

WLADIMIR KARÉNINE AND HER BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE SAND: ONE RUSSIAN WOMAN WRITER RESPONDS TO SAND¹

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Few scholars have analyzed George Sand's tremendous influence on nineteenth-century Russian writers; even fewer have noted the complex reaction of Russian woman writers to Sand.² Perhaps this is because Dostoevsky and Turgenev proclaimed that Sand morally and politically inspired their generation in the 1840s, while woman writers of their generation were silent.³ Dostoevsky and Turgenev tempered their praise by noting that Sand was out of fashion by the 1870s, but evidence exists to indicate that Sand continued to be important to woman writers. Two women did write about Sand after her death, though significantly without professional fanfare. Like the writer, critic, and feminist Mariia Tsebrikova's essay on Sand, Wladimir Karénine's (1862-1942) scholarly biography *George Sand, sa vie et ses œuvres* (1899-26), I believe, developed out of and alongside of her work and

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2. A. I. Beletskii, "Epizod iz istorii russkogo romanizma: Russkie pisatel' nitsy 1830-60 gg.," Kharkov, 1919; IRLI R.1, op.2, n° 44a. Carole Karp, "George Sand's Reception in Russia, 1832-1881," diss., U. of Michigan, 1976; Hugh Anthony Aplin, "M. S. Zhukova and E. A. Gan: Woman Writers and Female Protagonists 1837-1843," diss., U. East Anglia, 1988; Lesley Singer Herrmann, "George Sand and the Nineteenth-Century Russian Novel: The Quest for a Heroine," diss. Columbia University, 1979; Kevin J. McKenna, "George Sand's Reception in Russia: The Case of Elena Gan," *The World of George Sand*, ed. Natalie Datoof, Jeanne Fuchs & David A. Powell (Greenwood Press: Westport, CT, 1991) 227-33; Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994). (This article is part of a book project on the influence of Sand in Russia on aesthetic debates over Realism. These debates intersected with the increased aspirations for a great national literature and the emergence of writing and criticism as professions for both men and women.)

3. F. M. Dostoevskii, "Smet' Zhorzh Zanda" and "Neskol'ko slov o Zhorzh Zande," in "Dnevnik pisatelja za 1876 god, iun'" *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 30 vols. (Leningrad, 1972-90) 23:30-37. Turgenev wrote: "When eight years ago I first met George Sand, the ecstatic surprise that she had at one time aroused in me had long disappeared and I already no longer bowed before her, but it was impossible to enter the circle of her private life and not become her suitor in another, perhaps better sense." "Neskol'ko slov o Zhorzh Sand," *Novoe vremia* 15 June 1876, n° 105; *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, 28 vols. (Moscow, 1960-68) 14:233.

interests as a Russian woman writer.⁴

Before her work on Sand, Karénine had been mapping out her own place in a Russian literary tradition in which men had long invoked Sand in their polemics about women. Thus Karénine's interest in Sand is evident in her first two literary projects (the biography was her third), but this does not answer the two questions my study addresses: why would a Russian woman author, under a male pseudonym, write a monumental biography of Sand? While it was common practice for Russian woman writers to use pseudonyms, female as well as male, it was rare for a scholar. Her pseudonym represented a complex literary identity that appears to have been linked with Tolstoy,⁵ whom she figuratively worshipped before his conversion to Christianity and detested as a writer afterwards.

Karénine's interest in Sand was part of a Russian critical tradition of over fifty years of reading Russian woman writers through Sand, and of Russian women reading and translating her novels. Nineteenth-century Russian critics usually characterized the influence of Sand on Russian women writers as personal rather than professional, as emotionally disruptive rather than intellectually productive.⁶ For example, in 1900 the critic Kogan stated that Sand's influence had led women to seek freedom by means of their emotions, and now women should free themselves from those emotions to become good writers.⁷

4. In 1888, Karénine began her career as a novelist, then worked as a biographer and critic while continuing to write a play, stories, and fairy tales. Her *Sobranie sochinenii* in three volumes had two editions (1911-12, 1913-16). After 1912 she worked mainly as a scholar and archivist at the St. Petersburg Institute of Russian Literature (Pushkin House), writing on her family, the Stasovs, writers, and composers. With few exceptions, Komarova signed her work as Karénine, and because this study is about her written work, I call her Karénine throughout. Varvara Komarova, "Aviobiografiia V. D. Stasovoi-Komarovoi," *Ogonek* 42 (1927): 12; *Russkie pisatel'i 1800-1917, biograficheskii slovar'* 3 (Moscow, 1994) 42-3. In English, see Mary Zirin's entry on Komarova in *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*, ed. Marina Ledkovsky, Charlotte Rosenthal, and Mary Zirin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994).

5. See her uncle's reply to her letter (15 July 1891; *JRLJ, Arkhiv Stasovykh*, f. 294, op. 8, n° 15, ll. 3-7), in which she was angry because her pseudonym had been revealed to Tolstoy. Her uncle also tried to talk her out of breaking with Tolstoy permanently for other reasons by arguing that genius can be combined with despicable behavior. V. V. Stasov, 21 June 1891, *Pis'ma k rodnym*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1958) 2: 304-5.

6. The response of women critics, who all also happened to be fiction writers, was varied and complicated. Evgeniia Tur, Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaiia, and Maria Tsebnikova read and translated Sand's novels, but they avoided directly connecting their own work with Sand's, which was a critical commonplace. Evgeniia Tur [E. V. Salias de Turmemir], "Zhizn' Zhorzh-Sanda," *Russkii vestnik* (1856) 3.5.9:72-93, 3.6.12:693-715, 4.8.15:667-708. V. Porrechnikov [N. D. Khvoshchinskaiia], "Provincial'nye pis'ma o nashei literature, Pis'mo tret'e," *Otechestvennyye zapiski* 5 (1862):24-52. M. K. Tsebnikova, "Zhorzh Sand," *Otechestvennyye zapiski* (1877) 232.6:439-72, 233.7:255-92.

7. P. S. Kogan, "Iz zhizni i literaturny: Intelligentnaia zhenshchina v rasskazakh g-zhi Krandievskoi," *Obrazovanie* 2 (1900): 31-8.

Yet while critics warned women of the danger of Sand's ideas about love, they continued to judge Russian women's writing as artistically inferior to Sand's. Following the reviews written in the 1840s by the extremely influential literary critic Vissarion Belinskii, Russian critics who praised Sand extolled her capacity for ideas and berated Russian women writers for not thinking broadly in a larger social, historical context. Thus in 1889, Chuiko argued that this was because Sand, unlike Russian women, could write like Tolstoy and other male writers about love as a complex social idea.⁸

Thus like many Russians, Karénine's imagination was fired by Sand's political ideals.⁹ And like the nineteenth-century Russian women writers who were goaded by critics, Karénine emphasized her interest in ideas as such and in social issues, particularly relations between classes. For example, in an 1892 story she explored, through the eyes of a governess, the consequences for an aristocratic family of a widow's (Sandian) mésalliance with a teacher from a lower class.¹⁰ In her 1906 story "A Feminist from Abrosimovka," a peasant woman tells some aristocratic picnickers how she legally freed herself from an abusive husband, while her listeners react in various ways: the hostess of the picnic, who is active in charities for women, humors her guests at the peasant's expense, while a doctor argues that women are physically inferior, and a male guest says her husband should have killed her.¹¹

Here the political and cultural activities of her well-connected family clearly shaped Karénine's depictions of such women's political issues as education, motherhood, marriage, divorce, and work. She dedicated *George Sand* to her father, the prominent liberal lawyer Dmitrii Stasov: "C'est vous qui m'avez appris à aimer George Sand." Her aunt was the feminist activist Nadezhda Stasova, and her sister Elena was a Bolshevik and member of the Comintern. She corresponded about literary matters with her voluble, volatile uncle, the art and music critic Vladimir Stasov, who helped her gather material and publish.¹²

Karénine expounded on the importance of ideas and ideals in and of themselves in her work before the biography of Sand and again in the biography. In

8. V. V. Chuiko, "Sovremennyye zhenshchiny-pisatel'nitsy," *Nabludatel'* 4 (1889): 23-50.

9. On Russians preference for Sand's political writings, see Tsebnikova and Carole Kap, "George Sand, Balzac, and the Russian Soul," *Michigan Academician* 10 (1978):347-59.

10. V. Karenin, "Iz detskogo mira, Etnudy, I. Zabyta," *Vestnik Evropy* 3.6 (1892); *Strekozy: Skazki, rasskazy, povesti* (St. Petersburg, 1912; Petrograd, 1916) 13-33.

11. V. Karenin [V. D. Komarova], "Feministka iz Abrosimovki," *Russkie vedomosti* No. 154 (1906); *Strekozy: Skazki, rasskazy, povesti* (St. Petersburg, 1912; Petrograd, 1916) 113-29.

12. Her uncle gave Karénine's novel *Musia* to Mikhail Stasiulevich, his publisher at *Vestnik Evropy*, and the scholar Aleksandr Pypin. GPB, f. 621, N. 408, three letters in October 1887. Dmitrii Stasov first approached Mme Maurice Sand, while Karénine's archives contain transcripts of articles about Sand in her uncle's handwriting. GPB, Arkh. V. D. Komarovoi, n° 28, "Pis'mo k neustanovlennomu litu (Mikhail Mikhailovich)," dated after 1924.

1888, Karénine made her debut to mixed reviews with a female Bildungsroman *Musia*.¹³ Her next project was a biographical sketch of the eighteenth-century German actress and playwright Caroline Neuber (1697-1760), which she later turned into an unsuccessful play.¹⁴ In 1891 she first revealed her plan to write about Sand to her father, and later to her uncle. Although Karénine positioned her biography as a rebuttal to the myriad bad, sometimes malicious French biographies of Sand, her work and correspondence also indicate that she developed this project partly out of her concern about ideas in and of themselves as an ideal for women as heroines and as writers.¹⁵

Karénine conceived of the eponymous *Musia* within an established Russian literary tradition of responses to Sand's novels about adulterous love. *Musia* was Karénine's reworking of Anna's fate in *Anna Karenina*, in which Tolstoy partly responded to Chernyshevsky's argument in *What is to Be Done?* (1863), based on Sand's *La Comtesse de Rudolstadt* and *Jacques*.¹⁶ Chernyshevsky posited that while love was irrational, the consequences could be managed rationally to the benefit of society. In contrast, Tolstoy created a bleak picture of sexual passion out of control in *Anna Karenina* and later in *The Kreutzer Sonata* (1889). Karénine countered both writers' views, most powerfully embodied in their heroines, by creating a different heroine. By taking the pseudonym Karénine, Varvara Komarova, née Stasova, called attention to her literary intentions.

13. V. Karenin [V. D. Komarova], *Musia, Vestnik Evropy* (1888):3.5:121-90, 3.6:516-613, 4.7:81-143, 4.8:433-518; (St. Petersburg, 1911, 1913). One reviewer speculated that the writer was a woman because of the author's "remarkable capacity for observation" RGALI, f. 238, op. 1, d. 746, l. 2ob. An unspecified French publication that, like the early review in *Russkaia mysl'* (6 (1888):317-18), was positive. In his negative review, R. A. Distaflo called the author an able "master of literary matters," but uninteresting. *Nedelnia*, n° 41 (1888): 1303-7.

14. V. Karenin [V. D. Komarova], "Karolina Neiber (Die Neuberin)" *Severnyi vestnik* 12 (1897): 19-38; *Karolina Neiber. Tragicheskaia byl' v chetyrekh deistviakh s prologom, Sochineniia*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1912) 3:37-153. The play was first performed 17 Oct. 1900 in the Maly Theater in St. Petersburg; reviewers thought it was too talky and underhearsed. Although the publication dates place these works after Karénine was at work on Sand in mid-1891, both archival material and Vladimir Stasov's published letters to her in 1891, indicate that he had read the biography.

15. On this aspect of Sand in French art, see Janis Bergman-Carton, *The Woman of Ideas in French Art, 1830-1848* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 153-60.

16. Karénine gave her views of Tolstoy in letters to her uncle V. V. Stasov, IRLL, Arkhiv Stasovykh, f. 294, op. 8, n° 15. In published material, see Stasov's response (21 June 1891) to her angry letter about her pseudonym being exposed to Tolstoy among others, and Stasov's defense of Tolstoy. V. V. Stasov, *Pis'ma k rodnym*, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1958) 2:304-6. (On Sand's novels as sources for *What is to Be Done?*, see E. Klenin, "On the Ideological Source of 'Chto delat': Sand, George, Druzhinin, Leroux," *Zeitschrift für Slavische Philologie* 51.2 (1991): 367-407.)

Musia and the men she is involved with repeatedly dwell on how unlike other women she is, implicitly bringing to mind those other heroines. Like Chernyshevsky's heroine Vera Pavlovna, *Musia* makes a marriage based on friendship and common interests. But unlike Vera or Anna Karenina, *Musia* loves her husband, and she later loves both him and her lover equally, simultaneously. But the most significant difference is that *Musia* is both extremely passionate and intelligent in an analytical way that allows her to control her feelings. The novel's epigraph is Heine's "Warum?" and when *Musia* plays Schumann's song based on this poem, it captures the tension between her emotions, represented by the music and the poetry, and her intellectual quest for meaning and an occupation in life.¹⁷

Early in the novel, Karénine establishes *Musia*'s cast of mind as a defining feature of her personality. By the end of the novel, when *Musia* decides to return to her husband, Karénine marks her worldview and the quality of her mind as decidedly Sandian despite the conservative ending — idealistic, intelligent, and passionate.¹⁸

They say that any ideals are nonsense and that they are eternally shattered.

But now *Musia* knows that one can only live when one strives to achieve some kind of ideal, submitting one's whole life to one something, an idea, a cause, feeling, ... not submitting to anything temporary or accidental.¹⁹

Musia (like Karénine herself and more or less like Sand) has a masculine pseudonym: her guardian gives her the nickname Misha or Mikhail Nikolaevich because she neither thinks nor talks like a woman. In school *Musia* is as bright as her best friend, but Nina gets the gold medal (as did Karénine) because *Musia* learns only whatever interests her. This represents the continued debate about women's education and superficial rote learning versus learning to think for oneself. Significantly the most damning criticism of *Musia*, amidst speculation that the author was a woman,

17. This song became the title of Varvara Tsekhovskaia's literary debut with "Warum?" in 1899. The heroine Liza rejects love for the sake of her work in music and painting, thus reworking the tension in Karénine's novel to a different end. Of'nem, O. N. [V. N. Tsekhovskaia], "Warum?" *Russkoe bogatstvo*, 2 (1899); *Ocherki i rasskazy* (St. Petersburg, 1903, 1912).

18. This was a typically Russian step backwards from the actions of Sand's heroines in the opinion of the feminist critic Tsebnikova. M. K. Tsebnikova, "Gumannyi zashchitnik zhenskikh prav." Po povodu romana A. F. Pisemskogo "Liudi Sorokovykh godov," *Otechestvennye zapiski* 2 (1870): 209-28. More recently, Herrmann has made a similar argument about the recalcitrant radicalism of the Russian Jacques, who became a defender of hearth and home. Klenin has argued that Jacques was not the primary model for Druzhinin's *Polinka Saks* and Chernyshevsky's *What is to Be Done?*

19. V. Karenin, *Musia, Vestnik Evropy* 4.8 (1888): 508.

was that the author lacked "an independent relation to life."²⁰

In a letter, Vladimir Stasov praised the novel as "not simply autobiographical. No, it is a novel," thus recalling nineteenth-century critics on women's writing, who claimed women could write only from their (limited) lives and thus copied reality because they could not produce original ideas.²¹ Later Stasov wrote to Karénine that he admired Sand's "fire," but detested her idealism, exactly what appealed to Karénine.²² In the context of such criticism, it seems to me that Karénine's emphasis on Musia's mind clearly reflects back onto that of the author and states her position as a writer. Thus this novel could be considered autobiographical in its reflection of Karénine's professional life, her becoming a writer.

Karénine continued to explore her heroines' (and her) passion for ideas and for staying interested in one's ideas in her next project, the biography of Caroline Neuber.²³ Neuber had a pivotal role in the development of a German national tradition of theater and dramaturgy. Karénine reinterpreted the life of this eighteenth-century woman in light of Sand, calling her biography of Neuber "a deeply sorrowful image of a misunderstood soul and a martyr to an idea" (4). She sent it to her uncle and he identified Karénine with Neuberin, as they affectionately dubbed her, by calling his niece Komarovin. He also connected Neuber with Sand in his proposal for an article on them as two women who achieved much despite the odds against them.²⁴

Yet before Stasov made this last connection, Karénine had already moved on from Neuber to Sand, which seems to me to have been an organic progression. The story of how she came to write about Sand and the saga of her book's publication in Russian and in French over twenty seven years contains some odd turns and gray areas. In her published autobiography, as in an unpublished archival account, she credited her father, "who found that her real biography did not exist," for the decision to write about Sand.²⁵ Yet, in letters to her father and uncle, it is clear that she had long had the idea, which is important because it demonstrates that her conception of Sand is firmly attached to her own work as a writer. In May 1891, she asked her father to visit: "I have to speak with you about a certain literary matter of mine in

20. R. A. Disterlo, *Nedélia* 41 (1888): 1306. Another earlier review had speculated on her sex: "Nous persiflons à croire que cet auteur, malgré son pseudonyme masculin, est une femme," in an unnamed French paper issued in Russia, *RGALI*, f. 238, op. 1, d. 746.

21. Letter to S. V. Fortunato (his illegitimate daughter), dated 3 Nov. 1887, *Pis'ma k rodnym* 2: 219-20.

22. Letter 6 June 1891, *Pis'ma k rodnym*, 2: 303-4.

23. In Karénine's words, Neuber's accomplishments were that "she translated and adapted French and English classics for the German stage, herself wrote plays, prologues, and dialogues, worked to remove slapstick humor, so-called Hansichkeit, from the stage, to create a literary repertoire, to convert actors from pitiful clowns into artists who cared about their dignity" *Sochineniia*, 3: 4-5.

24. *Pis'ma* 2: 306.

25. "Avtobiografiia," 12. "Pis'mo k neustanovlennomu litisu," dated after 1924, *GPB*, Arkh. V. D. Komarovoi, n° 28.

secret, therefore it is better to do this at my place."²⁶ In response to her uncle's June letter containing his idea to write on Neuber and Sand, she was forced to divulge what she called "a secret" (using the same language as to her father): that she had already been doing preparatory work by reading Sand and works about her for two years.²⁷ Stasov proposed a popular format of great women through the ages, which she did not follow because she clearly already had her own conception.²⁸ In part her secrecy can be attributed to fear of competition, leading her to make an odd request: "write your article on *G. S. and Neuberin* and give it to me and I will place it in a chapter of my book...." But her secret preparations and consultations also suggest that her project (like her pseudonym) was audacious.

By 1894, Karénine wrote that she wanted to publish the book in France as well because of the threat, later realized, that her work would be plagiarized. She credited the unscrupulous action of S. Rocheblave with changing her life in a positive way because the French edition increased her audience tremendously and brought her into contact with famous and ordinary people throughout Europe and America.²⁹ When an article was plagiarized, her father and uncle advised her to translate her work into French and publish it simultaneously with the Russian edition, "as there were no literary conventions between France and Russia and dear Mr. R. could immediately 'use' my Russian book when it came out...."³⁰ From her notes of meetings with

26. 10 May 1891, *IRLI*, Arkhiv Stasovykh, f. 294, op. 8, N. 44, l. 9.

27. Stasov's letter dated June 21. Her response dated 24 June 1891, *IRLI*, Arkhiv Stasovykh, F. 294, op. 8, N. 15, l. 9ob-10.

28. Letter 28 June 1891, 2: 310-12.

29. "Pis'mo k neustanovlennomu litisu (Mikhail Mikhailovitch)," *GPB*, Arkhiv V. D. Komarovoi, No. 28, l. 4. An earlier account (citation below) was created for Henry Harnisse, the American lawyer who advised her, which colors somewhat the purpose of these travel notes written up to aid him in establishing her claims on her work. With his help, she composed a letter stating that she would write in whatever language she chose. (Initially she had been warned about Rocheblave by Mme Maurice Sand, who wanted her to get Sand's letters from him and not return them because he did unreliable work. Rocheblave questioned her about her bibliography, much of which he did not know. Despite her comments to the contrary, he assumed she would publish in Russia. When he realized her plan to publish in France, he sent her an odd letter in which he listed all her sources as if he were instructing her; he also asked her to mark all place of interest in the letters he had given her and to hire his copyist; finally, she would write in Russian and he in French. In a second letter he instructed her on how to handle a chapter she had already written and continued to insist they publish only in their respective countries. Most insulting was his patronizing tone: "Il a l'air de vouloir se poser en auteur guidant une pauvre petite commençant dans son travail à faire. C'est trop fort." Otryvki iz ee dorozhnogo literaturnogo dnevnika; Extraits de mon journal littéraire pour M. Harnisse, 6 July 1894, *GPB*, Arkhiv V. D. Komarovoi, n° 20, l. 13.)

30. "Pis'mo k neustanovlennomu litisu (Mikhail Mikhailovitch)," *GPB*, Arkhiv V. D. Komarovoi, n° 28, l. 2. Rocheblave immediately translated her Russian article, "George Sand, History and not a Legend" (1895), on Sand's relationship with Alfred de Musset, as "La fin d'une légende," and signed his name. Much of the rest of this letter details the trouble she had

Rocheblave, she clearly thought him a poor scholar.

Karénine considered the quality and quantity of evidence supremely important because of the nature of her subject. Karénine wrote the first life-and-works study of Sand because in her view, only this combination did justice to the force of Sand's ideas.

Ce qui distingue par dessus tout George Sand [...] c'est son attachement passionné à toutes les grandes idées de l'humanité, sa préoccupation convaincue pour atteindre à cet idéal est la personnalité intense qui règne dans tous ses écrits [...]. C'est, selon nous, dans ces traits de son caractère *humain* et de son tempérament artistique qu'il faut chercher la clef de tout, si l'on veut comprendre sa vie personnelle et son œuvre littéraire que l'on ne peut séparer l'une de l'autre [...]. Nous nous contentons de répéter ici que chez George Sand, plus que chez tout autre écrivain, l'activité littéraire et la vie personnelle sont si étroitement liées l'une à l'autre et tellement soumises à l'influence de ses idées (ou plutôt au développement d'une *seule idée*) qu'il est impossible d'omettre un *fait* de sa vie sans perdre aussitôt le fil du développement progressif de ses idées qui, seul, peut nous faire comprendre son œuvre. (8-10)

This passage reveals Karénine's persistent fascination with a woman's capacity to live for ideas, which she expressed first in *Muscia*, then in her biography of Caroline Neuber. But critics of such notorious women as Sand and Catherine the Great had long concentrated on their lives rather than their ideas, so Karénine assailed critics for manipulating the evidence.³¹

When Karénine compares Sand's autobiography to Catherine the Great's *Mémoires*, she comes closest to articulating the difficulty in interpreting this evidence, which is compounded by what she sees as the problem of gender.

[C]es deux esprits de génie ne pouvaient pas, ne devaient pas oublier, qu'elles étaient pourtant *femmes*, soumises à la modestie féminine, elles ont gardé un silence discret sur certaines choses [...]. On est forcé de lire

with the translation of the first volume into French, an indication that Rocheblave's plagiarism significantly sped up her timetable for the French translation. The second she translated herself and the third she already wrote in French, then translated into Russian, which indicates that the French publication was primary for her. The last volume was never issued in Russian, which exists as a two volume edition, with the second volume comprising the second and third French volumes.

31. To ensure that she had good evidence, Karénine laid down four guidelines for her biography, on the partiality of eyewitnesses, the need to speak rather than keep silent about difficult aspects of Sand's life, and the differences between fiction, Sand's *Histoire de ma vie*, and biography. She often relied on original, unpublished letters, because the incomplete collection of published letters had been edited to change details.

entre les lignes, mais l'ensemble, surtout dans l'*Histoire de ma vie*, est tout à fait conforme à l'idée générale. (67)

Karénine argued that Catherine's and Sand's memoirs shared this particular feature that completely shaped any reading: they were driven by "one idea," and therefore, "tous les événements ne sont plus considérés comme accidentels; ils forment dès lors un ensemble indissoluble" (66). This notion is echoed in Muscia's thinking about a purposeful as opposed to incidental life.

An astute reader, Karénine's response to Sand as the vessel of ideas was a function of many factors — Russian criticism, her own writing, her family, her temperament — but she chose to emphasize another factor in the introduction: her Russianness. Karénine quoted Dostoevsky at great length to explain why a Russian had written the most comprehensive critical biography of Sand. Dostoevsky eulogized Sand mainly to illustrate his argument for a middle ground against those who maintained that a historical, intellectual abyss stood between Russia and Europe and therefore Russians might either copy Europe or go their own (Asiatic) way, but never truly understand European ideas.³² Despite himself, Dostoevsky somewhat undercut his bid for understanding by trying to outdo the French in Russians' capacity to understand Sand, claiming she was a "Russian poet," a claim Karénine did not cite, perhaps judging it to be too idiosyncratic. Eschewing Dostoevsky's polemic, Karénine inserted herself under a male pseudonym as a Russian (male) writer into his general picture of Sand's influence.³³

C'est précisément en envisageant George Sand comme *force russe*, comme l'une des souches primordiales de la conscience sociale russe de notre temps, que nous avons considéré comme notre devoir d'écrivain russe de lui consacrer une étude sérieuse. (1:39)

To write about Sand's influence became tantamount to having the right to speak for the Russian people, a (male) political role filled with familiar tensions for Russian writers and critics. Like Dostoevsky, Taine, and Zola, Turgenev had hoped to write a substantial eulogy to Sand, and his letter to Flaubert reveals one motivation

32. Isabelle Naginski has termed Dostoevsky's view of Sand as the "serenity of influence," a potentially new way to view cross-cultural influences as less threatening than those Bloom describes within a writer's literary culture. But in Dostoevsky's case, this should be seen in terms of his attempt to heal the rift in Russian intellectual life between Slavophiles' and Westernizers' views of Russia as either Asian or European. This was most evident in his 1880 Pushkin speech, "The Serenity of Influence: The Literary Relationship of George Sand and Dostoevsky," *George Sand: Collected Essays*, ed. Janis Glasgow (Troy NY: The Whitston Publishing Company, 1985) 110-25.

33. Alexander Woronoff-Dashkoff has discovered that Princess Dashkova employed a similar stratagem when she criticized Peter III by borrowing the words of historians. "Disguise and Gender in Princess Dashkova's *Mémoires*," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 32.3 (1991): 61-74.

behind his desire: the national, professional honor it conferred on him.

Je sais que vous êtes allé à Nohant pour l'enterrement — et moi qui voulais envoyer un télégramme de condoléance au nom du public russe, j'ai été retenu par une sorte de modestie ridicule.... Le public russe a été un de ceux sur lequel Mme Sand a eu le plus d'influence — et il fallait le dire, pardieu — et j'en avais le droit — après tout.³⁴

The extent to which Karénine, shielded by a male pseudonym, joins hands with her male colleagues becomes evident when we contrast her extensive use of Dostoevsky's views on Sand in her Introduction to Sand's biography with her private discussion with Rocheblave, where she criticized Russians for an excessive interest in Sand's ideas at the expense of form.³⁵ But unlike Dostoevsky and Turgenev, who blamed Sand for the loss of her reading public and considered her work passé, Karénine, like the woman critic Isebrikova, saw the reason in society's indifference to problems, often women's issues.³⁶

Thus Karénine had a divided identity as a writer. Through her pseudonym and in writing about Sand, I think Karénine constructed herself as a Russian (male) writer and thus rejected writing as a woman writer. But her subject matter often was women and women's issues. The complexity of Karénine's identity is unusual among women who had pseudonyms, for she used it to sign correspondence and even created "him" as a literary character, which, for example, Nadezhda Durova never did.³⁷ In a short story, "Mister Kaloshkin," Karénine embodied her pseudonym as a male writer who tries to save a lower class version of Musia, also named Maria, from a degrading marriage to a gifted pianist and tyrannical petty bourgeois husband.³⁸ The hope the fictional Karénine inspires proves too much for Maria and she throws herself from a window. This represents an alternate ending to Musia's life, the one Karénine rejected in *Musia*, her argument against *Anna Karenina*. The story can be read as a

34. I. S. Turgenev, 6/18 June 1876, *Pastip*, 11: 272. Turgenev even competes a little with Flaubert for Sand's love, writing that it was "natural" that she love Flaubert more.

35. "Je lui signalai le fait singulier que la plupart de nos critiques russes reprochaient à George Sand sa retirée, après 1848, dans la vie privée et son retour vers les pastorales — retours acclamé avec joie par les critiques français. Les critiques russes font trop peu attention à la forme, les français le font trop...." 29 June 1894, "Otryvki," GPB, Arkh. V. D. Komarovoï, n° 20, 1. 12.

36. On the aesthetic significance and issues of gender in Sand's decreased popularity in France, see Naomi Schor, *George Sand and Idealism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

37. A decorated officer in the War of 1812 and author of *The Catvay Maiden* (trans. Mary Fleming Zinn (London: Angel Books, 1988)), Durova lived her life as a man, even demanding that her son address her as a man, and wrote under a male pseudonym Aleksandrov.

38. V. Karénin [V. D. Komarova], "Gospodin Kaloshkin," *Vestnik Evropy* 3.6 (1897); *Sochineniia: Srekozy*, 3 vols. (St. Petersburg, 1912; Petrograd, 1916) 2:49-111.

pessimistic commentary on Karénine's inability as a writer in the story, and in real life, to improve lives.

In her fiction and privately, Karénine allowed herself to be more ambiguous about the Russian writer's role in society. Clearly, writing about Sand was not writing like Sand, whose works changed literature and lives. Dostoevsky noted that the hopes of Russian writers for Sand's works were not realized, but Karénine seemed aware that the powers of social and political transformation that Dostoevsky envisioned lay beyond writing, perhaps in the organic union of life and work that she envisioned as emblematic of Sand.

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Le Siècle de George Sand



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