушевить мужчину, дать ему бодрость, энергию и силу. Это они делают любовью, страстью; они умеют возбуждать, но не умеют держать мужчину на высоте, и те

⁵⁴ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 5, p. 90. Letter of 6.07.1892.

⁵⁵ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 22. L. 41, 42. Entry of 30.01.1893.

⁵⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 3754. Pis’ma S. I. Sazonovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 69.

⁵⁷ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 98. Entry of 8.02.1893.

срываются с этой высоты, как сорвался Сольнес, и погибают⁵⁸.

As regards the heroine of his own novel, Suvorin experienced some difficulties ‘constructing’ her: ‘I do not know how to start the second part of my novel. All sorts of ideas come up, but I don’t like any of them.’⁵⁹ Gathering material for his novel and being seriously interested in ‘the world of morbid moral phenomena’, Suvorin, while in France, visited Charcot’s neurology clinic at la Salpêtrière: his diary contains a meticulous description of a public demonstration of hypnosis and the treatment of hysteria. He was also catching up with book news and took an interest in the novel *L’Animal* by a decadent woman writer, Marguerite Eymery, who explored morbid sexuality under the pen name Rachilde. In his diary, Suvorin copied out some quotes from the novel which he found exceedingly bold:

3.37 ...Nulle luxure n’est ‘amorable’. Le contact de la peau désirante a un sens éthique: il n’y a pas de non valeur intellectuelle dans la possession, mais elle touche à plusieurs joies de l’esprit. C’est pourquoi la perversité m’est chère...⁶⁰

On the whole, Suvorin did not like the novel because it encouraged carnal pleasures; however, his concern is solely for men and, specifically, with the vexatious business of conserving ‘vital energy’ which affects them:

3.38 В пороке много прелести и удовольствия, но последствия очень известны, и их никто не отринет. Мужчин это истощает — сумасшествие, диабетика, удары. Призывы к сладострастию — либо увлечения молодости, либо сластолюбивый цинизм старости. Роман г-жи Рашильд — плохой роман, плохо написанный, но у нее самой просто влечение давать сколько влезет, или приятные воспоминания о том времени, когда хотели, чтобы она дала.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 134. Entry of 27.04.1893. In 1895, Chekhov will catch up the same idea in his short story ‘Ariadna’ putting his words in the mouth of his *alter ego* Shamokhin: ‘...женщина мало-помалу исчезает, на ее место садится первобытная самка. Эта отсталость интеллигентной женщины угрожает культуре серьезной опасностью; в своем регрессивном движении она старается увлечь за собой мужчину и задерживает его движение вперед.’ A. Chekhov, *PSSP*, S., vol. 9, p. 130. See English translation in Appendix, 3-36*. On reception of Ibsen in Russia see for example: *Ibsen, Strindberg, Chekhov*, ed. by M. Odesskaia (M., 2007).

⁵⁹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 136. Entry of 29.04.1893.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138. Entry of 5.05.1893.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139. Entry of 6.05.1893.

In the meantime, just as Suvorin was going to reach the age of 60, what seems to be a romantic episode occurred, but only some muted references remain in his diary. In his notes related to his foreign travel initials 'M. M.' are entered. Suvorin writes that he is thinking about 'M. M.', that he is writing to 'M. M.'; in the entry of 7.05.1893 the initials are quoted next to the pecuniary sum of three thousand. One can assume that their relationship, whatever it was in detail, was not developing smoothly, since at the same time in his diary Suvorin kept insisting:

3.39 Женщину надо держать на известной нравственной высоте, иначе она по своей природе быстро способна принизиться и брать черт знает чем. Влиять на женщину, потакая ее инстинктам, ничего не стоит: она это быстро усваивает и потом так удивит, что ахти малина. Она принимает сначала с негодованием, потом с удивлением, потом начинает смеяться и наматывать себе на ус, потом вас же проведет самым незаметным образом⁶².

One may also assume that this relationship was not simply platonic, since Suvorin found himself in need of consultation on sexual matters. And he was promptly provided with a piece of advice:

3.40 Отчего не поделиться опытностью. <...> Мужчина начинает чувствовать любовный импульс иногда уже на повороте улицы к любимой особе. Женщина же — одна волнуется очень, очень редко. В результате то, что мужчина уже охладет, когда она только начинает горячиться. Понимаете? Поэтому так называемые страстные женщины, требующие продолжения, в сущности иногда вовсе не страстны... <...> Весь секрет известных ловеласов в этом фокусе. Самому не горячиться, пока дама сердца не дойдет до точки кипения. Причины сравнительной медленности женской чувственности в ее анатомическом устройстве — сообразить легко. <...> Надеюсь, Вы не осудите меня за теоретическую откровенность. Я думаю, она Вам нужна, иначе Вы не спрашивали бы...⁶³

No evidence survived to tell us clearly whether Suvorin found the consultation useful; but whether he did or not, there is also no evidence that this relationship continued. Moreover, Suvorin's complaints about his failing health become more persistent; he finds similar cases of exhausted 'vital energy' in other people. Having

⁶² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 173. Entry of 4.07.1893.

⁶³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4670. Pis'ma E. A. Shabel'skoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 35, 35ob. The letter was dated by 1893 and contains reference to towns (Venice, Berlin etc) Suvorin visited while travelling. On Shabel'skaia see below.

visited Alphonse Daudet, Suvorin leaves a note in his diary: ‘Daudet is suffering from ataxy; his hands and his head are shaking. “*C’est l’œuvre de sa femme.*” They say that his wife is a nymphomaniac and that it is she who has ruined him.’⁶⁴ Suvorin’s depression worsened and he shared his grievances about his failed family life with his diary; but there is also what appears to be regret about his failed affair of the heart:

3.41 Внутреннее беспокойство просто грызет меня, и я не знаю, что делать, как быть. Зачем меня понесло сюда? Я прекрасно вижу, что я мешок с деньгами и ничего больше для Анны Ивановны. <...> Вся жизнь потрачена на труд, и к старости, когда смотришь в могилу, нет никого, кто принимал бы сердечное участие, кто берег бы. <...> Семьи нет, хозяйки нет, нет никакого центра. Есть отель с несколькими хозяевами, которые берут из общей кассы газеты и тратят, сколько хотят, сколько угодно... <...> Бороться теперь с этой сволочью сил не хватит, а только разозлишь и разбудишь в сердце скверные чувства к себе. <...> Тоска человека, выброшенного из жизни, общипанного, куцего какого-то, переставшего жить настоящею жизнью, но желающего жить и чувствующего бессилие жить. <...> Часто думаю, что если б М. М. очутилась у меня лет десять тому, совсем было бы другое. А теперь это — только недоразумение с маленькими сомнениями и большим эгоизмом⁶⁵.

A reference to Suvorin’s romance emerges two years later in the diary of Smirnova-Sazonova; she seems to have felt a spasm of jealousy:

3.42 14.01.1895. Евгения Васильевна [Кривенко] передала мне почти все, что он [Суворин] им рассказывал из своей жизни, как он был в меня влюблен и как из этого, он должен сознаться, ничего не вышло, как в прошлом году у него был в Берлине роман с Шабельской, и этот роман стоил ему несколько тысяч. **15.01.1895.** Суворин стал жаловаться, что скучно жить, я ему посоветовала съездить в Берлин, продолжать роман с Шабельской. Он очень удивился, сказал, что Евгения Васильевна все это выдумала, обругал Шабельскую нецензурным образом и, наконец, признался, что у него был роман, но не с ней, и не в Берлине, а в Бадене, и не в прошлом году⁶⁶.

It was Elizaveta Aleksandrovna Shabel’skaia, actress and journalist, who was honoured by Suvorin with an unquotable word but who also gave him a consultation about female orgasm. She was indeed an unbalanced and domineering woman who interfered with Suvorin’s life and caused him a great deal of aggravation.⁶⁷ Aleksandr

⁶⁴ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 180. Entry of 5.09.1893.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 183–184. Entry of 17.09.1893.

⁶⁶ OR IRLI. F. 285. *Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi*. Ed. 25. L. 253, 260.

⁶⁷ See: O. Makarova, “Uzh esli Suvorin, izobretshii ee, otvernulsia...”: “Delo Shabel’skoi” i uchastie v nem izdatelia *Novogo vremeni*, in *NLO*, 85 (2007), pp. 100–120.

Amfiteatrov who knew Shabel'skaia fairly closely has left a vivid but unflattering memoir:

3.43 Истерия, морфий и портвейн сделали ее одною из самых диких женщин, каких когда-либо рождало русское интеллигентное общество, при всем плачевном избытии в нем неуравновешенных натур. <...> В тоске по ядам она делалась невозможна. <...> В этом состоянии она была на все способна: выстрелить в человека, выброситься из окна, выбежать нагою на улицу, плюнуть в лицо незнакомому прохожему, поджечь собственную постель... всего бывало!⁶⁸

Suvorin played a decisive role in Shabel'skaia's career as a journalist; he appointed her as a representative of *Novoe vremia* in Berlin and kept her in this post for seven years, from 1890 to 1896. There is little doubt that Suvorin fell for Shabel'skaia's assertive and flamboyant personality and was drawn into friendly relations with her. A voluminous correspondence⁶⁹ between the two lasted for nineteen years and at the very beginning showed signs of a mutual affinity:

3.44 Ну скажите, на коего черта понадобилась Вам моя молодость, что Вы все сожалеете, что я состарилась! Были бы мы оба молоды, наверно, влюбились бы друг в друга, и вышла бы трагедийная канитель⁷⁰.

On her return to Russia in 1896, Shabel'skaia lost her job with *Novoe vremia* and in 1900 she started her own theatrical enterprise. The latter proved a failure, and trying to rescue her business and to pay off her bills, Shabel'skaia resorted to fraud: she forged the signature of her lover, Vladimir Kovalevskii, who was at the time a Deputy Minister of Finance. In 1902, Kovalevskii sued Shabel'skaia and Suvorin got involved in the trial: he was summoned as a witness for the plaintiff. Suvorin did his best to help Kovalevskii backstage: he tried to persuade Shabel'skaia to admit her guilt. But Shabel'skaia, kept in detention, responded with blackmail and pestered Suvorin with dramatic letters:

3.45 Вы же отвернулись от меня, повредили мне больше всего. <...> И без доказательств Вы смешали меня с грязью, Вы побудили газеты не давать мне работы, Вы заставили меня голодать.

⁶⁸ A. Amfiteatrov, "Tiazhkaia nasledstvennost", in *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebia i dlia mnogikh*, vol. 2, pp. 68, 70.

⁶⁹ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4669, 4670. Pis'ma E. A. Shabel'skoi k A. S. Suvorinu. 4.01.1890–6.04.1909, 349 letters, 704 pp.

⁷⁰ Ibid., l. 149. Letter of 22.09.1893.

<...> Чтобы знали, что если я, не дотянув до суда — покончу в сумасшедшем ли доме, в проруби или иначе — просто потому, что оборвутся нервы, — не по своему желанию, то чтобы Вы знали, что *Вы* тут на добрую половину виноваты⁷¹.

Suvorin was compromised by his relationship with Shabel'skaia and severed his ties with her only in 1907 and not without difficulty; his diary commentary on Shabel'skaia sounds more than annoyed: 'Many a talented and good man has been destroyed by evil-minded sluts.'⁷²

On his return from his foreign pilgrimages at the end of October 1893, Suvorin retrieved from the back drawer a one-act sketch *Ne poiman — ne vor*⁷³ which he had written in 1889 and arranged its quick production at Aleksandrinskii Theatre, featuring Mariia Savina and Nikolai Sazonov. The play is about adultery, an alleged betrayal on the wife's side and a real one on the husband's side. On the whole, the play gives us a travestied version of Suvorin's family situation, but on the other hand, he may in this case have made use of his own recent experience of active adultery. Still, it is the unfaithful wife who is reprimanded by her husband:

3.46 Женщины вообразили, что им все прощительно. Они изменяют сто раз мужу, и когда муж, наконец, убедится в обмане, они требуют от него, ни в чем не повинного, чтоб он взял грех на себя, и муж соглашается на том основании, что женщина — слабый пол, а потому мужчина обязан быть дураком⁷⁴.

The sketch was followed by a longer and less funny play *On v otstavke*⁷⁵ also featuring Nikolai Sazonov. Being involved in production and rehearsals, Suvorin could see more of Sazonov's wife, Sofiia Ivanovna. She contributed to her diary with regular observations:

⁷¹ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4669. L. 253ob – 254. The letter was written between 22.11.1903 and 13.03.1904.

⁷² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 528. Entry of 23.07.1907.

⁷³ Originally the play was entitled *Muzhskoe gore* and on its completion was approved by Chekhov, who qualified it is 'a funny tragedy' and offered co-authorship: 'A most original beginning. <...> In one-act plays one should talk all sorts of *nonsense* — that's their strong point. Go ahead and let the wife want to seriously flee: she's bored and she's looking for strong feelings...' (A. Chekhov, *PSSP*, P. vol. 3, p. 130. Letter of 6.01.1889.)

⁷⁴ A. Suvorin, *Ne poiman — ne vor: Poslovitsa v odnom deistvii*, 2nd ed. (SPb, 1899), pp. 29–30.

⁷⁵ It is a tedious play about a retired official who feels that he is a cast-off. Suvorin took part in rehearsals: 'He insisted that the hero does not sit still but springs up now and then: he wants to see his own self on stage.' (OR IRLI. F. 285. *Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi*. Ed. 23. L. 254. Entry of 8.01.1894.)

3.47 27.12.1893. Вид у него [Суворина] рассеянный и удрученный. <...> Заговорили дорогой о родне. Суворин сказал, что у него есть только один родственник — «это Софья Ивановна».

25.01.1894. Суворин сидит совсем убитый. Разными дразгами довели его до того, что он думает

уехать из Петербурга. **8.02.1894.** Говорили о том, куда поехать летом. Он звал меня в Италию, поехать впятером: он, я с [дочерью] Любой и [С. Н.] Шубинский с [женой] Катей. **26.12.1894.**

Суворин усиленно жалуется на тоску, на старость, апатию и одиночество. Говорит, что писать ему теперь трудно и даже читать тяжело. **31.12.1894.** Анна Ивановна начинает, кажется, ревновать

меня. Говорит мне, что она встретила меня вечером у своего мужа, должно быть, мне помешала, потому что я с ней была очень сурова. Я удивлена. «Я, кажется, всегда с вами любезна». — «Нет, вы очень любезны с моим мужем»⁷⁶.

It started to look as though their cordial friendship was about to evolve into something more intimate. Since Smirnova-Sazonova's jealous husband did not trust her out of his sight, she tried to tone down Suvorin's feelings:

3.48 Вы мне пишете, что Вы человек занятой и в любви объясняться не умеете. Да Бог с Вами, милый друг! Разве я жду от Вас объяснений в любви? <...> Ведь это только наша общая знакомая Е. В. [Кривенко] думает, что мы с вами влюбленные. Мы в таких годах, что это выше всяких подозрений. Как будто нельзя быть искренно сердечно расположенной к человеку и видеть в нем только хорошего товарища и друга⁷⁷.

Writing romantic letters to Smirnova-Sazonova, Suvorin continued a discussion of 'the sexual question' in his correspondence with Chekhov. True to the principle of 'a rational sexual economy', Chekhov is seeking out appropriate examples in life as well as in literature and shares them with Suvorin:

3.49 Мне обидно, что Клотильду употреблял Паскаль [герои романа Э. Золя «Доктор Паскаль»], а не кто-нибудь другой, помоложе и крепче; старый царь Давид, изнемогающий в объятиях молодой девушки, — это дыня, которую уже хватил осенний утренник, но она все еще думает созреть; всякому овощу свое время. И что за дичь: разве половая способность есть признак настоящей жизни, здоровья? Разве человек только тот, кто употребляет? Все мыслители в 40 лет были уже импотентами, а дикари в 90 лет держат по 90 жен⁷⁸.

⁷⁶ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 23. L. 212, 213, 306, 339; ed. 24. L. 170; ed. 25. L. 193.

⁷⁷ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 3754. Pis'ma S. I. Sazonovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 48, 48ob. Letter of 24.08.1894.

⁷⁸ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 5, p. 244. Letter of 11.11.1893.

This letter was written soon after Suvorin's return from his foreign travels, so it may convey their exchange concerning Suvorin's complaints about his male inconsistency and his failed affair. Chekhov strongly disapproves of sexual activity at an older age, but he also supports sexual continence in young men and points out a relevant article in a professional medical journal:

3.50 Потребуйте 1 и 2 №№ «Врача» и прочтите там «К вопросу о половых сношениях». <...> Это в Вашем вкусе, т. е. в статье Вы найдете несколько любезных Вам мыслей. Тут речь идет о той печати, какую кладут на молодость и человеческий гений половые сношения. Вы, создавший девицу, которая поблекла и потухла после совокупления, должны послать этому благодушному автору воздушный поцелуй⁷⁹.

Chekhov's reference to the novel *V kontse veka, liubov'* may perhaps be seen as an ironic commentary on Suvorin's central idea in this novel; however, Suvorin's complaints about his mental and physical health perfectly tally with the quoted comment of an anonymous author who believes he had wasted his valuable energy resource on sex:

3.51 ...Разнообразные расстройства нервной системы, неправильная деятельность сердца, довольно быстрое физическое увядание, потеря энергии, ослабление памяти, частая апатия, уменьшение, а подчас и полное отсутствие интереса ко всему окружающему — «и в грядущем нет желаний, и прошедшего не жаль» — все эти ненормальные явления, если не всецело, то в значительной степени я приписываю именно моей неправильной половой жизни⁸⁰.

Chekhov finds an explicit example of wasted 'vital energy' within his close circle of friends and deems it important to share it with Suvorin:

3.52 Был я у Левитана в мастерской. Это лучший русский пейзажист, но, представьте, уже нет молодости. Пишет уже не молодо, а бравурно. Я думаю, что его истаскали бабы. Эти милые создания дают любовь, а берут у мужчины немного: только молодость⁸¹.

Revisiting Turgenev's novels, Chekhov writes to Suvorin about the resentment he feels as regards Turgenev's heroines who had freed themselves bodily and mentally and

⁷⁹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 5, p. 264. Letter of 25.01.1894.

⁸⁰ [Anonim], 'K voprosu o polovykh snosheniakh', in *Vrach*, 2 (1894), p. 43. The author quotes inaccurately from Lermontov's poem 'Demon'.

⁸¹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 6, p. 15. Letter of 19.01.1895.

who now claim equality with men. He sees them as vampires who drain men's precious energy:

3.53 Лиза, Елена — это не русские девицы, а какие-то Пифии, вещающие, изобилующие претензиями не по чину. Ирина в «Дыме», Одинцова в «Отцах и детях», вообще *львицы, жгучие, аппетитные, ненасытные*, чего-то ищущие — все они чепуха. Как вспомнишь толстовскую Анну Каренину, то все эти тургеневские барыни со своими соблазнительными плечами летят к черту⁸².

It is fairly probable that this postal exchange had prompted Suvorin to take a wider look at the female characters created by Russian writers; he also decided to draw parallels between writers' fictional women and those they dealt with in real life. The result of his sweeping analysis was a rather provocative *Malen'koe pis'mo*; Suvorin seems to diagnose gynophobia, as a reaction to female sensuality, in practically all major writers of the 19th century:

3.54 Русский писатель точно еще боится, как бы женщина его не укусила, не извела своей любовью, не погубила его такой своей страстностью и неумеренностью. По тому или по другому, но наши писатели больше «создавали» женщин, чем обладали ими, больше льстили им, чем говорили правду. Грибоедов⁸³, Пушкин, Лермонтов и Толстой знали женщин. В лице Печорина Лермонтов отнесся к женщинам злее всех наших писателей. <...> Гоголь, представивший такие удивительные типы мужчин, так метко схвативший их комические черты, женщин почти не касался и проповедовал нравственность и семейные обязанности калужской губернаторше (Смирновой). Достоевский едва ли их знал, хотя они целовали у него руки на Пушкинском празднике; Гончаров был слишком неподвижен для них в молодости и слишком корректен в зрелых летах, а с корректностью как их узнаешь. Григорович знает их хорошо, но говорил о них только приятное и с благодарностью за удовольствия, которые они доставляли ему в лета юности и зрелости. <...> Тургенев целый век просидел в рабстве у одной женщины и сочинял, вероятно, ее противоположности, мечтая о женщине, то страстной, как Ирина, то поэтической и чистой, как Лиза, то политической, как Елена, которая торопится сказать: «возьми меня». У него тоже целовали руки и говорили ему: «возьми меня», но он едва ли брал. <...> Салтыков совсем не знал женщин, и его сатира менее всего и слабее всего их касалась. Островский знал купчиху, да и то больше понаслышке и по угадке таланта; Некрасов больше любил карты, чем женщин, которых он презирал

⁸² A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 5, p. 174. Letter of 24.02.1893. Italics are mine — O. M.

⁸³ Cf. Suvorin's remark: 'Griboedov must have shocked a naïve person like Belinskii with his utterly real depiction of love, a love most common, trivial, without fine words, a love that starts with looks and quickly turns into embrace and nocturnal trysts with their pleasures and excitement, when body speaks to body. In this respect, Griboedov appears to be a *first Russian realist* (italics are Suvorin's — O. M.), forestalling Pushkin and Tolstoy.' (A. Suvorin, 'Gore ot uma i ego istolkovateli', in *Novoe vremia*, 3.01.1886.)

и покупал, как самок; Писемский, кажется, чувствовал грубую правду, но едва ли на практике изучал ее; Лесков мало знал женщин и относился к ним с довольно притворным почтением; не думаю, что их знает Боборыкин, хотя «сочинил» он их великое множество и притом все новейшей формации. Из молодых писателей... Я не знаю, знают ли они что-нибудь...⁸⁴

It is curious that Tolstoy already belongs to the cohort of the great masters whose expertise in women belongs to the past; moreover, he gets no comment on his obvious misogyny. Perhaps out of respect to Tolstoy the writer, Suvorin wanted to avoid this sensitive and controversial topic, the more so in that he had said enough while discussing *Kreitzerova sonata*. It is also noteworthy that Suvorin's close friend Chekhov with his gynophobia both in life and in his writings is absent from the list; this omission by Suvorin might be qualified as *argumentum ex silentio*. But on the whole, Suvorin's list is fairly representative and his observations rest on his personal acquaintance with ten out of fifteen of the writers mentioned. Moreover, Suvorin's rather jocular approach proved methodologically efficient: a similar comparative analysis has been carried out by modern feminist critics, the corroborative result being the theory of 'Terrible Perfection' (see Introduction, p. 13).⁸⁵

Suvorin wrote this *Malen'koe pis'mo* to support the ninth edition of the misogynistic book by Konstantin Skal'kovskii *O zhenshchinakh: mysli starye i novye*. Suvorin's first review of the book in 1886 was favourable enough (see chapter II, p. 133) and since then he had not changed his view about the book, particularly praising the author's style: bold, cynical, but 'seasoned with wit'. To make his current argument more convincing, Suvorin involves a 'new authority' on misogyny, Friedrich Nietzsche, whose works were now beginning to find their way through severe censorship to Russian readers. Suvorin kept Nietzsche's books in his library and found his ideas about women congenial to his own. However, as he mentions that the philosopher is mentally ill, he seems to ensure the typical equivocality of his argument:

3.55 ...Ницше, немецкий философ, теперь сумасшедший. <...> По таланту это — человек необыкновенно блестящий и своеобразный. И о женщинах я встретил у него очень яркую мысль <...> В новые [христианские] времена вместо дружбы явилась идеализированная половая любовь,

⁸⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 19.01.1895.

⁸⁵ See B. Heldt, *Terrible Perfection: Women and Russian Literature* (Indiana University Press, 1992), pp. 24–37; see also J. Andrew, *Women in Russian Literature, 1780–1863* (New York, 1988).

явилась женщина со своими претензиями на исключительную любовь к ней и своей страстью разорвала солидарность между мужчинами и принизила все то, что было тогда так высоко и бескорыстно. <...> Подумайте только: пока женщину игнорировали, пока она сидела дома и рожала детей, мужчины совершали великие дела в политике, в философии, в поэзии, в драме, в скульптуре, архитектуре...⁸⁶

The above words are particularly close to Suvorin's pronouncements during the debate on *Kreitserova sonata* (see pp. 158–159). Five years later and still seriously concerned with the advancement of women in all spheres of social life, Suvorin still talks about their nugatory contribution to world culture and civilisation; he subscribes to the widely held idea that women at large form, or certainly have formed, a force with 'zero effect' in this domain. Suvorin's old fear that the educated woman inevitably becomes similar to a prostitute still haunts him, as well as his idea that male civilisation may well be ruined by women, leading to an overall degeneration of the human race:

3.56 Наше время — время женской работы, женского образования. Впереди становятся кокетки и образованные женщины. Этим соседством не надо смущаться, ибо соседями бывают противоположности. Но идея та у соседок: свобода, заработок и независимость. По мере того, как женщина освобождается более и более, мир становится беднее высоким талантом, и посредственностью кишат все те отрасли науки, литературы, искусства, политики (тоже искусство), где талант выдвигается так ярко. Простая ли это случайность или естественные последствия нарушения гармонии, но отсутствия крупных талантов и у нас, и в Европе — нельзя отрицать⁸⁷.

Here, Suvorin seems to state what might be considered a peculiar antifeminist law, the idea of human degeneration now gaining a cultural dimension. In modern terms, Suvorin — whether realizing it or not — speaks about cultural entropy, which is to say, energy dispersal, so remains broadly within the territory of 'vital energy'. However, Suvorin sees no way to stop this pernicious process and so, like a 'typical gynophobic', wants to shut his eyes or otherwise avert his gaze:

3.57 Помню, недавно я читал отчет о каком-то женском конгрессе. Одна американка сказала, что 20-й век будет принадлежать женщине. Очень может быть, но в таком случае это будет век, где женщина не возвысится духом и талантом до мужчины, но принизит мужчину до себя. Я в 20-м веке жить не буду, а потому мало им интересуюсь⁸⁸.

⁸⁶ *Novoe vremia*. 19.01.1895.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

§ 4

This gloomy forecast for male civilisation causes Suvorin much misgiving, but his personal life depressed him even more. As usual, he gave vent to his grievances talking to Smirnova-Sazonova:

3.58 Вели разные задушевные разговоры, Суворин жаловался на свое одиночество, на то, что газета и богатство не дают ему счастья, что личного счастья он почти не знал, что жизнь прошла мимо. Он был так нервен, взволнован, что в его голосе слышались слезы. Он просто временами не мог говорить⁸⁹.

Suvorin's writing ideas were equally dark, re-activating his key character type, the woman as traitoress and murderess:

3.59 Суворин рассказывал содержание повести, которую хочет написать. Женщина желает отравить своего любовника, а любовник убивает ее. Последнюю сцену представляет даже в лицах, как она сидит на кресле, а он стоит сзади и ударяет ее ножом в грудь. Он видел это во сне и хочет теперь написать⁹⁰.

Suvorin's depression started to worry his wife and she turned for help to Chekhov:

3.60 Антон Павлович! У меня опять к Вам просьба повеселить нашего Алексея Сергеевича! <...> Все-таки, кроме Вас, он никого не любит и не ценит. Он очень хандрит и, главное, по ночам не спит. Заниматься совсем не может как прежде, и это его ужасно удручает⁹¹.

Chekhov readily offered Suvorin a helping hand:

3.61 Если бы Вы приехали в Москву в конце апреля или в начале мая, то мы поехали бы по кладбищам, монастырям, подгородным рощам, поехали бы, пожалуй, к Троице. <...> Если будет хорошая погода, то скитания наши по Москве и около удадутся настолько, что будет приятно вспомнить о них под старость⁹².

⁸⁹ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 24. L. 239–240. Entry of 9.01.1895.

⁹⁰ Ibid. L. 343. Entry of 7.02.1895. This Suvorin's plan had never been realized.

⁹¹ Op cit: A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 6, p. 383. Letter of January 1895.

⁹² Op cit: A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 6, p. 55. Letter of 18.04.1895.

However, Suvorin did not go to Moscow. Trying to fight his depression, he looked for distraction in theatre. By that time, he was a head of the Literary-Artistic Circle and a first performance had already been staged: the play *Hannele* by Gerhart Hauptmann. Aleksandr Kugel', a theatrical critic writing for *Novoe Vremia*, remarked:

3.62 Спектакль понравился, был повторен несколько раз при полных сборах, и Суворин взыграл духом. Он особенно увлекался игрой актрисы [Л.] Озеровой в роли Ганнеле, и предсказывал ей великую будущность. Суворин иногда судил слишком примитивно о театре и впадал в ошибки. Так вышло и с Озеровой. Он смешивал талант с истерией и драматическую силу воображения с кликушеством⁹³.

Suvorin finally became the owner of the first private theatrical enterprise in Petersburg, *Teatr Literaturno-Artisticheskogo kruzhka*. Indeed, his theatre raised his spirits for a while and he put in his diary: 'I quite like this hustle and bustle. There is something poisonous in theatre, just like in alcohol or nicotine.'⁹⁴ However, just like any addictive but noxious drug, theatre had its side-effects; Suvorin was soon suffering from them and was looking for new distractions or complaining about his symptoms to Smirnova-Sazonova:

3.63 19.07.1895. Суворин был не в духе, клянет новый театр, говорит, что он, кажется, его бросит. <...> Он не знает даже, что ставить. Петербург ему опостылел, а вырваться из него не может: ему кажется, что как только он из него уедет, то больше не вернется: где-нибудь умрет дорогой.

11.08.1895. Из Берлина от Суворина холодное и унылое письмо, о близкой смерти, о том, что силы ушли и все, что пришло, пришло для него поздно. Он едет в Париж, оттуда в Биарриц⁹⁵.

The official opening of Suvorin's theatre took place on the 17th of September 1895, although its owner was missing — he directed the process from abroad, by telegraph. During the first season, in ten weeks, the theatre produced a vast repertoire including 25 full-length plays and 19 one-act plays.⁹⁶ However, as regards this new enterprise, the public grew somewhat circumspect: 'General impression: this is an

⁹³ See: A. Kugel', *Literaturnye vospominania: 1882–1896* (Petrograd; M., 1923), p. 163.

⁹⁴ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 280. Entry of 7.02.1897.

⁹⁵ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 26. L. 274, 328.

⁹⁶ See: E. Karpov, 'A. S. Suvorin i osnovanie Teatra literaturno-artisticheskogo kruzhka: Stranichki iz vospominanii "Minuvshee"', in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 7–9 (1914).

amateurish theatre with a great deal of ambition.’⁹⁷ Suvorin’s theatre was later to be assessed critically by Soviet historians; however, as in the case of *Novoe vremia*, Suvorin’s success had much to do with his sensitivity to public demand and his ability to respond to that demand by organizing appropriate supply, and he did this now in theatre. It did not escape critics’ notice that on stage Suvorin favoured the ‘odd woman’:

3.64 Суворин претендовал на угадывание того, чего ждет, сама о том не зная, толпа. <...> Комедии и мелодрамы из светской жизни порой приближались здесь по звучанию к скандальной хронике, к инсинуациям желтой прессы, приобретали черты полупасквиля-полуфельетона, <...> обращая современную ситуацию в водевиль и формируя особый стиль игры. <...> В этих пьесах, как правило, варьировался на разные лады один и тот же женский тип — существо экзальтированное, порывистое, истеричное, душевно изломанное. В большинстве постановок вновь перепевались мотивы «женского вопроса», трактовавшегося крайне банально и по-прежнему сводимого к избитой коллизии любовного треугольника⁹⁸.

Suvorin himself admitted that the repertoire of his theatre was right up his alley:

3.65 А впрочем, я люблю, собственно, мелодраму... Знаешь, что чепуха, а трогательно... Добродетель торжествует, порок наказан... уходишь из театра удовлетворенный. Я, собственно говоря, люблю, когда пьеса кончается благополучно... <...> В жизни это не всегда получается, так хоть на сцене смотреть приятно...⁹⁹

Suvorin tried to hire actors with a well-established reputation. At the beginning, Pelageia Strepetova resumed her contract with Suvorin, but fairly soon left his theatre in a cloud of scandal, never to return. Suvorin must have regretted that he had allowed this woman, arguably rather odious, certainly difficult, to come near him:

3.66 Два таких капризных и своенравных человека не ужились в одном деле и еще задолго до конца сезона суворинские актеры рассказывали про невероятные по резкости сцены препирательств Стрепетовой с Сувориным, которого она с пеной у рта отделявала при всех не только за те гадости, какими полно было его дело, но и за то, чем возмущаться могла только такая больная и взбалмошная женщина, как Стрепетова, выходявшая из себя по всякому поводу¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁷ *Teatr i iskusstvo*, 38 (1897). The quotation is from the newspaper *St. Petersburger Zeitung*.

⁹⁸ *Istoriia russkogo dramaticheskogo teatra*, in 7 vol. (M., 1980), vol. 6, pp. 280–282.

⁹⁹ See: E. Karpov, ‘A. S. Suvorin i osnovanie Teatra literaturno-artisticheskogo kruzhka’, p. 461.

¹⁰⁰ See: B. Varneke, ‘Vospominaniia o P. A. Strepetovoi’, in *P. A. Strepetova: Vospominaniia i pis'ma* (M.; L., 1934), p. 467.

Suvorin's invitation to a rising star, Lidiia Iavorskaia, resulted in disaster. It was Chekhov who introduced Iavorskaia to Suvorin, after a fugitive but hectic romance:

3.67 Побывайте на «Madame Sans Gêne» [пьеса Victorien Sardou и Emile Moreau] и посмотрите Яворскую. Если хотите, познакомьтесь. Она интеллигентна и порядочно одевается, иногда бывает умна. <...> Московские газетчики всю зиму травили ее, как зайца, но она не заслуживает этого¹⁰¹.

Ambitious, flaring and full of sex appeal, Iavorskaia must have impressed Suvorin, since she was employed by him without a written contract. However, as she failed to win Suvorin's ultimate favour, she started an affair with his *alter ego*, Viktor Burenin, now a member of the theatre board, soon establishing herself as a prima donna.¹⁰² The only thing left for Suvorin was to complain to his diary:

3.68 30.04.1896. Вчера Буренин очень резко со мною по поводу Яворской. Сия актриса решительно поссорит меня с Бурениным. Он не хочет понять, что невозможно делать театр театром Яворской. <...> Яворская только и знает, что заботится об удалении не только соперниц, но даже предполагаемых соперниц. **22.10.1896.** Она [Яворская] вся соткана из притворства, зависти, разврата и лжи. А муж в ней души не чаёт. Если б он знал хоть сотую часть ее жизни. **11.12.1896.** Объяснение с Яворской, переписка с ней, ее претензии. Она прямо мучительница. <...> Лястя мне, она рассказывает обо мне разную гадость. **7.02.1897.** Для этой актрисы [Яворской] я сделал больше, чем для кого-нибудь. Я дал ей взаймы прошлый год 1200 руб., дал ее мужу, через нее (князю Барятинскому) 3000 руб., поставил для нее несколько пьес¹⁰³.

In 1900, Iavorskaia would provoke a scandal during performance of the play *Kontrabandisty* by Viktor Krylov and Savelii Litvin. Her protest concerned the anti-Semitic bent of the play,¹⁰⁴ and she herself had refused any part. She helped organize protest from the audience on the first night and there was indeed serious public disturbance and an intervention by the authorities. Her good intentions and the scandal which ensued created pressure and stress which cost the life of Suvorin's son-in-law and veritable right hand, Aleksei Kolomnin, for he died of a heart attack on the following day. Other people would also suffer from the scandal: a few dozen students would be expelled

¹⁰¹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P*, vol. 6, p. 383. Letter of 30.03.1895.

¹⁰² See: M. Litavrina, *Iavorskaia, bezzakonnaia kometa* (M., 2008), pp. 48; 55–68.

¹⁰³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, pp. 219, 260–261, 271, 279.

¹⁰⁴ See: A. Kugel', *List'ia s dereva: Vospominaniia* (L., 1926), pp. 57–60; E. Dinershtein, *A. S. Suvorin: Chelovek, sdelayshii kar'eru*, pp. 309–310; M. Litavrina, *Iavorskaia, bezzakonnaia kometa*, pp. 88–110.

from the University for causing disturbances. The theatre team insisted on dismissing Iavorskaia from the theatre. Suvorin, struggling hard to reconcile parties, was getting desperate:

3.69 С Яворской переписка. Вот баба мучительница. Ни в чем не виновата! Виноваты враги ее, которые ее гонят, а не она. Я написал ей несколько писем. Ничего не хочет понять. Мне надо оставить театр¹⁰⁵.

In the meantime, Suvorin continued to publish his *Malen'kie pis'ma* in *Novoe vremia*. He would touch upon 'the woman question' yet again in his articles, although not too regularly. Greeting his readers with the new year of 1897, Suvorin dedicated his *Malen'koe pis'mo* to 'minor events'. One of them, to his mind, was the founding of *Russkoe zhenskoe vzaimno-blagotvoritel'noe obshchestvo* which appeared to be the first officially registered feminist organisation.¹⁰⁶ Playing with an allusion to the Bald Mountain — a nickname given to the headquarters of the *Obshchestvo* by conservatives — Suvorin seems to find a devilish part in women who get involved in politics:

3.70 Я мог бы сказать о событиях еще более маленьких, например, женском клубе, который учредился с целью не пускать в него мужчин, и мог бы напомнить, кстати, что первообраз женского клуба — шабаш ведьм. <...> Шабаш ведьм — это символ той свободы, к которой стремились женщины и которую они, в былые времена, когда верили во всякую чертовщину, могли получать, только обращаясь в ведьм и проделывая в этом виде все то, что подсказывала им жажда свободы и любви. Теперь все это они могут делать в своем естественном виде, а в двадцатом веке покажут себя еще естественнее и сильнее. О, русская женщина — смелая женщина и Лысую гору посещала усердно...¹⁰⁷

However, when Suvorin acquired a book by Luis Franc, *La femme — avocat en case de m-lle Jeanne Chauvin*, during his foreign travel, he did not hesitate to recommend

¹⁰⁵ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 407. Entry of 8.12.1900. Iavorskaia did not leave Suvorin alone even when he was mortally ill: she wanted to see him during his visit to London in 1911: 'Dear Aleksei Sergeevich, I hope you will come to see me in *Nora*: it was my first part in your theatre in Petersburg and now I am playing it for the 50th time in London. I would be so glad to see you. You will come to my dressing room after the third act, won't you? Yours truly, Iavorskaia. PS I enclose your ticket to the box.' (RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4927. Pis'ma L. B. Iavorskoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 140.)

¹⁰⁶ See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, pp. 190–194. Iukina notes that so far there had been nothing similar in the traditional culture of the Russian gentry: 'This Society was running employment agency, there were also hostels, kindergartens, a mutual aid fund, reading rooms, and study circles. Women could attend foreign language courses, first-aid medical courses, and accountancy courses.'

¹⁰⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 1.01.1897.

it to his readers: 'The book is worthwhile; it is full of facts and ardent advocacy of women's rights.'¹⁰⁸ Agreeing with the author, Suvorin supports the idea of admitting women to the legal profession, although yet again, not without some irony:

3.71 Вторая половина проходящего века ознаменовалась, между прочим, сильным прогрессом электричества и женского вопроса. <...> Если женщина всегда занимала в семье роль хозяйки, домоправительницы, установительницы порядка, если она умела не теряться среди сложных семейных потребностей и именно она основала *семейный очаг*, то почему же она не может разобраться в том гражданском порядке, которым занимается юстиция? <...> Я того мнения, что рано ли, поздно ли, а женщина добьется того, что будет конкурировать с адвокатами и даже, может быть, совсем забьет их своей способностью защищать и правых и виноватых при помощи статей Свода законов и своего нервного красноречия¹⁰⁹.

Using relevant facts and figures, Suvorin proves beyond doubt that women will inevitably reduce male share in the labour market very significantly. But again, he steps aside from social progress and wants to stay in the 19th century. Perhaps, since he is not going to be there to witness women's victory over men, he is no longer haunted by a sense of Apocalypse; so for the time being, he conveniently replaces Doomsday with the more agreeable idea of a second Renaissance:

3.72 XX век, в котором я жить не буду, покажет гражданам этого века, которые на наших глазах бегают еще в детских штанишках, что женщина будет продолжать соперничать с электричеством в приложении своих сил. Во времена Возрождения итальянки отличались как юристы, как ораторы, во время второго Возрождения, которое начинается теперь, и француженки, и немки, и россиянки, будут и юристами, и адвокатами. Чтобы сказать это, не надо быть пророком¹¹⁰.

Showing a strong reluctance to continue into the 20th century, Suvorin had finally finished his novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'* and published it in 1898 in its enlarged and revised version. Longer by twelve chapters, the novel exactly repeats the plot of the short story 'V kontse veka', so the beginning and ending of both pieces do not differ at all. Speaking of his novel, Suvorin made a number of reservations:

¹⁰⁸ *Novoe vremia*, 29.10.1897.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

3.73 Я — журналист и лишь в исключительных случаях сочинитель; мои пьесы и моя проза — как раз сейчас я пишу роман — возникли случайно¹¹¹; «В конце века любовь» мне стоил большого труда¹¹²; ...Я работал над ним урывками, пользуясь небольшим досугом, который оставался мне от других работ¹¹³.

While preparing the third edition, Suvorin, in his own words, ‘completed the life stories of all the heroes’ (VIII); however, it is only the life of the female protagonist that is now brought to its conclusion. Having followed Varia’s life since childhood to her suicide and posthumous activities, Suvorin displayed the sum total of his views *apropos* ‘the woman question’, or to be more exact, *apropos* the problem of woman’s freedom in all its forms. As seen by the author, his character Varia Murina, an extraordinary and talented woman (there is something Nietzschean about her), is actually a dangerous woman: her self-chosen mission is ‘to rule the world’. While in Tolstoy’s eyes Varia may have earned credit, at least insofar as she had originally chosen chastity and celibacy, Suvorin, perhaps in polemics with Tolstoyan asceticism, compromises Varia’s dangerous ambition. Suvorin has Varia obey ‘the call of flesh’ and he pushes her into the arms of a womanizing philanderer, Vidalin, (in the earlier texts named ‘Vitalin’, a name rather too patently close to the notion ‘vitality’ perhaps), who takes the words out of Schopenhauer’s mouth: ‘...love is a woman’s element; outside it she is an utter nonentity. A woman is a personified sexual instinct and nothing else.’ (62)

Having lost her virginity to the philanderer, Varia finds it impossible to marry a man who loves her, the future priest Murin. The latter, to complicate matters, is a virgin at the age of 27 and an advocate of monogamy. But the loss of virginity, a symbol of autonomy and of her lofty goal turns Varia into a hater of men. Her plan to fulfill her mission by starting a women’s community *Obshchestvo mudrykh dev* proves a total failure (Suvorin does not spare irony in describing Varia’s activities). Varia’s efforts to attain the medical profession are also futile — in her own words, ‘only because she is a woman.’ Finally Varia becomes ‘an educated cocotte’ (Suvorin’s fear), but on the other hand, she is tormented by her sins and is generally disappointed in life: ‘I would rather

¹¹¹ See: F. Fidler, *Iz mira literatorov: Kharktery i suzhdeniia* (M., 2008), p. 96. Entry of 13.05.1892.

¹¹² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 493. Entry of 12.06.1907.

¹¹³ A. Suvorin, ‘Predislovie k 4-mu izd.,’ in *V kontse veka. Libov’*, 5th ed. (SPb, 1902), p. VIII. (In his Preface Suvorin states that the 4th edition (1900) is the final version of the novel; the 6th edition was published in 1904.) Further page reference is given in the text in brackets.

die, because there is no point in living. Life consists of trifles, which can only satisfy a mob.' (409) Suvorin, then, is using Varia's life to demonstrate that a woman's ambition to surpass her male co-specifics, or at least to match them socially or professionally, is totally futile and based on a misreading of nature.

Varia's life ends tragically after a number of attempts on that life by others: first, an attack by a fanatical nun, then, attack by the virtuous, but jealous, graduate of a religious academy, Murin, finally by her own doing. However, there is in effect, a murderer: the philanderer Vidalin, who seduced her and thus deprived her of 'vital energy' that was reserved for her great mission. The villain has to be punished, and the author agrees in this respect with his heroine. Vidalin, a typical 'hunter after women', recklessly wasting his precious 'vital energy', meets his own tragic end: he is drowned in the Neva, lured into the water by the winged spectre of Varia. Suvorin diagnoses Vidalin's case: 'The hero loses his mind thanks to the abuse of sexual love.'¹¹⁴ Thus in his novel, Suvorin brings to life his predictive apocalyptic vision of the future of human civilization: enjoying unlimited sexual freedom, man and woman eventually destroy each other.

As regards the third hero, Murin, he is clearly complex but perhaps insufficiently developed. On the one hand, Suvorin's sympathy is with Murin, since he entrusts him with the preaching of chastity, monogamy, and marital fidelity. On the other hand, the virtuous preacher picks up a gun to kill Varia, so that 'she does not wallow in vice' and then dramatically desecrates her dead body by extracting a skeleton from it. It is possible that that this character represents Suvorin's doubts regarding the practical moral strength of Christianity. It seems that Murin's further life development is not clear to the author at all: at any rate he simply disappears from the novel without trace.

In those chapters which he added to the novel, Suvorin dwells upon the idea of women's inferiority and involves the expertise of medical professionals. The French doctor Rochard whom Varia meets in Paris seems to have borrowed his ideas from the Russian doctor, Chekhov:

¹¹⁴ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 456. Entry of 13.10.1903.

3.74 Женщине не превзойти нашего брата. При равных талантах и равных занятиях она все-таки будет ниже мужчины¹¹⁵. А где же шансы превзойти более даровитого? Наш мозг окреп путем тысячелетних традиций, и кровь приливает к нему все сильнее. А у вас?.. У вас сильна только наследственность любви, и мозг и нервы сложились применительно к этому... Любовь, половые функции оттягивают у вас слишком много крови от головы, от мозга... и он питается хуже, чем у нас. (377)

Doctor Rochard also insists that for a man, it is necessary to spare and conserve sexual energy; and he provides persuasive evidence of what awaits the heedless:

3.75 Я вам укажу на тех мужчин, которые предаются почти исключительно одной любви, ухаживанию за женщинами, меняют их, а при каждой подобной смене требуется особенное напряжение и тратится сил гораздо больше, чем, например, в тихой и привычной любви в жене. Ведь такие мужчины, ставящие своей целью наслаждения с женщинами, постепенно тупеют, глупеют, разбрасывая зря свои лучшие соки, теряют энергию и делаются ни на что не годными... Вот подобные мужчины и напоминают женщин, потому что женщины почти исключительно занимаются любовью. Куда же им бороться с мужчиною? Слабеньких, конечно, они могут победить, тех слабеньких, для которых охота на женщин — главное занятие жизни... (377–378)

Since the prospect of human civilization was a subject of particular concern to Suvorin, it is more than likely that he had read a book by Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, which came out in Russia in 1893. However, there are no references to this book in any of Suvorin's available writings or documents.¹¹⁶ A barely visible trace can be found in a letter by Chekhov to Suvorin: 'I am fed up with all sorts of discussions, and I read such windbags as Max Nordau with disgust.'¹¹⁷ However, while Nordau himself could well have criticized Suvorin for exploiting decadent features in his novel,¹¹⁸ Suvorin, as it

¹¹⁵ Cf. Chekhov's ideas from a letter to his brother Aleksandr: 'Woman is ever passive. She gives birth to cannon fodder. She never exceeds the man in the political or sociological sense. <...> As far as creativity goes, she is a goose. (chapter II, p. 139).

¹¹⁶ Perhaps Suvorin was abashed because Nordau was a Jew. In *Novoe vremia* Nordau's book was severely criticized in a typical manner; cf.: 'crude and tough conclusions of a Semite who is judging Christians' (V. Peterson, 1.12.1893); or cf. a feuilleton by Burenin about the philosopher Kliaksa Erundau — 'who is also of Jewish extraction' (10.12.1893).

¹¹⁷ A. Chekhov, *PSSP*, P., vol. 5, p. 284. Letter of 27.03.1894.

¹¹⁸ Cf. 'The book that would be fashionable, must, above all, be obscure. <...> Ghost stories are very popular, but they must come on in scientific disguise, as hypnotism, telepathy, somnambulism.' (Max Nordau, *Degeneration* (University of Nebraska Press, 1993), pp.13–14). Suvorin's attitude to decadents was changeable but not without some interest. In *Novoe vremia*, he would reproach decadents à la Max Nordau: 'The Decadence has no genius, no creators; the best of it is anticipation and the worst of it is impudence <...> which manifests itself in literary works and in paintings as half-ideas, half-images, just as

appears, did not think unequivocally that Nordau was a windbag, since he enthusiastically publicized his ideas in *V kontse veka. Liubov'*:

3.76 В последние годы в публике понижался уровень требований к изящному, к талантам. Фокусничество начало рядиться в искусство, распущенность — в особую мораль, выработанную девятнадцатым веком, этим веком быстрых сообщений и сношений, когда думать было некогда. <...> Любовь завязывалась с быстротой электричества и потухала мгновенно и затем переходила на другой предмет, чтоб также потухнуть и возникнуть снова. Организм истощался, мужчины становились глупее и глупее, но богаче общими местами, женщины легкомысленнее и пошлее, но богаче разнообразием своих любовных ощущений. (414)

§ 5

Suvorin's novel was favourably reviewed posthumously by his biographer Boris Glinskii, who rated it as a modernistic experiment:

3.77 ...Он написал и большой роман «В конце века. Любовь», где он тонко подметил тяготение нашего общества к тому таинственному неведомому, спрос на которое сейчас у нас так велик. Он в этом отношении как бы опередил общественную мысль и еще много лет тому назад сказал то, чем ныне так заняты гг. Розанов, Философов и другие¹¹⁹.

By the phrase 'a taste on the part of our society for the mysterious unknown' Glinskii must have had in mind the religious and philosophical pursuits of the Silver Age, and primarily, investigation of the metaphysics of sex. As he mentions Vasilii Rozanov and Dmitrii Filosofov, he indicates, whether deliberately or not, polar directions in their search after verity.¹²⁰

it does in life as half-women, half-men (*Novoe vremia*. 3.12.1900). On Christmas Eve of 1899, Suvorin published his own Christmas story in *Novoe vremia*, 'Dekadentskoe proisshestvie', which parodied various decadent clichés and carried them to absurdity. But in his own publishing house he would, for example, publish Bal'mont and in his own theatre he would stage Maeterlinck. Smirnova-Sazonova recorded Suvorin's words in her diary: 'He says that he sympathizes with them [decadents] for their search of truth and of the unknown. He says that this movement will produce a genius' (Op. cit.: A. Chekhov, *PSSP*, P., vol. 6, p. 451).

¹¹⁹ B. Glinskii, 'Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin', in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 9 (1912), p. 12.

¹²⁰ See a detailed research of this subject in: L. Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Russia* (Cornell University Press, 1992); O. Riabov, *Russkaia filosofiia zhenstvennosti* (Ivanovo, 1999); O. Matich, *Erotic Utopia: The Decadent Imagination in Russia's Fin de Siècle* (Wisconsin University Press, 2005).

The philosopher Vasilii Rozanov, who had contributed to *Novoe vremia* sporadically since 1895 and on a regular basis since 1899¹²¹, by his own admission, had never read Suvorin's novel¹²² and presumably would not have appreciated his heroine, who rejected marriage and childbirth. When he presented his own journalistic programme to Suvorin, he made a very different claim:

3.78 Да, вот большое дело: если б Вы мне дали в «Новом времени» богато разработать, правда, щекотливую тему — о *поле и половом*. <...> Собственно говоря, мы имеем очень *двусмысленного* характера *семью* и *брак*. Евангелие не имеет никакого взгляда и даже в решительный момент говорит: «лучше не жениться». Отсюда, из этой ужасной строки потекло 2000-летнее отрицательное воззрение на пол, и, как мне думается, с этою строкою вошли под видом «кротости» и «чистоты» существенно демонические струи в нашу цивилизацию¹²³.

Rozanov's choice of 'the sexual question' was to a degree personally motivated: he suffered greatly in his first — hasty and childless — marriage, as he could not obtain a divorce from his wife, Apollinaria Suslova. Rozanov found happiness in his second — patriarchal — marriage with Varvara Butiagina, but it took him 12 years of hard effort to get his five children recognized as legitimate. Suvorin's family story represents something of a reversing mirror to Rozanov's: at least inasmuch as Suvorin's first marriage, meant to be a patriarchal family model, ended in a disaster, while his second marriage was, like Rozanov's first, hasty. However, Suvorin's second was no bed of roses.

Suvorin offered Rozanov good fees and a lot of newspaper space. To all appearances, Rozanov greatly appreciated Suvorin's *carte blanche*, although he did remark: 'Suvorin was rather puritanical as regards sex. He protested a lot against my articles on divorce and he disliked my "sexual question".'¹²⁴ Here by 'the sexual question' one should understand Rozanov's open glorification and apotheosis of coitus, and it is indeed true that, in his newspaper, Suvorin did not allow explicit sexual scenes

¹²¹ See for example: Iu. Kazakova, *Filosofia igry: V. V. Rozanov — zhurnalist i literaturnyi kritik (Po materialam gazety A. S. Suvorina 'Novoe vremia')* (M., 2001), pp. 8–61.

¹²² V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine* (M., 1992; 1st edition SPb, 1913), p. 52.

¹²³ *Pis'ma russkikh pisatelei k A. S. Suvorinu* (L., 1927), pp. 148–149. The letter was written in the 90s.

¹²⁴ V. Rozanov, *Poslednie list'ia* (M., 2000), p. 105. However, the other side of Suvorin's purism was his willingness to exchange bawdy stories in his correspondence with Chekhov, not to mention his voyeuristic diary passages.

even in fiction. One of his journalists recalls: ‘I do not quote any witty words of Suvorin about purely physical love. He <...> was resolutely against realistic description of sex in our fiction.’¹²⁵ Accordingly, despite the fact that Rozanov elevated only procreative sex to religious status, and despite the fact that for Rozanov only family life on the patriarchal model was to be considered the goal of our social existence, Suvorin did not indeed accept his views; however, he restricted his polemics with Rozanov to private correspondence only. The intimacy of a private letter allowed Suvorin — counter to his open preaching of the Christian marriage — to come up with shocking statements. There is reason to believe that Suvorin’s bitter irony was induced by his personal family experience:

3.79 Нынешний брак — чучело. Его надо побоку вместе с христианством, которое совершенно отживает свой век. Любовь должна быть свободна, но необходимо одно, чтоб мужчина и женщина, сделав ребенка, непременно выкормили его и воспитали хотя бы <...> лет до 10–12, когда ребенок может поступить в среднюю школу. <...> ...Может быть, было бы лучше учредить заведения из самцов, с хорошим жалованьем, в которые являлись бы девушки и женщины для удовлетворения своей плоти. Давайте проповедовать магометанство. Оно гораздо практичнее христианства¹²⁶.

Still, Suvorin, of course, was aware that Rozanov’s articles on ‘the sexual question,’ at the time a topical problem, would attract attention and would draw more readers: ‘While it was Tolstoy who with his demand for chastity initiated the debate on sexual morality at the beginning of the decade, it is Rozanov who at its conclusion stands out as the most challenging of the writers who had reversed the question and advocated sexuality free of guilt.’¹²⁷ However, as in the case with Tolstoy’s radicalism on the subject of chastity, Suvorin could not accept Rozanov’s idea of procreative sex which he also considered carried matters to an extremity:

3.80 А в Вас есть ли что, кроме «святого пола». Он действительно свят у вас, и это доказывать нечего. Что останется, коли не признать святости пола. <...> Я помню, после «Послесловия» Толстого к его известной повести, где действует Позднышев и проповедуется райская невинность, я

¹²⁵ N. Ezhov, ‘Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin: Moi vospominaniia o nem, dumy, soobrazheniia’, in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 1 (1915), p. 120.

¹²⁶ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*, p. 77. Suvorin’s letter to Rozanov of 29.07.1901.

¹²⁷ P. Møller, *Postlude to the Kreutzer Sonata*, p. 298.

получил длинное и горячее протестующее письмо от одного господина, который красноречиво проклинал Толстого за его проповедь воздержания и говорил, что русскому человеку ничего, кроме петли и водки, не останется, если запретить ему вольное обхождение с женщинами, они же это и любят до смерти¹²⁸.

Suvorin, who was apprehensive of promoting ‘the sexual question’ in the press on too wide a scale, at some point suggested that Rozanov change his subject:

3.81 У нас никто литературой не занимается. Буренин ее презирает и глумится над нею. Вы не читаете и не ищите, сидя над святостью пола. <...> Из «СПб ведомостей» я знаю, что в газете моего возлюбленного сына [«Русь», издатель А. А. Суворин] проповедуется обнажение тела, и какая-то барышня писала, что Розанов и [М. О.] Меньшиков, пожалуй, наденут на голое тело красные шарфы и резиновые галоши¹²⁹.

These young ladies who engage in an open discussion of sex in newspapers must presumably realize Suvorin’s fears of a woman liberated bodily and morally. The genre of the private letter allows Suvorin not to mince words, and seems to reveal his archetypal fear of *vagina dentata*:

3.82 Я думаю, это одна из тех барышень, которые даже голыми ничего собой не изображают и нимало не соблазнительны. Такой дряни у нас ужасно много. Они хуже проституток, потому что у тех все-таки есть нечто вроде красоты, а у этих ничего, кроме вульвы, да еще поганой, которую они всем подставляют¹³⁰.

Summing up, Suvorin returns to his evolutionistic apprehensions and also echoes Max Nordau: ‘We degenerate into mere intelligentsia, who have been practicing sex and sex only from time immemorial. How faded our young ladies are, how hard it is to find a strong man!’¹³¹ In the final result, Suvorin disputes Rozanov’s philosophy in its entirety.

¹²⁸ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*, p. 97. Suvorin’s letter to Rozanov of 18.05.1904.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 98. Suvorin means a series of articles by Maximilian Voloshin and Vladimir Zhabotinskii in which they glorified the beauty of the naked body. A red (worsted) scarf in those days was a fashionable accessory which symbolized not only the Revolution, but also artistic freedom. For example, Vsevolod Meierkhol’d was one of those who wore a red scarf to follow the fashion.

¹³⁰ Op. cit.: V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*, p. 98.

¹³¹ V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob A. S. Suvorine*. P. 98. As can be seen from this quotation, Suvorin (and also Chekhov) use the term ‘intelligentsiia’ with a negative connotation. Cf. his words: ‘It is not without reason that Russians adopted the word “intelligentsiia”, which in Europe does not indicate any particular social stratum. Why did we pick up this word so quickly and so willingly? This is because there

Now without irony Suvorin rejects Rozanov's idea that the main goal of sexual activity is childbirth; he provides evidence to oppose and contrast Rozanov's idealism and the positivism of evolutionists:

3.83 Вы горячо доказываете, что только то есть совокупление, если после него ребенок. А я думаю, что это просто дичь. Просто дичь. Ребята рождаются убогие, преступные, идиоты, подлецы и т. д., потому что и в браке и вне брака употребляются похотливые, пьяные, <облезлые?>, обессиленные, <нрзб>! Большинство людей — стадо, просто род назема, немножко лучше собаки, а пожалуй, многим и хуже. Что же это за «великая тайна», которая производится из мерзости?¹³²

However, an adverse commentary like that was not followed by any prohibitive measures on Suvorin's side and did not interrupt Rozanov in his productive contribution to Suvorin's newspaper: over 18 years, he published 1660 pieces in *Novoe vremia*, and many of his books (37 titles in all) were based on his newspaper publications.¹³³ Besides, during their collaboration, Suvorin and Rozanov maintained warm and friendly relations:

3.84 К Суворину он всегда хранил глубочайшее уважение и любовь, доходившую до энтузиазма, и это не только из чувства личной благодарности (без того материального устройства, которым он был обязан Суворину, русская литература не имела бы Розанова), а из совершенно бескорыстного влечения к этому типично бытовому человеку, «обывателю» с талантом литературного импрессиониста¹³⁴.

After Suvorin's death, Rozanov, apparently without realizing it, had actually responded to the key idea of Suvorin's novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*:

3.85 О девстве глубокое слово я слышал от А. С. Суворина и от [преподавателя духовной академии] А. В. Карташова. Первый как-то сказал: «Нет, я замечал, что когда девушка теряет девство (без замужества), то она теряет и всё. Она делается *дурною*». Конечно, он ни малейше не

are very few civilised as well as educated people in Russia. Thus the intelligentsia appeared, something in between, indefinite, covering up all sorts of lumber. It is either a third estate, or God knows what, neither meat nor fowl. What I mean to say is that culture should not be confused with intelligentsia.' (*Novoe vremia*. 25.03.1890.) This subject should be considered separately.

¹³² Op. cit.: V. Rozanov, *Priznaki vremeni: Stat'i i ocherki 1912 g. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k V. V. Rozanovu. Pis'ma V. V. Rozanova k A. S. Suvorinu* (M., 2006), p. 390.

¹³³ See: V. Sukach, 'Rozanov V. V.', in *Russkie pisateli: 1800–1917: Biograficheskii slovar'* (M., 2007), p. 326.

¹³⁴ P. Pertsov, *Literaturnye vospominaniia: 1890–1902 gg.* (M., 2002), p. 264.

имел в виду обычных нравственных суждений, и передал наблюдение «что бывает», «что случается», «что *далее* следует»¹³⁵.

Nevertheless, having finished his novel *V kontse veka: Liubov'*, Suvorin found himself concerned particularly with the moral implications of chastity, and he conceived a new literary piece:

3.86 Переписал в два дня первый акт пьесы, которую я стал переделывать из своего романа «Любовь» в прошлом году. Был написан 1-й акт и часть 2-го. Переписал 1-й акт, дело, по-видимому, дальше не пойдет. Трудно справиться с темой фантастической¹³⁶.

Suvorin's writing difficulties were accompanied by growing health problems. His diary of the time teems with complaints about his waning energy and on the whole about his general misery:

3.87 5.10.1897. Всего хуже сознание, что чувствуется, что песня моя спета. Я не могу работать, как прежде, и меня томит тоска. Я не могу ничего не делать. Желание работать не прошло еще, но силы надорваны. **6.03.1898.** Здоровье все хуже и хуже, и необъяснимое отвращение к врачам. <...> Только злишься на эту старость, которая съедает и энергию, и талант, съедает душу. **15.03.1898.** Я совсем расклеился. Вспыльчивость становится прямо сумасшедшей. <...> Кончится тем, что порвется сосуд и отправишься туда, откуда не приходят. Мне тяжело становится от бессилия работать. **8.09.1899.** Пробовал писать. Ничего не выходит. Писал 2-й акт «Героини» [переделка романа], бледно выходит. Видно, надо поставить точку и этим упражнениям¹³⁷.

However, Suvorin only came to a full stop when he finished recycling his novel into a play. In the process, he changed the working title *Geroinia* for a meaningful *Vopros*, which suggests he omitted epithet *polovoi*. But still, tackling this question, Suvorin faced some problems of story line:

3.88 Хотел продолжать комедию. [Юрист и писатель С. А.] Андреевский подсказал мне конец. Надо, чтоб герой спознался с женщинами, тогда он может жениться на Варе, которая жила с Муратовым. Тогда они равны. Девственность ужасная вещь для девушки. Однако зачем ее природа

¹³⁵ V. Rozanov. *Opavshie list'ia: Korob vtoroi i poslednii* (L., 1999), p. 279.

¹³⁶ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 302. Entry of 15.07.1897.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 309, 313, 314, 343.

сделала? У животных нет девственной плевы. Почему у дочерей Евы она существует? Ошибка Бога и природы, или это основание семьи?¹³⁸

The idea suggested by Andreevskii would actually have struck out ‘the sexual question’ which perturbed Suvorin a great deal, so he rejected the alternative ending. Now seriously preoccupied with the problem of virginity, Suvorin decided to look into the root of the matter. But also, since Suvorin greatly valued Chekhov’s opinion, he mentioned his play in his letter to him (their correspondence by that time being fairly minimal). Chekhov who by then was an established playwright, living in Yalta and although he was busy with his play *Tri sestry*, he replied without delay and offered Suvorin his help: ‘Send me your play and I shall return it as soon as I have read it.’¹³⁹

On receipt of the play, Chekhov analysed it thoroughly and approved it in general, although he also pointed out some structural weakness of the plot:

3.89 Новая пьеса, 1 и 2 акты, мне понравилась, и я нахожу даже, что она лучше «Татьяны Репиной». Та ближе к театру, а эта ближе к жизни. 3-й акт не определился, потому что в нем нет действия, нет даже ясности в замысле¹⁴⁰.

Furthermore, in his letter, Chekhov, like Andreevskii, practically eliminates the key question which prompted Suvorin to write this play in the first place. Again, he suggests that a mouthpiece of the untenable chastity idea should be removed:

3.90 Образованный дворянин, идущий в попы¹⁴¹, — это уже устарело и не возбуждает любопытства <...> а в его девстве и целомудрии увидят нечто скопческое. <...> Знает отец про грех Вари или не знает — думаю, все равно или не так важно. Половая сфера, конечно, играет важную роль на сем свете, но ведь не все от нее зависит, далеко не все; и далеко не везде она имеет решающее значение. Когда пришлете IV акт, еще напишу, если придумаю что-нибудь¹⁴².

Apparently, Suvorin tried to amend his play according to Chekhov’s advice, although no direct evidence has survived. As can be seen from the following letter from Chekhov, Suvorin made an attempt to link chastity with nihilism or to contrast these two

¹³⁸ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 366. Entry of 15.02.1900.

¹³⁹ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 9, p. 10. Letter of 8.01.1900.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22. Letter of 23.01.1900.

¹⁴¹ Murin from the novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*; in the play his surname is Ratishev.

¹⁴² A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 9, p. 24. Letter of 23.01.1900.

ideas. Chekhov rejected this variant as well and offered his own idea of the finale of Suvorin's play, very much in Chekhovian tone, and, to be more exact, in the tone of *Diadia Vania*:

3.91 Я ломал голову над IV актом и ничего не придумал, кроме разве того, что кончать нигилистами нельзя. Это слишком бурно, крикливо, к Вашей же пьесе более идет конец тихий, лирический, трогательный. Когда Ваша героиня состарится, не придя ни к чему и ничего не решив для себя, и увидит, что она всеми покинута, неинтересна, не нужна, когда поймет, что окружавшие ее люди были праздные, ненужные, дурные люди (отец — тоже) и что она проморгала жизнь, — разве это не страшнее нигилистов?¹⁴³

§ 6

As usual, Chekhov approved Suvorin's endeavours in writing:

3.92 Я рад, что Вы почти уж написали пьесу, и еще раз повторяю, что Вам следует писать и пьесы, и романы — во-первых, потому что это вообще нужно, и, во-вторых, потому что для Вас это здорово, так как приятно разнообразит Вам жизнь¹⁴⁴.

However, Suvorin saw his life now only as a heavy burden, his family driving him to suicide:

3.93 8.06.1900 Старость кончилась. Началась дряхлость у меня. Старость еще ничего, но дряхлость — удивительная скверность. Просто без просвета. **25.09.1900.** Не долго мне осталось держать перо в руках. Я в том периоде умирания, когда не хочется никому говорить, что действительно умираешь, когда все это очень хорошо видят, но молчат и не подают признака, что они готовы встретить смерть мою. <...> И в старости чувствуешь себя таким одиноким, что не будь у меня театра, не владей я пером, я бы пропал. Хоть вешайся. **27.09.1900.** Семья уменьшается, а расходы увеличиваются, то есть увеличивается грабеж с каждым месяцем и годом. <...> Я Леле [сыну Алексею] написал, что желал бы отдохнуть от всех этих мелочей, а потому желал бы учредить совет из членов моей семьи, которые бы проверяли расходы. Он мне ответил, что я желаю разыграть короля Лира. А я желаю разыграть просто старика, который устал от этих волнений, от ужасной злобы. **5.10.1900.** Говорил с Анной Ивановной о приданом [для дочери Насти]. Сейчас против меня, точно я обвиняю. Сейчас на меня нападать со злобою, с расчетом, чтоб я не смог

¹⁴³ A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 9, p. 49. Letter of 12.02.1900.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Letter of 23.01.1900.

сказать слова, чтоб я молчал и позволил делать, что хотят и как хотят. <...> Я зажился и мешаю им¹⁴⁵.

Suvorin's newspaper also seemed to enter 'a period of dying', although this was appreciated only in retrospect:

3.94 28 февраля 1901 года с большой помпой отпраздновало «Новое время» 25-летний юбилей своего существования. И вряд ли кому из присутствующих на юбилее могло прийти в голову, что этим празднеством «Новое время» справляет свою тризну. Никто не мог бы подумать, что 25-летний юбилей был тем роковым переломом в жизни единственной тогда русской газеты, за которым началось постепенное ее падение¹⁴⁶.

Suvorin had similar feelings exactly during the quarter-century jubilee celebration, but he could only share them with his diary:

3.95 Говорить прямо и открыто невозможно. Газета становится противною. <...> Газета меня угнетает. Я боюсь за ее будущее. Тьма сотрудников, большею частью бездарных и ничего не делающих. Я сказал, что юбилей — репетиция похорон. Так это и будет¹⁴⁷.

However, *Novoe vremia* would die a 'violent death' (would be closed down by the Bolsheviks) only in 1917, so over the next ten years, up to his death, Suvorin would remain at his post and would keep overall command of his newspaper, while he delegated the editorial duties to his sons Aleksei and Mikhail. Neither did Suvorin abandon his favourite genre, and in the newly arrived 20th century, he would send to his readers some four hundred of his missives, *Malen'kie pis'ma*.

At the beginning of the 20th century, official discourse associated with 'the woman question', being 'moderately conservative and habitual in its language, arguments, posits, and suggested decisions, has started to show misogynistic tendencies.'¹⁴⁸ As for the reasons, one should take into consideration the arrival of books by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Otto Weininger published in Russian in mass circulation; but the main reason is found in tangible achievements by the women's

¹⁴⁵ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, pp. 390, 396, 398–400.

¹⁴⁶ N. Snessarev, *Mirazh 'Novogo vremeni': Pochti roman* (SPb, 1914), p. 5.

¹⁴⁷ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 412. Entry of 7.03.1901.

¹⁴⁸ See: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 233. See also: O. Riabov, *Russkaia filosofiiia zhenstvennosti* (Ivanovo, 1999), chapter 3: 'Filosofiiia zhenstvennosti Serebrianogo veka'.

movement, and particularly, in strong women's competition in the labour market thanks to their growing education. Since it was impossible to turn away from reality, Suvorin published two *Malen'kie pis'ma* of significant length about women's education, paying particular attention to their medical training. In these letters, which seem to be the last of Suvorin's explicit and extended statement *apropos* 'the woman question', one can notice his attempts to smooth out the misogynistic tendencies of official discourse by boosting a positive public opinion on women's education. Nevertheless Suvorin could not resist typical reservations disguised by irony, albeit subtle irony:

3.96 ...Русские женщины играли выдающуюся роль в Европе. Оно и понятно: русская женщина — самая свободная женщина в Европе, в хорошем и условном значении этого слова, как русская литература — самая свободная и самая гуманная во всем том, что касается женщины, ибо русская литература — мужская литература, а русский мужчина — самый благодарный женщине за все то сердечное, что она дает ему¹⁴⁹.

Suvorin's immanent fear that male civilisation will eventually collapse, now acquires a milder tonality:

3.97 Вопрос о равноправности снова появился только в начале сороковых годов. С того времени развитие его растет все более и более, и окончательная победа женщин не за горами, чтобы ни говорили против него мужчины благодарные и неблагодарные. XX век будет женским веком, если мужчины не напрягут всех своих сил, чтоб сделаться умнее и лучше и быть достойными руководителями прекрасной половины человеческого рода.

It may seem that Suvorin, although he still maintains the idea of antagonism between the sexes, is less worried about it now; however, he can approve women's fight for rights in one area only:

3.98 Надо сознаться, что в самом существе мужчины лежит нечто враждебное против женщины, как и наоборот. Мужчина ее покорил, приспособил к себе, наложил на нее некоторые цели и обязанности кроме тех, которые выросли у нее сами собой. Равна ли она мужчине или не равна, это все равно. Но она затеяла борьбу за свою равноправность, борьбу не совсем приятную, а иногда и совсем неприятную мужчине. Литературные художники видят признаки взаимной вражды женской и мужской даже в жизни вольных кокоток. Но я говорю только о самой симпатичной стороне этой

¹⁴⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 17.10.1901.

борьбы, о праве учиться, как учится мужчина. Это — самая превосходная женская догадка и самая решительная.

Developing his argument, Suvorin has to admit that even ‘the most attractive’ aspect of women’s struggle for their rights has met with resistance:

3.99 Литература в огромном количестве своих органов совсем не поощряла женщин в этом научном отношении долгое время и пролила огромную массу чернил для доказательства того, что женщины далеко никогда не пойдут.

Suvorin does not hasten to admit that a great deal of the ink spilled was from his own ink-pot. We have seen that at certain points he spared neither ink nor eloquence to denounce woman doctors; Smirnova-Sazonova provides the evidence:

3.100 [Суворин] Говорил против женщин-врачей, что на какого черта нам ученые женщины с математикой, с греческим и латинским языком и в доказательство <...> рассказал о своем знакомстве с женщиной врачом, которая всю свою жизнь посвятила больным, возилась с чужими детьми и целыми днями принимала больных баб и мужиков в земской больнице¹⁵⁰.

Now Suvorin deems it necessary to show appreciation of women fighting for their right to education and for their right to work. Moreover, they deserve particular commendation for their fortitude; here Suvorin finally seems to admit his own inconsistency in his discussion of ‘the woman question’:

3.101 Ничего бы не достигли женщины, если бы поддавались минутному настроению, падали духом или выражали претензии навязать кому-нибудь свои взгляды. <...> Они очень хорошо сознавали, что даже друзья этого движения к науке в тайниках души думали иногда как враги и не могли удержаться от иронии или некоторого лицемерия. <...> То добро, которое принесли женщины в последние тридцать–сорок лет как женщины-врачи, как сестры милосердия, акушерки, фельдшерицы, профессорши, учительницы, технички по сельскому хозяйству, наконец, как образованные женщины — разве кто с этим может не считаться? <...> В сравнении с прежним масса интеллигентного женского труда увеличилась во много раз.¹⁵¹

Now fully approving women’s contribution to socially necessary labour, Suvorin outlines in his article the development of medical education both in Europe and America

¹⁵⁰ OR IRLI. F. 285. Dnevnik S. I. Smirnovoi-Sazonovoi. Ed. 23. L. 451. Entry of 28.03.1894.

¹⁵¹ *Novoe vremia*. 18.10.1901.

and tells the life story of the first woman doctor, Elizabeth Blackwell. However, Suvorin still maintains reservations about male and female co-education, and this allows him to revisit a problematic issue, ‘the sexual question’, which he now terms ‘the moral question’:

3.102 Вообще во всей этой полувековой истории у нас и за границей красной нитью проходит вопрос о нравственности, выражаемой то юмористически, то сатирически, то с серьезными доводами. <...> Рассудите, что у студента называется молодечеством и донжуанством, то у девушки называется распутством.

What seems like a promising opening to discussion of the double moral standard, evolves into Suvorin’s reflection upon the dissolution of morals; however, according to him, it is only women who are prone to ‘moral fall’; and the last statement has a personal ring:

3.103 Женщина учится по большей части не от безделья, а ради насущного хлеба, ради карьеры, общественного положения и замужества. <...> Если случаются падения, а они, разумеется, случаются, то они кончаются сплошь и рядом тем, что женщина оставляет лекции, и остаются те, которые действительно учатся. И мне хочется спросить, где более этих падений, не в обществе ли? Вопрос деликатный, но естественный. Какие семьи и чем ограждены от этого горя, которое к тому же является очень часто, как результат бессознательного, невменяемого увлечения.

Suvorin chooses not to consider ‘a delicate issue of moral falls’, but in his final statement he argues that women’s education should primarily be aimed at improving their morality. Here one can perhaps discern his old belief that education and loose morals are closely linked, although the relation is now reversed, i. e. Suvorin now states that education leads to better morals through enhanced responsibility:

3.104 Я думаю, что высшее образование дает сознание, увеличивает силу разума и прибавляет что-нибудь к ответственности прежде всего перед самим собою. В противном случае образование было бы и не особенно нужно.

In the meantime, Suvorin continued to explore ‘a fallen woman’ in his fiction, the result being his play *Vopros* which was staged first in Malyi Theatre in Moscow (2.12.1902) and then in Aleksandrinskii Theatre in Petersburg (30.01.1903) featuring

leading actors. Chekhov, paying no heed to Suvorin's moral topics, reacted to the play in his letter to Ol'ga Knipper: 'Suvorin's *Vopros* enjoyed a tremendous success in Petersburg, his witticisms were found very funny. So, the old man was lucky.'¹⁵² However, the author did not mean his play to be funny:

3.105 Я взял из романа главные положения и две-три сцены и могу считать «Вопрос» самостоятельным произведением. Он взят из первых глав и развит в пьесу. Вторая его половина совсем не вошла в пьесу. <...> Я выделил для пьесы вопрос о девственности и представил его независимо от романа¹⁵³.

Suvorin's play was not welcomed by critics, who doubted his professionalism as a playwright:

3.106 Там, где пьеса г. Суворина не есть мелодрама, она представляет настоящее словоизвержение на модные темы. О чем только ни говорят на сцене: — о неохристианстве и женском вопросе (1 д.), о марксизме, фабричных песнях, ботанике, Офелии, антихристе, сверхчеловеке (2 д.), о роли женщины в искусстве и гетевском Фаусте (3 д.), о значении семьи, о падающих звездах, падающих женщинах, об ангелах (4 д.). Часто говорят явный вздор. Из всех поднятых вопросов непосредственное отношение к пьесе имеет только один — о женщине с «прошлым». Не отличаясь новизной, он освещен в пьесе неумелой рукой. <...> Г. Суворин хотел, по-видимому, сказать, что «правда» приводит к трагическим последствиям. Эта идея тоже не нова (чисто ибсеновская)¹⁵⁴.

Indeed, the play (subtitled, à la Chekhov, 'a comedy') has a tragic ending: Ratishchev,¹⁵⁵ a virgin and a preacher of chastity, kills in a duel one Muratov,¹⁵⁶ a womaniser and a preacher of free love; the duel, also in a Chekhovian style, takes place offstage.

The message of the play can be reduced to the following theses. Muratov has forfeited his life for deflowering Varia, a nice and bright, but otherwise perfectly ordinary, girl. Deprived of her virginity, Varia rejects marriage with the chaste and virtuous Ratishchev because she finds it humiliating to confess her sin and to be pardoned by him. Moreover, Varia is publicly blamed and disgraced for moral dissipation and for

¹⁵² A. Chekhov, *PSSP, P.*, vol. 11, p. 144. Letter of 7.02.1903.

¹⁵³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 457. Entry of 13.10.1903.

¹⁵⁴ *Kur'er*. 4.12.1902.

¹⁵⁵ A young Murin in the novel.

¹⁵⁶ Vidalin in the novel.

causing Muratov's death, so that one can say that she is killed morally. Among other victims are Muratov's fiancée — she loses her suitor, as well as Ratishchev, who is liable for murder. Suvorin clearly indicates the heavy price of premarital sex for a woman, even if she has been a willing and consenting participant.

Without the mysticism and decadent embellishment of the novel, Suvorin's play does indeed deal with the relevant and essentially mundane topic of the double moral standard for men and women. Varia tries to challenge unjustness to women, but her protest is a voice in the wilderness:

3.107 Я хочу, чтобы меня признали свободным человеком... чтоб я не молила о прощении, не унижалась... <...> Чтоб я не лукавила перед тем, кто сильнее, и он, этот сильный, чтобы он не смел, не имел права меня допрашивать о моем прошлом, допрашивать, как преступницу, как рабыню... <...> Не вам нас судить, когда вы сами нарушаете закон, когда вы сами топчете его в грязь.¹⁵⁷

Devoid of support of other characters, Varia was found unconvincing by critics: 'Varia — a new type of woman longing to be free — acts, in fact, as a weepy girl straight from the era of Sentimentalism.'¹⁵⁸ On the whole, Suvorin's critics decided that his 'question' was left unanswered:

3.108 Автор не подсказывает окончательного решения вопроса в том или ином смысле. Но взяв общий, очень значительный вопрос семейной морали, он затрагивает попутно частности этого вопроса, различные его комбинации, усложняет вопрос — и сам останавливается с выражением вопроса над тезою своего произведения¹⁵⁹.

Suvorin tried to explain 'the thesis' of his play in his diary, apparently drafting a *Malen'koe pis'mo*, which was never published:

3.109 Мне случалось читать рецензии, где говорилось что «вопрос», трактуемый в пьесе, совсем и не стоит того, чтоб трактовать о нем. Это, мол, скорей вопрос для водевиля, чем для серьезной комедии. <...> Девственность считается вздором, предрассудком. Слово «предрассудок» часто встречалось в рецензиях. Оно склонялось по всем падежам, и слово «падение» высмеивалось тем грубым смехом, в котором ни юмора не было, ни остроумия. <...> В Петербурге меня поразило следующее: огромное количество женщин на представлении. <...> Да и на самом деле, это «вопрос»

¹⁵⁷ A. Suvorin, *Vopros: Komedia v chetyrekh deistviakh: 2-e izd.* (SPb, 1904), p. 115–116, 160.

¹⁵⁸ *Kur'er*. 4.12.1902.

¹⁵⁹ *Teatr i iskusstvo*, 6 (1903), p. 140. The author of the review is Aleksandr Kugel'.

для женщин. Они только выиграют, если не станут верить мужчинам, что девственность есть предрассудок. <...> Если девственность есть предрассудок, то от нее надо скорей избавиться. <...> При первом же увлечении молодым человеком, при первой влюбленности, надо говорить: «Возьми меня всю», и, конечно, мужчина возьмет. Для него это одно удовольствие. Для девушки иногда это даже не удовольствие, а только риск забеременеть¹⁶⁰.

Suvorin was apparently developing a fascination with virginity, even an obsession. When he read a book by Il'ia Mechnikov *Ėtiudy o prirode cheloveka* (which deals, in a special chapter, with the peculiar feature of female anatomy relevant to defloration¹⁶¹), he did not hesitate to launch into a heated argument with the author, a militant materialist and Darwinist (and a future Nobel prize-winner). Paradoxically, Suvorin now forgets about the Darwinism he displayed in his argument with Rozanov about childbirth and about the inadmissibility of explicit naturalistic evidence ('A newspaper cannot publish praise of sexual anatomy...'¹⁶²). Now Suvorin seems to adopt Rozanov's idealism. Because he has discovered what seems to be a 'a weak link' in science, which finds difficulty in explaining the function of the hymen, Suvorin insists that the hymen exists and functions by divine will; and he is, of course, fully aware of the force of his argument for the average and mainly religious mass reader:

3.110 Вот что замечательно: у прекрасной половины человеческого рода существует орган, какого нет у прекрасной половины всего животного царства, не исключая обезьян. Нет именно того, что называется девственностью. <...> Всё, что говорит Мечников по поводу девственности, весьма несущественно¹⁶³. Этот же вопрос я старался разработать в своей пьесе «Вопрос» <...> ...Ученые не знают, какую физиологическую роль играет девственность. А я думаю, что раз Бог отличил женщину от самок животных, то Он знал, что делал. Он выбрал женщину защитницей человеческого рода от вырождения, от мужского распутства, от мужской чувственности, которая рождается уже у мальчика, тогда как первая любовь девушки сплошь и рядом любовь платоническая, чуждая чувственности...¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 457. Entry of 13.10.1903.

¹⁶¹ See: I. Mechnikov, *Ėtiudy o prirode cheloveka* (M., 1903), chapter V: 'Disgarmonii v ustroistve i v otpravleniiakh organov vosproizvedeniia. Disgarmonii semeinogo i sotsial'nogo instinktov'.

¹⁶² Op. cit.: V. Rozanov, *Priznaki vremeni: Stat'i i ocherki 1912 g. Pis'ma A. S. Suvorina k V. V. Rozanovu. Pis'ma V. V. Rozanova k A. S. Suvorinu*, p. 390.

¹⁶³ Here Suvorin means the anatomy and physiology of virginity discussed by Mechnikov.

¹⁶⁴ *Novoe vremia*. 7.05.1903.

Suvorin seems to attribute men's sexuality to their biological nature, but he is not satisfied at all by Mechnikov's biologism; that biologism arouses his indignation. Moreover, Mechnikov's claim that the hymen is not functional¹⁶⁵ is regarded by Suvorin as a licence for unlimited sex, which is, he thinks, a cause for human degeneration:

3.111 Человечество все более и более склоняется к тому, чтобы беспрепятственно и свободно наслаждаться любовью, а не к тому, чтобы рождать возможно лучшие и здоровые поколения. Как можно меньше детей, даже вовсе не надо детей. <...> А кто знает, отсутствие сильных дарований, великих талантов и умов, что замечается в наши времена, не зависит ли в известной степени от этой жажды *только* наслаждаться любовью?..

However, in drawing his conclusion, Suvorin tends towards a reconciliation of science with religion, his unifying idea being self-improvement. Suvorin had offered this idea to his readers already; on the whole, it suggests premarital chastity and moderation in marital life, as a rational and adaptive investment of 'vital energy', where the key terms are flexibly construed:

3.112 Г. Мечников <...> это несоответствие, например, между ранним развитием чувственности у мужчин и поздним у женщин называет «дисгармонией»¹⁶⁶. <...> Он говорит фактами, проверенными наукой, и избегает морали. Но она сама собой становится на очередь. Если человек увеличивает эту дисгармонию своей неводержанностью, распутством и проч., то платится за это трагедиями ревности, самоубийства, убийства, расстройства здоровья, болезнями и преждевременной смертью. <...> Явилась ли эта дисгармония от того, что человек есть выродок обезьяны, или Бог таким его создал и он есть венец творения, во что я верю, все равно результат один: надо совершенствоваться, ибо в этом только лежит возможность жить долго и по возможности счастливо.

By an ironic twist of fate, Suvorin had at the same time to deal with a very bizarre virgin, who may be considered a caricature personification of the heroine of his novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*. A certain Nadezhda Sanzhar' began to pester Suvorin with her letters: because she thought herself a writer, she sought to gain a footing in a literary world and turned to Suvorin for support. Proud to keep her virginity at 26 despite her

¹⁶⁵ Cf.: 'It is not difficult to see that the hymen has no function in a human body. Its atrophy after perforation does not hinder sexual intercourse. Quite the contrary, with hymen intact, there are uncomfortable and unpleasant obstacles. (I. Mechnikov, *Étiudy o prirode cheloveka*, pp. 83–84.)

¹⁶⁶ According to Mechnikov, this disharmony is of evolutionary nature.

marriage, she was also a hater of men, while at the same time, she dreamt of having a child by a literary celebrity. With this end in view, she bombarded Leonid Andreev, Blok, Gorky, Viacheslav Ivanov and many others, with her illiterate letters. We can only conjecture what Suvorin's feelings were when he read Sanzhar's life story:

3.113 ...Теперь я пишу Вам мою жизнь, прочитайте, ради Христа, и посоветуйте мне, укажите хотя маленькую тропинку, и я пойду по ней, а оставаться так, как теперь, — я чувствую, что убью себя. <...> Несколько раз я могла бы променять мое звание крестьянки на превосходительство и быть богатой, мне везло на женихов, вдовцов-генералов, но я видела, что им до моего внутреннего содержания не было никакого дела, а просто им нравилось мое тело, которое возбуждало у них желание, ради которого много делается глупостей на свете; они были мне не симпатичны и без чего я брака не признаю¹⁶⁷.

Scared by this pushy virgin, Suvorin never allowed Sanzhar' to cross his threshold, and as regards her literary talents, he gave her 'a vague' answer...

§ 7

Suvorin was ageing, his health was sinking fast, he was forever complaining about his miserable life, but still he was reluctant to give up. His old interest in Dmitrii Samozvanets, which resulted in a thorough piece of historical research,¹⁶⁸ also had a spin-off: a drama in five acts *Tsar' Dmitrii Samozvanets i tsarevna Kseniia*. As in most cases, Suvorin chose an extraordinary woman for his heroine. He thought it important to substantiate his choice:

3.114 Кроме Димитрия, меня интересовала личность Ксении, дочери царя Бориса. <...> Те коротенькие заметки о Ксении, которые встречаются у русских летописцев того времени, дышат симпатией к ней. Эти летописцы знали, что она жила не только с Самозванцем, но приняла всякое бесчестие и от других, от русских и иноземцев, странствуя из лавры в лавру во время тогдашней смуты и всякого насилия. И что замечательно, русские современники, столь щепетильные к женскому «греху», а девическому тем более, в этом падшем величии, в этой наложнице поневоле, в

¹⁶⁷ See: ““Zadirat' nos vyshe mozga”, ili “Pochemu liudi takie driani?”: Pis'ma N. D. Sanzhar' k A. S. Suvorinu, Viach. I. Ivanovu, A. A. Bloku i A. S. Serafimovichu' / Podgotovka teksta, publikatsiia, vstupitel'naia zametka i primechaniia A. A. Aksenovoi, in *Philologica*, 3, No 5/7 (1996), pp. 315, 320. Spelling and punctuation of the quote have been changed according to the modern standards.

¹⁶⁸ A. Suvorin, *O Dmitrii Samozvantse: Kriticheskie ocherki. S prilozheniem novogo spiska sledstvennogo dela o smerti tsarevicha Dmitriia* (SPb, 1906).

2.10.1903. Мне грустно. <...> Мне кажется, что не только я разваливаюсь, не только «Новое время» разваливается, но разваливается Россия¹⁷³.

Suvorin's gloom also found its way into his letters to Smirnova-Sazonova and she did her best to support and comfort him:

3.117 Я рада, что Вы не можете изгнать меня из своего сердца. Пожалуйста, не изгоняйте. Оставьте мне там хоть самый маленький уголок. Да, Ваши успехи меня радуют, и мне хотелось бы, чтобы Вы летом начали новую пьесу. Вы должны ее написать, потому что силы Вам изменяют только физические, не духовные. <...> А то давайте писать драму из 18 века. <...> Или давайте писать каждый свою. Вы крупную историческую вещь, сильные страсти, загадочную женщину, я бытовую картину. Надо жить, милый Алексей Сергеевич, если не своей жизнью, так хоть чужой. А пока сохраним друг другу в сердце маленький уголок и будем вспоминать иногда, что есть близкая душа, которая откликается в тяжелую минуту¹⁷⁴.

Suvorin must have confided the tragic story of his first marriage to Smirnova-Sazonova; apparently his experience sublimated into a writing idea and he received encouragement from his writer friend: 'You should not relinquish the idea of converting the drama you had lived through into a play. I believe this is the way the most powerful pieces are written, with the very blood of one's heart.'¹⁷⁵

However, Suvorin was soon engrossed by a different drama: in 1904, the Russo-Japanese war started:

3.118 Суворин следил за всеми перипетиями войны, волновался, беспокоился, не спал по ночам, читал все статьи, сам писал, стараясь ободрить русское общество. Это был его год страды, он много унес у него сил и здоровья. Кроме того, неудачи русских войск страшно и губительно отозвались на Суворине. Он стал нервен сверх меры, вспыльчивее, чем когда-нибудь¹⁷⁶.

After the war, Suvorin became entirely preoccupied with politics, and specifically with the prospect of the first Russian parliament. He wrote quite a few of his *Malen'kie pis'ma* about the convocation of the *Zemskii sobor*, but seemed to ignore the rising wave of feminism. In the meantime women were actively joining political parties, they

¹⁷³ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, pp. 445, 450–451, 455.

¹⁷⁴ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 3754. Pis'ma S. I. Sazonovoi k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 157–159ob. Letter of 6.03.1903.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 167. Letter of 28.06.1903. This Suvorin's idea had never been realized.

¹⁷⁶ N. Ezhov, 'Aleksi Sergeevich Suvorin', in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 2 (1915), pp. 459–460.

established political bodies of their own, they organised rallies; ‘in all cities women were talking about and were concerned with one idea only: to win political equality with men, to delegate women to the Constituent assembly and, via this representation, to uphold equality with men in all spheres of life.’¹⁷⁷ However there was one occasion now when Suvorin did indeed have his say about female suffrage. His response to this problem is all the more significant, since even the most liberal intelligentsia considered women’s political claims excessive, while equal suffrage was seen by them as a violation of ‘the basic human separation of concepts’¹⁷⁸ and as destructive of civilisation. Still, true to himself, Suvorin remained ironic in his attitude:

3.119 Вообще фантазировать насчет серьезных вещей я ни вижу ни малейшей надобности и разделяю мнение одной своей корреспондентки, которая говорит, что совместное обсуждение государственных дел приведет к заключению многих браков, из чего, однако, не следует, что «население России значительно увеличится», как думает эта корреспондентка. <...> Однако я думаю, что есть женщины, которые помогают своим умом и влиянием даже очень даровитым государственным людям, и при этом в хорошую сторону. Я не думаю и того, что женщины должны ограничиться любовью и детьми. Не все из них пользуются этим благом и не все могут им довольствоваться. У нас женщины пользуются правом выборщиц, хотя и через доверенных мужчин. Я не вижу ничего худого в том, чтобы они пользовались этим правом *лично*. Это нимало не мешает тому понятию, которое Гёте называл *ewig weibliche*¹⁷⁹.

This passage, for all its evasiveness, should still be considered fairly radical, with Suvorin coming very close to the ideologists of the feminist movement. Indeed, this short text practically cancels all his stereotypes *apropos* ‘the woman question’. Now Suvorin a) agrees that a woman can have a positive influence on men; b) admits that a woman may legitimately have or find an alternative to childbirth; c) recognizes the woman’s right for social and political activity. With all these assets and freedoms assigned to a woman, Suvorin still believes that she can remain a woman; to support this idea, he uses the powerful symbol of ‘the eternal feminine’, while a full quote from Goethe’s *Faust* — ‘Das Unbeschreibliche / Ist nun getan, / Das Ewig Weibliche / Zieht uns hinan’¹⁸⁰ —

¹⁷⁷ *Zhenskii vestnik*, 5 (1905), p. 159.

¹⁷⁸ Op. cit: I. Iukina, *Russkii feminizm kak vyzov sovremennosti*, p. 225. For a more detailed discussion see pp. 219–227.

¹⁷⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 4.02.1905.

¹⁸⁰ The indescribable here is done, the eternal feminine draws us upward.

suggests that Suvorin gives up his fixed idea that a woman turns a man into a belittled and depleted being (see chapter II, p. 119–120; chapter III, p. 159). However, after this one-off feminist pronouncement, Suvorin would never again return to ‘the woman question’ in the press, possibly because the revolutionary events of 1905–1907 aroused an overpowering fear in him. The revolution itself, because of the feminine gender of the word in Russian, was personified as a vamp in Suvorin’s gynophobic mind:

3.120 Но она [революция] властная, честолюбивая, повелительная, не разбирающая средств, не жалеющая крови... <...> Она любит жизнь со всей страстью молодости и разгула и хочет жить, хочет ее завоевать, хотя бы ценой своей жизни, своими страданиями. <...> Это Дон Жуан между женщинами, обольстительный, страстный, за которого умирают, потому что он дает страсть и пыл¹⁸¹.

Metaphors aside, a real revolutionary woman inspired even worst fear in Suvorin; in his eyes, female cruelty was inseparable from debauchery. In his diary, Suvorin leaves an apocalyptic account of current events:

3.121 Женщины-террористки готовы стать палачами и есть человеческое мясо. Среди русских женщин была и Марфа-Посадница, и Салтычиха. Наши террористки не лучше Салтычихи по своей жестокости и распущенности. О разврате рассказывают ужасы. Декаденты распложают похабщину. Есть журнал, печатающий исключительно порнографию, историю проституции, маркиза де Сада, Казанову и т.д. Новые беллетристы собаку съели на женском теле¹⁸².

However, all these fears on the part of Suvorin did not prevent his newspaper — with his connivance, if not encouragement — from publishing private advertisements offering sexual services, although in a veiled form: there were quite a few ‘models’ available for ‘posing’. As a result, *Novoe vremia* which was at the time falling into disfavour, regained its popularity and brought in more profit.¹⁸³

On the 30th of April 1907, in Malyi Theatre a celebration was held to mark 40 years of Suvorin’s ‘theatrical and critical activity’. However, there appeared to be some confusion, since the organizers had got the date wrong. The hero of the occasion

¹⁸¹ *Novoe vremia*. 13.11.1905.

¹⁸² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 496. Entry of 14.06.1907.

¹⁸³ These advertisements raised public indignation, while Rozanov defended Suvorin: ‘...this is a human vice, not Suvorin’s. <...> Do you want people writing their ads on walls? Do you want to be pestered by those ‘models’ in the streets without any ads?’ (V. Rozanov, *Iz pripominanii i myslei ob Suvorine*, p. 30.)

had to correct them: his more important jubilee — 50 years of his writer's life — would be a year later. Still the 'false' jubilee was celebrated on a grand scale: there were 700 guests invited for dinner; Suvorin also received 150 telegrams not to mention numerous articles and addresses. At the dinner, there was a great deal of eulogizing. Valentina Mironova, an actress of Suvorin's theatre, presented Suvorin as a restless fighter for women's rights and freedoms:

3.122 Вы <...> своим большим умом, своим огромным талантом старались опрокинуть старый и нелепый взгляд на женщину. Вы отстаивали и отстаиваете теперь страшно революционную идею. Вы работали, работаете и теперь над созданием пятого сословия. Это пятое сословие — женщина. Вы в течение сорока лет любили не женщин, а женщину. Вы проповедовали ее освобождение от рабства. Ваша Медея, Ваша Татьяна Репина, Ваша Варя Болотова — это женщины, протестующие против рабства, против подчинения той морали, которую создали мужчины для своего собственного удобства. И Ваши героини шли напролом. Одни погибали, как Татьяна Репина, другие — как Варя — одерживали победу. В этой борьбе Вы Вашим огромным талантом поддерживали женщину. Вы хотели, чтобы женщина имела такие же права на моральную свободу, как и мужчина, чтобы она была ответственна за свои деяния не больше мужчины, чтобы ей не зачитывалось в грех то, что мужчине не только прощается, но часто возводит его на пьедестал особого героизма¹⁸⁴.

Apparently Suvorin, now openly recognized as a feminist, was fairly embarrassed, since the next day he hastened to publish his *Malen'koe pis'mo* with a reply. It is symptomatic that Suvorin explains his love for woman in the abstract and in terms of 'vital energy', although his gynophobia, on this momentous occasion, is embellished with a lofty idea of woman's predestination:

3.123 Г-жа Миронова в своей блестящей речи <...> сказала, что я любил всегда не женщин, а женщину. Это правда. Любить многих женщин — значит терять на них много той благородной силы, которая так нужна в жизни для энергии и настойчивости труда. Для Дон Жуана у меня не было никаких способностей, но женщину я так высоко ставил, что нахожу, что от нее так много зависит в здоровом развитии поколений и многое с нее спросится даже в той анархии, которую мы переживаем¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸⁴ Op. cit.: V. Gribovskii, 'Chestvovanie A. S. Suvorina v Malom teatre', in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, 6 (1907), pp. 931–932.

¹⁸⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 3.05.1907.

Talking about healthy generations, Suvorin knew that he himself was fatally ill: a year earlier, in 1906, he had been diagnosed with throat cancer. He was stoically fighting his illness, allowing doctors to experiment on him with all the modern methods of treatment. People around Suvorin encouraged him to seek distraction in work, but he doubted his ability to write:

3.124 [M. O.] Меньшиков говорил нынче, что мне надо бы писать роман. <...> Ну а писать теперь роман — откуда взять то напряжение, не говорю о таланте, которое необходимо. И если бы писать, то я стал бы писать политический роман. Но у меня мало наблюдений среди молодого поколения, а старики мне совсем не нравятся¹⁸⁶.

Still, a few days after this sad note, and directly in his diary, Suvorin wrote a drama sketch entitled *Kapriz*, a mock romantic scene in which a lover turns into a burglar. The piece was immediately self-reviewed: ‘Is it all right to write such scenes? The decadents have even sillier ones.’¹⁸⁷ In Suvorin’s archive in RGALI, there are three more topical plays (they exist in proofs): an anti-Semitic *Birzhevoi krakh*, a satirical one-act sketch *On — oktiabrist*, and a full-length play in three acts *Bez rulia i bez vetril*.

Bez rulia i bez vetril is a play about journalists of a radical newspaper *Buria*, edited by a freemason, Iakov Abramovich Tseder. The main event of the play is the dismissal of Tseder; he is being replaced by a young girl, Liuliusha. This young girl loves a journalist, a social-democrat, Lebedev, but she also has an older fiancé. Liuliusha vaunts and flaunts her free morals: ‘There is twenty years of difference in age between us. Which means that as soon as I marry him, I ought really to cheat on him.’¹⁸⁸ Apparently, Liuliusha takes after her mother, a 43 year old widow, who contributes to newspapers with articles on free love. Moreover, Liuliusha’s fiancé has a lover, and they also cheat on one another. At some point, Tseder had a wife; at his request and to pursue certain revolutionary ends, she slept around with other men. Currently, Tseder has a lover, Vera, a daughter of his colleague and a graduate of Lausanne University. Liuliusha and Vera talk about the prospects of women’s emancipation:

¹⁸⁶ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 493–494. Entry of 12.06.1907.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 505. Entry of 21.06.1907.

¹⁸⁸ RGALI. F. 459, op. 2, ed. 42. A. S. Suvorin. *Bez rulia i bez vetril, P'esa v 3 deistviakh*. Ottiski s pravkoi avtora. 1907. L. 63ob. Further page references are given in the text.

3.125 Вера: Полное равенство будет только тогда, когда рядом с мужской культурой начнет развиваться женская. Тогда явится та независимость, которая так нужна для женщины и через нее для человечества. **Люлюша:** А я думаю, никогда этого не будет. **Вера:** Да это уж началось, и женщины во многом даже превзойдут мужчин... (87об.)

As the play continues, the characters discuss the current political situation ('Russia is enormous, illiterate, and very much a mixed bag. The ultimate joy will be to have petticoats in the Duma' 84ob); some mysterious 'expropriators' rob the newspaper of its cash; then the printing house goes on strike. Liuliusha becomes an editor-in-chief and Tseder immediately attempts to seduce her. Suddenly Liuliusha appears to be morally sound, and the play ends with the following scene:

3.126 Цедер: Есть всегда известная сумма, за которую можно купить ночь не только у всякой женщины, но даже у девушки... **Люлюша:** Грабить, убивать, бесчестить?.. Всё смеее... и всё во имя высоких идей революции. А я ничего не смею... я, такая легкомысленная... За себя и за всех девушек, которые не продаются — вот вам! (*бьет Цедера по лицу, падает в кресло и начинает истерически рыдать*) Занавес (94).

Having left to posterity a caricature of mores and ideas inspired by the first Russian revolution, a month later Suvorin wrote his very last *Malen'koe pis'mo*, which he dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Leo Tolstoy. Calling the writer 'a monarch of Russian literature' and wishing him to live to be a hundred, Suvorin, as during the debate on *Kreitserova sonata*, and perhaps from some subconscious envy, repeated his fallacy as regards Tolstoy's personal life:

3.127 С самого детства он окружен был таким довольством и счастьем, каким редко пользовался гениальный человек, и подходит к концу жизни таким же счастливецем. Жизнь его — эпическая поэма без потрясающих трагических сцен, без того ужаса, который угнетал душу гениальных людей и держал ее в своих цепях и мучил¹⁸⁹.

The next three years allotted to him Suvorin would spend mainly abroad, trying to fight his illness with the help of the best European doctors. Suvorin's last will now became an urgent issue. Suvorin's children dictated their terms to their father without ceremony:

¹⁸⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 28.08.1908.

3.128 Мы с Мишей вдруг увидели себя в белом рабстве у Анны Ивановны. <...> Твоя болезнь за эту зиму была вся перед моими глазами. Я знаю, как она тяжела и мучительна, но возложи всю работу по всему этому делу на нас с Мишей и не поддавайся опять той же ошибке. <...> Мы не нападаем, а защищаемся от нападения, которым мы уже и теперь оттиснуты в фактический ноль, и обмолвку [*в завещании*], в силу которой главенство в деле вдруг передано Анне Ивановне, надо, конечно, исправить¹⁹⁰.

Suvorin resigned himself to the will of his offspring and seemed to surrender hope of curing his cancer:

3.129 Покончив с завещанием, я дам себе резать горло. Если зарежут, то это все равно будет естественной смертью. <...> Я боюсь страданий. В голове постоянно «Смерть Ивана Ильича». Клавдия Ивановна напоминала бы того мужика, который за Иваном Ильичом, если б она поменьше болтала, не вызывала меня на споры, зная, как мне вредно не только говорить, волнуясь, но и просто говорить. Между нею и Богданом Вениаминовичем [Геом] соперничество. Она стала помимо него сноситься с докторами. <...> Я столько лет знаю ее, имею основание не раскаиваться в ее привязанности, но эти чудачества, это следование за мною всюду, в Париж, Лондон, сюда кажутся мне не совсем — как бы это сказать? — основательными доказательствами привязанности. <...> Мне постоянно кажется, что я с этой свитой смешон и глуп. Вообще эта болезнь, по существу трагическая, является чем-то комическим, благодаря шуму»¹⁹¹.

The actress of Suvorin's theatre, Klavdiia Ivanovna Destomb (1874–1947), is the last 'odd' woman who conspicuously interfered with his life. Being Suvorin's personal assistant, she travelled to Europe to select plays for his theatre and also negotiated copyright purchase; and she translated some plays and chose books for his library. Suvorin was fully aware of her oddity:

3.130 Мне ее очень жаль, очень жаль. Не как актрису, а как странного человека. Она странный, больной человек, у которого нет ни привязанностей, ни приюта. Я в этом уверен. Она все ищет чего-то и не находит. Может быть, счастья. У нее есть фантазия, таланты, но все какие-то несовершенные, зачаточные. <...> Она сама несчастна и бесприютна, и к несчастным ее тянет¹⁹².

¹⁹⁰ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 4155. Pis'ma i telegrammy A. A. Suvorina k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 335. Letter of 25.05.1911.

¹⁹¹ OR GPB. F. 115 (Arkhiv A. E. Burtseva), ed. 65. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k M. A. Suvorinu. L. 4–6. Letter of 16.07.1911.

¹⁹² *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 344–345. Entry of 17.09.1899.

Although behind Suvorin's back, Destomb was capable of scheming: she succeeded in ousting a leading actor, Boris Glagolin, from his position in Suvorin's theatre, and Glagolin shared his indignation with Suvorin:

3.131 Вы не можете позволять Дестомб появляться в театре, председательствовать, разыгрывать из себя директрису, устраивающую дела Малого театра. <...> Я отказываюсь от всего, от службы в театре, если я должен служить под началом этой гадины, предательницы, ненавидящей меня вот уже 18 лет только за то, что я когда-то мальчишкой отверг ее любовь¹⁹³.

From the outside, all these intrigues around Suvorin's deathbed looked sinister:

3.132 Лицо у Суворина желтое, худое, сморщенное, совсем больное. Он осознает свое тяжелое положение. За ним усердно ухаживает эта Дестомб, которая ужасно обходится с родными Суворина — всех от него удалила. Жена Суворина была здесь два дня, ни разу не удалось ей поговорить с мужем наедине — всегда присутствовала Дестомб, которая внушила Суворину страх к семье, что они-де хотят его отравить. Без того, чтобы Дестомб не одобрила, он куска не съест. Вот ужасная, невозможная атмосфера для окружающих¹⁹⁴.

We may reasonably assume that Suvorin's family were exasperated to discover Destomb's name in Suvorin's will. Newspapers spared no details:

3.133 20 тысяч рублей получает по завещанию покойного артистка Малого театра Дестомб, исполнявшая обязанности личного секретаря Суворина и неустанно ухаживавшая за ним все последнее время его тяжелой болезни. Между прочим, г-жа Дестомб, когда нагноение шло особенно быстро, высасывала гной из раны, после того как узнала, что это облегчает состояние больного и что сестры милосердия отказались от этого¹⁹⁵.

Suvorin spent his last days in his villa in Tsarskoe selo; there, he must have made his very last entries in his diary: 'Everyone keeps silent around me. They have a secret: this old man is living out his days.'¹⁹⁶ He had his larynx removed, so he could only communicate with those around him by writing notes. In many of these notes, one can

¹⁹³ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 929. Pis'ma B. S. Glagolina k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 150–151. Letter of 20.11.1911.

¹⁹⁴ A. Bogdanovich, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhtsa: Dnevnik* (M., 1990), p. 510. Entry of 4.06.1912.

¹⁹⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 18.08.1912.

¹⁹⁶ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 549. Undated entry, summer of 1912.

see a female profile.¹⁹⁷ It is impossible to make an identification, but there is a temptation to link this profile intertextually with a declaration which Suvorin had made a few years earlier. Suvorin names the only woman one should not be afraid of:

3.134 А для меня по ту сторону — смерть. И я вам скажу, что это хорошо. Хорошо не потому, что смерть — необходимое звено жизни, а потому что смерть — совсем недурная женщина. Она — женщина с сильным характером и дьявольской убедительностью речи. Не скелет с косою, а красивая, стройная, несколько бледная женщина, в светлом платье, с синими глазами и приветливой улыбкой. Она приглашает в покой и на покой. Ничего страшного.¹⁹⁸

Suvorin passed away in the night on the 12th of August 1912. His magnificent funeral took place in Aleksandro-Nevskaia lavra. On behalf of the Emperor Nikolai II, ‘a splendid wreath of white roses, tuberose, and lilies’¹⁹⁹ was laid on Suvorin’s coffin; an impressive wreath was also sent by the French government.²⁰⁰ The burial service with graveside orations lasted for five hours.²⁰¹ The press was seething with contradictory comments; Suvorin was honoured with titles ‘the Lomonosov of the Russian daily press’ (Rozanov) and ‘the Napoleon of Russian book publishing’ (A. Kirpichnikov), but also ‘a shameless apologist of the Bourgeoisie’ (Lenin) and ‘an odious prostitute’ (Gorky). Such a wide and various range of opinions reflects social and political opposition in Russian society between the two revolutions; Suvorin’s contemporaries admitted this fact:

3.135 Счастье никогда не покидало Суворина. Успехом была его жизнь, успехом была его смерть. Он умер в период такого идейного разброда, когда отуманенные умы идеологов русской либеральной и отчасти демократической интеллигенции утратили традиционную ясность и твердость непримиримого отношения к реакционным силам русской жизни и когда идея приспособления к требованиям житейского успеха пользуется широкой популярностью в некоторых слоях нашего общества²⁰².

On the whole, Suvorin’s contribution to the development of the Russian press was assessed according to the political stance of his critics. Of particular importance in

¹⁹⁷ OR IRLI. F. 268. Arkhiv Suvorinykh A. S., A. A., M. A. Ed. 132. Suvorin A. S. Zapiski ego (21), napisannye im vo vremia poslednei bolezni [1912].

¹⁹⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 26.02.1901.

¹⁹⁹ *Peterburgskaia gazeta*. 15.08.1912.

²⁰⁰ *Grazhdanin*. 19.08.1912.

²⁰¹ *Moskovskie vedomosti*. 19.08.1912.

²⁰² N. Iordanskii, ‘Natsionalizatsiia Suvorina’, in *Sovremennyi mir*, 10 (1912), pp. 316–322.

determining such assessments was the attitude of the commentator to the petit bourgeoisie, a new and critical social group which emerged in Russia at the turn of the century and which Suvorin's made his focus audience. Thus, a Marxist, L'vov-Rogachevskii, denounced Suvorin for exactly that: 'Suvorin's so called outspoken editorial position meant <...> flirting with suburbia, which is forever vacillating, oscillating to and fro.'²⁰³ Giving a contrary opinion, a constitutional monarchist, Timofei Lokot' assessed Suvorin's position as an obvious achievement and qualified him as 'a major, a true representative of the Russian middle propertied democracy — a middle Russian estate which will soon acquire an important social and political role.'²⁰⁴ However, irrespective of their political stance, Suvorin's contemporaries unanimously admitted: 'In Suvorin's person, there quits the stage a typical Russian, endowed with literary talents and drawbacks, a *self-made man* of the most original make-up.'²⁰⁵

* * *

The time span which I have examined in this chapter, from 1889 to 1912, represents the last third of Suvorin's life, the period when his publishing empire had reached its zenith followed by its fairly swift decline. Apart from objective historical and economic considerations, Suvorin's business suffered from his depression, which took a morbid turn as he grew older. Suvorin was badly suffering from his miserable private life, particularly after the tragedy of his first marriage, but also in his dysfunctional second marriage. Suvorin's personal dramas and traumas made for his scepticism as regards marriage as a modern institution, so he advocated a patriarchal marriage model in the debate around Tolstoy's novella *Kreitserova sonata*. As editor of the newspaper with the biggest print-run in Russia, Suvorin acted on public opinion as a conservative, defending family values and rejecting all the doubtful — in his view — gains of women's emancipation, particularly female sexual freedom. Suvorin's pronouncements on the subject of sexual morals arguably show a gynophobic tendency (bordering on misogyny) and together with this fear in all its complexity, a tendency to blame women and regard them as a chief cause of dissolution of morals, and in particular sexual morals.

²⁰³ V. L'vov-Rogachevskii, 'V svoem dome (A. Suvorin)', in *Sovremennyi mir*, 9 (1912), p. 323.

²⁰⁴ T. Lokot', 'V chem sila i znachenie A. Suvorina', in *Golos Moskvy*, 14.08.1912.

²⁰⁵ *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*. 12.08.1912.

While Suvorin refuted Tolstoy's idea of total and radical chastity, he nevertheless borrowed the idea of chastity (or, rather, virginity) for examination in his own fiction. His literary project of sorts spanned some ten years and included the short story 'V kontse veka (*Fin de Siècle*)', the unfinished and finished versions of the novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*, and the play *Vopros*. Using a wide range of genres (from decadent short story via novel of ideas to realistic play), Suvorin promotes a fairly plain idea that young girls should observe premarital chastity, the latter being a token of high morals and a requisite of happy marriage. His other message is more in line with his gynophobic belief: a woman who claims supremacy over men is dangerous (Suvorin actually sentences her to death). In female anatomical virginity Suvorin discovered divine dispensation and he used this 'idealistic' argument in his polemics with Il'ia Mechnikov, an adherent of Darwinism and biologism. However, while Suvorin allowed Vasilii Rozanov to launch a campaign for childbirth and family values in *Novoe vremia*, he rejected Rozanov's idea that sex is sacred and in his private correspondence with him brought forward Darwinist arguments. Suvorin's blend of materialism and idealism seems to fit the pattern of his ideological inconsistency, but he could also employ the method of alternating his political stance to engage his readership and sometimes to obtain more persuasive argumentation.

In his declining years, suffering from depression and general health failure, Suvorin paid less attention to 'the women question' and hardly kept up with the women's movement, which at the turn of the century evolved into the feminist movement proper. His sporadic pronouncements on this subject retained a moderate conservatism, although at some point Suvorin unexpectedly and without obvious motivation supported the idea of equal suffrage, the idea which seemed excessive even to the most liberal intelligentsia. However, women's revolutionary activity terrified Suvorin and he personified the Revolution of 1905 as a cruel, dissolute, and bloodthirsty woman.

Suvorin's gynophobia and his inability to resist the influence of domineering women proved to be a cause of further dramatic collisions in his life. He became involved in a criminal trial of the actress and journalist Elizaveta Shabel'skaia and was compromised through it; an actress of his theatre, Lidiia Iavorskaia, provoked a scandal during the performance of the play *Kontrabandisty* which entailed police examination and the death of Aleksei Kolomnin, Suvorin's son-in-law and a key business manager of

Novoe vremia; Suvorin's personal assistant Klavdia Destomb, who attended on her dying patron, embroiled Suvorin in conflict with his family and inherited a substantial sum of money by his will.

Suvorin's death gave rise to a massive public response, and both his supporters and opponents gave Suvorin his due, admitting that his journalistic talent as well as his entrepreneurial skill enabled him to create something remarkable, *Novoe vremia*, the most popular daily newspaper in Russia.

CONCLUSION

In this section I shall give a brief overview of posthumous commentary and assessment of Suvorin as regards his political stance and will link such commentary with a definition, newly developed within modern Russian political and sociological studies, which, with some revision, allows, I think, a reassessment of Suvorin's contribution to Russian social thought.

Immediately after Suvorin's death, some attempts were made to examine the Suvorin phenomenon, and his name was in the limelight across a wide ideological range of publications during several months. Still, Suvorin's contemporaries were aware that assessment and even characterisation were not an easy task and that there could be no definitive assessment: 'Suvorin, as a gifted journalist, as a publisher, and as a major entrepreneurial talent, ended his earthly career with a solid asset, but also with considerable liabilities. Behind him, he has left a complicated and entangled account.'¹ It is interesting that Suvorin himself, at the peak of his career, drew out a similar 'profit and loss' statement, although he preferred to leave it within the limits of the private letter, writing to the artist, Ivan Kramskoi:

С-1 В литературной деятельности я никому не изменял, но моя смелость зависела от атмосферы... Кто поставлен был в такие тиски, как современный журналист, тот едва ли выйдет сух из воды. Провинность я за собой чувствую, как журналист, но если я удостоюсь того, что моя деятельность будет когда-нибудь оценена беспристрастно, то я уверен, что в результате будет плюс. Как издатель, я оставлю прекрасное имя. Да, прямо так и говорю. Ни одного пятна².

Indeed there are hardly any doubts about 'the profit side' of Suvorin's 'account';³ the bone of contention has always been as regards his journalism, and the difficulty has

¹ A. Petrishchev, 'Khronika vnutrennei zhizni', in *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 9 (1912), p. 135.

² OR RNB. F. 115 (Arkhiv A. E. Burtseva), op. 1, ed. 62. Pis'mo A. S. Suvorina k I. N. Kramskomu. L. 16. Letter of 1882.

³ Over forty years of publishing activity, Suvorin produced some 1600 titles amounting to 6.5 million copies, the range of titles varying from classics to reference books and their quality reaching the best European standards. Suvorin was the first to publish complete works by Dostoevsky (1882) with an appended biography, as well as his correspondence and recollections about him. To mark the 50th anniversary of Pushkin's death, Suvorin produced an impressive but very cheap ten-volume collection of his works (10 kopecks per volume), its print-run being 100,000 copies. His series *Deshevaia biblioteka* included hundreds of valuable titles, e. g. classics like *Gore ot uma*, *Nedorosl'*, Karamzins's works, and many others.

been his ideological and political stance. It is curious that at the very outset of his career, Suvorin advertised a commercial view of what he styles ‘convictions’: they are, he seems to say, commodities brought to market; and he advances this view as an apology for inconsistency of the hired pen. He displayed his views in the newspaper *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* with a youthful fervour:

С-2 ...если не стыдно продавать ситец, то почему же стыдно продавать убеждения? И ситец, и убеждения наживаются, а что наживается, то продается. <...> И, наконец, что такое убеждения? Не парус ли это, движимый ветром времени и опыта? Но времена переменчивы, и ветер бывает то с юга, то с севера, одним словом, со всех сторон. Не противостоит ли двигаться против ветра?⁴

A decade later, at a difficult moment in 1881, following the murder of the Emperor Aleksandr II, Suvorin was utterly disconcerted; he must have remembered the price he paid for his book *Vsiakie* in a comparable situation arising after the first attempt on the Emperor’s life in 1866. In his newspaper, he allowed a long pause, letting other journalists cover the trial of *Narodnaia volia*. Upon execution of the terrorists, he ventured a confession in his regular column appropriately entitled *Iz zapisok otryvochnogo cheloveka*:

С-3 Я не могу взяться за изображение того хаоса, который видел и который пережил сам в себе. Ужасно трудно. Сейчас станешь фальшивить и вилить. Уж такое время. <...> Никогда не становились перед русским образованным человеком так резко проклятые вопросы, как теперь, никогда он так не путался, так не волновался, никогда так не сознавал необходимости ясного, здравого, сильного ответа на всю потрясенную сумму своих убеждений. Убеждений? Да разве у нас, у так называемой интеллигенции, есть убеждения? Их нет. Есть только отрывки, неясные образы, есть критика, беспощадная критика, стремление к ломке, к разрушению⁵.

At this point Suvorin seems to associate himself with the intelligentsia, a social group, arguably ill-defined, which included *raznochintsy* and which at that time was still developing its self-identification. There is criticism in this passage addressed at radicals

⁴ ‘Prodaemsia li my?’ in *Ocherki i kartinki: Sobranie rasskazov, fel'etonov i zametok Neznakomtsa (A. Suvorina)* (SPb, 1875), pp. 8–9.

⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 19.04.1881. On the state of mind of the intelligentsia in the 80s, particularly as regards their attitude to the *Narodnaia volia* trial, see for example: D. Offord, *The Russian Revolutionary Movement in the 1880s* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 77–82; 161–170; see also: G. Novopolin, *V sumerkakh literatury i zhizni: V 80-kh gg. (1881–1895)* (SPb, 1913). pp. 7–15.

within the camp of the intelligentsia who resort to ‘wreckage and destruction.’ After another decade, as the intelligentsia grew more politicized, Suvorin would dissociate himself altogether (see chapter III, pp. 199–200). However, in the eyes of his later opponents, particularly Marxist critics, Suvorin’s fluctuating views would fit a stereotyped notion of the intelligentsia and they would attach him to this camp under an expressive and significant, if hardly honourable, label: ‘He was the first *Vekhist*, who was indeed knitted from contradictions and who was indeed a fragmentary person.’⁶ But Suvorin, already editor of the most popular newspaper in Russia, still considered it necessary to relate his ‘fragmentary’ mindset to his *raznochinets* origins:

С-4 Надо больше давать свободы личному мнению и не навязывать своего взгляда. Это большой недостаток в газетном деле. Газета не есть собрание истин, а собрание мнений. Меня упрекали в том, что я будто бы флюгер. Я вовсе не флюгер. Но будучи человеком, не получившим серьезного и солидного образования, вынужденный постоянно учиться, постоянно читать и на лету схватывать знания, я давал свободу мнениям и заботился главным образом о литературной форме⁷.

There seems reason to agree with Aleksandr Stolypin,⁸ one of the leaders of the liberal-conservative party *Soiuz 17 oktiabria* and a contributor to *Novoe vremia*, who gave Suvorin his due in an article entitled ‘Pamiati uchitelia’; Stolypin insists that it was exactly Suvorin’s *raznochinets* origin and his resistance to firm political commitment that ensured the success of his newspaper:

С-5 Суворин, как политик, как деятель государственный <...> стоял особняком от преемственно-правящего сословия и потому-то сам был необычайно зорок, а для других был поучителен и любопытен. Счастливая случайность рождения одарила его качеством судейского беспристрастия в тех политически-идейных тяжбах, где другие являлись заинтересованными сторонами. В борьбе сословных и экономических интересов он был совершенно свободен, так как с одинаковым правом мог себя причислить к каждому лагерю⁹.

It is worth noting that Suvorin was not at all preoccupied with climbing up the class ladder. In 1853, he retired from his military career with the lowest civil rank, that of

⁶ V. L’vov-Rogachevskii, ‘V svoem dome (A. Suvorin)’, in *Sovremennyi mir*, 9 (1912), p. 325.

⁷ Pis’ma A. S. Suvorina k V. V. Rozanovu (SPb, 1913), p. 80. Letter of 14.09.1899.

⁸ A younger brother of Petr Stolypin.

⁹ *Novoe vremia*. 23.12.1912.

kollezhskii registrator, but by the end of his life he had only progressed to *gubernskii sekretar'*, that is, he had moved only one step up in the Table of ranks.¹⁰ Neither was he at all allured when it came to decorations from the powers that be, and he was in fact indignant at the rumour that he was about to receive the order of St Vladimir: 'What, an order, for me? But this means killing me, shutting my mouth for ever. I will reject the order if I am awarded it.'¹¹ Apart from that, according to his contemporaries, Suvorin was fairly indifferent to the riches he was amassing: 'Suvorin was not living to make a fortune: he would spend enormous money on loss-making businesses, he would spend money <...> without hope of ever gaining profit or even at the very least covering expenses.'¹² Suvorin was generous; he supported dozens of people close to him as well as those not close to him at all; now and again he would go too far in his charity: 'He would help not only his literary opponents and ill-wishers, but he would subsidize whole enterprises, although he knew in advance that they would take his money to start a war against him.'¹³ Still, as it appears, this seeming lack of ambition was compensated or offset by Suvorin's need to maintain a *raznochinets* self-assertion: 'Success appealed to him, <...> without success, without a vast audience, be it the audience of Apraksin market, he could not imagine himself, and he would be short-breathed in obscurity, as in a vacuum.'¹⁴ Suvorin's craving for a certain sort of reputational success in cultural terms rather than for rank or riches may reflect the fact that the value system and the official hierarchy of the tsarist state were already losing perceived validity and recognized legitimacy; there is a similar conflict between competing systems of value in Chekhov's works. Suvorin's cultural aspiration was energised by his adherence to the basic principles of the Protestant work ethic, which he promoted widely in his journalism (and also followed in his own life).

¹⁰ In 1886, Chekhov, who had just started to contribute to *Novoe vremia*, in a humorous sketch 'Literaturnaia tabel' o rangakh' allocated to Suvorin a fairly honourable rank, the sixth from top rank of *kollezhskii sovetnik*, along with Apollon Maikov, Vsevolod Garshin, Viktor Burenin, Sergei Maksimov, Gleb Uspenskii, Mikhail Katkov, Aleksandr Pypin, and Aleksei Pleshcheev.

¹¹ *Dnevnik Alekseia Sergeevicha Suvorina*, p. 460. Entry of 22.02.1904.

¹² A. Petrishchev, 'Khronika vnutrennei zhizni', p. 133.

¹³ A. Amfiteatrov, 'Starik Suvorin', in *Zhizn' cheloveka, neudobnogo dlia sebia i dlia mnogikh*, in 2 vol. (M., 2004), vol. 2, p. 11.

¹⁴ A. Kugel', *Literaturnye vospominaniia (1882–1896)* (Petrograd; M., 1923), p. 159.

Suvorin's advocates, mourning his death, spoke very highly of his work: 'The Russian periodical press, as a big and acknowledged political power, was undoubtedly pushed to the front by Suvorin.'¹⁵ Between the two revolutions, Suvorin's newspaper appeared to be a consolidating factor for the emergent and still developing petit bourgeoisie. Aleksandr Guchkov, the leader of the party *Soiuz 17 oktiabria*, wrote to Suvorin about the 'agitational treasures' of *Novoe vremia* which 'help to revive from apathy middle classes which are yet unaware either of their goals in the present situation or of their own interests.'¹⁶ However paradoxical it may seem, it was exactly the ideological ambivalence or 'indecisiveness' of *Novoe vremia* (and its editor) which accounted for the social appeal of the newspaper and in so doing it fostered the self-awareness of the emergent bourgeoisie reflecting but also creating and modifying 'public opinion' as the ideological expression of a social stratum. Vasilii Rozanov was certain that Suvorin's influence reached well beyond the Russian border: 'In the person of Suvorin, Russia has lost her devoted son and Europe has lost the only mouthpiece of Russian public opinion, which they took into consideration and which they found impossible to ignore.'¹⁷ To Suvorin was attributed the role of social and historical archetype, a symbol-figure epitomizing the ultimate success of the *raznochinets*, a success grounded in developing class dynamics:

С-6 Из крестьянской хаты, через журналистику выйти на вершины общественной мысли и жизни великой страны, приобрести неоспоримое влияние не только на общественное сознание, но и на всю государственность этой страны, — это значит не только сыграть крупную историческую роль, но и быть выражением и отражением целой исторической эпохи¹⁸.

Maxim Gorky, who at the time sided with the Marxists, conveyed a similar idea in terms of his own political commitment; he maintained that Suvorin was 'not an individual, not a person, but a typical embodiment of the Russian mentality which we want to eradicate and to reform.'¹⁹ The Bolshevik leader Lenin classified the Suvorin

¹⁵ *Novoe vremia*. 12.08.1912. Press review on account of Suvorin's death. The quotation is from the newspaper *Svet*.

¹⁶ RGALI. F. 459, op. 1, ed. 1126. Pis'mo A. I. Guchkova k A. S. Suvorinu. L. 2.

¹⁷ *Novoe vremia*. 12.08.1912.

¹⁸ *Novoe vremia*. 12.08.1912. (The quotation is from the newspaper *Golos Moskvyy*.)

¹⁹ The letter of Gorky to E. A. Liatskov of 10.01.1913, in *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, vol. 95: *Gorky i russkaia zhurnalistika nachala XX v. Neizdannoe. Perepiska* (M., 1988), p. 554. Later, by an irony of fate, Gorky

phenomenon as ‘a historical U-turn of the liberal bourgeoisie from *democracy* to reaction, to chauvinism, and to anti-Semitism.’²⁰ In the Soviet state founded by Lenin, the ideas of proletarian democracy prevailed, so Suvorin, considered as a symbol of petit bourgeois opportunism, apostasy, and sycophancy, was removed from the public domain, with the ban lasting some eighty years.

In the post-Soviet period, particularly marked by an attempt to relocate the Russian ‘liberal idea’, an interest in Suvorin has rekindled (see Introduction) and it has been possible to review Suvorin’s contribution to the development of Russian social thought. In one view, Suvorin’s eclecticism suggests a certain anti-dogmatism and independence of thought; and is consistent with the view that Suvorin ‘did not consider a theoretical and ideological purity to be a prerequisite for the achievement of political and social goals.’²¹ There is now a tentative working definition of Suvorin’s peculiar ideological stance:

C-7 Можно сказать, что Суворин стал одним из создателей интеллектуальной базы русского консервативного либерализма на стадии становления этого идейно-политического течения. Главными принципами суворинского («правого») варианта формировавшейся идеологии были буржуазная модернизация и внедрение либеральных ценностей в крепком централизованном государстве с постепенно укрепляющимися представительскими учреждениями²².

This working definition has arguably proved serviceable for the treatment of some large-scale issues, like Suvorin’s nationalism.²³ I believe it might also, with some adjustment, accommodate the subject of the present work, namely, Suvorin’s complex relation to ‘the woman question’. Considered overall, Suvorin’s views on ‘the woman question’ broadly reflect the trajectory of the progressive liberal idea of women’s emancipation over half a century; but more particularly, they reflect a certain merging of

would be nailed down in a disparaging reference from Zinaida Gippius: ‘He is Suvorin by Lenin’s side. He will go even further.’ (Z. Gippius, *Dnevnik*, in 2 vol. (M., 1999), vol. 2, p. 118. Entry of 5.05.1918.)

²⁰ V. Lenin, ‘Kar’era’, in *PSS*, vol. 22, p. 44.

²¹ R. Romov, ‘A. S. Suvorin’, in *Obshchestvennaia mysl’ Rossii 18 — nachala 20 v.: Èntsiklopediia* (M., 2005), p. 524.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 523. On the variety of Russian liberalism, see for example: *Rossiiskii liberalism: Idei i liudi*, ed. by A. A. Kara-Murza (M., 2007), p. 15–17.

²³ See for example: S. San’kova, *Ideologiia rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo natsionalisma vtoroi poloviny 19 — nachala 20 vv.: Istoriograficheskii aspekt: Avtoref. diss.... d-ra ist. nauk* (M., 2009), p. 39–44; I. Podol’skaia, ‘Aleksii Suvorin: Iz istorii russkogo natsional-patriotizma’, in *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 4 (1999).

liberal and conservative attitudes towards key practical issues arising with respect to the social position of women. The research conducted in the present work suggests an adjustment of the above definition of Suvorin's ideological stance: as regards 'the woman question', Suvorin arguably proved *a liberal conservative*, in that he defended the family institution in its patriarchal model as a beneficial constraint on female nature and questioned woman's sexual freedom, which he linked with a strong resultant tendency to prostitution in one or other form. On the other hand, Suvorin's liberalism showed in his support of women's education and their right to work. However, he was not sure about the balance of women's freedom, since in his eyes, an educated and independent woman is liable to undervalue and perhaps dismiss her original and fundamental mission, which is assumed to be childbirth and the nurture of children. Besides, Suvorin held, more controversially, that women's liberation would inevitably lead to their supremacy over men and would end men's civilisation. Despite a strong element of conservatism, the thrust of Suvorin's publications on 'the woman question' appears to be *pro* rather than *contra* women's emancipation when measured against the norms already established in Russian society.

As I have shown in my work, Suvorin, in his newspaper, displayed his attitudes to 'the woman question' by alternating his conservative and liberal views; this alternation proved an efficient journalistic technique: it helped Suvorin to maintain the interest of his readership, but also allowed him to probe into public opinion and to influence it. He thereby enters Russian intellectual history as a pioneer in the manufacture of opinion using modern media and in the actual development of this kind of media.

Relying on the assumption that in the case of a prominent personality (here a 'writer with biography'), one should examine personal as well as public social life in their cross-impact, I have tried to demonstrate that the conservative component of Suvorin's liberalism was amplified by, if not grounded in, his dramatic personal experience of marriage, and that it finds certain of its roots in a condition of gynophobia which was a deep and abiding factor in his make-up. His conservatism also reflects a lack of self-confidence and a recurrent hesitancy and infirmity of resolution, which we may dub his 'decidophobia', and which could be regarded as sequel to his *raznochinets* origins and to the great pressures arising from the need to establish himself as he pursued a

career in an unfamiliar social milieu. Suffering from a certain insufficiency or 'lack of character', Suvorin more often than not succumbed to manipulation by strong and domineering women, the crucial fact being that his career was determined and guided in very large measure by his first wife. Suvorin's personal complexes, dramas and traumas are clearly reflected in his gynophobic and/or misogynistic journalism and they also found their way into his fiction. In Suvorin's fiction, a woman seems to assume the central part, although she presents a deviation from the norm: now an unfaithful wife, now a murderess, now a psychopath craving supremacy over men (together with some possible combinations of these types). It is perhaps symptomatic that there are no happy endings in Suvorin's literary pieces; on the contrary, they mostly end with the tragic death of the heroine; the central problematic is thereby removed.

In sum, Suvorin's role is to be understood, first in the Russian context, as a pioneer in the active manufacture of effective class consensus by modern mass media. His journalistic methods were highly effective and drew upon energies released by his own social life at the level both of his *raznochinets* personality and of his family, as I have shown in detail. His gynophobia, although deep, appears not simply an accidental and idiosyncratic condition, but was shared by others whose similar responses to social change, notably in relation to the 'woman question', helped, as in the case of Suvorin and Chekhov, to maintain and deepen acquaintance. Above all, I have tried to show that an appropriate analytical biography of Suvorin helps, in large measure, to dissolve the surface appearance of quaintness or peculiarity and reveals, if not the consistency, than at least the developmental origin and tactical logic underpinning the views of a personage, who, by common consent, 'reflected and expressed the entire historic era.'

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APPENDIX
Translation of Quotations

Introduction

- 32* a distemper or sickness, which, when it is of any continuance, is incurable, and the name of this disease <...> a passion for women, to which the Greeks give the name of *philogyneia* <...> But those feelings which are the contrary of these are supposed to have fear for their foundation, as a hatred of women...²⁴

Chapter I

- 1.1 When I was 19, I also fell in love with Tat'iana, but she was a girl, not a woman. We met at night, with great care, in spite of dangers; we kissed, but went no further, because, believe it or not, we had no idea what to do. At least, I did not, but I do not believe she did, either — she was about 17.
- 1.2 I never used a brothel in my life and only visited one in Paris when I was 55 or so, as a journalist. <...> I had my first woman only after I got married, and, by the way, it is probable that I have lived as long as I did because I never patronised these hotbeds of terrible, life-shortening diseases.
- 1.3 I, most likely, would have lived out my life in Bobrov, but Aniuta egged me on, cheered me up and generally exercised a huge influence over me. When I was offered a position at a Voronezh college, I mentioned this to Aniuta in passing. But she pushed me on to go to Voronezh and to make all the arrangements.
- 1.4 She (*very agitated*)
No, he will buy no hat for me
My cheer will for nothing be
And hopes are futile.
<...>
I know, beau's will come a-running,
Each one will fight to do my bidding,
They'll buy me dresses, coats, hat
And you, my friend, remember that.
- He (*enters in deep thought*)
...To take, or not to take: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in my silence suffer
The shouts and insults of estranged wife,
Or in dishonour and against convictions settle matters now...
- 1.5 Pamphlet No 1. Pamphlet No 2 will follow in two months and so it will continue, in this sequence, till the year of 1861. The publisher will, personally and without assistance, endeavour to, firstly, familiarise the public with the domestic manufacturing and credit industries and, secondly, explore whether a literary enterprise is viable without the pressure of the periodicals. A. Bobrovskii.
- 1.6 This Duniashka was having a really good time of it, was beholden to no-one and, you know, was a totally out-of-hand jade. You see, she was, firstly, always a fashion-monger and, secondly, without any restraint. <...> You better not hanker after her, because she will get everything from you tomorrow as well, and all, you know, so nicely, she'll just about kill you with her caresses, but have it her own way whatever you do.
- 1.7 Belinskii was one of the first to say: 'The provinces are awful.' And awful they are, because they often turn a decent man into either a supple bow or a doormat. Suppleness is one of the main features of provincials and follows naturally from the uncertainty of their convictions, from their spinelessness.
- 1.8 I am not a self-reliant individual, I like to be propped up from all sides, positioned appropriately and told: 'Well, there you are, just keep standing like this' — so now, being weak and indecisive, I'm starting to despair, not knowing what to do with myself after the closure of the newspaper.

²⁴ Translated by C. D. Yonge, in: *Cicero's Tusculan Disputations* (New York, 1877), p. 137.

- 1.9 I'm starting to miss my abandoned Voronezh lately, its life and all the goings-on. <...> I'm quite tired of literary endeavours these days. In fact, I'm rather disgusted with them.
- 1.10 You know, I'm ready to return to Voronezh, really I am! <...> Could you let me know whether they will take me back to the Cadet Corps if I come back in spring? <...> There is nothing left for me in Moscow and Petersburg is simply out of the question.
- 1.11 One could not blunder one's way through as a contributor to *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* and *Vestnik Evropy*, one had to know what one was about, one could not be found to be ignorant about historical, literary-historical and similar facts. That forced me to study and read and read again, read lots of books and study languages: French, German, and English. We studied and we worked at the same time. It was really hard.
- 1.12 [*Neznakomets*] ...managed to shift the focus from the then clumsy editorials to the lively, witty feuilletons, where, as though in a kaleidoscope, low-brow readers could discover the contemporary goings-on, names, facts, sad reality, politics, life stories; one could hear jolly laughter, awakening, rousing, calling from darkness to light, stirring one's hopes for better times ahead and dismissing everything dilapidated and useless.
- 1.13 Korsh got himself a Sunday clown for his oh-so-proper *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti*, who, just like Zagoretskii, could call himself 'an awful liberal'. <...> Everyone, who secretly devoured *Kolokol*, were able to settle — openly — for those titbits that the columnist from *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* managed to steer past the censors.
- 1.14 In his column, he makes jests, — frequently banal, ones, and exercises his wit at the expense of both authors and readers in such a way, that the reader frequently wonders where these jests end and what this Baron Brambeus actually thinks himself.
- 1.15 All the estates earnestly united in an outpouring of devotion to the Monarch and joy at his escape. However, there was a certain disunity as well, which was only natural at such a tense time: no estate, no group wished to own up to the villain and pointed fingers at every one else; many said that the malefactor was either of the landed classes or in their employ. Given that such opinions were expressed as early as in the evening of the 4th of April, I thought it utterly inappropriate to release my book then, as it dealt rather harshly with the landed members of a certain party. <...> My intentions in writing this book were utterly loyal.
- 1.16 The author of the book in question was rather nimble in his choice of words, strove to express himself mostly through hints and innuendos and, in order to avoid an accusation of direct support for subversive activities, put in assorted reservations and quasi-loyal discourses.
- 1.17 It was difficult to find a person more honest, readier for action in a good cause, truer to his convictions, which he strove to promote in his literary work and adhered to in his private life.
- 1.18 I can't think of anyone else who was so true to his principles, whatever the circumstances. <...> You asked the other day whether I ever loved anyone — he is the one I loved, was madly in love with. Were he only to say a word, I would have given everything to him.
- 1.19 Dear reader and you, my esteemed censor, duty-bound to scan these pages — you are home at last. In a few minutes, you will be able to truthfully say: this book is well and truly loyal. <...> You can say that all is well and let my book go on its way to renown, or to its resting place on the dusty shelves of bookstores.
- 1.20 This scoundrel Karakozov spoiled everything for us. Life was better, calmer before him, we had faith in our future. Now we, who wish more or less well to our Motherland, kept the faith; we kept it because, verily, we cannot expect a better Monarch than this one any time soon. <...> I've always loathed nihilists, and my stomach revolts at the mere thought of them now and their lack of substance is revealed with blinding clarity.
- 1.21 Actually, we never had any nihilists as such; we had theories, as is always the case, because the younger generation always goes further than their fathers and demands more from life. <...> I am the most humble and loyal person imaginable, was never involved in any political 'intrigues', not only never wrote any subversive leaflets, but don't even read them in *Moskovskie vedomosti* any more, not involved in any 'treason', I am not a nihilist now and won't ever become one.

- 1.22 I know that I am empty — I have nothing left, I must reinvent myself and I am truly impatient to do so, but I have no idea of whether I can manage. <...> When I wrote ‘Alenka’ <...> I used up my entire store of observations, I realised that I had nothing left and so did not write anything else, did not even attempt to. I started *Vsiakie* because my friends insisted that I should, but I got bored with them. <...> Now, given my four children (and the fifth one due by the New Year), I am compelled to write again. Well, down-and-outs breed like rabbits and necessity is the mother of invention. Would you imagine, I wrote general and bibliographical articles for *Russkii invalid* of over a year and have already stopped blushing over passing judgment over everything. It’s sad, but one has to live somehow, you know how it is with children.
- 1.23 She caught up with her teacher, who became her friend. She read the same books that he did, she was mentored by the same people, his closest colleagues from *Sovremennik* and *Russkoe slovo*, she attempted — and often successfully — to gain economic independence, she took part in a variety of ‘affairs’ — practical, scientific, literary — which she conducted more or less independently; she became a pedagogue and finally she transformed her family life. She always strove to be an independent person, to have her own ‘worth’ — in other words, to be an active, rather than passive, entity.
- 1.24 One would have liked to know whether the problems in the Society for Female Employment might be eventually resolved amicably and, if so, how soon would that happen? It would be pleasing to have one’s vanity flattered, of course, but it would be even more pleasing if, for instance, those girls eking out a living by copying papers for 5 kopecks per page and eating God knows what, could have more rewarding jobs.
- 1.25 Would it not have been fairer for men to seek to emancipate themselves from women, rather than the other way round? <...> Naturally, women would have been flocking to these emancipated men then, just as the men seek out emancipated women these days. Manufacturing would have evolved even further, because the garments necessary to attract emancipated men would have had to be more elegant, spectacular, and grand. Men would have been dispensing lottery tickets at posh receptions.... <...> Both men and women would have been hastily reaching for their wallets... And this is the point; we reached the heart of the matter. One can only ‘reach for the wallet’ if one earned the money in it oneself; these days, women do not give the matter any — or, at least, not enough — thought, they have fathers, husbands, lovers for that; emancipated men would not be inclined to hand their money over to women, so women would have actually to work energetically, to act rather than to talk. Thus the woman question would be resolved to the common benefit and the balance that bothers our emancipated women would be restored.
- 1.26 Coming back to the 18th century, I think that anyone with a real-life grasp of history will agree that Russian women were never so emancipated as during that century, which may be safely called a ‘female kingdom’. <...> I am quite convinced that the desire of women to emulate men is, to a certain extent, healthy: a woman was able to develop an iron will and robust health those days, whereas both are so rare amongst modern women; I should imagine that nervous breakdowns and female sicknesses were considered exceptional during the last century, whereas now one encounters them on a daily basis.
- 1.27 The emancipation of women, however, coincided here with a strong drive to luxury living, which — given the low education census — had some unfortunate consequences. <...> Luxury, first and foremost, led to lechery and terrible moral laxity in sexual relations. <...> So, where are the results of their [female] endeavours, where are the characters known for inspiring deeds, for socially useful work? There is only Princess Dashkova; everyone else is better known for their ‘sensual freedom’. It is quite remarkable that, even to this day, we are unwilling to differentiate between ‘freedom of the heart’ and ‘sensual freedom’ — and many a Russian maiden has been a victim of the latter.
- 1.28 All that was said above, naturally, was meant as a lesson to the present and we do believe that this present is superior to the past anyway: then, a solitary woman poisoned herself for love, but now, the entire *Zhenskii vestnik* takes poison monthly and suffers grievously in the contortions of their death agony. They take poison because of their passionate, insatiable love for humanity as a whole...
- 1.29 I visualize <...> a maiden. She’s seen it all, experienced everything, but somehow things go wrong, so it looks as if there is nothing for her to do. ‘My husband does not understand me, no-one wishes to understand my aspirations. Ah, men are so lucky! They are independent, they are free, they have so much to do, so many amusements!.. Ah, if I was only born a man!’ And so she paces the room, pale, distraught, and dreams only of being born a man. She sits down. Gets up after a while and paces again... Gazes at the street, then at the portrait of Ms [Elisabeth] Blackwell, then plays some trifle on the piano, picks up a book

by George Sand and reads. After one page, switches to Lord Byron and reads again, then grabs [Adam] Oehlenschläger and scans a page from that, not taking much in. It is as though my maiden tests herself: how much do I actually know? She answers to herself: yes, quite a bit, plenty of languages to start with. So she paces again and thinks: 'There's nothing for me to do, for all of that. I'm bored, miserable, no-one understands me, no kindred soul anywhere.' <...> And she'll never comprehend that she is bored because she attempts much, but never follows through. Sloppiness, that's what it is...

- 1.30** They say that one should not try to knock a brick wall down with one's forehead, which is perfectly true, but our ladies craving for work, are mostly scared even to approach that wall, to try to knock it down, make a hole using something other than one's forehead: nowadays, there are plenty of adequate tools for such a simple task around. Our ladies, those that whine about employment, are mostly work-shy, ready for nothing, bereft of both general and specialist education. And those that are different look down their noses at their sisters. <...> You boast of *intellectual* work... <...> Well, it is easy enough to produce a compilation! <...> Why don't you try to show energy and courage instead, why don't you prove to us that you are worthy of an independent position in the domain of men, that you are of the same kind as [?] Biard, [Lydia] Becker, [Harriet Taylor] Mill, Emma Esmond, [Elisabeth] Blackwell, Princess Dashkova — that will make all the difference. Moral fortitude always inspires respect... May I ask, though: what kind of moral fortitude do you, modern Russian women, possess? A vast majority of you read nothing but novels, any old fad distracts even those of you who are considered to be educated, a diamond brooch makes you forget your duty, obsequious compliments corrupt you, any vulgar loud-mouth intimidates you...
- 1.31** They say: we should encourage women; we should not reproach them or mock their endeavours. Oh yes, of course, this is all wonderful. May I enquire, though, how old are these women that should be so encouraged, that are so scared of reproaches and mockery? <...> It is not worthy — this initiative, this moral force that hasn't found its feet at such an [advanced] age... Serious, diligent labour, moral purity and fortitude conquer all... Initiatives dealing with hair cuts, male habits and superficial literary chatter are worthless, however. 'But wait, this is only the beginning; the first try is bound to be a flop' — they say. — 'Masses adore nonsense and superficiality and thus the inner life fades.' Well, that being the case, let me expose that emptiness, that corruption, that pitiful aping — perhaps, there will be fewer casualties this way...
- 1.32** Even should she get married, a woman with such an average education is worthless to her husband as an assistant, unless he disposes of a certain capital. There is not the slightest doubt that we are all aware of it, thus it is all the sadder, that, knowingly, we do absolutely nothing to give our daughters an education to free them from their absolute dependence on marriage.
- 1.33** A woman actually needs a job, looks for it and, usually, does not find it; journalists dealt with this subject extensively, even cleverly on occasion — so long as one excludes a few overly excited pieces and the whole of the *Zhenskii vestnik*. Indeed, so much was said that it was fitting to expect some initiatives, some practical applications. These duly came. An all-female bookbinding business appeared and disappeared, female typesetters appeared and disappeared, the Society for the Promotion of Female Employment appeared and proceeded to dawdle, the Philanthropic Society for the Protection of Governesses appeared and hardly anyone is aware of its existence — and not even its members know what it is about. <...> The future of Russian women is hidden by a coarse veil, which obscures everything.
- 1.34** Just as my correspondent, I <...> am perfectly ready to say: 'A woman with character and determination will never remain unemployed,' but I always thought and, indeed, still do think that, firstly, there are very few women with character amongst the women requiring work, secondly, that character alone is often insufficient to get a job and thirdly, that there are far too many women who talk a lot and do nothing. They, through their chatter, emptiness and occasional cynicism, made the very term 'female employment' bereft of sense and plainly laughable. 'Female employment' turned into a dirty pun in their mouths and, as soon as one attempts to defend it, they bury one under a mound of dubious jokes.
- 1.35** The woman question is not an integral part of public consciousness yet and, one imagines, would become so only when serious attention is paid to the education of women and when positive developments in the life of women stop being exceptions.
- 1.36** Many of our countrywomen also made their way to this Swiss city (Zurich); should they believe, however, that it is all as simple as reading a few popular physiological books, it would have been a hundred times

better for them to stay at home and, having married their compatriots, to present their motherland with — instead of unripe fruits of science — healthy infants with potential to grow into useful citizens.

- 1.37** It turns out that my female compatriots became offended and one of them — not actually Zurich-bound, but considering herself suited more to birthing newspaper columns than children anyway — resolved to take the wronged ones under her wings and so prepares a column now dealing with the following subject: ‘What is better — to have children or to study’ — and, naturally, demonstrates that to study is better. In my humble opinion, though, a question such as this could only have evolved in an idle and sufficiently deranged brain.
- 1.38** ...Co-education of men and women is universally accepted as not entirely appropriate. I do believe that this is as it should be, in the interests of both sexes as well as of parents, who would be naturally more comfortable sending their daughters to single sex auditoriums instead of mixed ones. This may well be offensive to our young men and women, may indeed be interpreted as distrust of their... how should I put it? — well, of their sense of moral values; however, we should not forget that the very fabric of our lives, our traditions are far from a guarantee that every young man, seated next to a young lady, would concentrate on science alone and ignore her pretty face, lovely hands and fresh maidenly voice.
- 1.39** ...the woman question migrated from the theoretical into the practical domain a while ago, and one does not need to be terribly smart and diligent to realise that it is not a utopia, but an essential requirement of our times. No half-way decent man, coming across it in the sphere of journalism, would dismiss it with a silly joke or a vulgar insinuation. It is apparent, however, that *Neznakomets* has never encountered it before, which amply demonstrates that, in terms of evolution, he is equivalent to a bushman.
- 1.40** It is clear now why you treated Mrs Liadova with such arrogance in your miserable letter. It [*the letter*] clearly follows from your previous blabber about female personality; it is the logical conclusion to all those scandalous columns of yours which, unfortunately, our best journalists have condoned for so long.
- 1.41** By way of settling last year’s scores, I cannot bypass the woman question, all the more so that certain gentlemen of the ilk of Piatkovskii and Minaev, as well as some employees of *Delo* have the gall to claim that I consistently expressed hatred towards female education. <...> I mean, really — is it possible to seriously debate whether it is better to study or to have children? It would seem obvious that both are in the purview of a woman and a man, that love and its natural consequence — children — existed, exist and will go on existing, that there were, are and will be particularly well educated women not ashamed of loving, giving birth and bringing up children, that educated mothers are much better than ignorant ones, etc. etc. <...> I do not deny that there are women who will be fully absorbed by science, and they won’t even think about love; but these women, just as men of the same sort, are an exception and a pretty weird one, for that matter, while we are talking about masses.
- 1.42** Well, it would seem that I am guilty of speaking to women the same way I am accustomed to speaking with everyone else. I can’t help that and, I suppose, have no desire to, because I respect women far more than those of opponents of mine, who take it as their duty to treat women as delicate flowers, liable to lose their scent and wither at a careless touch.
- 1.43** Mr [pedagogue, I. I.] Paulson announced that the courses for women seeking emancipation have resumed. Seeking emancipation, indeed! I could never really comprehend this; more to the point, I believe that a woman always remains a woman. <...> This, perhaps a somewhat superficial point of view, does not stop me from dealing with the matter philosophically, too. I accept any and all principles in an idea, liberal as well as radical ones. <...> This has nothing to do with its practical application, though. I might bewitch a woman with my super-progressive attitude in the woman question, but I will keep thinking: You poor, misguided sheep! You’ve no idea of history, nor any practical experience. Never, not in any society, nor at any time was a woman liberated via her intellect, education or virtue; but always, even during the most barbarous of epochs, when women were locked up, she was liberated... through harlotry. The only free woman is a courtesan. <...> A virtuous woman does not even have the rights of a man, whereas a courtesan even has privileges. An honest woman is destroyed if she betrays her husband; a courtesan is a ruler, a despot in love, she is above the law. And how many virtuous women are envious of courtesans! Fair enough, too... Being an honest man, I must admit that, were I to have children, I would have wished my daughters to be great beauties, first and foremost. Should they have this ravishing quality, I would have groomed them for glittering careers. Everything that charms: grace, music, wit, mastery of dance, bodily

strength and perfection — I would have developed all these in them and, at seventeen, would have summoned them, depicted for them the history of courtesans and blessed them to join... Fathers, do not fret! I'm childless, remember?

- 1.44** Our women positively devour [John Stuart] Mill. He well and truly served them up a book which should not only be essential reading, but some sort of a catechism for them. Indeed, Mill's reasoning is as convincing as a theorem in geometry and as clear as distilled water. I am not quite certain of its effect on conjugal relations and government decrees, but I am confident that it will stop the pointless chatter of manly women and feminine men about the equality of the sexes and women's right of entry into all the professions open to men. Theoretically, the issue is settled; practice remains, however, replete with countless roadblocks; more effort is required to remove those than to build the railway network, which did away with barriers and sentries.
- 1.45** ...I even heard that one woman was permitted to deliver several lectures on the methods of teaching small children. Can you imagine — a woman at a lectern! This is quite indigestible for many of us, in peacetime <...> A woman on stage, woman singer, woman circus rider — that is altogether different! There, a woman displays either herself or her skill; and it is perfectly acceptable for her to display herself or her skill, you know, but to demonstrate her knowledge, to instruct — it is totally unnatural and, many believe, quite beyond her physical capabilities. Who knows? I am not too familiar with the subject, but it pleases me to think that the administration is past pointless scaremongering and considers useful things to be useful at all times.
- 1.46** So what would you have me do? — and something I must do to make money, I am literally crushed by the costs and even indulge in craven despair sometimes. I have a thousand projects in my head, but cannot commence a single one — firstly, because of lack of initiative, but, secondly, daily hassles and toil required to meet daily needs remove any possibility of a longer-term, solid undertaking.
- 1.47** I am seriously thinking of publishing a daily newspaper in Berlin, something calm, strictly loyal to the constitution, respectful of the principle of monarchy in general and of the Russian reigning dynasty in particular, yet utterly pitiless towards all else and free of negotiations and <illegible> Pokhvisnev and Co. Berlin is a wonderful place for this kind of propaganda, so long as one does not overstep certain boundaries and if the Berlin administration does not expel one at the behest of its Petersburg counterpart. Naturally, this is a dream, but had I been single, without family, I would have jumped at it.
- 1.48** Let us as well, dear reader, [wish success] to all those Russian women who avoid the political limelight and set their steps towards diligent toil and difficult, yet useful activities to benefit our poor motherland.
- 1.49** Now is a difficult time, but if you consider the prices of accommodation and firewood, it becomes particularly difficult. This very difficult time <...> is particularly appropriate for a novel, not for a literary novel which is beyond my meagre strengths as a writer, <...> but for a feuilleton-novel, where fictional characters will feature on a par with the living ones, under their own names. This should enliven it tremendously, transform it into something they haven't yet found a name for; it will be a novel, a feuilleton, a historical essay, memoirs, vaudeville, something betwixt and between — pick your own name. I don't care about form — reader's interest is the most important thing for me.
- 1.50** Despite her youth, she had resolved for herself all the questions, directly or indirectly touching upon women, already — and resolved them definitively at that, without concessions and compromises. Were she to describe her life to you earnestly, explain her aspirations, you would have been shocked by the depth of her depravity, her total moral degradation.
- 1.51** A woman, being a superior organism to a man, ought to be superior to him in her intellect also. It is rather easy for her, because she matures earlier and feels a lesser urge for physical pleasures, than men do. <...> Time will come for women to lead the world and then it [the world] will see how pitiful all these crowd-pleasing fantasies are. The current civilisation, built by men's intellect, ought to be supplanted by a future one, created by women.
- 1.52** Beauty and elegance are weapons in the hands of clever women, weapons fit to achieve clever objectives. <...> To dispense with a hair-do, to become slovenly, to emulate men — this is as smart and well thought through as for soldiers to attack unarmed.

- 1.53 ...Courtesans have already achieved a lot, but much improvement, mental acuity and gymnastics are still required. *Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut* — that I understand... Ancients used to have Eleusinian Mysteries, open only to the initiates. [*Suvorin himself skips part of the text with a notation: 'Illegible'.*] I can imagine a highly developed woman, having rational aims and ambitions, concerned with things other than her monetary gain. I can visualize her as a courtesan [*Suvorin skips part of the text with a notation: 'This is perfectly legible, but the cynicism of thought, rather than cynicism of expression, does not allow me to read it'.*] The tradition of the 18th century women, who gathered around themselves everything best and most developed was overshadowed by the revolution. What a pity! Whatever else is said, the revolution was a setback for the woman question.
- 1.54 ...Does Mr Shchedrin agree with the hero of *Blagonamerennye rechi*, Teben'kov, that the woman question was resolved by *la belle Hélène*? I don't know about Mr Shchedrin, but I am certainly in full agreement with Teben'kov. Let them call me a vandal, but this is the truth personified, the wittiest, most wonderful truth imaginable... Tell me, for goodness' sake, what does the woman question consist of other than the very solution *la belle Hélène* came up with? What do the leading thinkers grapple with, which prejudices do they strive to dispense with, which subject did Georges Sand apply her colossal talent to? Simplify and normalize everything properly — and you will come up with the very same solution that *la belle Hélène* so thoughtfully and bravely reached. Is her deed not the greatest manifestation of personal freedom? <...> Men of the day saw the vast importance of the protest of this woman-ruler clearly enough, for they launched a prolonged, terrible war that led eventually to the destruction of the city to which the daring queen escaped with her lover. Naturally, after such a scandalous affair, men strengthened their domination over women and are still oppressing them to this very day. To put it plainly, this despotism will continue till women understand the real meaning of what *la belle Hélène* did and follow her example. Only then will the true liberation of women come, only then will the struggle for female employment triumph in all the professions.
- 1.55 The foundation for the serious medical education of women is being built and there all the reasons to believe that, in the near future, Russian women will not have to look for knowledge in German universities. They did not struggle in vain, they continued to pursue the goals of education despite constant mockery and abuse for a reason: persistence is nearly always rewarded.
- 1.56 'When there is nothing else to talk about, there is always the woman question' — one of my acquaintances often notes. That is true enough, too, it is an excellent, eternally new subject. Sometimes I think that it was invented specifically for journalists, but I instantly reject this thought as offensive to the spirit of our time and concur that the woman question is inexhaustible because it is a yardstick of the progress of the evolution of humanity; in other words, how successful men are in making ropes for their own fat necks. However, I refrain from speaking about this for a reason. No-one sensible would dispute that the male proponents of the so-called woman question are the most virtuous sheep of all in the global flock and ought to be adored by women as such. However, it is not sufficient to call them 'virtuous sheep'; these are suicides, these are sheep that weep the tears of joy at the abattoir's door and say, full of self-denial: 'Kill us as soon as you may, then roast us and serve us up to the darling women.' Clearly, when I describe such horrors, I refer to the end result, that is to that distant time, that new geological epoch when women, with the assistance of male traitors, will conquer and enslave us. <...> You are aware that I am one of the supporters of the natural evolution of the woman question. As a moderate liberal, I naturally support and promote everything that is moderately liberal; however, I am one of those moderate liberals who do not close their eyes to the final outcomes. <...> Weighing all this up, I say that the final outcome of the resolution of the woman question will be disastrous for men, therefore those of us who fight the 'outdated' attitudes to women are making a rope for their own necks, because it is beyond question that everything wrought by men for their rest and relaxation — all that will be demolished as being against the interests of women. I could paint you a picture, but I worry for the poor heads of those who fear the woman question very much anyway, even though it will only become truly dangerous in some five hundred years or so: till then, we will continue to lord it over the female tribe.
- 1.57 Womenfolk, though, could have shown themselves to advantage and earn the gratitude of the descendants even now. <...> Currently women should strive so that men do fewer unsavoury deeds. <...> Naturally, a man — well, a more or less considerate man, at least — will start by offering explanations; none of these explanations may be accepted...<...> It might be useful to establish a defensive society for this purpose,

named: 'Female society for mutual assistance and for the taming of men'. I am quite certain that the work of this society would be more beneficial than that of all the contemporary societies.

- 1.58** Room temperature leapt up ten degrees at once. <...> A woman entered the room and brought in warmth with her. Russian women are the warmest of women. All my life I have loved Russian women quite as much as tea; in death I give them my blessing, as they say, for their life achievement. This warmest of women is, at the same time, the most progressive one. I have always loved her: when she had long hair and when she cut it; had I lived longer and saw her shaving it off — I would have loved her clean-shaven. I loved her when she was meek and submissive to her husband when he was present and played up behind his back; I loved her when she stopped listening to her husband and, having dispensed with modesty, told him: 'My dear, I love another, so you stay here and I will go there!' And so she left, calmly, without haste, without hand-wringing, without pathos or endless monologues — because the warmest woman of all is the sincerest one at the same time. <...> Yes, I loved her, this sincere, warm and progressive Russian woman, I loved her always, at all the stages of her evolution — when she read Dumas and Paul de Kock and when she blushingly devoured anecdotes from Girtl's *Topographical Anatomy*, which she preferred to any novel. I loved her when, in despair after a prolonged, silent meditation, she sought solace in debauchery and when she put a gun to her mouth and collapsed, disfigured and without breath, I loved her always — when I defended her and when I mocked her. <...> How wrong were those liberal philosophers, who berated me for inconsistency, for attacking a woman today and defending her tomorrow. Oh, be ever blessed, you warm Russian woman; keep ever and unto eternity knocking and pushing at doors in the certain hope that they will open to her who knocks. Farewell!
- 1.59** She was lying on a sofa and, when she saw me, he said: 'My darling, my pet, forgive me, I deceived you.' <...> I started asking her what happened and saw it in her face that she was surprised at my ignorance. <...> She was dying. She breathed sadly two or three times and her eyes stopped at me. I sat by her on the floor. <...> I was utterly lost. <...> I asked to be taken to the Likhachevs.
- 1.60** The reason for the murder was, most probably, Komarov's hopeless love; having realised that there was no reciprocal feeling, he went berserk and resolved to kill both himself and the poor, blameless woman. <...> Anna Ivanovna is survived by five children, still in sore need of her attention and care. <...> She was a wonderfully good and clever woman.
- 1.61** Upon the inspection of the room where this all occurred, they found a sealed, unaddressed letter on the table, in which Mr Komarov asked for no-one to be blamed for the murder and suicide he committed and requested that no investigation into his motives be undertaken, for this secret was known to himself and his victim only.
- 1.62** Koni was the prosecutor in this case and Suvorin came to him with a request to be told the whole truth. Koni dissembled, naturally. Suvorin was close to suicide. He used to sit in Koni's drawing room and pour his sorrows out to Shchedrin, who listened sympathetically, but, upon Suvorin's departure, mocked and criticised him.
- 1.63** The terrible tragedy that has befallen you and your family is the work of blind, implacable and all-powerful fate, the chain of events which your will could not affect, which was utterly beyond its power to influence, which it could not possibly prevent. Consider the distribution of parts in this drama of yours. — You, a kind, weak, tolerant, trusting person, a realist in the realm of feelings and an idealist in sensual matters (please don't be angry with me for speaking plainly) — in other words, a theoretician at heart. <...> She — well, she is a strong, dominating personality, whose life had already been slipping away and which she reclaimed, by leaving the soul alone and over-emphasizing — morbidly and persistently — her bodily instincts... And, finally, he — this murderer, who managed to evade justice. <...> A literary groupie, a person of questionable education and equally questionable means, unemployed, bereft of future plans — former seducer from Heidelberg. <...> And this person, this parasite, encountered the two of you. You — so busy and trusting, and she, protected from him by her moral purity, but unwell, nervous, moody. People like him are adept in sapping the strength of their victims. — He is tolerated, he is put up with and he becomes a familiar fixture; he is listened to — and he confesses his love; he is asked for a favour — and he becomes a model lackey; — he is slapped — and he comes back, providing ample justification for a new slap. And so he erects an entire edifice on the basis of his 'proven' devotion, he cleverly and insidiously induces compassion, which, in women, is so often linked to that other, stronger, feeling — he does not even attempt to rise to her level — he, being always so meek, yet true, poor, yet devoted and, being always

somewhere down there, drags her down to his level. His strategy is certain — her delicacy and politeness suggest the first step, compassion determines the second and her craftily aroused and morbid physical nature does the rest. What a victory! She — the guardian angel and manager of a talented man and unique writer — will come to him, she — a noble and clever being — will accept him as her owner, however temporary — will surrender her proud heart to him — and will bathe him, this vulgar and moribund creature, in her luminosity. <...> It is not a run-of-the-mill parasite, this one, who conquered such a wife of such a husband, and such a seduction is head and shoulders above anything he accomplished in Heidelberg. And so all stops are pulled out — and everything is clouded over in the woman, all the absurd emotions and half-recognised instincts are aroused in the woman. The victory is certain, it seems. And yet, at a critical moment — her life force takes over, the old feelings, duty and sense of responsibility triumph over the semi-attachment and semi-compassion and the battle, so well prepared and conducted, is lost. What is left? The objective is not met — she did not stoop to his level — he cannot rise to hers — departure and parting are announced and are, likely, necessary — and only his old life, that of a spurned and despised parasite, remains. That is not acceptable, though, a way out is needed, an opportunity to be something, anything at all, anything but a zero. His heart overflows with anger and vengeance for the pointless humiliations, for the wasted labour of seduction — anger against everything and everyone, who silently, *eo ipso*, by their very existence, restrained and restrain her. — Vengeance is called for, a definitive and even a faintly romantic one. <...> What could you do against such a person? <...> Could you prevent his playing variations on the morbid nature and the kindness of your wife? <...> No, dear Aleksei Sergeevich, I believe that you were, as indeed you should have been, powerless under these circumstances. This disastrous man entered your life like a wedge and it was not within your power to prevent the catastrophe caused by his way of life and nature. It is so painful and sad that you had to encounter him under such circumstances — but so it has fallen out and it was not up to you to prevent the termination of his existence in the way that it — because of him and him alone — occurred.

- 1.64** So now you say that Suvorin was deceived by his wife. <...> True enough, but whose fault is it? — His! What was Anna Ivanovna? In all likelihood, a kind, sincere, but a perfectly ordinary woman. He taught her languages — excellent and most appropriate! He anointed her as a progressive one — silly and laughable! You see, he subverted her soul and moral values by this anointment and this new status.
- 1.65** It will be rather sad if the fate of our society follows the pattern of the Suvorins. A pitiful, hapless condition, where everything sacred, spiritual has rotted away or broken. <...> Modern progressivists are just scum, aching for pure destruction. <...> A riot of uncontrolled flesh leads to the events we saw in commune-dominated France, with women — like maddened furies — running the streets and setting the city ablaze with their kerosene lanterns.
- 1.66** At the time, I was looking for an ideal woman and, not surprisingly, nearly chose Shelgunova. I say ‘nearly’ because, despite all exciting acclamations, despite all my yearning for an ideal and capacity for adoration, I was disturbed by her critical approach and I felt unable to accept Shelgunova’s attitude to the emancipation of women. <...> To her, truly free women were Panaeva, certain French women she met in Paris. <...> Their worship sometimes resulted in me being evicted from the room, for more convenient enumeration of their progressive deeds.
- 1.67** I lost a great deal in my late wife: being a weak-willed, less than energetic person myself, I used to take from her what I lacked — and she had it in abundance.
- 1.68** In these three years of negotiations, I felt my enmity towards you rising. <...> I felt getting mentally ill, losing self-control. Had my mother been with us, she would have stopped you and saved me from the errors which I, no doubt, was making as well.

Chapter II

- 2.1** I intend to publish several issues, containing, in addition to what may have already been read by my readers, comments on the current events and questions of the day. Each issue will consist of three chapters: 1) short fiction, 2) former feuilletons, more or less updated and revamped, and 3) notes on contemporary issues.
- 2.2** For many years, he turned up every Sunday and amused his public in a rather popular newspaper. Now, he lies motionless, without speech, as poor as he was ten years ago — as a pauper, in fact, robbed by illness of his last means of existence. <...> Lately, they were saying that he is past it as a writer. That is a terrible

thing to say about a journalist. <...> Indeed, it does not take long for a writer to lose it <...> in an unrelenting fight for a crust and in uncertainty about the future! <...> To turn from a little king into nothing, from a prominent mercenary into a cave dweller — that's the way to lose one's mind or to have a nervous breakdown. It is so much better to die a timely death, die with dignity <...> without giving the mocking, self-satisfied audience an excuse for a hurtful smirk or an equally hurtful condolence.

- 2.3** An entire month of talks, negotiations, arguments, unbearable stress, fighting with myself and sleepless nights... <...> My head spun, I didn't know what to do, what to focus on. I considered pronouncements and advice of my friends and acquaintances carefully, but did not see anything except for the fog that obscured everything: faces, clothes, situations. <...> I decided to suspend activity, to wait for the sun to shine.
- 2.4** ...On the street, at home, in literature, we get a snub everywhere, be it direct or condescendingly-ironic. You, men, even without brains and talent are free to enter everywhere — but we, brains and talent notwithstanding, we have to beseech you for the right to show them...
- 2.5** What is all this prattle on the woman question to me, when they are indifferent and only perceive my work as pathology. <...> I am a woman! Between a negro and a child — there's her place! <...> Which female talents are rewarded best? Falseness, dissimulation, lack of moral values coupled with a lack of education, cunning, lust, and the qualities of an accomplished seductress... The courtesan — that is who they kneel before, whom they worship with incense, whom they pay most.
- 2.6** I know only that women, even the remarkable ones, are not made of stone and, having cleaved to a man, not just unremarkable, but rather defective, they marry, become mothers, housekeepers, sink into the trifles of life and, naturally, cannot nourish their talents, which perish without blooming. It's a hail-ravaged wheat field...
- 2.7** Life is hard...<...> the soul hurts, the brain hums, one craves knowledge... And? They laugh at you, they trip you up, they prescribe impossible things, and they confine you into a golden cage or... No, I can't go on. This cannot be borne, this is torture.
- 2.8** Oh, my dove with knitted brows... <...> Your voice — it is gold and fortune both, if you would only work on it a bit, you would gain both fame and money with it even now, in the provinces. But you only mess around and just carry on: I need nothing, I want nothing. <...> They say that love makes one energetic, upbeat, ready to do anything for the loved one. But I see the opposite in you: you go soft, mope about, suffer needlessly. Niusionok, darling, please, try at least a little and show that you are not a naughty child but a woman.
- 2.9** I wish to say once more that my soul is so filled with you that there is no space left for any other thing. <...> Only one thing is constant: attraction to you. Incredible: there is not a minute, it seems, when I don't think of you, don't imagine you near.
- 2.10** You said once, jokingly, that I'm your sole relative and it touched me deeply. <...> You know, I am idiotically attached to you. Time, distance, nothing can alter my feelings for you. <...> You know, there is an astonishing harmony between us. I think that no-one understands you as I do.
- 2.11** Common sense says: don't, don't think about her! What kind of a match is she to you and you to her? 'Her blood boils now, but time quells all things' — and you? Loneliness, longing, dreams of your own home, of your own dear person who would be near, loving, tender, faithful, a guardian angel, who would lighten up your life and it's hassles, who would make working near her a joy, who would banish grief, comfort you with kisses, support with firm hope in life, an easy, joyful outlook on the future. Guardian angel — as if there were any... <...> It is necessary to accept one's fate, to forget, to suffer so as not to suffer later, to steel oneself in one's loneliness and firmly, once and for all say to young happiness: farewell! It is not for you, and if it flickered on the horizon of your life, on its evening's horizon, it is only an accident; be happy with the past minute, don't ask happiness from fate and calm down. My darling, my dear wonderful Niusionok, how I would wish to be young, healthy, and fresh! How I wish you happiness, oh my God! How I wish it!
- 2.12** I enjoyed fun and games quite a bit, having stayed for three days in a village, some 40 miles from Kursk, with a girl, whom Niusia has every reason to be afraid of. Had I stayed a few days longer — it would have been a romance, but I ran away before consummation, having taken it half-way there, though. You would

agree that it is rather interesting for a writer to meet a 23-year-old beauty of the steppes and become the subject of her adoration.

- 2.13** I hope that you do intend to lecture your Kursk maiden appropriately. Or else, everything she wrote to you is the truth, in which case she is a rather ordinary girl, possessing not a hundredth of the independence she boasted of <...> ...If a 22-year-old girl immediately starts behaving like the Kursk maiden, it shows either moral cowardice, not so common among the protestants she tried to pass herself off as, or just simple vanity; if it works out well — fine, otherwise — you can take the blame. Thus, if the Kursk maiden coped with all that, she must be seriously unbalanced, you are better off without her. <...> Last year's girls bear no comparison with Lidiia Ivanovna. That one, at least, escaped from her milieu, gained her independence <...> passed many trials, whereas these semi-privileged maids are ever idle, squander their maidenhood, yet hunger for forbidden fruit under some romantic circumstances.<...> What can you possibly expect from the young ladies? Support for your aims, advice, help? Never. Proper housekeeping? That, to their shame, is questionable too. Only the conjugal bed is left: and if that is the only substance in the 'contemporary' girls, who are not even close to perfection, but are only more or less trained mediocrities with a grammar-school type education, you are fully within your rights to demand from your wife at least a rare beauty, that eternally essential ingredient of womanhood in the absence of either exceptional intelligence or talent. What a curse of fate lies heavily on the literati, scientists and intelligentsia in general, where one is everything, but the other half is a nothing, zero, or even more often a negative value. A merchant takes capital, an aristocrat — a pedigree cow, but with money, a landed gentleman — a new country estate, a peasant and a commoner — a worker, only the members of intelligentsia usually get involved with pretentious trash like the Kursk maiden and at best with children of nature. Women who have inspired the labourers with pen and brain to anything at all were one in twenty or thirty, whereas their wives turn out as women that look at their husbands who mobilize their fatherland, as helpless scribblers. Truth to tell, though, your role — as first-rate and almost unique journalist is spectacular, and even an ordinary wife will see that and will boast of your pen, but what will she give you? She will be stopping you, cool down the heat of your talent, teach you caution and petty thrift.
- 2.14** When one loves, one pities, and love itself often grows from pity for a man, particularly often amongst women. And so I believe that your love for me grew partially from pity — you could not have missed the anguish of my loneliness, even though I was never alone — partially due to your worship of my public figure, which has a certain reputation. 'He's so smart and yet he loves me' — you often repeated this to me yourself. You love not just an Aleksei Sergeevich, as one loves Ivan Ivanovich, Petr Pavlovich, but the well-known Aleksei Sergeevich, who they write and talk about. Should we live together, you — I am quite certain of this and have substantial reasons for saying so — you would soon be ready to swap me for another unknown, but younger and healthier who would be able to reciprocate your passion, whereas I cannot do that.
- 2.15** Anna Ivanovna wrote four times to you, and it would seem that you did not get any of these letters; yet two of these were sent on the same day. <...> At any rate, you cannot complain about her: there is no doubt that she is available to you. Should you firmly believe within your soul that you will gain your personal happiness with her, then act without any delay whatsoever. <...> However, you should consider first whether instead of the intended happiness you are likely to get the boring and silly drudgery of the most ordinary kind. *That is the question.*
- 2.16** I, naturally, answered instantly that she must not, knowing very well what these questions were aimed at. <...> In the opinion of Anna Ivanovna, she has only two ways out left: either suicide, which she would not have the guts to commit — or to give herself to the first man she meets, so that she can live with you thereafter, without hindering you with conjugal bonds. To what extent one is better than the other — is questionable. Her words revealed something that seemed to be calculated — and that, I must admit, perplexed me somewhat.
- 2.17** Please do not think that to say, as calmly as possible, everything that I tell to her about the futility of her love for you — means nothing, no, it's actually quite hard, particularly so when I'm being blamed, for hitting the sore spot and destroying a cherished dream. Still, I always remain on firm ground, as I try to prove to Nusia that in her love lies the demise of your fame and your reputation, — and that argument means a great deal to her.

- 2.18** I've made my bed, and I don't know how I'll lie in it, but I must. I feel like a devil tangling with a baby! And the saddest thing is, that there is no way to convince the baby that it cannot possibly end well, neither for the devil, nor for the baby. <...> Even though you are within your rights to laugh at me, you understand that both my and her circumstances are taking a tragic rather than a comic turn, and I am so scared of tragedy — I had my fill of it! — for myself, and most definitely do not wish it on her. <...> She, like everyone in love, believes that this is something eternal and unchanging, and it will be awfully hard for her to see that the 'eternal' passes, diminishes, disappears, being replaced by indifference. <...> I've always told her that. Passion must be responded to by passion — but where am I going to find it? <...> You do understand, that I do not wish to compare myself to anyone, but we, writers, are such that only very few of us enjoy a family happiness. When the brain functions, when the intellect is preoccupied with matters outside of woman's ken, when the more the head works, the less there are urges of a certain kind, it is always appropriate for a woman to prefer any rake to you. <...> Niusia, also, is interested in nothing in particular outside the domain of love. To introduce her into the realm we inhabit is not likely to be an enjoyable or even a potentially successful task. I thought sometimes that she understands that her love is not such a lasting feeling, that it is an impulse, wild, turbulent, that she is afraid of it passing and so rushes to secure the loved one. He stalls — that annoys her, stirs, and magnifies her desire. And yet, it would have been so much better to wait, so much better for her to enter the conservatoire, concentrate on her education.
- 2.19** Excessive intellectual pursuits, deep thinking, continuous wakefulness, sustained mental effort, by concentrating one's vital energies in the brain, deprive the sexual organs of these energies, and the organs wear out and gradually lose their procreative capabilities. Thus, we have scientists afflicted by anaphrodisia and idiots who are extraordinarily productive sexually.
- 2.20** What a conundrum: I had a paralysis, a small one so far, but nasty enough; my right eye, right cheek and the right part of my tongue refused to cooperate; <...> my lips lost sensitivity and open crookedly. <...> This accident happened the other day, without any preparatory work or warning, unless one treats the following as such: since I arrived in Piatigorsk, I started feeling unwell, nervous tension, shortness of breath, weakness; I moved to Zheleznovodsk; I got better initially, but then my weakness returned, fever started torturing me; they dragged me over to Kislovodsk to the famed Narzan; after a few baths — paralysis.
- 2.21** Regarding Niusia, I would have liked to say a great deal, but can't write much. <...> I have no wish to turn her into my nurse, and she would not be able to sustain this 'incomparable' assignment either, and, given my nervous exhaustion and paralysis, albeit local, making love, you would agree, is not so convenient. And with Niusia, this is the only thing one can do. <...> She is a passionate, terribly sensuous person, with an unconquerable yearning for pleasure; made lazy by the lack of education; she can't seriously tackle any task; her head developed in one direction, that of unlimited freedom; were she prettier, she would have become a famous courtesan. <...> Let someone turn up to take my place, you would see how rapidly she would cool to me. <...> Enticing traits in her, in Niusia that is — lots and lots of them. You will believe me if I say that that the nervous breakdown that I now feel and even physically feel, is at least partially a result of that struggle with myself that I sustained. <...> You reproach me for the lack of consistency in my letters to her, but do understand that I am torn in half, prudent today, reckless tomorrow, and when reckless, one thinks: to hell with conventions and relationships, even a few days, but of happiness! And then, what will happen to me, to her, to her relatives — who cares? Life passes by, while one is dithering!
- 2.22** When all was said and done and I had to go to the Department of Press, to sign the contract <...> I did not have the guts to. Elena Osipovna kicked me out from her salon, where I was relating all my misgivings and fears to her.
- 2.23** And so today I write to you with all sincerity of my heart, which, as worn out and tattered as it may be, still retains its core, that which I live by and which saved me before. And that good in my heart speaks loudly for you and of you and thanks you in a loud voice for your sincere help to me, which I once was the beneficiary of. <...> Without your help, I would not have had my newspaper...
- 2.24** The name of the ironic deity which guided the ship of his career in those times, most difficult for the Russian press, — was not greed. It was simply the 'desire for the greatest success possible'. That determined everything. So that the ship would not founder unexpectedly (like the lease of *Peterburgskie vedomosti*) — it was imperative to rid it of the burden of any firm and insistent convictions... In order for it to succeed with 'society' as well — it was necessary not to fight with the opinions of the majority, but to

sail the currents of the views of the masses, steering the ship into the mainstream, pandering to the ever-changing views of the crowd...

- 2.25** The ferment of the sixties, perhaps, all the worse for them, made them sceptics about the ideas that the generation reared by the reactionary eighties presumptuously lived by. What the young editorial staff felt to be the mandatory programme, the calm sceptics felt to be a mere experiment... That was both the good and the bad trait of the older generation. Good, because it precluded them from reaching absurd conclusions, which, in the heat of an argument, following the straight line of the purely axiom-driven, reality-independent politics, the editorial group of the 'eighties' often ended up with. Bad, because it supported in them their propensity to impressionistic compromises, which so conveniently fitted every idea to the circumstances, that it could end neither in categorical triumph, nor in categorical crash. <...> The older generation, led by Suvorin personally, were specifically insured from such sharp, painful crises by their sceptical impressionism, particularly responsive and shifting and capable of the widest amplitude. Constitutionalism and anarchism, religious idealism and nihilism of the sixties, militant nationalism and the broadest possible cultural cosmopolitanism, all mingled exotically and cohabited rather cosily there.
- 2.26** One of the best columnists of the time, a real journalistic and societal force, Suvorin appeared in *Novoe vremia* during the period of stagnation for the 'thick journals', when the Mohicans of radicalism already had one foot in the grave, but, most importantly, when the battle cries of the previous decades had weakened and were fading in popular consciousness. <...> *Novoe vremia* stood out in the daily press thanks to the certainty of its pronouncements, the rare unity and iron cohesion of its major, average and even quite negligible talents. It managed to surround itself with the aura of a certain moral hypnosis <...> among the 'bureaucrats' and ordinary petit bourgeois readers. Its [newspaper's] success and substantial socio-political weight are due not only to the above-mentioned integrity of its public profile, but, most importantly — to our petit bourgeois fright, our pack-running morality and weakness. <...> *Novoe vremia* is a fact of our lives, one of its aspects, one of the chronicles of our psychology, one of the indicators of our apathy and moral passivity.
- 2.27** The heavy, crushing tread of the boring and tedious 'headmaster' of 'national politics' — Katkov — fractured into the graceful, easy on the eye, soft pirouettes of the *Novoe vremia* journalists. Katkov was imperious, he was <...> the 'moral arbiter' <...> compared to whom the government was simply an executive organ. How different was the elastic, polyphonic *Novoe vremia*. At times, it copied and is still copying Katkov's gait of the stern 'saviour of the motherland'. For it, however, it is just that — a gait — chosen to suit the most stupid.
- 2.28** He swapped the social influence of an independent publicist for the influence of a newspaper entrepreneur, who moulds public opinion to the ever-changing views and needs of the powers, external to society and forcing their will onto it. <...> To create a surrogate public opinion, required by extra-societal powers and, being a voice of the bureaucracy, to assume the persona of a public entity — is not all that simple. <...> Suvorin, backed by the monopoly provisions of the system of public concessions <...> created a veritable public opinion factory.
- 2.29** A feuilleton, however serious, is always a bit of a clown, and one can always find a bell in its hat. <...> Clearly, his [Suvorin's] current audience, plutocrats-intellectuals, wheeler-dealers and empiricists, literati and scientists, are amused and entertained by the wittiness of Apraksin Yard.
- 2.30** *Novoe vremia*, operating as a barometer, discovers for society the opportunities implicit in its aspirations, expectations, and hopes. The deliberate appeal <...> of *Novoe vremia* to the 'average man' cannot but be welcomed. Mr Suvorin remarks very correctly, that we have that average person; we have a good and honest worker who actually has made Russia, who has paved her way of life and developed what we call now 'public mind' and 'public spirit'.
- 2.31** In the publishing world of Petersburg the primacy <...> beyond any doubt or appeal belongs to Aleksei Sergeevich Suvorin, who has in his *Malen'kie pis'ma* embodied with an unparalleled skill Gogol's, or an imaginary 'inspector-general'. Just look at the aplomb, the deeply-felt brashness with which he reviews all the matters under the sun. Everything is understood by him and is within his reach, all is familiar to him; he is omni-competent; he knows how to instruct anyone, to point out how things should have been done and which is the correct way to choose.

- 2.32 Nothing — *special*, nothing — *private*, nothing — *personal*, nothing — *particular* and *partisan*; everything — for *all of Russia*, for the ‘totality’ of Russia, generalised — what ‘the people and the state require’, what is required by ‘Russian history, as it is *currently being created*’: here is the slogan and quietly adopted path of the entire team.
- 2.33 Can’t you see how repetitive all our journals are — their opinions are in the public domain already and, believe me, they will all fall, undoubtedly fall, should they choose not to sniff the air and should they be unable to develop their sense of smell to an acute level.
- 2.34 Curious female readers, clearly, are wetting their lips and thirst for the discovery of all those interesting things and adventures that Nikolaev should experience at Balunskai’s. We ourselves, overcome by the lust of a writer, hunger for the privilege to reveal these fascinating adventures. Sadly, against our own will, we must postpone this story: we are constructing not just a novel, but a feuilleton-novel and are duty-bound to obey the occurrences and news of the day, rather than our author’s inspiration. And so, in the next chapter, we will be unable to slake the impatient thirst of our female readers: we will transfer our story to a different milieu. Our women readers should not get too angry with us, though: we will get back to the ‘wild lady’ and, believe me, an entire row of characters and events will be unveiled apart from her — spiritists of both sexes, hashish smokers (there will be a magnificent description of their visions: we have commissioned one of our staff authors to do this), hypnotists of all kinds, clairvoyants, etc., not to mention ladies with businesses of every kind.
- 2.35 As to Sacher-Masoch — I believe that he will be delighted to enter into a relationship with you. <...> I don’t know him personally — and, frankly, I am not an admirer of his novels. These are too ‘literary’ and ‘titillating’ — both good things — but unbearable after excessive mastication.
- 2.36 I hate those educated women — that female body, female soul, stifled by the corset of indigestible and inapplicable knowledge; it is a body, feeling an onset of fever, for which there is no remedy, it is a soul with repressed impulses, it is something between a German scientist and Magdalene, repentant that she is a woman. When I see these women, I tell them: ‘You are so clever, you are so good, you argue so convincingly, you shine such a bright light on our boring life!’ To myself, though I say: ‘Poor thing! You would have been so much better off marrying a cobbler and sniffing leather, rather than science!’
- 2.37 For women, however, love itself often includes the seeds of death; love itself causes sickness and suffering which are unknown to men. Where he only dwells in the garden of delights, a woman often drinks poison as well, which leads her to an untimely grave. <...> You have heard so many times that so-and-so is an exceptional girl, strikingly different from her coevals, full of enthusiasm, idealistic impulses, talent, love of knowledge; her heart is, seemingly, not made for personal happiness, for blossoming in the fold of her family, her intellect is so wide-ranging that it would seem necessary for the well-being of all of society; but give it a few years and either it all disappears, impulses wane, love of knowledge, requiring leisure, could not be satisfied, her female personality slackened, diminished, or you hear about something like a totally unexpected stroke that this now universally mourned deceased has suffered.
- 2.38 ...expose hypocrisy and falsehood of these personalities, who, under the guises of ‘new’, ‘learned’, emancipated women, even hiding behind academic degrees, gained not through toil and scholarship, but by intrigues and slyness, actually bring by their behaviour disrepute upon both the ‘new principles’ that they affect and the degrees that they, so to speak, stole, by not having a genuine claim to them.
- 2.39 I am quite certain that Anna Ivanovna does not satisfy you in great many things, particularly these days; that, however, has nothing to do with feelings and you are in full possession of hers, they are all concentrated on you and you are their sole focus; she lives and breathes by you. Your choice was a very successful one, in my opinion. Of all the women who have passed by you ever since 1875, only Smirnova could have been preferable. She would have been a fit representative of your publisher’s home, she would have put it in order, she could have shared thoughts with you on any subject, she would have loved you and you would have loved her. However, she would not have loved you the same way as Anna Ivanovna does and you would not have felt that easy with her love. A lot is gone from her feelings by now, a great many things are blunted by years and thoughts and she rather needs the heat of a young love to warm her, than giving warmth herself. <...> Also, Smirnova would have limited your freedom, she would have made quite a few purely superficial demands upon you, which you would have fulfilled and, likely, even learnt to live with eventually, but those would have taken a bitter toll on your inner self. Now, you are an absolute ruler

in your house, almost a God, then you would have been a host and a husband of a self-aware wife, which is not the same; I don't think that marital bonds chafe you now, whereas they would have then. <...> Still, Anna Ivanovna is not educated, is not a hostess, nor a companion, friend, advisor. And, wherever you look, litterateurs, journalists, philosophers, artists, all this bohemia, in short, are mostly married this way, three quarters are like this. <...> It would seem to me that there are only very few women who are capable of being their companions and advisors...

- 2.40** Anna Ivanovna Suvorina, or Niusia, as she was called in the family, was a very nice and pleasant woman, but <...> she never played any role in the family, probably because of her nature. As she herself told me, she mattered so little that she could not even order a dress to her taste, at the time of our discussion she craved for a black satin wrap, and even that she could not manage despite all the money thrown around all over the place.
- 2.41** I've missed you all, even though I know that the joys awaiting me at home are rather marginal, at best. I know, above all, that everything will continue as before, that is, that everyone will be looking after number one and everyone will look conspiratorially, as though each one of them is possessed of a profound idea or a great sorrow. <...> As I visualise this nice picture, <...> I become thoroughly sick.
- 2.42** All of humanity is prejudiced. <...> Here is another prejudice for you — women. How much hypocrisy there is in their treatment by the press and by men. Everyone pretends to defend them. To hurt a woman. It's impossible, it's horrible — to hurt a woman. A woman? As though she is a small child, a creature so feeble and weak that she cannot defend herself. There is not a brass farthing worth of candour in this. A woman was always a slave and a slave she remains; and a man, by his defender posture, only covers his hypocrisy up and gilds the pill. Mind you, when men talk amongst themselves about women, only the body is left, only it is under discussion. Women probably like it, though: I feel sometimes that they value the body most in themselves, that they almost beg for generalisations of this sort: all women are the same. Some live their lives straight from trashy novels and write them too, others only live this way. Then comes the differentiation: some have extended, meaningful affairs with worries and suffering, with pains of love, friendship, sacrifices, others — nice, brief, purely physiological ones, bereft of pain and suffering but replete with taking waters, baths, masquerades, champagne, and vodka. These latter ones are always happier than the former ones: the worst they can expect is satiation, but that is not so bad for a woman. <...> Problems come only if some unusual, sensitive, and warm male falls for them. They'd torture him to death. Some of these are utterly heartless, almost wooden. They care for nothing except their sexual urges, and stop at nothing in satisfying them — destroy all, ruin anyone's life, take everything you want and to your heart's content.
- 2.43** Men are fools too. Every married man becomes more stupid, even with a good wife. This is a law of nature and the State has accepted that, by protecting marital cohabitation. A married man's horizons close in, become trivialised, thinking becomes more cautious, more conservative, humbler. Should a good, clever woman even have a positive influence on a man, it is always to the detriment of his personal development if she is his wife. She starts thinking for him and his brain gratefully lessens the work effort. Great men never had great wives, nor great women — great husbands. These are totally incompatible entities. It makes sense, too: if even the most earnest love opens the way to trivial yearnings, marriage opens the way to the trivial yearnings of one's wife, her ambition, her vanity, etc. And where a man, paying his dues to marriage, can cope sometimes, a woman never can. Should a smart, talented woman marry you — forget her personal development, her talent, her future. In the best case she will take over a part of intellectual work of her husband and diminish his energy, in the worst — she will become devalued in all the contradictions of marriage. No gain for anyone.
- 2.44** I would have liked to see you often, but it gets so very awkward for some reason. <...> You mentioned once that I am a shallow personality. That is probable, but everyone's depth is rather relative. I only know that I could never cope with any emptiness; be it with an illusion, <illegible> I strove always to fill it; I become so edgy that I do not know what to do with myself. I did a lot of silly things for this reason and did myself quite a bit of harm by substituting an illusion for a very real emptiness. I could have written an entire novella about it. I don't know you well, not well at all, but you always reminded me of something amiable, warm, nice. <...> It's a few hours since I wrote this to you, and I feel it is all rather silly. It's as though one wanted to start an amorous correspondence and gushed out earnest sentences and facts. <...> I should abandon this trivia, these lines. Then, I reconsidered: it would not diminish her to read this...<...>

All I want is to say a few simple, warm, earnest words, without sense or reason, but straight out of my silly heart...

- 2.45** **28.04.1881.** We are leaving Petersburg. <...> Krylov and Suvorin are seeing us off. <...> Suvorin brought Liuba [Smirnova's daughter] a box of chocolates for the journey. He promises to visit us in the Crimea. Everyone tells him to go to Paris, to Charcot, but he does not feel like it. <...> Showdown with Nikolai. **04.05.1881.** I received such a letter from Suvorin that Nikolai asks me to terminate the relationship; he says that I'm acting in bad faith otherwise. **14.05.1881.** Another letter from Suvorin, wild, disjointed, both Nikolai and I are starting to think that not all is well with him. **25.09.1882.** The Suvorins live in Yalta, things are not good. Anna Ivanovna's room has no privacy. **25.10.1882.** Anna Ivanovna says that, if she were rich, she would have given Tolstoy a few thousands, for him to add a new ending to *Anna Karenina*, so that she survives. **09.02.1883.** Suvorin is in a domestic hell still <...> Suvorin made a will, in which he leaves the bulk of everything to his daughter and her children. That is all Kolomnin's doing. Anna Ivanovna has started having abortions, so as not to give birth. As soon as she would become pregnant, Kolomnin would convince Suvorin that it was not by him. Scenes of jealousy! He is calculating: more children, less inheritance. Suvorin's sons by his first wife are also against Anna Ivanovna and stand by Kolomnin. **12.03.1883.** The Suvorins dropped in. He talks of his new play about Potemkin and she — of buying hats in Paris. **19.06.1883.** Had tea at the Suvorins'. <...> Anna Ivanovna goes on about her husband, if he were like Kolomnin, he would have showered her with diamonds and velvet dresses, that she would have loved to be his wife, if only for a month. And he: 'Sure, you mean you would have wanted to strip me bare.'
- 2.46** No-one ever idealised a decent woman as Dumas idealised a courtesan. Is she too degenerate or too decent, for gentlemen to shoot and fight a duel over her? And, indeed, isn't a decent woman prose? Poetry is only movement, nerves, passion, impulse, languor. Every girl has a poetic period of her own, when love wakes up and bewitches her with unknowable charms, giving a poetic air to her own charms, her own thoughtfulness and joy. However, when a girl becomes a woman, poetry, even if it remains, takes on a calm and gracious hue, shading into prose. Marriage is the grave of love. Someone said that a long time ago, which makes it the grave of poetry too. Should poetry regain her sparkle in a woman, should her eyes shine with that particular light that draws one in and promises everything, when impulses return, unmotivated sadness now, unmotivated joy then, she is ready to fall in love with *another*, if not already in love. Note, though, that she no longer is a decent woman, because decency, by definition, involves marital fidelity, faithfulness, family cares, duties of a mother and a wife. <...> Thus, a decent woman is prosaic by necessity, which is why men neither shoot nor duel on her account. Happiness, though, real happiness, quiet, calm happiness of the soul — is it not prose? <...> It is so rare, though, so rare. My God, why is it so rare?
- 2.47** We feel that the Medea legend is the expression of folk wisdom, an expression of the desire to address the question of children and of the position of a mother, <...> for us, though the cardinal point is that Medea turns out to be a particularly strong personality. <...> Even though this playwright of genius [Euripides] is no admirer of women and his plays are full of anti-feminist rhetoric, he created a mighty image of this woman, unequalled in world literature. Extraordinary intellect, decisive logic, hellish will, boundless love, yet full of tenderness, strong protest against the enslavement of women — it is all there. As one reads this play, one is reminded of Hamlet's and Chatskii's thoughts, of the sermons of the defenders of women in their fight for the rights of the fair sex.
- 2.48** It goes without saying that we gave Medea contemporary features and even wished to russify her. Thus, our Medea is comprehensible to the crowd, to the majority of the public. That is her failing as a literary piece, but also her stage advantage. And we wrote for the stage, we aimed to serve *Russian* actresses.
- 2.49** **5.11.1882.** Was at Strepetova's, where I met Anna Ivanovna. <...> I suspect I interrupted her intimate conversation with Strepetova on the subject of the Kolomnins. Anna Ivanovna clamps down when I'm around... **18.11.1882.** Visited Strepetova. Anna Ivanovna was there <...> came for her orders, would Strepetova require something in the newspaper, a column perhaps, or an article of some kind?
- 2.50** **13.02.1883.** [First night of *Medea*]. Theatre only half full. The reception, though, cost three thousand at least! Calls, stomping, waving of handkerchiefs, initially for Strepetova only, then for Suvorin as well. Suvorin was terribly scared and did not want to appear, thought they'd boo him. <...> Strepetova's

performance feels deeply provincial to me. She slaps her thighs, jumps around the stage and bellows in an unnatural voice. <...> Public goes mad, though, that's exactly what they came here for.

- 2.51** I hate her all the more and ever more,
The more I realise that I'm obliged
To her for much. No, never should a man
Apply to women for succour
And women manly in their mind and body
We shun. Let every woman see
Defender, husband, father in her man
And should not be able to say: 'Observe,
I helped you, I defended you from this.'
Forget his peace and happiness, that one
Whose wife's a comrade of an equal strength:
Then love and caress turn to duty and
The delicate obedience itself
Departs for lack of faith, because
When husband feels the challenge of his wife,
What happiness can adversaries find?
- 2.52** Naturally, women like to think that, should they rule, things would have been much improved. <...> Had they been able to assume the place of men and take over the entire world, there is not the slightest doubt that humanity, for that reason alone, would have created something just as refined, fragrant and elegant as they are themselves. It is likely that they plan to do it, too, so God bless them; otherwise, can one explain their desire to learn, their competition with men in the practical application of science to life? Believe me, it is all fully thought through and we must keep this in mind.
- 2.53** **08.02.1884.** Domestic life would have naturally sorted itself out otherwise, if someone only wanted to sort it out. Everyone is being disruptive rather than constructive, though, and I turn like a millstone, possibly smashing lives along the way and pounding myself in a mortar. **22.02.1884.** On occasion, one only wishes for a kind of selfless, sacred love that only mother and daughter might be capable of, perhaps. Antigone existed, after all. Such love would have lulled, consoled, warned, removed all unpleasantness, would have known how to come and go in good time, how to be indispensable, how to converse, console, brighten up one's life. <...> Anna Ivanovna has stopped dining at home altogether. Take a look at other people's houses — everything is different. We are not a home; we are a hotel, without a hostess, but with a house-keeper. **28.02.1884.** I am ageing fast and badly, with that egoistical ageing that grumbles and wishes for something else, something that is unattainable, in fact — strength, health, and good cheer. **1.03.1884.** I really felt unwell. Depression. **24.03.1884.** I intend to go abroad next Tuesday. I really don't want to, it's like going to the next world.
- 2.54** **31.05.1885.** The very first thing I bumped into at Zheleznovodsk were the Suvorin family. They dine at the restaurant at the railway station and occupy the entire table d'hôte, there are ten of them or so: governesses, aunts, children. <...> Anna Ivanovna herself is dressed à la Serpoletta, in a crimson silken blouse and a knee-length skirt. <...> Suvorin himself is at Essentuki, with the Kolomnins. Aleksandra Alekseevna has diabetes. **1.06.1885.** I ran into Suvorin in the street. He'd just come back from Essentuki, was getting out of the carriage, actually. He's depressed, wants to go to Petersburg. **13.06.1885.** Suvorin is constantly at his wife's side: escorts her to the baths and to the Mariinskii springs.
- 2.55** Zheleznovodsk is a female kingdom, one could say a kingdom of psychopaths. <...> There is a common objective here — pleasure, love, both sides, a man and a woman, aim to gain them; it is the opposite of war, where adversaries, in attacking, seek to destroy each other; here, adversaries aim for life, joy, the best enjoyment possible within the limitations of human nature; the resisting woman can only resist to obey her sense of duty, but in the absence of it — and it is so easy to drop it, being such a ponderous thing — resistance is senseless. Anyone who has grasped these rules may pick the flowers of pleasure without restraint, everywhere. <...> The entire repertoire <...> [of women] consists almost entirely of love and easy conversations, tinted by love. Heaven punishes them for love much less severely than men, sometimes. Sleek Don Juans, those heart-breakers, come here legless, with damaged spine marrow and are being wheeled around the park and to the baths in their wheel-chairs. Skirted Don Juans, though don't have

that risk and truly enjoy themselves swapping lovers and coming to the springs in order to satisfy their heart's desires, which settles their nerves better than any mineral water.

- 2.56** During our last conversation, you startled me by your candour, you were never so open with me before and, even though this candour is not to my benefit, it is better than dissembling and falsehood. You clearly stated that you are not prepared for any sacrifices, that you must have love, that you might have been able to tolerate the situation were I the same as I was three years ago or so. That is impossible, it's like asking a man on his death bed: why the hell are you lying there, get up and dance.
- 2.57** In winter I received such a letter, anonymous, naturally, about you that I tore it up and burnt it...<...> Mind you, I can say to you with absolute certainty, given that I demonstrated it already, that I can tolerate my wife's infidelity. It is much harder to tolerate the scandal and mockery of a cuckold. There are so many cornutos around, though that it is preferable to accept oneself as a cuckold, rather than pretend that one is so attractive that the wife remains faithful, when she actually is scattering her favours to all and sundry. Possibly, you might even accept that your wife presents you with someone else's children, from lovers, but one cannot possibly reconcile oneself with that. This is doubly base — vile to the husband and even to the legitimate children. <...> A lover only takes his pleasure and would not lift a finger for the children he fathers and saddles the wronged husband with. <...> Who can tell when one lives both with the husband and lover — one does not write these things down.
- 2.58** ...possibility of someone else's child — that brings on both jitters and indignation in me. I can't possibly accept this, I can't think about it without horror. <...> There is only one way out — divorce. And all the advantages are with you, you have your entire life in front of you, but for me — there is death only. Please consider this carefully, discuss it with your family, even. <...> That I'm unbearable to you — you told me this yourself, even though you used kinder words. I have no wish nor capability to play a banal and stupid role. <...> Petersburg will be so good for you and, given the freedom of morals and love there, it would be difficult, perhaps, to find a better moment to part.
- 2.59** I did not know her [Anna Ivanovna's mother] well till she wrote me a certain letter, when I was in the Caucasus, when my relationship with you was in its infancy. <...> Among other things, she wrote that I should have proposed marriage to you as a formality only, to calm you down, to deceive you, that she realised that you were no match for me, nor I for you and that she would have endeavoured to arrange matters so that thereafter we would have separated and that I was free to use that letter as documentary evidence to declare that my proposal was not genuine, as it was made at a mother's request. <...> Later, I came across some of her letters to you, as well as yours to her. <...> According to your letters and hers particularly over the last few years, I am tolerated but only just, my death is eagerly awaited and arrangements are being made for my will. In one of these letters your mother said that you ought to take me in hand, as she would have done with such an old husband.
- 2.60** Your purely female qualities and talents were always secondary to me, but now they are of no importance whatsoever and it's obvious why: these qualities have to be enjoyed, but I can't do that any more. I am old and sick and, after a life filled with unrelenting, back-breaking labour, <...> I long for some pleasant rest. I do not have this rest and am not likely to get it, either. <...> You offered me an abundance of what I could not use, what was in fact a burden to me — excuse my frankness — but you gave very little of what you had, what was the most precious, most indispensable to me — your intellect and your talent.
- 2.61** I am either going mad or am already there. Regardless, though please give me a hearing. It is vital. I cannot talk to you about this. You don't like reading letters, but this is the last one. <...> Your appearance here yesterday demonstrated clearly that you do not wish to live with me, that my environment is a burden to you, that all your affections lie elsewhere. <...> You realise yourself that, since I deprived myself of the pleasures of bed, you got substantially healthier, your headaches disappeared, you stopped complaining of pains in your legs. Thus you benefited either from just this, or from something else — I shall not try to get to the bottom of it. I'm the first to applaud this, even though I am not indifferent to female charms, I even desire tenderness sometimes and you don't know what that restraint you complained of costs me. Was it genuine or forced abstinence, you never enquired, but I am well aware which one. Fear of having children by lovers, or even by me, as I know that these can only be weak, sickly ones, that is what raises the question between us <illegible> and it can be resolved by either of two ways: to stop having children and wait for my death, while enjoying a certain freedom of affection, or to divorce.

- 2.62** You said many times yourself that it was not me who married you, but you who made me marry you, so I can't possibly consider your marrying me as anything exceptional. You made a mistake and complained to your mother bitterly that she hadn't smacked you enough. I made a mistake as well, though, and at least as bad as yours. <...> My advantage, however, is this: I offered divorce to you many times, an opportunity to sort our mess out once and for all. Why did you not accept? Children. They would have been well provided for, though and I would have only retained the right to see them. You do not want a scandal? Is the existing situation, knowledge of which is not exclusive to us, any better? Another marriage is not an option for me, so that low and demeaning comedy which is incumbent upon divorce I naturally would have taken upon myself. You would have been free as a bird, you would have been honestly rid of the suffering you constantly complain of to me and others, of the ever bitter and hurtful necessity to lie continuously and deceive, and I would have been rid of your reproaches, of your enmity that is so transparent in your latest letters.
- 2.63** Aleksandra Alekseevna is insane. <...> Mr Kholeva, who is not inclined to accept the seriousness of the condition of Aleksandra Alekseevna, will be able to make use of her insanity, as the matters of honour always come second after animal instincts.
- 2.64** **06.09.1885.** Attended theatre, the Suvorins' box in fact, and was rather out of place there, tried to talk of their loss, but they stifled this conversation and I can't offer condolences properly. Anna Ivanovna is in mourning. Suvorin is seemingly more concerned about his son than his daughter. **11.10.1885.** Kholeva wears a black band on his sleeve now that Kolomnina has passed away and, with sorrow all over his face, talks to people about their relationship. **02.12.1885.** I went to Suvorin, to demand an explanation for the continuous attacks on Nikolai in his paper. <...> Suvorin gave me 'his word that nothing of this kind will ever happen again' and assured me that I remain the only woman that he recalls with the purest esteem. In the hall, as I was leaving, he said in French that his family is disintegrating. I did not understand him initially, but the actors' gossip that Nikolai brought home that very evening explained everything. Suvorin is terribly jealous of his wife's relationship with somebody and they are having awful rows every night. One morning, he woke up in fury and took her to Moscow for two weeks. **24.12.1885.** Suvorin hints at family problems, at his relationship with his wife, says that he is going to write a play about it. <...> Anna Ivanovna looks utterly lost, her eyes are utterly glazed.
- 2.65** There is nothing worse than spineless people, and no-one is as deceived and as easily tricked as they are. <...> All wives cheat on their husbands, and a husband is always depicted as ridiculous, or is crucified by the author as a villain. <...> Love is an important, supreme feeling, and no-one may utter a word against it. Business, children home — it is all as nothing. Fine.
- 2.66** Suvorin pleased me greatly: a short story in the Christmas issue of his paper is replete with power and charm and is terribly brave. It so lively and succulently constructed, that it splatters the reader not only with the hot blood, but even with semen... I know of no equal to this small, but excellent short story in bold realism and being true to life. I feel that he would have refused to print this masterful short story, except that he wrote it himself.
- 2.67** Your short story is truly excellent. You never wrote anything so good before. You should reflect: is this not your true genre, which you discovered only so late?!.. This is very deep, clever and strongly constructed.
- 2.68** There is enough material in this short story for an entire novella, which may contain enough analysis to put Dostoevsky to shame. And what an analysis — not the 'excavation of the privy of the soul' (as Pisemskii used to put it), but an immersion in passion and in punishment for it by the self-same passion (the passion of a lackey). This is not 'trifles', but rather predominantly 'crime and punishment'.
- 2.69** Suvorin's lackey does not come across properly to the reader — his tyranny over the victim is barely shown, which is why one lacks that compassion for her that the author ought to have tried to generate because of the requirements of artistic verisimilitude, but also to give the reader a focus for reconciliation with her, in order to enable him to pity her as a creature who has been through all this suffering. At least, that's how I feel, yet he may feel so as well. Otherwise, it was all too easy... Far too easy.
- 2.70** The author condemned women, their emancipation, the violation of family duty, love affairs, every rule that is so pleasant to violate and make this violation part of one's list of rights and obligations.

- 2.71 They preach love in novels, novellas, plays, comedies, opera, ballet, they preach it in painting, sculpture, in all the Arts; nature itself pushes it, it fills the universe. Who preaches continence and family duties? For every such preacher, there are thousands of others, preachers of female beauty, grace, charisma, charm, temptation. <...> Crimes motivated by love are consistently absolved in courts and in the court of public opinion as well... <...> It is perfectly clear that inwardly, we see breaches of trust, marital infidelity by either man or wife as trivial.
- 2.72 Marriage is the discipline of love. Children put serious obligations on both mother and father. However, the desire to escape this very discipline remains and is often justified by various reasons; this desire was once bound by fetters of iron, yet fetters broke at the touch of love, and now these fetters are but threads which are so easy to tear, and tear they actually do, be it openly or in secret and will go on tearing ever more.
- 2.73 What is there to worry about? Everything is running smoothly and no book about women can do anything about it, because nothing can destroy the close alliance between men and women for the defeat of the very same men — and so men surrender.
- 2.74 I have never reflected upon matters — couldn't or did not have time. Mishaps should have taught me, but they did not. If only there was someone to advise me, to push me along, to point out my mistakes to me, to reprove me, to argue — but no-one was ever there for me.
- 2.75 Chekhov and I befriended each other quickly, never quarrelled, but argued often and fiercely — at least, for my part. My husband adored him, as though Anton Pavlovich had bewitched him. To please him, let alone to do his bidding, was literally a pleasure for him.
- 2.76 I loved him as a man, more so than as a writer. He was close to me in spirit, because of our origins. <...> I am beholden to him and he — to me, we are beholden to each other as we were kindred spirits. I contributed my literary knowledge, particularly that of foreign literature, my experience, advice sometimes, and he 'rejuvenated' my soul, as I liked to put it.
- 2.77 In art he resembles a setter in a snipe shoot, meaning that he deploys a devilish instinct and always burns with passion <...> Being short on theories, he inevitably had to develop his rich natural gifts, so inevitably he developed his instinct into a remarkable intellect.
- 2.78 He dislikes empty words, whining and despair and he is a friend to the most ordinary people. <...> Everything about his writings is plain, ordinary, universal... <...> It is as though he wants to say that one should live plainly, like everyone, and strive for, do one's utmost for the improvement of this plain, ordinary life, rather than heroic endeavours — and not to try to set the Thames on fire without cause.
- 2.79 I can't give you a short story that I feel to be wholly disgusting, not for anything, otherwise I would have scribbled weekly in your paper and had a lot of money. With your permission, of course, but I do intend to keep the same policy for the future, i. e. not to send you things that revolt me. One must spare at least one paper — and preserve the reputation of *Novoe Vremia* at the same time. Leave this to *Peterburgskaia gazeta*, they will swallow anything.
- 2.80 ...woman always was and always will be the slave of man! <...> She is wax — tender, plastic wax — from which man can mould what he will. <...> Devoted, unthinking slave! <...> Noble, exalted slavery! <...> In this, in this alone, is hidden the true significance of a woman's life!²⁵
- 2.81 I'm now working on and intend to continue with a tiny subject: 'the woman question'. Please do not laugh, though. I am building a natural foundation for it and creating a 'History of sexual authority'. <...> Woman is ever passive. She gives birth to cannon fodder. She never exceeds the man in the political or sociological sense. <...> As far as creativity goes, she is a goose. <...> The undertaking, as you see, is much too solid, not appropriate for <...> our feminist journalists-emancipators and skull measurers.
- 2.82 **28.02.1884.** Grigorovich was here today. <...> He calls himself 'the biggest rake around' and when he talks about it, he does so with certain fury. 'When I like a woman, I do so wish to twist her like a pretzel, crumple, pester, conquer her. They love that. The more one crumples them and rages, the more they like it.' An expert. **22.11.1886.** Maslov told of a young woman, the daughter of a Marshal of the Nobility, who was

²⁵ Translated by R. E. C. Long, in *The Black monk and Other Stories by Anton Chekhov* (London, 1916), p. 69.

staying on the ground floor of the hotel 'Rossia' in Yalta. A man of around 40 was always about her. Some footmen had a peek through the window into the lighted room, around midnight (the curtain did not reach the windowsill), and there they both were, stark naked, exercising — mind you, she was trying her hardest to arouse him.

- 2.83** Women who have sex (or, to use the Moscow expression, hump) on any sofa aren't rabid, they are decrepit cats suffering from nymphomania. <...> I have seen quite a few wayward women and have sinned many times personally, but I do not believe Zola or that lady who told you, 'Wham-bam, and it's done.' Dissipated people and writers like to make out they are gourmets and fine connoisseurs of fornication; they are daring, decisive, inventive, they have sex 33 different ways, on virtually everything but a knife edge, but all that is just talk, in fact they have sex with their cooks and go to one-ruble brothels. All writers lie.²⁶
- 2.84** You say that women love from compassion, marry from compassion... What about men? I dislike it when realist writers slander women, but equally dislike it when women are hoisted upon shoulders <...> and they set out to prove that, even if she is not quite up to a man's standard, a man is a scoundrel nevertheless and a woman is an angel. Man and woman are a matched pair, except that men are smarter and fairer.
- 2.85** I expect I shall find that staying with the Suvorins cramps my style somewhat. <...> Before lunch — a long conversation with Mme Suvorin on how much she loathes the human race, followed by how she bought a jacket today for 120 roubles. <...> Between lunch and tea I pace from corner to corner in Suvorin's study; while we philosophize his wife is butting in with inopportune comments from time to time in a deep bass voice or trying to bark like a dog;²⁷
We have endless talks with Suvorin; Suvorina keeps changing her dresses every hour, she sings love songs with feeling; she scolds and talks without cease. She is a restless, frivolous woman, a day dreamer and an eccentric to the marrow of her bones;
[Letter from Feodosia] Suvorina <...> has an amazing capacity for ceaseless chatter about nothing in particular, but it is the chatter of a talented and interesting person and so one can listen to it without tiring, like to a canary. <...> In the evenings she sits weeping on the sand beside the sea, and in the mornings she laughs and sings gypsy songs.²⁸
Two weeks with the Suvorins have passed in a moment. <...> All that he told me was very interesting. He has an enormous experience. Anna Ivanovna treated me to slaps in the face, lectures, and some chartreuse.
- 2.86** I got seized by a whim, for boredom: sick of the golden mean, so loiter and complain about the lack of original, crazy women... In short, 'and he, a rebel, craves for tempest!'²⁹ Everyone says with one voice: 'Well, my friend, you would have liked Kadmina!' And so I study Kadmina little by little and, based on what they are saying, believe her to be an exceptional personality.
- 2.87** Imagine a newspaper feuilleton in dialogue, sometimes witty, sometimes trite, which in an easy, lively language tells you about women, art, the Decameron, Petersburg, Moscow, provinces, Jews, bankers, money, life and death, love and hatred, the press, Bismarck and hypnotism and whatever else — and you have an impression of *Tat'iana Repina* by Suvorin.
- 2.88** Not to retreat... To fight for all... to solve all problems... that's our motto. We don't mind government experts. We tell the officials what to do. We cut the Gordian knot. Like Aleksandr the Great, we create new empires. We excite passions, we shed tears over the needs of the people...³⁰
- 2.89** Yes, despite all else, we create public opinion. We make a daily meal for people to take with their tea or coffee in the morning when their heads are rested after a good sleep, when their brains are fresh. We

²⁶ Translated by D. Rayfield, in *Anton Chekhov: A Life* (HarperCollins, 1997), p. 181.

²⁷ Translated by R. Bartlett and A. Phillips, in *Anton Chekhov: A Life in Letters* (London, 2004), p. 130.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²⁹ A quotation from Lermontov's poem 'The sail'.

³⁰ Translated by J. Racin, in *'Tatyana Repina': Two Translated Texts: The 1888 Four-Act 'Tatyana Repina' by Alexei Suvorin and Anton Chekhov's 1889 One-Act Continuation; With an Introduction and Appendices*, translated and edited by J. Racin (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London, 1999), p. 95.

energize their brains with our news, and they live by that until next morning. Yes, we are a great power... a new breed!³¹

- 2.90** A nervous age! A peculiar phase has come over women, and they throw themselves into the sciences and into all kinds of social movements, onto the stage. They run out of the family and exhibit themselves everywhere to challenge men. They run after life, wrestle with it. They want more and more, but their nerves fell apart like a beggar's rags. They cry out: 'Our time has come; it's better to have fame, even as a courtesan than simply to vegetate.'³²
- 2.91** Tat'iana Repina got her moral bit between her teeth, so to speak, and so became a definitive example of a recent type of both sexes common in our society, namely a psychopath. <...> This image, complete with even the minutest attributes of an absolute psychopath, is reproduced <...> with an astonishing accuracy.
- 2.92** Do you know what I've been thinking? What if an actress took real poison on stage and actually began to die? <...> Convulsions would torment her, she would cry, and writhe about in despair. She would gasp in agony and her groans would echo throughout the theatre. <...> I'd like to hear the song you'd sing.³³
- 2.93** **9.04.1883.** We talked of Strepetova. Suvorin said that her familiarity infuriates him. **26.11.1884.** Strepetova came. Her hatred of Savina grows and grows. She does not visit the Suvorins lately, because they praise Savina there. **19.11.1886.** There is no play [*Tat'iana Repina*] there, only the part. [Suvorin] Wants to give it to Savina and his wife and Strepetova both are throwing tantrums. **6.12.1886.** Strepetova did not visit us for two or three years, but came all of a sudden. Nikolai, in a most naïve way, asks her why she does not appear as Tat'iana Repina. She tells how she stayed with the Suvorins in summer and how he quarrelled with Anna Ivanovna almost daily. Now, when Suvorin gave the role to Savina, she told Anna Ivanovna: 'Your husband is as scoundrel.' She sprang up: 'That's a bit too much!' **13.12.1886.** Suvorin announced the other day that he proposes to give the role of Tat'iana to both Savina and Strepetova, in turn, but today there is news: there will be no play at all. **1.01.1888.** Strepetova tells Nikolai that there is no point in him ingratiating himself with her any more, that she has broken with the Suvorins.
- 2.94** Tat'iana Repina, in my opinion, is not a tragic figure after all, but a character, a type. She is in all respects a progeny of theatrical bohemia. Tat'iana is one of those Russian provincial actresses of whom they say: 'She's fireworks, not a woman!' Her entire life is for show, which is the basis of this role... She even dies ostentatiously, as it were...
- 2.95** You may recall that when, at a rehearsal, I told you that you were being too gentle in the last scene, which contradicted the words of Repina about an actress really dying on stage, you replied with a rather angry look on your face: 'Well, you want me to die in truth, fine!' I watched you in this act during the first performance, from way back in my box. You got more and more distraught. Notes of earnest suffering were issuing from your breast. <...> Your entire body, your raised arms, the heart-rendering sound of your voice encompassed so much struggle with death, so much absorbing tragedy, that the audience froze with horror and pity. Several people rushed to you, tried to restrain you — you convulsed in their arms and they literally carried you, moaning, to a chair. The audience could not bear it! An almost unique event in the annals of the theatre took place: the auditorium became the stage and the stage — the auditorium. Hysterical weeping and shouts erupted in both boxes and stalls; the stalls audience turned round, men and women started leaving both boxes and stalls. Actors stopped performing. I saw only the scared and bewildered actors on stage; I saw you get up from the chair and collapse, amidst the incredible noise, tears and weeping of the audience. I rushed to the stage and kissed your icy hands. Still tearful, still greatly excited, you asked: 'Happy now?' — 'This is terrible, you can't do this, but it is unrivalled, it is perfect!'
- 2.96** Mme Ermolova in the leading role of this comedy is an actress such as has never been seen by anyone on the Russian stage. Her performance in the last act is a work of genius in all senses of this word, the immensity of which was never equalled even by such stars of dramatic art as Mademoiselle Rachel, [Adelaide] Ristori, Sarah Bernhardt. It is fitting that, during the final scene of the last act at the first performance of *Tat'iana Repina*, six ladies with major hysterical attacks were carried out from their boxes and stalls.

³¹ Translated by J. Racin, in '*Tatyana Repina*', p. 96.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 97–98.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 126.

- 2.97** Some provincial psychopath was running along the Tretyakov gallery in tears and in a trembling voice begged to point Repin's* Tat'iana out to her [*genitive case — *comment by Chekhov*] which she had heard so much about and by which she wished to induce a hysterical fit.
- 2.98** The flaws in your play are irremediable because they are organic. Take comfort in the fact that they flow from your good qualities; I have reread your play again. It contains many good and original elements which up to now haven't appeared in dramatic literature, but unfortunately, it contains a number of drawbacks (for instance its language); You have what is missing in others. With great pleasure I would do my best to exploit your talent as long as we are alive. What you didn't use, I would steal.³⁴
- 2.99** (*A groan is heard*)
 — Why are hysterical women allowed in here?
 — Who fainted?
 — They are trying to take her out, but she won't go... Who is she? Sh-h-h!
 — Yesterday, another woman poisoned herself at the Hotel Europe.
 — Yes, they say it was the wife of some doctor.
 — Why did she do it?
 — The fourth one to poison herself the way Tat'iana Repina did. Tell us, old man, why are they poisoning themselves?
 — Madness. Nothing else.
 — Why do they imitate each other?
 — Suicide is a contagious disease.
 — So many crazy women around now.
 — Tat'iana Repina's death has poisoned the air. All out ladies are catching the disease. The men who abandon them drive them mad.
 — Even the air in the church is poisoned. I feel it. What tension!
 — Has the doctor's wife been autopsied?
 — Not yet. They say her husband deserted her. They also say that Sabinin also deserted Repina. Is it true?
 — Yes-s...
 — I was there when they autopsied Repina...³⁵
- 2.100** *Woman in black (coming out from behind a pillar, staggering)*. Who's there? Take me away... take me away... (*groaning*) I am the sister of Ivanov, the officer... the sister. I have taken poison... out of hatred... he betrayed... Why should he be happy? My God! (*shouting*) Save me... save me! (*sinking to the floor*) Everyone should take poison... Everyone! In this world... no justice! Out of hatred... Everyone should take poison... (*groaning and writhing on the floor*) She is in her grave, and he... he... To betray a woman is to betray God... A woman has been destroyed. (*tearing her clothes and screaming*) Save me! Save me! Save me! (*Curtain*)³⁶
- 2.101** It may be that neither will you be able to create such a strong character ever again, nor will I ever succeed in performing like that once more, but one such evening in life is sufficient. Those were the minutes of total satisfaction. And is that not enough? Let them say about you that it is outrageous to write scenes like this one — and about me that it is scandalous to perform like this on stage, but we ruled the crowd then and moulded it as we wished.

Chapter III

- 3.1** I would very much like to read your novella, the one they were reading at the Kuz'minskiis and which is being talked about so much. You know how much I love your work and this piece is of particular interest to me. I can't wait till you publish it. I'd be obliged if you would write to Kuz'minskiis, so that I could borrow it for a day from them.
- 3.2** We are utterly befouled, we lie through our teeth and out-pharisee the Pharisees themselves, but, when I feel the profound truth in every word, it shocks me so much that I regret that such a book did not exist when I was young, because it would have saved me from many a nasty thing that I have actually done —

³⁴ Translated by J. Racin, in *'Tatyana Repina'*, pp. 165, 170, 166.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 152–158.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

how could I possibly say that there is some kind of cynicism or even infringement of moral purity here? I have to say that you wrote nothing like this before; none of your works have this ring of truth, which we all need so badly and which is so amazingly simple.

- 3.3** A woman's mission in life is to be a mother and a mistress of her home. This is the first and best thing of all. <...> *Zwei Kindersystem* and concepts of this kind only corrupt the female body and cause it to degenerate; nervousness, psychopathy, exhausting maladies and extreme irritability that affect a modern, educated woman not only in Russia but everywhere, all result from this voluntary corruption of the female body and its mission.
- 3.4** This is odd: it looks as if a woman indeed hinders a man, as if she is in his way, barring him from spiritual perfection; as if a man, who is proud of his mind, his talents, and his aspirations, feels that he is earthbound and vulgarized by a woman. I recall Balzac's saying: 'one night spent with a woman takes away from you the amount of energy sufficient to write a book.' A man does realize that all his lofty deeds and intentions get ruined if touched by a woman. <...> Everything that weakens a man, that makes him idle, dull, and spineless has its roots in a woman.
- 3.5** Turgenev paints love in soft, poetic colours and he is only interested in the time when love grows and evolves. <...> Tolstoy, on the contrary, puts the emphasis on family life. <...> Tolstoy picks up his characters exactly where Turgenev abandons them <...> and commences his merciless examination of their lives, sometimes even following them to their graves along his 'path of prose'. If you follow Tolstoy's writings closely, you will find that his ideas of love and marriage seem to be a ribbon, which changes colour from pink to black as the writer gets older, as his analysis matures, as he parts with his illusions. He does not lavish the poetry of love on his readers, <...> he seems to be in a hurry to poison love with suffering and animal passions.
- 3.6** All this [Greco-Roman] culture, all this high creative tension <...> it was all born and matured without any romantic love, with women nearly enslaved, lacking any position in social life. Women gave birth, nursed children and ran the household, <...> whereas all the state and social affairs, all that required lofty ideas, mind, talent, genius, enterprise, high art — all that was being done exclusively by men...
- 3.7** In the sixties, Petersburg commenced both to defame the history of Russian women and to give rise to the so-called woman question. It announced that a Russian woman was a slave, that she was being humiliated, that she was just a play-thing and that she should become aware of her rights. They talked about family, woman as mother and housewife with scorn and indignation.
- 3.8** A great deal of confusion in ideas and privileges arouse. Sham marriages, daughters fleeing their parents, wives ditching husbands, husbands abandoning wives... <...> So many tragedies, so much weeping and disappointment! It is too early to write a history of this period yet, but, when the time comes, it will be impossible to read it without indignation...
- 3.9** The right to enjoyment without obligations or children — that was the sermon women found exciting, because, once this objective is achieved, i. e. once women stop having babies, they become equal to men, or even superior by being freer, because men cannot quite relieve themselves of the burden of work required to support themselves and their better halves, while these better halves are free to devote themselves to love, to love and betrayal.
- 3.10** This is not that far from the next step, when the marriage is completely thrust aside and the real hostilities start, the ultimate struggle for existence between men and women — and they will devour each other. Thus, when Tolstoy says that life on earth might end because of abstinence and chastity, it is not so bad after all: at least, it will end peacefully and quietly. <...> Should it end in hostility, in a fight for survival, however — it will resemble the coming of the Antichrist.
- 3.11** The world will be saved by a woman who obeys God's laws, not by the one who scorns these laws and is concerned solely for herself... <...> Women who comprehend the true meaning of hearth and home would never demand any other occupation for themselves. <...> Whatever it is a woman might invent, whatever it is she might produce in intellectual and artistic spheres — she will never invent anything better than children.
- 3.12** Women and girls of the sixties, who sacrificed so much at the altar of politics and Cupid, have indeed produced nothing remarkable either in literature, or in science, or in the fulfilment of their supreme

mission; that is, they have failed to produce a single extraordinary man, but they must have produced a lot of weak, worthless and sickly people, without concern that, in every child, they produce whole new generations.

- 3.13** It goes without saying that the average Russian man populated Russian land; an average Russian is a good worker, who appreciates the value and power of intellectual pursuits. <...> He has begun to take with a pinch of salt all those allegedly indisputable historical and economic ideas and fashions. <...> Russian thinking definitely starts to work on its own. <...> In this average zone of Russian consciousness, however, there is probably no fusion between old canons and new ones.
- 3.14** D'iakov displays <...> even more spite and fervour when he talks about the degradation of the family. <...> Zhitel' condemns modern Russian women, blaming them for venality, the craving for base gratifications, being unfaithful to their husbands and countless other vices. <...> While demanding from a woman an absolute fidelity and submission to her husband, he never makes any such demands of a husband, and he looks at any sign of a woman's independence with deep mistrust.
- 3.15** Christianity may not incorporate anxiety for the fate of the human race if it is truly based on love of one's neighbour and on love of people. Having accepted, however, that sexual love is degradation, sin and deviation from Christian teaching, one must also accept that Christ despaired of humanity and could see no outcome for it but self-destruction. And I cannot imagine, intellectually or emotionally, that Christ appeared on Earth to tell people to annihilate each other as soon as possible...
- 3.16** ...This entire novella seemed a masterpiece in form and content to me. I sensed the truth in Pozdnyshv's words on education, women and marriage. <...> As I sensed this truth and was amazed by it, however, I rejected all of Pozdnyshv's extreme conclusions... And now, with his 'Afterword', Tolstoy confirms the opinion of archbishop Nikanor all of a sudden, namely that the author of *Kreutzer Sonata* "put in his (Pozdnyshv's) mouth nothing less than his beloved, well-known Tolstoyan ideas..."
- 3.17** The author of the *Kreutzer Sonata* is a most fortunate person, not only because he ranks amongst the world's best writers, but because he enjoys one of the happiest family lives around as well. To desire more happiness than he was allotted would be unconscionable, at least in the eyes of an average man. Thus, if Tolstoy truly says that marriage is the fall of man, that celibacy and annihilation of the human race are the highest objectives of a human being, nobody is going to believe him.
- 3.18** Tolstoy denies eternity to humankind, but, oh God, there is so much personal in it! I read his 'Afterword' the other day. Strike me dead, but this is more stupid and stifling than 'Pis'ma k gubernatorshe' [Gogol's letters to A. O. Smirnova-Rosset], which I despise.
- 3.19** You have kindly offered to publish some of my articles that deal with chastity. I do not think that they are worth a book. Besides, as I learn more (a bit late, unfortunately) about the history of Christianity, I realise that the issue of chastity is as complex and insoluble as the issue of the Kingdom of Heaven. So let those who are able to produce healthy children, produce them without hesitation and let them make good citizens out of the children, too.
- 3.20** I met Suvorin on Nevskii Prospekt — we haven't met for several years. He is just back from Feodosia and complaining about boredom, shortness of breath and indifference to life. <...> As he said goodbye, he repeated again that he remembers me most kindly.
- 3.21** You should not have abandoned Marina Mnischev; of all the historical tarts she is just about the most colorful. As regards her attitude to all things Russian, who on earth cares. Russians were Russians and she was Mnischev; besides, she is too much of a skirt and way too petty to have had opinions which are worth paying attention to.
- 3.22** What kind of heroes and heroines do our writers have? <...> Nothing new, the same old tunes. <...> Men of letters are plainly not aware of many things that they ought to know well... Physiology, pathology, psychology, these sciences are a closed book to them... <...> The world of morbid moral phenomena, this strange and diverse world <...> barely exists as far as the authors of our novels are concerned. <...> Phenomena that science has already accepted as existing, be they caused by sickness or aspects of human nature (hypnotism, suggestion etc), which are no longer treated as delusions or superstitions, <...> our writers still regard as irrational and keep on mocking.

- 3.23** Now I see why you sleep so badly. Had I written such a story, I would have stayed awake for all of ten nights. <...> It is both frightening and in accord with spiritism. <...> The idea is good, the story itself is fanciful and interesting. You should write a dozen frightening stories like that one and publish them as a book — it will sell well.
- 3.24** Your novella of yesterday is rather impressive. It is full of imagery, deep thoughts and true feeling. Your piece stands out in our literature thanks to both its rich plot and elegance. <...> Mind you, I cannot stand this blend of fiction and reality... <...> I believe that you deliberately, out of a principle (*fin de siècle*) constrict this deep, serious understanding of the truths of life that you brim over with, you wrap it up in the shabby rags of Romanticism. These erstwhile beautiful robes no longer attract anyone. Decadents in Paris only fling them over their shoulders, after re-dyeing them in fashionable colours of a bizarre spectrum.
- 3.25** He liked Varen'ka a great deal and thought she was outstanding in intellect, education, originality, independence of opinion and her captivating eloquence. She knew botany, she could distinguish between geological strata, she knew a great deal of astronomy and chemistry, she wrote poems without a single word about love in them, yet replete with nature, skies and love for humanity.
- 3.26** She talked of marriage with hatred and swore that no man ever would have the honour to be called her husband or lover. She could only offer her friendship, but she wanted to be a leader in this friendship, because she considered herself cleverer than any man and because she thought herself destined to do something extraordinary and great.
- 3.27** Recognising that she was not tempted by anything, that she did not even want to think of marriage, he, in one of those moments when, they say, one loses control, availed himself of the prerogative of a close friend and became Varen'ka's lover.
- 3.28** We are so mean and barbaric... If we have a family, we ignore it, if we don't, we make it up of lovers and all kinds of idle and bored scum. <...> I won't have it so. Either they will shout about me from the rooftops all over the world, or I will die...
- 3.29** You took me by deceit and by force, when I was not even thinking about love... <...> There were other great powers in me and they were growing to benefit the people... I may have been a woman born only once in a long while, but you destroyed these great powers in me by awakening my passion, which consumed them.
- 3.30** I liked your novella a great deal. I devoured it in two sittings with such attention and interest which only captivating pieces afford. There is a lot new and fresh there and one hell of lot of skill.
- 3.31** The first part, prior to the appearance of young Murin, seemed to be remarkable in its originality, and I nearly screamed with horror when this cleric Murin entered and, with his useless and boring chastity, ousted and overshadowed the image of Varia, sinful, yet unique in our literature. <...> This chaste Murin lacks colour and the reader does not believe him, since he has no life experience nor any notion of sin and, therefore, suffering. It is easy to talk about chastity if one has never been with a woman!
- 3.32** So, would it be possible to emphasize Vitalin instead of Murin? Let Vitalin shoot himself in the end, but it is still better than having Murin. I think that you yourself feel that there is something wrong with Murin, as his talk with Varia is the most boring part of the entire novella... <...> They won't believe Murin, and all that he says will be explained away as your desire to be heard and will be attributed to you.
- 3.33** There is little to say about the novel itself. Mr Suvorin has no artistic talent, so it's not surprising that his opus does not possess any notable literary merit. <...> The essence of the novel is in its numerous quotations from the Church Fathers, in the string of miracles that are paraded in front of the reader's eyes. Hypnotism, clairvoyance, moralistic discussions on serious subjects — that's what imparts piquancy to the new opus of Mr Suvorin.
- 3.34** Should you lose your temper and start breaking furniture and throwing things, I'll give you a hand. This kind of mood is familiar to me, but I find it embarrassing to do it on my own: together it is just fine. On the whole, there is a remarkable harmony between us. I think no-one understands you better than I do. It's not surprising that our friendship has withstood the test of seventeen years and I have a medal from you for long-standing devotion.

- 3.35** What kind of life have I lived? The life of an author. Sparks of happiness, mostly as a result of a successful article or a well-received play, but I have never known that simple, true happiness, the happiness of love.
- 3.36** Hilda is a remarkable girl. I think that such girls and women only exist in novels and plays, though. A male author is forever looking for ideals, he wants to 'construct' a woman to match him, to give her intelligence, imagination, wings, but in real life they are all breeders and nothing more, inferior beings, nonentities or nearly so by themselves, but who are necessary to inspire a man, to give him vigour, energy, and strength. They do it with their love, with their passion; they can excite a man, but cannot sustain the excitement and men fall from those heights, just as Solness did, and die.
- 3.36*** Woman is gradually disappearing and her place is being taken by an archetypal female. This backwardness of the educated woman is a real menace to civilisation. Retreating, she tries to drag man back with her and arrest his progress, no doubt about it³⁷.
- 3.37** ...Sensual cannot be 'immoral'. A contact with human skin which ignites desire has an aesthetic quality: there is no intellectual value in possession, but the former brings joy to my heart. This is the reason I value perversity...
- 3.38** There is a lot of charm and pleasure in vice, but the consequences are well known and nobody can deny them. Men get exhausted and madness, diabetes, strokes ensue. Salacious temptations require either young passion or voluptuous cynicism of old age. The novel by Mme Rachilde is a bad novel, poorly written, but she seems to be obsessed with sex for the sake of sex or, quite possibly, she indulges in memories of the time when she was in much demand.
- 3.39** You should keep a woman at a certain moral distance, otherwise, true to nature, she will rapidly debase herself and do you-know-what to ensnare you. It is easy to influence a woman by indulging her base instincts: she learns quickly and is fully capable of astonishing even you later on. She starts with an indignant acceptance, follows up with astonishment, then she starts laughing and noting things till she finally deceives you without you knowing a thing.
- 3.40** There is no harm in sharing my experience. <...> A man starts to feel an urge of desire sometimes as early as in the street, as he rounds the corner on his way to meet the beloved one. A woman by herself, on the other hand, rarely gets excited. Consequently, she only starts to warm up when a man has already cooled down. You understand? This is the reason why the so-called passionate women, who urge one to go on, may not even be all that passionate... <...> The secret of famous seducers is in this information. Not to get too excited oneself until a woman reaches boiling point. The reasons for the slow arousal of woman's sensuality are in her anatomy — easy enough to figure out. <...> I do hope that you will not be disappointed in me for my theoretical earnestness. I do believe you need it, you wouldn't have asked otherwise...
- 3.41** My inner anxiety devours me and I have no idea what to do, how to go on living. I can see very well that I am simply Mr Moneybags to Anna Ivanovna, nothing more. <...> My entire life has passed in labour and, at my old age, as I stare into my grave, there is no one to sympathize with me, to care for me. <...> There is no family, no mistress of the house, no focus to my life. There is a hotel with several owners instead, who simply take money from the cash register and spend it to their heart's content, as much as they will... <...> I don't have it in me to fight this scum, that would only infuriate me and stir up self-loathing. <...> This is the anguish of a person thrown out of life, of the one who is plucked and shorn, who is not truly alive any more, who wants to live and is unable to. <...> I often think that, had M. M. turned up some ten years ago, everything might have turned out differently. As it is, though, it's simply confusion, with tiny doubts and a large measure of egoism.
- 3.42** **14.01.1895.** Evgeniia Vasil'evna [Krivenko] relayed nearly everything to me that he [Suvorin] was telling them about his life, how he was in love with me and how nothing, he had to admit, came of it; how last year he had an affair with Shabel'skaia in Berlin which cost him a few thousands. **15.01.1895.** Suvorin started to complain about his boring life, so I advised him to go to Berlin to continue his affair with Shabel'skaia. He was very surprised and said that Evgeniia Vasil'evna made it all up; he swore at

³⁷ Translated by R. Hingley, in *The Oxford Chekhov*, (OUP, 1965), vol. VIII, p. 92.

Shabel'skaia obscenely and, finally, confessed that he had indeed had an affair, but not with her, nor in Berlin (but in Baden) and not last year.

- 3.43** Hysteria, morphine and port wine have made her one of the wildest women ever produced by the Russian intelligentsia, sadly replete with unbalanced characters as it is. <...> She was awful in her craving for drugs. <...> She could do anything in that condition: shoot a person, throw herself out the window, rush into the street stark naked, spit in the face of a total stranger, set her own bed afire... we've seen it all!
- 3.44** Pray tell, what on earth do you need my youth for, why do you keep regretting that I've grown old! Were we young again, well, we would have probably fallen in love with each other and nothing but a tragic farce would have resulted.
- 3.45** You did more harm to me than anyone else by turning your back on me. <...> You dragged my name through mud without a shred of proof. You induced newspapers to deny me work, you drove me to starvation. <...> I want you to know this: if I can't last till my trial and end up in a madhouse, in a river or elsewhere — just because my nerves have failed me, not by my own free will — I want you to know that more than half of it is *your* fault.
- 3.46** Women imagine that they can do anything. They cheat on their husbands hundreds of times, but when that husband finally catches them, why, they demand that he, an innocent person, takes the blame upon himself, and what is more, the husband agrees: women are perceived as a weak sex, so a man ought to play the part of a fool.
- 3.47** **27.12.1893.** He [Suvorin] looks distraught and depressed. <...> On our way home, we started to talk about our relations. Suvorin said that he had only one relative: 'Sofia Ivanovna.' **25.01.1894.** Suvorin is heart-broken. They drove him to the point of contemplating quitting Petersburg with all manner of squabbles. **8.02.1894.** We discussed our plans for summer. Suvorin invited me to Italy, he suggests that the five of us go: him, me with [S.-S.'s daughter] Liuba and [S. N.] Shubinskii with [his wife] Katia. **26.12.1894.** Suvorin is complaining a lot about his anguish, old age, apathy and loneliness. He says that he finds it difficult to write and even to read. **31.12.1894.** Anna Ivanovna, it would seem, is starting to grow jealous of me. She says that she saw me at her husband's in the evening and that she must have interfered with my plans as I was very stern with her. I am surprised: 'I thought I was always pleasant with you.' — 'No, you are very pleasant with my husband.'
- 3.48** You write that you are a busy person and you do not know how to talk of your love. Oh, my dear friend! Would I ever expect a declaration of love from you? <...> It is only our mutual friend E. V. [Krivenko] who believes that we are in love. At our age, we are beyond suspicion. As though one can't be just cordially disposed towards someone and perceive him solely as a good companion and friend.
- 3.49** It's a shame that it was Pascal who slept with Clotilde [protagonists of the novel *Le Docteur Pascal* by Émile Zola] and not another, someone younger and stronger; old King David, fainting in the arms of a young girl is a frosted melon on an autumnal morning, dreaming of still getting ripe; all in good time, you know. What rubbish, though: how can sexual potency be a sign of a meaningful life, of health? Should only a man who can have sex be called a human being? All thinkers were impotent by the age of forty, while savages in their nineties routinely keep ninety wives each.
- 3.50** Ask for issues No's 1 and 2 of the magazine *Vrach* and read the article 'K voprosu o polovykh snosheniakh'. <...> It is right up your alley, meaning that you'll find a few ideas that are dear to your heart in this article. It talks about the brand that sex marks young age and genius with. You, the creator of a maiden who faded and withered after copulation, should blow this kindly author a kiss.
- 3.51** ...Assorted disorders of my nervous system, such as incorrect heart function, relatively rapid physical decay, loss of energy, weakness of memory, recurring apathy, loss and sometimes total absence of interest in life — 'I do not have any desires for the future, I do not have any regrets about the past' — I attribute all these abnormalities, to a considerable degree, to my irregular sexual life.
- 3.52** I visited Levitan in his studio. He is the best Russian landscape painter, but, would you believe it, he's lost his youth already. His painting style is not young any more, it is ostentatious. I think he's worn out by women. These nice creatures give you love and take only a trifle from men in return — their youth.

- 3.53** Liza, Elena — these are not Russian girls at all, they are Pythias or something, ever prophesying, full of excessive ambitions. Irina in *Dym*, Odintsova in *Ottsy i deti*, these are all lionesses, fervid, lush, insatiable, forever seeking something — they are all rubbish. As soon as you recall Anna Karenina, all these Turgenevian maidens with their enticing shoulders can go to hell.
- 3.54** A Russian writer seems to be afraid of Russian women, as if they would bite him, or exhaust him with their love, or ruin him with passion and intemperance. For this reason or another, all our writers ‘created’ women rather than possessed them, flattered them rather than told them the truth. Griboedov, Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy — they all knew women. In Pechorin, Lermontov treated women with more spite than any other. <...> Gogol, who created such fascinating male characters, who described their comical features so precisely, did not touch women at all and only preached morality and family duties to a governor’s wife from Kaluga (Smirnova). Dostoevsky hardly knew women, even though they kissed his hands at the Pushkin celebrations; Goncharov was too inert for them in his youth and too polite to them in his mature years — one does not get to know women this way. Grigorovich knows women well, but he spoke only nicely and with gratitude of them, because of all the joys they gave him in his youth and during his mature years. <...> Turgenev spent his entire life being a slave to one woman; it would seem that he was constructing her opposites, sometimes dreaming of a passionate woman like Irina, sometimes of a pure and poetic one like Liza, sometimes of a politically minded one like Elena, who hastens to say ‘take all of me’. He had his hands kissed and was told ‘take all of me’ also, but it’s not likely that he took advantage of those offers. <...> Saltykov did not know women, and his satire barely touched them. Ostrovsky knew a merchant woman, though mostly by hearsay and by the innate intuition of his talent. Nekrasov preferred cards to women; he despised the latter and bought them as females, as he needed. Pisemskii seemed to feel the brutal truth, but it is unlikely that he had a chance to examine it in real life. Leskov knew women very little and treated them with a feigned respect; I do not believe that Boborykin knows women, even though he has ‘created’ a great many, all of them fully up-to-the-minute. Young writers, well... I am not convinced that they know anything at all.
- 3.55** ...Nietzsche, a German philosopher, now insane... He is a brilliant and versatile talent. There are clever ideas about women in his works as well. <...> In the new [Christian] times, idealised sexual love emerged as the replacement for friendship and woman came forth, complete with her ambitions for exclusive love and — with her passion — dissolved the link between men and diminished all that used to be so lofty and unselfish. <...> Consider: when a woman was being ignored, when she stayed at home having children, men performed great deeds in politics, philosophy, poetry, drama, sculpture, architecture...
- 3.56** Our time is the time of woman’s work and education. Cocottes and women of education both lead the way. One need not be ashamed of such proximity: opposites do meet. These neighbours have the same ambitions: freedom, income, and independence. As women gain their freedom, however, the world becomes impoverished in genius and the areas where talent shines so brightly — literature, arts, politics (an art also) — swarm with mediocrity. Be it a mere accident or a natural consequence of ruined harmony, one cannot deny that both in Russia and in Europe major talents are practically absent.
- 3.57** I recall reading a report about some women’s congress recently. One American lady said that the 20th century will belong to women. This is very likely, however — should it actually happen — it will be the age of a woman lowering man to her own level, rather than rising to his in spirit and talent. I am not going to be alive in the 20th century, so am barely interested in it myself.
- 3.58** **9.01.1895.** We had all manner of heart-to-hearts. Suvorin complained about his loneliness, that his newspaper and wealth do not make him happy, that he’s hardly known personal happiness, that life has passed him by. He was so nervous and so distressed that one could hear tears in his voice. At certain points he was simply unable to speak.
- 3.59** **7.02.1895.** Suvorin talked about the novella he wants to write. A woman intends to poison her lover, but the lover kills her instead. He acted the last scene out, showing her sitting in an arm-chair, with him standing behind and stabbing her in the chest. He saw it in a dream and proposes to write it up now.
- 3.60** Anton Pavlovich! May I ask you to cheer up our Aleksei Sergeevich once again, please! <...> It would seem that you are the only person he loves and values. He is very depressed and, what is even worse, unable to sleep. He cannot work as he used to do, which makes him deeply unhappy.

- 3.61** Were you able to come to Moscow at the end of April or at the beginning of May, we could visit cemeteries, monasteries and suburban groves; pop into Troitse[-Sergieva Lavra], perhaps. <...> If the weather is fine, our wandering round Moscow and its environs will no doubt be so pleasant that it will be nice to recall even in our dotage.
- 3.62** The play was a success, it was sold out three times straight away and Suvorin cheered up. He was particularly fond of [Liudmila] Ozerova playing Hannele and he predicted a great future for her. Suvorin tended to be somewhat primitive in his theatrical judgements and often wrong. That was the case with Ozerova as well. He took her hysteria for talent, and her frenzy — for artistic imagination.
- 3.63** **19.07.1895.** Suvorin is out of sorts; he curses his new theatre and says he is going to put an end to it. <...> He has no plays to stage. He is sick to death of Petersburg, but unable to break away: he believes that if he leaves town, he will never come back, die en route to wherever. **11.08.1895.** A cold and grim letter from Suvorin (from Berlin); he writes about his approaching death, about his weakness and that everything good that came to him now is too late for him anyhow. He plans to go to Paris, then to Biarritz.
- 3.64** Suvorin claimed that he could guess correctly what the mob subconsciously desired. <...> In his theatre, comedies and high-life melodramas were becoming indistinguishable from *chronique scandaleuse* and the insinuations of the boulevard media, they acquired features of semi-lampoon bordering on semi-feuilleton, <...> turning life into vaudeville and creating a style of acting all of their own. <...> As a rule, the same female type featured (albeit with certain variations) in all these plays — an ecstatic, violent, hysterical being with a traumatized psyche. The majority of plays simply rehashed ‘the woman question’ which was typically interpreted rather banally and conveniently reduced to a love triangle.
- 3.65** I quite like melodrama, mind you... It’s such an obvious rubbish, but touching anyhow... Virtue triumphs, vice punished... you leave the theatre well satisfied. Actually, I like happy endings... <...> It does not always happen this way in real life, so it’s nice to see it on stage, at least.
- 3.66** Two such capricious and wilful people could not possibly get along and well before the end of season Suvorin’s actors would talk about some extraordinarily sharp wrangling sessions between Strepetova and Suvorin; she would furiously scold him in public, not just for the dirty tricks his business was full of, but for anything at all that could have only affected such a sick and unbalanced woman, who was constantly getting enraged over nothing.
- 3.67** You should go and see *Madame Sans Gêne* [a play by Victorien Sardou and Émile Moreau] with Iavorskaia in the lead part. You can meet her, if you’d like. She is refined, well-presented, occasionally clever, even. <...> Newsmen hounded her all winter in Moscow, but she did not deserve it.
- 3.68** **30.04.1896.** Yesterday Burenin spoke sharply to me on account of Iavorskaia. This particular actress is definitely going to cause a falling-out between me and Burenin. He refuses to understand that the theatre may not be Iavorskaia’s theatre exclusively. <...> Iavorskaia pays specific attention to getting rid not only of her real rivals, but even of the potential ones. **22.10.1896.** She [Iavorskaia] is woven purely of hypocrisy, envy, lechery and lies. And her husband dotes on her. Would that he knew even a fraction of her past life. **11.12.1896.** Showdown with Iavorskaia, correspondence with her, her complaints. She is rather an accomplished torturer. <...> She flatters me, yet keeps befouling me at the same time. **7.02.1897.** For this actress [Iavorskaia], I did more than for anyone else. Last year, I lent her 1200 roubles, I gave her husband 3000 roubles, I staged several plays especially for her.
- 3.69** Correspondence with Iavorskaia. What a tormentor she is, this woman. ‘It’s not her fault!’ Her enemies are guilty, those who persecute her, but she is utterly blameless. I wrote several letters to her. She doesn’t want to understand anything. I have to give the theatre up.
- 3.70** I could have mentioned a few even less significant events, for instance a women’s club which was founded with the express object of preventing men from joining; I could have also mentioned, by the way, that the prototype of women’s clubs was a witch’s Sabbath. <...> A witch’s Sabbath is a symbol of the freedom women strove for; in the olden times, when they believed in all kinds of devilry, women attained it only if they became witches and, in this guise, did everything their thirst for freedom and love prompted them to do. Now they can do all these things as they are, and in the 20th century, they will be even less affected and stronger still. Oh, a Russian woman is a brave one and a diligent attender of the Bare Mountain...

- 3.71 By the way, the second half of the passing century is marked by strong progress, both in electricity and ‘the woman question’. <...> A woman always played the role of a housewife, house manager and enforcer of order; she always knew how to avoid being lost in a complex network of family needs and it was she who invented the very concept of *family home* — why can she not deal with the matters of civil order that justice is concerned with? <...> I believe that, sooner or later, women will come to compete with jurists and may even beat them at their own game, given women’s ability to defend both guilty and innocent equally, using the Code of Laws, and their highly strung eloquence.
- 3.72 The 20th century, which I will not be able to live in, will show its citizens — at present still in the short trousers — that women will continue challenging electricity with their innate energy. During the Renaissance, Italian women excelled as both lawyers and public speakers — so, during the second Renaissance, which is starting now, we shall have French, German, and Russian women as lawyers and solicitors, too. One does not have to be a prophet to say this.
- 3.73 I am a journalist and only in exceptional cases a writer; my plays and my prose —I am writing a novel at the moment — appeared strictly by accident; *V kontse veka. Liubov'* cost me a great deal of effort. ...I snatched the spare time to work on it from my other jobs.
- 3.74 A mere woman will not be able to best one of our kind. Talents and skills being equal, she is still inferior to a man. And what are her chances to excel against someone more talented? Our brain has been strengthened by millennia of traditions and the blood flow to it keeps getting better and better with time. And what do you possess? Your heredity is strong in the matters of love only and your nervous system developed accordingly... Love and sexual functions take too much blood away from your head and brain... therefore it is not nourished as well as ours.
- 3.75 I can easily point out men to you who are occupied exclusively with love and courtship; they change their women regularly, but every such change causes tension and requires much more energy than, for instance, a calm and habitual love life with one’s wife. My point is that such men, whose sole aim is the enjoyment of women, gradually get dull and stupid by wasting their best life juices; they lose energy and become useless in the end... As a matter of fact, such men resemble women, because almost the only preoccupation of women is making love. How can they possibly compete with men? They can vanquish weaklings, mind you — those very weaklings who make the hunt for women their lifework.
- 3.76 Over recent years, public demand for refinement and talent has declined. Trickery masquerades as art, dissipation — as a special kind of morality induced by the 19th century, a century of both quick communication and liaisons, with no time for careful consideration. <...> Love waxed with the speed of an electric light and waned instantaneously, then transferred onto the next object, to wax and wane all over again. Bodies grew exhausted, men were getting ever stupider, but richer in triviality; women — ever more flippant and vulgar, yet richer in their love experiences.
- 3.77 ...He also wrote a large novel *V kontse veka. Liubov'*, in which he skilfully depicted a taste which is so strong nowadays on the part of our society for the mysterious unknown. In this respect, he outstripped, as it were, social thinking, because many years ago he had already verbalised the thoughts that, at the moment, preoccupy Mr Rozanov, Mr Filosofov and various others.
- 3.78 Well, here is something major for you: if you would only allow me to properly develop an admittedly delicate subject in *Novoe vremia* — on sex and sexual matters. <...> As a matter of fact, our views on marriage and family are fairly ambiguous. The gospel offers no opinion, it even says at a crucial point: ‘it’s better not to marry’. The fount of our 2000-year-old aversion to sex is right here, in this terrible line and it seems to me that certain, utterly demonic, undercurrents entered the stream of our civilisation with this line as well, having effectively disguised themselves as ‘meekness’ and ‘purity’ first...
- 3.79 Modern marriage is a stuffed animal. It should be thrown away along with Christianity, which is certainly dying out. Love should be free, on one mandatory condition only: having had a child, the man and the woman raise him themselves, at least <...> till he is 10 or 12 years old and can enter secondary school. <...> ...It might be an idea to create institutions staffed with well-paid males, for women and girls to satisfy their carnal needs. Let’s preach Islam. It is ever so much more practical than Christianity.
- 3.80 Do you have anything left in you apart from ‘sacred sex’? You believe it is sacred indeed; so there is nothing to prove. What else is left, though, if one does not accept that sex is sacred? <...> I recall, when

Tolstoy published 'Afterword' to his famous novella where he preaches heavenly innocence and where Pozdnyshv is featured, I received a long and passionate letter from a certain gentleman, who eloquently cursed Tolstoy for his sermon on continence; he said that there is nothing left for a Russian, if they are denied liaisons with women (who love it to bits), but vodka and the noose.

- 3.81** Nobody deals with literary matters in our newspaper. Burenin scorns literature and jeers at it. You never read, nor have any curiosity, dwelling on 'sacred sex'. <...> As I know from *SPb vedomosti*, the newspaper of my beloved son [*Rus'*, publisher A. A. Suvorin] preaches nudity, so a certain damsel wrote that Rozanov and [M. O.] Men'shikov may well emerge naked soon, in red scarves and galoshes only.
- 3.82** I feel that she is one of those damsels who are nothing much even naked — not tempting at all. There is plenty of such trash around. They are worse than prostitutes, because the latter have some sort of appeal at least, while the former have nothing but a vulva, a foul one at that, which they busily push at all and sundry.
- 3.83** You keep insisting that it is a baby that justifies coitus. As for me, I think that that is rubbish. Just rubbish. Children are born wretched, delinquent, imbecilic, foul etc., because, whether inside or outside marriage, they all copulate with the lecherous, drunk, <mangy?>, exhausted, <illegible>! Most of the people are cattle, a kind of dung, somewhat better than dogs, or perhaps even worse than those in so many ways. What kind of 'great mystery' is it, when it comes out of filth?
- 3.84** He always felt for Suvorin the deepest respect and love, which was close to enthusiasm; this was not out of personal gratitude only (although, without Suvorin's material support, Russian literature would have been deprived of Rozanov), but out of absolutely disinterested attraction to this typically down-to-earth person, a 'common man' with the talent of a literary impressionist.
- 3.85** I heard some profound thoughts on virginity from A. S. Suvorin and from [the seminary lecturer] A. V. Kartashov. The former said once: 'Well, I did notice that when a girl loses her virginity (without marriage), she loses everything. She gets befouled'. Of course, he did not imply any of the usual moral judgements at all, he just shared an observation: 'what happens', 'what results, 'what follows thereafter'.
- 3.86** In just two days, I revised the first act of the play which I started recycling from my novel *Liubov'* last year. I completed the first act and a part of the second one earlier. The first act is now done, but I don't think I'll continue. It's difficult to deal with a fantastical subject.
- 3.87** **5.10.1897.** The worst of it is being aware that I am not long for this world, in fact over and done with. I can't work as I used to and that depresses me. I can't be idle. The wish to work is still there, but I have no strength left whatsoever. **6.03.1898.** My health is deteriorating and there is this inexplicable aversion to doctors. <...> You just rage at this old age, that eats your energy and talent, that consumes your soul... **15.03.1898.** I feel seedy. My temper is hot beyond belief. <...> It may all end with a ruptured vessel — and off I go on my last journey. I feel awful for being unable to work. **8.09.1899.** I've been trying to write. Nothing comes out. I've been doing the second act of 'The Heroine' [recast of the novel], it looks pitiful. Here is the time then to put an end to these exercises as well.
- 3.88** I wanted to continue with my comedy. [The lawyer and writer S. A.] Andreevskii suggested a conclusion. The hero ought to get to know women carnally, then he could marry Varia, who used to live with Muratov. This way, they are equal. Virginity is a terrible thing for a girl. Why did nature ever invent it? Animals do not have a hymen. Why should Eve's daughters have it, then? Is it an error of God and nature or the foundation of a family?
- 3.89** I liked your new play, acts 1 and 2, and even find that it is better than *Tat'iana Repina*. The latter is closer to theatre, while this one is truer to life. Act 3 lacks structure though: there is no action and even its main idea is not clear to me.
- 3.90** An educated nobleman taking up the cloth is a hackneyed idea, it does not arouse any curiosity any longer, <...> and with his virginity and his chastity they will see him as a eunuch. <...> Whether Varia's father knows about her sin or not is not at all important, to my mind. Of course, the sexual sphere is critical to our lives, yet it does not determine everything, far from it; and it is not nearly always decisive. I'll tell you more when you send me act 4 (should I have something useful to say, of course).

- 3.91** I've been racking my brains about act 4, and could not come up with anything, except that you should not have nihilists at the end of your play. This is much too boisterous, too loud: a quiet, lyrical and touching ending to your play will be more fitting. When your heroine grows old without achieving anything or reaching any conclusions about herself; when she sees that she is uninteresting, unwanted, abandoned by everyone; when she understands that all people in her life were idle, useless, and wicked (her father as well) and that she had let her life slip by — is this not worse than nihilists?
- 3.92** I am glad that you have nearly finished your play and so I repeat that you should write both plays and novels: firstly, because this is generally a good thing to do, and, secondly, because it's good for you, it brings pleasant variety to your life.
- 3.93** **8.06.1900** My old age is over, now I am getting decrepit. Old age is tolerable still, but decrepitude is particularly miserable. Not a gleam of hope. **25.09.1900.** I am not going to be able to wield my pen for much longer. I am at that particular stage of dying when I do not want to tell anyone that I am actually dying; while all around me see it pretty clearly, but keep silent and do not show that they are actually ready for my death. <...> In my old age I feel so lonely, that if it were not for my theatre or my writings, I would be lost. I could hang myself. **27.09.1900.** My family is getting smaller, but the expenses are growing, i. e. the robbery is increasing month by month and year by year. <...> I wrote to Lelia [son Aleksei] that I would like to have a break from all this trivia, that I would like to establish a family board to control expenses. He replied that I was acting King Lear. Yet all I am acting is an old man, tired of all this anxiety and malice. **5.10.1900.** I talked to Anna Ivanovna about the dowry [for their daughter Nastia]. She turned on me at once, as though I was blaming her. And she attacked me viciously, calculatingly, to prevent me from putting a word in, so that I would keep my trap shut and let them have it their own way. <...> I've been living for too long and I am in their way now.
- 3.94** On the 28th of February 1901, *Novoe vremia* celebrated its 25th anniversary with great pomp. It is rather unlikely, though that anyone of those present at the ceremony could have possibly recognised it for what it actually was — *Novoe vremia*'s wake. No-one could see that the 25th anniversary was a turning point in the life of the only Russian paper of its time, followed by its gradual decline.
- 3.95** It's impossible to speak openly and frankly. The newspaper is becoming abominable. <...> The newspaper depresses me. I am afraid for its future. There is a whole crowd of journalists there, most of them mediocre, idling their time away. I said that a jubilee is a rehearsal for a funeral. That's exactly how it is going to turn out.
- 3.96** ...Russian women played a prominent role in the life of Europe. This is easily explained: Russian women are the most liberated women in Europe in both the straight and figurative meanings of this word, just as Russian literature is the most liberal and humane in everything that concerns women, because Russian literature is a literature of men and Russian men are particularly grateful to women for all the love they give.
- 3.97** The issue of equality re-emerged only at the beginning of the 40s. Since then, it has been evolving faster and faster, and the final victory of women is not far off, whatever men, both grateful and ungrateful, may say about it. The 20th century will be the century of and for women, unless men do their utmost to self-improve, smarten up and become worthy leaders for the fair half of mankind.
- 3.98** One has to admit that, inside any man, there is a deep-seated hostility towards women — and *vice versa*. Man has subjugated woman, deliberately adjusted her to himself and imposed certain goals and duties on her, quite different to those that she herself developed. Whether woman is equal to man or not is beside the point. However, women have begun their struggle for equality; it is a struggle not entirely pleasant and sometimes most unpleasant for men. Men of letters can discover some signs of mutual male and female hostility even in the lives of liberated cocottes. I am referring to the most attractive side of this struggle, however, to women's right to study on a par with men. This is the most admirable of women's ideas and it is also the decisive one.
- 3.99** Our literature despite the enormous quantity of its organs has not encouraged women in this scientific respect for quite a while, and a lot of ink has been spilled to prove the fact that women would never go far in it.

- 3.100** [Suvorin] spoke against women doctors, along the lines of ‘why the hell do we need learned women with mathematics, Greek and Latin’ and, to clinch the argument, <...> told us about a woman doctor he used to know who dedicated her entire life to sick people; she looked after other people’s children and spent entire days treating sick peasants in a local hospital.
- 3.101** Women would have accomplished nothing, were they to allow themselves to indulge their whims, give way to despair or try to impose their views on others. <...> All the good done by women over the last thirty or forty years as doctors, nurses, midwives, medical assistants, professors, teachers, agronomists or just as educated women — who could possibly ignore all that? <...> Compared with the past, the amount of female intellectual labour has grown considerably.
- 3.102** Generally speaking, the issue of morality, dealt with ironically, satirically or very seriously indeed, has been a thread throughout the entire past fifty years, both in Russia and abroad. <...> Consider: what is called ‘boldness’ or ‘playing around’ for men, for girls, there is a word: ‘dissipation’.
- 3.103** A woman does not educate herself out of idleness, but for the sake of survival, career, social status or marriage. <...> Moral ‘falls’ are known to occur, of course; but, when they do, women usually drop their studies as well; thus, only those who take their education seriously tend to remain. May I ask, though: where do we have more of these ‘falls’? In society itself, by any chance? This is a delicate, but an obvious question. Is any family safe from this disaster, which is so often caused by instinctive and blind infatuation?
- 3.104** I believe that a higher education provides self-awareness, enhances intellect and adds something to one’s sense of responsibility, primarily to oneself. Were it otherwise, we would not need it all that much.
- 3.105** I borrowed the main ideas and a couple of scenes from my own novel, but consider the play *Vopros* an independent opus. It was created from the opening chapters and evolved into a play. The second part did not feature in the play at all. <...> I singled out the question of virginity for the play and treated it independently from the novel.
- 3.106** Where Mr Suvorin’s play is not a melodrama, it is a veritable verbal diarrhoea of fashionable subjects. They talk about everything on stage: Neo-Christianity and ‘the woman question’ (Act 1), Marxism, worker’s songs, botany, Ophelia, Antichrist, and Übermensch (Act 2), the role of women in the Arts and Goethe’s *Faust* (Act 3), the importance of family, falling stars, fallen women and angels (Act 4). Quite often they talk a lot of rubbish. Of all the issues raised, there is only one which is relevant to the play itself — one about a woman ‘with a past’. Not being a novelty, this issue is dealt with fairly incompetently. <...> Apparently, Mr Suvorin wanted to say that ‘the truth’ often leads to tragic consequences. This idea is not new either (pure Ibsen).
- 3.107** I want to be recognized as a free human being... I do not want to beg forgiveness, to abase myself... <...> I do not want to prevaricate in front of those who are stronger, and those who are stronger should not dare, should not have the right to question me about my past, to interrogate me as a criminal, as a slave... <...> You are not fit to judge us: you violate the law yourself, you trample it in mud.
- 3.108** The author does not hint at any way to resolve the problem once and for all. Having raised a general and very significant issue of family morals, he touches upon some details in passing only: he looks at its various combinations, he complicates it, and finally, he stops with a question mark over the thesis of his play.
- 3.109** I encountered reviews which said that ‘the question’ raised in my play is simply not worth raising. They say it’s a subject for a vaudeville, rather than for a serious comedy. <...> Virginity is considered nonsense, a prejudice. The very word ‘prejudice’ was often used by the reviewers. It was sneered at, while the word ‘fall’ was met with rude laughter, lacking both humour and wit. <...> In Petersburg, I was astonished by the sheer number of women in the theatre. <...> Well, this is ‘the question’ for women, after all. They can only benefit, if they would stop believing men that virginity is a prejudice. <...> Were virginity a mere prejudice, you see, one ought to get rid of it as soon as possible. <...> At the first infatuation, once in love for the first time, the girl should immediately say ‘Take all of me’, and of course, the man would be only too happy to oblige. It’s a sheer pleasure for him. For a girl, though it’s not even a pleasure sometimes, but a risk of pregnancy.
- 3.110** Here is a remarkable fact: the fair half of the human race has an organ which is absent in the fair half of the animal world, primates included. The very thing they call virginity is missing. <...> All that Mechnikov says as regards virginity is by no means essential. This very same question I tried to clarify in my play

Vopros. <...> Sciences are not aware of any physiological role for virginity. I believe, however, that God knew what he was doing when He made women so different from females of animal species. He chose woman to be the guardian of the human race against degeneration, male lechery, male sexuality which already manifests itself in boys, whereas the first love of a girl is often platonic, unrelated to sexuality...

- 3.111** Mankind is more and more inclined towards uninhibited, free love — not towards siring the best possible future generations. The fewer children the better, perhaps it is best not to have any children at all. <...> Who knows, though: the absence of powerful gifts, great talents and minds, which is so noticeable in our days — is this the result, at least to a certain degree, of this obsession with the *sole* enjoyment of love?
- 3.112** Mr Mechnikov <...> calls this discrepancy, for example between early sexuality in men and later one in women, ‘disharmony’. <...> He operates with facts proven by science and he avoids moral judgements. These emerge regardless, however. Should a person choose to enhance this disharmony with incontinence, lechery etc, he has to pay for it with tragedies of jealousy, suicide, murder, health failures, diseases and premature death. <...> Whether this disharmony results from the fact that a man is a degenerate monkey, or whether God made him so and he is the Crown of Creation (as I believe), there is only one conclusion, regardless: one must perfect oneself, because this is the only way to live a long and potentially happy life.
- 3.113** ...Now I am telling you my life story; I beg you, read it and give me some advice, show me at least a tiny path and I’ll follow it, because if I let things slide — I feel I might kill myself. <...> I could have more than once exchanged my peasant status for a ‘Your Excellency’ and riches; I was fortunate to have had plenty of widowed generals as suitors, but I saw that they had no regard for my inner self at all, they just liked my body, which aroused their desire (which, incidentally, is the cause of so much foolishness in life); I disliked them and that ruled out marriage for me.
- 3.114** Apart from Dimitrii, I was also interested in Kseniia, the daughter of the Tsar Boris. <...> Those brief notes that we can find in Russian chronicles are full of sympathy for Kseniia. These chroniclers knew that she not only lived with the Samozvanets, but accepted disgrace as well — heaped upon her by many in Russia and abroad — by wandering from one monastery to another in those troubled and violent times. It’s rather remarkable that her Russian contemporaries, who were so scrupulous over a woman’s ‘sin’ and even more so over a girl’s one, regarded this fallen dignity, this unwilling concubine, this nun — as a saint, who suffered for others, with the entire Russian people and who, with this ‘disgrace’ and suffering, bought herself eternal life and access to Heaven.
- 3.115** There is nothing worse than the impotence of old age.
I have desires, I have ideas, but I am too weak to realize them.
- 3.116** **21.09.1902.** My irritability is abominable. <...> You commit a senile folly and then put it right. <...> My nerves are so frayed that I can’t cope with myself these days. In old age you just go mad, you get thoughtless, irritable, weak-willed. **2.10.1903.** I am sad. <...> It seems that I am not the only one disintegrating, not only *Novoe Vremia*, but all of Russia as well.
- 3.117** I am glad that you are unable to banish me from your heart. Please, do not do that. Just leave a small place for me there. You know, your writing makes me happy and I would have liked you to start a new play this summer. You ought to write it, because it is only your physical powers that are waning, not the mental ones. <...> Let’s write an 18th century drama together. <...> Or, perhaps, we should write one each. You will write a major historical piece, strong passions, a mystery woman, while I’ll do a ‘kitchen-sink’ drama. We’ve got to live, darling Aleksei Sergeevich, if not our own life, then someone else’s. For the time being, though let’s keep small places for each other in our hearts and let us remember sometimes that there is a kindred soul around, who will always be there in one’s hour of need.
- 3.118** Suvorin closely followed all the vagaries of the war; he fretted, worried, could not sleep, kept reading articles and he wrote himself, trying to lift the morale of the Russian public. It was his year of travail; it drained a lot of his energy and ruined his health. Also, the failures of the Russian army affected Suvorin terribly and destructively. He became high-strung beyond measure and hotter-tempered than ever before.
- 3.119** To be honest with you, I see no point in fantasizing about serious matters and agree with one of my female correspondents who says that a joint discussion of state affairs will lead to many marriages; it does not necessarily follow, though that the ‘Russian population will increase significantly’, as my correspondent believes. <...> On the other hand, I believe that women who are able to contribute positively to the work of

even the most gifted statesmen with their intelligence and influence do actually exist. I do not believe that women should confine themselves to love and children either. Not all of them have this opportunity however, nor are able to remain satisfied with it. Our women have the right to vote, albeit via a male proxy. I do not see any harm in women enjoying this right *personally*. This is in no way contrary to the idea that Goethe called *ewig weibliche*.

- 3.120** She is despotic, ambitious, commanding, never selective about her means of gaining her objectives, nor sparing of blood... <...> She loves life with all the fervour of her youth and wild passion; she wants to live this life, to conquer it, even at the price of her own life, her sufferings. <...> She is a female Don Juan, seductive, passionate, the one they are ready to die for because she imparts passions and ardour.
- 3.121** Female terrorists are ready and willing to turn executioners and eat human flesh. Among Russian women, one finds both Marfa-Posadnitsa and Saltychikha. Our female terrorists are as bad as Saltychikha in their cruelty and dissipation. They tell horrible things about debauchery. Decadents are the fount of obscenity. A magazine exists which publishes only pornography, the history of prostitution, Marquis de Sade, Casanova, etc. Emerging novelists know the female body inside out.
- 3.122** You <...> with your great mind, your big talent, endeavoured to overturn an old and absurd opinion of women. You upheld and continue upholding an incredibly revolutionary idea. You worked and are working now on the creation of the fifth estate. This fifth estate is — woman. For forty years, you have loved woman, not women. You advocated her liberation from slavery. Your Medea, your Tat'iana Repina, your Varia Bolotova — they are all women who protested against slavery, against morality created by men for their own convenience. And so, your heroines stopped at nothing. Some of them perished, like Tat'iana Repina, others, like Varia, triumphed. In this struggle you supported women with your enormous talent. You wanted a woman to have the same rights of moral freedom as a man does; you wanted her to be no more responsible for her deeds than a man is — not to be condemned as a sinner for a deed not only pardonable, but considered somewhat heroic in a man.
- 3.123** Mme Mironova in her brilliant speech <...> said that I always loved woman, not women. This is true. To love many women means to waste a lot of that noble energy which is needed so much for an active and persistent work. I did not have any of Don Juan's abilities, but I always thought highly of women, because I believe that they contribute a great deal to the health of our nation and are responsible for so many things even during the current period of anarchy.
- 3.124** [M. O.] Men'shikov told me today that I should try to write a novel <...> Well, I have no idea where to find that creative tension, not to mention talent, which is imperative for the task. And, should I do so after all, I would write a political novel. I do not have nearly enough observations of the younger generation, while the older generation I dislike.
- 3.125** **Vera:** Full equality will only be reached when female culture emerges alongside the male one. This will ensure the independence that woman needs so badly and, via her, humankind as well. **Liuliusha:** I think it's never going to happen. **Vera:** Well, it's started already and women are even going to overtake men in many ways...
- 3.126** **Tseder:** There is a certain sum which will buy a night not just with a woman, but with a virgin... **Liuliusha:** You mean robbing, killing, raping?.. You feel so free to do anything in the mighty name of revolution. Me, though — what can I do, being so light-minded?.. So, from me and also from all the girls that don't sell themselves — here you are! (*she slaps Tseder, falls into an arm-chair and commences sobbing hysterically*). Curtain.
- 3.127** Since childhood, he had been surrounded with such comfort and happiness as is hardly ever available to a genius, and he reached the end of his life as fortunate as he always had been. His life is an epic poem without shocking dramas, without the terror which devastates the heart of a genius, chaining it and tormenting it.
- 3.128** Suddenly we recognised ourselves as being white slaves of Anna Ivanovna. <...> I've lived through your illness this winter. I know how grave and agonizing it is, so please let me and Misha do all the work in this and do not commit the same error all over again. <...> We are not attacking, but rather defending ourselves from the attack which has already reduced us to nothing; so this unfortunate clause [in Suvorin's will]

which assigned the leading role in our business to Anna Ivanovna all of a sudden should certainly be corrected.

- 3.129** Having finished with my will, I'll let my throat be cut. Should they cut me to death, it will be a natural death still. <...> I am afraid of suffering. I am haunted by 'The Death of Ivan Il'ich'. Klavdiia Ivanovna would have resembled the peasant who attended on Ivan Il'ich, if she only chattered less, if she did not provoke arguments with me, knowing full well how detrimental it is for me not only to talk emotionally but simply to talk. She competes with Bogdan Veniaminovich [Gei]. She contacts doctors behind his back these days. <...> I've known her for so many years, so I have no reasons to question her commitment, but her oddities, all this tagging along after me everywhere, to Paris, to London, here: that does not seem to constitute — how should I put it — a convincing proof of such a commitment. <...> I can't get rid of the idea that I look ridiculous and silly with such a trail. On the whole, my illness, actually a tragic one, looks like something of a joke because of all this fuss.
- 3.130** I pity her, I really do. As an odd person, not as an actress. She is a weird, sick person, who has neither commitments nor refuge. I am sure of that. She keeps looking for something, all in vain. Perhaps she just wants to be happy. She has imagination, talents, but they are somehow imperfect, rudimentary. <...> Herself, she is miserable and homeless and so is attracted to her likes.
- 3.131** I give up everything, even my theatre work, if I have to submit to this viper, this traitress who has been hating me for 18 years only because, as a young man, I rejected her love. <...> You can't allow Destomb to appear at the theatre, to lord it there, to act as the directress in charge of Malyi Theatre.
- 3.132** Suvorin's face is sallow, shrunken, badly wrinkled, awfully sick. He is aware of his grave condition. This person Destomb attends him diligently: she is horrible to his family — she's sent them all away. Suvorin's wife came here for two days, but she had never had a chance to talk to her husband in private — Destomb was always around; she convinced Suvorin that his family wanted to poison him, so he is now afraid of them. He wouldn't eat a bite without Destomb approving it. What an awful, impossible situation for all of them.
- 3.133** According to the will of the deceased, 20 thousand roubles go to the Malyi Theatre actress Destomb, who was Suvorin's personal assistant and who attended him during his last illness. Incidentally, when Suvorin's abscess troubled him too much, Mme Destomb sucked out the pus personally, because she discovered that this alleviated his sufferings, while nurses refused to do this.
- 3.134** For me, though there is only death on the other side. And I tell you that this is good. It is good not because death is a necessary link in the chain of life, but because she is quite an attractive woman. She is a strong woman and a devilishly convincing one, too. She is not a skeleton with a scythe, but a beautiful, slim, slightly pale woman, in a light-coloured dress, with blue eyes and a friendly smile. She invites one to rest and to rest in peace. Nothing to be afraid of.
- 3.135** Fortune never abandoned Suvorin. His life was a success and his death was one as well. He died in a period of ideological confusion, when befogged minds of the liberal and even parts of the democratic intelligentsia have lost their traditional clarity and firmness in rejecting the reactionary powers of Russian society and when the idea of an accommodation with the demands of mundane success is gaining broad popularity in some strata of our society.

Conclusion

- C-1** In my writings, I have never betrayed anyone, but my courage depended in any particular case on the circumstances... If you find yourself in a vice-like grip, as the modern journalist often does, then who is going to emerge unscathed? So, of course, I admit my faults as a journalist, but if, by any chance, my work is ever assessed in an unbiased way, then I am sure that the result will be positive. And as a publisher, I shall leave a formidable reputation. Yes, exactly and precisely that, a formidable reputation with not a single blemish.
- C-2** ...if it is all right to sell cotton cloth, why is it not right to sell one's convictions? Both cloth and convictions are acquired items, and what can be acquired, can be sold. <...> After all, what is a conviction? Is it not a sail driven by the wind of time and experience? But times keep changing, so the wind blows either from the south or from the north, in a word, from all sides. Would it not be plain unnatural to move against the wind?

- C-3** I can't bring myself to portray the chaos which I've seen and which I've felt in my heart. It is horrendously difficult. One simply can't help being false and prevaricating. That's the way things are now. <...> An educated Russian person has never had to face these accursed questions, certainly not put so sharply as they are put now; he has never become so confused and so concerned, and he has never been more aware of the need to get clear, sensible, and solid supportive acknowledgement of his shaken convictions taken as a whole. Convictions? Do we, the so called intelligentsia, have any? We don't. There are some fragments, some blurred images, and there is, of course, criticism, merciless criticism, leading to wreckage and destruction.
- C-4** One should give more freedom to personal opinion and refrain from imposing one's own view, which is a serious handicap in the newspaper business. Newspapers do not offer a collection of truths, but a collection of views. I've been reproached for being a weathercock. But I am not a weathercock at all. Rather, as a person without a really serious and solid education, and having therefore continuously to learn, to read and to catch things on the fly, I've always given freedom to opinions and have actually been mainly preoccupied with literary form.
- C-5** Suvorin as politician, as a public figure <...> always stood aloof from the hereditary ruling class, so he was remarkably sharp-sighted, and he was also edifying and interesting for many. His happily fortuitous origin endowed him with a judge's impartiality in all those political and ideological disputes where others were interested parties. In the competition of class and economic interests he was absolutely free, since he could *pari passu* assign himself to either camp.
- C-6** To progress from a peasant hut via journalism to the heights of social thought and life at the top of a great country, to acquire an indisputable influence not only on public consciousness, but on the whole administration of the country — this is not only to play a major historical role, but also to reflect and to express an entire historical era.
- C-7** It is possible to qualify Suvorin as one of the founders of Russian conservative liberalism in its intellectual basis at the initial stage of this politico-ideological movement. The main principles of Suvorin's ('rightist') version of this developing ideology were bourgeois modernisation and the promotion of liberal values in a strong centralized state with gradually consolidating representative institutions.