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# To Be a Woman at *Sovremennik*: Poetry and Truth in the Fiction of Avdot'ia Panaeva

The article focuses on Avdot'ia Panaeva's fiction as a source for reconstructing the writer's subjectivity. Examined from this point of view, her prose allows for an understanding of how Panaeva, the only female contributor to *The Contemporary* [Sovremennik], felt about the progressive declarations and daily practices of the male editorial staff of the periodical. The article also discusses in detail both the defining characteristics of Panaeva's prose (such as prototypism, or the emancipation project outlined in her prose) and her literary reputation as a fiction writer, in particular examining her retirement from literature a few decades after the publication of the novel *A Woman's Lot* [Zhenskaia dolia, 1862]. Although, due to historical circumstances, Panaeva's progressive project turned out to be unpopular with her contemporaries, the legacy of her prose gives researchers an opportunity to view the editorial staff of *The Contemporary* through a woman's eyes. This article is the updated version of a Russian language article published by the authors in the journal *New Literary Observer* [Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie] in 2023 (No. 3).

Avdot'ia Panaeva (1820–93) is now considered a minor author. Her late memoir *Memories* [Vospominaniia, 1889] is the only text from her extensive literary heritage which has remained in the canon. The attitude towards it, however, is predetermined – Panaeva is reproached for the inaccuracies and a superficial view of the writers surrounding her. Her novels and short stories, published under the pseudonym Nikolai Stanitskii, are absolutely forgotten, while Panaeva herself is often recalled as a co-author of the second-rate prose of Nikolai Nekrasov – the novels *Dead Lake* [Mertvoe ozero, 1851] and *Three Lands of the World* [Tri strany sveta, 1848], which were written during the years of censorship restrictions called 'the seven dark years' [mrachnoe semiletie].

Literary scholars have assigned Panaeva the role of 'the poet's wife' (Chukovskii 2004). Moreover, she is usually defined as a distinguished woman of an outstanding man': the mistress and muse of Nekrasov, the wife of Ivan Panaev, a close friend of Nikolai Chernyshevskii, a patroness of Nikolai Dobroliubov. Although the scholars evaluated these roles positively, Panaeva

was always perceived as a dependent. Disregarding the real duties of Panaeva in *Sovremennik* [The Contemporary] (she was a proof-reader and the head of the fashion section), Soviet literary historians saw her as the hostess of the editorial board – in other words, a person who, through domestic routine, united the employees and the authors in a 'circle' or 'family'. However, for many members of the circle, Panaeva was an eroticized emblem of the editorial staff, if not an object of harassment.[1]

Panaeva has almost always been considered through androcentric optics, while her subjectivity and intentions have not been taken into account.[2] All efforts to explain her psychology appear even more depressing. Kornei Chukovskii, who was mostly responsible for the distortion of the writer's image, did not attach great importance to her prose. The only exception was the early short tale *The Talnikov family* [Semeistvo Tal'nikovykh, 1928], but even in this case, Chukovskii believed that the text had been written with considerable help from Nekrasov. In his opinion, fiction, in general, did not play a crucial role in Panaeva's life: at heart, she was mere 'Avdot'ia, a good, very good Russian woman, who almost accidentally found herself in the circle of great people', and her inner world can be determined by futile attempts to give birth and create a family (Chukovskii 2004: 297).[3]

The image of Panaeva as an unsuccessful, dependent, and creatively fruitless agent maintained in Soviet history due, to a certain extent, to a famous story of embezzlement of Nikolai Ogarev's money (Cherniak 1933; Makeev 2017). Since this story threatened the reputation of

[1] T.N. Granovskii wrote this about Panaeva to his wife in 1851: 'And if you knew how they treat her! There is no one to protect her from the most impudent, insulting philandering on the part of the friends of the house' (Stankevich 1897: 284).

[2] Cf., however, the portrait of Panaeva in the latest biography of Nekrasov. While evaluating the relationship between the poet and the writer in a balanced way, and noting that Panaeva was a strong person (in contrast to the views of the Soviet time), the researcher, nevertheless, believes that Panaeva 'had no literary ambitions', and her equality with Nekrasov was possible only in the emotional sphere (Makeev 2017: 162).

[3] Because of Chukovskii's high status, it was his understanding of Panaeva that prevailed in Soviet scholarly circles. However, even in Soviet times not everyone accepted his view. See the balanced critique of his attitude to Panaeva the writer in the pioneering dissertation of Ul'ana Dolgikh (Dolgikh 1977: 37–38).

Nekrasov, and since Panaeva did indeed play a dubious role in legal and financial operations, the easiest option for literary scholars was to charge her with the disappearance of money.[4] Thus, Nekrasov became innocent, while Panaeva acquired an aura of treachery. Later, this aura would become the core element of her image as a temptress and *femme fatale*.[5]

This understanding of Panaeva is deeply archaic. It reduces her character to an attribution of versatile roles fixed in masculine discourse.[6] Historically, it is a great injustice because Panaeva, as well as other women of the literary circle of Vissarion Belinskii and his followers (Mariia Ogareva, Elizaveta Granovskaia, Natal'ia Gertsen), was an early representative of the emancipation movement. Not only did she help form the feminist discourses of her times, referring to George Sand and French socialists, but also was a member of a radical (for her era) experiment to change the marital status of a woman (Kafanova 2017). The triple alliance of Nekrasov and Panaevs was an experiment in developing a new type of family.

It is hard to regard Panaeva as a passive participant in these experiments. Several ego documents prove beyond doubt that her decisions and acts were based on a developed and ideologically elaborated subjectivity. One of these documents is her correspondence with Belinskii from the summer of 1845, in which she addresses the critic on equal terms and, sometimes, with irony, proves her absolute intellectual independence. She speaks with displeasure about Ogarev, reports on her disputes with Nikolai Ketcher, and char-

[4] B.L. Bessonov proved convincingly that M. K. Lemke even forged Nekrasov's letter in order to make Panaeva the main culprit in this 'case'. It should be emphasized that we are talking about the research reception of the twentieth century; Nekrasov's contemporaries were inclined to blame him for the story.

[5] See the reprint of Panaeva's memoirs under the title *My Lover – Nikolai Nekrasov* [Moi liubovnik – Nikolai Nekrasov] (Panaeva 2014) and the telling phrase from the abstract: 'Before you are the memories of the great poet's Muse, a woman who inspired, excited and drove out of mind'.

[6] Moreover, these roles developed as early as the first third of the 19th century and were attributed to a greater or lesser extent to women writers. It is noteworthy, for example, that during the transition from an aristocratic salon to a more democratic journal culture, the repertoire of women's roles remained the same. While the editorial office was radically different from the salon, the role of 'the woman of the house' with all its stable attributes was equally prescribed to women in both types of spaces.

acterizes other members of the circle (Brodskii 1948: 217–23).

Panaeva's subjectivity manifests itself in her letters to Ogareva more consistently (Cherniak 1933). Traditionally, these letters are regarded as material for reconstructing the facts of the financial affairs of the Ogarev case. However, this aspect is not the only important one. In this correspondence, Panaeva articulates her cherished beliefs and reflects on the social and marital status of women. Among her core values, Panaeva lists autonomy, independence (above all, the financial), and labour as the way to achieve them.[7] In light of early feminist ideas, the Ogarev case looks like a thought-out but not well-realized act of emancipation, which had to change the subordinate position of women and the established gender hierarchy (on early Russian feminism see Stites 1978 and Iukina 2007).

Panaeva was the only writer among the women of Belinskii's circle. Fiction was not a leisure practice for her – Panaeva regarded writing as a professional activity and as a source of income. The account books of *The Contemporary* show that Panaeva received royalties for her work on par with other contributors to the journal.[8] Professional realization was important for her because it confirmed the social status of the writer and provided her with the artistic, financial, and human independence, to which Panaeva aspired. For younger participants in the women's movement, Panaeva was not just the common-law wife of an outstanding editor and poet, but an autonomous cultural figure. Thus, Liudmila Shelgunova considered Panaeva a personality of the same status as the French feminist Jenny d'Héricourt (Stackenschneider 1934: 344, 536). The ideas of the latter inspired Mikhail Mikhailov to write an article entitled 'Women, Their Upbringing and Meaning in the Family and Society' [Zhenshchiny, ikh vospitanie i znachenie v sem'e i obshchestve] (Mikhailov 1860).

[7] Let us take just one quote as an example – a fragment from a letter to Ogareva dated March 2, 1848: 'It is time to understand that reliable fortune is the first condition of life. [...] And my advice is to have capital in your hands, to take it when you want and give it to whomever you want if it is necessary. Enough have you lived in dependence [...] (Cherniak 1933: 345). In these words, it is easy to see the reflection of Panaeva's life program. However, since she, unlike her friend, did not even potentially possess much capital, she had to rely on literary labour.

[8] We thank M.S. Makeev for the reference.

The publication of this text is the starting point of a wider feminist movement in Russia (Kotliarevskii 1914).

Panaeva occupies a very specific place among Russian-speaking women writers, a subject which has become the focus of extensive research in the last few decades.[9] Panaeva's prose, however, has not received sufficient attention in papers on women's literature, although there are still some works dedicated to her specifically (Kurova 1952; Dolgikh 1977; Gheith 2001; Holmgren et al. 2007; Holmgren 2009; Vaysman 2021). Literary scholars do not always manage to reconcile the revision of the canon and its inevitable aesthetic hierarchy. Perhaps, Panaeva's fiction is inferior to the prose of her contemporaries. But another aspect is important to us: in comparison to other writers (e.g. Elena Gan, Elizaveta Salias de Tournemire, Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia and others), Panaeva occupied a more stable position in the field of literature. This place was not on the periphery but at the centre of literary practices.

For *The Contemporary*, she was not just an ordinary author. Her willingness to sacrifice her artistic freedom in the interest of the journal is an evidence of that: the aforementioned *Dead Lake* and *Three Lands of the World* were created for the sole purpose of filling the pages of the prose section and saving the face of the publication in the eyes of subscribers when not enough material was available for publication. Such a thankless goal implies work to a deadline, labour governed not by inspiration or inner needs but by necessity.[10] This labour, in turn, would have been impossible without self-identification with the journal, which is undoubted in Panaeva's case.[11] She could rightfully consider herself a member of the editing office of

[9] See, for example: Kelly 1994; Clyman et al. 1994; Marsh 1996; Greene 2004; Stroganova 2004; Stroganova et al. 2006; Stroganova 2019; Kliuchkin 2019 etc.

[10] We shall note that traditional literary criticism, which attributes all the successes of the co-authored novels to Nekrasov (Evgen'ev-Maksimov 1950: 123–27, 155–57; Nekrasov 1981–2000, IX, 2: 327–35; Nekrasov 1981–2000, X, 2: 268–76), is set by an androcentric lens which cannot withstand serious criticism, and needs revision. See the attempted reinterpretation in Dolgikh (Dolgikh 1977).

[11] See a significant line from V.I. Dobroliubov's 1860 letter to his nephew about *The Contemporary's* criticism by the press: 'Avdot'ia Iakovlevna is terribly upset about the attacks and has ordered to send to you all the articles written against *The Contemporary*' (Chernyshevskii 1890: 604).

*The Contemporary*. Due to several historical circumstances, the life of *The Contemporary* was not only studied, but studied better than the life of any other magazine. That is why 'the reality' of Panaeva is accessible to scholars in opposition to the world of Russian female writers of the middle of the nineteenth century, which is sometimes 'closed' to research.

The unique position of Panaeva naturally determines researchers' approaches. While modern literary historians interested in gender analyze women's fiction as a relatively autonomous and hermetic subsystem that exists alongside 'overvalued' masculine literature, we will use fictional material to reconstruct women's subjectivity. No doubt, gender literary studies have also reached an unprecedented level in the study of historical forms of female consciousness, but they are often faced with a scarcity of data. The emergence of female subjectivity in the prose is frequently impossible to correlate with the biographical facts. Hence, detaching literary stimuli (for example, Sand's novels) from the personal experience of the writer also becomes difficult. The researchers usually detect personal experience in a text and notice that it is realized in literature in specific 'female' subgenres (Kelly 1994).

We believe that it is necessary to consider Panaeva's artistic prose as material that allows us to reconstruct a particular woman's consciousness. In this approach, the study of the subjectivity of the female writer is especially important for us. Among such studies, first of all, is the monograph by Irina Savkina, which, alongside other aspects, successfully summarizes the findings of previous studies (Savkina 2007). Savkina introduces a metaphor within the framework of which the female autobiographical writings are presented as a mirror. This 'mirror' reflects the prescriptions and expectations of a society shaped mostly by men. We can apply this metaphor to Panaeva's fiction: we know for sure who is looking into the 'mirror' of her prose and can compare the reflection against reality – in other words, we can show that her works critically respond to the ideological projects and daily practices in relation to gender of the male editorial staff of *The Contemporary*, primarily Nekrasov. Using Savkina's lens for the analysis of the non-autobiographical texts, we will show that in the case of Panaeva, there is no impenetrable border between egodocu-

mentary and fictional discourses.

The common reading of Panaeva's prose allows us to assert: its distinctive feature is the sublimation of life and editorial experience into literary subjects. As a professional writer, Panaeva focuses on the depiction of fictional worlds that are structurally related to the tradition that is relevant to her. The plots and subjects that play out in her work are from early Russian women's prose and Sand's novels (such as disappointment in marriage or betrayal). Panaeva's reputation as a Russian George Sand was acknowledged by her contemporaries (see, for example, the elements from the 1850s in Nikolai Shcherbina's *The Dream Book of Contemporary Russian Literature* [Sonnik sovremennoi russkoi literatury, 1857] (Shcherbina 1929: 148–49) . This attitude to Panaeva later made its way into literary studies, including gender studies.[12] At the same time, like many writers, Panaeva willingly included portraits of people she knew in her works; to them, her texts turned out to be a special message addressed to them only.[13]

Traditional literary criticism loves to unravel the prototypes of characters. This fad has not overlooked Panaeva's texts: it has already been noted that Mikhail Lermontov (Bessonov 1979) was portrayed in Panaeva's *The Apiary* [Paseka, 1849], and Vasilii Botkin and Dobroliubov were depicted in *A Woman's Lot* [Zhenskaia dolia, 1862] (Kurova 1952; Dolgikh 1977: 157–58; Stepina 2019). This list can go on: in Serge from the novel *Trifles of Life* [Melochi zhizni, 1854], a failed scientist, a homeopath, and a landowner who goes bankrupt thanks to utopian projects to improve the lives of peasants, one can recognize Ogarev. Panaev is behind the image of Boris Olkhovskii, who maniacally changes his attire and lives in constant quarrels with his wife Elena while chasing after every passing skirt. The traits of Belinskii can be seen in an ever-present character in Panaeva's prose – a poor, sincere young intellectual who sympathizes with the heroine (Karsanov from *Romance in the*

[12] Thus, M. Vaysman interprets the novel *A Woman's Lot* in the light of the specifics of women's narratives and, in particular, the 'gender transvestism' of the nineteenth century (Vaysman 2021).

[13] This probably explains the skeptical attitude of some contemporaries to her, for example, I.S. Turgenev's irritated remarks about her, or V.P. Botkin's doubts about her femininity (Turgenev 1987: 235; Izmailov 1930: 69–70, 86).

*Petersburg Demi-Monde* [*Roman v Peterburgskom polusvete*, 1860]), and the similarity is made more obvious by the fact that the character is dying of consumption (Anatolii Skvortsov from *Trifles of Life*, Sergei in *A Woman's Lot*).[14] No doubt, Nekrasov also appears in Panaeva's prose (Stepina 2019). His traits appear in the so-called 'artistic figures' – the sculptor Cordier, who makes his way in the world from the lower classes and is very gifted, but also vain and prone to quarrels (in *A Capricious Woman* [Kapriznaia zhenshchina, 1850]), as well as in the artist Drozdov, a skilful manipulator who imitates an incurable disease and enslaves those around him (*Domestic Hell* [Domashnii ad, 1857]). The evidence for the prototypic nature of the characters can be unmistakably found in plot collisions and the typical characteristics of the 'intellectuals' preserved in memoirs.

However, it would not be right to limit research to the unraveling of prototypes and searching for the real people reflected in characters. The prototypes of Panaeva's characters are valuable as vehicles of ideology and supporters of family and social practices that she opposes, rather than as real people with different personalities and habits. In this regard, the prototypical nature of Panaeva's works fully defines her writing and sets her apart from other writers. While usually for a writer who resorts to the poetics of prototypes the inclusion of references to specific people works as an additional technique that strengthens the fictional character system of the work, for Panaeva, the desire to explain herself to the people around her comes first. Thus, fiction functions as a way of delivering replies in a tense dialogue. In a certain way, the prototypical nature of Panaeva's prose is pre-literary; it is more a property of the writer's imagination and only as consequence of this is it a feature of her writing.

Analyzing this phenomenon, we come closer to understanding her not as a fiction writer among others, but as a representative of the specific subjectivity of the mid-nineteenth century.

The most acute controversy in the *Contemporary* circle was reflected in Panaeva's novel *A Woman's Lot*, which gathers together numerous themes from her previous stories and novels. A distinctive feature of this text is that a circle of characters who can be traced back to the senior

[14] However, Karsanov and Sergei could also reflect traits of Dobroliubov, whose image was superimposed on the memories of Belinskii.

members of the editorial staff (Botkin, Panaev, Nekrasov, etc.) are all accused of the same allegation. Although all the characters in the novel are depicted as independent individuals, they are indistinguishable in a way that is crucial for Panaeva – all of them participate in the oppression of women.

In this regard, this group of friends and like-minded people, subjectively evaluating themselves as 'new men', as emancipators striving for the maximum realization of the creative and intellectual potential of the individual, does not differ from another persistent enemy in the prose of Panaeva and other women in the nineteenth century – traditional high society. The writer repeatedly attacked this society in short stories, such as *The Apiary*, *Castles in the Sky* [Vozdushnye zamki, 1855], and in longer works like *Domestic Hell* and *Romance in the Petersburg Demi-Monde*, and others. The specifics of Panaeva's deconstructive approach lie in the fact that the characters representing the circle of *The Contemporary* tend to see and accentuate their differences from the high society [svet]. They openly oppose themselves to it, while the writer's gaze is fixed on the part of their practices where these differences are not apparent. Panaeva chooses a perspective in which there is no difference between the new 'emancipators' and the old 'oppressors': both treat women as property, but the former seek to justify emotional and social submission using the need for progress, while the latter plays out the norms of high-society life. In other words, Panaeva aspires to see more than other writers – she discovers a deep and essential similarity where those who have fallen under the spell of emancipatory preaching see only superficial, albeit striking differences.

This attitude of Panaeva is based on a notable discrepancy between the theory and practice of the senior representatives of *The Contemporary*. While Druzhinin, Botkin, Panaev, and, of course, Nekrasov professed a new attitude to women, their daily lives did not reflect the ethical ideals they propagated. The authors frequented brothels and practised a purely masculine, objectifying attitude towards women in both high society and the *demimonde*, such as discussing how available they were. Moreover, being participants in the *Chernoknizhniki* circle, they took part in comical literary exercises that humorously and obscenely reflected all

these practices.[15] Panaeva's texts are vivid evidence that not only was she aware of the wide gap between the theoretical views and the behaviour of the senior editorial board, but that she also saw the ethical inferiority of the male feminist project reflected in this fact.

In *A Woman's Lot* this understanding is expressed in an overexaggerated form. The novel consists of two parts, which are connected by the central character, Sofiia Grigorievna. Wishing to deprive her mother of her power over her young daughter, her father, who suddenly arrives at the estate, sets Sofiia up with Petr Vasilievich, a young man from St Petersburg, a bearer of advanced ideas, and an 'artistic nature', as he is sincerely characterized by those around him and ironically by the narrator. Soon Sofiia is seduced, becomes Petr's wife and moves to his estate, where she finds herself surrounded by her husband's friends, Fedor Fedorovich, Nadezhda Kondratievna, and her lover Sergei Ignatievich. They consider themselves progressive people and strive to educate Sofiia: they try to liberate the modest heroine's sexuality and turn her into a 'bacchante' [vakhanka].[16]

The world of the estate in which Sofia finds herself gradually unfolds before her. It turns out that Petr has a child with the housemaid. Nadezhda Kondratievna and Sergei Ignatievich also have an adult son, who has been declared insane (indeed, the eccentric Serezha reminds the reader of the blessed Myshkin in Dostoevskii's *The Idiot* [Idiot, 1868]) and is hidden from the eyes of outsiders in a cabin in the woods. Fedor Fedorovich turns out to be a womanizer obsessed with sexual desires, in particular, his attraction to Sofiia, which he attempts to justify philosophically by constantly

[15] See Druzhinin's diary, letters to him and poetic texts in (Druzhinin 1986: 239, 227–28, 254, 261, 332–33; Popov 1948: 63, 82, 86–87; Ranchin et al. 1994).

[16] The word 'bacchante' refers, incidentally, to the name given to Ogareva in Aleksandr. Herzen's circle (Gertsen 1961: 155). One must assume that the relationship with Nekrasov was not the only basis for the first part of *A Woman's Lot* – it can be considered as an ostracizing look at the attempts of Herzen's and Ogarev's families to build a communitarian, harmonious family. Sofiia's independent position, unwilling to participate in the 'bacchic' projects of Nadezhda Kondratievna and Fedor Fedorovich, corresponds in many respects to the experience of Ogareva, whose family affairs were well known to Panaeva. For Panaeva, the intellectuals of the 1840s and the older generation of *The Contemporary* merged into one group of characters, and Sofiia's experience embodies not only Panaeva's experience, but also that of her friend.

talking about ‘attraction’ (Panaeva 1862: 95). In addition, everything in the house is subject to the will of the owner, the grandfather, who lives in isolation and terrorizes all the inhabitants of the estate. Panaeva portrays the grandfather as a capricious manipulator akin to Foma Opiskin, one of the characters of Dostoevskii’s *The Village of Stepanchikovo and Its Inhabitants* [Selo Stepanchikovo i ego obitateli, 1859] who uses his power (owning and controlling the estate) for his sadistic pleasures. Gradually Sofiia realizes that she has ended up in a nest of hypocritical debauchees who cover up their lust and greed with exclamations of progress, humanity, and gender equality. The only ally of the heroine is the naive and sincere Serezha, but his help is not enough to improve her situation in any way.

The villains of the novel objectify and oppress the woman and create a discourse that justifies her position in the family. The ideology that, at first glance, was supposed to give women the long-awaited right to make their own destiny, in practice turns out to be a new set of instructions. Women are re-subordinated to this ideology, which takes away the obligation to follow the old rules but imposes new ones. Sergei Ignatievich tells Sofia: ‘I want to teach you how you should live, and how you should establish your marital relations’ (Panaeva 1862, IV: 141). Meanwhile, Nadezhda Kondratievna encourages her to work on herself: ‘You, Sophie, [...] should be proud that you live among people who have such a sublime view of women, and therefore you should try to become on a par with us in the development of your mind and heart’ (Panaeva 1862, IV: 101).

Sofiia’s husband considers her an uncultured, selfish woman whose constant complaints and sufferings are explained by her childhood upbringing and her lack of understanding of others. She should only treat him with understanding and sympathy. Petr tries to explain to his wife: ‘Our sensible love has bound us spiritually, not materially; and therefore I am convinced that you will heal my wounds with your warm attention to my sufferings’ (Panaeva 1862, IV: 143). In constructive terms, the rhetoric Petr uses on the heroine corresponds to an important aspect of Nekrasov’s love poems to Panaeva. The famous ‘Panaeva cycle’ is characterized by the subject’s insistent tendency to instruct the beloved. In creating a new, more equal, free, and emotionally diverse relationship,

the woman needs to be constantly controlled, and only the man knows how the relationship should be arranged. Therefore, the status of the heroine in Nekrasov's poems is ambivalent: she seems to be intellectually and emotionally equal to the man; however, her intelligence is valued according to her ability to obey the man's instructions (rather than form her own subjectivity). A careful reading of the 'Panaeva cycle' convinces us that instruction framed in various poetic forms is its main rhetoric.[17]

Panaeva's novel *A Woman's Lot* is a gesture of disagreement with the gender model of Nekrasov. We assume that we are dealing with an extremely rare situation for the nineteenth century. In a work by a woman writer, we find a reflection of her dissatisfaction with the established gender order and the way her relationship with a specific man has developed. Moreover, she is dissatisfied with the form of literary sublimation in which this relationship is represented by the man. Thus, *A Woman's Lot* can be read as a reaction to the Panaeva cycle. The novel clearly shows the kind of practices of Nekrasov and his friends that were unacceptable to Panaeva. The promiscuity of the characters in *A Woman's Lot*, along with their hypocrisy, directly undermines the norms of behaviour and the rhetoric of the *Contemporary* circle. As Panaeva sees it, the ideology of the editorial board is a liberal screen for a transactional attitude toward women.

The relationships that Nekrasov portrays one-sidedly are presented in *A Woman's Lot* from the perspective of the silent and subordinate woman. There are a number of specific examples in the text that mirror the themes and problematics of Nekrasov's poems. Thus, the novel deconstructs the demonstrative disregard for women's tears expressed in 'Tears and Nerves' [Slezy i nervy, 1876] (Nekrasov

[17] C.f. for example: '*Govori* zhe, kogda ty serdita'; 'Ia ne liubliu ironii tvoei. / *Ostav'* ee otzhivshim i ne zhivshim'; '*Otrin*' nasil'stvennoe bremia'; 'Prosti! *Ne pomni* dnei paden'ia'; 'Opravdan'ia i slezy *osmei*'; '*Ne govori*, chto dni tvoi unyly'; '*Ne gordis*', chto v tsevetushchie leta'; '*Skazhi!* Ia dolzhen znat' ('*Speak* when you are angry'; 'I do not like your irony / *Leave* it for those who finished living or did not live at all'; '*Reject* the burden forced on you'; 'Forgive me! *Do not remember* the days of fall'; '*Laugh* at excuses and tears'; *Do not tell* that your days are sad'; '*Do not be proud* that in your flourishing years'; '*Tell me!* I need to know' – our emphasis). In the 'Panaeva cycle' there are other, more complex, forms of discursive suppression of women, the discussion of which requires a separate study. See Fedotov et al. 2023.

1981–2000, II: 129–30). In this text, Nekrasov declares tears a way of manipulating a man. Moreover, in his opinion, they reveal a whole complex of stereotypical notions about the deceitful and theatrical nature of women. The sincere tears of Sofiia's mother are the last degree of despair in her confrontation with her villainous husband. However, the latter understands them as a 'desire to appear unhappy' in order to achieve his hidden goals (Panaeva 1862, IV: 61). The attitude was so outrageous to Panaeva that she objected to the stereotypical perception of tears on behalf of the narrator: 'Many people are convinced that women's tears, like children's tears, are water. Both women and children, probably, shed many tears as a result of this cheerful belief' (Panaeva 1862, IV: 54). Thus, Panaeva rejects Nekrasov's gender rebuke directly. The plot of her novel, in turn, is an implicit rejection.

Panaeva's novel also reflects another text by Nekrasov, the poem 'When from the Darkness of Delusion' [Kogda iz mraka zabluzhdeniia, 1845]. This text, whether it implies Panaeva or an unknown prostitute (Stepina 2019: 15–16), is characterized by the demonstrative attitude of a 'male emancipator': a relationship with an educated man could pull a 'fallen' woman out of the social abyss and elevate her to a new civil status. Moreover, such relationships were actually suggested to the developed intellectual as a 'moral duty'. In fact, the older circle of *The Contemporary* practiced such 'developmental' marriages, though not with sex workers, but still with those who were deemed to be 'socially unequal' and in need of 'help and liberation'.

Such manifestations and actions seemed false to Panaeva. In the 1850 story *The Reckless Move* [Neobdumannyi shag] she deconstructed the idea of saving a woman lower on the social ladder. The story, which 'may serve as a lesson to other young people' (Panaeva 1850a: 141), is simple: a young intellectual nobleman, Danilov, who lives in the provinces, takes Tat'iana under his protection. She is a petty bourgeois who has been molested during a feast. Danilov sees Tat'iana as a 'perfectly beautiful creature' and decides to 'rescue' and 'educate' her. He rents her an apartment, buys clothes for her, and tries to teach her how to read. They live in a common-law marriage, and have children after a while, but the 'reeducation project' fails. Not only does Tat'iana not change for the better, but she drags Danilov into

the swamp of a vulgar bourgeois life, out of which he, unable to leave his children, can not escape. As a result, he becomes a 'fallen' man. Panaeva writes: 'Thinking of developing a sense of dignity in her, Danilov developed in her only false pride and self-confidence'. A few lines later, she leads the character to the realization that 'only the monotonous life in a provincial town and the absence of educated women could bring him close to such a woman, who at every step insulted him with her words, notions – in a word, with all the triviality of her nature' (Panaeva 1850a: 146, 157).

In *The Reckless Move*, Panaeva debunks the idealism of intellectuals by showing that the utopia of salvation leads to ruined lives for the main characters and their children. In *A Woman's Lot*, in turn, she goes further and deconstructs both the practice of salvation (she sees it only a source for easily accessible sexual pleasure) and its rhetorical framing. Petr has a mistress, Ekaterina, apparently a prostitute or 'lorette', in town. Not being satisfied with his life with Sofiia (as well as, probably, his sex life), he regularly visits Ekaterina. However, he explains these trips quite differently: he believes that he must save and financially support the fallen woman.

The argument for Ekaterina's salvation and development, as expounded by Petr, looks both comical and pathetic. While on a visit to the town, Petr gives his wife instructions in a letter, explaining how she should react to the situation emotionally and linking his infidelity to the principles of lofty humanism:

> It would be cruel of you if, out of an empty and unworthy sense of jealousy, you prevented me from saving a fallen woman and showing her the true path to life. You are so kind and so mature, that you will yourself rejoice with me if we succeed in resurrecting a lost soul. Yes, my dear friend, you have now entered a new life and must look at things objectively; by this alone you will attain an open-minded view of life and will be able to show sympathy for the high arts and sympathy for suffering humanity. (Panaeva 1862, IV: 143)

This cynical view of relationships with sex workers reaches its climax in Petr's sincere exclamation in his conversation with Serezha: 'I need fallen

women – they understand my suffering!' (Panaeva 1862, IV: 162).

The right of the lustful man to 'educate' anyone and everyone is not only ridiculed but also markedly rejected by the narrator. Interestingly, the rhetoric of 'education' leads to the paradox that the 'debauched women' turn out to have a better standing in society than the 'decent women': 'A 'lorette' or a hypocritical young lady will always find protection in a society that cherishes them, patronizes them, and is proud of them as the very best side of its moral civilization!' (Panaeva 1862, IV: 50). From the author's perspective, men who are unable to limit their sexual demands hinder emancipation. Indeed, 'educating' relationships have always proceeded from the presumption of the moral superiority of the senior partner. Meanwhile, Panaeva repudiates this very superiority in her decisive statement: 'Until men become more moral, no emancipation of women is possible' (Panaeva 1862, IV: 51).

Panaeva's deconstruction of the idea of 'saving' women and the sexual desire behind it was based not only on her polemic with Nekrasov's poem, but also on her rejection of his behaviour. *A Woman's Lot*, as already noted, shows that the writer was aware of the sexual habits of the men in her circle. Nekrasov's behaviour was no exception for her, although there is not much factual information about this. It is known, for example, that in 1860 Nekrasov had an affair while Panaeva was abroad. According to his confession in a letter to Dobroliubov, he informed his common-law wife about it. In our opinion, the poet's frank letter to the critic contains a conglomerate of ideas, intonations, and rhetorical strategies of self-justification that are artistically debunked in Panaeva's novel. Nekrasov wrote to Dobroliubov that he:

> dreamed of some kind of renewal of the heart. And for four days I had robins singing in my soul. […] If only it had stayed that way – but it didn't. First, though the girl was *neither an angel nor a fallen angel, to my misfortune she turned out to be a decent woman – that's the trouble!* And then there was the sacrifice, not a trivial one in her position. She was so flattered by my sweet talk (I was very eloquent!) that she left the man who'd been providing for her […] Write to me something

> about Av[dot'ia] Ia[kovlevna]. You will surely see her soon; if she is distressed, comfort her somehow: I must tell you that I have written to her briefly but directly about my new relations. For I should have done so – though this new relationship is hardly lasting. She did not pity me, loving and dying, and yet I pity her [...] I have been trying to make up my mind for four years now, but the realization that we should not live together, when I am drawn to other women, has always spoken in me. (Nekrasov 1981–2000, XIV, 2: 138–39; our emphasis)[18]

Not aiming to either reconstruct Nekrasov's psychology or give a detailed description of the vicissitudes of his relationship with Panaeva, let us note that this episode is not the only case of infidelity. The period Nekrasov alluded to as the time when Panaeva 'had no pity' for him 'loving and dying' was 1853-55. At this time he was suffering from a severe throat disease that he and the doctors believed would lead to imminent death (Mel'gunov 2006–2009, I: 468). This period was truly difficult for the couple: their son had died earlier, in April 1855, and by the end of the summer it became obvious that Nekrasov's illness was sexually transmitted, which shed some new light on the sexual side of his past (Mel'gunov 2006–2009 I: 466–67; Nekrasov, 1981–2000, XIV, 1: 214). A little more than a year later, Nekrasov and Panaeva reunited abroad. According to the confessional letters of the poet, the resumption of their relationship was psychologically difficult: Panaeva felt guilty (perhaps she was not faithful to Nekrasov), while Nekrasov was at times delighted with their feelings, but almost 'ran away' from his partner once (Nekrasov XIV, 2: 57). Despite the stream of difficult feelings, Nekrasov, however, did not fully focus on his relationship with Panaeva. On 17 February 1857, he wrote to Turgenev that 'the heart cannot and

[18] Nekrasov's infatuation brought Panaeva a lot of worries; for this Chernyshevskii criticized the poet: 'He is partly upset by various semi-family affairs, and, although the fault is more likely his, [...] still I partly pity him. However, there are moments when he creates a different impression, which makes one think: is it decent for a man in his years to awake in a woman, who was once so dear to him, a sense of jealousy – with the antics and liaisons befitting some cavalry cornet?' (Chernyshevskii 1949: 401–02).

should not fight against a woman with whom so much has been lived through'. On March 2, referring to his own experience, he informed Druzhinin in detail about the best way to find a prostitute in Italy (Nekrasov 1981–2000, XIV, 2: 57, 61). Presumably, these examples are only a few remaining pieces of evidence of a more frequent, if not systemic, practice.

Sexual intemperance, like the failure of marital fidelity, is a typical topic in other novels besides *A Woman's Lot*. In the novel *Trifles of Life*, Elena's husband Boris is courting a young lady. He is clearly ready to go further with his advances, not to mention that at one point he disappears with some French women of the demimonde (Panaeva 1854, IV: 146–63).[19] Cordier, a brilliant sculptor and at the same time a vain, resentful, and hypocritical man in *A Capricious Woman*, was ready to leave his wife for the heroine and, demonstrating the seriousness of his intentions, 'even told of his amorous victories' (Panaeva 1850b: 302).

Love's desire becomes the central theme of *Domestic Hell*. In the story, several men at once seek the favor of Katerina Petrovna, a young and poor ward of the landlady Denisova. A particularly noteworthy character is the painter Drozdov. Living on the estate of Denisova and adored by her, he terrorizes everyone around him; in this respect, he resembles the grandfather from *A Woman's Lot*; he, however, employs other manipulative techniques. Presenting himself as an incurably ill but brilliant artist, he tries to win Katerina's sympathy, discredit the opponents who 'are killing' him and at the same time maintain Denisova's patronage and love. Drozdov turns every conflict in the landlady's house to his advantage, demonstrating how badly the scandals affect his

[19] We noted above that Boris has many of Panaev's traits, but he also has some of Nekrasov. Thus, Boris quarrels with his wife and even brings her to tears, which is followed by a reconciliation and promises 'to be more tolerant towards each other' (Panaeva 1854, II: 210). Let us bear in mind that quarrels are a key theme of the 'Panaeva cycle' (cf, for example, the poem 'Me and you are 'You and I Are Stupid People…' ['My s toboi bestolkovye liudi…', 1851]), not to mention that memoirists often drew attention to the fact that Nekrasov regularly brought Panaeva to tears. It is also interesting that Boris takes offence at his wife's ironic harshness, saying that her 'irony is offensive' (Panaeva 1854, II: 210); c.f. the canonical Nekrasov poem 'I do not like your irony' ['Ia ne liubliu ironii tvoei…', 1855]. This referencing shows that Panaeva's female characters are also autobiographical in many respects.

shattered health and his inspiration, although his talent is dubious and his health is not in any real danger.

In our opinion, the combination of artistic talent and illness in the character, who was created after the above-mentioned biographical twists and turns of the 1850s, unequivocally points at Nekrasov.[20] Panaeva's taking issue with Nekrasov thus takes on an exceptional degree of severity here. Not only is his infidelity brought to life, but his illness itself is portrayed as manipulation.

One may suppose that when Nekrasov accused Panaeva of being merciless in his letter to Dobroliubov, he might have been referring to her story *Domestic Hell.* It is obvious that while reading Panaeva he noticed harsh, sometimes insulting, attacks on himself and his friends. Yet, remarkably, he published her works in *The Contemporary*. What could be the explanation for that?

We are proposing psychological, as well as historical-literary explanations. The publication of *A Woman's Lot* and other works in *The Contemporary* most likely indicates that Nekrasov separated his relations with Panaeva the writer and Panaeva the partner, and did not channel personal resentment into the professional field. At the same time, Nekrasov, apparently, could not help admitting the fairness of many of these claims. By publishing Panaeva's fiction, he demonstrated that, at least on the level of beliefs and attitudes, he was in solidarity with emancipatory ideas and did not limit the individuality and professional realization of his partner.

At the same time, publishing Panaeva's works corresponded to Nekrasov's editorial strategy. Ideologically, Panaeva's prose matched both the emancipatory program of *The Contemporary*, expressed in Mikhailov's article about women, and the board's bet on the 'new people' – young intellectual *raznochintsy*. The publishing of Panaeva's novels reflected Nekrasov's belief that only young editorial staff would be able to bring *The Contemporary* to a new level. It is significant that in the previously mentioned confessional letter, Nekrasov confides to Dobroliubov, who was then a young employee of the journal. Nekrasov's complaints about his common-law

[20] With that in mind, it is no coincidence that Italy plays an important part in this text. This is the place where Denisova had once come across Drozdov, and where the sequel novel *Russkie v Italii* [Russians in Italy, 1858] is set. C.f. above about Panaeva and Nekrasov in Italy.

wife arise against the background of a split at *The Contemporary*, during which Panaeva was a firm ally of her partner and publisher.

Both the emancipatory programme and the bet on the 'new people' are mentioned in *A Woman's Lot*. In this context, Panaeva's attacks on the members of the old editorial board become an act of literary contestation. It might seem strange that the circle of *The Contemporary* did not take up this challenge and did not respond to criticism directed at it. The targets of the accusations could not publicly respond, as the editorial board of *The Contemporary*, following a long-standing and strictly guarded tradition, did not review the works of its contributors. However, it's unlikely that the male circle of the journal was interested in attracting additional attention to their private lives. It cannot be ruled out that Panaeva's attacks were discussed within the circle, but unfortunately, here we encounter a distinct lack of information. The gauntlet thrown down by Panaeva was left untouched.

While the emancipatory program is unrolled in the first part of the novel, sympathy for young intellectuals is consistently declared in the second. There, the reader finds Sofiia in a new situation: she has run away from her husband, met the landowner Lakotnikov, and borne him children. Still, Lakotnikov also reveals his true face, leaving Sofiia behind.[21] However, the second part of the novel focuses on the fate of the heroine to a much lesser extent. New characters appear: the illegitimate and declassed Anna Vasilievna and Snegov. Snegov, a young graduate of St. Petersburg University, is a writer of radical beliefs, who has already suffered for them, while Anna Vasil'evna is the object of stereotypical courting and overt harassment by numerous powerful men. Nevertheless, as a young woman of the new era, she resists patriarchal pressure and chooses the determined, free, and honest Snegov as her ally. At the end of the novel, she follows Snegov into political exile in Irkutsk.

The appearance of positive, idealized characters in *A Woman's Lot* and the abrupt switch of the narrative to new relationship models are symptomatic, although for Panaeva it was not her first attempt to express a positive programme. In 1860, the writer had already introduced a

[21] Let us refrain from the temptation to unequivocally associate Lakotnikov with Nekrasov only – the character obviously joins the gallery of male oppressors of the first part of the novel.

'new man' in *Romance in the Petersburg Demi-Monde*. Karsanov, the son of a church clerk and a university graduate, makes his way by doing diligent literary work. He is wholeheartedly in love with the novel's main character, who is only seen as an object of 'bargaining' by people in high society. At the end of the novel, Karsanov, like Snegov, fails: he is arrested at the border while trying to flee abroad with his beloved; although his future is not pictured, he is certain to face imprisonment. In line with the tragic ethic of progressivism, suffering and hardships are used to 'emphasize' the significance and value of the character's path and 'prove' him right.

It is noteworthy that Dobroliubov's article 'When Will the Real Day Come?' [Kogda zhe pridet nastoiashchii den'?, 1860] was published in the same issue of *The Contemporary* as the first part of Panaeva's novel. This publication led to the final break in relations between Nekrasov and Turgenev and became the final point in the editorial split. We should note that, while discussing Turgenev's novel *On the Eve* [Nakanune, 1860], Dobroliubov demanded the emergence of an active hero such as the Bulgarian Insarov on Russian soil. Both Karsanov and, later, Snegov were clearly conceived by Panaeva as a direct response to the critic's demand (about which she, due to her friendship with Dobroliubov, had known earlier and in more details than others: Dobroliubov was living in Nekrasov's apartment).

The writer apparently attempted to join the young radical voices only to be rejected. How is it that Panaeva's progressiveness was not recognised in the collective memory of the progressives themselves?

Shortly after the publication of *A Woman's Lot*, Panaeva, who had hitherto been an active fiction writer, left literature for a long time. The explanation for this hiatus seemed obvious to literary historians: that was a time of the break with Nekrasov, who was traditionally perceived as the patron and almost the coauthor of everything that Panaeva created. She married the editorial secretary Apollon Golovachev and gave birth to a daughter in 1866. The end of her literary career after leaving Nekrasov seemed, in the view of many, to signify the writer's creative impotence. And according to Chukovskii, it even reflected her 'true' ambition – that is, to create a family and raise children. However, this hiatus should not be attributed merely to the tribulations of her personal life.

We would like to propose an alternative reconstruction, primarily based on literary rather than biographical logic. Like Chukovskii's version, it is not supported by documentary evidence, but it takes into account Panaeva's professional choice, rather than solely relying on gender stereotypes imposed on women. We believe that the end of Panaeva's literary career was mainly motivated by professional reasons. *A Woman's Lot*, Panaeva's most radical and feminist novel, was not successful with the very audience that the author thought should have received it with great enthusiasm. In 1864 the novel was subjected to a devastating critique by Dmitrii Pisarev. In his article 'A Puppet Tragedy with a Bouquet of Civil Sorrow' [Kukol'naia tragediia s buketom grazhdanskoi skorbi] (Pisarev 1864) he declared that Panaeva knew literally nothing about the life of 'the new people' and that Karsanov and Snegov were the best evidence of this (on Pisarev's attack on Panaeva, see also Kurova 1952).

Pointing out the contradictions in the contents of *The Contemporary* (*Russian Word* was engaged in irreconcilable polemics with Nekrasov's periodical), Pisarev wondered how one journal could consistently publish novels praising egoism as almost the main driving force of social development (*What Is to Be Done?* [Chto delat'?, 1863]) and then publish works that denounced it (*A Woman's Lot*). The very comparison with the novel *What Is to Be Done*? was on the mark: Chernyshevskii had clearly succeeded in doing what Panaeva had long tried to do unsuccessfully – presenting progressive radicals favourably, so that they would see themselves as heroes and recognize the author's right to be their emissary in literature. Chernyshevskii's novel, in some sense, overturned and discredited Panaeva's attempts. After its publication, Panaeva's Karsavins and Snegovs, romanticized lonely characters whose values are affirmed by their losing struggle against the system, lost their relevance for the time and started to be perceived as obsolete. They were replaced by the Lopukhins and Kirsanovs, cheerful, optimistic, and completely unwilling to see themselves as marginal. The tragic stoicism of the progressives would still return to the Russian novel, but in this brief phase, Chernyshevskii's utopian project won out. It pushed all competing models of the 'new people' to the periphery, in particular the model in Panaeva's novel.

The emancipatory program of *A Woman's Lot* also seemed unpromising to Pisarev. Insisting on the necessity of social transformation of men for the liberation of women, Panaeva essentially declared the goal of this transformation to be marital fidelity; Panaeva's unhappy heroines were primarily women deceived in love and marriage. Pisarev, on the other hand, insisted that real emancipation was not in the elimination of the cause of jealousy, but in the rejection of this relic emotion. Without jealousy, the very value of fidelity would disappear as irrelevant to the social definition of women. While Panaeva called for the restraining of men, Pisarev urged women to finally do something besides experiencing unhappy love:

> It would be a sad thing if [...] a seven-year-old child had to remain a child for seventy years, and if there were a whole breed of such humanoid creatures who would shed bitter tears over every summer rain that ruined a pleasant walk. Yet those pathetic and miserable individuals, for whom the infidelity of Ivan and Petr constitutes a tremendous misfortune, filling a whole life with tears and despair, are not far removed from these weepy creatures. Novelists and critics daily exalt to the great dignity of human nature this weepiness, this wretchedness, this shocking poverty [...] The emancipation of women must be directed precisely against this very painful and shameful dependence. (Pisarev 2003: 206)

Pisarev's criticism effectively dissected the two key points of Panaeva's writing: the high hopes for emancipation and the 'new people'. A third (i.e. the veiled rebuke against Nekrasov and his circle) could not be of interest to Pisarev, as they were not addressed to him.

Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia also joined in the criticism of *A Woman's Lot* in an article from the cycle *Provincial Letters on Our Literature* [Provintsial'nye pis'ma o nashei literature, 1862] (Khvoshchinskaia 1862). She sympathized with the themes of Panaeva's prose, but denied her literary skill (none of her novels 'is satisfying in artistic terms' (Nesterenko 2018: 126)). According to Khvoshchinskaia, Panaeva sometimes manages to speak honestly, but more often falls into caricature, and most importantly, she tends to overuse

depictions of evil and suffering, which makes the reality of her work implausible:

> Let us assume that there is no cursed corner in the world where fate has brought together both the cruel, greedy egotistic old man, his heir, the idle and debauched dandy, the lady of no decent manners, her friends, the debauched phrasemonger-sponging houseguests, and her son, the madman à la Hamlet. They evoke in the reader sometimes a smile, more often the annoyance of fatigue, but both the smile and the annoyance are cut short suddenly by a sigh: 'What a parade of uglies!' [...] He [Stanitskii, Panaeva's pseudonym] has brought his sufferers all together in one place, at one time – an artistic error, perhaps, unforgivable; but it does not prevent us, from looking at our unfortunate and fallen, our *misérables*, all at once and in one place. It is ugly to the point of caricature, it is filthy to the point of disgust – and yet all these fallen ones are guilty only of having trusted and loved... (Nesterenko 2018: 127–28)

Thus, *A Woman's Lot* was attacked by people in the literary communities important to Panaeva. The reproaches from Pisarev were painful because their author was the 'heir' of Dobroliubov, whose literary inheritance Panaeva, as it seemed to her, was following faithfully. Khvoshchinskaia's criticism, on the other hand, mattered for another reason: the prose of Panaeva was condescendingly criticized by a woman – a writer who was more successful in literary terms.[22]

In our opinion, it was not the break with Nekrasov, but the devastating critical reviews of *A Woman's Lot* that served as the main reason for the suspension of Panaeva's literary career. It was the defeat of *A Woman's Lot* that prompted Panaeva, who saw herself as a professional writer, to leave literature.

Panaeva did not gain a foothold in the collective memory of pro-

[22] Certainly, Panaeva was aware that it was a female author writing under the pseudonym of V. Krestovskii. Back in 1856, in one of his reviews Nekrasov directly pointed out that Krestovskii was 'the pseudonym of a lady writer' (Nekrasov 1981–2000, XI, 2: 244). For the editors of *The Contemporary*, therefore, Krestovskii's gender was not a mystery.

gressives – due to the fact that competing social programs, primarily in Chernyshevskii's novel, proved more influential. She also remained unknown to the 'general reader' despite the novels and novellas published in *The Contemporary*. This is partly due to the fact that the literature of the following decades largely transformed Panaeva's themes and plots, deepening and problematizing them. Thus, practically all the problematic aspects and the system of images in *A Woman's Lot* were developed by later writers. It is worth remembering the independent women in Khvoshchinskaia's prose and the analysis of the problem of experiencing attraction to a sex worker in Dostoevskii's *Notes from Underground* [Zapiski iz podpol'ia, 1864], and odd heroes like Myshkin, as well as the hardships and horrors of marriage in *Anna Karenina* [1875] and *The Kreutzer Sonata* [Kreitserova sonata, 1890], not to mention the poetics of the horrifying caricature of one family's life in *The Golovlev Family* [Gospoda Golovlevy, 1880].

In her later years, Panaeva tried to return to creative activity, but in the 1880s and 1890s, she found herself in a completely different literary context. Even if one does not attempt to evaluate the aesthetic component of her later stories and novels (*The Mongrel* [Dvorniazhka, 1889]; *The Rooster* [Petukh, 1891]; *Orphans* [Siroty, 1893]), it is clear that she had no place in the new culture of Populist and pre-Symbolist movements (for more detail, see Dolgikh, 1977). This period, however, left us with *Memories* (1889), Panaeva's most canonical and popular text.

In our opinion, the memoirs were largely powered by the same emotional impulses that defined Panaeva's prose of the 1850s and 1860s. Their 'unreliability' is explained by the same style of writing. In her memoirs, there is no need to conceal the prototypes. At the same time, Panaeva is also unable to avoid the fictional basis – she constructs her narrative on the model of an almost plot-driven text, fictionalized and with the smoothness of literature. In other words, Panaeva's inability to write a credible memoir is the inverse of her inability to create pure fiction.[23] On an imaginary

[23] Note that, as it seems, Panaeva's works were less successful when based on fictionalization. It is indicative that her late memoirs most strongly remind us of her earliest text – *The Tal'nikov Family*, a story highly praised by Belinskii, whose autobiographical and traumatic character was never doubted – if we apply the term 'autobiography' broadly – not as an exact reproduction

authenticity scale, her *Memories* aspires to be an 'auto psychological novel' that combines the wish to tell the truth about people once close to her and, at the same time, the determination to settle accounts with them. In this respect, the antithesis of the 'old editorial staff' vs. the 'young radicals', represented in the *Memories*, is emotionally homogeneous to a similar antithesis in the prose of the 1850s and 1860s. In a certain way, Panaeva's *Memories* replace one type of authenticity with another. Therefore, they should not be evaluated in the same way as other testimonies. In place of the 'masculine' factuality there is a 'feminine' emotional authenticity, unmatched in other texts of the epoch.

Thus, the fundamental principle of Panaeva's poetics of the 1840s and 1860s is the presence of prototypes, which forms the emotional core of her writing, rather than being a peripheral literary device as in most of her contemporaries' works. Her defeat and retirement from literature can be explained by professional reasons. At the same time, it was not the principles of Panaeva's writing that were repressed but her attempts to engage in the most urgent literary and political agenda. She could not compete with her ideological allies, who were her rivals in the literary field. Unnoticed and underappreciated, Panaeva's prototypical device would only be rediscovered after most of the people in her circle became part of cultural history.

Regardless of whether the readers of the 1850s and 1860s were right in their assessment of the originality and artistic merits of Panaeva's prose, ignoring it drastically reduces the opportunity for researchers and enthusiasts to understand and visualize this era of Russian literature. In her works, Panaeva offered a defamiliarizing, feminine, protesting view of the central literary phenomenon of her time – the editorial board of *The Contemporary*. She revealed the gendered side of both its activities and ideology, as well as the everyday life of the writers associated with the journal. Without the contribution of the only woman among the editorial staff, the portrait of *The Contemporary* is doomed to be inaccurate, if not false.

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of facts, but as a reproduction of one's life experience (Holmgren 2009).

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