



Research

# Nannies and Governesses in Russia and Russian Literature of the 19th Century

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## Abstract:

This article describes the role of nannies and governesses in Russian noble families in the 18th and 19th centuries. It presents briefly the guidelines for the upbringing and education of children in the aristocratic families and the influence from European countries, mainly France and to some extent England. The Russian nobility hired foreign teachers, governesses and governors to raise their children in the "Western way". In contrast to them, the nannies who took care of the children in their earliest childhood, were Russian women, mostly of peasant origin. The article provides examples of the portrayal of governesses and nannies in the literary works of some famous Russian writers. It mentions some real nannies of future writers who played an important role in their lives and influenced them with their moral examples, as well as by telling fairy tales and stories. The article also touches on the topic of depictions of nannies in painting and sculpture.

## Keywords:

Governess; nanny; European influence; national culture; upbringing and education; Nobility; Russia of the 18th and 19th centuries

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. *The upbringing and education of noble children in Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries*

As Marina Surenskaja writes, upbringing and education in noble families depended mainly on the financial situation of the family and on the gender of the child, but the choice of schooling could also be influenced by the long distance from educational institutions. Boys were taught by home teachers or attended military schools, boys from wealthier families could also attend private fee-paying schools. Very important families could send their children to special elite schools, such as the famous Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum, which Pushkin, among others, attended. Girls were educated at home or in so-called institutions of virtuous virgins.

Governesses first appeared in Russia in the families of the tsars, as Olga Solodjankina writes, but in the period between the 18th and 19th centuries they were a common phenomenon in all noble families. The main educators of children in the 18th century were governors and governesses, who were mostly foreigners, writes Ljudmila Konšina (Konšina 2016). As Konšina writes, in the rich noble families of the 18th century, even two governors were hired, one of whom was usually French. One educator took care of the child's upbringing, while the other took care that the child studied and read books with him - this was usually a Frenchman who, of course, also taught French. For other subjects, they hired other teachers. The governess was responsible that the child was diligently learning with the teacher, whether it was a teacher of dance or other subjects.

The nobles who could afford such pedagogues were very well educated. They read a lot, even in foreign languages, and could recite a lot by heart, writes Ljudmila Konšina (Konšina 2016).

As Marina Surenskaja writes, in the first half of the 19th century it was very common for children to be educated at home. They could be taught by parents or older brothers or sisters; in this case, they remained poorly educated, even almost illiterate, writes Marina Surenskaja. In the first half of the 19th century, education got more value. The families often hired home teachers. There were very few Russian teachers, so the children were mainly taught by foreigners. Finding a good teacher was quite difficult. As we learn on the culture.ru portal, already in the time of Peter I, governesses and governors were often not properly educated to teach children. They were hired mainly because the children could learn a foreign language with a native speaker. Those teachers taught the children other subjects as well, even though they were not pedagogues. According to Ljudmila Konšina, it often happened that French immigrants looked for work in other professions, for example as cooks or hairdressers, and ended up working as governors, since the salary of governors was quite high even by the European standards of that time, and they got also a free accommodation and meals. As the aforementioned author writes, there were also excellent teachers among foreigners, but there were very few of them. The emphasis in domestic education was on learning a foreign language, French. They learned some geography and early history, but learning Russian grammar with foreign teachers was no longer possible.

As stated on the website culture.ru, the domestic education was regulated by a decree from 1755 by Empress Elizabeth I, when foreign teachers had to pass an exam at the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg or at Moscow University. The person who hired a governess without an exam was fined for not following this rule. As Ljudmila Konšina writes, at the end of the 18th century, home teachers or governors could already be high-quality educators. Such were also teachers in educational institutions for nobles.

According to Marina Surenskaja, girls' education was often deficient. In poor families, girls were mostly taught by their mothers or older sisters, while rich families hired governesses or even teachers to educate their daughters. A good education for noble girls meant good upbringing, i.e. correct behavior in society, and included playing of some instrument, singing, drawing and dancing. Of course, there were exceptions: existed well-educated girls from simpler families and perfectly educated aristocrats. Young noblewomen could only go out into the street accompanied by a person older than them or a governess. The rules of etiquette included, for instance, that they were not allowed to laugh loudly and

speak loudly or talk to strangers. The main goal of education was for noblewomen to behave well at dances and in society, while poorer girls were raised to be good housewives, the mentioned author emphasizes. As Ekaterina Kolosova writes, the first public educational institutions for girls appeared only in the 19th century; in 1858, public high schools appeared. (Kolosova, p. 68).

As Ekaterina Kolosova states, educators and teachers at the beginning of the 19th century were mainly church dignitaries, university professors (who were often foreigners), students or educated servants. Depending on social status and education, teachers or educators were divided into so-called home teachers, nannies and governesses. The title of teacher was higher than that of governor. The teacher had to be a graduate of a high school or faculty, or had to pass special exams to obtain the title of home teacher (Kolosova, p. 69). In 1834, the Native Teachers Ordinance was issued, requiring teachers to be Christians and resident in Russia. The emphasis in education was on foreign languages; subjects as history, geography, mathematics, physics were studied according to how important these subjects were to the child's parents and to the children themselves; religious education was also important (Kolosova, p. 70). Teaching was thus distinctly individual, adapted to each student individually. As Kolosova writes (p. 71), boys could be educated at home until the age of twenty, while girls could be educated at home until they got married. Teachers had to be supported financially throughout their lives. According to culture.ru, the governess stayed with the girl until she found a husband. If she did not marry, the governess could remain with her as a companion. From 1853, old governesses received small public pensions. The profession of governess was widespread in Russia until the revolution of 1917 (culture.ru).

As we learn from various sources, the parents handed over all their obligations to the children to the governesses. The nobles did not even see much their children, as they lived their cosmopolitan lives, and they did not even have the time or desire to raise with their children. Immediately after birth, the child was placed in the care of a nanny or a nurse and they assumed all maternal obligations towards the child.

The period of Tsar Peter I (reigned between 1672 and 1725) was a time of reforms. In 1703, Tsar Peter I., named also Peter the Great, had built from a swamp by the Neva River a city of St. Petersburg. The construction of the city, which was supposed to be a "window to the West", was based on European models. Saint Petersburg later became the Russian capital instead of Moscow (it remained a capital until 1918). (Wikipedia, Peter the Great). In that time the Russian nobility began to follow the European way of life and thinking. Many aristocrats also wanted to raise their children in a "Western" way and hired foreign governesses and governesses.

## 2. Governesses in Russian literature

### 2.1. European influence in the education in the work of Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev

The writer Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev, who spent a lot of time abroad, especially in Germany and France, was widely read and admired by his contemporaries, but at the same time he was also criticized. He was labeled as too much "European" writer, who even did not love much his homeland. As Blaž Podlesnik writes, Europe was for progressive-oriented intellectuals of the 19th century "a progressive model that Russia should follow"; on the contrary, conservative, "authentically Russian" oriented thinkers claimed that this very Europeanness "is the source of all problems" for Russia (Podlesnik 2024, p. 115). Dostoevsky wrote in his visionary essay about the World Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, which he visited, that for Russians Europe is a "land of holy wonders": a place where all Russians want to go. At the same time, Europe will never recognize Russia as a part of itself, because Russia, with all its Asian parts, is too different from Europe.

Turgenev in his novel *A House of Gentlefolk* described a noble family that raises its children with the help of foreign, European educators: »When the time came to teach him languages and music, Glafira Petrovna engaged, for next to nothing, an old maid, a Swede, with

*eyes like a hare's, who spoke French and German with mistakes in every alternate word, played after a fashion on the piano, and above all, salted cucumbers to perfection. In the society of this governess, his aunt, and the old servant maid, Vassilyevna, Fedya spent four whole years.» (Turgenev 1906, pp. 68-69).*

*»She spoke modestly of Paris, of her travels, of Baden [...] taking off her gloves, with her smooth hands, redolent of soap à la guimauve, she showed how and where flounces were worn and ruches and lace and rosettes.« (Turgenev 1906, p. 245). The child's father then decided to undertake the upbringing and declared to his wife: »I want above all to make a man, un homme, of him' he said to Glafira Petrovna, 'and not only a man, but a Spartan.' Ivan Petrovitch began carrying out his intentions by putting his son in a Scotch kilt; the twelve-year-old boy had to go about with bare knees and a plume stuck in his Scotch cap. The Swedish lady was replaced by a young Swiss tutor, who was versed in gymnastics to perfection. Music, as a pursuit unworthy of a man, was discarded. The natural sciences, international law, mathematics, carpentry, after Jean- Jacques Rousseau's precept, and heraldry, to encourage chivalrous feelings, were what the future 'man' was to be occupied with. He was waked at four o'clock in the morning, splashed at once with cold water [...] Ivan Petrovitch on his side wrote him instructions in French in which he called him mon fils and addressed him as vous. In Russian Fedya called his father thou but did not dare to sit down in his presence. The 'system' dazed the boy, confused and cramped his intellect [...]« (Turgenev 1906, pp. 70-71).*

## 2.2. Influence of Germany

Knowledge of foreign languages was considered to be part of education, so the nobles welcomed into their homes teachers who were native speakers of foreign languages. During the period of the reign of Peter I, German-speaking teachers were most valued. German governesses were said to be meticulous and practical in raising future mothers and wives who will be able to manage a household perfectly.

In his Writer's Diary for the year 1873, Dostoevsky named Turgenev's story Rudin to be the most German of all Turgenev's works. The main character Rudin loved German romantic poetry and philosophy and spent two years in Germany.

## 2.3. Influence of France

In the middle of the 18th century, during the reign of Catherine the Great (between 1762 and 1796), a fashion for everything French appeared. Catherine II. or Catherine the Great, a German on the Russian throne, was correspondance with Diderot, Voltaire and D'Alembert. She quickly learned Russian, read a lot and was fascinated by the European Enlightenment. (Wikipedia, Katarina Velika).

Many terms for luxury items used by aristocrats, such as jewelry, alcohol, elite clothing, in Russian are from French origin. As Olga Solodjankina writes, Paris was an aesthetic example not only for Russia, but also for Europe. As we learn on the culture.ru website, France became the leading model that the Russian nobility followed in their way of life, fashion, and literary taste. Every well-educated Russian nobleman had to master the French language. As Ljudmila Konšina points out, even at the beginning of the 19th century, children from noble families first learned to speak French, and only later Russian. It happened sometimes that nobles knew French better than Russian, as they thought in a foreign language (Konšina 2016).

In his story or novel Rudin, Turgenev distorted many quotations of the aristocrats' conversations in French and thereby wanted to show the poor knowledge of French in the Russian upper circles.

A typical Russian noblewoman writes Turgenev in his novel *Fathers and Sons*, Bazarov's mother Arina Vlasieva» [...] *in her youth she had been comely, and a player of the clavichord, and able to speak a little French« (Turgenev 1929, p. 165).*



A typical Russian noblewoman, fascinated by France, was Varvara Pavlovna from Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk*: she spoke French, and from her trip to France she brought a maid from Paris with her to Russia. She wrote a long letter in French to her husband Lavrecki. She read only French books: »George Sand drove her to exasperation, Balzac she respected, but he wearied her; in Sue and Scribe she saw great knowledge of human nature, Dumas and Féval she adored. In her heart she preferred Paul de Kock to all of them, but of course she did not even mention his name. To tell the truth, literature had no great interest for her.« (Turgenev 1906, p. 258). »[...] till a late hour of the night, the lofty apartments of the house and even the garden re-echoed with the sound of music, singing, and lively French talk.« (Turgenev 1906, p. 291).

Governesses and governors from France came to Russia. As Olga Solodjankina writes, governesses were mainly women. As we learn on the website culture.ru, French women were distinguished by good manners and good aesthetic taste, but they were quite beautiful, so Russian ladies were worried that they would not be a temptation for their husbands. For that reason noblewomen preferred to hire older governesses. Thus, in Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*, the husband of the Oblon family had a relationship with a French woman who worked in their house them as an educator. As Olga Solodjankina points out, French governesses were "a typical figure of the Russian noble family before the reforms in Russia."

In the novel *A House of Gentlefolk*, Turgenev portrayed the character of Liza, who was raised by a teacher from Paris, Mlle Maureaux, until she was ten years old. This French woman was »a tiny wrinkled creature with little bird-like ways and a bird's intellect In her youth she had led a very dissipated life, but in old age she had only two passions left — gluttony and cards. When she had eaten her fill, and was neither playing cards nor chattering [...] Either as a result of her frivolous youth or of the air of Paris, which she had breathed from childhood, a kind of cheap universal scepticism had found its way into her, usually expressed by the words: tout ça des betises. She spoke ungrammatically, but in a pure Parisian jargon, did not talk scandal and had no caprices — what more can one desire in a governess? Over Lisa she had little influence ; all the stronger was the influence on her of her nurse, Agafya Vlasjevna.« (Turgenev 1906, pp. 213-214). In this novel, we cannot read the most beautiful words about governesses. They were cold towards the pupils, so they did not stay in the best memories.

A governess in Turgenev's novel *Rudin*, » [...] Mile Boncourt, in spite of her forty years' residence in Russia understood Russian with difficulty« (Turgenev p. 90).

Governesses also appear in 20th-century prose, such as, for example, in Pasternak's novel *Doctor Zhivago*, the governess of Countess Zhabrinska's daughter, Mlle Fleury. Pasternak describes her as a »Gray-haired, pink-cheeked, and dishevelled [...] She told long stories in her broken Russian, swallowing the ends of her words in the French manner [...]. (Pasternak 1958, p. 212).

#### 2.4. Influence of England

The upper classes of the Russian nobility in the 18th and 19th centuries became enthusiastic about England, writes Olga Solodjankina. Russian nobles thus began to admire the English way of life, English parks, artists and writers. Most young Russians did not know real life in England, but they were fascinated by everything English: things, fashion, food, literature; they were also attracted by the "free English spirit" or dandies, writes the aforementioned author. An excerpt from Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk* depicts such a Russian nobleman who admires England - it was Ivan Petrovič, Fedja Lavrecki's father: »Ivan Petrovitch returned to Russia aft Anglomaniac. His short-cropped hair, his starched shirt-front, his long-skirted pea-green overcoat with its multitude of capes, the sour expression of his face, something abrupt and at the same time indifferent in his behaviour, his way of speaking through his teeth, his sudden wooden laugh, the absence of smiles, exclusively



*political or politico-economical conversation, his passion for roast beef and port wine — everything about him breathed, so to speak, of Great Britain.*» (Turgenev 1906, p. 64).

A hero from Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*, the nihilist Bazarov, mocks the obsession with England: »*In my room there is an English washstand, yet the door will not shut! But such things (English washstands I mean) need to be encouraged; they represent 'progress.'*« (Turgenev 1929, p. 21).

As it is written on the culture.ru portal, at the beginning of the 19th century, English governesses start to work as governesses in the aristocratic families. They were trying to raise Russian girls according to the example of English "Misses" and were never spoiling them. They were supposed to be typical "English ladies", such as the heroines of novels by Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters or Samuel Richardson, which English women liked to read. Often, English governesses were born in Russia and had no contact with England, and did not speak Russian well. Such a typical English governess, Miss Jackson, was portrayed by Pushkin in the story *The Squire's Daughter*.

An experience with the English governess was described in the memoirs of Sofia Vasilyevna Kovalevskaya, an excellent mathematician (born Korvin-Krukovskaya). As Lyudmila Saraskina writes, fifteen-year-old Sofia was in love with Dostoevsky, who read and praised her children's poems. Dostoevsky corresponded with her older sister Ana for almost a year, and he even desired to marry her, but she rejected him (Saraskina 2021, pp. 352-353). Kovalevskaya writes (quoting from: Solodjankina) that the English governess's daily schedule was quite strict. Sofia's brother had a Polish governor who was not as strict as the English lady. The girl got up early in the morning and after morning tea, music and other subjects were on the schedule. After the midday breakfast, there was an hour and a half long walk with the teacher, if it was warmer than ten degrees. After lunch, the pupil prepared for the next day's lessons and was all the time with the governess, who did not let her join the rest of the family in the afternoon meetings. According to Kovalevskaya's memoirs, the governess was strict and cold towards her. She focused only on raising the girl, because she was quite lonely in Russia, where she never really felt at home.

### 2.5. Russian teachers

According to culture.ru, in the 19th century, Russian pedagogues who had graduated from teacher training schools also began to be hired. Girls were prepared for this profession in special institutes. Mostly, those girls came from poor families and could earn good money as home teachers. They lived with families where they were employed, and their position was higher than that of servants, as they were educated and free women. Their job was to accompany their pupils all the time, take care of their development, bring them up and teach good behavior. They were also travelling with them and were even choosing books, which should be suitable for them. The governesses themselves were a model of behavior for their pupils and were constantly reminding them of the right behaviour.

In the Turgenev's novel *On The Eve*, there is a governess of the main character Elena. She »[...] *was a Russian, the daughter of a ruined bribe-taker, graduate of a Government Institute [...] This governess had been very fond of literature, and was herself in the habit of scribbling bad verses; she imbued Elena with a taste for reading [...]*« (Turgenev pp.46-47).

A famous example of a Russian governess in the literature is Dunya, a sister of Rodion Raskolnikov from Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*.

Many governesses and nannies appear in Chekhov's novels and plays. For example, in the novella *The Duel*: »*Marya Konstantinovna, who had been a governess in aristocratic families and who was an authority on social matters, said: "Oh yes! Would you believe me, my dear, at the*

*Garatynskys' I was expected to dress for lunch as well as for dinner, so that, like an actress, I received a special allowance for my wardrobe in addition to my salary.*" (Chekhov 1922, p. 37).

In Pasternak's famous novel *Doctor Zhivago*, Lara becomes an educator in the family of a great businessman Kologrivov. She has been their daughter Lipa's teacher for more than three years, and her parents and sister love her (Pasternak 1986, p. 115).

In the story *Nevsky Prospect*, Nikolai V. Gogol described how educators walked with their pupils on this famous street of St. Petersburg: »Governesses, pale English misses and rosy-cheeked Slav maidens, walk in stately fashion behind their lightsome, fidgety girls, commanding them to hold their heads high and backs straight; in other words, at this time Nevsky Prospect is a pedagogical thoroughfare.« (Gogol 1995, p. 5).

### 3. Russian nannies

#### 3.1. Roles of nannies

In contrast to the teachers, governors and governesses, mostly foreigners, who were often strict and cold towards the children, the nannies had a much greater influence on them. There were also men who raised young children. They were called дядьки (uncles) in Russian. Nannies were benevolent, warm, caring, loving, often wise and religious Russian women who sincerely loved children and were faithful to their families.

The nannies also introduced national culture to children. With the stories and fairy tales they were telling, they also influenced the literary work of many famous Russian writers and poets.

Usually, the nannies were poor peasant women who were very dedicated to their work, with which they could live without financial worries for their entire lives, since the nannies stayed with the family even after the children grew up. They could become nannies for the children of the next generation. Nannies were not servants, but were treated as part of the family.

There is a well-known true story about Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky's nanny, Alyona Frolovna, who wanted to donate all her savings when the Dostoevsky family's possessions burned down. Dostoevsky also remembered her as a teller of wonderful stories (Saraskina 2020, p. 59).

According to Marina Melija, nannies were a kind of intermediaries between children and parents - the parents brought up the children only with their presence; about everything else, education and health of the children, took care the nannies, who watched over them every moment of the day. That is why nannies were respected and appreciated by everyone. Children were thus more attached to their nannies than to their own mothers, as the nannies showed them sincere love, attention and care. Being a nanny was a vocation in the true sense of the word, or rather, for poor peasant women, a "gift of fate", as Melija writes. If a nanny had children of her own, they were like brothers and sisters of the other children, of whom she was taking care. This was the case, according to the aforementioned author, for example, for the children of the nanny of Tsar Nicholas I.

As Marina Melija writes, not only representatives of the elite had nannies, but also children in other families who could afford it.

In larger cities, there were even specialized four-year schools for nannies. In the 20th century, during the revolution of 1917, most nannies emigrated together with the families in which they were working, writes Marina Melija. Philosopher Nikolai Berdyaev wrote that nannies in Russia even represented a special social class (quoting from: Melija). The

tradition of nannies in Russia continues into the 21st century; in many well-to-do families nannies help to take care of the children.

### 3.2. Nannies in literary depictions of some Russian classics

#### 3.2.1. Nanny of Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin

The most famous nanny in Russian literature is certainly Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin's nanny, Arina Rodionovna. The poet mentioned his beloved nanny several times in his work; the poem 'Nanny' is a literary memorial to a dear person from the poet's childhood. He mentions his nanny with nostalgia in the poem 'Winter Evening', where he calls her »Sweetheart of my youthful springtime, Thou true-souled companion dear« (Pushkin, poets.org).

In Pushkin's novel in verse *Eugene Onegin*, the old nanny Filipyevna is Tatyana's confidant and advisor. Tatyana wants advice from her nanny's life experience; the nanny helps and supports her in difficult moments. In his work, Pushkin shows the spiritual connection between a person from a modest family (nanny) and an aristocrat.

#### 3.2.2 Nannies in the work of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov

From the literary work of Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, we can cite an example of a nanny from his story (according to some definitions, the only novel) *The Shooting Party*. Chekhov's dramas often feature nannies or governesses: in *The Cherry Orchard* there is a governess Charlotte Ivanovna, in *Three Sisters* a nurse, an 80-year-old woman called Anfisa, in *Uncle Vanya* there is an old nurse Marina. In *Three Sisters*, Natasha wants to banish the old nanny, saying she is useless, and treats her harshly.

#### 3.2.3. Nannies in Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk*

Turgenev in the novel *A House of Gentlefolk* describes life of a nanny Agafya Vlashevna. »This woman's story was remarkable.« (Turgenev 1906, p. 214). Agafya was Lisa's nanny, who took care of her from the age of five to eight and had a significant influence on the girl. »Lisa was at first frightened by the austere and serious face of her new nurse; but she soon grew used to her and began to love her.« [...] She was Afraid of her father; her feeling towards her mother was undefinable, she was not afraid of her, nor was she demonstrative to her; but she was not demonstrative even towards Agafya, though she was the only person she loved. Agafya never left her. It was curious to see them together. Agafya, all in black, with a dark handkerchief on her head, her face thin and transparent as wax, but still beautiful and expressive, would be sitting upright, knitting a stocking; Lisa would sit at her feet in a little arm-chair, also busied over some kind of work, and seriously raising her clear eyes, listening to what Agafya was relating to her. And Agafya did not tell her stories; but in even measured accents she would narrate the life of the Holy Virgin, the lives of hermits, saints, and holy men. She would tell Lisa how the holy men lived in deserts, how they were saved, how they suffered hunger and want, and did not fear kings, but confessed Christ [...] Lisa listened to her, and the image of the all-seeing, all-knowing God penetrated with a kind of sweet power into her very soul, filling it with pure and reverent awe; but Christ became for her something near, well-known, almost familiar. Agafya taught her to pray [...]« (Turgenev 1906, pp. 217-218). When three years later, the nanny Agafya was replaced by a French governess, »[...] the frivolous Frenchwoman, with her cold ways and exclamation, tout ça c'est des bêtises could never dislodge her dear nurse from Lisa's heart; the seeds that had been dropped into it had become too deeply rooted. Besides, though Agafya no longer waited on Lisa, she was still in the house and often saw her charge, who believed in her as before.« (Turgenev 1906, p. 219). Later, the old nanny went on a pilgrimage and, according to some rumors, stayed in a monastery. At the end of the novel, Lisa also goes to a monastery and becomes a nun.

#### 3.2.4. Nanny in *Oblomov* of Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov



The nannies influenced the children with the fairy tales and folk tales they were telling them. An example of such a nanny was Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov's nanny, Ana Mihailovna. He described his memories of her in a famous novel *Oblomov*. A characteristic of the hero Oblomov is that he spent his whole life behind the stove and did not work. *»On a long winter's evening he was pressing close to his nurse, and she was whispering of some unknown country where neither cold nor darkness were known, and where miracles took place, and where rivers ran honey and milk, and where no one did anything the year round [...]* (Goncharov 1915, p. 109). So artfully did the nurse or tradition eliminate from the story all resemblance to everyday life that the boy's keen intellect and imagination, fired by the device, remained enthralled until, in later years, he had come even to man's estate. As a matter of fact, the tale which the nurse thus lovingly related was the legend of the fool Emel — that clever, biting satire upon our forefathers and, it may be, also upon ourselves. [...] (Goncharov 1915, p. 110). Russian folk tale about the fool Emel, who is extremely lazy, but managed to catch a pike, which gave him magical power: everything he commands is fulfilled. (Wikipedia, At the Pike's Behest).

*To the same story had his father and his grandfather listened as, shaped according to the stereotyped version current throughout antiquity, it had issued from the mouths of male and female nurses through the long course of ages and of generations. (Goncharov 1915, p. 111). With a simplicity, yet a sincerity, worthy of Homer, with a lifelike similitude of detail and a power of clear-cut relief that might have vied with the great Greek poet's, she fired the boy's intellect and imagination to a love for that Iliad which our heroes founded during the dim ages when man had not yet become adapted to the sundry perils and mysteries of nature and of life — when still he trembled before werewolves and wood demons, and sought refuge with protectors like Alesha Popovitch (one of the three brave knights from Russian folklore (Wikipedia, Alyosha Popovich, At the Pike's Behest.) from the calamities which surrounded him — when air and water and forest and field alike were under the continued sway of the supernatural. (Goncharov 1915, pp. 11-112). as little Oblomov listened to his nurse's legends concerning the Golden Fleece, the great Cassowary Bird, and the cells and secret dungeons of the Enchanted Castle, he became more and more fired to the idea that he too was destined to become the hero of doughty deeds. Tale succeeded to tale, and the nurse -pursued her narrative with such ardour and vividness and attractiveness of description that at times her breath choked in her throat. For she too half-believed the legends which she related; so that, during the telling of them, her eyes would shoot fire, her head shake with excitement, and her voice attain an unwonted pitch [...]*« (Goncharov 1915, pp.114-115).

### 3.2.5. Similarities and differences of nannies in Russian literature

Literary depictions of nannies in the quoted cases have a different function. For the most part, the characters of nannies are personifications of goodness, love and loyalty, as is evident in Pushkin, who even dedicated a poem to his nanny. Nanny Filipyevna in *Eugene Onegin* is a confidant and moral support for the heroine in difficult moments.

In Chekhov's drama *Three Sisters*, the nanny is something left over from the past and is no longer necessary in the present, as the heroine wants to kick the old woman out of the house.

In Turgenev's *A House of Gentlefolk*, the nanny is a moral example that even seals the life path of the heroine.

In Goncharov's novel *Oblomov*, nanny connects different generations with the help of folk tradition and influences the fate of the hero, to whom she appears in his dreams as a precious memory from his childhood.

### 3.2.6. Examples of depictions of nannies in sculpture and painting

In addition to literature, nannies were also depicted in other arts. Famous are monuments to Pushkin's nanny Arina Rodionovna, there are several in various Russian cities, and new ones appear from time to time. Thus, as we read in the online newspaper "Родина" (Cygankova, 2024), in October 2024, a new monument to Arina Rodionovna was erected in the Pushkin Mountains in the Pskov region (these are three estates, Mikhaylovskoye, Trigorskoye and Petrovskoye, which are connected with the life of the great poet, and the Svyatogorsky Monastery, where he is buried).

Nowadays, there is a museum - reserve of Aleksandr Sergeyevich Pushkin (source: Guz-eva, 2020). Arina Rodionovna in this statue is sitting on a bench, with a cat next to her.

In painting, there is a well-known portrait of the Russian impresario in Paris, Sergei Diaghilev, with his nanny. This portrait was painted in 1906 by Léon Bakst, who created scenes and costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Léon Bakst (1866-1924), Russian Jewish painter who studied in Paris between 1893 and 1896. After returning to Russia, he was a member of the "World of Art" group, which published a newspaper of the same name with the aim of introducing new trends in art. In 1909, Bakst returned to Paris, where he began creating exotic, colorful sets and costumes for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes (cited from: Kuiper). In the foreground of the picture is a portrait of Sergei Diaghilev, and behind him in the background on the left is his old nanny (see Virtual Russian Museum).

Among the paintings of governesses in Russian art there is a well-known painting by Vasily Perov 'Arrival of a New Governess in a Merchant House' from the Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery.

## 4. Conclusion

Nannies and governesses had an important role in the upbringing and education of the children of nobility in Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries. While the governors and governesses were generally foreigners, mostly strict and unyielding, the nannies were Russian women who were distinguished by kindness, indulgence, love for children, wisdom and a sense of belonging to their families. The task of governesses was primarily to teach a foreign language, their mother tongue, and to remind the children of the rules of etiquette. The nannies, on the other hand, had an important influence on children, because they were like their second mothers, who took upon themselves parental responsibilities and raised kids with love, indulgence and benevolence. They were able to tell wonderful stories.

Governesses and nannies were often mentioned by writers and poets in their works. The characters of the nannies, with their love, loyalty and self-sacrifice, reflect the character traits of real nannies, who played an important role in shaping the characters of future writers and poets.

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