

Employing such artistic conventions as *turquerie* in a highly personal manner, Briullov navigated across social boundaries (he was not of Samoilova's noble class) to transform this portrait into a covert profession of his love for the sitter and simultaneously possess her as his own. Popular in Europe, especially France, *turquerie* was at first a fashion for Turkish styles and motifs in interior design, masquerade balls, clothing and furniture. But European fantasies about the East intensified through colonial expansion at the end of the eighteenth century. *Turquerie* came to represent a European superiority over an exotic "other," often manifested in the image of the black servant, which is also prevalent in Orientalist paintings.

But the discourse of Orientalism extends over broader visual arenas such as the bath, harem-life, landscapes of exotic foreign lands and their inhabitants. Orientalism is a discourse which is based on continued colonial conquest and primarily considered a European, namely French and English, "othering" of the Near East and North Africa. Within the Orientalist revisionist discourse, other imperializing countries such as Russia are reconsidered. However, Orientalism presents a dilemma when applied to Russia, as its identity is simultaneously European and Eastern "other," with western European perceptions tending to view Russia as singularly Eastern. To complicate the issue further, Russia itself was an imperialist nation.

Samoilova is conceptually developed within this Russian discourse of Orientalism. As both artist and sitter were living in Italy when the portrait was painted, it was the duality and perception of Russian cultural identity that

Briullov manipulated when creating *Samoilova*. The painting is a manifestation of both traditions of *turquerie* and Orientalism.

KARL BRIULLOV'S *PORTRAIT OF COUNTESS SAMOILOVA*

by

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Introduction

Over life-size, measuring nine feet in height and six feet in width, the stunning *Portrait of Countess Samoilova* (1832-1834) (figure 1) dominates the wall on which it hangs in the Hillwood Museum. Standing above the viewer, Countess Samoilova is an icon to admire as well as an illustration of Briullov's epitome of elegance and beauty. The vivacious young countess wears a tiara, classicizing jewelry, a Kashmir shawl, and a fashionable Parisian evening gown with elegant lace trim and silk shoes. Greeted by her adoring foster-daughter Giovanina, a black servant and the family dog, she saunters into the sunlit room. Despite the intimacy of the setting and the closeness of the painted figures, the viewer soon realizes that this is a formal portrait of Samoilova and not a domestic scene. All attention is turned to Samoilova, who does not return the adoring smile of her young daughter or anyone else, but gazes into the distance.

When first exhibited in Milan in 1834, *Samoilova* received great critical acclaim. Briullov's use of color and lavish textiles were favorably compared to those of Rubens, Titian and Van Dyck.¹ In general, however, *Samoilova* is

¹ N.G. Mashkovtsev comp., *K.P. Briullov v pismakh, dokumentakh i vospomnaniakh sovremennikov* (Moscow, 1961), 99-103, hereafter Mashkovtsev.

not considered a high-minded painting.² The Countess is not engaged in any sort of intellectual activity as in the more serious psychological portrait type Briullov also painted, as can be seen, for example, in the portrait painting of A. N. Strugovshchikov from 1840 (figure 2). Her image is simply characterized as Briullov's ideal beauty, the ultimate grand-manner portrait painting. And yet, these traditional readings of the painting reveal only one side of this multifaceted work.

A tribute to its sitter, *Samoilova* is a fantastic transformation of a society portrait into a highly symbolic and personal statement that communicated deeper sentiments. By embedding Samoilova's portrait with signifiers of himself and the exotic, Briullov both possessed her and declared his love to her; the portrait ultimately representing the fantasy of a potential love affair between the artist and his subject. Artistically these symbols

² All of the following offer descriptions, some brief and some extensive, of the painting in this manner: M. Rakova, *Briullov Portretist* (Moscow, 1956), 33-39, hereafter Rakova; G. Leonteva, *Karl Pavlovich Briullov* (Leningrad, 1986), 22; G. Leonteva, *Karl Briullov: Paintings. Watercolors. Drawings* (Leningrad, 1990), 28, hereafter Leonteva 1990; G. Leonteva, *Karl Briullov: the Painter of Russian Romanticism* (Leningrad, 1996), 37-40, hereafter Leonteva 1996; Wendy Salmond in Anne Odom, *A Taste for Splendor: Russian Imperial and European Treasures from the Hillwood Museum* (Alexandria, VA, 1998), 262, hereafter Odom; Mashkovtsev, 99-103; O. Allenova, *Karl Briullov* (Moscow, 2000), 38; K. Taylor, *Russian Art at Hillwood* (Washington, D.C., 1988), 17-18; E. Atsarkina, *K. P. Briullov; zhizn' i tvorchestvo* (Moscow, 1963), 84; D. Sarabianov, *Russian Art: from Neoclassicism to the Avant-Garde 1800-1917* (London, 1990), 60; [No author] "Vystavka v akademii khudozhestv v 1876g. Portrety, kisti K. Briullova," *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia*, no. 374 (1876), 180, 182-3.

developed out of the conventions of the eighteenth-century phenomenon *turquerie*.

Popular in Europe, especially France, *turquerie* was at first just a fashion for Turkish styles and motifs in interior design, masquerade balls, clothing and furniture. But European fantasies about the East intensified through colonial expansion at the end of the eighteenth century. *Turquerie* came to represent a European superiority over an exotic “other,” often manifested in the image of the black servant. An analysis of the black servant in portraiture, as well as Briullov’s use of the servant in his works, is one of the keys to unlocking the layered meanings of the painting. Another useful analysis is the connection among *Samoilova*, *Bathsheba* (figure 3), and the genre of “the bath,” where we see the intersection of *turquerie* and Orientalism in Briullov’s works, and how he applied both systems to *Samoilova*.

Primarily considered a European, namely French and English, “othering” of the Near East and North Africa, Orientalism occurred in relation to colonial and imperial conquests. Within the Orientalist revisionist discourse, other imperializing countries such as the United States and Russia are reconsidered. However, Orientalism presents a dilemma when applied to Russia, as its identity is simultaneously European and Eastern “other,” with Western European perceptions tending to view Russia as singularly Eastern.

The artist and sitter lived this dual identity as both were in Italy when the portrait was painted, Briullov exploiting their position to possess

Samoilova visually and conceptually colonize her, just as his own country was colonizing the Caucasus. Russian involvement in the south followed the traditional Orientalist discourse, as literary writings which Romanticized and exoticized the region were produced in response to conquests. This sensualization of the Caucasus in Russian literature is the same sort of sexuality with which Briullov's genre paintings are imbued, especially those from his earlier Italian years.

Considered the first Russian painter of Romanticism, Briullov was a celebrated and respected artist at the height of his career when he painted *Samoilova*. Living in Italy since 1822, he was now fully assimilated into the international artistic community and able to express his own artistic style, having absorbed firsthand the master works of the western canon of art history, away from the stringent atmosphere of the Russian Academy of Arts. He also met and became dear friends with Julia Samoilova in 1827, three years after she came to live in her family villa on Lake Como.

Julia Pavlovna Samoilova, née von der Pahlen, was a Russian countess with a family history and personal reputation as colorful as her portrait. Extremely popular and charming, she married three times and had a steady stream of admirers. She inherited a renowned art collection from her Italian grandfather and held lavish parties and gatherings in Milan and St. Petersburg. Her extravagant lifestyle garnered the Emperor's dissatisfaction, and it was part of the reason he forced her to sell her Russian estates and relinquish her

citizenship. She raised two foster daughters, Amazilia and Giovanina, who were not blood sisters.

Samoilova and Briullov were lifelong friends, and their relationship was surrounded by unsubstantiated rumors that they were also lovers. If they were romantically involved, the hierarchies of Russian society would not have permitted them to have an open love affair. He was not of the noble class, as was Samoilova. He was however of the artistic nobility, appealing to her social taste as she was known for entertaining musicians and artists.

Despite the incredible wealth she inherited, Samoilova used up her vast resources and was eventually forced to sell many of her paintings and other worldly possessions to support herself in the later years of her life. She did not, however, sell this painting, but kept it until her death in 1875. That this painting meant so much to her and that she did not mind the hint of an illicit affair as portrayed in the canvas, of which she would have been aware, one is lead to speculate again that perhaps she and Briullov were in fact lovers after all. At any rate, there is no question they are intimately connected in this work.

Chapter One: Historical Context

Orientalism

The nineteenth-century phenomenon of Orientalism, a complex “othering” of the Near East and North Africa that grew in relation to imperialism, is well documented within the continuum of revisionist scholarship.³ The first scholar to present this as a literary theory that brought significant new meanings to the word “orientalism” was Edward Said in his polemical book of the same name.⁴ The basic discourse of Orientalism is that the Eurocentric, white male, Christian dominated, Western tradition exercised power over the East, generally perceived as its opposite: Arab and Islamic. While the West dominated and restructured the “other,” it simultaneously redefines itself in response to that Eastern image. Western power over the East

³ The literature on Orientalism is vast. The following is a list of sources that form the foundation for my discussion: John M. MacKenzie, “The Orientalism Debate,” chap. 1 in *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester, 1995); James Clifford, “On Orientalism,” chap. 11 in *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, 1988); Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: Stereotype, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism,” chap. 3 in *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994); Dennis Porter, “Orientalism and Its Problems,” chap. 7 in *Colonial Discourse and Post Colonial Theory; a Reader* ed. and intro. by Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York, 1994); Meyda Yegenoglu, “Mapping the Field of Colonial Discourse,” chap. 1 in *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge, 1998); Gyan Prakash, *Orientalism Now: History and Theory* 34 (3) (1995): 199-212; Frederick N. Bohrer, “Inventing Assyria: Exoticism and Reception in Nineteenth-Century England and France,” *The Art Bulletin* 80 (2) (1998): 337-356; Linda Nochlin, “The Imaginary Orient,” *Art in America* 5 (1983):118-187.

was physically acted out through imperialism and colonization. To the French and British, the “other” Eastern peoples were the inhabitants of North Africa, India, and the Middle East. These peoples needed to be aggressively colonized to “save” them from themselves.

In the visual arts, Orientalism developed from the 1830s onward, as seen in the works of Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) (figure 4), Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) (figure 5), and Jean-Leon Gérôme (1824-1904) (figure 6) to name just a few of the many artists working in this mode. As pointed out by Mary Harper, the “international and domestic politics during the 1830s and 1840s were shaped by what Europe saw as the ‘Eastern Question’: the East was seen as a stage on which the European Powers might project and carve out their own national identity as well as extend their markets.”⁵ Orientalist paintings did not typically depict Eastern life. Rather, they were a product of artistic license and Romantic imagination reflecting conceptions of the East already held by Europeans. Todd Porterfield articulated it as “presenting a contrived reality to satisfy preconceived expectations.”⁶

⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

⁵ Mary J. Harper in *The Dahesh Museum, Picturing the Middle East a Hundred Years of European Orientalism : a Symposium* (New York, 1996), 58.

⁶ Todd Porterfield, *The Allure of Empire: Art in the Service of French Imperialism* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1998), 134.

Russian Identity and Orientalism

The ongoing debate of Russian national identity may never be resolved. Geographically, Russia's vast lands extend from Western Europe to China and incorporate multiple ethnic groups such as Cossacks, Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Circassians, Buryats and Aleutians. Thus, Russia's Slavic identity is inevitably problematic as it tries to encompass its many parts.

Despite much resistance, Peter the Great (1672-1725) compelled Russia to become self-consciously European by mandating that his citizens emulate Western culture. Among his specific stipulations were the requirement of the nobility to wear Western dress, of men to cut their traditional beards, and for women and men to mix at social occasions. On a national level, Peter moved the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg in 1703, and invited foreign architects and artists to design the city, its buildings, and to decorate its interior spaces.⁷

Once this cultural Westernization took hold, beginning in the early years of the eighteenth century, the Russian elite imported and adapted European culture without hesitation until the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Russian writer Petr Chaadaev (1794-1856) described the Russian aristocracy of the eighteenth century as a group who

⁷ Odom, 70-72. See also James Cracraft, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Imagery* (Chicago and London, 1997).

dragged us along the road of perfection in spite of ourselves, who always towed the country behind them, without the country doing anything at all, [the aristocracy] themselves imposed Western customs, language, and luxury upon us.⁸

These Russians looked down on the native Russian language, spoke French, wore elegant European clothing, hired Western tutors and discussed current Enlightenment and revolutionary ideas in their Salons. This phenomenon could be termed a form of reverse Orientalism, as the Russian elite shaped their identity by presenting themselves as quintessentially Western in an effort to disprove the Western stereotypes about them.⁹

Russian culture and identity underwent further changes in the first half of the nineteenth century under the reigns of Alexander I (1777-1825) and Nicholas I (1825-1855). Russia began to seek out its “true” roots, equal and yet distinct from the West. Strained diplomatic and military relations between Russia and France helped to turn the country away from the West, especially after Napoleon invaded in 1812. Russia established an intellectual foundation for the development of Russian Eastern studies in the 1820s through the

⁸ Petr Chaadaev, “Apologia of a Madman,” in *Philosophical works of Peter Chaadaev*, Raymond McNally and Richard Tempest, eds. (Dordrecht, The Netherlands, 1991), 103.

⁹ Kalpana Sahni also alludes to this trend of reverse Orientalism by stating “the Russian elite became mentally colonized without having ever been a colonial subject.” Kalpana Sahni, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia* (Oslo, Norway, 1997), 15, hereafter Sahni.

1840s.¹⁰ An early visual example of a Russian affirming his heritage is an 1809 portrait by the French artist Antoine-Jean Gros (figure 7). The powerful Prince Nikolai Borisovich Iusupov had his thirteen-year-old son portrayed wearing a Tatar costume, thus honoring the family's lineage from the khans of the Golden Horde.

Sparked by liberal European ideas, the Decembrist uprising of 1825 occurred just before Nicholas I came to power. Nicholas reacted with a heavy hand against the nobility involved in the uprising, exiling them to Siberia and the Caucasus, and thus setting the tone for his reign. He devised a plan of Official Nationality, implemented in the 1830s, which consisted of three broad concepts: Slavophilism, Orthodoxy and Nationality.¹¹ The plan's aim was to define a national culture, independent from the West. In practical terms, it curtailed civil rights and micro-managed the day-to-day affairs of peoples' lives. One famous anecdote is the Tsar's personal offer to edit the writings of Pushkin. While monarchies were already leaning towards a conservative program to create stability in the reconstruction of Europe after the collapse of

¹⁰ See Cynthia H. Whittaker, "The Impact of the Oriental Renaissance in Russia: The Case of Sergej Uvarov," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 26 (1978): 503-524 for a precise account of these developments in relation to the President of the Academy of Sciences, Sergei S. Uvarov (1786-1855).

¹¹ See Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley, 1961) for an overview of this system, hereafter Riasanovsky. The term 'Nationality' needs a brief explanation as it has multiple meanings. It could represent the country of Russia and the Russian people in a broad idealized sense, or, it could be a confirmation of the existing autocratic system. Riasanovsky, 124 passim.

the Napoleonic Empire and the tumultuous first decades of the nineteenth century, the author Nicholas Riasanovsky recognized that “Russia appeared even more archaic under Nicholas’ rule.”¹²

The Frenchman Astolphe Marquis de Custine (1790-1857) asserted a common European opinion of Russia in his well-received journals, first published in 1843 after he visited the country in 1839. He claimed, “these are men lost for the savage state and deficient for civilization...the terrible words of Voltaire or of Diderot...come back to my mind: ‘The Russians have rotted before they are ripe.’”¹³ He was irritated that they tried to pass themselves off as European: “I do not blame the Russians for being what they are; I blame them for pretending to be what we are.”¹⁴ These comments were the ultimate insult, as he did not suggest that Europe might colonize Russia to “improve” her cultural conditions as the French did in Algeria and the British did in India. Russia was beyond help and of no use to the continent.

Despite Western opinions of her as “other,” Russia too was an imperialist nation. Throughout the eighteenth century Russia assimilated lands to the south and east and held derogatory views of these conquered peoples. Under the reigns of Alexander I and Nicholas I in the first half of the

¹² Riasanovsky, 268.

¹³ Astolphe Custine, Marquis de, *Journey for Our Time: the Russian Journals of the Marquis de Custine*. Phyllis Penn Kohler, ed. and trans. (Washington, D.C., 1987) 97, hereafter Custine.

nineteenth century, Russia continued Catherine the Great's expansionist policies and aggressively colonized the Caucasus. To Russians, all the tribal peoples of the south were the same, so that differentiating between one culture and another was unnecessary. Further paralleling European trends these southerners were all perceived as Asian, Muslim "others."

General Alexei Petrovich Yermolov (1772-1861), who was the Commander in Chief of the Russian military in the Caucasus from 1817-27, epitomized Russia's Orientalism in the south. His brutal campaigns to extend Russian control in the Caucasus were supported at the highest levels of Russian society. A "living legend" in his own time, he was admired by poets, diplomats and even the Decembrist Revolutionaries who were exiled to the South.¹⁵ In 1833, Pushkin sought to publish the retired General's memoirs on the Caucasian military campaigns pleading with him, "Your fame belongs to Russia and You have no right to conceal it."¹⁶ That Pushkin and his generation held such high regard for Yermolov lends insight into Russian society's Orientalizing stereotypes of the Muslim Caucasus. Here Yermolov justifies his own ruthlessness:

I was forced to follow many Asiatic customs and realize that the Proconsul of the Caucasus cannot curb the cruel disposition of this area by being soft hearted....condescension in the eyes of the Asiatics is a sign of weakness, and out of pure humanity I am inexorably severe.

¹⁴ Custine, 97.

¹⁵ Sahni, 40.

¹⁶ Sahni, 41.

One execution saves hundreds of Russians from destruction and thousands of Muslims from treason.¹⁷

The Caucasus became Russia's very own orient, as illustrated in the literature of the 1820s through 1850s.¹⁸ Pushkin wrote a whole group of "Southern poems" devoted to the Caucasus, "the most popular 'exotic' locale of Russian Romanticism."¹⁹ One of the earliest of these works was *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* from 1820, written just after he visited the Caucasus. In this poem, he portrayed the cruel khan, the languid harem, and he ultimately reaffirmed his belief that "Orientals had no sense of history, the prerequisite for advanced European cultures, which of course included Russia."²⁰ Dutifully recreated in illustrations by Briullov and other artists, Pushkin's literary imagery of the cruel khan and the languid harem is brought to life in visual form, further solidifying the orientalist stereotypes in the mind of artists and audiences (figure 8).

The sensualization of the Russian Caucasus in Russian literature is the same sort of sexuality with which Briullov's genre paintings were imbued,

¹⁷ Sahni, 42.

¹⁸ See Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, 1994), for an analysis, incorporating Edward Said's theory of Orientalism, of the dialogue between Russian cultural identity and the Russian perceptions of the Caucasus as the Orient as mediated through literature.

¹⁹ Sahni, 35.

²⁰ Sahni, 55.

especially those from his early Italian years. Rosalind Gray pointed out that Briullov's genre paintings are "shamelessly idealized,"²¹ yet these romanticized and idealized scenes from Italian daily life warrant further analysis in light of current art historical research about the "exoticized other." This analysis is carried out in the next chapter focusing on Briullov and his *oeuvre*, which establishes the framework within which *Samoilova* is analyzed.

²¹ Rosalind P. Gray, *Russian Genre Painting in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000), 102, hereafter Gray.

Chapter Two: Karl Briullov Artist and *Oeuvre*

Considered a “painter by the will of God,” Karl Briullov fulfilled the Western stereotype of a Romantic genius with his free-spirited attitude, temperamental outbursts, and divine inspiration.²² His contemporaries regarded him as the Pushkin of the visual arts, an apt comparison as they were exact contemporaries, both born in 1799. Briullov achieved wide critical acclaim in his lifetime, eventually being elected an honorary member of the Academies of Art in Milan, Bologna, Florence, Palma and Paris.²³ The Uffizi Gallery requested his self-portrait.²⁴

Briullov absorbed the European Academic style during his training at the Russian Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg from 1809-1821. He became its leading star, winning a gold medal for his painting *The Appearance of the Angels to Abraham* (figure 9) in 1821. Along with his Gold Medal, Briullov won a three-year stipend and travel scholarship from the Academy. His request to work under Professor Ugryumov, and in turn his travel scholarship,

²² State Russian Museum, *Karl Brullov 1799-1852: Painting, Drawings and Watercolours from the collection of the Russian Museum*. exh. cat. ([St. Petersburg], 1999), 7, hereafter RM.

²³ Gray, 101; Alison Hilton, “Expanding Vistas and National Identity” in *The George Riabov Collection of Russian Art* (Rutgers, New Jersey, 1994), 34, hereafter Hilton.

²⁴ Gray, 101, ft. 20 also points out that Orest Kiprensky’s self-portrait entered the Uffizi first and may not have been a commission, therefore making Briullov’s self-portrait all the more significant as the first that the Gallery actually commissioned from a Russian artist.

was denied by the President of the Academy, Aleksei Olenin (1763-1843).²⁵ Thus, Briullov sought funding with the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, also securing patronage for his brother the painter and architect Aleksandr. The two men left for Western Europe in 1822. They traveled via Dresden, Munich, Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, Modena, Bologna, and finally, Florence, before arriving in Rome in 1823.²⁶

Continuing his academic training while traveling, Briullov was a devout student of the antique and the Old Masters. In Dresden, he copied Guido Reni's *Head of Christ in a Crown of Thorns* and Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*. These two works were extremely influential for Briullov: Reni's work "would serve as a guide in painting heads and expressions accurately, while [the Raphael] persuaded Briullov that the secret to success 'consists in drawing more from the antiques and Raphael.'" ²⁷ Briullov dedicated his first five months in Rome to studying in the Vatican, where he copied Raphael's frescoes, Domenicino's *St. Jerome Receiving Communion*, and Caravaggio's

²⁵ Gray, 103.

²⁶ Mashkovtsev, 37.

²⁷ Mashkovtsev, 33, Karl Briullov to Petr Kikin (1775-1834), a founding member and President of the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, October 10, 1823, as quoted in Gray, 103. In the 1961 edition of Mashkovtsev, this passage is pages 36-37.

Deposition of Christ.²⁸ Between 1824 and 1828 he copied Raphael's monumental *School of Athens*.²⁹ Briullov's admiration for the classical can also be gleaned from one of his quotes to a friend: "drawing antiques in an antique gallery is as essential to art as salt is to food."³⁰ He even kept copies of the *Apollo Belvedere* and the *Belvedere Torso* in his studio.³¹

Briullov socialized with, and was influenced by, the other Russian and international artists then living in Rome, including the landscape painter Silvestr Shchedrin (1791-1830), the sculptor Samuel Ivanovich Gal'berg (1787-1839),³² and history painter and portraitist Fedor Bruni (1799-1875). Appointed by the Russian government to supervise Briullov and the other Russian artists living in Italy were the Italian history painter Vincenzo Camuccini (1771-1844) and the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844).³³ In Rome, Briullov socialized with the Russian salon hostess Princess

²⁸ Mashkovtsev, 38, Briullov to Kikin; Mashkovtsev, 39-40, Briullov to the Society for the Encouragement of Artists.

²⁹ Gray, 103.

³⁰ N. Ramazanov, *Materialy dlia istorii khudozhestv*, 177 as cited and quoted in Gray, 103.

³¹ Gray, 103.

³² Mashkovtsev, 38, A. Briullov to F. Briullo(v); Janet Kennedy, "The Neoclassical Ideal in Russian Sculpture," chap. 10 in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*. Theofanis George Stavrou, ed. (Bloomington, IN, 1983).

³³ Gray, 113.

Zinaida Volkonskaia (1792-1862) and Ambassador Prince Grigori Gagarin (1782-1837). Briullov even made a watercolor of himself, Thorvaldsen, Volkonskaia, and Bruni, all attending a theater performance at Gargarin's residence.³⁴

Briullov is considered the first painter of Russian Romanticism. His most successful painting, which also launched his international career, was the Romantic epic *Last Day of Pompeii* (1830-1833) (figure 10). Its size alone is phenomenal as it measures approximately fifteen feet high by nineteen feet wide. Renowned from the moment it was first exhibited, *Pompeii* elicited praise from Walter Scott, Ivan Turgenev, Nikolai Gogol, Aleksandr Pushkin, the Italian press and the international artistic and public communities living in Italy. It was exhibited in the Paris Salon of 1834, where it won a gold medal for technical merit and artistic mastery.³⁵ It inspired Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873) to write his novel *The Last Days of Pompeii* in 1834.³⁶

However, Pompeii and Vesuvius as Romantic subject matter were not uncommon or new. Giovanni Pacini had great success with his opera of the same title in 1825. The British artist Jacob More (1740-1793) painted *Mount Vesuvius in Eruption: The Last Days of Pompeii* in 1780; Pierre Jacques Volaire (1729-1802) and Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797) also created

³⁴ Gray, 114, ft. 71.

³⁵ Gray, 101 and 105 passim.

³⁶ Hilton, 34.

works based on Vesuvius.³⁷ But Briullov was perhaps the first and only artist to populate this subject with such a large grouping of emotionally charged and distraught figures.

Pompeii did, however, also initially incur some negative commentary. Some members of the Academy in St. Petersburg criticized its non-academic use of color, composition, and figures.³⁸ To critics and artists such as Horace Vernet at the French Salon, *Pompeii* seemed dated and stale in comparison with Gericault's *Raft of the Medusa* (figure 11) from 1819 and the more recent *Liberty Leading the People* by Delacroix, exhibited at the Salon of 1831.³⁹ Both of these earlier monumental works illustrated similarly dramatic scenes filled with many figures in order to invoke a Romantic experience in the viewer.

Despite criticisms, *Pompeii* also solidified Briullov's reputation as a history painter. Surprisingly, Briullov created just a few finished history paintings during the course of his career. His only completed paintings after 1835 are religious altarpieces made for the Kazan Cathedral and the Lutheran

³⁷ See David Irwin, *Neoclassicism* (London, 1997), 205-208; University of Michigan Museum of Art, *Pompeii as Source and Inspiration: Reflections in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Art* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977) for more information regarding this subject.

³⁸ RM, 11-12.

³⁹ Gray, 105.

Church of Saints Peter and Paul, both in St. Petersburg.⁴⁰ Although his reputation was undiminished until after his death when critics such as Vladimir Stasov (1824-1906) began to attack his academic style,⁴¹ Briullov would never match the artistic successes he achieved in Italy in the 1830s. Perhaps this is explained by his appointment to the position of Professor at the Russian Academy in 1835, which confined him to the conservative environment of the Academy. He no longer had the space of hundreds of miles between himself in Italy and the Academy in Russia to allow the emergence of a more daring creativity and push the boundaries of the Academy.

While *Pompeii* assured his artistic reputation in Russia and abroad and demonstrated his ability to create a large-scale history and Romantic painting, Briullov's genre paintings strengthened his position as a Romantic artist. Paintings such as *Italian Morning* (1823) (213) and *Italian Midday* (1827) (figure 13), the latter commissioned by Nicholas I as a pendant for the former, are sensualized and romanticized images of Italian peasant women.⁴² Briullov

⁴⁰ RM, 20. These paintings are now in the Russian Museum.

⁴¹ Gray, 101-102.

⁴² Gray, 104. Rosalind Gray asserts that *Morning* and *Midday* illustrate part of the tradition of the Cycle of time, wherein people represent the times of the day in various stages of their life as Briullov might have seen Runge's painting of *Morning* from this series when in Dresden. If so, Briullov did not finish the series as there is no representation of evening or night. The woman represented in *Morning* is also not a baby or even prepubescent but voluptuously mature. It seems more likely that these paintings simply demonstrate the artists' stylistic mode of choice for scenes of daily life.

actually painted *Italian Morning* in response to German artists who were lamenting the fact that artists no longer finished their works as the Old Dutch masters had. Briullov said to them that “painters had ceased to finish their pictures because they found the completeness of the Dutch artists superfluous. In order to prove my words, I painted *Italian Morning*.”⁴³ As privileged viewers to the intimate morning ritual of a woman washing in *Italian Morning*, we see her exposed breasts, the sensuous curve of her back, and her blissful expression as her hands cup the water from the fountain. Bathed in the warm morning sun, she is a stirring figment of Briullov’s imagination.

In the pendant painting *Italian Midday*, we see a reversal of the position of the woman. She now faces to the viewer’s left, and gestures upward to pluck a bunch of grapes from the vine. Yet she is equally sensualized, if not more so. Her voluptuous bosom is emphasized by its near exposure. The shirt falling from her shoulder and loosely hanging from her right breast tantalizes the viewer. The artist’s initials “CB” are strategically placed, in bright red lettering against her white blouse, to draw the viewer’s attention to the breast. Incongruous to this scene of supposed labor and heightening our sense of Briullov’s imaginative treatment of the work, she is bedecked with a pearl hairpin and large dangling earrings, which gently swing with the movement of her head. She happily picks the grapes while the midday sun still finds its way through the thick foliage. Her fingernails are remarkably clean and well kept.

⁴³ Mashkovtsev, 22-23 in the 1952 version as first cited in RM, 10.

Briullov's voluptuous and sexualized woman in *Midday* did not go unnoticed by the Society for the Encouragement of Artists, through whom the Tsar commissioned the work. The Society criticized Briullov for straying from the ideal of a classically and academically proportioned body. Briullov's response was simply that the artist could "on occasion deviate from the conventional beauty of the form."⁴⁴ Although criticized by the Society, the painting was accepted by the Tsar and hung, alongside its pendant, in the private quarters of Empress Alexandra Feodorovna.⁴⁵

Girl Picking Grapes in the Environs of Naples (1827) (figure 14) was also created in the same erotic vein. The young girl lying on the ground, her left breast exposed, gazes out at the viewer. The girl picking grapes, while fully clothed, is supple and sensualized in her pose. Reaching back and up while standing on the tips of her toes to get the grapes, the roundness of her hips is emphasized and the line of her form is that of a graceful curve. The red garment tied around her waist accentuates her curvaceous body, and the translucent white skirt through which we can see her leg heightens the viewer's curiosity.

The sensualization of his Italian genre paintings is a conscious choice that Briullov made in composing his subjects. The illustrations he created as part of a sketchbook of Italian peasant women (figures 15, 16) are seemingly

⁴⁴ Gray, 104.

more realistic than his sensualized paintings. They are also closely related to peasants depicted by Orest Kiprensky (1782-1836) *Girls of Naples* (1831-1834) (figure 17). Because the artists each portrayed peasant women in outfits similar in style, their bodies modestly covered, wearing a headdress to protect her face from the harsh sun, the viewer is given the sense of a scene captured from daily life.

Briullov's romanticized Italian peasants are half-dressed, their voluptuous breasts exposed. They wear jewelry in the case of *Italian Midday*, instead of headdresses. Hardly the vision of a working peasant, Briullov's idealized genre paintings are instead sexualized objects for the viewer to admire. Perhaps Briullov was able to eroticize these women because of his position as a visitor temporarily living in Italy. Just as Delacroix and other travel artists who passed through North Africa and the Middle East created fantasized images of exotic locales, so too did Briullov adapt the position of a detached observer when painting his Italian peasant women, freely using his creative license to embellish at will. Here in his Italian period is a precursor to his orientalizing works of the people and places he saw when traveling to the Near East.

Briullov was called home by the Tsar to become a professor at the Academy. Not rushing immediately back to St. Petersburg, Briullov left Italy for the Near East in 1835 as the travel artist for Count Vladimir Orlov-

⁴⁵ RM, 161.

Davydov. However, Briullov became ill, causing him to leave Orlov's trip early. He still traveled through the Near East by transferring to the ship *Themistocles* with Ambassador Gagarin, which was sailing from Athens to Constantinople and Smyrna, then back to Odessa. Despite his illness Briullov managed to create many sketches of daily life in these foreign lands, which he developed back in Russia into a new Orientalist vocabulary. Images such as *Once a Year by Allah's Will the Shirt is Changed* (figure 18) and *Jaguar in a Planter's Hut* (figure 19) are fantastic scenes of sexuality and powerful domination by an outside observer over an unknown culture and fit into the discourse of Orientalism. Briullov and his friends thought one of his drawings of the Turkish police to be hysterically funny and a genuine caricature. Pushkin viewed it as bordering on political satire.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Mashkovtsev, 13.

Chapter Three: Julia Samoilova

An understanding of the social background and biography of Julia Pavlovna Samoilova is necessary to finish framing the context within which Briullov worked. A full account of the existing information about Samoilova's life is also not available in English. Lastly, this chapter explains the identity of the young Giovanina, represented in *Samoilova*, which the Russian scholar Nikolai Prozhogin recently discovered in Italian repositories.

Julia Pavlovna Samoilova, née von der Pahlen, was a Russian countess with a family history and personal reputation as colorful as her portrait.⁴⁷ Extremely popular and charming, she married three times and had a steady stream of admirers. A member of the noble Skavronsky family she inherited incredible wealth through her Russian family estates. Samoilova's parents divorced within only a few years of their marriage. Her mother remarried a Polish Count and her father Count Paul von der Pahlen lived abroad in the army. Samoilova was therefore raised by her grandparents: Catherine Engelhardt, one of Grigori Potemkin's (1739–1791) nieces with whom he had

⁴⁷ For all biographical information relating to Samoilova see V. A. Bernatskii, "Posledniaia v rod grafov Skavronskikh," *Russkaia starina*, 160 (Nov 1914): [286]-295, hereafter Bernatskii; Nikolai Mikhailovich, Grand Duke of Russia, 1859-1919, *Russkie Portrety xviii i xix stoletii*, III (St. Petersburg, 1907), pl. 69 and I (1909), pl. 13, hereafter Mikhailovich; Aleksandr Polovtsov, *Russian Exhibition Gossip* (London, 1935), 74-79, hereafter Polovtsov. I am grateful to Wendy Salmond and Anne Odom for providing me with this source.

affairs,⁴⁸ and Catherine's second husband the Italian Count Giulio Litta,⁴⁹ the Russian envoy for the Knights of Malta responsible for helping establish Tsar Paul I as Grand Master of the Order in 1798. Samoilova was the favorite granddaughter of Litta, who bequeathed to her his art collections, his villa in Milan, and shared his great wealth with her throughout his life.

Her first marriage in 1822 was to Nicholas Samoilov, Captain of the Preobrazhenskii Guards. Their marriage was brief. When they divorced in 1824, tired of her "boring" husband and his jealousy of her male admirers, she moved to Milan.⁵⁰ Once established in Italy she became the "Russian lady of Milan" after her social debut in 1828.⁵¹ She entertained both Russian and Italian intellectuals such as the Russian writer Ivan Turgenev (1818-1883), who always made it a point to stop and see her fantastic art collection. The Italian composer Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) also visited her.

An interesting addendum to the story of her first marriage is that she waited until Samoilov died in 1842 before remarrying. Perhaps this was

⁴⁸ For information regarding Engelhardt see Mikhailovich, II (1905), pl. 30 and I (1906), pl. 6 and I (1907), pl. 10. Engelhardt married Count Paul Skavronskii in 1781 but he died in 1793. Engelhardt then married Giulio Litta in 1798.

⁴⁹ His name turns up as Pompeo in Polovtsov, 75; Jules in Mikhailovich, I (1905), pl. 29, which is probably just a Russification of his Italian name Giulio as it appears in H. J. A Sire, *The Knights of Malta* (New Haven, 1994), 243.

⁵⁰ Polovtsov, 76.

⁵¹ Serena Vitale, *Pushkin's Button* (New York, 1999), 28, hereafter Vitale. I am grateful to Anne Odom for bringing this source to my attention.

because she and Samoilov were only separated, not divorced. The references and language surrounding the divorce provide conflicting reports. Nikolai Mikhailovich states they were divorced. Aleksandr Polovtsov refers to Samoilova as “his widow” which would imply they were married at the time of Samoilov’s death.⁵² V. A. Bernatskii actually says that reconciliation was in progress for the couple and that Samoilova arranged for Slavianka to be prepared for their return. To add still more drama to the story, Samoilov tragically died just a few days before they were to be reunited on the estate, after living apart for fourteen years.⁵³

Alexander Polovtsov (1832-1909), an art collector and writer, stated in a biographical account about her that “the only career she was really fit for was that of Circe the Enchantress; this she practi[c]ed with wonderful zest.”⁵⁴ She constantly entertained friends from all layers of society at her family estate Slavianka near Tsarskoe-Selo in St. Petersburg and was “bitterly criticized” and “accused of mixing...with a Bohemian set” for entertaining artists and musicians.⁵⁵ One account by Georges d’Anthès, written in 1835, illustrates the extent to which the Tsar himself was losing his patience with Samoilova:

⁵² Polovtsov, 77.

⁵³ Bernatskii, 293.

⁵⁴ Polovtsov, 76.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

I wasn't there, but incredible things are being said that I know aren't true. For example, that she had peasant women climb greased poles and every time they fell there were endless cries of joy, and also that she had the peasant women run horses races, that the women sat astride without saddles, in short, all sorts of jokes of this type, and the most unfortunate thing is that Alexander Trubetskoy broke an arm on his way home... The Emperor found out about all these rumors and about Alexander's broken arm, and at the Demidovs' ball the next day he was furious and, addressing our general in front of forty people said: "So the officers of your regiment will persist in this foolishness and will not be satisfied until I transfer half a dozen of them to the Army, and as for that woman," speaking of Julie, "she'll behave herself only when I have the police throw her out." I'm sorry for that, because Julie is a very good person, and even if I didn't visit her home I did see her often; I must tell you I thought it better not to visit her because the Emperor had so explicitly condemned the people who intimately frequented her home.⁵⁶

The Emperor's dissatisfaction with her is generally thought to be the reason she sold her Russian estates and relinquished her citizenship. It is also widely assumed that this happened when she left Russia in 1824. But as the above account shows, Samoilova was still entertaining in Russia in 1835. Samoilova also had Aleksandr Briullov redecorate her dacha at Slavianka in the Pompeiian style in 1837.⁵⁷ Most likely she was forced to abandon her citizenship in 1842, when she married her second husband, the opera singer Pierre Antoine Peri.⁵⁸ Because Peri was Italian, Samoilova's official

⁵⁶ Vitale, 29.

⁵⁷ T. L. Pashkova, *Dom arkhitektora Briullova* (St. Petersburg, 1997), 61.

⁵⁸ The full name of Peri is only listed in one source, a letter in the Hillwood curatorial files. All other references simply refer to him by his last name. I have yet to find any other corroborative information for Peri's full name or any additional biographical information about him.

nationality was no longer Russian. Irritated by Samoiloova's antics, Nicholas probably recognized an opportunity to have her expelled by choosing to enforce a law that forbade foreign nationals from owning property in Russia. He also could gain ownership of the coveted Slavianka. As such, Samoiloova was then forced to sell all of her Russian real estate and other possessions.⁵⁹ Samoiloova was now formally exiled from her homeland, but unfortunately she was single again as Peri died of consumption in 1846.⁶⁰ She spent the rest of her life in her villa on Lake Como, inherited from Litta, and in her Château de Groussay outside Paris.

Samoiloova's last marriage was to Comte Charles de Mornay in 1863, the French diplomat now remembered for having been the King's representative to the Sultan of Morocco. De Mornay led the 1832 delegation that invited Eugène Delacroix to be its documentary artist, in turn launching the Orientalist phase for Delacroix's career. Samoiloova's marriage to de Mornay was also brief, and she took the name of her first husband, Samoilov, as her own after this third and final marriage ended in divorce.

Despite her renowned art collection at her villa in Milan, her reputation as a hostess in both Milan and St. Petersburg, and her extravagant lifestyle in

⁵⁹ Polovtsov, 77; Mikhailovich, III (1907), pl. 69 and I (1909), pl. 13; Bernatskii, 294 refers to her marriage to Peri as the reason for the sale of Slavianka, but states that they married in 1846, not 1842 as do the other two sources. This is most likely a typographical error as all sources agree Peri died in 1846.

⁶⁰ Bernatskii, 294.

general, Samoilova is unknown in current scholarship.⁶¹ Her name only appears sporadically in random memoirs and accounts of the time. Further research in Italy and France, where she spent most of her adult life, is needed to complete Samoilova's colorful life story.

The Identity of Giovanina

Samoilova did not have any children, but she did raise two foster daughters, Amazilia and Giovanina. Both girls have long been presumed to be the daughters of the Italian opera composer Giovanni Pacini (figure 20), with whom she was romantically involved from 1828-1831.⁶² Pacini did have two daughters with his first wife Adelaide Castelli, who died in 1827, however, it is most certain that Giovanina was not Pacini's daughter. He never mentions Giovanina in his memoirs and refers to Samoilova as the "benefactress of my

⁶¹ She does not appear in the handful of recent publications about Russian women: Toby W. Clyman and Judith Vowles, *Russia Through Women's Eyes: Autobiographies From Tsarist Russia* (New Haven, 1996); Helena Goscilo and Beth Holmgren, eds., *Russia Women Culture* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1996); Natalia Pushkareva and Eve Levin, trans. and ed., *Women in Russian History From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (Armonk, New York, 1997).

⁶² S. L. Balthazar, "Giovanni Pacini" Stanley Sadie ed. and John Tyrell exec. editor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* 2nd ed., 18 (New York, 2001): 862, hereafter Balthazar. Her affair with Pacini did not add polish to her reputation for he himself was married three times. He apparently only married Castelli in 1821 after a very public relationship with Pauline Borghese.

daughter Amazilia.”⁶³ He wrote an opera about Amazilia of the same name. If Giovanina were Pacini’s daughter, why would he neglect to mention her, whether deliberately or unintentionally?

If not Pacini’s, then whose daughter was Giovanina? Her name appears to be Giovanina Peri. Nikolai Prozhogin quotes a reference to a deed notarized in 1829, which states that upon Samoilova’s death, her home (in Milan) was to go to “the orphan Giovanina Carmen Bertolotti, daughter of the late Don Gerolamo and Mrs. Clementina Peri [whom Samoilova] took in.”⁶⁴ The beginning of Samoilova’s guardianship of Giovanina in 1828 or 1829 coincides with Samoilova’s involvement with Pacini. Perhaps Samoilova’s generosity with Giovanina prompted Pacini to ask her to take in Amazilia as well.

With this compelling evidence that Giovanina was NOT Pacini’s daughter, how did she come to be known as such? One simple explanation for the twentieth-century supposition of the family name Pacini for Giovanina could be that she and Giovanni share a common name. Also, Giovanina was just a few years older than Amazilia, suggesting the idea that the two girls were blood sisters. Castelli and Pacini were married in 1821, so Giovanina, if born

⁶³ Prozhogin, Nikolai. “Briullovskaia vsadnitsa i ee neobychainye prevrashcheniia,” *Mir Muzeia*, 2 (160) (March-April 1998): 43, hereafter Prozhogin 2. It is unclear what happened to his second daughter, Amazilia’s birth sister.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

in the first few years of the marriage, would have been about eight to eleven years old, the same age as the girl portrayed in *Samoilova*. The two girls were in the public eye as Briullov painted *Vsadnitsa* (figure 21), a double portrait of Amazilia and Giovanina⁶⁵ in 1832, and another portrait in 1842, *Masquerade* (figure 22), in which Samoilova and Amazilia are the main subjects.

Contemporary accounts of *Samoilova* do not refer to Giovanina by name, but rather as the “young girl,” “foster-daughter,” or “daughter.”⁶⁶ Accounts of Giovanina attached to the name Pacini do not surface until after Samoilova’s death.

Prozhogin makes a further supposition that Giovanina was the niece of Samoilova’s second husband Peri. The fact that both have the same last name is an odd coincidence, but again lies within the realm of conjecture.

Documentation connecting the two has yet to be found. Samoilova adopted Giovanina by 1829, but did not meet Peri until 1842, when by mere chance, she happened to see his operatic debut in a small Italian city. If Giovanina were the niece of Peri, would not Samoilova and Peri have met sooner? Or, perhaps Samoilova’s “discovery” of Peri might not have been the surprise that

⁶⁵ Prozhogin, *Mir Muzeia*, 1 (159) (January-February 1998) and Prozhogin 2 for a detailed account of the different identities attributed to *The Rider* throughout the course of the painting’s history and why the horsewoman is unquestionably Giovanina.

⁶⁶ Mashkovtsev, 99-103. [No author] “Vystavka v akademii khudozhestv v 1876g. Portrety, kisti K. Briullova,” *Vsemirnaia illiustratsiia* no. 374 (1876): 182, hereafter *Vsemirnaia*. A. I. Somov, *Karl Pavlovich Briullov i ego*

it was. This last point of Giovanina's identity is still difficult to determine, but at least her parentage is made clearer.

Chapter Four: *Portrait of Countess Samoilova*

Briullov extended his sensualizing style to *Samoilova* through the visual manifestation of *turquerie*, but also conceived of the painting within the discourse of Orientalism. Julia Samoilova was the living embodiment of Briullov's idealized type painted in his Italian genre paintings; he considered Samoilova to be "the very epitome of femininity and beauty."⁶⁷ The writer Nikolai Gogol described how enamored Briullov was about Samoilova's appearance as it matched his ideal type:

[Briullov's] woman is full of proudly beautiful movements; his woman sparkles, but she is not the woman of Raphael with refined, inconspicuous, angelic features. She is a passionate woman, sparkling, southern, Italian in her midday beauty, powerful and strong, burning with all the wealth of passion, with all the power of her beauty—splendid as a woman.⁶⁸

But Julia Samoilova was of the Russian noble class, not a peasant girl. Briullov's eroticizing of Samoilova in her portrait is not as explicit as in his genre paintings. *Samoilova* is instead a carefully developed image of grand-portraiture through *turquerie*, embodying his love for the sitter's physical and personal attributes. Creating Samoilova's portrait with signifiers of himself and the exotic, Briullov intellectually possessed her and declared his love to

⁶⁷ Ivan Bocharov and Iuliia Glushakova, *Karl Briullov. Italijskie nakhodki* (Moscow, 1984), 67, hereafter Bocharov. Translation by Wendy Salmond.

⁶⁸ Bocharov, 69.

her; the portrait ultimately representing the fantasy of a love affair between the artist and his subject.

The Relationship Between Artist and Sitter

Little is known about the actual relationship that existed between Karl Briullov and Julia Samoilova. Briullov began his lifelong friendship with Samoilova in 1827, three years after she came to Italy to live in her family villa on Lake Como. Their relationship is surrounded by rumors that they were not just friends but lovers, and Samoilova's letters to Briullov reinforce this notion. She called him her "precious Brishka," and wrote, "I love you more than I can say, I embrace you and will remain true to you unto the grave. Tell me where you are living and who you love. I kiss you and will write to you often, for it is happiness for me even to talk with you by pen."⁶⁹ While she clearly felt very fondly towards him, these professions do not necessarily connote a romantic love, which is not explicitly mentioned and becomes less likely in light of her desire to know "who [he] love[s]." Samoilova was possibly married while living in Italy at the time when she and Briullov met, but being married had not discouraged her from having an affair with the Italian opera writer Giovanni Pacini from 1828-1831. At any event, all we can be certain of is that she and Briullov were dear friends. Although all of the

⁶⁹ Bocharov, 67-68.

contemporary accounts agree that Briullov loved Samoilova romantically, it is never suggested that she loved him in such a manner.⁷⁰

There may have been practical reasons why the two were not lovers. Even if she did have such feelings for Briullov, the hierarchies of Russian society would not permit them to have had an open love affair. While Briullov was a celebrated and respected artist, he was not of her noble class. Even though she had an affair with Pacini who was not of the nobility, he was also not a Russian by blood and their original social boundaries did not bind them. Yet again, one can come full circle and argue that Pacini and Briullov were of the artistic nobility. And living in Italy, not Russia, the hierarchies of society were loosened for Samoilova and Briullov. As Napoleon's sister Pauline Borghese had an affair with Pacini,⁷¹ it is conceivable that Samoilova had an affair with Briullov.

Samoilova, who would have been aware of the potential meanings of most or all of the personal signifiers, did not object to their inclusion in the painting. Furthermore, she chose to keep the painting until her death in 1875. Despite the incredible wealth she inherited, Samoilova used up her vast resources and was eventually forced to sell many of her paintings and other

⁷⁰ Mikhailovich, vol. III (1907), pl. 69 and vol. I (1909), pl. 13; Polovtsov, 75; Leonteva 1990, 21. Leonteva 1996, 24. Leonteva excludes the sentence that Briullov loved Samoilova romantically in the 1996 version of the essay. Otherwise, the text in both sections of the 1990 and 1996 versions is identical. Bernatskii, 292.

⁷¹ Balthazar, 862.

worldly possessions to support herself in the later years of her life. Holding such sentimental value to Samoilova, her portrait by Briullov was one of the few she did not sell. That this painting held such significance for her and she did not mind the hint of an illicit affair as portrayed in the canvas, one is led to believe that perhaps she and Briullov were in fact lovers after all. At any rate, there is no question they are intimately connected in this work.

The Painting

Constructed with classic academic proportions, diagonals, and pyramidal forms, *Samoilova* is precisely balanced. Briullov uses an academic polish, props and accessories in *Samoilova* that are all similar to his other portraits at this time, such as his portraits of Giovanni Pacini (1830) (figure 20), The Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna (1830) (figure 23), and O. I. Orlova-Davydova (figures 24). Typical for his paintings from the Italian years, Briullov placed his sitters in an invented locale and surrounded them with objects or persons that identified their personality or reflected the sitter's interests. He also romanticized many sitters by leaving the finishing details sketchily drawn and loosely painted to set off the polished surface and academic proportions.

In the case of Pacini, he stands at his piano either playing or composing one of his operas. He gazes into the distance, deep in thought, but away from the massive sculpture of the muse sitting on the piano. He is fashionably

dressed and surrounded by a luxurious curtain and carpet. The curtain is pulled back to reveal the window through which we see Mt. Vesuvius smoking in the distance. The volcano is a symbol and reminder of Pacini's popular opera *L'ultimo giorno di Pompei* (Last Day of Pompeii), performed in Naples from 1825-1830.⁷²

In the portraits of *Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna and her daughter* (1830) and *O. I. Orlova-Davydova and her daughter* (1834) Briullov incorporated the use of the heavy red velvet curtain, fashionably dressed women, and the symbol of their social position as mothers to their daughters. Even Yelena Pavlovna of the royal court, who would have had attendants to raise her child, is portrayed in a motherly yet regal pose, holding hands with her daughter while taking a walk at a lush country estate.⁷³ Briullov originally sketched Yelena Pavlovna in front of a view of Mount Vesuvius, then changed the placement of the curtain, and finally removed the distant landscape all together (figure 25). By simply framing the mother and daughter with the curtain, he maintained the solemnity of the Grand Duchess's position in society, while also conveying the sentimentality of tenderness in motherhood.

⁷² John Black, "The Eruption of Vesuvius in Pacini's *L'Ultimo Giorno di Pompei*" Alexander Weatherson ed. *The Donizetti Society Journal*, 6 (1988): 95.

⁷³ For the eighteenth-century French idea about the new virtues of the role of motherhood, see Carol Duncan, "Happy Mothers and Other New Ideas in Eighteenth-Century French Art," in *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds. and comps. (New York, 1982), 200-219.

An apartment decorated with sumptuous fabrics and colors, from the floral patterned rug and the vibrant shawl to the heavy velvet curtain, also surrounds Samoilova. She too has a family dog as in the *Orlova-Davydov* portrait. Samoilova walks forward as in *Grand Duchess Yelena*, but in Samoilova's case the flowers which are part of the rug's pattern appear to spring from her step, just as flowers had sprung up from Venus's feet as described by Hesiod in *The Theogony*.⁷⁴ Pearls are another attribute of Venus, and Samoilova's resplendent tiara with its large tear-drop pearl would also seem to associate her with the goddess of love and beauty. While similar to Briullov's other portrait paintings, *Samoilova* is disguised with sensational symbolic meanings.

Artistic and Social Origins of the Black Servant: Sources for Briullov

One prop Briullov used in *Samoilova*, the black servant, was uncommon in his repertoire. He created just four paintings with a black page, *Samoilova*, *Bathsheba* (1832) (figure 3), *Portrait of the Shishmariov Sisters* (1839) (figure 26) and *Portrait of the Young Princesses Volkonsky With a Moor* (1849) (figure 27). But only in *Samoilova* and *Bathsheba* is the attendant a significant part of the composition. In *Shishmariov Sisters* the servant is a creation by Briullov and only half of the body of the page is

⁷⁴ See also William Pressly, *James Barry: the Artist as Hero* (London, 1983) 33.

depicted in the lower left foreground of the work. While the Shishmariov family was wealthy, they could not afford to keep a servant or thoroughbred horses at their country estate as portrayed.⁷⁵ In *Princess Volkonsky* we only see the face of the black man wearing a turban as he peers through the railing in the background. Thus, Briullov's use of the black servant in *Samoilova* and *Bathsheba* can be considered unprecedented to his *oeuvre*, which heightens the importance of this Western European convention in these two paintings and helps us to unravel the multiple layers of *Samoilova*.

The history of the portrayal of blacks in Western European art stems from the Middle Ages when black Africans were popularly portrayed either in Christian imagery as the revered three Magi, or to the opposite extreme as a lowly servant or slave.⁷⁶ The idea of the black page in portraiture first appeared during the Italian Renaissance in Titian's *Laura Dianti* (1523-25) (figure 28).⁷⁷ In the instance of *Laura Dianti* the black servant helps identify

⁷⁵ RM, 18-19.

⁷⁶ See Paul Kaplan, *Ruler, Saint and Servant: Blacks in European Art to 1520*, Ph.D. diss. (Boston, 1983) and *The Rise of the Black Magus in Western Art* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1985) for studies on the development of western European attitudes towards blacks and their portrayal in the arts from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Allison Blakely, *Blacks in the Dutch World: the Evolution of Racial Imagery in a Modern Society* (Bloomington, IN, 1993) also devotes a chapter of his historical study of the Netherlands to "Art as History," providing other sources for this same type of imagery.

⁷⁷ Paul H.D. Kaplan, "Titian's 'Laura Dianti' and the Origins of the Motif of the Black Page in Portraiture," *Antichità Viva* 21 (1) (1982): 12, hereafter Kaplan (1).

the sitter as someone who was interested in black Africa. Dianti's interest was so great that the author Giovanni Battista Giraldi (1504-1573) dedicated a collection of novellas to her, one of which Shakespeare used as the basis for *Othello*.⁷⁸ The servant also most likely represents an actual African child who was a member of the Ferrarese court.⁷⁹ But this example of an identifiable person portrayed as a servant or to identify his master is basically relevant to the sixteenth century, during which time there are only three other known portraits containing the image of a black page.⁸⁰

Not until Sir Anthony Van Dyck painted his portrait *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi* (figure 29) in 1623 did the image of the black servant reappear in portraiture.⁸¹ But Van Dyck's use of the servant differs significantly from Titian's original use. For Van Dyck and the artists who follow him, the black servant takes on a new meaning which is not to be the representation of an actual black person, but rather, to be a symbol of his master's status, wealth, and power. The image of the black servant begins to be used as a decorative

⁷⁸ Paul H.D. Kaplan, "Titian's 'Laura Dianti' and the Origins of the Motif of the Black Page in Portraiture," *Antichità Viva* 21 (4) (1982): 10-11, hereafter Kaplan (4).

⁷⁹ Kaplan (4) 10 and Kaplan (1) 11-18.

⁸⁰ Kaplan (4) 10-14. The three works are Tintoretto, *The Battle of Asola* (1546); After A. Moro, *Infanta Doña Juana* (1551); Paris Bordone, *A General Armed by Two Pages* (1555-1560).

⁸¹ Kaplan (4) 14.

motif with which the artist is free to use his full artistic license. In the case of *Grimaldi* the servant could represent the Grimaldi family's Genoese trade connections with foreign lands upon which their fortune was made. But the servant as an actual portrait of a person is unlikely as evidenced by his pointed ear and his mature face combined with his short stature.⁸²

The Venetian Giovanni Battista Tiepolo's (1696-1770) painting *The Banquet of Cleopatra* (1743-44) (figure 30) further exaggerates Van Dyck's *Grimaldi* model with its servants of an invented type.⁸³ The servant clearing away the charger from Cleopatra, whose own features are wholly European and not Egyptian, has a similarly distorted ear to that seen in *Grimaldi* as well as unnaturally slanted and elongated eyes. His demonic appearance matches that of the servant in the right foreground as well. These servants are no longer people but props.

From this Northern Italian tradition of painting, Briullov created a fantasy portrait of Samoilova accompanied by the black servant. He combined in *Samoilova* the intimate closeness of the master and servant in Titian's *Dianti* with the grandeur and forward movement of Van Dyck's *Grimaldi*. Briullov became familiar with this type of portraiture through his extensive travels in

⁸² Arthur Wheelock Jr. and Susan J. Barnes, et. al., *Anthony Van Dyck* (New York, 1990), 176, hereafter Wheelock.

⁸³ Ursula Hoff, *European Paintings Before 1800 in the National Gallery of Victoria* (Melbourne, Australia, 1995), 285. Catherine the Great purchased this painting in 1765 and it hung as a ceiling painting in the Mikhailovski Castle from 1796-1801 and was relocated to the Hermitage by 1891.

Northern Italy. It is necessary to recount his route from Russia to Rome: Dresden, Munich, Venice, Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, Modena, Bologna, and Florence.⁸⁴ On his travels, Briullov could have seen a copy of *Dianti*, of which there was one in Venice and two in Modena.⁸⁵ Prints after an engraving by Egidius Sadeler (1570-1629) were also widely distributed.⁸⁶ Briullov likely never saw the original *Dianti* at this time, as it had been sold into various private collections in England beginning in 1798.⁸⁷ Van Dyck's *Grimaldi* was still in Genoa in the collection of Giambatista Cattaneo, husband of Elena Grimaldi, until 1828. Its reputation as a masterwork by the well-known Van Dyck, along with the 1780 description of the painting by the writer Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, could also have brought it to Briullov's attention.⁸⁸

Another portrait by Van Dyck which may also have served Briullov as a prototype was *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine* (1634) (figure 31). The composition of the black servant holding a bowl of flowers in his hands,

⁸⁴ Mashkovtsev, 37.

⁸⁵ Kaplan (4), 18 ft. 45. Copies of *Laura Dianti* with the black page are in Stockholm, two in Modena, Antwerp, Cardiff, Cologne, Venice, Kirchberg, Turin and Prague. There is a copy of the painting in Basel and two in Rome which omit the servant. There is also a print by Thiboust Benoit which also omits the servant.

⁸⁶ Kaplan (1), 12.

⁸⁷ Kaplan (4), 14 and Filippo Pedrocco and Corrado Federici trans., *Titian* (New York, 2001), 136.

⁸⁸ Wheelock, 176.

gazing up at the standing Henrietta, who places her right hand on his shoulder, is almost identical to *Samoilova*. It is unlikely that Briullov saw the original painting, as it had never been in Italy having gone from Brussels to France to England, and by 1831 was in the collection of the Earl of Carlisle.⁸⁹ However, a copy of the painting is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna,⁹⁰ and Briullov could have known about the work from this collection.

A painting Briullov might have had the opportunity to see was *Caroline Murat and Her Children* (between 1808-1815)⁹¹ (figure 32) by Jean-Baptiste Joseph Wicar in the Royal Palace of Caserta, Naples. He traveled to Naples when preparing to paint *Last Day of Pompeii*. Although this work does not include a black servant, compositionally the pyramidal form and position of the three figures is strikingly similar to *Samoilova*. The curtain in the left background and artwork in the upper right hand corner is common to both paintings as well. *Samoilova* can be seen as an amalgamation of the classical pyramidal forms and standing, forward moving figures of *Caroline Murat* and *Grimaldi*, the use of the black servant of *Grimaldi* and *Henrietta*, combined with the intimate touch of servant and mistress in *Dianti*.

⁸⁹ Wheelock, 278.

⁹⁰ Whellock, 280.

⁹¹ The date of this painting is so far undeterminable, but Joachim and Caroline Murat ruled as the King and Queen of Naples from 1808-1815. I am indebted to Adrienne Childs for telling me about this portrait.

Whatever Briullov's exact compositional sources for the grouping in *Samoilova*, he portrayed the servant, as in *Grimaldi*, with mature features on a child-sized body and crouched position, a typical pose of servitude common from Renaissance times.⁹² The servant's eyes follow his mistress. His collar, while not identical to that worn by the dog, is similar in width. This parallel representation of the servant and the dog is another part of the standard iconography in the portrayal of blacks in Western art.

This artistic convention of an ornate servant still parallels, however, the social practice of European and Russian upper-class households where black servants were also dressed up and treated as a valuable commodity much like a parrot or a shawl, their identities irrelevant. The importance of the role of the black servant as a grand ornamental symbol, not just in portraiture, can be seen in two paintings depicting nineteenth-century interiors. In the first, a painting of the Pavilion hall in the Small Hermitage (1857) (figure 33), two fashionably dressed women populate the impressive hall while the colorfully dressed black servant stands in attendance at the rear. The ornate grand arcade with its grotesques and elaborate carvings speaks to the wealth and status of its imperial owner. But the artistic recreation of an aristocratic residence was not complete without the fanciful black servant. The second work is a watercolor rendition (ca. 1862) of Aleksandr Briullov's Arab Dining Room in the Winter

⁹² Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven and London, 1992), 131 for the description in this paragraph.

Palace which he recreated after the palace fire in 1837 (figure 34). Aleksandr became well known for his architectural achievements, and this room derived its name from the black servants who stood in its doorways while guests were in attendance.⁹³

Even though the servant in *Samoilova* is based on standard artistic conventions, if he was an actual person it is probably not possible to determine his identity or even nationality. Although he seems to be drawn from life, as his facial features are realistic, we do not know if he actually worked in Samoilova's household, if he was an artist's model, or how Briullov came to know him. Artists sometimes repeated the same black face in their works, just as they would recreate stock decorative patterns and ornamentation. Briullov recreated the image of this servant in *Bathsheba*, which, as part of the *turquerie* portraiture tradition, is also a symbol from Orientalism and connects *Samoilova* to both discourses.

Turquerie in Europe and Russia

Popular in Europe, especially France during the eighteenth century, *turquerie* was at first just a fashion for Turkish styles and motifs in literature, music, the fine and decorative arts, interior design, and even masquerade balls. Fashionable aristocrats dressed in an exotic Turkish style for their portraits.

⁹³ Emmanuel Ducamp, *The Winter Palace Saint Petersburg* (Saint Petersburg, 1995), 78.

The theme of an aristocratic woman portrayed as a Sultana, attended by a black servant at tea or in the bath, became popular in the eighteenth century (see for examples figures 35, 36). A watercolor on paper by an unknown artist working in Russia, *Toilet of a woman with a blackamoor* (1770s) (figure 37), illustrates the theme of *turquerie* and women attended by a black servant in general.

Contact with the Ottoman Empire beginning in the sixteenth century piqued the curiosity of Europeans about distant places. But as France and England expanded their colonial undertakings at the end of the eighteenth century, European fantasies became manifested into a discourse of power which exercised power of man over woman, West over East, and white over black.⁹⁴ This power structure maintained an imaginary component and did not necessarily correlate to any specific geographical region other than non-European lands. Areas as far reaching as China, Russia, the Middle and Near East, India and North Africa all achieved an exotic status.

As in Orientalism, literature was the most effective medium in which distorted Western ideas about Eastern life and its rituals spread. Tales such as *Les Mille et une nuits*, the first volume of which was published in 1704, helped solidify Western ideas about the erotic East and the Turkish harem in particular, which became “a location that epitomized female submissive

⁹⁴ Adrienne L. Childs, *Serving Exoticism: the Black Female in French Exotic Imagery 1733-1885*. M.A. Thesis (College Park, MD, 1999), 3, hereafter Childs.

sexuality and male dominance.”⁹⁵ The observations of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762) were published as the book *Turkish Letters* in 1763. These examples of travel literature brought about an increased “fascination with the violence and debauchery of Arab men; the mystery, docility and sexual subservience of Arab women; and the naturalization of slavery [which] were among the major themes that recurred in Western constructions of the East and were played out in French *turquerie*.”⁹⁶

Within the discourses of *turquerie* and Orientalism, the black servant as a generic representation of wealth, power, and far away places also took on an inherent sexuality. The exotic Eastern harem became intertwined with one of the traditional themes from Western European art - the bath. Scenes of bathing nudes in a landscape, such as the toilet of Venus or Diana with maids, are common in classical imagery. Biblical scenes represent stories of Bathsheba with her maid or Susannah and the Elders.⁹⁷ The French Rococo artist Antoine Watteau (1684-1721) began to paint scenes of a mistress and maid without any classical or Biblical reference, but rather to represent “intimacy for its own sake.”⁹⁸ The anonymous maid and mistress now preparing for an anonymous

⁹⁵ Childs, 20 passim.

⁹⁶ Childs, 9.

⁹⁷ Beatrice Farwell, “Courbet’s ‘Baigneuses’ and the Rhetorical Feminine Image” in *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1739-1970* Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin eds. (New York, 1972), 65, hereafter Farwell.

⁹⁸ Farwell, 67.

liaison “became a type, in which the mistress may or may not be nude, and the maid never is.”⁹⁹ No longer legitimized by the classical myth or Biblical reference, the bath image became more and more a genre scene and in turn, more erotic.¹⁰⁰ A type of engraving even arose in eighteenth-century France “derived from paintings made for the private market, in which women are seen in intimate moments of bath or toilet, some observed by peeping Toms, some leaving the voyeurism to the viewer”¹⁰¹ (figure 38). These engravings range in date from 1815 to the 1830s and could have inspired Briullov when painting *Bathsheba* (figure 3).

Briullov’s *Bathsheba* is highly unusual and extremely progressive. The young woman gazes directly out at the viewer while her androgynous servant, his/her genitals either obscured or not painted in and an earring in the left ear, signifies an Eastern harem setting. The servant’s hand rests on her thigh and he/she is about to bathe her. What differentiates Briullov’s *Bathsheba* from a typical *turquerie* bath scene is the nudity and actual touch by the servant. The intimate touch of a woman in the bath is normally by her specifically female servant and does not appear until later in the nineteenth century in Orientalist paintings such as those by Gérôme (figure 6). As well, Gérôme’s bathers are being touched as the servant helps them by handing over a towel or giving a

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Farwell, 69.

massage. In none of the bathing scenes, even those by later painters, is the servant completely nude.

In *Bathsheba*, the servant casually touches her naked thigh as he/she begins to wash her, a sponge in the left hand, breaking the barrier between imagined fantasy and reality, but still legitimizing the scene within the guise of the biblical Bathsheba. As illustrated by Beatrice Farwell, the bath scene without the heading of Biblical or classical becomes just an erotic portrait. Bathsheba's direct gaze at the viewer is not coy, bashful, or seductive, but cheerfully direct. She looks back at the viewer and is thus reminiscent of other nudes such as Titian's *Venus of Urbino* and Ingres's *Grand Odalisque* (figure 5).

Briullov's *Bathsheba* also illustrates his complete assimilation into the Western European artistic tradition. At the Russian Academy of Arts in St. Petersburg, founded by Empress Elizabeth in 1757 and reorganized according to the French system by Catherine the Great in 1764, *turquerie* was not part of the working program for Russian artists. A relatively young program, St. Petersburg tended to lag behind the French school founded in Paris in 1648, as evidenced by the Parisian reaction to Briullov's *Last Day of Pompeii*. Patrons and Western artists working in Russia imported the few examples of *turquerie* that existed there.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

In September 1782, Empress Catherine the Great purchased two of the three great French *turquerie* paintings by Carle Van Loo,¹⁰² *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour as a Sultana Taking Coffee* (figure 36) and its companion *Sultanas Embroidering*. Originally the paintings were made for Madame de Pompadour's bedroom, known as the *chambre à la turque*, at the château Bellevue, built from 1748-1751. The favorite of Louis XV, she specifically designed the bedroom interior, which was directly linked by a staircase to the *chambre du Roi*, to evoke Turkey and the seraglio. The paintings by Van Loo were a significant part of the decoration, portraying Pompadour as a Sultana receiving tea from her black female servant. The taste for *turquerie* was not only popular but one preferred by Louis XV, and she used this style to express her political power as the Sultana, the favorite of the Turkish Sultan and herself the favorite of the French King. Certainly some of the original meaning of the works was lost out of situ after they were cut down, although they were again installed in a bedroom, the blue bedroom of the Old Hermitage, as overdoor paintings.¹⁰³

In Russian art few works used the motif of the black page, and Western artists produced even these. In the tradition of Titian's *Laura Dianti*, the

¹⁰² Perrin Stein, "Madame de Pompadour and the harem imagery at Bellevue," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 123 (January 1994): 29-44, hereafter Stein 1994. The description and history of these paintings is from Stein.

¹⁰³ Stein 1994, ft. 41. See also Pierre Rosenberg and Marie-Catherine Sahut, *Carle Vanloo premier peintre du roi* [Exh. Cat. Nice, Musée Chéret, et.al.] (Nice, 1977), 76.

Dutch engraver Adriaan Schoonebeek portrayed Peter the Great in the beginning of the eighteenth century with a black servant, a motif representing Peter's interest in blacks (figure 39). Few blacks were native to Russia and even these were isolated from the white population during tsarist times; they lived on the Black Sea and rarely moved beyond the Caucasus.¹⁰⁴ Peter was instrumental in widening the presence of blacks in Russia, bringing them to Russia as slaves and servants to embellish his court as was fashionable in Europe.¹⁰⁵ Peter adopted a black child, Abram Hannibal, as his godson. Hannibal was sent to Paris for his education and lived abroad for seven years. The great-grandfather of Alexander Pushkin, Hannibal was also the inspiration for Pushkin to write *Negro of Peter the Great*.

Following the example of Peter, it became a standard custom among the nobility and the Tsars' courts to have black servants throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁰⁶ The nobility generally maintained just a few servants. The Tsars' courts kept an entourage of blacks that in the eighteenth century numbered less than ten and in the nineteenth century

¹⁰⁴ Allison Blakely, *Russia and the Negro* (Washington, D.C., 1986), 13-16 passim for the source of the history of black servants at court, hereafter Blakely 1986.

¹⁰⁵ Blakely, 13-14 passim.

¹⁰⁶ Blakely, 15.

approximately twenty. This number was always kept constant: when one black left the service or died a replacement was found.

Perhaps the best-known image of a black servant in Russian art is the sculpture *Empress Anna Ioannovna with a blackamoor* (1732-1741) (figure 40) by Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli (1675-1744).¹⁰⁷ This western style composition of the two figures, the inclusion of the page, and the decorative details of her dress in the height of the baroque style presented a monumental national subject. Rastrelli, Italian by birth and invited by Peter the Great to work in Russia, is considered to have also revolutionized Russian sculpture. His son Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli (1700-1771) continued to work in Russia as the court architect to Empress Elizabeth (1709-1762).

Empress Elizabeth Petrovna on horseback with a blackamoor (1743) (figure 41) by the German court painter Georg Christoph Grooth (1716-1749) is a grand parade portrait depicting the Empress being led by a regal black servant who walks in front and waves his hand.¹⁰⁸ Two copies after Grooth's painting were made and it was also used for a Meissen porcelain sculpture group. In these portraits the servant is beautifully dressed and could emphasize

¹⁰⁷ V. A. Gusev, *Gosudarstvennyi Russkii Muzei: kolleksii zhivopisi, skul'ptury, grafiki, dekorativno-prikladnogo iskusstva XII-XX vekov* (Moscow, 1991), 156.

¹⁰⁸ See Iakov V. Bruk, and Lidiia I. Iovleva, *Gosudarstvennaia Treťiakovskaia Galereia: katalog sobraniia seriia zhivopis' XVIII-XX vekov* vol. 2 (Moscow, 1998), 108 for the description and information regarding this painting and its copies.

the Empress's family history, in that her father, Peter the Great, adopted a black son.

The Exoticization of *Samoilova*

Briullov's use of *turquerie* and Orientalism as manifested by the servant in *Samoilova*, elevated her to the status of a Russian Empress just as Peter, Anna, and Elizabeth were portrayed with black servants. The tiara she wears also confirms this as one wonders why she is wearing it in the middle of the day. Reinforcing the idea that this is a fantastic scene and she is elevated to Empress, a creative embellishment of Briullov's imagination so common in his genre paintings, the crown is also of an Eastern-style. The baroque pearl that hangs from it to rest on her forehead, serves to exoticize Briullov's subject. While such pearls were not uncommon in Western Europe, their appearance implies an Eastern origin which transfers to its wearer. Not only serving to associate Samoilova with Venus, the pearl also reinforces her Eastern Russian identity and social reputation. The overall affect of the tiara simply yet effectively exalts Samoilova's regal stature. She is the queen of this painting, the object of our attention.

Another exotic feature and particular highlight of Samoilova's appearance is her jewelry. Her necklace gently follows the décolleté outline of her dress. Her wide belt, decorated with large cabochons and a carved gem buckle, each jewel outlined with sketchy filigree, enhances her figure and

distinguishes her appearance from everyday fashion. Unlike her dress and shoes, her necklace and belt do not reflect current French styles (figures 42, 43). The necklace could be of the archaeological revival style (figure 44). But it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the jewelry firm of Castellani would create revivalist designed pieces for couture clients.¹⁰⁹ The date of *Samoilova* is too early to support this stylistic attribution.

Other possible explanations for the classical design of her jewelry could be that the pieces were authentic or Neapolitan copies. If this were so, it would attach to her the reputation of southern Italy, a place considered exotic by Europeans, and northern Italians in particular.¹¹⁰ Some wealthy collectors actually owned original pieces of classical jewelry. *Samoilova*'s maternal grandfather, her grandmother Catherine Skavronsky's first husband, was the Russian ambassador to Naples and they lived there from 1795-1793. Perhaps these pieces were handed down to *Samoilova* through her family.

Neapolitan craftsmen were well known in Italy for their expertise in copying and faking antique jewelry. The earliest fake was discovered at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and was dated to 1761.¹¹¹ With the help of archaeologists working on the excavation sites at Pompeii and Herculaneum

¹⁰⁹ Geoffrey Munn, *Castellani and Giuliano: Revivalist Jewellers of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1984), 14 passim, hereafter Munn.

¹¹⁰ See Jane Schneider, ed., *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in one country* (Oxford, 1998) for various discussions on this issue.

¹¹¹ Munn, 14.

and with a ready supply of actual pieces from which to copy, Neapolitan artists created a thriving business selling exact copies to foreign visitors of the ruins. Briullov could have purchased these pieces for Samoilova as did other tourists while visiting Naples, or she may have owned an original. However, from wherever she came to possess these effects, the implication is clear: Samoilova is connected to an exotic land through her jewelry.

One contemporary critic of the painting writing on the occasion of its 1834 Milan debut mentions the “magnificent ottoman.”¹¹² The ottoman and its implication of the seraglio had become ubiquitous in various settings in the early nineteenth century, the reviewer’s singling out this piece of furniture as “magnificent” underscores this dual implication.¹¹³ Normally used in the East, ottomans were fitted along walls much like a bench. In European interior design at this time they were used as an individual piece of furniture, much as a bed, or as the traditional bench.¹¹⁴ The European style Turkish bed made for Madame de Pompadour’s bedroom at Bellevue resembles a deep couch¹¹⁵ (figure 45). In *Samoilova*, the ottoman juts into the middle of the room and is

¹¹² Hillwood Curatorial File, *Dell Ricoglitore italiano e straniero...il titolo Belbe Arti*, 10, October 1834.

¹¹³ John Morley, *The History of Furniture: Twenty-Five Centuries of Style and Design in the Western Tradition* (Boston, 1999), 290, hereafter Morley.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal*, 15 (1987): 213. We do not know if this flower motif is the original pattern of the fabric as the silk is modern.

more likely a traditional divan as it is capable of holding the heavy red curtain. It also serves to complete the diagonal enclosing the scene.

What could have seemed “magnificent” to the Italian reviewer is the paisley design on the ottoman. Paisley appears to have been used exclusively as a border design on shawls and furniture and did not exist on Western furniture at this time in all-over patterns¹¹⁶ (figure 46). The paisley motif on the divan is also a direct connection to the East. Originally, the design we call paisley was a Babylonian motif representing the date palm or the Tree of Life which provided food and quality wood with which to build shelters.¹¹⁷ The shape of paisley as a teardrop leaning into a hook at the top resembles a tightly curled palm as it begins to grow. This new growth represents fertility, adding still more value to this symbolic motif. The motif spread throughout different civilizations and eventually appeared in India in many forms, particularly on shawls in the 1600s. Paisley was finally brought to Europe through British and French colonization of the Near East. Agents of the British East India Company in the middle of the eighteenth century were the first to bring shawls back as gifts to their wives. Quickly becoming a fashion staple for society women throughout Europe and into Russia, the paisley shawl was a major

¹¹⁶ Mary Schoeser and Kathleen DeJardin, *French Textiles, from 1760 to the present* ([London], 1991), 86-87.

¹¹⁷ Valerie Reilly, *Paisley Patterns: A Design Source Book* (London, 1989), 7-22 passim for the description of paisley in this paragraph.

commercial import although scarce and expensive. A shawl on the British market at that time would cost between 200 and 300 British pounds, the equivalent of thousands of dollars in today's market.

The divan covered in red paisley fabric supports the large red curtain, which serves as a framing device and draws the viewer's eye down toward the Countess. The red velvet curtain, as discussed above, was used frequently by Briullov and is not a realistic curtain but a standard classical device, particularly evident in the works of Van Dyck, adding weight and monumentality to the format of the painting. But the divan is only visible because the heavy curtain covering has been pulled back to reveal this piece of furniture and its exotic motif, as if unlocking forbidden secrets. Samoilova with her Eastern tiara and situated in a room with not just an ottoman, but one decorated with an authentic eastern design, becomes the Sultana, the queen of the harem.

Although she is now an exotic princess, in keeping with European attitudes towards Russia, she is still not the most exotic figure in the work: the servant attending his mistress the Sultana now assumes this role. The black servant is a part of the triad surrounding Samoilova, yet he is still in the background, hidden behind the massive shawl that he is poised to take. As Samoilova's shawl is actually larger than the servant who gathers it, the two blend into the same expensive decorative object, each with a specific realistic place and significance in homage to the wealth and stature of the patroness. It

seems that Briullov purposefully painted Samoilova's arm a few inches too long to allow the shawl to block the view of the boy and to isolate him. Even the dog is given a more prominent foreground position in the painting than that of the servant.

Into this highly charged, highly eroticized environment, Briullov inserted himself. The perfect academic proportions of the painting position Samoilova as literally the center of the work. The entire group including the servant and daughter walking forward with Samoilova are, however, uncentered. Measuring the distance from the edge of the painting to the servant and applying this same distance from the edge of the daughter's sleeve out towards the curtain and thus centering the grouping, one realizes that the excluded space of the right side of the painting is that of the artist himself (figure 47). He publicly presented a fragment of his famous *Last Day of Pompeii* in the upper right hand corner directly above the private, personal implications of the exotic paisley divan.

On the surface Briullov's inclusion of himself in *Samoilova* with his *Pompeii* seems a fitting tribute to a family friend. Karl included her portrait in *Pompeii* as many as three times. It is certain that she appears at least once as the woman holding a vase on her head in the left background in the same space and just to the right of Briullov's self-portrait. Another possibility is that Samoilova appears as the woman holding a child while sheltered under a

man's brown garment, and as the woman in the left foreground embracing her two daughters.

But Samoilova never owned *Pompeii* and the painting could not have hung in her villa for very long, if at all, and certainly not for the two years Briullov was painting *Samoilova*. If this was an unknown sketch of the painting,¹¹⁸ it seems an unlikely choice for such an intimate setting. Also, if Briullov was touting the great success he achieved with *Pompeii* and thanking Samoilova for her companionship, he could have shown more of the painting than just that one corner. There is room to include *Pompeii* at the left. This careful placement of the work just above the divan adds more weight to the covert implications of the divan and of the artist's space in the painting. As a symbol of Briullov's artistic success, *Pompeii* becomes his calling card.

Samoilova and Briullov are also joined together by an almost invisible element, a monogram on the main intaglio of her belt (figure 48). This is not the first time Briullov used the technique of placing a personal reference on a subject in his paintings. In *Vsadnitsa* (figure 21) "Samoiloff" is written in Latin on the collar of the dog. Briullov possessed his sitter in *Italian Midday* (figure 14) by branding the girl with his bright red stamp "CB" on her shirt in the middle of her voluptuous breasts. In *Samoilova*, he placed the ultimate personal reference on the sitter, the monogram incorporating Briullov's and possibly her initials in a type of marital designation.

¹¹⁸ Rakova, 33-50.

Only clearly visible at a distance of a few inches from the canvas, with the aid of a stepladder, the monogram would only have been known to Samoilova and Briullov. It consists of the stylized Cyrillic letters “G”, “V”, and “S”; the “V” and “S” are also the Latin-alphabet cognates “B” and “C”. Briullov signed the painting in Latin, in the bottom left corner “C. Briullof.” It seems logical then, that the “B” and “C” would represent his name. The Cyrillic “G” could represent “Gospodin” or “Mr.” Carl Briullof. The Cyrillic “G” could also represent Samoilova’s name Giulia in the Italian, but this is a slightly awkward translation as it should sound more like the letter “zh/j”. However, the Latin letter “C” as a Russian “S” could represent her married name “Samoilova.” The “G” could also be Cyrillic for “Grafina” or “Countess” Samoilova. Another possibility of the interplay of the three letters in Cyrillic could be just her own name: Grafina von der Pahlen Samoilova; her maiden name von der Pahlen is represented by the coat-of-arms above the doorway. The play on Latin and Cyrillic letters would hide the artist’s implication from its Western audience and allow him to possess Samoilova as she wears his initials.

Other Russian signifiers are manifest in the painting as well.¹¹⁹ The orange-red color of the shawl seems to represent Russia as it contrasts with the

¹¹⁹ Another possible Russian sign is the tri-color of the Russian flag - red, blue, and white - across the foreground of the painting. The traditional imperial flag at this time was a horizontally striped flag consisting from bottom to top of red, blue and white. The shawl that the servant holds is oddly painted, something a contemporary critic even noted (Mashkovtsev, 99-100). The shawl almost

Italian red color of the Van Dyckian curtain. Saturated in deep red hues, the color of the curtain is reminiscent of those used in Northern Italian paintings by artists such as Titian, Rubens and Van Dyck, whose style Briullov purposefully copied for his own curtain. In comparison, the M.I. Skotti painting *Portrait of Count Kustaisov with his children* (figure 49) illustrates this difference between the Rubens's red of the curtain and the Russian orange hue of the shawl.¹²⁰ Portrayed while traveling in Florence, the children wear traditional Russian clothing as was fashionable at the Russian court. The orange-red saturation of the girls' Russian dress is very similar to the coloring of the shawl in *Samoilova*. The Italian chair in which the father sits is also of the same deep red found in Northern Italian painting and also that of Briullov's curtain.

The architectural elements surrounding the doorway appear in both Western and Russian designs. In the West, these elements denote the highly fashionable French Gothic style (figure 50). To Russian audiences, the cutouts of the overdoor decoration could replicate the ubiquitous onion-shaped domes of Russian churches, but perhaps even more particularly those in the Moscow

appears as two separate pieces of fabric. Painted in this manner, the block of red color is purposefully lowered in the foreground to be level with the blue dress giving distinct play to the three colors of the flag. But this color scheme could just as simply be explained by the complementary red and blue colors which are common in Briullov's *oeuvre*.

¹²⁰ Fedor Kriuger, "Russkie v Italii," *Pinakoteka*, 8-9 (1999): 94. I am grateful to Yelena Harbick for bringing the painting and this article to my attention. The description of the painting is derived from this source.

Kremlin, where the seventeenth-century Terem palace is also located.

Reconstructed in the 1490s, the upper levels of the Terem palace were the private quarters of the Tsar and the royal women and children.¹²¹ It was an “inner sanctum” where only those closest to the Tsar could gain access. Thus, Samoilova located in the Terem palace can again be a Tsarina or a Sultana.

¹²¹ John Adamson, *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture Under the Ancien Régime 1500-1750* (London, 2000), 297-298.

Conclusion

Briullov's careful navigation of public versus private is masterfully executed in *Samoilova*. Not the typical image of an orientalized woman, *Samoilova* epitomizes modern European taste. The sitter is the object of our admiration but we do not look upon her. Instead, she looks over us, never meeting our gaze. She stands, paused in motion, fully clothed, and not laid out in a horizontal and suggestive harem-like pose. She does not peer out seductively as in an Ingres *Odalisque*, (figure 5) but rather as a regal Tsarina.

Briullov's use of latent exoticism through the systems of *turquerie* and Orientalism to illustrate his private feelings towards the Countess simultaneously reflects the broader public opinion of Russians by the West. He uses the stereotypes normally meant to bind his countrymen to free himself as an artist and as a lover. *Samoilova* too is freed, as these stereotypes enable her to live her extravagant lifestyle within Western boundaries of the "other." The two successfully live between East and West, maintaining the duality of their Russian identity. Using inherited traditions of symbolism and portraiture, he weaves together his and *Samoilova*'s Russian nationality within their present Italian locale in order to possess her as his own.

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Figure 1. *Portrait of Countess Samoilova*, 1832-1834. Oil on canvas, 269.2 x 200 cm. Hillwood Museum & Gardens, Washington, D.C.



Figure 2. *Portrait of A. N. Strugovshchikov*, 1840. Oil on canvas, The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 3. *Bathsheba*, 1832. Oil on canvas, 173 x 125.5 cm. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 4. Eugene Delacroix, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment*, 1834. Oil on canvas, 180 x 229 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

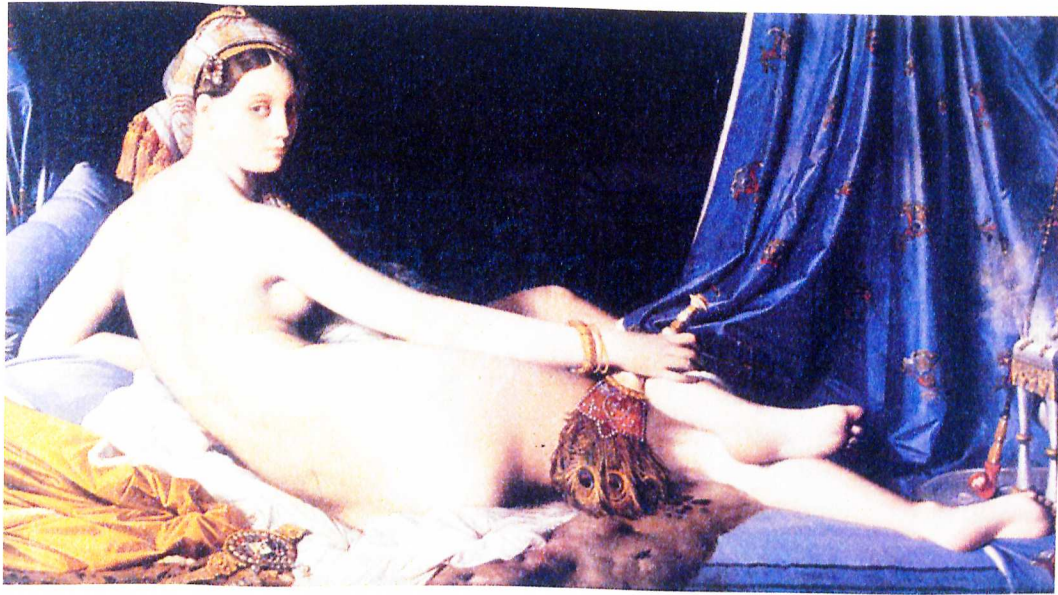


Figure 5. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, *The Grand Odalisque*, 1814. Oil on canvas, 91 x 162 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 6. Jean-Léon Gérôme, *The Bath (Le Bain)*, 1880-1885. Oil on canvas, 73.6 x 59.6 cm. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Mildred Anna Williams Collection.



Figure 7. Antoine-Jean Gros, *Portrait of Prince Yusupov in Tatar Costume*, 1809. Oil on canvas, 321 x 266 cm. Pushkin Museum, Moscow.



Figure 8. *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, 1849. Oil on canvas. Pushkin Museum, Moscow.

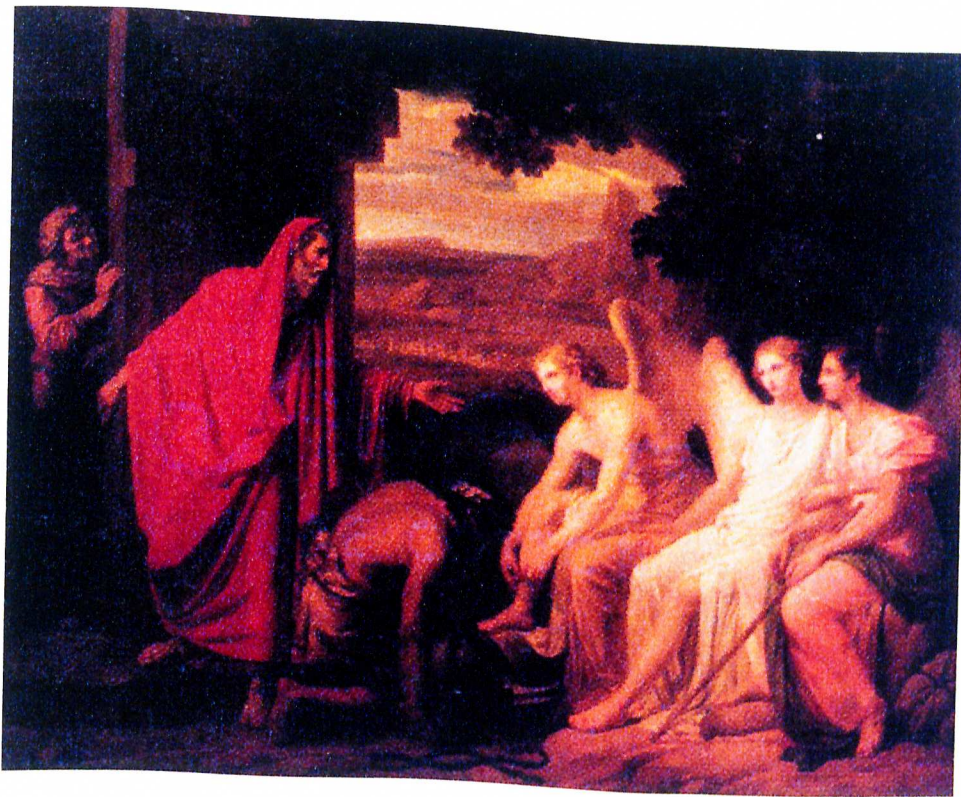


Figure 9. *Abraham's Vision of God in the Form of Three Angels in the Plains of Mamre*, 1821. Oil on canvas, 113 x 144 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 10. *Last Day of Pompeii*, 1828-1833. Oil on canvas, 456.5 x 651 cm.
State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 11. Théodore Géricault, *The Raft of the Medusa*, 1819. Oil on canvas, 491 x 716 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Figure 12. *Italian Morning*, 1823. Oil on canvas.

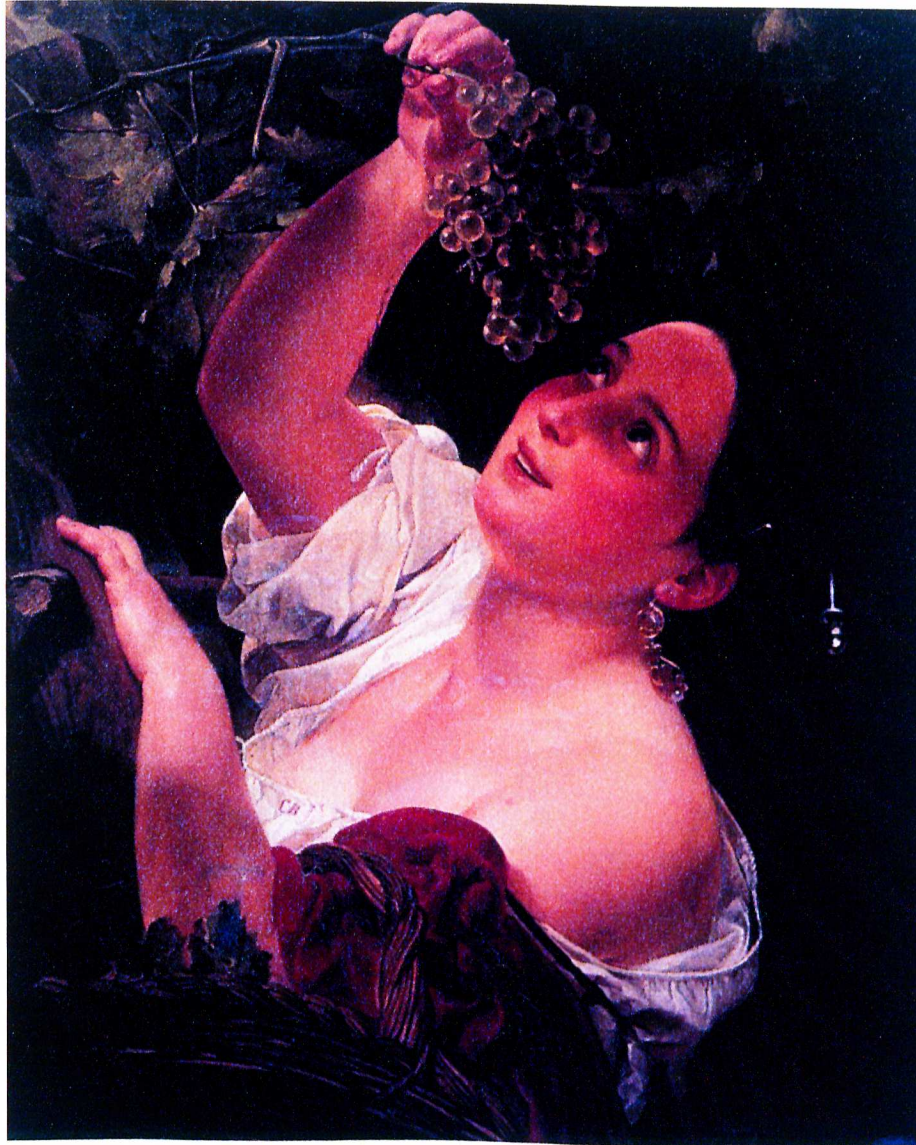


Figure 13. *Italian Midday (Italian Girl Picking Grapes)*, 1827. Oil on canvas, 64 x 55 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 14. *Girl Picking Grapes in the Environs of Naples*, 1827. Oil on canvas, 62 x 52.5 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 15. *A Girl Standing with a Staff in Her Hand (Italian Woman from Olevano)*, 1828-1829. Pencil, 36.1 x 23.9 cm. Stolichny Bank of Savings, Moscow.



Figure 16. *An Italian Woman from Nettuno*. Sepia, brush, 37.6 x 25.4 cm.
Stolichny Bank of Savings, Moscow.



Figure 17. Orest Kiprensky, *Girls of Naples*, 1831-1834. Watercolor and pencil on paper, 36.3 x 28 cm. The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.



Figure 18. *Once a Year by Allah's Will the Shirt is Taken from the Girl*, 1845.
Sepia and graphite pencil on paper, 23 x 18 cm. State Russian Museum,
Saint Petersburg.



Figure 19. *Jaguar in a Planter's Hut*, 1837-1840. Graphite pencil and sepia on paper, 27.5 x 35.2 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 20. *Portrait of the Composer Giovanni Pacini*, 1828. Watercolor. Private Collection, Italy. Reproduced from *Mir Muzeia* 1, 159 (January-February 1998): 37.



Figure 21. *Vsadnitsa*, 1832. Oil on canvas, 291.5 x 206 cm. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 22. *Masquerade*, 1842. Oil on canvas, 249 x 176 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.

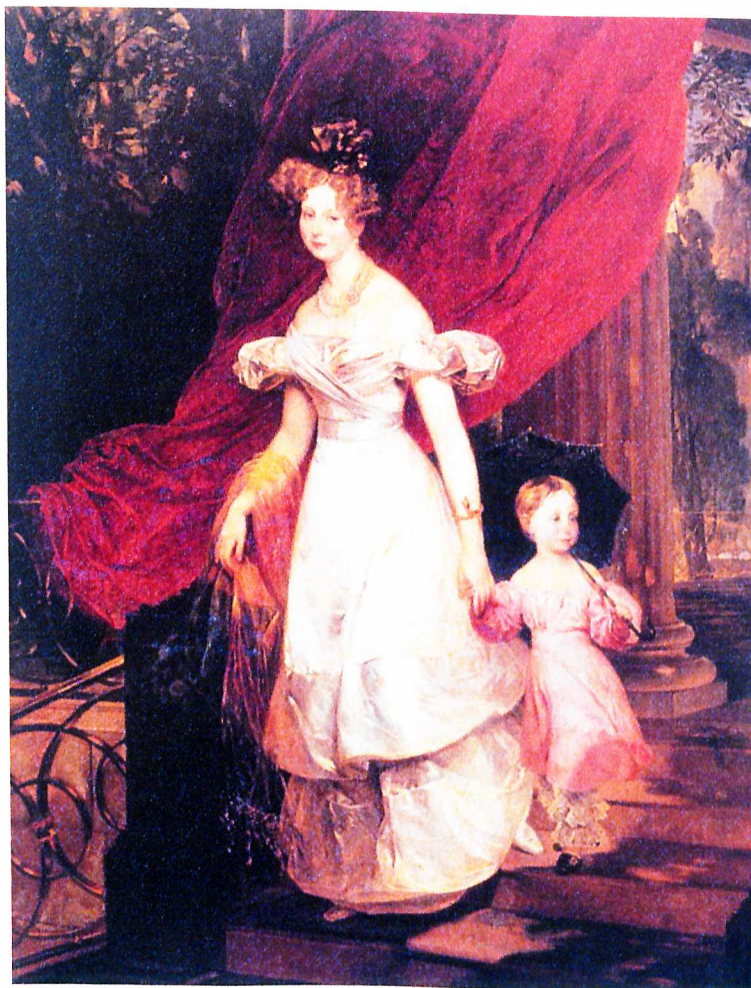


Figure 23. *Portrait of the Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna with her daughter*, 1830. Oil on canvas, 265 x 185 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 24. *Portrait of Olga Davydova with her daughter Natalia*, 1834. Oil on canvas, 195 x 126 cm. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

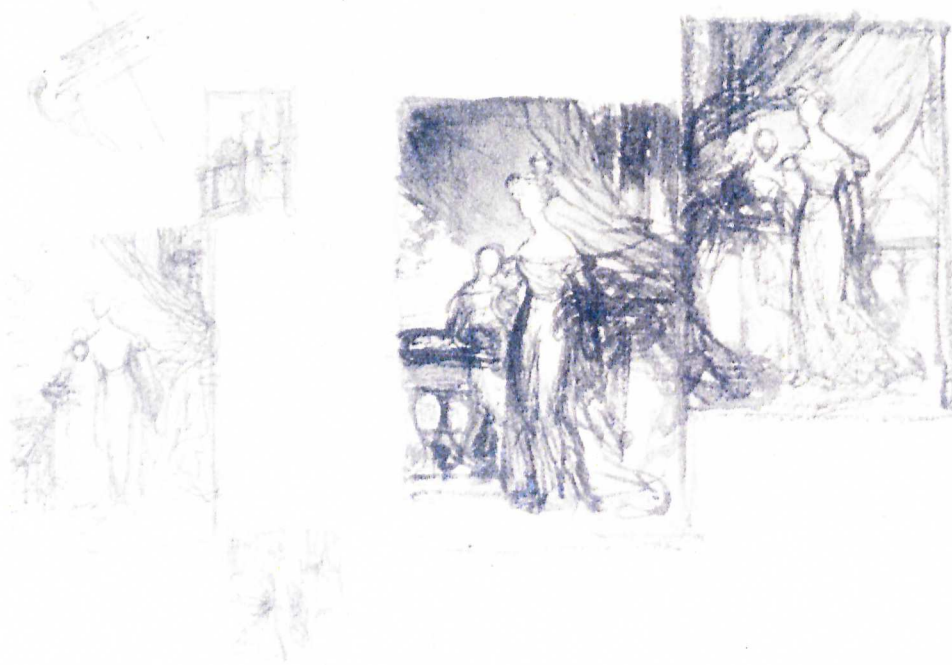


Figure 25. *Sketches for portrait of Grand Duchess Yelena Pavlovna with her daughter, 1828-1830. Sepia. Reproduced from Esfir' Atsarkina, Karl Pavlovich Briullov: zhizn' i tvorchestvo (Moscow, 1963) 49.*



Figure 26. *Portrait of the Shishmariov Sisters*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 281 x 213 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 27. *Portrait of the Young Princesses Volkonsky* By a Moor, 1849. Oil on canvas, 146.1 x 224.1 cm. The Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 28. Titian, *Portrait of Laura Dianti*, 1523-1525. Oil on canvas.
Private Collection.



Figure 29. Sir Anthony Van Dyck *Marchesa Elena Grimaldi*, 1623. Oil on canvas, 246 x 173 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Widener Collection.

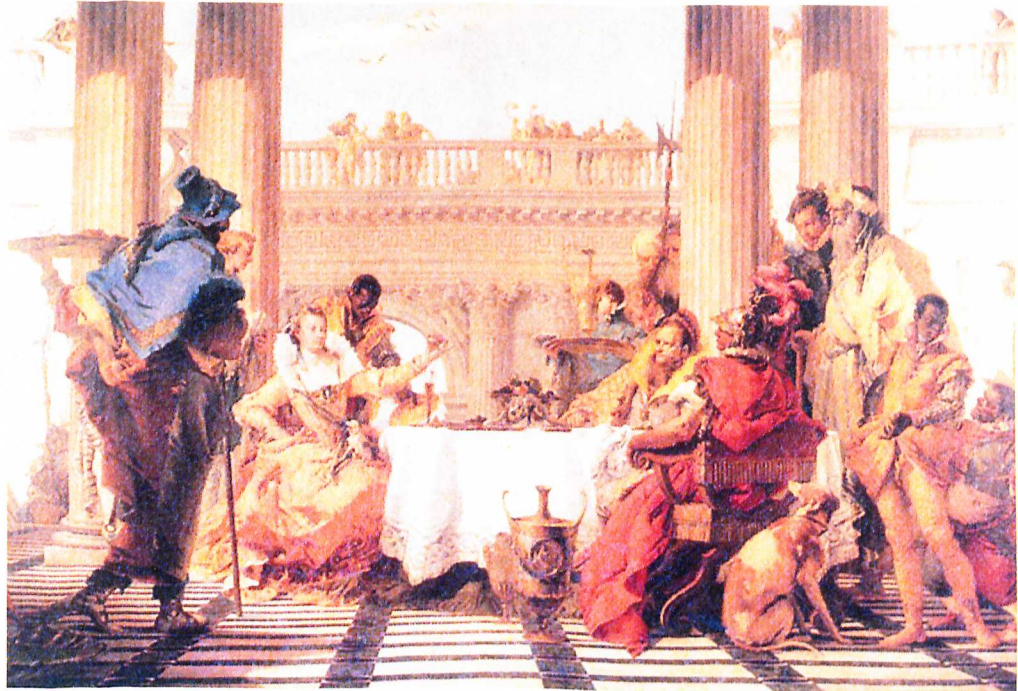


Figure 30. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *The Banquet of Cleopatra*, 1743-44. Oil on canvas, 248.2 x 357.8 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Australia.



Figure 31. Sir Anthony Van Dyck, *Princess Henrietta of Lorraine*, 1634. Oil on canvas, 213.4 x 127 cm. The Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood (English Heritage).

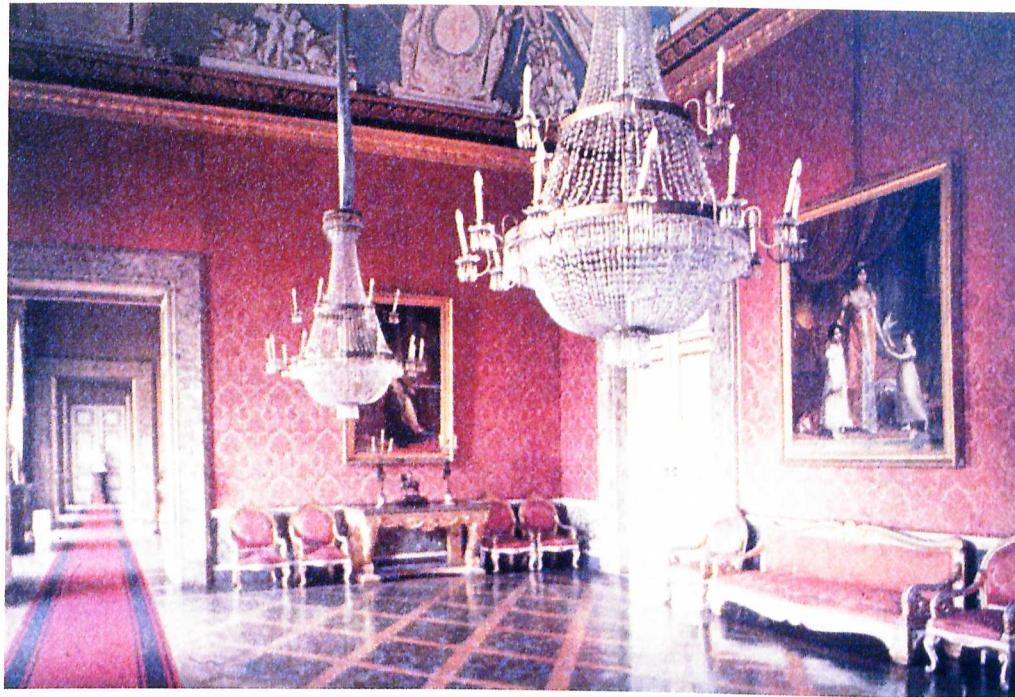


Figure 32. Jean-Baptiste Joseph Wicar, *Caroline Murat and Her Children*, between 1808-1815. Oil on canvas. Royal Palace of Caserta, Italy.

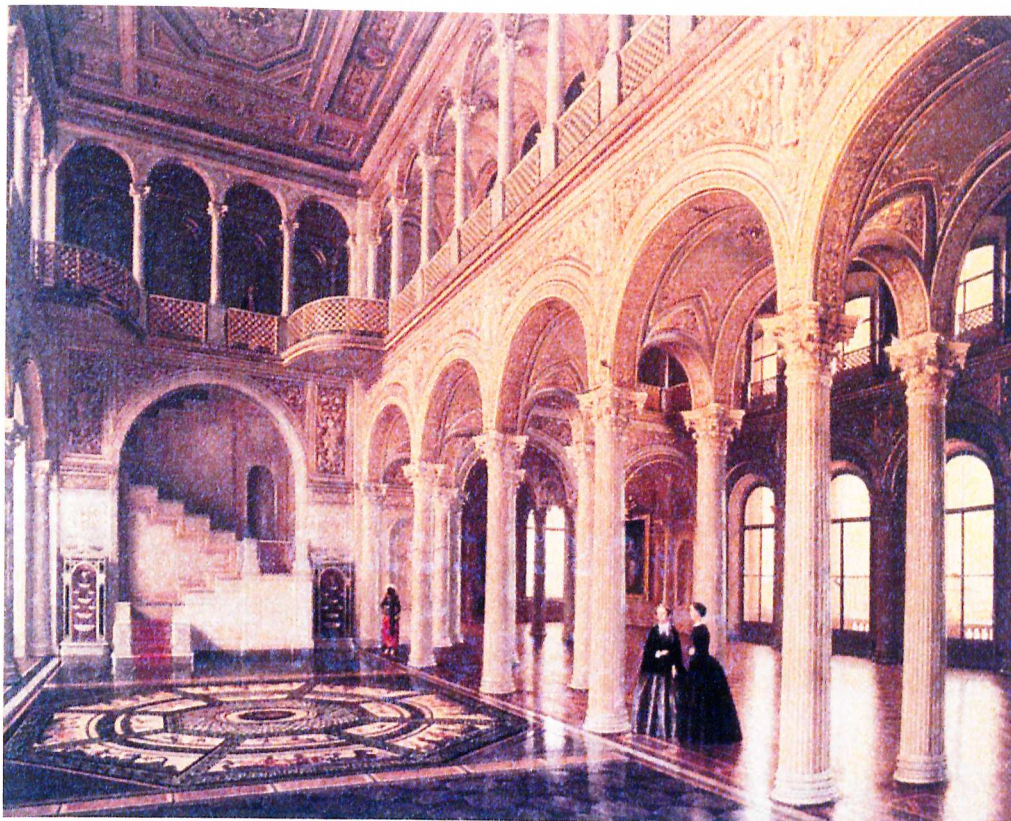


Figure 33. P. V. Tutukina, *Pavilion Hall in the Small Hermitage*, 1857.
Reproduced from Iuliia Demidenko, *Inter'er v Rossii: traditsii, moda, stil'*
(Saint Petersburg, 2000) 200.

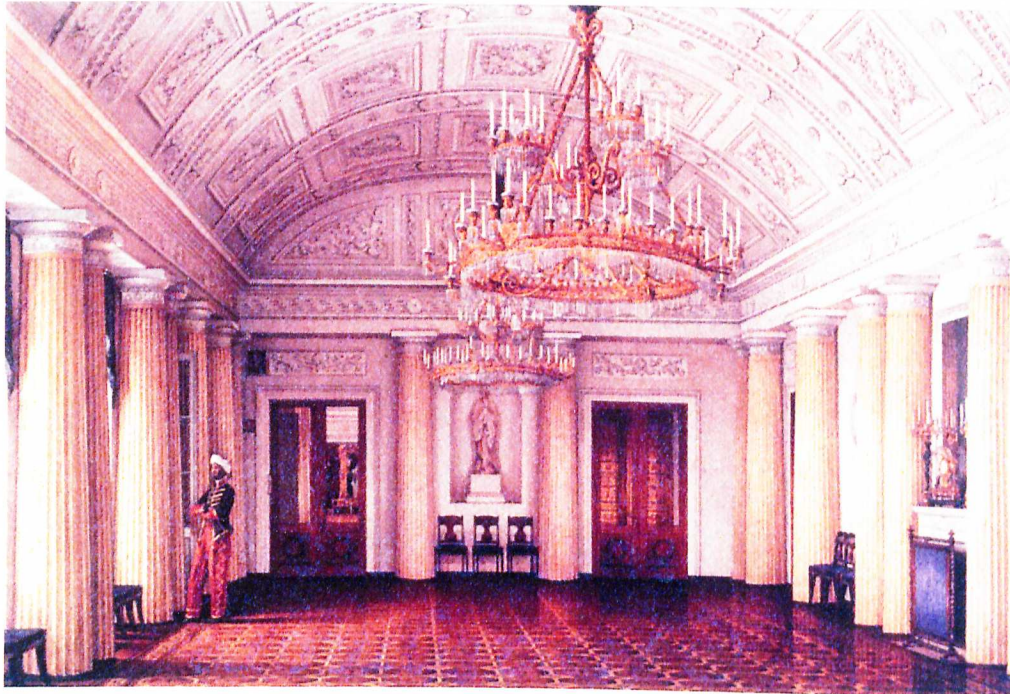


Figure 34. Konstantin Andreievich Ukhtomsky. *The Arab Dining Room* [ca. 1862]. Reproduced from Emmanuel Ducamp. *The Winter Palace, Saint Petersburg* (Saint Petersburg, 1995) 78.



Figure 35. Jean-Marc Nattier. *Mademoiselle de Clermont as a Sultan's Wife*, 1733. Oil on canvas, 109 x 104.5 cm. The Wallace Collection, London.



Figure 36. Carle Van Loo, *Portrait of Madame de Pompadour as a Sultana taking coffee*, 1750-1754. Oil on canvas. The Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg.



Figure 37. Unknown Artist. *Toilet of a woman with a blackamoor*, 1770s.
Watercolor on paper, 29.2 x 21.2 cm. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

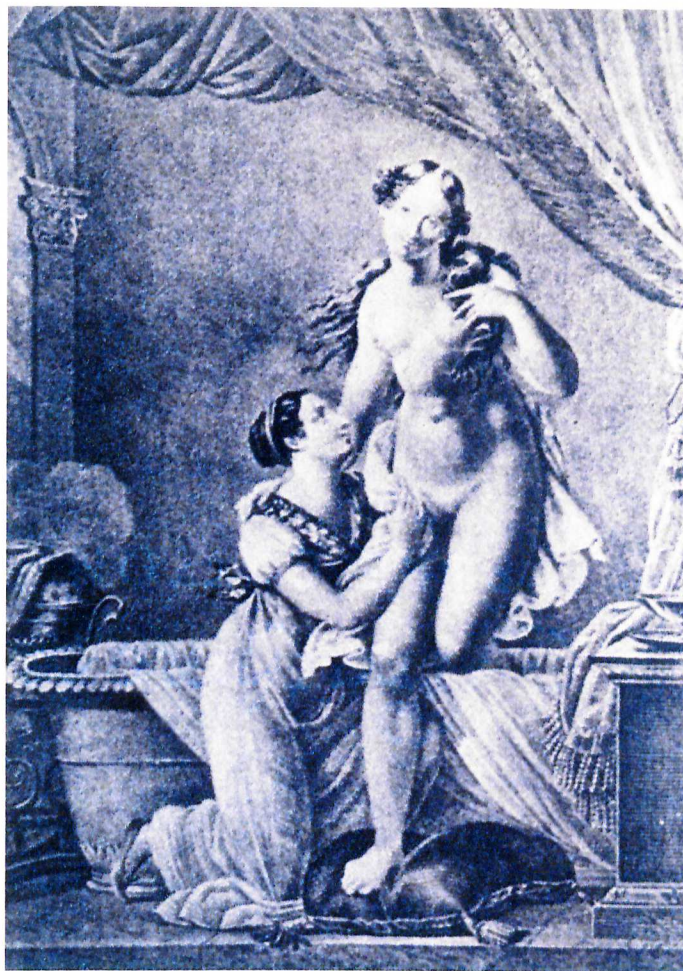


Figure 38. Noël Blaizot, *Noon (The Bath)*, ca. 1815. Reproduced from *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1739-1970*. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, eds. (New York, 1972) 71.

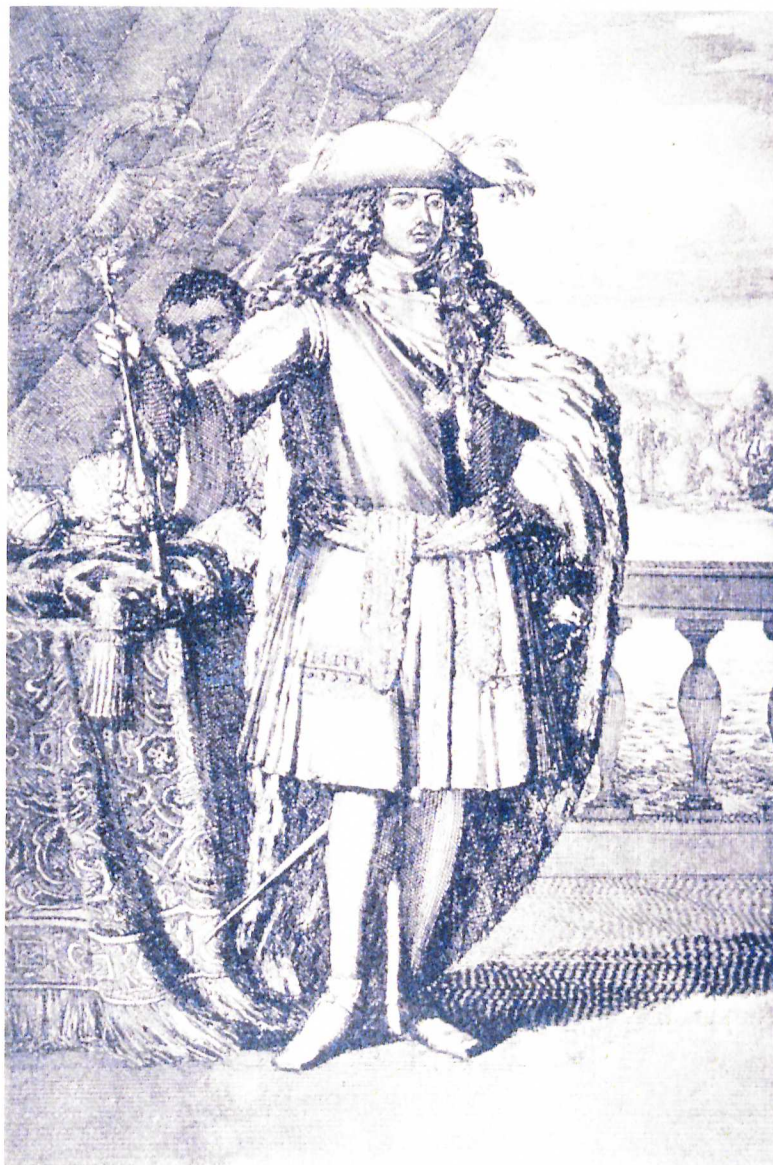


Figure 39. Adriaan Schoonebeek, engraving after Unknown Artist, *Peter the Great*, 1700-1705. Reproduced from *Gallereia Petra Velikago v Imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteke*. Saint Petersburg, 1903. pl. XI.



Figure 40. Bartolomeo Carlo Rastrelli, *Empress Anna Ioannovna with a blackamoor*, 1732-1741. Bronze, 223 x 155 x 228 cm. State Russian Museum, Saint. Petersburg.



Figure 41. Georg Christoph Grooth, *Empress Elizabeth Petrovna on horseback with a blackamoor*, 1743. Oil on canvas, 85 x 58.5 cm. The Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



Figure 42. *French Lady of Fashion*, 1830. Reproduced from Douglas Gorsline, *What People Wore: A Visual History of Dress from Ancient Times to Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1952) 141.



Figure 43. *Women's Shoes, 1833*. Reproduced from Douglas Gorsline, *What People Wore: A Visual History of Dress from Ancient Times to Twentieth-Century America* (New York, 1952) 142.



Figure 44. Fortunato Pio Castellani, *Earrings, Necklace*. 1864-1884. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

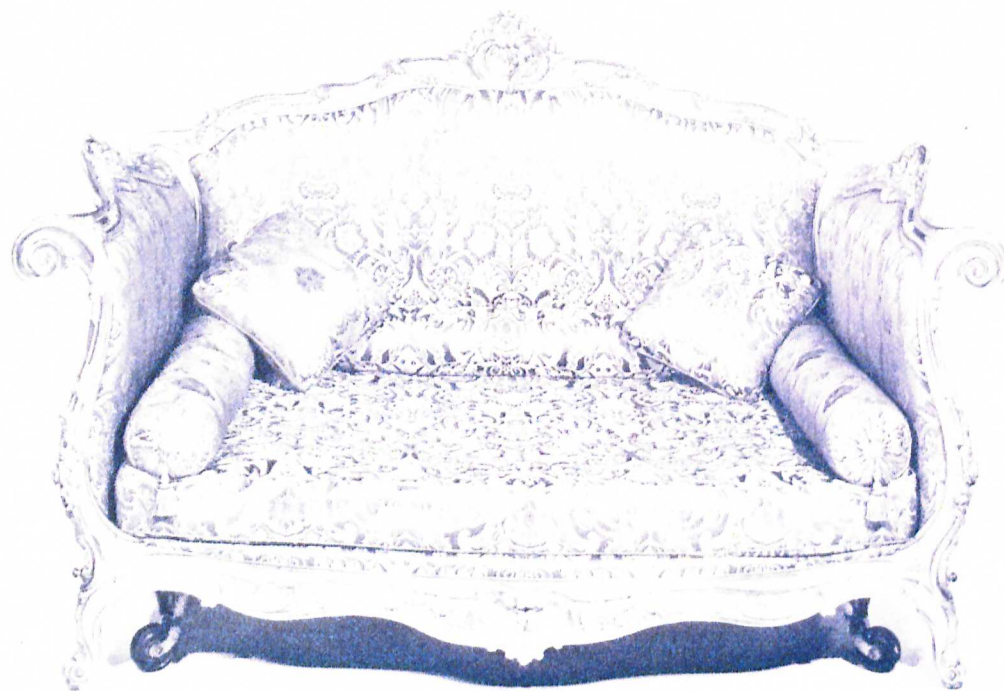


Figure 45. Bed, French (Paris), ca. 1760-1770. Gilded beechwood and modern silk upholstery, 174 x 264.8 x 188 cm. The Getty Museum.



Figure 46. *Long Shawl*, ca. 1835. Reproduced from Frank Ames, *The Kashmir Shawl and its Indo-French Influence*. 3rd ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1997) 176.



Figure 47. *Portrait of Countess Samoilova - Diagram.*

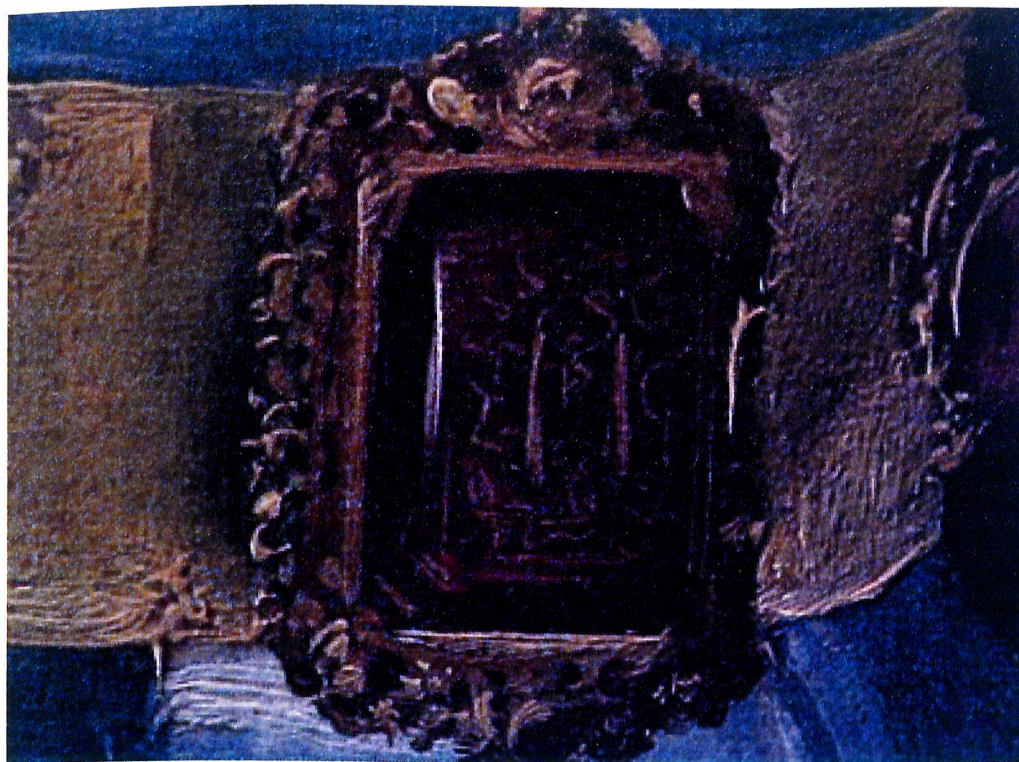


Figure 48. *Portrait of Countess Samoilova - Detail of Monogram on belt.*



Figure 49. M.I. Skotti, *Portrait of Count Kustaisov with his children*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 256 x 191 cm. Reproduced from *Pinakoteka* 8-9 (1999): 94.

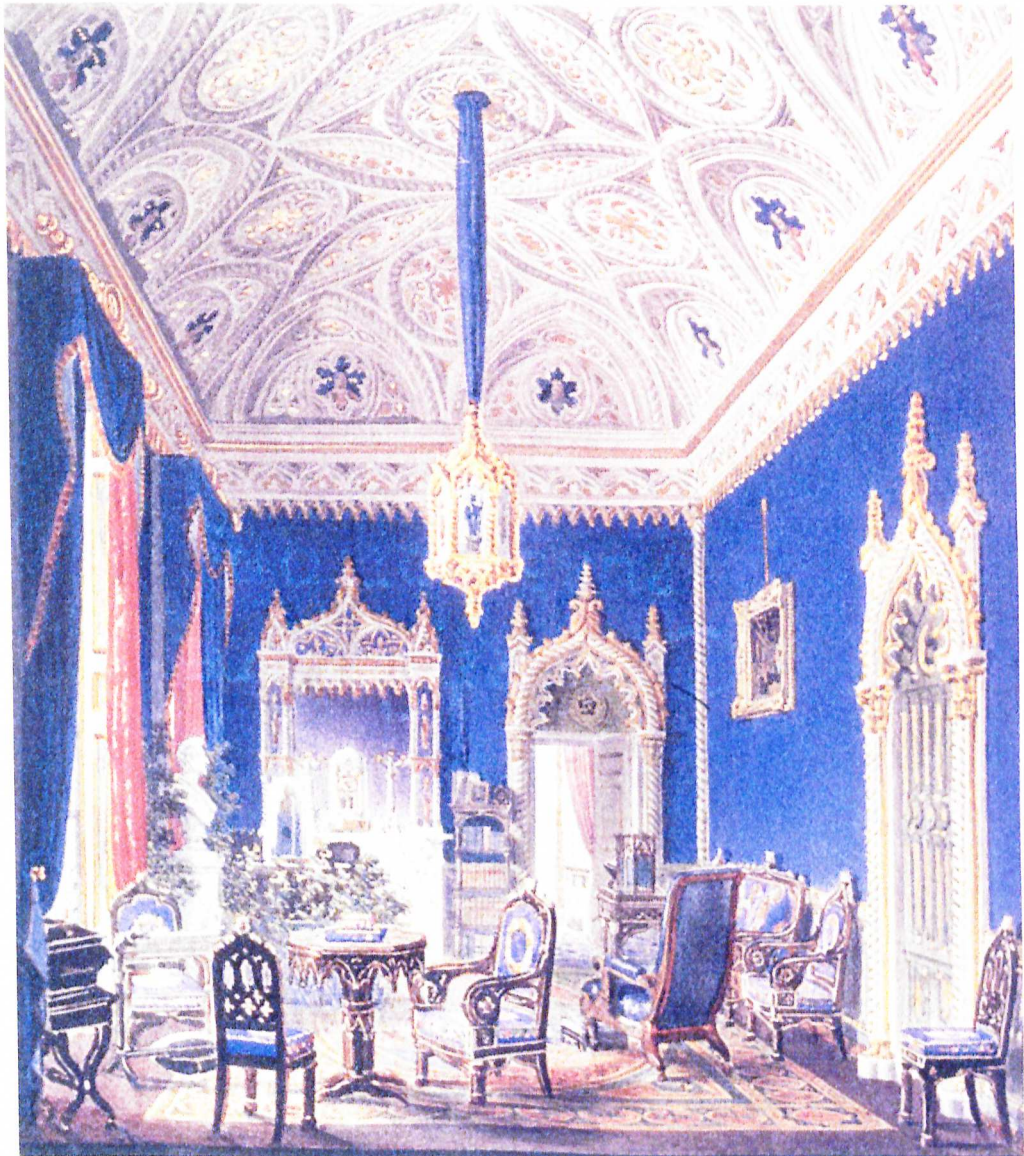


Figure 50. *A Drawing Room in Gothic Style; French, 1836.* Reproduced from John Morley. *The History of Furniture: Twenty-Five Centuries of Style and Design in the Western Tradition* (Boston, 1999) 242.