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TREDIAKOVSKII'S JOURNEY TO
THE ISLAND OF LOVE AND ITS
SOCIAL CONTEXT**

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V. K. Trediakovskii's translation of Paul Tallement *Voyage de l'isle d'amour* occupies a special place in the history of Russian 18th-century literature: it is often credited with creating a new vocabulary of love and amorous intercourse, an innovation that would pave the way for much of the later poetry and prose. It is also believed to have gained instant popularity among Russia's youth, although who exactly Trediakovskii's early readers were is not clear. Likewise, while Trediakovskii's early life and his stay in Europe have been a subject of extensive study, we do not know much why exactly he chose this topic and this particular work for his translation: following the version offered by the poet himself, this choice is usually treated as nearly random. Against this background, this paper uses a variety of archival sources to reconstruct the actual courtly context of these events. On the one hand, it focuses on the secret liaison between Ekaterina Ioannovna, the Duchess of Mecklenburg, the most important patron of Trediakovskii and his work in the early 1730s, and Prince Beloselskii. On the other, it explores a trove of unpublished letters written by a variety of French, German, and Dutch ladies to Prince A.B. Kurakin during his stay in Europe in the 1720s: these letters present the prince as fully integrated in the social life of Western European aristocracy and, most importantly, as thoroughly versed in the contemporary rules and conventions of gallant intercourse. Kurakin, as is well known, was another patron of Trediakovskii, and it was thanks to him that the poet has been introduced to Ekaterina. Taken together, these documents not only provide context for Trediakovskii's translation and its popularity, but also allow us to reconstruct the amorous practices of the post-Petrine Russian elite.

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One of the most notable events in the cultural history of eighteenth-century Russia is arguably the 1730 publication of Vasilii Trediakovskii's Ezda v ostrov luibvi (Journey to the Island of Love), a translation of Paul Tallemant's novel Le Voyage de l'Isle d'Amour¹. This work, focused as it was on describing and even celebrating the evolution of its protagonist's amorous feelings, is rightly considered to have opened a new page not only in the history of Russian literature, which hitherto had not known such genres, but also in the history of the Russian language. With its explicit depiction of sexual desires, with its thinly veiled portrayal of caressing different parts of female body as 'climbing up the hills' and descending into 'deep valleys', this was a text unlike anything the Russians had previously seen in print. It was in the course of producing this translation that Trediakovskii had to codify a new, previously non-existent vocabulary for conducting a polite secular discourse about carnal love and the affective states that accompany it. This vocabulary, in turn, played the key role in the evolution of lyrical poetry and of language of feelings later in the century².

Not surprisingly, this publication is central for some of the most influential interpretations of cultural change in the eighteenth century Russia in general. In France, argued Iurii Loman, the grand maitre of Russian dixhuitiemists, Tallemant's novel was born out of a very specific social and cultural context that gave it meaning – and that was so obviously missing in Russia. Rather, it was Trediakovskii's translation itself that was supposed to give birth to the relevant cultural milieu: 'there [in France] a mode of life generated a text, here a text was to generate a mode of life'. In that sense, this episode serves for Lotman as a prime exhibit of the crucial, generative role allegedly played by literature in the eighteenth century Russia where 'fiction becomes a model for life, [where] from novels and elegies people learn to feel, and from tragedies and odes – to think'. In short, as Lotman observes elsewhere, in post-Petrine era a 'writer does not follow the cultural context, but creates it'. In this particular case, Trediakovskii was, allegedly, on a mission to bring to St Petersburg the 'spirit of the salon', that is, to create the social context that would've allowed a poet such as himself a modicum of autonomy, as it allegedly did in Paris³.

Other scholars appear to concur. Echoing Lotman, B.A. Uspenskii argued that Trediakovskii translated 'a work of French salon culture not because there already existed such a culture in Russia, but specifically in order to create such a culture. While, normally texts emerge in a certain context that brings them to life, in this case, on the contrary, creation of a text predates the emergence of relevant context. And this is very typical of the eighteenth century in Russia'⁴. And according to V. N. Toporov, in the eighteenth century Russia the 'cart' of literary patterns has been 'put ahead of the horse' of social practices (even though, he admits, the horse might have been 'waiting impatiently for the cart, and life – for the literature to appear')⁵.

The debate about the relationship between social and cultural practices, on the one hand, and literary models, especially the ones that prescribe certain emotional templates, on the other, acquires additional relevance against the backdrop of some of the most prominent recent trends in historiography. One such trend is, naturally, the burgeoning interest in the history of emotions. In the Russian case, most notably, Andrei Zorin presented a powerful case for the crucial role of literary models in shaping the emotional repertoires of Russian elite and, really, guiding the educated aristocrats' behavior. Zorin insists that his conclusions apply only to later decades of the eighteenth century, as it is then that the Russia culture underwent a transition from the 'tradition-oriented' to 'inner-oriented' personality type and experienced a 'monumental cultural-historical turn ... towards Western European literature as the main source for its emotional repertoire'. Even with such caveats, he seems to be following in the footsteps of the traditional, literature-centric paradigm of eighteenth-century Russian culture. Indeed, Zorin's book opens with a chapter on Catherine II's efforts to create a 'new breed' of subjects, in effect, to impose specific emotional regimes from above – the enterprise that the author, it seems, views as somewhat successful⁶.

Another important historiographical trend that frames our revisiting of Trediakovskii's Ezda is the growing attention to the history of translation and of cultural transfers. While this literature is too voluminous, of course, to be reviewed here, what matters for us is its focus on sociological mechanisms of such transfers and on the ways in which the translated/transferred texts and concepts are never the exact replicas of their original selves, but rather the products of the local conditions that provoked the translation/transfer, to begin with. In particular, this literature stresses the role of translator as an actor who acts within the context of and in a reaction to societal expectations: in that sense, translation becomes, contra Lotman and others, virtually impossible without some sort of a preexisting demand⁷.

Even with all that, however, the need to revisit the history of Vasiliï Trediakovskii's most famous work might appear less than obvious, for the poet and his writings have been, of course, a subject of extensive research. Most notably, Uspenskii and Shishkin presented an amazingly detailed, creative, and still unsurpassed reconstruction of the poet's yearly years and his experiences in Europe. Their mini-monograph, however, focuses on Trediakovskii's involvement with the philo-Catholic circles among the Russian aristocrats and diplomats, but does little to explain the appearance of such work as Ezda⁸. As I.Z. Serman recently pointed out, we still know next to nothing about the poet's actual experiences during his nearly two year-long stay in Paris⁹.

This article seeks to fill this gap at least to some extent. Least the readers be disappointed, however, a caveat must be made in advance that it is not built around a discovery

of any previously unknown letters or papers by Trediakovskii that would directly shed light on his own life in France or on his artistic plans and intentions. Rather, the case presented here is circumstantial: it is based on a reconstruction of the social and cultural context in which the poet likely conceived of translating Tallemant's Le Voyage and in which his translation became a success at the Russian court. This reconstruction demonstrates how Trediakovskii's Ezda was, in fact, a reflection of, if not a direct response to the concerns and experiences of his two most important patrons at that time, Prince Aleksandr Borisovich Kurakin (1697-1749), and Tsarevna Ekaterina Ioannovna, the Duchess of Mecklenburg. In that regard, this episode also invites us to question the received wisdom of the eighteenth-century cultural change in Russia as being driven, if not generated by literary models. Rather than being a story of a writer's valiant attempt to conjure with his mighty pen new social or cultural realities (such as the 'spirit of the salon') out of the thin air, this episode might be first and foremost about the importance of the demand for this work among the elite – the demand for vocabulary that would express and legitimize their already existing practices and modes of life.

* * *

That Prince A. B. Kurakin played the key role in Trediakovskii's life and literary career in the late 1720s-early 1730s is not a secret, of course. Trediakovskii's would-be patron was the son of the leading diplomats of the era, Prince Boris Ivanovich Kurakin (1676-1727), himself a long-time ambassador in a variety of European capitals, including Paris. Prince Aleksandr stayed with his father in Europe since his early teens. While the young aristocrat began his studies back in Russia, in Europe Prince Boris arranged for additional educational opportunities for him. In particular, Prince Aleksandr might have benefited from an offer extended in 1710 by the Duke of Wolfenbüttel to educate the young Russian at his academy for nobles for free¹⁰. In 1722, Prince Aleksandr was designated to represent Russia at the court of Versailles (albeit under his father's overall supervision), with the rank of Gentleman of Bedchamber and Councilor of Legation, and later promoted to the rank of ambassador¹¹.

The young Trediakovskii gained access to his house through the philo-Catholic aristocratic network reconstructed so masterfully by Uspenskii and Shishkin. The future poet literally walked to Paris from The Hague at the end of 1727 and stayed at the ambassador's house. At this time Trediakovskii might have been involved somehow in the intrigue revolving around the proposed reconciliation of the Churches in the wake of Peter I's visit to Sorbonne in June 1717: in practical terms, he was charged with delivering to Sorbonne Orthodox books and, perhaps, with other minor commissions that required both a solid background in humanities and

certain political savvy. After leaving Paris and staying for about a year in 1729-30 in Hamburg, where he worked on the translation that would make him famous, Trediakovskii returned to Russia in September 1730¹².

In his own preface he poet explains that he began his work on Ezda in response to a letter from Kurakin, by then back in Moscow, who called upon him ‘to translate some French book into Russian’. It is also to Kurakin that the work is dedicated, in an appropriately deferential tone, and it was also because of Kurakin that Trediakovskii found himself idling in Hamburg, a break that gave him the time to do the translation, as Kurakin’s luggage was rerouted to this city in view of the prince’s abortive appointment to ambassadorship in Berlin in 1729¹³. One other notable work that the poet wrote in Hamburg (in May 1730) were the ‘Epithalamic Verses on the Marriage of His Highness Prince Kurakin’. It was also Kurakin who likely funded the printing of the Voyage, and it is in Kurakin’s house that Trediakovskii stayed upon his arrival to Moscow in January 1731¹⁴.

Overshadowed by the gigantic figure of his father and somewhat discredited by less than dignified role he would play later at the court of Empress Anna, Aleksandr Kurakin has not attracted much attention from historians, so it is not clear how, if at all, might Ezda be related to his lifestyle and interests. Alas, a perusal of his surviving official papers doesn’t yield much information about the prince’s and his retinue’s life in Europe besides the purely diplomatic and ceremonial matters. This is not surprising, as overall, generally speaking, the surviving correspondence of the Russian servitors of that era, including their epistolary exchanges with their foreign peers, mostly focus on the affairs of state – diplomatic and trade negotiations, military operations, and so forth.

Against this backdrop, a batch of letters written to the young Kurakin in the 1720s by about a dozen European ladies are really unique in reflecting his immersion in the social and romantic life of aristocratic Europe¹⁵. These letters have survived as a single volume preserved in the archive of the St Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Its distinctive leather cover indicates that it once belonged, too, to the Kurakin family archive in Nadezhdino, the bulk of which is now kept at the State Historical Museum in Moscow (fond 3), and which served as a basis for the multivolume nineteenth-century publication Arkhiv kniazia F.A. Kurakina.¹⁶ Indeed, some of the pages bear the characteristic marks in blue pencil similar to the ones left by the editors of Arkhiv kniazia F.A. Kurakina in many of the files in the Moscow collection. As best we can tell, the volume in question is an artifact produced not by Kurakin himself, but one of his heirs or their assistants as they sorted out the family papers. Some of the letters are unsigned, many have incomplete dates (only the day and month, but not the year), and

as the envelopes are missing, this further complicates figuring out the circumstances in which the letters had been written and read.

Some of the more colorful among these missives are written by a woman who sent her letters from Munich around 1722 and only signed as Therese. Therese was clearly a high-ranking lady, and her correspondence reflects the life of the Bavarian court: theater and opera, hunting trips and carnivals, various events in the life of the ruling family.¹⁷ She also informs Kurakin about the arrivals and departures of diverse princes and aristocrats and relationships between them. Much of this gossip revolves around amorous interactions. She observes that ‘in Munich, as everywhere, love takes very different forms (on fait l’amour on est fort variable)’, that ‘a furious change’ took place in this department since Kurakin’s departure, and that there are ‘secret love affairs which one does not mention (amours cachés dont on n’ause pas faire mention)’. Thus, the visiting Count Kinski (‘fort jolie garçon’) used to be ‘amoureux’ with Princess of Holstein, but that’s now over, and so forth¹⁸. Empty as it might seem, this sort of gossip was, in fact, also directly related to Kurakin’s work as a diplomat: the travels of and the dealings between sovereigns and aristocrats (and their assorted lovers), their moods and (in)dispositions had direct bearing on the affairs of the state and diplomatic intrigues.

Besides that, however, Therese and Kurakin are engaged in a peculiar game. The lady persists in inviting the prince to come spend the carnival season at Munich, and she signs one of the letters as Kelnerin Masqué (‘a masked bartender’) – a reference to her own carnival mask, perhaps¹⁹. Yet, Kurakin clearly intends to go to Venice instead, and so Therese adds a note of affected jealousy. She repeatedly refers to the ‘beautiful ladies of Venice’ who would, supposedly, ‘amuse’ the prince: indeed, they are the ‘best medicine’ that Kurakin could take for some unnamed affliction. The correspondence between the two appears to have been clandestine, as the lady makes a point of signing with her first name only and intends to use a ‘secret address’ in the future²⁰. Most notably, though, Therese and Kurakin openly discuss their respective amorous adventures. Therese calls upon the prince to ‘frankly tell [her] about [his] amours’, and in return promises to inform him about ‘the conquest that I made’. In the next letter, she is ‘obliged’ to him for sharing the news about his ‘whore (catin)’, and though Therese pretends that she does not so easily approve of ‘amusements with grisettes’, this time she is willing to excuse him. Indeed, she reciprocates by ‘being true to my promise to keep you abreast of my amours’ and reports to have broken up with an unnamed lover hinted at in the previous letters²¹.

The letters also present Kurakin as being completely at home in the Parisian aristocratic circles. His correspondent here is Countess de Sainte-Maure, that is, Marie de Sainte-Maure, nee Des Chiens de la Neuville (1695/8–1764),²² the wife of Louis Marie, baron d’Auger, marquis de Chaux et d’Archiac, count de Sainte-Maure (1698/1700–63), premier écuyer du roi, commandant

la grande écurie de Sa Majesté. Married in 1720, the count and the countess became separated already by 1725, as Marie filed a complaint about her husband accusing him of mistreating her in various ways and actually endangering her health through his contacts with 'femmes débauchées'. This legal battle dragged on for years and became a cause célèbre. The count, in his turn, accused his wife of infidelity: alleged witnesses reported that she dated her cousin, Abbé Loyard, as well as Chevalier de Breteuil; another servant claimed to have seen her lying on the grass in the Bois de Boulogne in the company of Count Demelay, his hand wandering under her skirt ('ayant Une de ses mains passée sous sa Jupe')²³. Indeed, already in 1720 she is described by an informed contemporary as the object of affection of Duc de Chartres (Philippe Charles, 1674–1723, eventually Philippe II, Duke of Orléans), the regent's son.²⁴ Her husband, for his part, has been detained in 1729 'in the course of a fait socratique' in the Jardin Luxemburg, the event that greatly helped his wife's cause in the litigation²⁵.

Sainte-Maure's correspondence with the Russian prince is remarkable for its friendly, even intimate tone. On February 14, 1726, after reproaching Kurakin for 'negligence' towards her and stressing that she 'pride[s] [her]self on being a Parisian', the countess goes on to 'congratulate' the prince 'with [his] new passion'. She mentions certain commission' that Kurakin gave her in connection with this new courtship: Sainte-Maure is asked to act as an intermediary, it seems, between him and the lady in question, and she is happy to oblige. Another (or perhaps, the same?) lady mentioned in the letter is the wife of a certain 'president' (la présidente): 'She got herself a new lover she is very happy with. He is a poet, unfortunately'. This poet, the countess reports, sought to sing his love for the lady in his 'amorous verses', and in order to do so he intended to 'write poetically about the thirty lovers she has had, listing them all by name'²⁶. La présidente is referred to as an objects of Kurakin's infatuation, as the countess insists that 'you have loved la présidente more than you think. You do not speak of it, but without being aware of it, you are almost jealous of the poet'. Finally, the letters also refer to Kurakin's regrets about his departure from Holland and the 'beautiful Hollander' he left behind is mentioned again and again. Saint-Maure believes that the prince lacks a 'vocation for matrimony' (oblique reference is also made to her own failing marriage), although later on she approvingly notes that Kurakin will 'sacrifice his dreams about the beautiful Hollander to his [matrimonial] happiness'²⁷.

Notably, the countess specifically acknowledges the prince's apparent skills in conducting courtly correspondence: 'you are wicked and you mock well (vous estes mechant et vous raillez bien)', as Sainte-Maure allegedly nearly 'died from laughter' reading Kurakin's jealous comments about la présidente. Further, the countess considers the Russian quite capable of appreciating the latest theatrical news and the quality of theatrical production, as she

mentions, for example, a new play on a 'subject that has been treated numerous times' (Eddie), and an opera actress, Mademoiselle d'Ambert, who acted dressed as a man and performed 'with grace and spirit'. Finally, here again, we see how the prince's courteous correspondence with ladies is directly connected to his diplomatic work. In June 1726, Sainte-Maure informs him about the recent changes in the French government: the replacement of the first minister, the controller-general of finances, and the minister of war, and so on²⁸, while in February and March she repeatedly mentions Mademoiselle de Laroche-sur-Yon as a mutual friend of theirs with whom Sainte-Maure shared Kurakin's confessions about his new passions²⁹. This is, of course, Louise Adélaïde de Bourbon (1696–1750), a daughter of Prince de Conti, a princesse du sang, noted by the memoirists as a princess who never married, but bore numerous bastard children. Two years later, in April 1728, she would be among the members of the extended royal family attending the lavish celebration thrown by Kurakin in Paris on the occasion of Peter II's coronation. Present were the Duchess de Bourbon with her children; Princess de Conti; Count de Clermont; Count de Charolais, and others. The celebration ended with a ball for 1500 masked guests, which Kurakin opened by leading in a dance with another princesse du sang, Mademoiselle de Charolais, i.e. Louise Anne de Bourbon (1695-1758), who would later be reported to be a mistress of her cousin Louis XV, and to whose sister it would fall to formally introduce Madame de Pompadour at court. The dancing lasted till 10 in the morning³⁰.

What were the marriage plans that the countess referred to, and who is 'beautiful Hollander' mentioned in the correspondence? The latter is very likely Marie van Welderen, whose letters are also found in the same batch – probably, Marie Judith, the daughter of Count Johan Bernardsz van Welderen (1659-1724), a prominent Dutch aristocrat who greeted Peter I on behalf of the Estates General in The Hague in 1717³¹. The batch also contains letters sent to Prince Aleksandr by Odilia Louise, Count Johan Bernardsz' widow, and we can see that both the father and the son Kurakins not only socialized with the van Welderens a lot, but were also fully accepted as the members of this family's social circle. Odilia Louise congratulates Prince Aleksandr with his appointment to Paris, thanks him for the flowers he sent her, relates various family news ranging from their summer plans to the pregnancy of one of her married daughters, and so on – and sends her regards to his father, Prince Boris, whom she continues to see socially in the Netherlands. She also complains about the terribly boring winter season: there are very few 'assemblies', and these are worse than ever, while 'dancing is out of the question' (probably due to the outbreak of smallpox mentioned in the correspondence)³².

The very first, undated and unsigned letter sent to Kurakin by Odilia Louise's daughter is but a brief note: the young woman informs the prince that she had to stay at home that evening. She casually invites him over to her house, 'if you wish to join me this evening, you will be

pleased to come', while also begging him to keep her invitation a secret from her mother³³. Her subsequent letters are very polite and full of ritual pleasantries; overall, the correspondence between Marie and the prince is much more subdued compared to Kurakin's exchanges with some other ladies. Yet there are also oblique signs of a failed romance and lingering attachment. On one occasion Marie indicates that an earlier letter from the prince has caused her some embarrassment: 'When I allowed you to write to me I did not believe that an exchange of letters (commerce de lettres) established on mere friendship would have been a cause of difficulties', she writes in March 1726. Somehow, people around her learned about this correspondence, and that led to much teasing. Now Marie finds herself obliged 'to beg you to write to me rarely and that your letters be written in such a way that I can show them to others'. In fact, if she would 'continue this exchange regularly, it would only bring me grief, and you are too much of a friend to wish to cause it'³⁴.

Two years later, though, in November 1728, Marie still reproaches Kurakin, somewhat cryptically, for 'living off my weakness (vous vivez de ma foiblesse)' and not being able 'to understand what true love is capable of'. Not without a hint of jealousy, Marie also hopes that the 'beautiful Highness' (Kurakin's bride-to-be, apparently), would not be jealous of their future correspondence³⁵. The next spring, she refers jealously to the 'quatre pretendantes', that is, four unnamed ladies competing for Kurakin's attention; Marie also hopes that Kurakin's matrimonial plans would fall through and even calls upon him to 'sacrifice certain practical considerations (interests) to the liberty which is the most treasured (aimable) of all benefits'³⁶.

Who exactly this 'beautiful Highness' might have been is not clear: Kurakin ended up getting married only in 1730. However, as early as May 1726 his father, Prince Boris, petitioned Empress Catherine I requesting for his son a permission to marry a foreigner. In a letter to the sovereign he argued that such a union would be in agreement with the intentions of the late Peter I who wished to ally his subjects with the foreign aristocracies. In his parallel missives to key dignitaries, such as Menshikov, Golovkin, Osterman, and the powerful cabinet-secretary Makarov he stressed different motives: as it turned out, his son's bride was bringing with her a dowry of 300 000 'German guilders', an opportunity 'rare not only for us, but also for other nations'. In all letters, however, Prince Boris felt the need to stress that it was his 'son who found an occasion for a useful and profitable marriage', as opposed to the match being arranged by the father himself³⁷. It is probably this marriage project that Countess de Sainte-Maure congratulated Prince Aleksandr with in the summer of 1726.

Why did this matrimonial project collapse, we do not know (it might well be Kurakin's prospective bride was, in fact, Marie van Welderen). Regardless, Prince Aleksandr certainly continued his quest for a 'profitable' union. Another correspondent of his, a certain Countess de

Heidhort from Breslau, relates to Kurakin diverse news about their mutual acquaintances, their socializing, entertainment, amours, and marriages, as well as engages in mild flirting herself, playfully volunteering to sacrifice her own happiness (i.e., being able to correspond with the Russian) to his marital bliss. Additionally, though, she positions herself as a matchmaker. In one of her letters she presents Lore Firstenb[erg?] (probably Countess Maria Eleonora Amalia von Fürstenberg-Möblich, 1699-1773) as ‘the most pleasant girl in the world; even though she is not the most beautiful, but her solid sense (esprit solid) is much more preferable to beauty which is subject to much change’. The young lady spoke about Kurakin in such complimentary terms that Countess de Heidhort, ‘experienced in the department of love’ as she was, sensed in Lora’s heart a much stronger interests in Kurakin that she would’ve been willing to admit. De Heidhort has no doubt that this lady would be the ‘best bride in the world’ for the prince³⁸. In other letters, though, she takes a much more pragmatic approach, persistently bringing to Kurakin’s attention two potential brides. One was a Polish lady of great aristocratic standing and connections, another a daughter of an Austrian baron, of ‘mediocre naissance’, but distinguished by her ‘very good education’. Each brought along a dowry of about 300 000 ‘German florins’, but ‘as for the beauty, I cannot say much neither about the one, nor about the other’, the countess concludes³⁹.

These and others missives present Aleksandr Kurakin as fully conversant in the language and social rituals of amorous relationships practiced in Europe: he is able to successfully pursue a somewhat risqué correspondence and to engage in a game of flirting and courtship (needless to say, this also means that he is fully conversant in the language of his correspondence, i.e. in French). Evidently, the aristocratic ladies also believe Kurakin to be capable of appreciating both an anecdote about a poet-lover working to catalogue his thirty predecessors, and the news and commentary regarding theatrical life; they also fully trust his taste, as on numerous occasions they commission him to choose and buy in Paris luxury items, such as carriages, on their behalf. Among other things, the extraordinary diversity of names figuring in the gossip that the ladies share with Kurakin makes it clear that already by the early 1720s he had built a truly pan-continental network of connections stretching from Milan and Venice to Vienna and Breslau to Berlin, The Hague, and Paris. Of course, Prince Aleksandr was building on his father’s connections and on his status as a diplomatic representative of an ascendant Russian Empire. But Kurakin’s ability to fully immerse himself in the life of courteous flirting was a necessary precondition, indeed the key instrument for his blending in with the cosmopolitan European aristocracy of his day. It is inconceivable that these practices were not also observed and discussed by the members of Kurakin’s retinue at the Russian embassy, including Trediakovskii, and that they did not set the tone at the prince’s household and shape Trediakovskii’s understanding of what might be appealing and appropriate for his patron.

* * *

It was also to Kurakin that the poet owed his introduction to Tsarevna Ekaterina, at whose court he enjoyed his moments of greatest success during the winter of 1730/31. From Trediakovskii's letter to Johann Daniel Schumacher, the librarian and perpetual secretary of the Academy of Sciences, on March 4, 1731, it follows that by then the poet had been admitted to Ekaterina's court. There he was able to socialize with important dignitaries 'at the palace, indeed, even at the [private] chambers of Her Royal Highness (à l'hôtel, même dans la chambre de Son Al. Royale M-me la Princesse Catherine)': according to the poet, she gave him 'such signs of her favor that exceeded all his expectations (telles grâces, qui passèrent mes espérances)'. Most importantly, Ekaterina promised to introduce Trediakovskii to her sister the empress, something that did happen a year later⁴⁰. This patronage was, probably, crucial, given the misgivings of not only some members of the clergy, but also of those secular readers who, according to the poet's own admission, accused him of 'the lack of piety, of irreligiosity, deism, atheism, and of all sort of heresies'⁴¹. It is questionable whether Trediakovskii could have felt so self-assured and perceived himself to be so fashionable as he did early in 1731, were it not for Ekaterina's approval.

The Duchess, of course, is well-known for her active socializing, in particular, for her theatrical experiments chronicled in his diary by Friedrich Wilhelm von Bergholtz (1699–1765), a gentleman of the bedchamber to Duke Karl Friedrich of Holstein-Gottorp (1700-1739)⁴². She has also been rumored to have, in the words of Duke de Liria, the Spanish envoy, 'an inclination for wine and love (l'inclination pour le vin et l'amour)'⁴³. In that regards, of course, she wasn't really unique among the women of the extend Imperial family, as having lovers-favorites became a universal practice by then. Ekaterina, though, is singled out by de Liria for frequently changing her lovers. In that sense, the theme and the polemical thrust of Trediakovskii's Ezda would seem to fit her interests and lifestyle well. It turns out that Trediakovskii appeared with his work at her court right in the midst, or immediately in the wake of her especially well-documented liaison, that with Prince Mikhail Andreevich Belosel'skii (1702-1755), a petty Riurikid prince and a naval lieutenant⁴⁴.

Not surprisingly, perhaps, we know about this affair because few years later, already after Ekaterina's death, it became a subject of an investigation by the Secret Chancellery. A former friend of Beloselskii's, of whom we shall talk more below, had been exiled to Siberia in 1731, there got restless and desperate, took to the bottle, and predictably, his barely coherent utterances made during one of his drunken public outbursts landed him in the torture chamber in 1735. As his initial pronouncements were extremely vague, the investigators were making equally vague demands for confessions. Under torture, the broken fellow begun recalling all and

any remarks made by his former contacts in Moscow and St Petersburg (and indeed, his own unspoken thoughts) that could be construed as political – hopes regarding Tsesarevna Elizabeth’s accession, comments on the events of 1730, reflections on the life and character of the members of the Imperial family⁴⁵.

It is in this context that the exile recalled that Beloselskii once related to him some of the conversations he had had with Tsarevna Ekaterina: as the investigators pushed him to divulge more details about the circumstances in which these conversations allegedly took place, the theme of Prince Mikhail’s liaison with Ekaterina came up. At this point the Beloselskii affair branched out into a separate line of inquiry, for regardless of what might have been said by those involved about politics, the very suggestion by Beloselskii that he could have been sexually involved with Ekaterina constituted, of course, a crime of lèse-majesté. This perspective explains the kinds of questions investigators asked or did not ask: they sought to ascertain whether Beloselskii talked about the affair, not whether the affair actually ever took place. This also partially explains why many of the witnesses who, according to the tortured convict, allegedly knew about the liaison or even played some role in it, were never brought in for questioning.

The question, of course, is whether anything related by such a person under torture had actually taken place, as opposed to being made up by him. On the one hand, it might be nearly immaterial for our purposes whether his testimony was factually accurate or not. It is sufficient that this is the way a contemporary with an extensive first-hand experience at court, as was the case here, imagined a liaison of this type developing. On the hand, though, the accuser had no obvious motives to seek to destroy his old friend in such a fashion. As Beloselskii was not a powerful or otherwise politically important person at that point, it is not clear what his former comrade might have hoped to gain by inventing these stories about him (as opposed to someone else). Nor does he appear to have held any grudge against the prince, so we have no reasons to suspect him of trying to settle old scores by such means.

So, how did the witness describe the liaison and the practices that constituted it? On the most basic level, Beloselskii allegedly told his friend that he ‘lived carnally’ with Ekaterina⁴⁶. When exactly did the affair begun, and how did the lovers met is not clear. While it might have lasted for years, the earliest date that could be deduced from the testimony is July 1730, when Empress Anna went to visit the Trinity Monastery, and Beloselskii accompanied Ekaterina on this trip. The lovers maintained frequent correspondence: Ekaterina’s servant, one Danilov ‘the Turk’, ‘frequently’ came to summon Beloselskii to the Tsarevna and to deliver missives from her, as well as to take back letters from the prince⁴⁷. When the affair ended, Ekaterina ordered Beloselskii ‘to bring the letters back to her, or to burn them’⁴⁸. On a more titillating note, Ekaterina had given her undershirts to her lover – was it meant to be an erotic souvenir, to fuel

Beloselskii's imagination?⁴⁹ More pragmatically, the prince also accepted from her a gift of one thousand rubles⁵⁰. He also sought, allegedly, to become attached to Ekaterina's household, and if successful in his aspirations, promised to help his friend to obtain employment there⁵¹. Beloselskii actually admitted during the investigation that it is with Ekaterina's help that he tried to get transferred to the newly created Izmailovsky Guards⁵². Tsarevna also felt free to discuss with her lover the sensitive topics which for anybody else could have meant a ticket to the chopping block: the fact that her sister – i.e. Empress Anna's – 'lives carnally' with Bühren and her sister's political anxieties. Allegedly, the empress herself was 'amazed' that the political events around her accession to the throne did not lead to a riot⁵³.

The prince visited Ekaterina's residence frequently and openly, as someone admitted to her social circle, so he must have participated in the entertainments and gatherings that she hosted and got opportunities to display the social skills and ability to be pleasing noted by the contemporaries: Axel von Mardefeldt, the Prussian envoy, would later describe him as 'a person of pleasing appearance and a smart one (*homme de bonne mine et d'esprit*)'⁵⁴. Their relationship was known to some of those around them, in particular, to Beloselskii's cousin (born Princess Kozlovskaiia), as it is at her apartment that the lovers had some of their 'occasions'⁵⁵. There are indications that they were not trying to conceal the relationship too hard. Once when Kozlovskaiia was going through childbirth, Ekaterina came along with Beloselskii to check on her. Ekaterina gave the woman 100 rubles as a gift, and 'seeing his cousin having labor, Beloselskii told the Sovereign Tsarevna: "Well, my lady, shall we counter trouble with trouble?"', and the Sovereign Tsarevna deigned to have a laugh with the said Beloselskii'⁵⁶.

The affair was over, however, no later than December 1731 and possibly even as early as 1730. Beloselskii told his friend that he 'did not have any more prospects at the court of the Sovereign Tsarevna': the reasons for the break-up supposedly was that he has been 'joking carelessly' with Tsesarevna Elizabeth, and Ekaterina Ioannovna saw it⁵⁷. Was it a jealousy of a personal sort, or a more political one – a reflection, perhaps, of the growing tension between the two branches of the royal family – is not clear. There might have been also other reasons for this split, that is, Beloselskii's failure to perform his role as a lover unsatisfactory. 'The Sovereign Tsarevna Ekaterina Ioannovna summoned me for copulation, – allegedly confessed Beloselskii to his friend, – but I was not ready for this business'. In order to be 'always ready for this business', the prince asked his friend to procure for him medicine from the Apteka, a large state-run pharmacy set up by Peter I in Moscow. Secrecy was clearly an important consideration, and rather than going to the pharmacy himself, the friend in turn dispatched Guardsman Nikita Nesterov, his distant in-law; the medicine was supposedly intended for his friend's manservant, who could not consummate his marriage due to a 'non-riser', nevstanikha. Yet, the guardsman

came back empty-handed: the pharmacist refused to sell the required substance without a doctor's prescription⁵⁸. Indeed, once Beloselskii's affair with Tsarevna was over, Princess Aleksandra Iakovlevna Dolgorukova allegedly told him: 'So, my lady deigned to taste it, but did not take to liking it, so she has no need for you any longer?'⁵⁹.

Naturally, presented with his friend's testimony, Beloselskii vehemently denied having an affair with the Tsarevna, or ever saying any of the things attributed to him. Yet, certain episodes he would not deny – probably, because he understood that they could be verified by the investigators – but rather attempted to explain them away. Thus, he admitted having accompanied the royal family on the pilgrimage to the Trinity Monastery, but claimed that he was invited along by Ekaterina's uncle, Moscow Governor-General Saltykov. He admitted having been visited often by Danilov 'the Turk', who indeed delivered to him invitations from Ekaterina, and also admitted having enjoyed the latter's 'favor' – but claimed that this favor was of an entirely innocent sort, and that he only came to Ekaterina 'to pay respect (ezzhival dlia poklonu)'. Finally, Beloselskii admitted receiving from Ekaterina 1000 rubles, without offering any explanation for such a gift⁶⁰.

* * *

This brings us, finally, to the personality of Beloselskii's friend to whose indiscretion we owe all this information about the prince's royal liaison. His name was Egor Stoletov, and he is notable in the history of Russian court politics of the 1720s for his involvement with Willem Mons (1688-1724), the younger brother of Peter I's first official mistress, Anna Mons, and eventually the favorite and likely the lover of the tsar's second wife, Catherine I, beheaded for his exploits by the enraged ruler at the end of 1724. Stoletov was a favorite's favorite, Mons' factotum and manager in charge of the latter's multifaceted corrupt dealings; it is his quarrel with Mons and his mishandled attempts to amass the compromising materials about the favorite that apparently led to the collapse of the entire enterprise, Mons' beheading and Stoletov's own first exile. The history of this affair needs not to be retold here: for our purposes it is important that the Stoletov connections puts Beloselskii's right in the midst of the Mons' circle of courtiers in the early 1720s⁶¹. During his 1736 interrogation the prince did not deny this connection: on the contrary, he himself recalled some of the conversations he had with Mons in Stoletov's presence in the spring of 1724. Moreover, the earliest surviving letter we have from Beloselskii is found among Mons' confiscated papers. It is dated January 1724, and it follows from the text that it was to the favorite that the prince owed his promotion to the first commissioned rank earlier that month⁶².

In order to understand the connection between the prince and the favorite properly, it must be seen in the context of what we know about the peculiar cultural milieu of which Mons was a member, if not one of the centers. In fact, his and Stoletov's confiscated papers are fascinating not only for a window they provide into his business dealings, but also because they contain some of the earliest surviving samples of secular, lyrical poetry in Russia⁶³. These verses are generally short, four or sixes lines only, although there are some that are longer; few also appear to form cycles of sorts. Their topic is invariably love and various anxieties and sorrows that accompany it: they virtually never refer to happy lovers, but instead deal with jealousy and despair, with parting with a lover and missing him or her, and so forth. Their content, not terribly sophisticated as it was, is best exemplified, perhaps, by the following stanza:

Уже мене не ходите
Куды я ходила,
Уже мене не любити
Кого я любила.

I won't be going again
Where I used to go;
I won't love again
The one whom I used to love.

In another verse, the narrator implores his beloved one:

Ах, астаньса верна!
Хотя вы вдали,
Мя никто не отлучит,
То обещаюсь вам для таго,
Что нету в свете миляя вас.
Ах астанса верна,
Хотя вы вдали.

Oh, stay faithful!
Even though you are far away,
Nobody will lead me astray from you.
This I promise to you,
For there is nobody lovelier than you in the entire world.
Oh, stay faithful!
Even though you are far away.

Elsewhere, a modicum of hard-earned wisdom is offered:

Плавлет судно едным едно,
Под ным вода тиха.
Хто незнаем любитися,
То не знает лиха

A ship is sailing alone,
Waters are calm around it.
One who keeps his love affair discreet,
Does not get into trouble⁶⁴.

These verses have been found both among Mons' and among Egor Stoletov's papers, and so both Mons and Stoletov are sometimes presumed to have authored them. Yet, for all their similarity in terms of form and content, stylistically these texts are a little bit too diverse to be penned by the same person, or two persons. Some of them bear clear signs of Ukrainian or Polish linguistic influences; others are written in what's called the '[German] Quarter argot', that is, a transliteration of sorts where Russian words are rendered in Latin alphabet. Some verses also appear to be mangled, as if written down by someone who did not understand the meaning of certain words, or perhaps could not hear them well. It has even been suggested that some of them might have been written by a mysterious female poet. At the same time, as it turns out, these files also contain a number of translations from identifiable German sources, such as a popular anthology of gallant poetry compiled by one Benjamin Neukirch (1665—1729) and published at the end of the seventeenth century; or a 1649 funeral poem by pastor Johann Georg Albinus (1624—1679). This latter borrowing is especially striking, as exactly the same passage that Mons choose to keep among his papers figures in a somewhat earlier, no less celebrated episode of a tragic romance between a young dashing courtier and his sovereign's wife. A poetic reference to 'having dared to love the one whom I ought to have only revered' is found in a letter sent to Sophia Dorothea of Celle, the wife of George of Hannover, the future George I, by her probable lover Philip Christoph von Königsmarck (1665-1694)⁶⁵. Overall, while it is certainly possible and even likely that Mons or Stoletov might have personally contributed to writing or translating some of these texts, more broadly the favorite and his minion seem rather to have been in the business of collecting diverse love-themed verses that circulated in Russia in the early 1720s, and the stylistic diversity of this collection reflects also the diversity of cultural and social types that were involved with this poetry.

Love is generally described in these verses in a typical baroque fashion, as almost an uncontrollable physical condition, a ‘fire’, or an ‘internal flame’ that ‘burns’ one’s heart and ‘tempers’ it; as an affliction that overwhelms a person in a very literal sense. Quite fittingly, Mons’ papers also contain a horoscope, as well as references to a mysterious potion (that could potentially be read even as plotting to poison his royal lover’s husband), and instructions for making four rings – those of wisdom, of treasure, of war and victory, and finally, of love. Forged of specific materials under specific conditions – for example, ‘on Sunday at the Hour of the Sun’ – these were expected to have magical powers. The ring of love, in particular, was to be ‘used prudently, for it could cause much evil; whoever touches with it a [person of] female sex, she would fall in love with him and do whatever he desires. It is to be made of pure copper’⁶⁶. The baroque language of passions as a ‘flame’ and an affliction, as a physical process that could be manipulated with the help of alchemy or sorcery arguably makes the practices reflected in Mons’ papers quite comprehensible to a much wider Russian audience of the day. On some level, it serves as a bridge between people from the Mons’ circle and someone like Captain Andrei Novokshchenov who opined in 1702 that ‘you can’t take a woman with the help of drinks, one needs here a bawd (*svodnia*) with a spell’, or serf wench Ustinia Grigorieva, who described in 1737 her first love towards a soldier as an overwhelming ‘great yearning (*toska*)’ – and countered it with the help of a potion and a spell⁶⁷.

Regardless of whether the favorite and his factotum were the authors, the translators, or simply collectors of these verses, the real question is how exactly was this poetry consumed and what were the social practices in which the verses were involved? Put simply, what did these people do with such texts? Most obviously, the language and notions codified in such verses were also employed in interpersonal communication: this vocabulary of love is also found in the letters that Mons wrote to a variety of court ladies and that have been also discovered among his confiscated papers. He would refer to Cupid; claim his inability to ‘contain my tears from pity as I saw from your letter that Your Grace is in the state of gloom’; beg the addressee to ‘take my unworthy heart in your white hands’, etc.⁶⁸ To still another lady, Mons tried to explain the reasons why he won’t be able to come tonight to the Duchess of Courland’s house to see her. A visit to the duchess (future empress Anna) the day before provoked a fit of jealousy in an unnamed person – most likely, Catherine herself: ‘You could see the tears yourself yesterday: it means that [she suspects] that I have an amour with the Duchess of Courland, and so if I come to you, instead of the palace, she would suspect that I do it for the duchess’ sake’⁶⁹.

At the same time, a number of these verses were labeled ‘songs (*pesni*)’, so perhaps they were indeed meant to be sang, or recited in public gatherings. Who were the members of such gatherings, then? Probably, some of Mons’ younger kinsmen, as well some of his retainers,

such as Ivan Balakirev or Egor Stoletov. Finally, such gatherings were likely to include people like Beloselskii himself – younger courtiers and aristocrats, pages and guardsmen. For them reading, reciting, or signing such poetry must have meant reflecting on their own relationships and those of their fellows or superiors. One other piece of evidence regarding Beloselskii's connection to Mons, besides the letter cited above, is his own 1736 account of a conversation he had with the favorite sometimes around the time of the announcement of Tsesarevna Anna betrothal to the Duke of Holstein-Gottorp. The marriage has been agreed upon in May 1724, so this episode must have taken place in Moscow in the spring or early summer of 1724. It was during one of Beloselskii's visits that the favorite saw it fit to remark, in Stoletov's presence, that Tsesarevna Anna was a 'good person', but her fiancé did not fit her as a human being ('on ei po chelovechestvu ne pridet'), so the marriage was bound to be 'orderly ... in a German way (po nemetski ... chinovno)'⁷⁰.

Such circles where poetry could be consumed and matters of love discussed could be imagined as early cells of sociability, or proto-sociability, perhaps. Relationships here were hierarchical, of course, indeed, they were inseparable from membership in patronage networks. At the same time ability to be sociable and pleasing to interact with, to appreciate somewhat more refined entertainment – such as the love-themed 'songs' – must have been important for membership in such circles, a crucial element of one's status and identity that could somewhat compensate for the deficit of more tangible assets. Characteristically, Stoletov, for his part, would stress years later that Beloselskii viewed him as a skilled writer - so much so that the prince asked him for help with drafting a response to his royal lover (although in that particular episode Prince Mikhail ended up disappointed with Stoletov's epistolary style). To this request, Stoletov allegedly replied that 'he, Beloselskii, can write as well as he, Stoletov': in other words, members of this milieu were aware of each other's skills in writing gallant letters – and appreciated them⁷¹. Ivan Balakirev, Mons' other factotum – he was only three years Beloselskii's senior – later on acquired a notoriety of sorts for his witty pronouncements. While at Anna's court (and in the folklore) this behavior was reinterpreted to make him fit the traditional and dishonorable role of a 'fool', a court jester, some contemporaries viewed him much more ambiguously and respectfully, stressing his ability to entertain and to maintain a pleasant conversation⁷². And while Beloselskii met and befriended Stoletov in the company of Mons, he continued to socialize with him and retained him as a companion and confidant even after Stoletov's return from his first exile, when he was no longer an influential mover and shaker⁷³. It is not too far-fetched to suggest, therefore, that the relationships between an aristocrat and a 'dishonored' former convict, or between the royal favorite at the pinnacle of his power and a petty princeling such as Beloselskii, were based on certain affinities, on shared

cultural profile and behavioral patterns, on recognition of belonging to a community that superseded formal hierarchies. It is not by chance, then, that people who met Beloselskii years later likewise invariably described as him as a very sociable and affable person: his distinctive, indeed his pretty much only quality mentioned in these recollections is his propensity to be ‘pleasant’. It is his social skills, most likely, that also earned him the attention of Tsarevna Ekaterina Ioannovna, Duchess of Mecklenburg.

* * *

In many ways, then, Beloselskii turns out to have been a central nod connecting diverse networks of courtiers who came of age during Peter’s reign and who were now involved in talking, reading, and writing about their amorous practices. On the one hand, Beloselskii personifies a direct continuity between Willem Mons’s circle with its interest in ‘songs’ and the court society of the early 1730s, in which Trediakovskii made his name. On the other, Beloselskii also embodied the continuity between this homegrown world of love-related cultural practices and the most sophisticated contemporary Western European patterns of gallant behavior, for as it turns out, he was pretty close with both of Trediakovskii’s patrons – not only with Ekaterina Ioannovna, but also with Aleksandr Kurakin, then fresh from Paris. According to Stoletov, Beloselskii frequented the Kurakin mansion in Moscow around 1730-31 and had friendly conversations with Prince Aleksandr, who was only four years his senior. Despite the vast difference in rank and wealth between them, Kurakin also paid visits to Beloselskii⁷⁴.

Indeed, Beloselskii was also on good terms with with Kurakin’s step-mother, Princess Maria Fedorovna (born Princess Urusova, d. 1731, the second wife of Prince Boris Ivanovich), whom he visited at her Moscow estate and with whom he continued to correspond after his departure to St Petersburg – and who also knew Stoletov personally⁷⁵. Most notably, in January 1728, Beloselskii paid a visit to the Princess on her estate in the environs of Moscow. Princess Maria and her unmarried daughter Princess Katerina had just arrived from St. Petersburg, and as some of their servants reported a year later, the ladies began bragging to Beloselskii that in the new capital ‘His Imperial Majesty [Peter II] visited their house, and sent his own sleigh to fetch them’. The young emperor Peter II had acquired by that time quite a reputation as a ‘friend of the feminine sex in the highest degree’ and was reported to have numerous ‘galanteos’: indeed, de Liria, the Spanish ambassador believed that ‘despite the cold climate’, both males and females matured very early in Russia⁷⁶. So, it was only natural for Beloselskii to read the ladies’ boasting in quite a straightforward way. ‘Why, have you had any luck once I left [St. Petersburg]? For while I was there you were sidelined’, he allegedly remarked and turning to the twenty-six years

old Princess Katerina, continued, in her mother's presence, 'Come on, Princess, are you having an affair with the sovereign?' ('Uzh ne sliubilas' li ty s gosudarem?'). Rather than being embarrassed or insulted by this suggestion, Princess Katerina supposedly shot back: 'I have, my lord, someone to love' ('Est', bat'ka, kogo poliubit'!')⁷⁷.

It is in this milieu, in this and similar elite circles that Trediakovskii's Ezda must have made such a splash; it is the members of this very circle that commissioned the translation and made its publication possible. Does it really make sense, then, to argue that for them this literary work served to 'generate a mode of life'? Is it really appropriate to present this episode as a glaring example of 'theory preced[ing] practice'; of 'not so much [cultural] programs adapting to life, as life adapting to [imported cultural] programs', and as a consequence, of 'artificiality of Russian cultural development'⁷⁸; of writers 'not following the cultural situation, but actively creating it, ... creating not only texts, but also their readers, and the culture for which these texts would be natural [*organichny*]⁷⁹? Certainly, it would be a folly to present this as an 'either-or' question, and certainly the appearance of this, or any other important text is likely also to have influenced the context in some way and to have shaped the subsequent behavior of those who consume this literature. Yet, upon closer examination the most striking part of the story of Trediakovskii's Ezda appears to be the one that has to do with the ways in which the social context, mediated here through the poet's two patrons, generated demand for a certain kind of text – or at the very least, that's the dimension of the story that has not so far attracted sufficient attention from the scholars.

That the mechanics of this demand is largely absent from our models of eighteenth century Russian cultural process, especially as far as the earliest decades are concerned, is not surprising given the paucity of sources at our disposal; it is this paucity, however, that might be largely responsible for the accounts in which literature conjures new modes of life almost ex nihilo. In our study, too, we are able to uncover only the circumstantial evidence of such demand. Yet, it appears to be there. Trediakovskii's patrons and the people around them converse about their own and the others' amorous relationships; reflect on and seek to categorize them; search for ways of conducting epistolary exchanges in the context of such relationships; consume love-related poetry. It certainly appears that the mode life already exists, that it does not need to be generated by Trediakovskii's work; that the readers for Trediakovskii's Ezda are there. Rather than waiting to be 'created' by the author, they, to reiterate the point, quite directly create the Ezda phenomenon by commissioning and promoting this work. And it is the desire to service the interests of these patrons and their friends, which he could not have helped knowing, that must have driven Trediakovskii to produce this work, not his alleged aspirations to

introduce the ‘spirit of the salon’ in Russia, the theory which must be finally put to rest as an unfounded fantasy.

So, the next question, then, is how did these people interact with this work once it appeared, how did they put it to social uses? We might imagine that Ezda helped them to reimagine and to legitimize the practices that they’ve been engaged in all along (although, as we have seen in Katerina Kurakina’s case, they did not necessarily feel shy or uneasy talking about their amorous exploits before Trediakovskii came along). We might also reasonably imagine that once Ezda came out, they began using Trediakovskii’s vocabulary – for example, to produce letter, like the one Beloselskii’s struggled with when he needed to respond to the Duchess of Mecklenburg. They must have certainly also adapted Trediakovskii’s oeuvre to their own needs as they saw fit, and in any case, any interaction they had with this work must have been very selective and driven by their own social goals and life strategies. All of these are legitimate and important questions that need to be addressed, however scarce might be the sources at our disposal. They do imply, however, taking seriously the agency of those who consumed Ezda, as well as other works, as opposed to seeing them as being brought into existence by the writer.

¹ For a brief overview in English, see Irina Reyfman, Vasilii Trediakovsky: The Fool of the ‘New’ Russian Literature, Stanford, 1991, pp. 24-29; Gary Marker, Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of the Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700-1800, Princeton, 1985, pp. 50-54.

² B. A. Uspenskii, Kratkii ocherk russkogo literaturnogo iazyka (XI-XIX vv.), M., 1994, p. 123.

³ Iu. M. Lotman, ‘Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul’tury XVIII-nachala XIX veka’, in Iz istorii russkoi kl’tury (XVIII-nachalo XIX veka), ed. Iu. M. Lotman, V. M. Zhivov, S. S. Averintsev, A. M. Panchenko, 5 vols, M., 1996, 4, pp. 97-99, 107.

⁴ B. A. Uspenskii, ‘Iazyk Derzhavina’, in Iz istorii russkoi kul’tury (XVIII-nachalo XIX veka), ed. Iu. M. Lotman, V. M. Zhivov, S. S. Averintsev, A. M. Panchenko, 5 vols, M., 1996, 4, p. 784.

⁵ V. N. Toporov, ‘U istokov russkogo poeticheskogo perevoda (“Ezda v ostrov liubvi” Trediakovkgo i “Le Voyage de l’Isle d’Amour” Talemana)’, in Iz istorii russkoi kul’tury (XVIII-nachalo XIX veka), ed. Iu. M. Lotman, V. M. Zhivov, S. S. Averintsev, A. M. Panchenko, 5 vols, M., 1996, 4, pp. 592-94.

⁶ Andrei Zorin, Poiavlenie geroia: Is istorii russkoi emotional’noi kul’tury kontsa XVIII – nachala XIX veka, Moscow, 2016, here pp. 39-40.

⁷ See most notably Michel Espagne, Les transferts culturels franco-allemands, Paris, 1999; Martin J. Burke and Melvin Richter (eds.), Why Concepts Matter: Translating Social and Political Thought, Leiden and Boston, 2012.

⁸ B. A. Uspenskii, A. B. Shishkin, ‘Trediakovskii i iansenisty’, Simvol, 23, 1990, pp. 319-456.

⁹ I. Z. Serman, ‘Trediakovskii i frantsuzskie kritiki 1720-kh godov’, in V. K. Trediakovskii: k 300-letiiu so dnia rozhdenia. Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii. Sankt-Peterburg, 12–13 marta 2003 g., SPb., 2004., pp. 9-19 (p. 10).

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- ¹⁰ ‘Boris Kurakin to Vice-Chancellor Shafirov, 12/23 March 1710’, in Arkhiv kniazia Kurakina, ed. M. I. Semevskii, 10 vols, SPb., 1890-1902, 2, p. 324.
- ¹¹ ‘Peter I to Louis XV and Duke of Orleans, 30 April 1722’, in Arkhiv kniazia Kurakina, ed. M. I. Semevskii, 10 vols, SPb., 1890-1902, 2, pp. 143-45.
- ¹² Upsenskii, Shishkin, ‘Trediakovskii’, pp. 105-9, 128; E. P. Grechanaia, Kogda Rossia govorila po-frantsuzski: russkaia literatura na frantsuzskom iazyke (XVIII - perviaia polovina XIX veka), M., 2010, pp. 26-30.
- ¹³ Upsenskii, Shishkin, ‘Trediakovskii’, pp. 105-9, 128.
- ¹⁴ Upsenskii, Shishkin, ‘Trediakovskii’, pp. 150, 44, 47-48.
- ¹⁵ Sankt-Peterburgskii Institut istorii Rossiiskoi Akademii nauk (hereafter, Arkhiv SPbII RAN), f. 239 (Sobranie N.P. Likhacheva), op 1., № 440, Damskie pis'ma k kniaziu Aleksandru Borisovichu Kurakinu 1722-1729.
- ¹⁶ Arkhiv kniazia Kurakina, ed. M. I. Semevskii, 10 vols, SPb., 1890-1902; on the history of the archive, see P. A. Druzhinin, ‘Sud'ba arkhiva kniazia Kurakina’, in Neizvestnye pis'ma russkikh pisatelei kniaziu A.B. Kurakinu, M., 2002, pp. 77-92.
- ¹⁷ ‘Therese’ to Prince Kurakin, 10 October and 5 December [1721]. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 47-48 ob., 44-45 ob.
- ¹⁸ ‘Therese’ to Prince Kurakin, 5 December [1721]. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 44-45 ob.
- ¹⁹ ‘Kelnerin masquée’ to Prince Kurakin, undated. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 25.
- ²⁰ ‘Therese’ to Prince Kurakin, 10 October [1721]. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 47-48 ob.
- ²¹ ‘Therese’ to Prince Kurakin, 19 March [1722]. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 14-15 ob.
- ²² Her father was Charles des Chiens, président à mortier at the parlement of Pau, who also succeeded his uncle as the king’s intendant in Béarn, and then in Roussillon and Burgundy.
- ²³ J. Merrick, ‘“Ces Affaires Sont Toujours Fâcheuses”: The Marital Separation Case of The Comte And Comtesse De Sainte-Maure, 1724–31’, French History, 31, 2017, 4, pp. 420-39; ‘Dans l’instance pour dame Marie Deschiens de la Neuville, épouse séparée de biens et d’habitation de messire Louis-Marie, comte de Sainte-Maure, demanderesse’, in H. Cochin, Oeuvres complètes de Cochin, 8 vols, Paris, 1822, 5, pp. 63-96.
- ²⁴ Journal et mémoires de Mathieu Marais, avocat au parlement de Paris sur la Regence Et Le Règne De Louis XV (1715 - 1737), 4 vols, Paris, 1863-68, 2, p. 8.
- ²⁵ Merrick, ‘Ces Affaires Sont Toujours Fâcheuses’, p. 435.
- ²⁶ Countess de Sainte-Maure to Kurakin, 14 February 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 22-23.
- ²⁷ Countess de Sainte-Maure to Kurakin, 21 March and 28 March 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 26-27, 31-32.
- ²⁸ Countess de Sainte-Maure to Kurakin, 20 June 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 40.
- ²⁹ Countess de Sainte-Maure to Kurakin, 14 February, 21 March and 28 March, 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 22-23, 26-27, 31-32.

³⁰ Kurakin to Peter II, April 1728. Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi imperii (hereafter AVPRI), f. 93, op. 1, 1728, № 5, ll. 60-61 ob.

³¹ E. Vagemans, Tsar' v Respublike. Vtoroe putestestvie Petra Velikogo v Niderlandy (1716-1717), SPb., 2013, p. 117.

³² Odilia Louise van Welderen to Kurakin, 11 July 1722 and 19 January 1723. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 3-5, 10-11.

³³ Unsigned, undated to Prince Kurakin. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 24.

³⁴ Marie van Welderen to Kurakin, 31 March 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 33-34 ob.

³⁵ Marie van Welderen to Kurakin, 4 November 1728. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 84-85ob.

³⁶ Marie van Welderen to Kurakin, 29 May 1729. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 106-107 ob, 72-73.

³⁷ Boris Kurakin to Catherine I, 19/30 May 1726. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 29-30 ob.

³⁸ Countess de Heidhort to Kurakin, undated. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 64-65 ob. The countess is probably the daughter-in-law of 'Count Neithart' mentioned in the travel diary of Prince Boris Kurakin as a Kammern-president in Breslau. Prince Boris stayed with him on few occasions and described the count as 'proficient in French, German, and Italian, and welcoming towards foreigners'. In one of her letter to Aleksandr Kurakin, the countess refers to her (unnamed) father as a source of news about the prince's travels. 'Zhizn' kniazia Borisa Ivanovicha Kurakina im samim opisannaia, 1676- iulia 20-go 1709 g.', in Akhiv kniazia Kurakina, ed. M. I. Semevskii, 10 vols, SPb., 1890-1902, 1, p. 280; 'Dnevnik i putevye zametki kniazia B. I. Kurakina, 1706-1708 gg.', in Arkhiv kniazia Kurakina, ed. M. I. Semevskii, 10 vols., SPb., 1890-1902, 2, p. 167.

³⁹ Countess de Heidhort to Kurakin, undated. Arkhiv SPbII RAN, f. 238, op. 1, №440, ll. 18-19ob, 20-21ob.

⁴⁰ P. Pekarskii, Nauka i literatura v Rossii pri Petre Velikom, 2 vols, SPb., 1862, 2, pp. 27-28.

⁴¹ Neizvestnye pis'ma russkikh pisateley, pp. 45-46.

⁴² F. V. Berkhgol'ts, Dnevnik kamer-iunkera Berkhgol'tsa, vedennii im v Rossii v tsarstvovanie Petra Velikogo, s 1721 po 1725 god, M., 1860, pp. 476-79.

⁴³ Kh. F. D. Stiuart, gertsog de Liria-i-Kherika, 'Donesenie o Moskovii v 1731 godu', Voprosy istorii, 5, 1997, pp. 73-94. I am grateful to professor Alexander Lavrov for sharing the quotes from the French original with me.

⁴⁴ On him, see: V. Berkh, Zhizneopisaniia pervykh rossiiskikh admiralov, ili Opyt istorii rossiiskogo flota, 4 vols, SPb., 1831-36, 2, pp. 377-90; B. Alekseevskii, 'Belosel'skii, Mikhail Andreevich', in Russkii biograficheskii slovar', 25 vols, ed. A. A. Polovtsev, SPb., 1896-1918, 3, pp. 651-52; I. V. Kurakin, Biron, M., 2006, pp. 118, 215; P. V. Dolgorukov, Rossiiskaia rodoslovnaia kniga, izdavaemaia kniazem Petrom Dolgorukovym, 4 vols, SPb., 1854-57,1, p. 220; Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota, eds. S. I. Elagin, F. F. Veselago, 17 vols, SPb., 1865-1904, 9, pp. 420, 518-21, 524-27, 529-33; G. P. Chernyshev, 'Zapiski grafa G. P. Chernysheva. 1672-1745', Russkaia starina, 5, 1872, 6, pp. 798-99; M. A. Belosel'skii, Belosel'skaia N. G., Belosel'skaia N. M., 'Dnevnik Belosel'skikh-Stroganovykh', in Rossiiskii arkhiv: Istoriia

Otechestva v svidetel'stvakh i dokumentakh XVIII-XX vv., 14 vols, M., 1994-2005, 14, pp. 71-73.

⁴⁵ Minutes of Stoletov's interrogation, April 7, 1736. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennii arkhiv drevnikh aktov (hereafter, RGADA), f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, ll. 5-16. For an overview, see 'Egor Stoletov. 1716-1736 gg. Rasskaz iz istorii tainoi kantseliarii', Russkaia starina, 8, 1873, pp. 1-27.

⁴⁶ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 84 ob.

⁴⁷ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 93.

⁴⁸ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 93 ob.

⁴⁹ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 119.

⁵⁰ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 84 ob.

⁵¹ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 11.

⁵² RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 125 ob.

⁵³ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 6.

⁵⁴ Francine-Dominique Liechtenhan, 'La Russie d'Élisabeth vue par des diplomates prussiens (1)', Cahiers du monde russe: Russie, Empire russe, Union soviétique, États indépendants, 39, Juillet-septembre 1998, 3, pp. 264. For another account of his personality, see: Into the Kazakh steppe: John Castle's mission to Khan Abulkhayir, ed. Beatrice Teissier, Oxford, 2014, p. 105.

⁵⁵ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 94.

⁵⁶ 'Nut-ka, matushka, my s toboi stanem likhoe likhim izbyvat'. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 136.

⁵⁷ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 6.

⁵⁸ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 85.

⁵⁹ Minutes of Egor Stoletov's interrogation, 8 March 1736. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 119.

⁶⁰ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, ll. 89, 93, 95.

⁶¹ On this affair see M. I. Semevskii, Tsaritsa Katerina Alekseevna, Anna i Villim Mons. 1692-1724, SPb., 1884; reprint, Leningrad, 1990; and most recently, I. V. Kurukin, Ekaterina I, M., 2016, pp. 160-176.

⁶² Beloselskii to Mons, 13 January 1724. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 157, part III, l. 92-92 ob.

⁶³ These poems were first described and partially published in Semevskii, Tsaritsa Katerina Alekseevna, pp. . For publication of and extensive quotes from Stoletov's verses, see also V. N. Peretz, 'Ocherki po istorii poeticheskogo stilia v Rossii', Zhurnal Ministerstva Narodnogo Prosveshchenia, CCCLXI, October 1905, pp. 354-97. The most up-to-date analysis of this poetry is offered by A. V. Pozdneev who argues that the verses were, in fact, the work of an unknown female poet. A. V. Pozdneev, Rukopisnye pesenniki XVII-XVIII vv.: iz istorii pesennoi sillabicheskoi poezii, M., 1996, pp. 272-95.

⁶⁴ The originals are in RGADA, f. 11, op. 1, d. 42, ll. 5, 8.

⁶⁵ Ilya Vinitskii, 'Noch' pered kazn'iu, ili Russkaia liubovnaia lirika nakanune rozhdeniia', Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 149, 2018, 1, pp. .

⁶⁶ RGADA, f. 6, d. 157, Part I, l. 116.

⁶⁷ E. B. Smilianskaia, "'Lyubov' tvoia rany mne velikie daet..." (chuvstva i strasti po sledstvennym materialam XVIII v.)', in Mifologia i povsednevnost'. Gendernii podkhod v antropologicheskikh distsiplinakh, SPb., 2001, pp. 26-45.

⁶⁸ Semevskii, Tsaritsa Katerina Alekseevna.

⁶⁹ RGADA, f. 6, d. 157, Part I, l. 92.

⁷⁰ ‘I on, de, Belosel’skii, k tomu Monsu priezzhival’. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, ll. 127-127 ob.

⁷¹ Stoletov’s testimony, 9 March 1736. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, ll. 121-121 ob.

⁷² See, for example, N.I. Panin’s much later account of him. S.A. Poroshin, ‘Zapiski, sluzhashchie k istorii velikogo kniazia Pavla Petrovicha’, in Russkii Gamlet. S.A. Poroshin, A.B. Kurakin, Velikii kniaz’ Pavel Petrovich, Moscow, 2004, p. 110.

⁷³ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 88.

⁷⁴ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 85 ob.

⁷⁵ RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, l. 330.

⁷⁶ Duke de Liria to Marquise de la Pas, 10 January 1728. *Rossiiia i Ispaniia. Dokumenty i materialy, 1667-1917*, 2 vols, Moscow, 1991-1997, 1, p. 125. Cf. Magnan in November 1727 on Peter II’s infatuation with Tsesarevna Elizabeth, his young aunt. Sbornik Imperatorskogo Russkogo istoricheskogo obshchestva (hereafter, SIRIO), 148 vols, SPb., 1867-1916, 75, pp. 137-38.

⁷⁷ Summary of the case from the archive of the Preobrazhenskii Office prepared for the Secret Chancellery, March 1736. RGADA, f. 6, op. 1, d. 190, ll. 145-46. This conversation was reported to the authorities by one Dmitrii Zernov, a scribe, who learned about it from Vasilisa Dudorina, Kurakin’s servant. Dudorina confirmed this report; however, three other female serfs identified as present during the conversation, denied that anything of that sort ever took place. Since Zernov himself was also under investigation for running away from the Trinity Monastery and for murder, this testimony was ultimately disregarded and the episode had no consequences for the Kurakins and Beloselskii.

⁷⁸ B. A. Uspenskii, ‘Iazyk Derzhavina’, p. 783.

⁷⁹ Iu. M. Lotman, ‘Ocherki po istorii russkoi kul’tury’, 107.

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