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Abstract:

Konstantin Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* (“Cockroach”) caused a *succès de scandale* at the annual exhibition of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg in 1864–65. The painting represents the legendary last moments of an impostor princess, who claimed to be the daughter of Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (r. 1741–62) and her lover, Alexei Razumovsky. Imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, she purportedly drowned in her cell during the famous flood of 1777 (in reality, she died in 1775). This article discusses the controversy caused by Flavitsky’s painting, which casts a shadow over the history of Russia’s imperial dynasty, as an example of the role played by nineteenth-century Russian visual art in uncovering secrets untold in the country’s official historiography.

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Hidden Histories and Historical “Truth”: Konstantin Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* of 1864 and How Art Helped Change the Understanding of Russian History

by Maria Chukcheeva

In 1858, the well-known Russian composer and music critic Alexander Serov (1821–70) advised the artists of his country to turn their attention to Russian history of the eighteenth century:

It is time for our artists to turn at last to this glorious age in our Fatherland. It is time to understand how many inexhaustible treasures, contrasts and dramatic scenes of all kinds the artist will find in everyday life of the time, in the struggle between Asian and European mores, even among the highest ranks of society. And we have so many historical guides, documents and costumes at our disposal! The archives of the Imperial palaces [in the countryside] around the city would provide rich material for artists; and how many topics from the Petrine and post-Petrine eras are to be found in the novels of that Russian Walter Scott, Lazhechnikov: *The Last Novik* and *The House of Ice*.^[1]

Serov was right. If writers such as Ivan Lazhechnikov (1792–1862) had turned to the reign of Empress Anna Ioannovna (r. 1730–40) for inspiration as early as the 1830s, mid-nineteenth-century painters would rarely have looked for subjects in Russian history at all, and when they did their preference would have been for episodes from before the reign of Peter the Great (r. 1682/96–1725).^[2] The eighteenth century, especially the post-Petrine period with its palace coups and rapid succession of short-lived rulers, was thought of as too dark and alien to serve as a source for the subject of painting.

Konstantin Flavitsky’s (1830–66) *Princess Tarakanova*, the pièce de résistance of the annual exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg in 1864–65, was one of the first examples of a nineteenth-century artwork depicting a historical event from the post-Petrine epoch (fig. 1). Rather than following Serov’s advice regarding the representation of scenes from everyday life, however, Flavitsky chose an obscure and politically contentious episode from the reign of Catherine II (r. 1762–96).

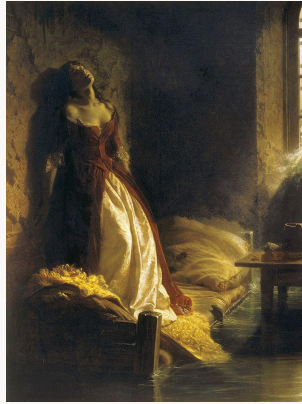


Fig. 1, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Princess Tarakanova*, 1864. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
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In the picture, a beautiful woman in a red velvet dress stands on a wooden bed in a prison cell, pressing herself despairingly against the wall as water pours through a window, slowly filling her chamber. She knows, like the mice scrambling onto the bed, that there is to be no escape.^[3] This scene is based on the tale of a beautiful impostor who had claimed the Russian throne in 1774. Captured abroad, she was brought back to Russia in 1775 and imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, where, according to an entirely legendary version of her fate, she drowned in her cell during the great flood that devastated the city on September 10 (21), 1777.

Princess Tarakanova introduced a new, melodramatic mode to Russian painting, a mode associated with one of the most influential history painters of his day, Paul Delaroche (1797–1856).^[4] His work enjoyed increasing popularity in the Russian art world from the 1850s to the mid-1860s, becoming a model for a number of Russian history painters.^[5] Paintings in this mode were clearly intended to elicit an emotional response, but this by no means precludes other, perhaps more important, subtexts.

A recent attempt to view Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* within the context of depictions of doomed famous women in nineteenth-century European painting describes a “feminization” of history in Russian art while largely ignoring the political question of women’s status in Russia in the 1860s.^[6] Asserting that the painting was simply intended to inspire sympathy or empathy for the underdog or for the weak, the author mentions possible political implications only in passing, concluding that Flavitsky was not interested in the significance of Tarakanova in terms of the threat she posed to the Romanov dynasty and that his painting was thus not an attack on autocracy.

As I will illustrate below, besides offering drama, heightened emotion, and even a hint of erotic titillation, Flavitsky’s painting undoubtedly had important political and cultural implications. It tied in to the growing interest in eighteenth-century Russian history and touched on a series of political and social matters that were gaining new relevance in the 1860s, the age of Alexander II’s (1818–81) Great Reforms. It also raised important questions

about artistic truth, about how painters should work with historical evidence, and about whether (and how) their approach should differ from that of historians. *Princess Tarakanova* can be seen as a milestone, not only because it brought nineteenth-century Russian art closer to international trends in history painting, but also because of its presentation of a highly provocative political subject, in which the heroine was the victim of autocracy. This contributed to a move towards declassification of previously inaccessible archival materials because it was feared they might cast the imperial family in a negative light and thus alter the public’s understanding of their national history.

Konstantin Flavitsky

After receiving a Great Gold Medal for *Jacob’s Children Sell Their Brother Joseph* (fig. 2), Flavitsky was awarded a pension by the Academy of Fine Arts, which allowed him to travel to Italy in 1855.[7] He returned to Russia in 1862, taking with him a large-scale history painting in the classical mode, *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum* (fig. 3). The Academy was disappointed with the derivative nature of this work, which was perceived to be too closely inspired by the celebrated *Last Day of Pompeii* (1830–33; State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg), the work of the leading artist of the previous generation, Karl Briullov (1799–1852). Still, as Margaret Samu has pointed out, as the most famous Russian picture of the first half of the nineteenth century, *Last Day of Pompeii* was even then seen as the epitome of Russia’s international artistic achievements.[8] Such was the Academy’s dissatisfaction that Flavitsky was merely awarded the title of Free Honorary Member (Pochetnyj vol’nyj obshhinnik) of the Academy rather than being elevated to the rank of academician.[9]



Fig. 2, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Jacob’s Children Sell Their Brother Joseph*, 1855. Oil on canvas. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).
[\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 3, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum*, 1862. Oil on canvas. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).
[\[larger image\]](#)

Then came *Princess Tarakanova*, the originality of which was obvious. The work arrived at a time when there was much discussion in artistic circles of the alleged decline of Russian art,^[10] a situation which was perversely seen as both the cause and effect of public indifference.^[11] *Princess Tarakanova's* critical and popular success was such that it played a major part in Flavitsky's almost immediate appointment as professor at the Academy. The painting also resulted in a significant increase in audience attendance at the Academy's exhibitions, with numbers considerably higher than those at its exhibitions in the early 1860s.^[12] This alone further increased official approval for Flavitsky. In March 1865, Flavitsky wrote to the collector Pavel Tretyakov (1832–98) that he hoped to show the picture in Great Britain, though this did not happen.^[13] That summer it was exhibited alongside the permanent display in the rooms of the Moscow Society of Art Amateurs, where exhibition reports inform us that it was seen by 8,179 people.^[14]

Critics understood that the painting was more than a sensational image, seeing beyond its drama and its sensuous representation of skin and fabrics to recognize its important political implications. Inspired by the response to his picture, Flavitsky started planning works with similarly sensitive subjects.^[15] This is not surprising, for, at a time when the liberal opposition in Russia had largely been forced into exile, the artist's political views had been largely shaped by the ideas of the political émigrés Alexander Herzen and Nikolay Ogarev and by publications in the Free Russian Émigré Press.^[16] Indeed, as Flavitsky's letters made clear, he had been reluctant to return to Russia, recalling the increasingly reactionary mood at the time of his departure, in the last years of the reign of Nicholas I (r. 1825–55). He was also keenly aware of the numerous political arrests that had occurred and were still occurring under Nicholas's son Alexander II (r. 1855–81).^[17] Although known today as the Reformer Tsar who liberated the serfs from indentured servitude in 1861, Alexander had responded harshly to a series of political manifestos arguing for more reform, especially the proclamation “Young Russia” of 1862 by Pyotr Zaichnevsky (1842–96), a call for violent revolution. That same year, the highly influential critic and philosopher Nikolay Chernyshevsky (1828–89) was arrested and imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Soviet scholars have argued for a direct relationship between Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* and the political arrests of 1861 and 1862.[18] Like the main character in the painting, the arrestees were imprisoned in St. Petersburg’s Peter and Paul Fortress. But we must also take into consideration the broader political context of censorship and historical transparency. Historical studies had been tightly controlled during the reign of Nicholas I, since it was felt that numerous events had the potential to throw a bad light on the aristocracy or members of the Romanov dynasty. As a result, there were serious lacunae in the shared knowledge of Russian history, not least that of the eighteenth century, and vital evidence about events and individuals (including Princess Tarakanova) in state archives was inaccessible to researchers.[19] With Alexander II’s promises of greater transparency ringing in their ears, historians expressed their hopes that material would now be declassified. In 1859 an anonymous author wrote in the literary magazine *Russkaya beseda* (Russian conversation):

Today, many of those political reasons that led to the covering up of a multitude of things which might shed true light on obscure events in Russian historical life have ceased to have any significance. Is Russian history truly doomed to lies and gaps in all the ages since Peter I? No, we firmly hope that those gaps shall be filled.[20]

Fuller knowledge of Russian history was one of the causes taken up by émigré writers. Beginning in the 1850s, as classified documents became available, publications such as those of Herzen and Ogarev looked at aspects of Russian history which had been censored or deliberately excluded from official narratives. Flavitsky’s painting, like such publications, should be seen as a message from a liberal and politically aware artist to the government, challenging it to declassify more documents that would throw light on Russia’s past.

“Princess Tarakanova”

Tarakanova was not the so-called princess’s real name but a nickname, coined after her death. It was derived from the Russian word “tarakan,” or cockroach. She called herself by various names, among them Princess Volodimirskaya and Elizabeth Trémouille, when she first appeared in Italy in 1774, claiming to be both the illegitimate daughter of Russian Empress Elizabeth Petrovna (r. 1741–61/62)[21] and the sister of Yemelyan Pugachev, leader of the Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–75, who claimed to be Emperor Peter III (r. 1762), the murdered husband of Empress Catherine II. On Catherine’s orders, Tarakanova was seized in Livorno and brought to Russia in May 1775. Imprisoned without trial, she apparently died of tuberculosis on December 4 (15) that year.[22] This story was already known in Russia in the 1860s, but legends continued to abound, including one in which Tarakanova died in the famous flood that swept through St. Petersburg in 1777. According to another legend, she lived on to a ripe old age under the name Sister Dosifea in the Ivanovsky Monastery in Moscow, dying there in 1810.

It is explicitly stated in the catalogue of the 1864 exhibition that Flavitsky’s choice of subject was influenced by recent publications about Tarakanova.[23] An 1859 article in *Russkaya beseda* published letters and reports to Catherine II regarding Tarakanova’s kidnapping in Italy,[24] while research mentioning the flood was published the same year in the periodical *Russkiy vestnik* (Russian herald).[25] These and other sources showed the Russian royal family in a poor light. The story of Tarakanova’s death during the flood was told, for

instance, in *Vie de Catherine II* (Life of Catherine II) by Jean-Henri Castéra, French ambassador in St. Petersburg toward the end of her reign, which was first published in 1797, shortly after the empress’s death.[26] And just before Flavitsky created his painting, in 1863, Russian émigré August Golitsyn had published a brochure entitled *O mnimoy knyazhne Tarakanovoy* (On the false Princess Tarakanova), which quoted from her letters and cited excerpts from a supposed will of Petrovna found in Italian archives.[27] Golitsyn posited the existence of more than one pretender, suggesting that Sister Dosifea was a true descendant of the Romanovs, while the foreign impostor, Trémouille, was not—hence his use of the term “false.”[28] There is no indication, however, that Flavitsky was aware of Golitsyn’s brochure.

Reaction: Social and Aesthetic Norms

For some people, Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* was simply a dramatic and sensational work that offered a pleasingly sensuous image of a beautiful woman:[29] the Russian public was not used to seeing a doomed woman as the main character in a history painting.[30] It is not my intention here to deal with the status of women in Russia in the 1860s,[31] but this increasingly sensitive subject must have played a part in Flavitsky’s choice of a woman as his main character and, in turn, had an effect on how the picture was received.

Moreover, prior to the appearance of Flavitsky’s painting, the Russian public had seen few (if any) examples of historic genre painting (*genre historique*), a form of history painting that had been evolving in European art since the 1830s.[32] A compromise between history and genre painting,[33] it focused on the everyday aspects of days gone by, with particular emphasis on the Middle Ages and the early modern period. Historic genre painting often featured scenes from the private lives of famous people and not infrequently represented the impending violent death of major historical figures, especially in the works of Delaroché (*The Death of the Sons of King Edward in the Tower of London* [1831; Musée du Louvre, Paris]; *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey* [1833; National Gallery, London]; and *Strafford Led to Execution* [1836; private collection]).[34] Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* was one of the first Russian examples of this kind of history painting, and was thus in itself significant.

The reception of *Princess Tarakanova* was bound up with the debates around aesthetics that had begun in the mid-1850s in the wake of Chernyshevsky’s master’s thesis, published in 1855 as *Esteticheskie otnosheniya iskusstva k deystvitel’nosti* [*Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality*].[35] Flavitsky’s painting prompted discussions on the importance of decorum in art and on the representation of horror as an aesthetic category in history painting: in the context of the classical aesthetics that had dominated Russian art before the 1860s and to which conservative critics still adhered, *Princess Tarakanova* was perceived as ignoble and repulsive. Critic Mikhail Dmitriev wrote:

He [Flavitsky] probably wished to inspire pity for the prisoner, but instead he inspires an unpleasant feeling, which leads us to turn away from the picture. Such paintings are like moral torture, of a kind not permitted by the rules of art, just as the laws of society do not permit physical torture. Even in real life, suffering excites an ambiguous sympathy; it arouses real horror mixed with great respect for suffering;

but, alas, the sorrow and pity it brings lack any respect for the fate that has befallen the sufferer.[36]

Immediately preceding this passage was a discussion of Flavitsky’s preference for depicting the tragic side of life. In contrast to apologists for the dominant materialist aesthetic of the 1860s, Dmitriev asserted that nature should not be presented in art with all the crudeness of reality. Not all forms of horror were suitable for drama or painting, and even if suitable, horror had to be given poetic treatment when expressed in the fine arts. Dmitriev compared Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova* and a sketch for *Wallenstein Led under Guard the Day before His Death* by the German artist Karl von Piloty (1826–86), which was displayed at the permanent exhibition of the Imperial Society for the Encouragement of Artists (sadly, the work’s location today is unknown).[37] If Albrecht von Wallenstein was in dire straits, he nonetheless showed fortitude, his pose expressed nobility, and the public could easily see the difference between this “hero” in the classical sense and the desperate woman in Flavitsky’s picture. While Dmitriev allowed that both the traditional male hero and a (mere) woman were equal in the face of death, he felt that the protagonist of Flavitsky’s painting could not inspire sympathy or respect because she lacked the humility in the face of her doom that was a prerequisite for figures in the noble art of history painting. He was also puzzled by the contrast between her rich attire and her prison environment, and squeamishly felt that the unpleasantness of it all was exacerbated by details such as the mice.

Unlike Dmitriev, the critic Pavel Kovalensky was not an adherent of artistic conventions and idealism. In his opinion, although the painter was on the verge of breaking the rule of decorum,

a sense of proportion and taste has kept the painter from going beyond the line separating the awesome from the repulsive. His princess is beautiful in the last second before she becomes a corpse. Even at the very height of tragedy, he stopped on the very edge; that languor of imprisonment, these tear-swollen eyes, the spasm of horror upon the lips, the pallor almost of the grave; if he had just gone a little further, made it just a little stronger, it would have become the convulsions of the dead. . . . In vain do those who censure the tragic in art say that this is not the stuff of art; it is not true! Only lies or disgrace are not the subject of art.[38]

Both Dmitriev and Kovalevsky were undoubtedly influenced in their responses by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s *Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Mahlerey und Poesie (Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry)* (1766). The first Russian translation had appeared in the *Zhurnal izyashchynykh iskusstv* (Fine arts journal) in 1823, but the text had recently (1859) been published (in a new translation) as a separate book,[39] and thereafter, into the twentieth century, writers frequently referred to Lessing in their discussions about the distinctions between word and image when conveying horror and awe. Both critics agreed that, by making *Tarakanova* both beautiful and yet on the verge of death, Flavitsky had gone beyond the bounds of realism and decorum and come close to breaking the rules of painting, according to the concept of *ut pictura poesis* (as is painting, so is poetry). Mikhail Trofimenkov points out that painters of the historic genre frequently chose to depict the moment immediately before or after death, rather than the moment of death itself.[40] Citing Lessing’s statement that painters should depict suffering in accordance with the restraints set by concepts of beauty and dignity, he

argues that moderation in the representation of tragedy continued to be seen as the defining feature of history painting in the mid-nineteenth century. Seen against that foil, *Princess Tarakanova* could only be controversial.

Several years later the historian and philologist Fedor Buslaev, in “Zadachi sovremennoy esteticheskoy kritiki” (The tasks of contemporary aesthetic criticism) (1868), noted that it was widely felt that exposure or revelation should be the dominant direction in modern Russian literature and art, lamenting that modern art criticism rarely allowed for depictions of truly noble sentiments and behavior.^[41] History painting should, rather, be a lesson in morality, and in a work such as *Princess Tarakanova* (which he described without naming it specifically), the protagonist should face death with dignity. Otherwise, such a work was base, ignoble, disgraceful, and pointless. Like Dmitriev, Buslaev was disturbed by the discrepancy between the elegant figure of Tarakanova and the realistic depiction of the prison environment, and by what he perceived as a lack of meaning and feeling. Rather than looking to salvation, to the joys of the soul’s transition to a higher plane, the figure was transfixed by helpless, thoughtless desperation, which destroys all sense of humanity. Buslaev thus used the example of Flavitsky’s picture to express his own skeptical approach to that modern materialist aesthetic which demanded photographic accuracy in recreating life (whether in the past or present), and to remind his readers that it was the purpose of history painting to set a moral lesson.

Another example of the new kind of history painting was *Ivan the Terrible beside the Body of the Son He Murdered* (1864; State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow) by Vyacheslav Schwartz (1838–69),^[42] also shown at the exhibition of 1864–65, although it drew considerably less attention (fig. 4).^[43] Nearly ten years later, in 1872, the leading Russian critic Vladimir Stasov (who had enthusiastically reviewed *Princess Tarakanova* in 1865^[44]) sought to define the differences between the approaches to historical representation of Schwartz and Flavitsky, both followers of Delaroche and both responsible for introducing the historic genre to Russian art.^[45] For Stasov, who divided history painting into idealistic and realistic modes, Schwartz’s picture constituted a true history painting, since it showed the moment of Ivan the Terrible’s desperation rather than the coronations, sieges, wars, and so on that were merely the “external aspect” of Russian history, the aspect most actively represented in art before the second half of the nineteenth century.^[46] Stasov emphasized that Schwartz managed to convey Ivan’s psychological state, that the picture had the very smell of fear and death, while Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova*, despite its realistic representation of the prison cell, was more idealistic—not least, he pointed out, in that Tarakanova’s head was based on the famous statue of Niobe’s daughter.^[47] For Stasov, such adherence to the classical heritage was equivalent to adherence to an idealistic aesthetic. He saw the success of the painting not in its originality but in the fact that there were simply relatively few Russian masterpieces in the 1860s, more than ten years after the death of Briullov.^[48] Thus, Stasov took a revisionist view of Flavitsky’s *Princess Tarakanova*, seeing it not as a radical work of art, breaking the very bounds of painting, but as a continuation of the classical tradition in Russian art.



Fig. 4, Vyacheslav Schwartz, *Ivan the Terrible beside the Body of the Son He Murdered*, 1864. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#). [\[larger image\]](#)

Reaction: Historical “Truth”

Other equally vital questions raised in debates about Flavitsky’s painting centered on the subject’s plausibility and credibility, and whether (and how far) such qualities were important in history painting.

Dmitriev was one of the first to draw attention to the choice of a dubious version of Tarakanova’s death, raising the question of the history painter’s obligation to be truthful when representing events from the past. Drawing parallels between the history painter and the historian, he wrote:

Mr. Flavitsky has shown Princess Tarakanova in the fortress during the flood. Of course, he has some right to do this: such stories do exist. But criticism is just as necessary to a history painter as to a historical writer. In portraying a historical figure, one needs to verify their whole history; and the truer to the facts a work of art is, the more important it will become. But here we cannot even argue with Mr. Flavitsky to assert that this incident could hardly have happened, since there is no information at all.^[49]

Mikhail Longinov, who had written about Tarakanova herself in 1859, was less categorical in his response to Flavitsky’s picture in 1865. He allowed that a painter might be permitted some poetic license in representing the circumstances surrounding Tarakanova’s death, since mid-eighteenth-century Russian history was still only poorly researched and there was a dearth of reliable testimony. Longinov was convinced that, if the painter had only known exactly how Tarakanova died, “he would never depict a false event, no matter how tempting the subject for an artist.”^[50] Nonetheless, he confirmed that it was of tuberculosis that Tarakanova had died in 1775, citing state secretary and president of the Academy of Sciences, Dmitry Bludov,^[51] who had had privileged access to the relevant materials when drawing up a report for Nicholas I.^[52]

One anonymous critic, however, suggested a very different view of the significance of truth in historical representation, stating that

a historical writer must base his conclusions on the most reliable evidence, but novelists and playwrights have the inalienable right of full freedom . . . the task of the artist is not necessarily to reproduce what was, but what could have happened, and therefore it is strange to blame Mr. Flavitsky for focusing on those historical legends whose pathos is so fitting to the nature and aspiration of his talents.[53]

This critic appealed to Horace’s *ut pictura poesis* in order to demonstrate the difference between historical research and historical fiction.[54] He saw it as the privilege of artists to be free to interpret historical events,[55] something echoed by Stasov several years later, when he declared that a painter is not a historian and hence has no obligation to establish the absolute truth of the historical evidence he depicts.[56]

If most critics were indeed indifferent to the degree of truth in Flavitsky’s painting, emphasizing its attractive qualities and fine technique (to them, it apparently made little difference whether this was the depiction of a specific historical figure or some generic prisoner[57]), the painting was provocative for the shadow it cast over the imperial dynasty. According to the official view, the establishment of the first Romanov tsar, Mikhail Fyodorovich I, in 1613 had marked a turning point in Russian history. His grandson, Peter the Great, had transformed Russia into a world power, creating the Russian Empire in 1721. But for those wishing to project a positive image of the ruling house, the remainder of the eighteenth century presented a problem. First there was the death in prison in 1718 of Peter I’s son Alexey, arrested on suspicion of plotting against his father. Following the brief reigns of Peter’s widow, Catherine I (r. 1725–27), and his son Peter II (r. 1727–30), his niece Anna Ioannovna held the throne for ten years (1730–40), but the brief tenure of the infant Ivan VI (1740–41) was cut short by Peter’s daughter Elizabeth, who ousted her infant cousin, imprisoning him along with his mother in Schlüsselberg Fortress. Her chosen heir, Peter III, lasted just six months in 1762 before he was removed by his wife (two years later Catherine was to order the “removal” of Ivan VI); their son Paul I (r. 1796–1801) was himself to be murdered.

While the official version of events continued to be somewhat sanitized, the publication, from the late 1850s onwards, of archival documents and other factual material relating to the imperial family drew increasing attention to the less positive aspects of their past. One of the earliest examples, and perhaps the most important, was the publication in 1858 of a letter (possibly forged) purporting to be from Alexander Rumyantsev (1680–1749) to one Dmitry Titov, regarding the murder of Peter I’s son Alexey.[58] Whether Alexey died as the result of torture or, as the letter stated, from being smothered with a pillow, the very fact of the Europeanizing monarch’s involvement in his son’s death was something that had largely been played down.[59] Another nearly contemporary example was the response to a book by Baron Modest Korf, *Vosshestvie na prestol imperatora Nikolaya 1-go* (*The Accession of Nicholas I*) (1857), a history of the uprising protesting Nicholas’s succession in 1825, which was uncompromisingly critical of the rebels.[60] In an angry public letter of protest to Alexander II, Herzen and Ogarev argued that Korf’s conclusions were incorrect,[61] and the

following year they published a collection of documents and articles that supported their alternative view of the uprising.[62]

The government’s response was to issue a circular from the Censorship Department on March 8 (20), 1860, which stated that

there is no specific paragraph in the censorship charter that would positively prohibit the distribution of information that is unfounded and inherently unfit for disclosure regarding the life and governmental actions of those Sovereign persons of the Royal House who are already dead and who belong to history. Therefore, in order that, on the one hand, such information brings no harm, and on the other, that the development of national history not be constrained, we shall set the period to which such information should not be published as starting from the end of the reign of Peter the Great. After this time, disclosure of information shall be forbidden if it might spread negative perceptions of deceased individuals from the Royal House.[63]

Although this circular, the directives in which remained in force until 1905, limited freedom of information about the tsarist family starting with Peter I’s death in 1725, in fact the restrictions were observed mainly with regard to the nineteenth century; the authorities allowed some laxity when it came to the eighteenth century.[64] It was this laxity that made it possible for Flavitsky to exhibit his painting, even though the Censorship Department paid close attention to ongoing historical research about Princess Tarakanova and to publications on the subject in the press.[65] Knowledge thereof may have caused some Russian critics to downplay the historical circumstances in their reviews of Flavitsky’s painting and to write instead about Tarakanova’s beauty and the sensuality of her décolleté.

Political Relevance: False Pretenders and Palace Coups

It is hard to explain to the non-Russian reader the significance of the very concept of impostors or false pretenders (*samozvantsy*) in Russian history. Flavitsky’s painting was immediately comprehensible to contemporaries in this context, referencing a subject that was seen as something specifically Russian.[66] This is not surprising when we think of just two (out of dozens) of instances from Russian history: there were at least three individuals who claimed to be the Tsarevich Dmitry, who had died in 1591 at the age of eight, while some forty or so men claimed to be Peter III, murdered husband of Catherine II.[67] Interest in the phenomenon was further heightened in the 1860s and 1870s,[68] partly in the wake of the imperfect emancipation of the serfs in 1861, which left many peasants impoverished and without land. There were those who dreamed of a coming “savior” of the people, a concept tightly bound up with the phenomenon of imposture in the Russian consciousness.[69] This savior, it was hoped, would free them in a way that the 1861 emancipation had not.[70]

Princess Tarakanova was not the only painting—indeed, not the first painting—to deal with the subject of impostors in Russian art in the 1860s. In 1862 the annual Academy exhibition in St. Petersburg included two works on the subject of Grigory Otrep’ev, the most famous of those claiming to be Tsarevich Dmitry: *Agents of the False Dmitry Kill the Son of Boris Godunov* by Konstantin Makovsky (1839–1915) (fig. 5) and *The Flight of Grigory Otrep’ev from the Tavern*

on *Lithuania’s Border* by Grigory Myasoedov (1834–1911) (fig. 6). The dramatic events of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (1598–1613) seemed particularly apposite in the age of Great Reforms. Some saw the harsh reign of Nicholas I as akin to that of Ivan the Terrible (r. 1547–84), while the disturbances wrought by Alexander II’s policies were perceived as paralleling those of the Time of Troubles, a period of political unrest that lasted from 1598 until the establishment of the House of Romanov in 1613.[71] The genuine historical figure of the False Dmitry, who had claimed the Russian throne for a short period in the wake of the death of Boris Godunov in 1605, enjoyed some popularity during Alexander’s reign, becoming not only the object of intensive historical research but the subject of a number of dramas.[72]

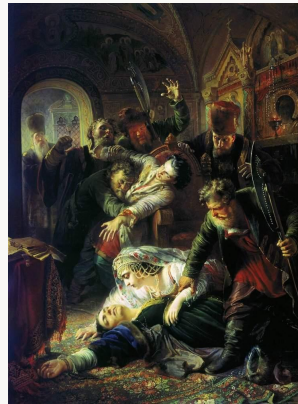


Fig. 5, Konstantin Makovsky, *Agents of the False Dmitry Kill the Son of Boris Godunov*, 1862. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#). [larger image]

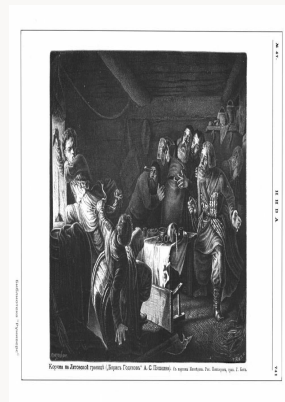


Fig. 6, D. Ponezerov (designer) and G. Koch (lithographer), *Taverna on the Border of Lithuania*, after Grigory Myasoedov’s *The Flight of Grigory Otrep’ev from the Tavern on Lithuania’s Border* (original painting in the All-Russian Aleksandr Pushkin Museum, St. Petersburg). Lithograph. Published in *Niva*, no. 47 (1872): 741. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Runivers](#). [larger image]

Despite their apparent relevance, however, the paintings of Makovsky and Myasoedov had little resonance among the Russian public, even if a few critics did suggest that Russian

painting was finally charting its way toward “true history,”^[73] or at least, that these paintings gave cause for hope with regard to the development of history painting in Russia.^[74] Contrasting the great poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), whose play of 1831, *Boris Godunov*, was the source for both paintings, with Nikolai Ustryalov, one of the main historians during the reign of Nicholas I, one critic emphasized the distinction between official history and the alternative histories that were escaping from state control:^[75]

Pushkin’s genius helped Mr. Myasoedov. Once, very recently, the critic of *Otechestvennye zapiski* [Annals of the fatherland, a contemporary literary magazine] expressed doubts regarding Pushkin’s national spirit, but now I must but ask him why this “nonnational” Pushkin so quickly enabled a young artist to comprehend this scene from national history, inspiring him as no folk songs, or historians such as Ustryalov, ever could have.^[76]

On the surface, Flavitsky’s painting, which harked back to the age of palace coups, to the intrigues and conspiracies of the court of Catherine II, was less politically relevant than works dealing with the Time of Troubles. As one journalist explained in 1867:

There is hardly any other age in our history that is more dramatic than the age of pretenders and interregnum: the palace coups were not so dramatic, simply because the people themselves were not involved and there was very little in them that was Russian.^[77]

This perceived “non-Russian” aspect of the post-Petrine era was by no means insignificant, since the period was commonly characterized as a time of German domination. Anna Leopoldovna was German born, as were Peter III (Charles Peter Ulrich of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp) and Catherine II (Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst), and many of the royal advisers in the first half of the century were Baltic Germans. Moreover, the period drew less interest simply because it had been less well studied. Very few archival materials relating to the palace coups or to the reign of Catherine II had yet been published.

Yet there were clear parallels to be drawn between current developments and events of the middle of the eighteenth century, which must have resonated with contemporaries. Flavitsky’s picture was exhibited at a time of heated debate on the Polish question, in the wake of the suppression of the January uprising in the Russian part of Poland in 1863. If the uprising recalled some aspects of the Time of Troubles,^[78] since it was with Polish support that the False Dmitry had briefly taken the Russian throne, Princess Tarakanova also had a connection with Poland. After the First Partition of Poland in 1772, one of the most influential princes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Karol Stanisław Radziwiłł, who was keen to reestablish Poland’s former borders, promised Tarakanova his support in gaining the throne. It was this connection between Princess Tarakanova and Poland and Lithuania that was to be particularly emphasized in Pavel Melnikov-Pecherskiy’s short story, *Princess Tarakanova and Princess Volodimirskaya*, published in *Russkiy vestnik* in 1867.^[79] Associations between the Time of Troubles and events in the 1860s thus tied in to a widespread antagonism between Russia and the rest of the Western world. Suppression of the 1863 uprising aggravated relations between Russia and Catholic countries, which came to Poland’s defense, and fear of a pan-European war became one of the main topics of discussion in Russian society.^[80]

Princess Tarakanova Center Stage

In terms of emotional response, Flavitsky’s painting represented a marked contrast to the paintings of Makovsky and Myasoedov. Their works are multigure compositions, filled with energy and movement, so very different to the single, dramatic figure of Princess Tarakanova. Both their subjects are taken from the start of the False Dmitry’s path to the throne, while Tarakanova is shown on the verge of death. Unlike the heroine of a work with which Flavitsky’s picture is more often compared, Ilya Repin’s *Tsarevna Sofia* of 1879 (fig. 7), in which Peter the Great’s sister is shown imprisoned by the ruling regime but unbowed,[81] Tarakanova is defeated, desperate. While it is unclear whether this greater concentration on the individual figure was due to the nature of the chosen subject or to the gender of the protagonist, or whether the subject or gender was chosen because it allowed for greater sensitivity and nuance, Flavitsky’s painting—like that of Repin’s after him—set a female historical figure center stage.



Fig. 7, Ilya Repin, *Tsarevna Sofia Alekseevna a Year after Her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and Torture of All Her Servants in 1698*, 1879. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).
[\[larger image\]](#)

The fate of Princess Tarakanova had been a subject of interest since the late eighteenth century, from Castéra’s book of 1797 to research published in 1809 by the secretary of the Saxon Embassy in Russia, Georg Adolf Wilhelm von Helbig, who thought her to be the daughter of Empress Elizabeth and her favorite, Ivan Shuvalov.[82] Helbig also believed that Tarakanova was imprisoned at Schlüsselburg Fortress, and that she died there in 1776.[83]

In 1865, almost certainly in response to Flavitsky’s painting,[84] Viktor Panin, the head of the second section of His Imperial Majesty’s Own Chancellery, presented to the tsar a report on the case of Tarakanova[85] compiled by one of his subordinates, Georg von Brevern. This report was based on Bludov’s note to Nicholas I (see above). Panin applied for permission to “publish for public dissemination an extract of the detailed file compiled in order to put an end to rumors circulating both in Russia and abroad.”[86] His text, “O samozvanke, vydavavshey sebya za doch’ Elizavety Petrovny. Po arkhivnym materialam” (On the impostor who declared herself the daughter of Elizaveta Petrovna. From archival

material), appeared alongside thirty documents from the secret archives in early 1867.[87] That same year, Panin and Brevern published their study in German, in order to prevent the circulation abroad of rumors about Tarakanova.[88] Like Bludov, they concluded that Princess Tarakanova had no blood ties to the imperial family and that Catherine II had been strict but fair in her treatment of her.[89] This study was complemented by the publication of archival materials by Konstantin Zlobin, director of the State Archive, “Bumagi iz dela o samozvanke izvestnoy pod imenem knyazhny Tarakanovoy” (Papers from the file of the impostor known under the name Princess Tarakanova).[90] Both publications made available to the public a large body of materials relating to Tarakanova’s life, although they inevitably presented the official point of view.[91] As modern scholars have remarked, most of the documents relate to the last three years of Tarakanova’s life, and it has proved impossible so far to discover anything about her origins.[92]

If prior to this few in Russia could have said just who Tarakanova was, interest in the fate of the pretender to the Russian throne was to grow within Russia, with Flavitsky’s painting providing further stimulus for a more accurate study and declassification of her story.[93] And she drew European attention once more, for in 1867, months after Flavitsky’s death in September 1866, *Princess Tarakanova* was shown in the Russian-art section of the Exposition Universelle in Paris, chosen by the *commissaire* (curator), the painter Schwartz.

Flavitsky’s picture had been selected for display in Paris in the face of opposition from the Council of the Academy of Fine Arts. Even Emperor Alexander II, the liberal tsar, did not approve of the work: on January 2 (14), 1867, the Minister of the Imperial Court wrote to the Academy’s vice president, stating that “His Majesty ordered that it be noted in the catalogue which will be distributed in Paris, next to Flavitsky’s work *Princess Tarakanova* (no. 50), that the subject of this painting is taken from a novel, which contains no historical truth.” This note was duly included in the catalogue, although it certainly had no basis in truth.[94]

Chernysheva feels that one reason for the Russian government’s opposition to the picture’s display was that it might have revived anti-Russian feeling in the wake of the suppression of the Polish Uprising in 1863. She nonetheless believes that the French public had little interest in any of the political implications, seeing *Princess Tarakanova* very much in the tradition of the French school of painting, particularly the art of Delaroche.[95]

If international audiences did not pick up on the political significance of the subject for Russia, however, the painting made its mark. The following year, 1868, Élise Moisson-Desroches (1833–70) exhibited at the Salon a work that essentially repeated Flavitsky’s composition, *La Princesse Farrakanoff noyée dans sa prison par suite d’une crue subite des eaux de la Neva en 1777* (*Princess Farrakanoff Drowned in Her Prison during Neva’s Flood in 1777*) (fig. 8, upper left).[96]



Fig. 8, Élise Moisson-Desroches, *La Princesse Farrakanoff noyée dans sa prison par suite d'une crue subite des eaux de la Neva en 1777* (*Princess Farrakanoff Drowned in Her Prison during Neva's Flood in 1777*), ca. 1868. Oil on canvas. Photograph from *Album de photographies des oeuvres achetées par l'Etat intitulé: "Ministère de la Maison de l'Empereur et des Beaux-Arts. Tableaux commandés ou acquis par le Service des Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1868"* [. . .] (Album of photographs of artworks purchased by the state entitled "Minister of the House of the Emperor and the Fine Arts. Paintings commissioned or acquired by the Fine Arts Service. Salon of 1868" [. . .]) (Paris, 1868). The painting is now in the Musée Denys-Puech, Rodez. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Archim](#). [\[larger image\]](#)

Conclusion

This research illuminates the complicated interrelations between the visual arts and historical politics in the Russian Empire. Censorship and the limitations of access to archival material made it almost impossible for historians to address certain episodes in the Russian past, and paintings offered a way of drawing wider attention to controversial events. Flavitsky's *Princess Tarakanova* is an exceptional instance of this, a history painting that not only raised a contentious subject but had its own effect on the declassification of documents.

Born out of the political and cultural ideas of the 1860s, the age of Great Reforms, Flavitsky's painting tied into his contemporaries' perceptions of a new, turbulent "Time of Troubles." Rather than choosing a popular "hero" such as the False Dmitry, the artist chose a less familiar subject, one that was all the more provocative for being less clear-cut. At the same time, *Princess Tarakanova* introduced a new sense of history to Russian art. In contrast to traditional historical canvases, it did not seek to teach a moral lesson but to arouse sympathy, and empathy, for one powerless in the face of death.

Postscript

The surge in information about Tarakanova—whether based on archival documents or the imaginings of Russian writers—and the widespread interest in her story would have been unthinkable before the exhibition of Flavitsky's painting in 1864. Over the succeeding years, books about Tarakanova by French and German authors would be joined by Russian novels.[\[97\]](#)

Despite its great success, to the amazement of contemporaries, the painting was not immediately purchased. One anonymous critic listed it among paintings that, because of their political implications, did not find buyers.[98] In fact, Tretyakov, who believed that Flavitsky’s painting brought honor to the Russian school of painting, had begun negotiations for its purchase in March 1865, but the artist demanded too high a price.[99] Tretyakov thus bought the picture only after Flavitsky’s death, when it returned from exhibition in Paris, for the sum of 4,000 silver rubles.[100] It joined the gallery of Russian art he had started assembling in 1856, becoming the first historical picture in his collection.[101] Such was its significance, that, as he explained in a letter of November 5 (17), 1869, to the Moscow Society of Art Amateurs, he decided not to lend it in the future to any exhibitions.[102] That same year, an unidentified artist painted a copy of Flavitsky’s work (fig. 9).[103]



Fig. 9, Unidentified artist, after Konstantin Flavitsky, *Princess Tarakanova*, 1869. Oil on canvas. Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts, Yekaterinburg. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of the [Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts](#). [\[larger image\]](#)

Even while it prompted the publication of factual information, Flavitsky’s picture was also to cement the myth of Tarakanova’s death during the great flood in St. Petersburg. It was that myth which was to be reflected in fact and fiction thereafter. In 1874, the Russian revolutionary Pyotr Kropotkin found himself imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress and wrote in his memoirs:

Here Peter I tortured his son Alexis and killed him with his own hand; here the Princess Tarakanova was kept in a cell which filled with water during an inundation, the rats climbing upon her to save themselves from drowning; here the terrible Minich tortured his enemies, and Catherine II buried alive those who objected to her having murdered her husband.[104]

And when Ippolit Shpazhinsky’s 1904 play, entitled simply *Princess Tarakanova*, was turned into a short film, directed by Kai Hansen, in 1910, the final scene very closely reproduced Flavitsky’s painting of 1864 (fig. 10).[105]

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Notes

Dates are listed according to the Julian Calendar in use in Russia until 1918, followed by “new style” dates, corresponding to the Gregorian Calendar used in Europe (a difference of eleven days in the eighteenth century and twelve days in the nineteenth) in parentheses. Abbreviations in the notes: RGALI (Russian State Archive of Literature and Art, Moscow); and RGIA (Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg).

All translations are by the author, except where indicated.

[1] “Пора, наконец, нашим художникам обратиться к это блистательной эпохе отечества. Пора понять сколько неисчерпаемых богатств, контрастов, драматических сцен всякого рода художник найдет в быте того времени, в борьбе нравов азиатских с европейскими, даже в высших сословиях общества. И все пособия исторические, все документы, костюмы — на лицо! Архивы загородных дворцов Императорских представили бы в этом случае обильную дань художникам; а сколько сюжетов для Петровского времени, и для после Петровской эпохи в романах русского Вальтер-Скотта. Лажечникова; Последний Новик и Ледяной дом.” А. Серов (А. Серов), “Vystavka v Imperatorskoy Akademii Khudozhestv” Выставка в Императорской Академии Художеств [The exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Arts], *Teatral’nyy i muzykal’nyy vestnik* Театральный и музыкальный вестник, no. 17, May 4 (16), 1858, 196.

[2] Peter ruled jointly with his older brother from 1682 until 1696.

[3] The rodents have the appearance of large mice and are usually described as such, rather than as rats.

[4] See, for example, “Peterburgskaya khronika. Vystavka v Akademii Khudozhestv” Петербургская хроника. Выставка в Академии Художеств [St. Petersburg chronicle. The exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Russkiy invalid* Русский инвалид, no. 271, December 6 (18), 1864, 2; Kh. L. (X. Л.), “Vsednevnaia zhizn’. Vtoroy tom ‘Paris Guide’ i otzivi o russkikh i russkom otdele na vseмирной vystavki” Вседневная жизнь. Второй том “Paris Guide” и его отзывы о русских и русском отделе всемирной выставки [Everyday life. The second volume of the “Paris Guide” and its references to Russians and the Russia section at the Exposition Universelle], *Golos* Голос, no. 222, August 13 (25), 1867, 2; and V. S. (В. С.) [V. V. Stasov], “Novye khudozhestvnynye izdaniya” Новые художественные издания [New publications on art], *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* Санкт-Петербургские ведомости, no. 149, June 2 [14], 1872, 2.

[5] See also M. A. Chernysheva (М. А. Чернышева), “Knyazhna Tarakanova’ vs ‘Tsarevna Sof’ya.’ Chuvstvitel’naya feminizatsiya istorii v iskusstve XIX veka” “Княжна Тараканова” vs “Царевна Софья.” Чувствительная феминизация истории в искусстве XIX века [“Princess Tarakanova” vs

“Tsarevna Sofia.” A sensitive feminization of history in nineteenth-century art], *Iskusstvoznanie* Искусствознание, no. 1 (2022): 205. On the impact of Delaroché’s art on Russian painters, see M. A. Chernysheva (М. А. Чернышева), “Kompozitsii Polya Delaroshia iz sobraniya Anatoliya Demidova i ikh znachenie dlya russkikh khudozhnikov XIX veka” Композиции Поля Делароша из собрания Анатолия Демидова и их значение для русских художников XIX века [Compositions by Paul Delaroché in the collection of Anatoly Demidoff and their significance for Russian nineteenth-century artists], *Aktual’nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства, no. 6 (2016): 597–604; M. A. Chernysheva (М. А. Чернышева), “Zakonchennaya kartina kak kontseptual’nyy chernovik k voprosu o genezise istoricheskogo zhanra v russkom iskusstve” Законченная картина как концептуальный черновик к вопросу о генезисе исторического жанра в русском искусстве [The finished painting as conceptual draft: On the question of the genesis of the *genre historique* in Russian art], *Die Welt der Slaven* 62, no. 1 (2017): 79–99; M. A. Chukcheeva (М. А. Чукчеева), “Formirovanie istoricheskogo zhanra v Rossii v 1860-e gody i tvorchestvo V. G. Shvartza” Формирование исторического жанра в России в 1860-е годы и творчество В. Г. Шварца [The formation of the *genre historique* in Russia in the 1860s and the work of V. G. Schwartz], *Khudozhestvennaya kul’tura* Художественная культура 1, no. 19 (2017), <http://artculturestudies.sias.ru/>; and M. A. Chernysheva (М. А. Чернышева), “Paul Delaroché: The Reception of His Work in Russia,” *Vestnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo Universiteta. Iskusstvovedenie* Вестник Санкт-Петербургского Университета. Искусствоведение 9, no. 3 (2019): 577–89.

[6] See Chernysheva, “Knyazhna Tarakanova’ vs ‘Tsarevna Sof’ya,” 206–10.

[7] On the educational system at the Imperial Academy of Arts, including the awards and titles, see Rosalind Polly Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas: Painting in Imperial Russia, 1757–1881* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016).

[8] The painting had been commissioned by Count Anatoly Demidov (Demidoff) (1813–70), who in 1834 presented it to Tsar Nicholas I; he in turn gave it to the Academy of Arts, where it was proudly displayed. See Margaret Samu, “The Reception of Karl Briullov’s *Last Day of Pompeii* at the Salon of 1834,” *The Art Bulletin* 103, no. 2 (June 2021): 77–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2021.1847579>.

[9] The Academy’s dissatisfaction with Flavitsky’s painting for this reason was noted by the artist’s contemporary, Russian artist Nikolay Ge. See V. V. Stasov (В. В. Стасов), *Nikolay Nikolaevich Ge: Ego zhizn’, proizvedeniya i perepiska* Николай Николаевич Ге: Его жизнь, произведения и переписка [Nikolay Nikolaevich Ge: His life, works and correspondence] (Moscow: Posrednik, 1904), 150.

[10] See M. A. Chukcheeva (М. А. Чукчеева), “Problema ‘natsional’nogo’ v otechestvennom iskusstve: Diskussiia o bytovom i istoricheskom zhanrakh zhivopisi v russkoy presse 1860-kh godov” Проблема “национального” в отечественном искусстве: дискуссия об историческом и бытовом жанрах живописи в русской прессе 1860-х годов [The question of the “national” in art of the fatherland: The discussion around history and genre painting in the Russian press in the 1860s], in *Aktual’nye problemy teorii i istorii iskusstva* Актуальные проблемы теории и истории искусства [Current questions about the theory and history of art], no. 10, ed. A. V. Zakharova (А. В. Захарова), S. V. Mal’tseva (С. В. Мальцева), and E. Yu. Staniukovich-Denisova (Е. Ю. Станюкович-Денисова) (Moscow: Moskovskiy Gosudarstvennyy Universitet; St. Petersburg: NP-Print, 2020), 351–62; and M. A. Chukcheeva (М. А. Чукчеева), “Transformatsiia kontseptsii ‘ut pictura poesis’ i novaya formula prezentatsii istorii v russkom iskusstve: Diskussiia ob akademicheskoy ierarkhii zhanrov v otechestvennoy presse v 1860-e gody” Трансформация концепции “ut pictura poesis” и новая формула презентации истории в русском искусстве: дискуссия об академической иерархии жанров в отечественной прессе в 1860-е годы [Transformation of the concept of *ut pictura poesis* and the new formula of presenting history in Russian art: The discussion concerning the academic hierarchy of genres in the Russian press in the 1860s], *Shagi/Steps* Шаги/Steps 6, no. 4 (2020): 28–51.

[11] K. A. Varnek (К. А. Варнек), “Stranitsy iz istorii nashego iskusstva” Страница из истории нашего искусства [Pages from the history of our (national) art], *Severnaya pchela* Северная пчела, no. 242, October 30 (November 11), 1861, 999–1000.

[12] See *Otchet Imperatorskoy Akademii Khudozhestv s 4 noyabrya 1864 po 12 sentyabrya 1865* Отчет Императорской Академии художеств с 4 ноября 1864 по 12 сентября 1865 [Report of the Imperial Academy of Arts from November 4, 1864, to September 12, 1865] (St. Petersburg, 1865), 7.

[13] See N. G. Galkina (Н. Г. Галкина) and M. N. Grigor’eva (М. Н. Григорьева), eds., *Pis’ma khudozhnikov Pavlu Mikhailovichu Tret’yakovu. 1856–1869* Письма художников Павлу Михайловичу Третьякову. 1856–1869 [Letters from artists to Pavel Mikhailovich Tretyakov. 1856–1869] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1960), 159.

- [14] *Pyatyy otchet komiteta obshchestva lyubiteley khudozhestv za 1865 g.* Пятый отчет комитета общества любителей художеств за 1865 г. [Fifth report of the Committee of the Society of Art Lovers for 1865] (Moscow: V Universitetskoy Tipografii Katkov i Ko., 1867), 6.
- [15] Flavitsky wanted these works, which he never actually painted, to deal with subjects concerning conflict within the Russian ruling family, such as “Tsarevna Sofia looking from the window of her cell to see the Streltsy hung” (Sofia, regent during the minority of her brother, Peter I, had sought to take power herself, in part with the support of the Streltsy regiments), or with less specifically Russian tales of political imprisonment, such as “the iron mask” and “Tasso in prison.” See A. G. Vereshchagina (А. Г. Верещагина), *Istoricheskaya kartina v russkom iskusstve, Shestidesyatye gody XIX veka* Историческая картина в русском искусстве: Шестидесятые годы XIX в. [The history painting in Russian art: The 1860s] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1990), 116, 222n51. See also M. Gilchrist, “Imprisoned Princesses: Princess Tarakanova and the Regent Tsarevna Sof’ya,” *Inferno: St. Andrews Journal of Art History*, no. 1 (1994): 33–34. A document in the archives tells us that on December 15 (27), 1864, one Sergey Orlov commissioned from Flavitsky several works on these topics, including a copy of *Princess Tarakanova*. See RGIA, Fond 789, opis’ 14, delo 7-F, f. 52.
- [16] Flavitsky was in contact with liberal circles inside Russia. See Vereshchagina, *Istoricheskaya kartina*, 222n49. Some art historians have suggested that he may also have been in direct communication with Herzen and Ogarev. See Vereshchagina, *Istoricheskaya kartina*, 115–16; and O. A. Atroshenko (О.А. Атрошенко) et al., *Zhivopis’ vtoroy poloviny XIX veka. Katalog* Живопись второй половины XIX века. каталог [Painting of the second half of the nineteenth century. Catalogue], ed. L. I. Iovleva (Л. И. Иовлева) (Moscow: Krasnaya Ploshchad’, 2006), 399. I have discovered no direct evidence to confirm this fact, although a letter from Flavitsky of September 9 (21), 1862, to his friend Mikhail Zheleznov, does mention Ogarev. RGIA, Fond 789, opis’ 14, delo 7-F, f. 66.
- [17] Flavitsky wrote to his brother in 1862: “I regret all the more that I must return and see Russia in this grotesque mode, where everyone is threatened by the excessive zeal of the police, which seizes both the just and the guilty merely on a suspicion.” (Я еще больше жалею, что в такое время должен возвратиться и увидеть Россию в этом (не разб). и где личность каждого подвергается опасности от особенного усердия полиции, которая и правого и виноватого хватает по одному только подозрению.) RGIA, Fond 789, opis’ 14, delo 7-F, f. 62 v.
- [18] Vereshchagina suggested the direct connection between the painting and the political arrests in the 1860s. Although her book was published in 1990, it was based on her doctoral thesis, completed in 1974 under the influence of Soviet ideology. See Vereshchagina, *Istoricheskaya kartina*, 115–19. Her argument was echoed by Gilchrist in “Imprisoned Princesses,” 34–35.
- [19] “Neskol’ko dannykh dlya istorii printsessi Tarakanovoy” Несколько данных для истории принцессы Таракановой [Several facts for a history of Princess Tarakanova], *Russkaya beseda* Русская беседа 6 (1859): 59–76; and N. Ya. Eidel’man (Н. Я. Эйдельман), *Gertsen protiv samodержaviiya. Sekretnaya politicheskaya istoriya Rossii XVIII–XIX vekov i Volnaya pechat’* Герцен против самодержавия: Секретная политическая история России XVIII–XIX вв. и Вольная печать [Herzen against autocracy: The secret political history of Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the free press] (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Mysl’), 1973. This led Nathan Eidel’man to divide nineteenth-century Russian historical writing into official and secret. Eidel’man, *Gertsen*, 5–7.
- [20] “В наше время уже потеряли значение политические причины, заставлявшие скрывать много, что должно бросить свет на неясные события Русской исторической жизни. Неужели русская история осуждена на ложь и на пробелы за все время — начиная от Петра I-го? Нет, мы твердо надеемся, что эти пробелы пополнятся.” “Neskol’ko dannykh,” 60.
- [21] According to this particular claim, Petrovna’s favorite, Count Alexey Razumovsky (1709–71), was Tarakanova’s father.
- [22] For an English-language discussion of Tarakanova’s fate, see P. Longworth, “The Pretender Phenomenon in Eighteenth-century Russia,” *Past & Present*, no. 66 (1975): 63–64; and Gilchrist, “Imprisoned Princesses,” 32–33.
- [23] “Antichnaya. Otdel V. Zhivopis’” Античная. Отдел V. Живопись [Ancient. V Department. Painting, no. 1: *Princess Tarakanova in Her Cell during the Flood*], in *Ukazatel’ khudozhestvennykh proizvedeniy Godichnoy vystavki Akademii khudozhestv za 1863–1864 akademicheskii god* Указатель художественных произведений Годи́чной выставки Академии художеств за 1863–1864 академический год [Index of the works of art in the annual exhibition at the Academy of Arts for the academic year 1863–1864] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya Gogenfek’dena, 1864), 29.
- [24] “Neskol’ko dannykh.”

- [25] M. Longinov (М. Лонгинов), “Knyazhna Tarakanova. Epizod iz anekdoticheskoy khroniki” Княжна Тараканова. Эпизод из анекдотической хроники [Princess Tarakanova. An episode from anecdotal chronicles], *Russkiy vestnik* Русский вестник 24, no. 1 (1859): 716–36. The 1864 catalogue mistakenly states that Longinov’s publication appeared in 1860. Gorina suggested that Flavitsky in fact did not use these articles as his source, without providing any evidence for her rejection. See T. N. Gorina (Т. Н. Горина), *Konstantin Dmitrievich Flavitsky. 1830–1866* Константин Дмитриевич Флавицкий. 1830–1866 [Konstantin Dmitrievich Flavitsky. 1830–1866] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1955), 16.
- [26] J.-H. Castéra, *Vie de Catherine II, Impératrice de Russie*, vol. 2 (Paris: Chez F. Boisson, 1797), 31–40. On her death, see Castéra, 39–40. Polish historian Ernst Luninsky, for example, noted the connection between Castéra’s tales and Flavitsky’s famous painting. See E. Luninsky, *Knyazhna Tarakanova* Княжна Тараканова [Princess Tarakanova] (Moscow: Russkaya Byl’, 1908), 7–8.
- [27] Av. Galitsyn (Ав. Галицин), *O mni moy knyazhne Tarakanovoy* О мнимой княжне Таракановой [On the false Princess Tarakanova] (Leipzig: Wolfgang Gerhard, 1863).
- [28] See also V. D’yakov (В. Дьяков), “Knyazhna Tarakanova’ po poluzabytyim arkhivnym istochnikam” “Княжна Тараканова” по полузабытым архивным источникам [“Princess Tarakanova” from half-forgotten archival sources], *Slavyanovedenie* Славяноведение, no. 1 (1994): 67; and S. Dolgova (С. Долгова), “Sud’ba arkhiva knyazhny Tarakanovoy” Судьба архива княжны Таракановой [The fate of Princess Tarakanova’s archive], in *Pamyatniki kul’tury. Novye otkrytiya: Pis’menost’, iskusstvo, arkhologiya. Ezhegodnik 2000* [Cultural monuments. New discoveries: Text, art, archaeology. Annual 2000] (Moscow, 2001), 7.
- [29] One critic hinted at a certain impropriety in the painting and recommended that only those with “stable emotions” view it. See P. P-rov (П. П-ров), “Fel’yeton” Фельетон [Feuilleton], *Modnyy magazin* Модный магазин, November 1864, 345.
- [30] See, for example, N. D. Dmitriev (Н. Д. Дмитриев), “Khudozhestvennyye novosti v Peterburge” Художественные новости в Петербурге [Artistic news in Petersburg], *Otechestvennyye zapiski* Отечественные записки, no. 157 (November 1864): 886.
- [31] See, for example, R. Stites, *The Women’s Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860–1930* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); and L. Edmondson, “Women’s Rights, Gender and Citizenship in Tsarist Russia, 1860–1920: The Question of Difference,” in *Women’s Rights and Human Rights. International Historical Perspectives*, ed. P. Grimshaw et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 153–67.
- [32] See also, for example, M.-C. Chaudonneret, “Du ‘genre anecdotique’ ou ‘genre historique.’ Une autre peinture d’histoire,” in *Les Années romantique. La Peinture française de 1815 à 1850*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux, 1996), 76–85. On the Russian situation, see Chukcheeva, “Formirovanie istoricheskogo zhanra v Rossii”; Chukcheeva, “Problema ‘natsional’nogo’”; and Chukcheeva, “Transformatsiya kontseptsii ‘ut pictura poesis.’”
- [33] Historic genre painting was sometimes called the *juste milieu*, although scholars now approach this concept with some skepticism. See also Chaudonneret, “Du ‘genre anecdotique’ ou ‘genre historique,’” 83; and S. Paccoud, “The ‘Historical Genre’ as an International Style: The Influence of Paul Delaroche on Józef Simmler and Polish History Painters,” in *European History Painting of the 19th Century: Mutual Connections, Common Themes, Differences, Actes de Colloque*, ed. W. Balus, R. Ocheduszko, and B. Ciciora-Czwórnóg (Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, Instytut Historii Sztuki, 2010), 155.
- [34] On the subject of historic genre painting, see M. S. Trofimenkov (М. С. Трофименков), “Evolutsiya frantsuzskoy istoricheskoy zhivopisi” Эволюция французской исторической живописи [The evolution of French history painting], in *Problemy izobrazitel’nogo iskusstva XIX stoletiya* [Problems of visual art of the nineteenth century], ed. N. N. Kalitina (Н. Н. Калитина) and I. D. Chechot (И. Д. Чечот) (Leningrad: Izdatel’stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1999), 122–23.
- [35] N. G. Chernyshevsky (Н. Г. Чернышевский), *Esteticheskie otnosheniya iskusstva k deystvitel’nosti* [Aesthetic Relations of Art to Reality] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya E. Pratsa, 1855); and N. G. Chernyshevsky, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* Полное собрание сочинений [Full collected works], vol. 2 (Moscow: Goslitizdat, 1949), 5–92. See also C. Adlam, “Realist Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Russian Art Writing,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 4 (2005): 657–58. On the question of *ut pictura poesis* in Russian realism, see M. Brunson, *Russian Realisms: Literature and Painting, 1840–1890* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2016).
- [36] “Он [Флавицкий], вероятно, хотел возбудить сожаление к пленнице, а возбуждает, напротив неприятное чувство, зовущее поскорее отвернуться от картины. Такого рода картины есть нравственная попытка, чего не допускают художественные законы, как законы общественные не допускают пытки

физической. И в жизни страдание возбуждает неодинаковое сочувствие: одно возбуждает действительный ужас, смешанный с высоким уважением к страданию; другое внушает скорбь, сожаление, но, увы, без всякого уважения к постигнутому бедствию.” Dmitriev, “Khudozhestvennye novosti v Peterburge,” 885–86.

[37] “Piloty, Wallenstein Led under Guard the Day before His Death. Sketch for a Large Painting,” in *Ukazatel’ postoyannoy khudozhesvennoy vystavki Obshchestva Pooshreniya khudozhnikov* [Указатель постоянной художественной выставки Общества Поощрения художников [Index of the permanent art exhibition of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists] (St. Petersburg, 1864), 11, no. 65. Dmitriev did not name the painter and called the picture *Wallenstein before His Death*. See Dmitriev, “Khudozhestvennye novosti v Peterburge,” 885–86.

[38] “Мера и вкус удержали художника как раз на той черте, за которою оканчивается потрясающее и начинается отвратительное. Его княжна привлекательна и за миг до того, чтоб сделаться трупом. Даже в самой силе трагического он остановился на крайней грани: это истома заточения, эти исплаканные глаза, судорогой ужаса запечатленные уста, это полу-гробовая бледность, – все это немножко более, немножко усилиннее – уже перешло бы в конвульсию смерти. Но на челе, еще прекрасном, только печать смертного приговора, на устах – вопль, последний, во всем еще вопль жизни . . . Напрасно говорят порицатели трагического в искусстве, что это не его дело, – неправда! только то не его дело, что ложь или безобразие.” Р. К. (П. К.) [P. M. Kovalevskiy], “Po povodu akademicheskoy vystavki kartin v Peterburge. Kartiny gg. Flavitskogo, Bronnikova, Filippova, Trutovskogo, Klodta, Sukhodol’skogo” По поводу академической выставки картин в Петербурге. Картины гг. Флавицкого, Бронникова, Филиппова, Трутовского, Клодта, Суходольского [On the Academy exhibition of paintings in St. Petersburg. Paintings by Messrs. Flavitsky, Bronnikov, Filippov, Trutovsky, Klodt, Sukhodolsky], *Sovremennik* Современник 105 (December 1864): 177–78.

[39] [G. E. Lessing / Г. Э. Лессинг], “O predele mezhdru zhivopisiu i poeziiu i o tom, chtu sii iskusstva mogut zaimstvovat odno ot drugogo” О пределе между живописью и поэзией и о том, что сии искусства могут заимствовать одно от другого [On the division between painting and poetry and on what these arts can borrow from each other], *Zhurnal izyashnykh iskusstv* Журнал изящных искусств 4, no. 1 (1823); no. 5: 381–400; and no. 6: 460–83; and G. E. Lessing (Г. Э. Лессинг), *Laokoon ili O granitsakh zhivopisi i poezii* Лаокоон или О границах живописи и поэзии [*Laocoon: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*], trans. E. Edelson (Moscow: Tipografiya Aleksandra Semena, 1859).

[40] Trofimenkov, “Evolutsiya frantsuzskoy istoricheskoy zhivopisi,” 123.

[41] F. I. Buslaev (Ф. И. Буслаев), “Zadachi sovremennoy esteticheskoy kritiki” Задачи современной эстетической критики [The tasks of contemporary aesthetic criticism], *Russkiy vestnik* Русский вестник 77 (September 1868): 273–36.

[42] In 1861 Schwartz was awarded a First Silver Medal by the Academy for a large cartoon on the same subject (State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg).

[43] On Schwartz’s painting and the development of the *genre historique* in Russia, see also Chukcheeva, “Formirovanie istoricheskogo zhanra v Rossii”; and Chernysheva, “Paul Delaroche: The Reception of His Work in Russia,” 582–84.

[44] He compared the painting to the sun, since it was the most significant work in the exhibition of 1864–65. See V. V. Stasov (В. В. Стасов), “Vystavka v Akademii khudozhestv” Выставка в Академии художеств [The exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* Санкт-Петербургские ведомости 36 (January 8 [20], 1865): 3.

[45] V. S., “Novye khudozhestvynnye izdaniya,” 1–2.

[46] In the second half of the nineteenth century, Russian historians talked of the “inner” and “external” sides of national history, the inner side dealing with everyday life or the private life of major historical figures.

[47] V. S., “Novye khudozhestvynnye izdaniya,” 1. Stasov referred here and elsewhere to “Niobe’s daughter,” but the likeness is rather to the statue of Niobe herself with her younger daughter, now in the Galerie degli Uffizi in Florence, which was known from many casts and copies.

[48] V. S., “Novye khudozhestvynnye izdaniya,” 1.

[49] “Г. Флавицкий изобразил принцессу Тараканову в крепости, во время наводнения. На это он, конечно, имел некоторое право: рассказы об этом существуют. Но ведь критика для исторического живописца так же необходима, как и для исторического писателя. Выставляя историческое лицо, нужно проверить всю его историю, и чем фактичнее будет художественное произведение, тем оно важнее. Но здесь спорить с г. Флавицким, что происшествие это едва ли могло случиться, мы не можем, потому что не имеем для этого данных.” Dmitriev, “Khudozhestvennye novosti v Peterburge,” 885.

- [50] M. Longinov (М. Лонгинов), “Zametka o knyazhne Tarakanovoy. Po povodu kartiny g. Flavitskogo” Заметка о княжне Таракановой. По поводу картины г. Флавицкого [Note on Princess Tarakanova. On the painting by Mr. Flavitsky], *Russkiy arkhiv* Русский архив, no. 1 (1865): col. 94.
- [51] Longinov, “Zametka o knyazhne Tarakanovoy,” col. 91.
- [52] On Bludov’s report, see S. Panchulidzev (С. Панчулидзеv), “Samozvanka Tarakanova” Самозванка Тараканова [The pretender Tarakanova], *Russkiy arkhiv* Русский архив, no. 1 (1905): 425–26.
- [53] “Исторический писатель обязан основывать свои выводы на наиболее правдоподобных данных, но романистам и драматургам принадлежит неотъемлемое право полной свободы . . . задача художника воспроизводить не непременно то, что было, а то, что могло быть и потому странно упрекать г. Флавицкого в том, что он остановился на тех исторических преданиях, пафос которых наиболее сроден характеру и стремлению его таланта.” “Godichnaya vystavka v Imperatorskoy akademii khudozhestv. Knyazhna Tarakanova v temnitse vo vremya navodneniya. Kartina Flavitskogo” Годи́чная выставка в Императорской Академии Художеств. Княжна Тараканова в темнице во время наводнения. Картина Флавицкого [The annual exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Arts. Princess Tarakanova in her cell during the flood. Painting by Flavitsky], *Vest’* Весть 47 (November 22 [December 4], 1864): 18.
- [54] The simile *ut pictura historia* was often used in Russian criticism during the 1860s, when critics chose to distinguish the task of making historical studies from that of painting.
- [55] One critic suggested that “Flavitsky’s painting should be looked upon not as an episode from history, but, to use Mr. Longinov’s telling expression, as an episode from some anecdotal chronicle of the eighteenth century” (a reference to words in the title of Longinov’s “Knyazhna Tarakanova, epizod iz anekdoticheskoy khroniki” [Princess Tarakanova, an episode from anecdotal chronicles]). See “Godichnaya vystavka v Akademii Khudozhestv” Годи́чная выставка в Академии Художеств [The annual exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Golos* Голос, no. 337, December 6 (18), 1864, 2. The word “anecdote,” rarely used in relation to Russian history painting in the 1860s, was far more common in discussions of French art, where there was a *genre anecdotique*, about which see Chaudonneret, “Du ‘genre anecdotique’ ou ‘genre historique,’” 76–85.
- [56] V. S. (В. С.) [V. V. Stasov], “Vystavka v Akademii Khudozhestv” Выставка в Академии Художеств [The exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti* Санкт-Петербургские ведомости, no. 11, January 12 [24], 1867, 1.
- [57] Critic and sculptor N. A. Ramazanov proposed changing the title of the painting to simply “The Prisoner.” See N. Ramazanov (Н. Рамазанов), “Knyazhna Tarakanova. Kartina g. professora Flavitskogo” Княжна Тараканова. Картина г. профессора Флавицкого [Princess Tarakanova. Painting by Professor Flavitsky], *Moskovskie vedomosti* Московские ведомости, no. 80, April 15 [27], 1865, 3.
- [58] “Ubienie tsarevicha Alekseya Petrovicha. Pis’mo Aleksandra Rumyantseva k Dmitriyu Ivanovichu Titovu” Убиение царевича Алексея Петровича. Письмо Александра Румянцева к Дмитрию Ивановичу Титову [The murder of Tsarevich Alexey Petrovich. Letter from Alexander Rumyantsev to Dmitry Ivanovich Titov], *Polyarnaya zvezda* Полярная звезда, no. 4 (1858): 279–85.
- [59] On the publication of Titov’s letter and the debates surrounding it, see Eidel’man, *Gertsen*, 68–70.
- [60] Baron M. A. Korf (бар. М. А. Корф), *Vosshestvie na prestol imperatora Nikolaya 1-go* Восшествие на престол императора Николая I-го [The Ascent to the Throne of Emperor Nicholas I] (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiya 2 Otd. Sob. E. I. V. Kantselyarii, 1857). The book proved extremely popular and was translated into English that same year as *The Accession of Nicholas I* (London: J. Murray, 1857). Korf’s book was just one of a series of failed attempts to control the declassification of historical materials. See also N. Ya. Eidel’man (Н. Я. Эйдельман), *Tainye korrespondenty “Polyarnoy zvezdy”* Тайные корреспонденты “Полярной звезды” [Secret correspondents of “Polar Star”] (Moscow: Mysl, 1966), 125–26.
- [61] “Pis’mo Aleksandru II (po povodu knigi barona Korfa)” Письмо Александру II (по поводу книги барона Корфа) [Letter to Alexander II (with regard to Baron Korf’s book)], *Kolokol* Колокол 4 (October 1 [13], 1857): 27–31.
- [62] *14 Dekabrya i Imperator Nikolay. Izdano Redaktsiey Polyarnoy Zvezdy. Po povodu knigi Barona Korfa* 14 Декабря 1825 и Император Николай. Издано Редакцией Полярной Звезды. По поводу книги Барона Корфа [December 14, 1825, and Emperor Nicholas. By the editors of Polar Star. With regard to Baron Korf’s book], comp. Iskander (Искандер) [A. I. Herzen (А. И. Герцен)] (London: Trubner, 1858).
- [63] “а как в цензурном уставе нет особенной статьи, которая бы положительно воспрещала распространение известий неосновательных и по существу своему неприличных к разглашению о жизни и правительственных

действиях августейших особ царствующего дома, уже скончавшихся и принадлежавших истории, то, с одной стороны, чтобы подобные известия не приносили вреда, а с другой - дабы не стеснять отечественную историю в ее развитии, - периодом, до которого не должны доходить подобные известия, принять конец царствования Петра Великого. После сего времени воспрещать оглашение сведений, могущих быть поводом к распространению неблагоприятных мнений о скончавшихся лицах царствующего дома.” “Копия с tsirkulyarnogo predlozheniya po Tsenzurnomu vedomstvu ot 8 marta 1860 goda” Копия с циркулярного предложения по Цензурному ведомству от 8 марта 1860 года [Copy of the circular letter from the Censorship Office of March 8, 1860], in *Sbornik postanovleniy i rasporyazheniy po tsenzure s 1720 po 1862 god: Napechatan po rasporyazheniyu Ministerstva narodnogo prosveshheniya* Сборник постановлений и распоряжений по цензуре с 1720 по 1862 год: напечатан по распоряжению Министерства народного просвещения [Collected resolutions and orders on censorship from 1720 to 1862: Published by order of the Ministry of Public Education] (St. Petersburg: V Tipografii Morskogo Ministerstva, 1862), 453.

[64] See also I. M. Chirskova (И. М. Чирскова), “Tsenzura i istoricheskoe znanie v Rossii vtoroy poloviny XIX veka” Цензура и историческое знание в России второй половины XIX века [Censorship and historical knowledge in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century], in A. N. Dmitriev (А.Н. Дмитриев), ed., *Istoricheskaya kul'tura imperatorskoy Rossii: Formirovanie predstavleniy o proshlom: Kollektivnaya monografiya v chest' professora I. M. Savel'yevo* Историческая культура императорской России: формирование представлений о прошлом: коллективная монография в честь профессора И. М. Савельевой [Historical culture in imperial Russia: The formation of ideas about the past; Collective monograph in honor of Professor I. M. Savel'eva] (Moscow: Izdatel'skiy dom Vyshey Shkoly Ekonomiki, 2012), 308–26.

[65] Chirskova, “Tsenzura i istoricheskoe znanie v Rossii,” 318.

[66] In 1868, the influential historian Sergei Solov'ev declared that “nowhere does it [the subject of impostors or false pretenders] appear so frequently, and nowhere is it of such importance as it is in Russian history of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.” S. M. Solov'ev (С. М. Соловьев), “Zametki o samozvantsakh v Rossii” Заметки о самозванцах в России [Notes on impostors in Russia], *Russkiy arkhiv* Русский архив, no. 2 (1868): col. 266.

[67] V. A. Uspenskiy (В. А. Успенский), “Tsar i samozvanets: samozvanchestvo v Rossii kak kul'turno-istoricheskii fenomen” Царь и самозванец: самозванчество в России как культурно-исторический феномен [Tsar and impostor: Impostorship in Russia as a cultural and historical phenomenon], in *V. A. Uspenskiy. Izbrannyye trudy. I: Semiotika istorii. Semiotika kul'tury* В. А. Успенский. Избранные труды. I. Семиотика истории. Семиотика культуры [V. A. Uspensky. Selected works, I: Semiotics of history. Semiotics of culture] (Moscow: Yazyki Russkoy Kul'tury, 1996), 75–109.

[68] O. E. Maiorova (О. Е. Майорова), “Tsarevich-samozvanets v sotsial'noy mifologii poreformennoy epokhi” Царевич-самозванец в социальной мифологии пореформенной эпохи [The impostor tsarevich in the social mythology of the reform era], *ROSSIYA / RUSSIA* РОССИЯ / RUSSIA 3, no. 11: *Kul'turnye praktiki v ideologicheskoy perspektive. Rossiya XVII — nachalo XX veka* Культурные практики в идеологической перспективе. Россия XVIII—начало XX века [Cultural practices in ideological perspective. Russia in the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries] (Moscow: OGI, 1999), 204–32.

[69] See also K. V. Chistov (К. В. Чистов), *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy XVII–XIX vv.* Русские народные социально-утопические легенды XVII–XIX вв. [Russian popular socio-utopian legends of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries] (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), 24–27; and K. V. Chistov (К. В. Чистов), *Russkaya narodnaya utopiya* Русская народная утопия [The Russian popular utopia] (Moscow: Dmitriy Bulanin, 2003), 49–53.

[70] See also I. Kalinin (И. Калинин), “On gran' khotel steret' mezh tem chem byl i chem kazalsya': Raby, samodержztsy i samozvantsy (dialektika vlasti). Stat'ya pervaya” “Он грань хотел стереть меж тем, чем был и чем казался”: рабы, самодержцы и самозванцы (диалектика власти). Статья первая [“He sought to blur the lines between what was and what appeared to be”: Slaves, autocrats and impostors (the dialectics of power). Article one], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie* Новое литературное обозрение 142, no. 6 (2016): 442–45; Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy*, 212–17; A. M. Panchenko (А. М. Панченко), “Russkaya kul'tura v kanun petrovskikh reform” Русская культура в канун петровских реформ [Russian culture on the eve of Petrine reforms], in *Iz istorii Russkoi kul'tury* Из истории русской культуры [From the history of Russian culture], vol. 3, ed. A. M. Panchenko (А. М. Панченко) et al. (Moscow: Shkola “Yazyki Russko Kul'tury,” 1996), 26; and Maiorova, “Tsarevich-samozvanets,” 218–20.

[71] See I. Vinitsky, “Russian Glubbudbrib: The Shade of False Dimitry and Russian Historical Imagination in the Age of Realism,” in *Ghostly Paradoxes: Modern Spiritualism and Russian Culture in the Age of Realism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 50.

- [72] On these historical dramas, see Vinitsky, “Russian Glubbudbrib,” 52–56; and I. S. Avkhimovich, “Performing the National Past: History on Stage in Imperial Russia” (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017), 142–226.
- [73] “настоящей [. . .] истории.” О. [V. V. Stasov], “Zametki o vystavke v Akademii Khudozhestv” Заметки о выставке в Академии Художеств [Notes on the exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Sovremennaya letopis. Russkiy vestnik* Современная летопись. Русский вестник 42 (October 1862): 8.
- [74] Ya. P. O. (Я. П. О-ъ.), “Po povodu vystavki v imperatorskoy Akademii khudozhestv” По поводу выставки в императорской академии художеств [On the exhibition at the Imperial Academy of Arts], *Illustratsia* Иллюстрация, no. 242, October 25 (November 6), 1862, 266.
- [75] See also Maiorova, “Tsarevich-samozvanets,” 213–16.
- [76] “Гений Пушкина помог г. Мясоедову. Когда-то очень недавно - критик ‘Отечественных записок’ сомневался в народности Пушкина - и вот теперь я бы только спросил этого критика: отчего это не народный Пушкин так скоро заставил молодого художника понять народную сцену и вдохновить его так, как не вдохновили бы его никакие простонародные песни, или историки, в роде Устрялова.” Ya. P. O. (Я. П. О-ъ.), “Po povodu vystavki,” 266.
- [77] “И действительно, едва ли в нашей истории есть другая эпоха, более исполненная драматизма, как эпоха самозванцев и междоусобия; дворцовые перевороты уже по одному тому не столь драматичны, что народ не принимал в них никакого участия, и русского в них было очень мало.” “Bibliografiya and zhurnalistika” Библиография и журналистика [Bibliography and journalism], *Golos* Голос, no. 103, April 13 (25), 1867, 1.
- [78] See also Maiorova, “Tsarevich-samozvanets,” 222.
- [79] М. [P. Mel’nikov-Pecherskiy], “Knyazhny Tarakanova i princessa Vladimirskaia” Княжна Тараканова и принцесса Владимирская [Princess Tarakanova and Princess Volodimirskaya], *Russkiy vestnik* Русский вестник 69 (May 1867): 181–86.
- [80] See also Maiorova, “Tsarevich-samozvanets,” 223.
- [81] See M. A. Chukcheeva (Чукчеева М. А.) “Kartina I. E. Repina Tsarevna Sofya Alekseevna cherez god posle zaklucheniya ee v Novodevichyi monastyr’, vo vremya kazni strel’tsov i pytki vsej ee prisluzhi v 1698: ‘Deformatsia’ istoricheskoi zhivopisi i reaktsia sovremennikov” Картина И.Е. Репина Царевна Софья Алексеевна через год после заключения ее в Новодевичьем монастыре, во время казни стрельцов и пытки всей ее прислуги в 1698 году: “деформация” исторической живописи и реакция современников [I. E. Repin’s *Tsarevna Sofia Alekseevna a Year after Her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel’tsy and Torture of All Her Servants in 1698: Its Reception by Contemporaries and the “Deformation” of History Painting*], *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 56, no. 3 (2022): 321.
- [82] G. A. W. von Helbig, *Russische Günstlinge* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1809), 249–52.
- [83] Helbig, *Russische Günstlinge*, 251–52. Schlüsselburg was where Elizabeth had imprisoned the infant Ivan VI and his parents when she seized power in 1741, and where Ivan was killed in 1764.
- [84] Panchulidzev suggested that Flavitsky’s painting inspired Panin to publish the material about Tarakanova’s fate. See Panchulidzev, “Samozvanka Tarakanova,” 426n2.
- [85] Luninsky, *Knyazhna Tarakanova*, 9.
- [86] “напечатать для всеобщего сведения извлечение из составленной по сему делу подробной записки дабы положить конец распространенным как в России, так и за границей ложным слухам о самозванке Таракановой.” Cited in Panchulidzev, “Samozvanka Tarakanova,” 426.
- [87] V. N. Panin (В. Н. Панин), “O samozvanke, vydavavshey sebya za doch’ Elizavety Petrovny. Po arkhivnym materialam” О самозванке, выдававшей себя за дочь Елизаветы Петровны. По архивным материалам [On the impostor who declared herself the daughter of Elizaveta Petrovna. From archival material], *Chteniya Obshestva Istorii i drevnostey Rossiiskih* Чтения Общества истории и древностей Российских, no. 1 (1867): 1–91. Panin’s publication led to discussion about the scope of the circular of March 8 (20), 1860, with regard to the publication of historical research in the press in general. See Chirskova, “Tsenzura i istoricheskoe znanie v Rossii,” 315.
- [88] G. von Brevern, *Die vorgebliche Tochter der Kaiserin Elisabeth Petrowna: Nach den Akten des Kaiserlich Russischen Reichsarchiv’s* (Berlin: Carl Duncker’s Verlag, 1867).
- [89] See also D’yakov, “Knyazhna Tarakanova,” 67–68.
- [90] К. К. Zlobin (К. К. Злобин), “Bumagi iz dela o samozvanke izvestnoy pod imenem knyazhny Tarakanovoy. Soobshcheno iz gosudarstvennogo arkhiva K. K. Zlobinym” Бумаги из дела о самозванке, известной под именем княжны Таракановой. Сообщено из государственного архива К. К. Злобиным [Papers from the file of the impostor known under the name Princess Tarakanova.

Related from the state archive by K. K. Zlobin], *Sbornik russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva* Сборник русского исторического общества, no. 1 (1867): 169–97.

[91] D’yakov, “Knyazhna Tarakanova,” 68.

[92] D’yakov, “Knyazhna Tarakanova,” 74.

[93] See A. I-n. (А. И-н.), “Zhurnal’nye i bibliograficheskie zametki” Журнальные и библиографические заметки [Periodical and bibliographical notes], *Russkiy invalid* Русский инвалид, no. 158, June 10 (22), 1867, 3; and “Bibliograficheskie izvestiya” Библиографические известия [Bibliographical news], *Birzhevye vedomosti* Биржевые ведомости, no. 169, June 28 (July 10), 1868, 1.

[94] “император повелел в каталоге картин, который будет раздаваться в Париже, против произведения Флавицкого ‘Княжна Тараканова.’” Panchulidzev mentions the following foreign novels about Princess Tarakanova: *Anna Petrowna, fille d’Elisabeth, Impératrice de Russie, histoire véritable*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1813); Wilhelmine Lorenz, *Elisabeth Tarakanow oder die Kaisertochter, ein historischer Roman* (Altenburg, 1835); and Luise Mühlbach, *Die Tochter einer Kaiserin*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1848), reissued in 1860 as *Princessin Tarakanow oder die Tochter einer Kaiserin*. See Panchulidzev, “Samozvanka Tarakanova,” 433n1.

[95] M. A. Chernysheva (М. А. Чернышева), “Natsional’noe proshloe i nastoyashchee v russkoy zhivopisi na Vsemirnoi vystavki 1867 goda” Национальное прошлое и настоящее в русской живописи на Всемирной выставке 1867 года [National past and present in Russian painting at the World’s Fair in 1867], *Iskusstvoznanie* Искусствознание, no. 3 (2019): 149–50.

[96] With thanks to Iliia Dorontchenkov for this information.

[97] Most significant were the responses of Russian writers in the 1880s, when a number of novels appeared. Among the novels are the following: E. A. Salias de Turnemir (Е. А. Салиас-де-Турнемир), *Printsessa Volodimirskaya. Istoricheskii roman* Принцесса Володимирская: Исторический роман [Princess Volodimirskaya. A historical novel] (St. Petersburg: G. Goppe, 1882); P. P. Sukhonin (П. П. Сухонин), *Knyazhna Vladimirskaya (Tarakanova), ili Zatsepinskiye kapitaly: Istoricheskii roman* Княжна Владимирская (Тараканова), или Зацепинские капиталы: Исторический роман [Princess Volodimirskaya or Zatsepin’s capital: A historical novel] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiya V. S. Balashev, 1882); and G. P. Danilevsky (Г. П. Данилевский), *Knyazhna Tarakanova: Istoricheskaya povest’* Княжна Тараканова: Историческая повесть [Princess Tarakanova: A historical tale] (Berlin: B. Behr [E. Bock]), 1885.

[98] “Zametki po povodu godichnoy vystavki v Akademii Khudozhestv” Заметки по поводу годичной выставки в Академии Художеств [Notes on the annual exhibition at the Academy of Arts], *Golos* Голос, no. 265, September 25 (October 7), 1868, 1.

[99] Galkina and Grigor’eva, *Pis’ma khudozhnikov*, 167, 325n2. In 1866, Flavitsky’s brothers tried to sell the painting for 60,000 francs or 18,000 silver rubles. See Galkina and Grigor’eva, *Pis’ma khudozhnikov*, 172–73.

[100] Atroshenko et al., *Zhivopis’ vtoroy poloviny XIX veka*, 401.

[101] On Tretyakov and his gallery see, for example, T. V. Yudenkova (Т. В. Юденкова), *Drugoy Tretyakov: Sud’ba i kolleksiya odnogo iz osnovateley Tretyakovskoy galerei* Другой Третьяков: судьба и коллекция одного из основателей Третьяковской галереи [The other Tretyakov: The fate and collection of one of the founders of the Tretyakov Gallery] (Moscow: Art-Volkhonka, 2012); and R. P. Blakesley, “An Unexpected Role Reversal: Pavel Tretyakov and the International Exhibition of 1862,” *Experiment* 23, no. 1 (2017): 93–103.

[102] RGALI, Fond 660, opis’ 1, delo 1039, f. 11.

[103] The painting was for many years thought to be a copy by Flavitsky himself.

[104] P. Kropotkin, *Memoirs of A Revolutionist* (London: Smith, Elder), 141.

[105] See *Knyazhna Tarakanova* (1910) [*Princess Tarakanova* (1910)], WebM audio/video, <https://en.wikipedia.org/>.

Illustrations



Fig. 1, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Princess Tarakanova*, 1864. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.
Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#). [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Jacob's Children Sell Their Brother Joseph*, 1855. Oil on canvas. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).
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Fig. 3, Konstantin Flavitsky, *Christian Martyrs in the Colosseum*, 1862. Oil on canvas. State Russian Museum, St. Petersburg. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).
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Fig. 4. Vyacheslav Schwartz, *Ivan the Terrible beside the Body of the Son He Murdered*, 1864. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#). [\[return to text\]](#)

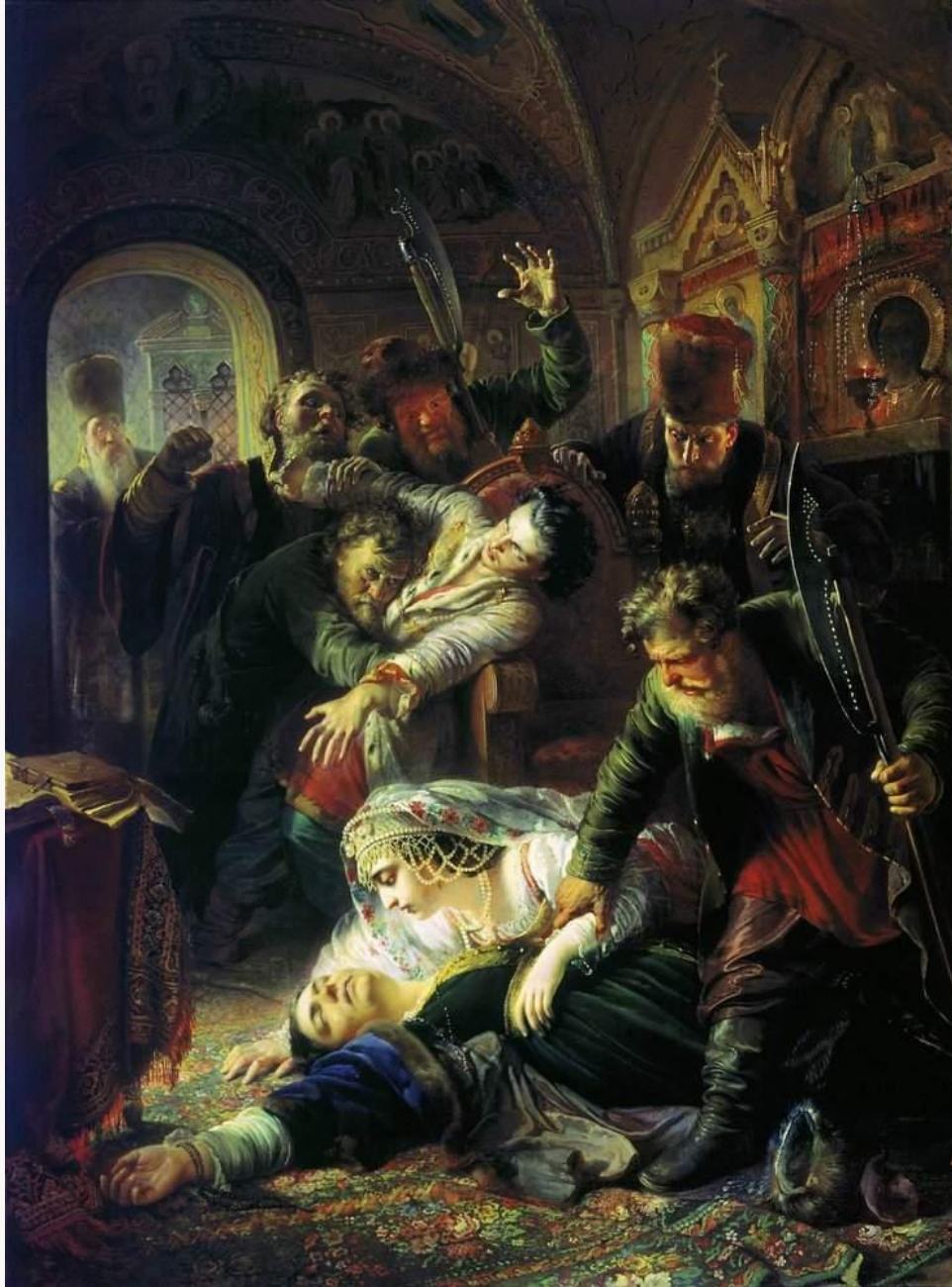


Fig. 5, Konstantin Makovsky, *Agents of the False Dmitry Kill the Son of Boris Godunov*, 1862. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#). [\[return to text\]](#)

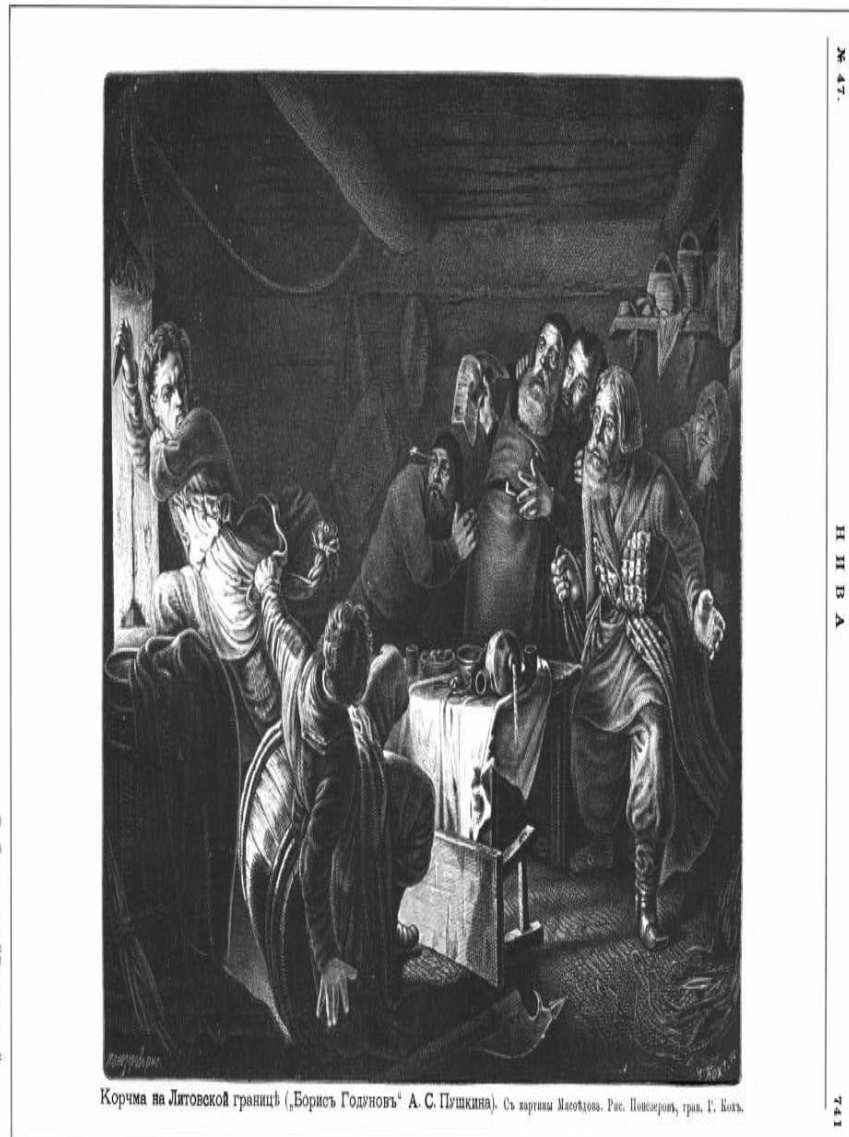


Fig. 6, D. Ponezerov (designer) and G. Koch (lithographer), *Taverna on the Border of Lithuania*, after Grigory Myasoedov’s *The Flight of Grigory Otrep’ev from the Tavern on Lithuania’s Border* (original painting in the All-Russian Aleksandr Pushkin Museum, St. Petersburg). Lithograph. Published in *Niva*, no. 47 (1872): 741. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Runivers](https://www.runivers.ru). [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 7, Ilya Repin, *Tsarevna Sofia Alekseevna a Year after Her Imprisonment in the Novodevichii Convent, during the Execution of the Strel'tsy and Torture of All Her Servants in 1698, 1879*. Oil on canvas. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Artwork in the public domain; available from: [Wikimedia Commons](#).

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Fig. 8, Élise Moisson-Desroches, *La Princesse Farrakanoff noyée dans sa prison par suite d'une crue subite des eaux de la Newa en 1777* (*Princess Farrakanoff Drowned in Her Prison during Neva's Flood in 1777*), ca. 1868. Oil on canvas. Photograph from *Album de photographies des oeuvres achetées par l'Etat intitulé: "Ministère de la Maison de l'Empereur et des Beaux-Arts. Tableaux commandés ou acquis par le Service des Beaux-Arts. Salon de 1868"* [. . .] (Album of photographs of artworks purchased by the state entitled "Minister of the House of the Emperor and the Fine Arts. Paintings commissioned or acquired by the Fine Arts Service. Salon of 1868" [. . .]) (Paris, 1868). The painting is now in the Musée Denys-Puech, Rodez.

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Fig. 9, Unidentified artist, after Konstantin Flavitsky, *Princess Tarakanova*, 1869. Oil on canvas. Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts, Yekaterinburg. Artwork in the public domain; image courtesy of the [Yekaterinburg Museum of Fine Arts](#). [\[return to text\]](#)