

**A WORTHY FRIEND OF TOMIRIS: THE LIFE OF
PRINCESS EKATERINA ROMANOVNA DASHKOVA**

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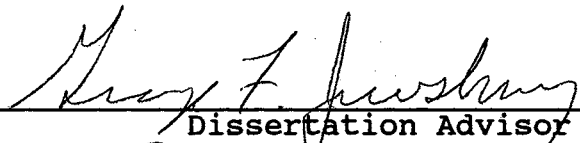

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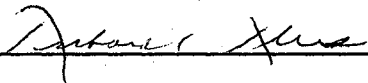
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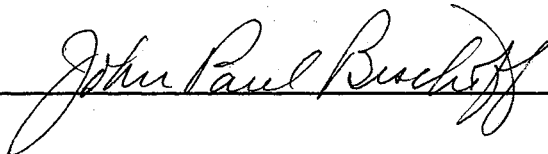
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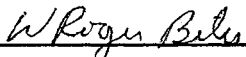
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PREFACE

March 17, 1993 marked the 250th anniversary of the birth of one of the most famous and least understood women of the eighteenth century, Princess Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova (1743-1810). Toward the end of Dashkova's life, a young Irishwoman named Catherine Wilmot who enjoyed an extended visit with her issued the following warning,

I have since I came here often thought what a task it would be to attempt to draw the Character of the Princess Daschkaw! I for my part think it would be absolutely impossible. Such are her peculiarities & inextricable varieties that the result would only appear like a Wisp of Human Contradictions...But she has as many Climates to her mind, as many Splinters of insulation, as many Oceans of agitated uncertainty, as many Etnas of destructive fire and as many Wild Wastes of blighted Cultivation as exists in any quarter of the Globe! For my part I think she would be most in her element at the Helm of the State, or Generalissimo of the Army, or Farmer General of the Empire. In fact she was born for business on a large scale which is not irreconcilable with the Life of a Woman who at 18 headed a Revolution & who for 12 years afterwards govern'd an Academy of Arts & Sciences...¹

Although Dashkova may have been born for life on a grand scale, in fact, most of her life was spent out of the public eye occupied in more traditional pursuits as a

¹The Marchioness of Londonderry and Harford Montgomery Hyde, eds., The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1934), 211.

daughter, wife, and mother. Too often Dashkova's brief but brilliant appearances in public life have blinded observers to the larger reality of her life viewed in its entirety. Dashkova's whole life cannot be understood simply in terms of her public accomplishments. It must be viewed in the context of the family she grew up in as a girl and the one she created as a woman during a culturally and politically turbulent era of Russian history.

Dashkova was born into the powerful Vorontsov family and married into an old Muscovite family. In her youth she both witnessed and participated in court politics during the reign of her godmother, Empress Elizabeth (1740-1762), and Peter III (1762). Dashkova married Prince Mikhail Dashkov in 1759 and they had three children. Their brief marriage ended with the Prince's death in 1764. In 1759 Dashkova also befriended Catherine the Great (1762-1796) when she was still Grand Duchess and in 1762 participated in the coup which brought her to the throne. After Catherine's coronation this outspoken woman quickly fell out of favor because she became a focal point for criticism against the new Empress and the rising influence of the Orlov family. For almost two decades following the coup, Dashkova did not play an active public role. After her husband's death Dashkova chose not to remarry and focussed all of her energies on rearing her children and managing her family's estates. In the 1770s she was allowed to leave the country

and traveled extensively in part for her children's education. While traveling through Europe Dashkova formed lasting connections with the European intellectual community. For example, she sufficiently impressed Voltaire and Diderot that they wrote laudatory letters about her to Catherine helping to repair that relationship. Upon her return to Russia Dashkova regained the favor of the Empress and was made Director of the Academy of Sciences and President of the Russian Academy. Dashkova's relationship with the Empress and the major European intellectual figures of the eighteenth century enabled her to play a formative role as both patron and participant during critical times in the political and intellectual life of Russia. The years Dashkova spent out of the public sphere functioning primarily as a wife and mother in a period of rapid cultural change are equally important for an understanding of eighteenth century Russian women's lives. Because of the overwhelming stature of Catherine, however, relatively little study has been given to the life of this dynamic woman whose activities were known from Moscow to Edinburgh. There is a need to begin to reexamine Dashkova's life in light of the recent scholarship and changing attitudes toward women in the decades since H. M. Hyde's work, The

Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova, was published in 1935.²

The Russian medievalist Charles Halperin has stated that the hallmark of the best research in women's history is that it sheds light on broader questions.³ Dashkova's life provides valuable insight into Russian social, intellectual and political development in the last half of the eighteenth century. Dashkova's public life is unique and sets her apart from other Russian women and in some ways from the Russian nobility in general. However, in some significant respects Dashkova represents important elements of the Russian nobility's life and thought in this period.

Although French was her first language growing up in St. Petersburg, Dashkova was no francophile. And, although she traveled widely in Western Europe, she was no westernizer. Throughout her life Dashkova combined a great admiration for English political and economic traditions with a deep love and pride for her Russian heritage. This blend of Anglomania and nascent slavophilism underpinned her private choices in matters such as the education of her son and in her public activities as the director of the Academy of Science and the Russian Academy. Dashkova is representative of the educated eighteenth-century Russian

²H. M. Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1935).

³Charles Halperin, "Women in Medieval Russia," Russian History 10 (1983): 139.

noble who felt little or no conflict between learning from the strengths of other countries and taking pride in Russia's own traditions, customs, and language. This mirrors the cosmopolitan nature of eighteenth century European aristocracy as a whole. Dashkova did not simply assume foreign customs and ideas were superior and slavishly copy them as Russians were often accused of doing by contemporaries and historians. Throughout her travels, the management of her family and estates, and the directorates of the academies, Dashkova sought to understand and use the knowledge and methods found in other countries, particularly England, for the strengthening and glorification of Russia and her Empress.⁴

Although her family and the family she married into were wealthy and powerful, Dashkova's life was not without genuine hardship. A second aspect of Russian life that can be studied in Dashkova's life is the vulnerability of the nobility to the whims of the Russian autocrats. From her mother's narrow escape to Dashkova's own exile by Paul I, the extreme insecurity of the nobles' position in Russia is

⁴A. G. Cross, "Russian Perceptions of England, and Russian National Awareness at the End of the Eighteenth and the Beginning of the Nineteenth Centuries" Slavic and Eastern European Review 61 (January 1983): 89 - 106. Dashkova is the only woman Cross mentions among many Russian nobles who "manifested that blend of Slavophilism and admiration for England which was a characteristic of a certain type of Russian at this period." However, he does not explain the origins of her admiration for England or its impact on her family life.

obvious. Dashkova experienced the greatest possible extremes of notoriety and obscurity usually as a result of her relationship with a Russian ruler. Throughout her Memoirs, Dashkova returns time and again to financial problems. Although her references to poverty may seem exaggerated, the impact of the indebtedness endemic among the Russian nobility who were required to maintain lavish homes in both capitals and country estates is clearly seen in Dashkova's life. Daily, nagging financial worries were not the only forms of insecurity the Russian nobility faced. Even under a benevolent despot the lack of a constitution or guarantees of basic rights despite Catherine the Great's Charter of the Nobility meant the ever present possibility falling out of favor and subsequent social ostracism, confiscation of property or even exile. Dashkova and other close members of her family experienced all of these fates and often described them in very clear and moving terms.

Finally although Dashkova achieved a degree of public prominence unique for a woman, she spent most of her time and energy struggling to fulfill her obligations to the Vorontsovs and the Dashkovs. A final theme that runs through Dashkova's life is the toll taken by the demands of court life and the nobility's insecurity on Russian women and children. As a child Dashkova was left in the care of her maternal grandmother so that her parents could meet the demands of court life in St. Petersburg. Much of Dashkova's

adult life was spent simply caring for her children which included managing the estates that formed their inheritance and their major source of security. Dashkova's public and private lives were often at odds. Involvement in Court life required great sacrifices of time, energy, and financial resources which could have been devoted to her family. Dashkova was constantly challenged with coordinating her family responsibilities with her public life. Family tragedy or controversy which could not be mitigated by imperial favor often accompanied her periods of fame. The times of greatest personal satisfaction were often periods when her relationship to Court life was distant.

Dashkova's life is often viewed solely as that of a public figure functioning in the context of her relationship with Catherine the Great.⁵ Although Dashkova's relationship with Catherine II was certainly central to her public achievements, that part of her life can only be seen clearly in light of her whole life which included many other deep attachments and independent accomplishments. Viewed in its entirety Dashkova's life provides valuable insight into the turbulent period between Peter the Great and Catherine

⁵The only book written about Dashkova in English embodies this approach from title to conclusion. See H. Montgomery Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov (London: Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1935). The most recent Soviet biography of Dashkova is similar in its emphasis on her public life often in all capital letters with exclamation marks. See L. Ia. Lozinskaia, Vo Glave Dvuk Akademii (Moscow: Akademii Nauk, 1978).

the Great and the dramatic changes which occurred in Russia during the reigns of Paul I (1796-1801) and Alexander I (1801-1825). Her life demonstrates the attitudes of many Russian nobles toward their own country and the rest of the world. As a woman, Dashkova's life, in particular makes clear the toll on women and their families taken by the ups and downs in the fortunes of the eighteenth-century Russian nobility. Although Catherine the Great or Voltaire or the prejudices of historians in a variety of fields frequently overshadow her, the life of Princess Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova deserves reassessment.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the people who assisted me with this dissertation and during my coursework at Oklahoma State University. In particular, I wish to thank my major advisor, Dr. George Jewsbury for his encouragement and direction. I also appreciate the essential goodwill extended to me by the other members of my committee both past and current.

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

In 1840 Alexander Herzen recorded this thought in his reminiscences about his wife,

Altogether women's development is a mystery; there is nothing: just dress and dances, mischievous back-biting and novel-reading, making eyes and shedding tears--and all at once there appears a titanic will, mature thought and colossal intelligence. The young girl carried away by her passions vanishes, and before you stands a Theroigne de Mericourt, the beauty of the tribune, swaying multitudes of the people, or an eighteen-year-old Princess Dashkov, sword in hand, on horseback, in the midst of a mutinous crowd of soldiers.¹

This statement, as flattering as it is, typifies the problems with much of what has been written about Princess Dashkova and particularly about her early life. First, she was not the Amazon depicted by Herzen. Second, her own development was not really a mystery. The remarkable family into which Countess Ekaterina Romanovna Vorontsova was born and the major events that shaped her childhood clearly provided the foundation for her mature beliefs and actions.

During the first eighteen years of Dashkova's life the outlines of the qualities that would characterize her life

¹Herzen, My Past and Thoughts, 2: 449.

began to emerge. From her own early childhood experiences and what she learned of her mother's life, Dashkova knew the insecurity of the nobility in Russia and the debilitating impact this had on noble families. In Dashkova this produced a tendency to be deeply devoted and intensely loyal to those closest to her. In middle childhood in the home of her uncle, Chancellor M. I. Vorontsov, Dashkova became interested in the world beyond Russia--particularly England. In early adolescence this interest was strengthened through extensive reading of the major works of the Enlightenment in which England's constitutional government was praised. As a result, Dashkova developed a very idealistic view of England as a peaceful and secure place and dreamed of going there. When Dashkova married at seventeen, she began to discover the riches of her own country, its language and customs outside of St. Petersburg. Therefore, by 1761 nascent Slavophilism, Anglomania, and an awareness of the tenuous nature of noble fortunes in Russia had become basic elements in Dashkova's view of life and the turbulent world around her.

The period between the death of Peter the Great in 1725 and the accession of Catherine the Great in 1762 is often described as the "Era of Palace Coups." Noble fortunes rose and fell rapidly as rulers and their favorites changed at a dizzying pace. The dynastic struggles of this period dramatically affected the families of both Dashkova's mother and

father. When Peter the Great (1682-1725) decreed that the Tsar had the power to choose his own successor and then died before exercising that power, Russia plunged into a period when seven rulers came to the throne through a combination of lineage, chance, court intrigue, and foreign meddling. Catherine I (1725 -1727) succeeded her husband, Peter I. Her death in 1727 brought Peter's grandson, Peter II (1727-1730) to the throne. The Dolgorukii family dominated this young emperor during his brief reign which ended in his death in 1730. In the crisis that followed, Russia's Supreme Privy Council offered the throne to Ivan V's daughter, Anna of Courland, believing that she could be easily dominated. Although Anna Ivanovna (1730-1740) initially accepted the "Conditions" imposed by the Council, she quickly asserted herself as an autocrat. Her favorite, Biron, dominated Russian affairs throughout her ten years of rule. Nationalists view Anna's reign as a terrible time for their country as German favorites controlled and exploited Russia.² The reigns of Peter II and Anna were a critical period for Dashkova's mother's family and the events of this period make very clear the extreme insecurity of even the greatest and most wealthy Russian families.

The Dolgorukii family supported Peter II's traditional claim to the throne and dominated his reign. Dashkova's

²David MacKenzie and Michael W. Curran, A History of Russia, The Soviet Union, and Beyond (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 260-263.

mother, Marta Ivanovna Surmine (1718-1745), was the daughter of one of the wealthiest grain merchants in the Empire. Although Peter the Great confiscated her father's property because of alleged speculation, he managed to leave his wife and children very well off and arranged the marriage of his daughter to Prince Yuri Dolgorukii. The marriage would have been a tremendous combination of economic and political power; however, it was shortlived. The Dolgorukii family was blamed for the death of Peter II and implicated in a plot to forge a will passing the throne to Peter II's fiancée, a member of their family. Empress Anna banished the whole family to Siberia for life. However, Dashkova's grandmother petitioned the Empress for a divorce for her daughter and it was readily granted. This act spared Dashkova's mother a life in exile.³ Years later when Empress Elizabeth recalled the Dolgorukiis from exile they visited Chancellor M. I. Vorontsov's home to thank him for his advocacy of their cause. Dashkova grew up with this striking image of the extreme disparity of fortunes possible for nobles in Russia. As Martha and Catherine Wilmot noted later:

Their gratitude for such a blessing as Liberty and all that made life itself desirable which they owed alone to Count Worontzow (for Elizth was not inclin'd to favor them) soon brought them to his House with hearts over-

³Arkhiiv kniaza Vorontsova, ed. P. Bartenev (Moscow: A. I. Mamontova and K. Bolshaia Dmitrovka, 1870-1895), (hereafter abbreviated AKV) 31: 3.

flowing with gratitude. The ci-devant Mademoiselle Surmine was present at their unexpected entrance & amongst them instantly perceiv'd her Husband who recogniz'd her quickly. A mutual sensation of embarrassment was the only result of this meeting. She was happy in her 2d Marriage, & had he wish'd to reclaim her he had no right, having been dead in Law.⁴

Once free from the disgrace of the Dolgorukiis Marta Ivanovna was married to Roman Ilarionovich Vorontzov in 1736.⁵

The significance of Dashkova's mother being able to remarry and produce children who became some of the most important political and intellectual figures of late eighteenth-century Russia is much clearer when compared with the other possibilities for nobles dependent on the whim of the autocrat. In striking comparison to the fate of Dashkova's mother is the situation of the other famous female memoirist of the eighteenth century, Natalia Borisovna Dolgorukaia. This young woman also came from a very wealthy family and was, therefore, viewed as an advantageous match for another of the Dolgorukii Princes. However, less than a month after her betrothal Peter II unexpectedly became ill and died. As previously mentioned, the Dolgorukiis were disgraced and sent to Siberia. As Martha Wilmot described it, "a husband's & Wife's wealth being always distinct in Russia, the banishment of a husband

⁴The Russian Journals, 321-322.

⁵Sbornik Starinnykh Bumag, Khraniashchikhsia v muzee P. I. Shchukina (Moscow: n.p., 1901), 9: 49.

& confiscation of his property affects the Wife in nothing but what her heart suggests." ⁶ For Natalia Borisovna Dolgorukaia, who had no parents to petition or guide her, this meant following her new husband and his family to years of hardship in Siberia. Her husband was tortured and eventually executed. Her petition, unlike Marta Surmine's, was to request that she know what had become of her husband and be allowed to enter a convent if he was dead. She was allowed to return to Moscow in 1740. She postponed her entrance to a convent to raise her two sons born in exile. She quickly became a symbol of saintly, sacrificial, Russian womanhood.⁷

The lessons from this period in her mother's life that Dashkova were taught and recounted in her own memoirs and conversations further emphasize the vulnerability of the nobility to the whims of the Empress Anna. Dashkova seemed particularly sensitive to the possibility of personal humiliation for a woman by a ruler. Since Catherine the Great rewarded Dashkova for her contribution to the coup that put her on the throne by making her a lady-in-waiting, the images that Dashkova carried throughout her life of the treatment possible for women holding that post are significant. According to Dashkova, the Empress Anna was

⁶The Russian Journals, 323.

⁷The Memoirs of Princess Natal'ja Borisovna Dolgorukaja, ed. Charles E. Townsend (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1977), 1 - 31.

particularly fond of cruel practical jokes played on even those closest to her. On one occasion a lady-in-waiting requested permission to make a pilgrimage and it was granted. The Empress then ordered that she be treated kindly and shown all the apartments of the church including the room where torture took place. She also ordered that the lady be given a light flogging and required to sign a promise never to reveal that this had occurred. According to Dashkova, the Empress then amused herself for some time by bringing up the visit and asking the lady about the time she had there.⁸ Anna also frequently called one of her favorite ladies-in-waiting to her apartments to entertain her with conversation. The lady was never allowed to sit in the Empress's presence despite the terrible swelling that she suffered in her legs. On one occasion the pain was so obvious that the Empress finally allowed her to lean on a table, but only on the condition that one of the maids stand between them so that the Empress could feign ignorance of this disrespect.⁹ Later, Dashkova's mother was the object of Anna's abuse. The Empress decided that she wanted to see a Russian dance performed and summoned Marta Ivanovna and three other beautiful young women to her apartments. The Empress so intimidated the women, however, that they trembled violently that and were unable to perform very

⁸The Russian Journals, 104.

⁹Ibid, 348.

well. This angered the Empress and she slapped them. They continued dancing almost dead on their feet from anxiety and fatigue until she ordered them to stop.¹⁰ Dashkova entered society under the influence of the images of the most powerful, wealthy, and even beautiful women in her country being subjected to terror and humiliation.

During this difficult time, Dashkova's mother established a very different sort of relationship with the daughter of Peter the Great, the future Empress Elizabeth (1740-1762). As Dashkova described the situation at the time of her birth,

The Empress Elizabeth had just returned from Moscow where she had been for her coronation. She held me at the baptismal font, while the Grand Duke, known afterwards under the name of Emperor Peter III, was my god-father. This honour was not granted by the Empress because of her family connection with my uncle the Grand Chancellor, who was married to Her Majesty's first cousin, rather it was due to her friendship with my mother who with the greatest tact, zeal and, I may say, generosity, supplied the Empress--then still a Princess living in straitened circumstances at the Court of the Empress Anne--with whatever was necessary for her household and her dresses of which she was very fond.¹¹

Although Dashkova may have overstated her mother's importance, this close relationship with Elizabeth Petrovna certainly benefitted the situation of the whole Vorontsov family and she was remembered fondly for it.¹² Unfortunate-

¹⁰Ibid, 348 - 349.

¹¹Dashkova, Memoirs 23.

¹²AKV, 1: 12.

ly, Marta Ivanovna's second marriage lasted nine years. She and Roman Vorontsov had five children: Maria born 1737, Elizaveta born 1739, Alexander born 1741, Ekaterina born 1743 and Semen born 1744. Dashkova's mother died on April 19, 1745 from typhoid fever.¹³

Although there had been a Vorontsov at the Muscovite court of Ivan the Terrible, his line died out in the sixteenth century.¹⁴ During the eighteenth century a new Vorontsov family rose to prominence in the Russia ruled from St. Petersburg. Ilarion Gavrilovich Vorontsov was a prominent provincial official. He and his wife provided their sons, Roman, Mikhail, and Ivan, with a traditional education at home with private tutors and managed to secure Roman Larionovich a place in the Izmailovski Guards regiment created by Peter I. The family's position was secured, however, in 1740. The Empress Anna died in October leaving her favorite, Biron, as regent to the infant, Ivan VI. This situation only lasted three weeks after Ivan VI's mother, Anna Leopoldovna, replaced Biron as Regent. During this woman's regency, German favorites and foreign ambassadors who fought to control Russia outraged Russian nobles.

¹³John T. Alexander, "Roman Larionovich Vorontsov", in The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History, ed. Joseph L. Wiczyński (Academic International Press, 1978), 43: 55-56.

¹⁴L. Hamilton Rhineland, "Mikhail Illarionovich Vorontsov", in The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History, 43: 48.

Through their participation in the coup that ended the regency and brought Peter the Great's daughter, Elizabeth, to the throne, the Vorontsovs became one of the most powerful noble families in Russia. Throughout Elizabeth's reign, the Vorontsovs' honors, position, and influence increased.¹⁵

The demands of court life also increased for the Vorontsovs and these demands had an impact on their family life. Like many other Russian noble children, as an infant, Dashkova was sent to live with her maternal grandmother so her parents would be free to fulfill their social and political obligations in the capital. Therefore, Dashkova never really knew her mother. After the death of Dashkova's mother, her father had several mistresses and maintained very little interest in his children. Dashkova did not even enjoy any of her mother's wealth. Although she had heard of dresses decorated with pints of pearls, neither she nor her sisters ever saw them as her father spent everything on his mistresses.¹⁶ His children were scattered among those

¹⁵John T. Alexander, "Roman Larionovich Vorontsov", 55-57.

¹⁶The Russian Journals, 158-159. The reference to "pints" of pearls may or may not have been an exaggeration. Martha Wilmot confessed that she had become convinced that jewels, particularly diamonds, must have been much less expensive in Russia than in England because Russian women wore so many. She hoped to purchase gifts of jewelry to take back to Ireland and was very disappointed to find out that, in fact, jewelry cost just as much in Russia as it did in her own country.

willing to take them in. Dashkova's sisters lived at Court with the Empress; Semen lived with their grandfather for a time; and only Alexander lived with his father until sent to boarding school.¹⁷ According to Dashkova, it was out of gratitude to her mother that her uncle, Chancellor Mikhail Vorontsov, took on the responsibility of rearing her. And it is obvious from the way she describes the situation in her that she was not entirely comfortable with it:

the Grand Chancellor, who was my father's eldest brother, removed me from my grandmother's loving care and made me share in the education of his only daughter, who afterwards became Countess Stroganov. The same room, the same masters, even dresses cut from the same cloth, all in fact should have made us into two perfectly similar individuals; and yet never have two people been so different at all various periods of their lives. (Those who claim to know all about education, please note; also those who want to impose their ideas and their theories in connection with a subject so precious and so decisive for human happiness, and yet so little known, because a single brain cannot comprehend it in its entirety with all its numerous ramifications.)¹⁸

¹⁷The basic elements of this arrangement are confirmed by Alexander Vorontsov's autobiographical essay. He does not, however, emphasize his mother's importance to the family's position as Dashkova does. AKV, 5: 105-108.

¹⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 24. According to Max Okenfuss in his article, "Popular Educational Tracts in Enlightenment Russia: A Preliminary Survey," Canadian-American Slavic Studies 14 (Fall 1980), 311-130, the major educational theorists of the time such as Fenelon, Comenius and Locke were widely known in Russia. It is interesting to note that Catherine the Great in her own Memoirs also felt free to criticize the methods used in her early training. See Memoirs of Catherine the Great, trans. Katharine Anthony, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 4, 7.

The nine years Dashkova spent in her uncle's home included a combination of indulgence and neglect. As noted previously, by her own account, nothing was spared to provide for her education and material needs. Dashkova's claim that she and the Grand Duchess Catherine were the only two women in the Empire who did any serious reading was only a slight exaggeration. Despite proposals for female education by Peter the Great's advisors, there were no state institutions for educating Russian girls until Catherine became Empress. The Vorontsovs were among the first noble families to provide their girls with foreign tutors. However, as Dashkova complained, the education these tutors offered girls was little more than foreign languages and good manners.¹⁹ As she described it many years later,

My uncle spared nothing to give us the best masters, and according to the ideas of the time we received the best education; for we had a perfect knowledge of four languages, particularly French; we danced well and drew a little; a State Councilor taught us Italian and Mr. Bekhteyev gave us Russian lessons whenever we felt like it; we were attractive to look at and our manners were lady-like. Everyone had to agree that our education left nothing to be desired. And yet, what was done for the improvement of our hearts and minds? Nothing at all.²⁰

To supplement her education, Dashkova was provided with pocket-money which she spent primarily on books. By

¹⁹J. L. Black, "Educating Women in Eighteenth Century Russia: Myths and Realities," Canadian Slavonic Papers, 10 (March 1978): 23-26.

²⁰Dashkova, Memoirs, 24.

the time she married she had acquired over nine hundred volumes. Her bibliomania was so well known that the Empress Elizabeth's favorite, Ivan Shuvalov, helped her to subscribe to Diderot's Encyclopedia and other imported works.²¹

Her uncle, surprisingly, also gave Dashkova access to state papers in his possession. From them she caught glimpses of exotic foreign countries such as Persia and China and of the intrigues of the powerful. She was also allowed to interrogate with childlike curiosity all the visitors to the Grand Chancellor's home.²² From all this information, Dashkova developed a desire to travel particularly to England.²³ In one conversation with an English Ambassador Dashkova plaintively asked, "Why is it my bad luck to be situated in this vast prison house? Why am I forced to cringe with this crowd of flatterers who are as servile as they are false?"

²¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 27.

²²This privilege of Dashkova's was so well known that it was included in Rulhiere's account of the coup that put Catherine the Great on the throne. In his description of Dashkova, Rulhiere wrote, "Here she had an opportunity of seeing all the foreign ministers; but from the age of fifteen she chose to converse only with the ministers of republican governments. She exclaimed vehemently against the Russian despotism, and declared her intention of going to settle in Holland, the civil liberty, and religious tolerance of which country were her favourite topics." Claude Carlomen de Rulhiere, Histoire ou Anecdotes sur la Revolution de Russie; en l'année 1762 (Paris: Chez Desenne, 1797), 67.

²³Dashkov, Memoirs, 26-27.

Why was I not born an Englishwoman? How I adore the freedom and spirit of that nation!"²⁴

In contrast to this sort of indulgence, Dashkova experienced loneliness and perceived a lack of affection in her uncle's family. For the Russian nobility, family was essential for survival as the major source of loyal and close relationships. The extended family as a whole was supposed to fulfill its members' emotional needs even if relationships between individual members did not. The structure of the Russian family was flexible enough to cope with the termination of a relationship, as in the case of Dashkova's mother's death and her father's abandonment. And it was not uncommon for a widow to place her sons in the care of a male relative or a widower to find a home with a mother for his daughters to grow up in.²⁵ Other family members were supposed to fill in for those who were missing. In Dashkova's case, on an emotional level, this did not occur, even though her uncle provided generously for her material needs.

For Russian women the most important relationship in their lives was the one they formed with their mother or the person given maternal responsibility over them. To

²⁴Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 107.

²⁵Jessica Tovrov, "Mother-Child Relationships among the Russian Nobility," in The Family in Imperial Russia, ed. by David L. Ransel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981) 15-17.

understand Dashkova's childhood, her marriage, and her choices in raising her own children it is critical to look at the basis of her relationship with her aunt. Dashkova did not form really close relationships with either her aunt or her cousin after she was placed in her uncle's home. Although the dresses made for them were cut of the same cloth, Dashkova and her cousin were not. Like Dashkova's own mother, her aunt was not of noble origins and did not even have the great wealth of the Surmines. However, the illiterate Lithuanian peasant, who was her father, also happened to be the brother of the woman Peter the Great made Empress Catherine I. This made the Countess Vorontsova a first cousin of Empress Elizabeth and, therefore, even more important than Dashkova's mother in the Vorontsovs' rise to power. This competition, her temperament, which differed so from Dashkova, and her devotion to Peter III rather than Catherine contributed to making the strong maternal relationship, which was so important for Russian women, impossible. Although her aunt reported normal sort of family news about Dashkova to her cousin when the then Countess Stroganova went abroad in 1761, the women never developed lasting ties.²⁶ Dashkova poignantly described her surrogate parents failure to meet her emotional needs:

My uncle had no time, and my aunt had neither the ability nor the inclination. I had a proud

²⁶A. K. Vorontsova to A. M. Stroganova, 13 February 1761, 31 July 1761, in AKV 4: 460, 475.

nature, allied in some way to a sensitive and inordinately affection character. Ever since I was a child I craved for affection. I wanted the sympathy of those I loved, and when at the age of thirteen I began to suspect that I was receiving neither, I was overcome by a feeling of loneliness.²⁷

The turning point in Dashkova's intellectual and family life came when she was thirteen and came down with the measles. Because of danger of exposure of the imperial family, Dashkova was sent to the country with servants but no close relatives. She spent days brooding over her situation within her family. As a result of this period she changed from a happy, even mischievous child to a quiet, studious young woman. When her illness was over, Dashkova seemed convinced of her isolation from the Vorontsovs. She determined that the ties that were supposed to not only bind but support family members did not exist for her. Her marriage a short time later and subsequent political activities only make sense if she felt free to form new loyalties. To pass the time while she was quarantined, she read voraciously and her favorite authors became Montesquieu, Voltaire, and Bayle. For Dashkova the result was she sought to develop the character qualities to function despite her family's rejection.²⁸ The impact of

²⁷Dashkov, Memoirs, 24-25.

²⁸It is interesting to note that the other famous female memoirist of the eighteenth century also faced the loss of her mother and being placed in the care of a male relative. She also withdrew socially but her choice was very different. As she described it, "My youth was captive to my

this period was so great that her family believed she was ill and called in physicians to deal with her condition who could find no physical cause for her decline.²⁹

Kliuchevskii concluded that the excessive reading, in fact, caused a nervous breakdown.³⁰ However it is interpreted, Dashkova concluded that this experience "together with my peculiar character completed my education and made me what I am."³¹

Even after her return to St. Petersburg Dashkova did not resume her previous level of social activity. She did not retire completely into her library and she soon met the man she would marry. Rumors persisted throughout her life concerning the events leading to Dashkova's marriage. Her own account, of course, differs markedly from the gossip. In both stories it is obvious that the marriage was not arranged in a traditional sense and her aunt and uncle did not seem to be involved or even concerned about Dashkova's choice of a husband. According to her own account, in the summer of 1759 the Vorontsovs went to the summer homes of the Empress leaving Dashkova in St. Petersburg. While out

reason, and I restrained for the time all my desires, feeling that there would yet be time for my pleasure; I schooled myself in boredom very early." The Memoirs of Princess Natal'ja Borisovna Dolgorukaja, 37.

²⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 25.

³⁰Kliuchevskii, 4: 104.

³¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 25.

walking with a friend, they met Prince Dashkov whom Dashkova had never seen before. At this first meeting she was very favorably impressed, but admitted that

I have often been inclined since to attribute this meeting and the favourable impression we could not help creating on each other to a special and unavoidable dispensation of Providence. For had Prince Dashkov's name been mentioned at home, where he was not received, I would have heard unfavorable comments about him, and details of a certain intrigue would have come to my knowledge which would have destroyed all thought of uniting our two lives. I do not know what he had heard about me before he met me, but it is certain that an intrigue he had had with a very near relative of mine... and the wrongs both apparent and real of which he was guilty towards her convinced him that he must not entertain either thought, desire or even hope of ever making me his own.³²

In the popular story that circulated, and Rulhiere recorded, the Prince's hopes and desires were slightly different than those perceived by Dashkova. According to his account,

One day, Prince d'Aschekof, one of the handsomest noblemen about the court, having addressed her in a style of gallantry somewhat particular, according to the language of the country, she called the grand Chancellor, and said to him: "Uncle, Prince d'Aschekof is now doing me the honour to propose marriage to me." Strictly speaking, what she said was true; and the young man not daring to acknowledge to the first personage in the empire, that the proposition which he had made to his niece did not amount precisely to this, he married her, but sent her to Moscow, two hundred leagues off.³³

³²Ibid, 29.

³³ Claude Carlomen de Rulhiere, Histoire, ou anecdotes sur la Revolution de Russie; en L'année 1762 (Paris: Chez Desenne, 1797) 68-69.

Whether the result of true love or trickery, the couple were married in February of the following year with the approval of both families and the Empress.³⁴ Prince Dashkov was the last male heir of an old Muscovite family which traced its lineage back to Riurik and marriage to the powerful Vorontsovs was obviously very advantageous to them.

The fact that the wedding of the niece of the Grand Chancellor and godchild of the Empress was a quiet one added credence to the rumors of its questionable nature. (Dashkova explained the small wedding as the result of her aunt's ill health.) And as Rulhiere reported, they did go to Moscow shortly after their wedding when the Countess Vorontsova's health improved sufficiently. Described by Rulhiere as a sort of exile imposed by a grudging bridegroom, the next two years in Moscow were very important for Dashkova. Although she had lessons in Russian as a child, Dashkova spoke French as her first language and her husband's family spoke only Russian. To win the approval and affection of this new family that she longed for so much, Dashkova mastered the Russian language and entered fully into Muscovite society. In the process she developed the love for her native tongue and customs that marked the rest of her life.³⁵

³⁴E. R. Dashkova to A. R. Vorontsov, 20 July 1758, in AKV, 5: 157-158.

³⁵Dashkov, Memoirs, 30-31.

The two years Dashkova spent on the Dashkov's estates in and near Moscow were very challenging and emotionally grueling. In a conversation with Catherine the Great Dashkova later described these years in Moscow:

Married at fifteen to the most virtuous of mortals and an exemplary son who, as the result of his in-born generosity rather than a young man's usual expenditures, had thrown his patrimony into disorder and wished to conceal it from his mother who would have grieved if she had found out, I was obliged to deny myself every pleasure, even to the extent of the new books which I loved having. I was a mother at fifteen also. Over two years I spent in the house of my mother-in-law, a superstitious and domineering woman who made us spend whole days in her apartments listening to prayers. I could not even retire to my own apartments to indulge in the pleasure of reading without her accusing me of luring away my husband and depriving her of his society. Far from increasing in stature my character shrinks and degenerates.³⁶

In these trying circumstances Dashkova's new husband became the focus of the intense devotion and affection that characterized her relationships. None of her reading or contact with foreign diplomats or travelers prepared her for life in the other Russian capital. Dashkova might as well have been in a foreign country compared to the life she had led in St. Petersburg. She admitted to feeling bewildered by her surroundings and disconcerted by the customs she

³⁶Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova, 270. Dashkova habitually recorded conversations with Catherine in French. Martha Wilmot transcribed the manuscript and her descendents allowed Hyde to translate it for publication with his work. Like many of the papers brought back by Miss Wilmot, this manuscript apparently remains in the possession of her descendents.

encountered in Moscow. This was certainly understandable as the Vorontsovs were one of the Russian noble families most open to Western ideas and customs and frequently in contact with foreigners in St. Petersburg. For example, Rastrelli, the noted Italian architect who designed the Winter Palace, built one of her uncle's places.³⁷

Intellectual pursuits helped relieve the stress of life in her mother-in-law's home. Dashkova attended public lectures on mathematics at the recently established University of Moscow. Although less able to purchase new books than she had been before her marriage, Dashkova also relied on music and reading for comfort as she had done during her recuperation from the measles.³⁸

During these two years, Dashkova also had her first two children. Although she only mentioned briefly the birth of her daughter almost exactly a year after her marriage, Dashkova described in detail the events surrounding the birth of her son. They illustrate the mutual passion and devotion in her marriage which are critical to understanding many of her later decisions. This situation also dramatizes the sacrifices and even chaos experienced by Russian noble families as a result of the demands of state service and court life in Russia.

³⁷Dashkov, Memoirs, 38.

³⁸Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 14.

In May 1760 the Dashkovs left Moscow to visit their estate, Troitskoye, for the summer. This estate was located about sixty miles south of Moscow about halfway between the towns of Borovsk and Serpukov.³⁹ In the fall they returned to Moscow and Dashkova wrote to her father to ask that he arrange an extension of the Prince's leave from his regiment in order to be present for the birth of their child. The Grand Duke required that the Prince make his request in person in St. Petersburg. Dashkova was distraught over her husband's departure so late in her pregnancy.⁴⁰

One of the most dramatic events in Dashkova's married life was her husband's arrival in Moscow the night of her son's birth. It is worth going into some detail about this occasion in order to provide a context for Dashkova's choices later in life and her profession of lifelong devotion to her husband. During his stay in St. Petersburg

³⁹Hyde, The Empress Catherine, 15.

⁴⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 32-33. The severity of her condition must have blurred her memory of this awful event for even in writing about it forty years later Dashkova mixes up the dates. She first states that in May 1760 they went to Troitskoye and took a brief trip to the Dashkov estate in Orel in July when she was again pregnant then returned to Moscow. However, she then states that her husband left for St. Petersburg on the eighth of June to stay for a fortnight and identifies the date of his return as the first of February, 1761. It is obvious she must have meant that he departed on January eighth. This would not only have made the date of his return make sense but also be in keeping with the Dashkov's habit mentioned earlier of spending the spring and summer at Troitskoye and returning to Moscow late in the fall.

the Grand Duke Peter had required Prince Dashkov to accompany his court on sledging parties despite the urgency of Dashkova's condition. As a result he became ill and lost his voice. Not wishing to alarm his wife or mother, Dashkov stopped at his aunt's home when he arrived in Moscow on February first. The post-horses were retained to drive him home in the morning and to convince Dashkova and his mother that he had just arrived in town in good health. Dashkova's maid promptly reported all of this to her despite the fact that she had already gone into labor. At this point Dashkova described her character and that of her marital relationship in the following way,

To form any conception of the effect that my maid's rash confidence produced on me it must be remembered that I was a hot-headed and impetuous girl of seventeen, desperately in love, and with no idea of happiness apart from loving and being loved, regarding riches and pomp as burdens of no use for a quiet enjoyment of felicity.⁴¹

Dashkova managed to convince her husband's mother and aunt that she was not in labor so that they would leave her alone. After their departure, convinced that her husband was sick or wounded, Dashkova persuaded the mid-wife and an old servant to walk her to where her husband was staying. Despite the labor pains they managed to make it down the back stairs of the Dashkov's home to avoid being seen, across the street, and up the stairs of the aunt's home to

⁴¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 34.

the Prince's room. However, when she finally saw her husband lying ill, Dashkova fainted and had to be carried back home leaving the Prince and his aunt's entire household in an uproar. Approximately an hour later Dashkova's son, Mikhail, was born.⁴²

The next day, the Prince, who had remained at his aunt's to keep his mother from knowing what had occurred, returned to their home. In an uncharacteristic understatement Dashkova summarized Dashkov's situation by stating that, "his mother's and his wife's exaggerated love caused him a great deal of unpleasantness that day."⁴³ He was once again put to bed this time in a room next to his wife and new son. According to Dashkova, the young couple wore out an old servant and their own eyes sending tender epistles back and forth for the next three days. Finally tiring of this the servant informed Dashkova's mother-in-law who severely rebuked her and threatened to take away her pen and paper. Fortunately, the Prince's recovery resolved this crisis. Given the circumstances it is not surprising that Dashkova's own recovery from childbirth was slow at first.⁴⁴

After two years away from her family and the capital, Dashkova was anxious to return to St. Petersburg. Caught

⁴²A. K. Vorontsova to A. M. Stroganova, February 13, 1761, AKV, 4: 460.

⁴³Dashkov, Memoirs, 36.

⁴⁴Ibid, 36 - 37.

between his wife's wishes, his own obligations to the Preobrazhenski Guard regiment to which he belonged, and his mother's desire for them to remain in Moscow, Prince Dashkov prepared to return to the capital. When the Dashkovs decided to return to St. Petersburg, another choice had to be made concerning the care of their two children. To understand this choice and its significance it is necessary to examine briefly some of the major features of Russian childrearing practices. In the 1760s when Dashkova was beginning her family, educated Russians, influenced by Western ideas, were studying childhood and questioning traditional childrearing methods.⁴⁵ In 1761 Mikhail Lomonosov estimated that the infant mortality rate in Russia was 50 percent and published his recommendations for dealing with this tragic situation. Several factors can be identified that contributed to this staggeringly high death rate. First, obstetrical care was minimal. Although Catherine the Great established schools that taught obstetrics in 1776, traditional midwives continued to assist at most births. After bathing the newborn, Russian midwives swaddled the newborn tightly. Lomonosov and others

⁴⁵Max J. Okenfuss, The Discovery of Childhood in Russia: The Evidence of the Slavic Primer (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1984). Okenfuss argues that during the early modern period in Russia between 1560 and 1800 adult attitudes toward children and childhood changed so greatly that it could be described as a discovery. Parents began to think about their children and their needs individually rather than simply as part of the family.

criticized this restrictive practice for its harmful effects on the physical and psychological development of Russian children. Although most Russian babies were breast fed during the eighteenth century, solid food was introduced practically at birth in the form of a pacifier packed with food and at five weeks in the form of small pieces of bread. Lomonosov blamed these practices for many infant deaths from choking and gastrointestinal problems. Even Orthodox religious practices relating to children were often hazardous. Russian infants were baptized by immersing them three times in the baptismal font. If the child was born in winter or early spring this meant it was exposed to intense cold as churches and the baptismal water itself remained unheated. Finally, Russian children in noble families were routinely left in the care of older relatives and serfs who were sometimes neglectful and even abusive. Also these caregivers were more likely to adhere to traditional practices despite growing concern over them among educated Russians.⁴⁶

⁴⁶Patrick Dunn, "That Enemy is the Baby: Childhood in Imperial Russia," in The History of Childhood, ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 383-392 and David L. Ransel, Mother, Medicine, and Infant Mortality in Russia: Some Comparisons, Kennan Institute Occasional Papers #236 (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, June 1990). Both authors outline the same major shortcomings in Russian childcare practices. However, Dunn's article is seriously flawed. He identifies Ivan Shuvalov as one of Catherine's major advisors. However, Shuvalov was actually Empress Elizabeth's last favorite and he had a difficult relationship with Catherine. He also describes Betskoi as one of Catherine's favorites when the

In dealing with her own children, Dashkova apparently compromised between traditional Muscovite practices and enlightened ideas. When Dashkova returned to St. Petersburg, she left her infant son in the care of her mother-in-law in Moscow. However, she chose to take her sixteen-month-old daughter, Nastasia, with her to the capital and remain involved in her care. That this decision was a departure from the normal detachment of Russian noble parents from their children is evident in a letter from Dashkova's aunt to her cousin. Countess Vorontsova noted that Dashkova had arrived with her daughter which she thought was very foolish.⁴⁷ This initial decision regarding her young children marks the beginning of Dashkova's efforts to apply less traditional principles to her own life by being more involved in her children's lives than earlier generations of Russian parents.

After many agonizing delays for Dashkova, they finally arrived in St. Petersburg in July 1761. By the time she returned to the capital at the age of eighteen Dashkova had survived not only a Russian childhood but childbirth as well. In this formative period of her life Dashkova's basic

term he uses for Shuvalov, advisor, is much more appropriate for the man who was an important force in Catherinian educational policy. More problematic, however, is Dunn's conclusion that Russian childrearing practices indicate a basic hostility toward children. This does not seem to be supported by any other research in this field.

⁴⁷A. K. Vorontsova to A. M. Stroganova, 3 July 1761, in AKV, 4: 475.

understanding of the world around her and her place in it was established. From what she had been told of her mother's life, Dashkova was well schooled in the insecurity of even the most powerful noble families in an autocratic state. The period of her life spent in her uncle's home was critical in two ways. First, travelers and diplomats she met there piqued her interest in England. But more importantly it is apparent that she felt rejected and excluded from the family relationships that were the foundation of not only social but political life in Russia. Her emotional ties to the Vorontsov family broke down as she was successively separated from her mother, father, and siblings. This breakdown helps to explain how Dashkova was able to become involved in the conspiracy to dethrone the man who had held her at the baptismal font, her godfather, Peter III. Although her time with her husband's family was difficult in many ways, the two years Dashkova spent in Moscow introduced her to traditional Russian language and customs more fully than she had ever been before. Unlike her friend, Catherine, Dashkova began to have a real appreciation and affection for the ancient city of the tsars and all it represented. Finally, during these years Dashkova entered into the role that required most of her time and energy for the rest of her life--motherhood. Dashkova became a mother during a culturally volatile time in Russia and was forced to balance new information about

children and their education with the traditional practices of her parents and mother-in-law. She also had to balance her family and political obligations in an autocratic state. Balancing the tension between her anglomania and slavophilism as well as between the demands of state and family became much more difficult and complex when the Dashkovs returned to the intrigues of court life in Peter's window on the West.

CHAPTER II

DEATH AND DISAPPOINTMENT

When Dashkova returned to St. Petersburg in the summer of 1761, she entered into a very complex and volatile political situation. The Empress Elizabeth's health was declining rapidly and Russia was involved in the Seven Year's War against Prussia. However, Elizabeth's heir, who became Peter III, was openly sympathetic to Prussia and expressed his loyalty to Frederick the Great. In addition, Peter was also overtly contemptuous of his adopted country's customs, language, and religion. Concern about his ability to govern Russia was growing, particularly among the Guards Regiments. In this situation the Vorontsovs were firmly legitimist. Their rise to power and influence came as the result of supporting Elizabeth and they were committed to her chosen heir despite his shortcomings. Dashkova, however, became involved with Peter's wife, the Grand Duchess Catherine. Unlike her husband, Catherine adopted and scrupulously honored Russian customs. Like Dashkova she learned Russian when she married and was well read in the works of the Enlightenment. Dashkova became convinced that

Catherine would save Russia from Peter III's disastrous policies and reform it along Enlightenment principles.

Dashkova's involvement in the coup which developed to dethrone Peter III proved very costly to her and her family. By allying herself with Catherine, Dashkova alienated her family, the Vorontosovs. Financial and health problems plagued the Dashkovs as they became more involved in the conspiracy. Even their children were left increasingly in the care of servants and relatives during this time with tragic results. Their infant son died in Moscow while the Dashkovs were in St. Petersburg. Although the coup was successful, the vulnerability of the Dashkovs' position became clear very soon afterwards. Dashkova was suspected of being involved in opposition to Catherine immediately after her coronation and as a result fell out of favor. Dashkova's husband died while with the Russian troops supporting Stanislaus Poniatowski's accession to the throne of Poland. By 1764 Dashkova's political life seemed over and her family life had suffered greatly.

Dashkova first met the Grand Duchess Catherine in the winter before her marriage to Prince Dashkov. One evening the Grand Duke Peter and his wife came to have supper and spend the evening with the Grand Chancellor and his family. Although they knew of each other, this is the first recorded meeting of Dashkova and the future Empress Catherine. The Grand Duchess focussed her attention on Dashkova and spent

almost the whole evening conversing with Dashkova and her fiancée who was not as favorably disposed toward Catherine as she was. Her efforts were a spectacular success, as Dashkova admitted,

we were mutually drawn towards each other; and the charm, which she knew how to exert whenever she wanted to win over anyone, was too powerful for an artless little girl like myself, who was not even fifteen, to refuse her the gift of my heart for evermore.¹

Catherine had won an important although youthful ally in one of the most powerful families devoted to Empress Elizabeth and her chosen heir, Peter III. In a two for one situation, Catherine also won over Dashkova's husband, a Guards officer, who was not initially impressed but was easily persuaded by her to join Catherine's cause.²

During the year leading up to the coup, Dashkova became increasingly active socially and politically. She continued to try to balance those activities with her family responsibilities. For example, her first priority when arriving at the home they had rented was making sure that

¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 28.

²Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova in Martha (Wilmot) Bradford, ed., Memoirs of the Princess Daschkaw, Lady of Honour to Catherine II, Empress of all the Russians, Written by Herself: Comprising Letters of the Empress, and other Correspondence 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1840), 2:63-66 and Dashkov, Memoirs, 28. Catherine consistently sends her regards to the Prince in her notes to Dashkova and in one note writes, "Tell the prince that I return him the very graceful salute he made in passing my window this afternoon. The attachment which I experience from both of you, in truth touches my heart."

her sixteen month old daughter was properly installed in a room adjacent to her own. Only then did she begin calling on other family and friends. Her father informed the Dashkovs that they had been included among those invited to stay at Oranienbaum with the Grand Duke and Duchess. They were allowed to stay in one of the Vorontsov homes between Oranienbaum and the city rather than at court although they were expected to visit daily.³ The Grand Duke Peter, whose mistress was Dashkova's sister, Elizabeth, quickly noted Dashkova's growing affection for Catherine. Throughout her account Dashkova emphasizes that she held no personal animosity toward either Peter III or her sister and portrays her relationship with them in the least negative light possible. The most obvious example of this is the passage describing Peter attempt to warn her about Catherine:

Taking me aside one day, he made the following extraordinary remark to me, revealing both the simplicity of his mind and the goodness of his heart: 'My daughter', he said, addressing me thus because he was my godfather, 'remember it is safer to live and deal with simpletons like us than with those great minds who squeeze all the juice out of a lemon and then throw it away.'⁴

During these summer months the foundation of Dashkova's relationship with Catherine was firmly laid. When they visited Oranienbaum, the Dashkovs spent as much time as possible with the Grand Duchess Catherine preferring her

³Dashkov, Memoirs, 38.

⁴Ibid, 39.

company to the German, military atmosphere of Peter's court. Even more important for their relationship were times spent together during Catherine's weekly visits with her son, Paul, whom the Empress Elizabeth was rearing. On her return from Peterhof to Oranienbaum, Catherine passed Dashkova's home and requested the Princess to join her for the rest of the evening. As these visits were emotionally trying for Catherine and Dashkova, too, was missing a young son, a strong emotional tie was formed. They also discussed the day's news and began to share their ideas on literature and history. The basis of their later collaborations was clearly laid during these times together.⁵

The two women also frequently wrote each other notes when they were unable to visit in person both before and after the court returned to St. Petersburg.⁶ Although Catherine burned all of Dashkova's notes to her, Dashkova saved some of Catherine's. The notes are full of assurances of Catherine's deep affection and immense regard. As examples below will demonstrate, for the most part they are not burdened by the flowery verbiage so common in eighteenth-century correspondence. They indicate a genuine sharing of thoughts and ideas, books and even things they composed themselves. In several notes, Catherine mentions a

⁵Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova, 31-33; Dashkov, Memoirs, 39-40.

⁶Dashkov, Memoirs, 39 - 41.

manuscript she has written which included a section concerning "Differences between the Clergy and Parliament." In the first notes, she makes excuses for being slow about sending it assuring Dashkova that it is not due to a lack of trust. Later notes include increasingly urgent requests for the manuscript's return concluding with this passage,

Listen, dear princess, for I shall be seriously angry if you either give or allow a copy to be taken of what I have confided to you exclusively; and in this prohibition I make no exception even in your own favour, since no human being is exempt from the accidents of life. I have, as you know, the most implicit reliance on your candour; tell me then truly, is it for this purpose that you have detained a paper three days which could not have you more than half an hour to read? Do not, I beseech you, delay another moment in returning it, for I begin to be uneasy about it, knowing as I do, from experience, that in a situation like mine, circumstances the most trivial are liable to the most unfavourable, and sometimes the most unjust, construction. Remove, then, my anxiety on this point, and be assured now, as ever, of my unalterable esteem and gratitude.⁷

The subject and tone of this exchange make it clear that Catherine did trust and to a certain extent depend on Dashkova at least for discretion and understanding.

The notes also indicate in other ways Catherine's fears and concerns for herself and any who chose to befriend her. One note in particular helps to establish Catherine as an independent and determined woman despite her fears. She forcefully states,

⁷Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 68 - 69.

I have often erred, perhaps, in following my own suggestions, but I have not been quite so unfortunate as to be led astray by weak advisors, and among such M--- is entitled to a distinguished place. For my part, I hold it to be an act of meanness to put oneself wantonly, and with eyes open too, into the power of enemies and inferiors. In spite of the caution so necessary for me to observe, I must nevertheless assert that portion of independence which every human creature ought jealously to maintain, not only because in thousands of cases the exertion of it is of obvious utility, but because it is quiet indispensable in establishing any pretense to character. If you object to this reasoning as abstruse and inapplicable to the present purpose remember that my principles are not formed on vulgar views and motives, but on a pretty accurate knowledge of the human heart and character. Forgive, dear princess, all this rhodomontade, which I beg you will consign to the flames; and in saying simply that I love you, you will receive this assurance as the dictate of my heart not to be misunderstood.⁸

Some notes mention of the some of the major figures in the coup and the role Catherine has in mind for Dashkova. For example, in one note, Catherine asks Dashkova to exert her influence on her father, a Senator, on behalf of a soldier about to be punished by being sent off to some distant post in Empire. This is obviously a minor request, but possibly a test of Dashkova's willingness and effectiveness to influence her powerful family on Catherine's behalf.⁹ Catherine also makes a discreet

⁸Letter from Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Ibid, 2: 66-67.

⁹Letter from Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 63.

overture to Dashkova's older brother, Alexander Vorontsov, by writing to her,

I cannot speak too favourably of your elder brother, who appears to me a young man of infinite promise. Besides in his affectionate zeal in whatever concerns me, I cannot but acknowledge a strong resemblance to his sister, and recognize all her kindness.¹⁰

After the court returned to St. Petersburg Dashkova was not able to see Catherine as often and relied on these notes for contact. This would explain, in part, her total ignorance of the nature of Catherine's relationship with another major conspirator, Gregory Orlov, and the pregnancy which resulted from it which limited Catherine's actions during these critical months. Because of her friendship with Catherine, Dashkova became a focus for the alarm growing about the future of Russia under the rule of Empress Elizabeth's heir, the Grand Duke Peter. Dashkova continued to appear at the Grand Duke's court and, speak freely to him as godchild. Dashkova believed that one incident in particular gained her reputation among her husband's friends in the Guards regiments. At a dinner party Peter argued that a young officer carrying on an affair with a cousin of the Imperial family should be executed for such impertinence. Dashkova reminded him of what he seemed to

¹⁰Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Ibid, 2: 71-72.

have forgotten: that his aunt, the Empress, had abolished the death penalty and she was still alive.¹¹

As the Empress's health declined alarm continued to grow about Peter and his loyalty to Frederick the Great with whom Russia was at war.¹² On December 20th, when Dashkova learned that the Empress was dying she determined to visit Catherine at the palace. To avoid being seen Dashkova went up the back stairs and was taken to Catherine's apartments by a loyal servant. To conceal Dashkova from view and to conceal Catherine's advanced stage of pregnancy from Dashkova, Catherine stayed in bed and ordered Dashkova to join her behind the heavy draperies surrounding it. Dashkova demanded that she be informed of Catherine's plans

¹¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 41.

¹²Ibid, 42, 44. Throughout her Memoirs, Dashkova consistently minimizes any discord between herself and her family particularly over the issue of loyalties divided between Peter and Catherine. Concerning Elizabeth's death, she states,

I shared with all my heart the profound grief of my whole family and particularly my uncle, the Grand Chancellor, both because I was fond of the Empress who was also my godmother, and because my stay at Oranienbaum had opened my eyes to all that my country could expect from a Princes who was ignorant, narrow-minded, ill-disposed towards his people and priding himself on being always at the orders of the King of Prussia, to whom he referred, even when alone among his intimates, as 'the King my master'.

And, a few days later, when she returned from visiting Catherine and compared notes with her husband who had spent the evening with her father, she was convinced that her father secretly sympathized with Catherine as well.

in the event of the Empress's death and that she be told what she needed to do. In tears, Catherine responded,

I am more grateful to you, my dear Princess, than I could possibly express, and it is with perfect truth and every confidence in you that I say to you now: I have formed no plan. I can undertake nothing and I must and shall meet bravely whatever may befall me. God is my only hope and I put my trust in Him.¹³

Dashkova accepted this explanation situation, but it did not have the calming effect that the Grand Duchess may have hoped. Dashkova assured her that as she could not act, her friends would with utmost zeal. Catherine tried to stop her and discover what Dashkova planned to do. As the Princess truly did not have a plan all she could do was assure Catherine of her enthusiasm. It is not surprising that as Dashkova was leaving Catherine seemed upset and disturbed by the possibility that her young friend might do something brash.¹⁴

In fact, when the Empress Elizabeth died on Christmas Day, 1761, Dashkova did not take action, but rather took to her bed. She went so far as to reject the invitations of the new Emperor on the basis of illness. She finally appeared at court only after her sister informed her that Peter III was displeased and disbelieving of her excuses. The Emperor's first words to Dashkova were to inform her that he intended to get rid of Catherine in order to marry

¹³Ibid, 43.

¹⁴Ibid, 44.

Elizabeth Vorontsov. He went on to advise Dashkova to be more attentive to her sister as her only avenue of advancement in the world. For once, Dashkova was dumbstruck and quickly excused herself.¹⁵

During his brief reign, Peter III managed to alienate almost every major group in Russian society and many foreign dignitaries by his public actions and decisions. Dashkova remembered and recorded many relatively minor incidents which offended people of all sorts. For example, while Catherine remained in deep mourning for the Empress, Peter III flirted with the ladies attending the coffin, made fun of the clergy, and derided the officers standing guard. At dinner parties he told stories bound to offend foreign ambassadors and Russians as well. He was also inattentive to his heir, Paul, and publicly cruel to his wife.¹⁶ The

¹⁵Ibid, 45-47. During the game of cards previously mentioned, Dashkova refused to play a second hand after Peter III won all the money wagered and accused him of cheating. Her excuse was that her husband insisted on living on an small allowance sent by his mother, was going deeply into debt, and she was very anxious about their financial situation. However, the other guests were astounded and she heard them say that she must be a very proud woman to talk to the Emperor in such a way. It is fortunate for the Princess that Peter III continued to treat her as the godchild he had always known. This incident, however, may have been part of the basis for persistent gossip that Dashkova was such a miser that she wouldn't pay her losses at the card table.

¹⁶Ibid, 55. Two points about this matter deserve to be mentioned. First, in the famous incident in which Peter calls Catherine a fool across a crowded dinner table, the word in Russian is "dura" and is much stronger than "fool" in English as it is ususally translated. Second, another cause for the lack of affection between Dashkova and the

Emperor was also obsessed with the parade activities of the military and publicly upbraided officers who failed to please him. In January such an incident occurred involving Prince Dashkov. The Prince did not meekly accept Peter III's rebuke, responding so heatedly that the Emperor quickly backed down. The incident so alarmed Dashkova that she convinced her uncle to secure an appointment in a foreign country to remove her husband from harm's way. Therefore, Prince Dashkov was made ambassador to Constantinople.¹⁷

When worry for her husband's safety no longer burdened her, Dashkova threw herself into conspiratorial activities. Dashkova states clearly her political goal in becoming involved in the plot to overthrow Peter III,

cousin with whom she had grown up becomes clear during this fiasco. Trying to recover from this abuse, Catherine asked the nobleman attending her to help divert her attention by relating some amusing story. That nobleman was Count Stroganov, the husband of Dashkova's cousin, and he shared Dashkova's devotion to Catherine. The Countess was, however, just as committed to Peter III and his mistress, her cousin, Dashkova's sister, Elizabeth Vorontsov. Immediately after dinner, Peter III relegated Count Stroganov to one of his more distant estates for his efforts to relieve the social tension caused by the Emperor's outburst.

¹⁷Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs 2: 71, 73, 77. Catherine first congratulates Dashkova on her husband's appointment. Then she finds it necessary to console her about his absence and assure her of his safe return. Also Dashkov, Memoirs, 45 - 56. The Prince did manage to absent himself from all the dangers and intrigues of Court, but not precisely in the way Dashkova had in mind. He first went to Moscow, then accompanied his mother on her usual retreat to Troitskoye where he remained safely until July when the coup was over. With Catherine on the throne he was able to return to St. Petersburg without ever reporting to his post in Constantinople.

Limited monarchy, headed by a Master who could be a father to his people and who knows himself respected and even loved by his subjects, and yet feared by the wicked, must be the goal of every thinking person. For power, lodged with the masses, whose opinions are lightly held and forever changing, is unstable; it is exercised either too slowly or with undue precipitancy; the great variety of views and convictions deprives it of harmony.¹⁸

Dashkova's most significant contribution to the coup was to cultivate relationships among family and friends who might be sympathetic to Catherine's cause. It is on this issue that much of the controversy concerning Dashkova's role the coup arises. Totally unaware at the time and continuing to deny throughout her life the role that the Orlovs were playing, Dashkova claimed that she brought most of the major figures into the conspiracy.¹⁹

The most sensational and persistent of the claims and counterclaims in this matter relate to Dashkova's relationships to Grand Duke Paul's tutor, Count Nikita Panin, and an Italian named Michael Odart. Dashkova was related to Panin by marriage; he and Prince Dashkov were second cousins. Dashkova provides an excellent picture of the Count at the time of the coup which helps to explain his opposition to the crude, barracksroom approach Peter III took to ruling,

¹⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 55-56.

¹⁹Dashkova's account of this period is meant to refute the descriptions of the coup written by French authors such as Ruhliere and Castera. In fact, Dashkova listed seventeen items that she specifically refuted in Rulhiere's account. This list is included in the AKV, 7: 655-656.

Mr. Panin...was a man of forty-eight, sickly and fond of a quiet life, most of which he had passed at the Russian or (as Minister) at foreign Courts. He wore a wig with three ties hanging down his back, was studied in his dress, always the perfect courtier--a somewhat old-fashioned one, truth to tell, like a picture-book idea of those at the Court of Louis XIV.²⁰

Convinced that it was essential to have such an influential figure involved in the conspiracy, on several occasions in the spring of 1762 Dashkova spoke to Panin about the possibility of Peter III's fall, at first in very hypothetical terms and then in more specific detail. Panin, who had actually been in contact with Catherine from the beginning, made it clear to Dashkova that his goal was to reform the government along the lines of the limited monarchy of Sweden. He hoped to put his pupil, Paul, on the throne with Catherine as Regent with the approval of the Senate. Panin could find no source of legitimacy for Catherine as ruler without Paul.²¹ As Dashkova remembered it later she supported Panin's position in theory but was unsure if such a plan was practical. As she put it,

That would be splendid...if only we were granted the time. I agree with you that the Empress has no claim to the throne, and that by rights it is her son who should be proclaimed Sovereign with the Empress as Regent until he comes of age, but you forget that not one in a hundred would regard

²⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 50 - 51.

²¹David L. Ransel, The Politics of Catherinian Russia: the Panin Party (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 67-68.

the removal of the Sovereign as anything but an act of violence.²²

She even went so far as to suggest such a plan to the other conspirators, but the arrest of a Guards officer named Captain Passek prevented further discussion of this possibility by forcing the conspirators to act. Panin's reluctance to be involved in a coup in Catherine's favor provided the basis for rumors concerning the extent and methods employed by Dashkova to win Panin's support. Apart from outraging Dashkova, these accounts are important in two ways. First, they contributed to the alienation of Dashkova from her family, particularly her father. Second, they are an early example of the ways that Dashkova's importance is diminished. In this case she is relegated to the role of

²²Dashkov, Memoirs, 63.

seductress.²³ Ruhliere reported one of the most scandalous versions of this gossip, Panin

opposed, for a long time, and with firmness, every other resolution: the Princess d'Aschekof, with whom he was violently in love, employed in vain all her arts of seduction; she encouraged his passion, but she yielded not to it, persuaded

²³This controversy is even dealt with in David Ransel's work on Panin. Ransel concludes that the nature of Dashkova's personal relationship with Panin remains "a mystery". The real mystery, however, is how such an eminent scholar came to such a conclusion. Despite extensive archival research, Ransel does not provide any documentation from Panin's own papers, diplomatic or personal for an affair with Dashkova. He cites two letters from the aging Chancellor Vorontsov to Dashkova's brother, Alexander, complaining about Panin's devotion to Dashkova and blaming her for Panin's failure to answer his letters. (See AKV 32: 260, 272) The whole tone of Chancellor Vorontsov's letters indicates his feelings towards Dashkova. Whereas he addresses Alexander Vorontsov as "my dear nephew" or "my friend", he refers to Dashkova as "your sister, Princess Dashkova" not "my dear niece." In fact, Ransel's conclusion is based primarily on the fact that it seems to him that "the lady doth protest too much" in her famous Memoirs which, incidentally, also downplay the role and importance of the subject of his study and everyone else. As far as the coup is concerned he argues that Panin was actually the leader among the civilian participants and set the revolution in motion after Passek's arrest. Ransel states that Dashkova only knew the details of the coup because she was with Panin when he took the necessary actions. See David L. Ransel, The Politics of Catherinian Russia, 63 - 113. However, Kyril Fitzlyon, the sympathetic translator of the best English version of the Memoirs argues exactly the opposite, that Panin knew what was occurring because he was with Dashkova. (See Kyril Fitzlyon, "Introduction," in Dashkov, Memoirs 11.) Ransel does finally admit that political and family considerations may have motivated Panin in his relationship with Dashkova. Ransel also points out that later Panin was known to have an affair with Dashkova's cousin, Anna Mikhailovna Stroganova. He sees this as evidence that Panin had "a weakness for Vorontsov women." As previously discussed, these two particular women hated each other and had absolutely nothing in common but their maiden names making them unlikely candidates for liaisons with the same man no matter what his, or his biographer's, weaknesses may have been.

among other reasons, by the intimate connection that had subsisted between her mother and Panin, that she was the daughter of this lover. A Piedmontese, named Odart, their confidant, determined this young woman to get the better of her scruples; and it was thus she obtained from Panin the sacrifice of his pupil.²⁴

In his translation of Castera's biography of Catherine, William Tooke repeated and expanded this story further noting that initially, "It was not however virtue in madame Dashkof, that impelled her to reject the professions of Panin. Many other known suitors had already experienced that it was not invincible."²⁵ For his long service in Russia Tooke had been made a corresponding member to the Academy of Sciences by Dashkova and like her was a member of the Free Economic Society. Therefore, in one of his many footnotes, Tooke defended the Princess's reputation by stating,

It is but justice to observe in this place, that many persons who attended successively the courts of Elizabeth, Peter III and the late empress, have uniformly affirmed, that, of all the imputation thrown out on princess Dashkof concerning certain peculiarities in her disposition and temper, they never once heard the slightest suspicion cast on her chastity; and to her friends it has always been her boast, that, though a widow at the age of eighteen, the most malignant of her enemies had nothing to accuse her of in this respect.²⁶

²⁴Ruhliere, Histoire, 76.

²⁵W. Tooke, The Life of Catharine II Empress of Russia with a Correct Map of the Russian Empire, Fifth Edition, 3 vols. (Dublin: J. Moore, 1800), 1: 171.

²⁶Ibid, 172.

Dashkova defended her relationship with Odart and heatedly denied the gossip about Panin. Odart had come to Russia seeking his fortune and secured the patronage of Dashkova's uncle, Grand Chancellor Mikhail Vorontsov. The Grand Chancellor acquired a position in the Ministry of Trade for him but it was soon obvious to all concerned that he was totally incompetent. Odart asked Dashkova if she could find some employment for him in the service of the Empress. In the notes from Catherine during this period, the Grand Duchess first makes it clear that she cannot employ him directly in her establishment. She later stated that

The services of M. Odart appear likely to be of use to me. There will be little difficulty, I imagine in giving him an appointment. But first tell me if you could induce your uncle to recommend him to me: if not it does not signify, and things may take their course. You can make all the necessary pecuniary arrangements with him; but till he resigns his present post this little transaction had better best between you and me. In fact, I do not know enough of his circumstances to be able to advise him either as to the how of when; but as he has always been a protege of your uncle's, it is better at once to consult him. In the meantime, I will keep vacant the appointment which I design him to fill.²⁷

That appointment was to improve the land and the establishment of factories on one of Catherine's estates. Although Dashkova later described him as her own protege, she denied even seeing him in the last weeks before the coup

²⁷Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 76.

much less accepting any advice from him concerning Panin.²⁸ Odart's services did prove useful for Catherine. Odart was entrusted with the safekeeping copies of the Empress's manifesto announcing her accession to the throne before it was made public. He remained a counselor at court and in 1763 was named to the important Commission on Commerce.²⁹

Dashkova also had serious financial responsibilities to attend to during this period. Her husband had incurred a number of debts which caused her a great deal of anxiety. Her father arranged for her to receive a piece of land a few miles outside the city and built a timber house on it for her. Dashkova was reluctant to take on this responsibility and determined not to add to her husband's debts. The piece of land was very marshy and wooded making improving it very difficult. To make the necessary improvements, Dashkova severely limited her household expenditures to provide the minimal food and shelter for herself, her daughter, and servants. She also accepted the labors of about a hundred of the Dashkov's peasants who had come to St. Petersburg to earn extra money. They agreed to work four days at a time and on alternate holy days to improve the land. They were soon able to drain the land and build a house, offices, and a courtyard. This was Dashkova's first estate and later she

²⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 57-58.

²⁹John T. Alexander, Catherine the Great: Life and Legend (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 8, 84.

named it, Kirianovo after the two saints on whose day the coup which put Catherine II on the throne occurred.³⁰

On one occasion Dashkova became ill after inspecting the land. When she learned of it, Catherine wrote her an interesting note providing a glimpse into the affectionate nature of their relationship. It also indicated the playful quality of Catherine's own earlier life as she wrote,

I am really sorry that your sore throat prevents you from coming to me, and deprives me of the pleasure of enjoying your society. But pray, how comes it that you will enact the water nymph? I should certainly scold you, did I not recollect that at nineteen years of age I too had a tenderness for such adventures. To chastise you, however, a little for the injury you have inflicted, and with your eyes open, I will pronounce for your mortification, that a few years will effectually cure you of all these frolics.³¹

The acquisition and improvement of this land was very important apart from leading to this illness. Dashkova's frugality in this matter no doubt added to her growing reputation as a miser in a country where indebtedness was not just accepted but flaunted. If she did wear old clothes and what was left of her trousseau, as she claimed, she could not have avoided criticism as she continued her social life to further the conspiracy. The estate also provided a front in a sense to divert attention from conspiratorial activities. It appeared that Dashkova was

³⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 59 - 61.

³¹Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 79-80.

absorbed in squeezing out of her peasants and household budget a beautiful estate in a fashionable area rather than planning a coup to dethrone the Tsar who had given her the land. It also gave her retreat where she could clarify her thoughts and read everything she could find about revolutions in preparation for the one about to occur in Russia.³²

Dashkova assumed that she was the chief conspirator and that as she did not have a clear plan of action there was none. The coup as she experienced it was a providential combination of chance and opportunity. Captain Passek and another officer visited Dashkova on June 26 to tell her of the impatience of the Guards to act against Peter III who was preparing for war against Denmark and of rumors circulating about the Empress being in danger. Dashkova told them to assure the soldiers that they at least did not need to be concerned about Catherine because Dashkova was in daily communication with her and would inform them in Catherine was genuinely threatened.³³

³²Dashkov, Memoirs, 65. Unfortunately, Dashkova did not indicate in the Memoirs or her correspondence exactly what works she read about revolutions.

³³In Catherine the Great's account of her accession to the throne written shortly after the murder of Peter III, she offered this explanation of Dashkova's part in the coup, "Princess Dashkov was concerned in this event in the following manner. She was the younger sister of the mistress of Peter III, nineteen years old and prettier than her sister, who was very ugly. If their outward appearance was dissimilar, their souls were still more different. The younger had much intelligence and understanding; she was industrious, well read, had a strong liking for Catherine and was loyal to her with heart, mind, and soul. Since she

The court had departed for Peterhof and Oranienbaum by this time and Dashkova became alarmed about Catherine's isolation there. She wrote to a loyal servant to have a carriage and four post-horses kept ready for the Empress' use in an emergency. The next day Passek was arrested and

did not conceal this liking and since she believed that the happiness of her Fatherland depended on this monarch, she expressed herself everywhere in accordance with these feelings, which did her endless harm with her sister and Peter III.

In consequence of this point of view...many officers who could not speak to Catherine herself turned to Princess Dashkov to assure the Empress of their devotion. But this happened long after the offers of the Orlovs. It was rather the conversation and schemes of the latter which had led these officers, who did not know about the direct way taken by the Orlovs, to turn to the Empress through the mediation of Princess Dashkov, whom they thought closer to her. Catherine never mentioned the Orlovs to the Princess, in order not to expose their names. The great zeal and youth of the Princess caused her to fear that, in the throng of her acquaintances, there might be some one who would inadvertently betray the matter.

Finally the Empress advised the Orlovs to make the acquaintance of the Princess in order that they might be in a better position to communicate with the above-mentioned officers to see what use they might derive from it. For however well-intentioned these officers were, they were, according to Princess Dashkov's own admission, less firmly decided than were the Orlovs, who found the means of carrying out their plans.

As for the rest, not all the courage which Princess Dashkov really showed to such a high degree, would have decided anything. She had more flatterers than confidence, and the character of her family always caused a certain mistrust.

Finally the Princess demanded, or rather through her mediation Lieutenant Passek demanded on one side and the Orlovs on the other, that Catherine should give them something in writing with which they could convince her friends of her consent. Through the Princess she sent a note which was confined to the following expressions: 'Let the will of God be done, and that of Lieutenant Passek; I am in agreement with all that is useful for the Fatherland.'" See Catherine II, Memoirs of Catherine the Great, Katharine Anthony trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), 274-275.

Gregory Orlov himself came to inform Dashkova and Panin of this turn of events. It was at this point that Dashkova's version of the story differs considerably from either Panin's or Catherine's. According to Dashkova's account, Panin seemed unconcerned by the news of Passek's arrest. According to Panin's account, he informed two of the other major conspirators, Hetman K. G. Razumovskii and General M. N. Volkonskii, and instructed the Orlovs to begin the coup against Peter III.³⁴ Dashkova agreed that Orlov should go back to the regimental barracks to find out more details of the arrest. As soon as he left, she asked Panin to leave so that she could rest after all the excitement. Panin returned to the Summer Palace to attend to the young grand duke, Paul, thereby avoiding suspicion which his absence might have caused.³⁵ When he left, she put on a man's greatcoat and started out for the home of another conspirator. On the way she stopped one of the younger Orlov brothers who told her he had come to inform her that Passek had been arrested for crimes against the state. He went on to tell her that he had informed Roslavlev as well and Gregory Orlov had gone to find Count Panin. According to Dashkova, she then specifically told Alexis Orlov,

to go without a moment's delay to the barracks of their regiments, the Izmailovski Guards, and to remain there to receive the Empress, for it is the

³⁴Ransel, The Politics of Catherinian Russia, 65.

³⁵Ibid.

first regimental barracks on her route. Then you or one of your brothers must fly like lightning to Peterhof and tell Her Majesty on my behalf that she should take the post carriage which will be waiting for her, and drive off at once to the Izmailovski Regiment where she will immediately be proclaimed Sovereign, that she should then repair to the next regimental barracks on her way, and that the matter is of such urgency as the loss of a single minute can be so dangerous that I would not delay you by writing to her. Tell her that I spoke to you in the street and implored you to hasten the moment of her arrival. She will understand how essential it is for her to come here as quickly as possible. Good bye. I may go and meet her myself tonight.³⁶

After this conversation, Dashkova returned to her home. Unfortunately, the tailor had failed to deliver a suit of men's clothes that she had intended as a disguise so she was unable to go and meet the Empress herself. In order not to arouse her servants' suspicions she retired to bed. About an hour later another Orlov came to her home to question the decision to bring the Empress to the city so soon. According to Dashkov, "anger and anxiety overwhelmed me and I expressed myself in no uncertain terms about the presumptuousness of these brothers who had been so slow in carrying out the orders I had given to Alexis Orlov."³⁷ The younger brother assured her that her orders would be carried out,

³⁶Dashkov, Memoirs, 71. In this section, Dashkova not only takes credit for initiating the revolution she specifically refutes Ruhliere's account down to the detail of not writing a note to Catherine. He states that she wrote these instructions to Catherine, but Alexis Orlov not wanting to give any credit to Dashkova failed to pass the note on to the Empress. (See Ruhliere, Histoire, 96)

³⁷Ibid, 71.

but she spent an anxious night imagining what might occur if their plans failed. In fact, during the critical hours when the Orlovs brought Catherine from Peterhof to the Izmailovski Regiment to be proclaimed Sovereign and then on to the Kazan Cathedral to receive the oath of allegiance from the other regiments and people of St. Petersburg, Dashkova remained at her home and Panin remained in the Summer Palace waiting for news.³⁸

The next morning Dashkova learned of what had transpired and went to the Winter Palace to join the new Sovereign. As she started across the Square the Guards waiting to catch a glimpse of Catherine recognized Dashkova and lifted over their heads and passed from one to another until she reached the Palace. She presented herself to the Empress with one sleeve missing and totally dishevelled. The two women threw themselves into each other's arms and exchanged accounts of the events of the night before. Looking back over her life, Dashkova wrote, "No happiness could ever have exceeded mine at that moment. It had reached its summit."³⁹ Catherine and Dashkova decided to go with the troops to Peterhof to deal with Peter III. When the Empress arrived in St. Petersburg, the Guards immediately threw off the Prussian style uniforms required by Peter III and put on the Russian

³⁸Ransel, The Politics of Catherinian Russia, 65; Dashkov, Memoirs, 71.

³⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 73.

ones used from the time of Peter the Great. The two women borrowed two of these uniforms to wear during the ride to Peterhof.⁴⁰

Dashkova went home to check on her daughter and when she returned to the Palace, Catherine was meeting with senators in council. Dressed in her borrowed uniform Dashkova barged into the Council to suggested to Catherine that Peter III might attempt to come to the city to oppose her. In response to that suggestion Catherine ordered her secretary to write instructions that guards be posted at the mouths of the rivers coming into the city. After the Council meeting was over, Dashkova and Catherine mounted their horses, reviewed the troops, and set off for Peterhof. Only moments before they left Dashkova's uncle, Chancellor Vorontsov, arrived and remonstrated Catherine for her actions. When he realized his arguments were futile, he refused to swear allegiance to the Empress and returned to his own home. He promised Catherine not to oppose her in anyway but believed he could not break his oath to Peter III as long as he was alive. According to Dashkova, Catherine

⁴⁰It was not uncommon for them to wear men's clothes when going riding. In one of the early notes from Catherine that Dashkova saved, the Grand Duchess informs her that she had been riding and was going to change her clothes because it would not be wise her to go through the streets in men's clothing. She then advised Dashkova "to drive thither direct in your own carriage, lest you should be mistaken for a cavalier in good earnest, and of course be set down as my lover." See Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 81.

did not put him under house arrest. Rather, the Chancellor requested a guard be posted at his home so that there would be no questions regarding his actions in this matter. His dignified behavior in this crisis deeply impressed Dashkova, particularly as he was not fond of Peter III and realized his total incapacity to govern.⁴¹

At Krasny Kabak, they halted for three hours to allow the troops to rest. Unable to sleep, Catherine read out loud to Dashkova the manifestoes she intended to publish and they shared their fears and hopes for their country.⁴² Catherine the Great wrote many versions of her own memoirs for various purposes. Shortly after the coup, she recorded her version of these events. The first mention of Dashkova relates to the stop they made at Krasny Kabak,

In the meantime Catherine was not as peaceful as she seemed; she laughed and jested with the others, called across the entire room to this one and that one, and if she had moments of abstraction, she attributed it to the exertions of the day. They tried to induce her to lie down; she threw herself on the bed for moment but could not close her eyes. But she kept quiet in order not to disturb Princess Dashkov who lay by her side.

⁴¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 76; Catherine II, Memoirs, 270. Interestingly, Catherine describes the response to the threat of Peter's return differently by writing, "While she was marching to Peterhof with the troops, the people (emphasis mine) thought that Peter III might come by water. Several thousand of them assembled on the shore of the Vassili Ostrov where the Neva joins the sea and armed with sticks and stones firmly determined to sink every boat that should come from the sea." Even in this minor matter, Catherine sought to portray herself as the choice of her nation rather than a usurper put on the throne by a coup.

⁴²Dashkov, Memoirs, 75.

When she accidentally turned her head, she saw that the great blue eyes of the latter were open and gazing at her. Thereupon they both burst into a loud laugh, because each had thought that the other was asleep and respected her sleep. They then went back to the others, and soon afterwards they broke camp.⁴³

The difference between the quiet, even intimate time at Krasny Kabak described by Dashkova and the frenetic scene pictured in Catherine's narrative indicates more than simple variations in perception. By the time Catherine began writing her story, her relationship with Dashkova had already begun to cool. The Empress had little use for the woman to whom she had written when only a Grand Duchess, "Difficult, indeed, would be the search to find your equal here, when, throughout Russia, the person I am sure does not exist worthy to replace a friend like you."⁴⁴ Catherine was firmly on the throne though before she was ready to discard this lemon as Peter III had earlier referred to her in his warning to Dashkova.⁴⁵

⁴³Catherine II, Memoirs, 273 - 274.

⁴⁴Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 64.

⁴⁵Katharine Anthony, Catherine the Great (New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1925), 163. Anthony states this in a way that is much flattering of Catherine. She also fails to acknowledge the ups and downs in Dashkova's relationship with Catherine and demotes Dashkova's rank by writing, "Catherine was not quite so egoistic as Peter made her out. She did not throw away the rind; she preserved it carefully. The Countess Dashkov enjoyed the patronage and protection of the great Empress all her life."

From Krasny Kabak they proceeded toward Peterhof, but were met on the way by General Izmailov bringing Peter III's offer to abdicate. According to Dashkova, Catherine sent him back

"beseeching him to persuade His Majesty to give himself up and thus avoid all the incalculable mischief which could not otherwise be prevented; she would then undertake to render his existence as pleasant as possible in any residence he might choose some distance away from Petersburg, and would do her utmost to provide for all his desires."⁴⁶

Dashkova did not actually see the capture of Peter III, but was informed of it and assured that he was safe and in good health. She spent most of her time rushing from one end of the Palace at Oranienbaum to another attending to details.⁴⁷

Upon returning to Catherine's apartments, events transpired which would prove to be a turning point in Dashkova's relationship with Catherine. She discovered Gregory Orlov stretched out on a sofa opening state papers. When she asked what he was doing, he informed her that he was simply carrying out the Empress's orders. Contemptuously she replied, "I doubt it, since no action need be taken on them for a few more days till the Empress appoints people who will officially deal with them. But neither you nor I are qualified for that work."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Dashkov, Memoirs, 76 - 77.

⁴⁷Ibid, 77.

⁴⁸Ibid, 78.

She was angered to find that Catherine planned for Dashkova to dine with her and Orlov. When Catherine asked her what the matter was, she used fatigue as an excuse. But when Catherine asked Dashkova to help convince Orlov not to retire from state service, Dashkova finally realized that the two were lovers. For those like Dashkova and Panin this sort of incident provoked genuine fear that all of their efforts on Catherine's behalf might turn out to benefit this recently arrived Guard's officer and lead to a return to the blatant favoritism of earlier reigns.⁴⁹ Personal jealousy of her intimacy with Catherine also led Dashkova to dislike Orlov intensely. Dashkova could no longer restrain her true feelings even though she knew it would displease her friend. She informed Catherine that it seemed to her that as Empress she could reward Orlov in any way she chose without compelling him to remain in state service. Although Catherine had obviously believed that it was possible to maintain relationships with both Orlov and Dashkova, they could not tolerate each other. For Dashkova that meant that her days in imperial favor were numbered, but not yet over.⁵⁰

From Peterhof they proceeded toward the city, stopping at a loyal noble's country house on the way. Rather than

⁴⁹Isabel de Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 33.

⁵⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 78 - 79.

another warm, intimate scene, Dashkova states simply that she and the Empress had to share the only bed available in the house. During the period between the coup and the coronation Dashkova's conduct, even as described by herself in what she must have felt was a positive light, was terribly arrogant and self centered, bound to offend the Empress as well as her favorite. Her description of their entry into St. Petersburg was typical. She states that she can only remember the cheering crowds and triumphant sounds imperfectly because

overwhelmed by my own emotions and almost oblivious of reality, I rode by the side of the Empress, reflecting on the blessings of a bloodless revolution and contemplating in this gift of Heaven both a beneficent Sovereign and an adored friend whom my own efforts had helped to rescue from a perilous situation, even perhaps, from a horrible fate, and to place on the throne of my beloved country.⁵¹

When they arrived at the Summer Palace, Dashkova immediately asked and received permission to visit her daughter and the rest of her family. Their reactions indicate the breach which had developed between Dashkova and the Vorontsovs. She stopped first at the home of Chancellor Vorontsov whom she perceived to be calm and good spirits. His words of warning to her concerning the fickle nature of friendships with rulers indicate the bitterness and betrayal that he was feeling. She then went to her father's home to find him even more unhappy than her uncle. Soldiers had

⁵¹Ibid, 79.

surrounded his home and one had been posted at the door of every room. Dashkova took it upon herself to inform the officer on duty that he had obviously misunderstood the Empress's instructions and that he should allow most of the soldiers to be reassigned to guard the palaces in the city. This officer immediately informed Orlov of Dashkova's actions. He, in turn, complained to the Empress. When Dashkova returned from visiting her family, the Empress reproved her for her actions and particularly for speaking in French to the officer instead of Russian. Rather than apologizing, Dashkova replied disdainfully, even sarcastically, reminding Catherine that she had only been on the throne a few hours and needed those soldiers for her own and her son's protection.⁵²

Dashkova even refused at this point to accept Catherine's own diamond Order of St. Catherine which the Empress attempted to pin on her. Dashkova informed her that she set no store by decorations and, as her loyalty could not be bought, she did not want to be repaid for her services. Surprisingly, Catherine did not respond angrily to Dashkova's presumption, but rather embraced her and allowed her to kiss her hand. This awkward scene ended happily when the Empress informed Dashkova that a messenger had already been sent to her husband requesting his immediately return to St. Petersburg. According to Dashkova, "This news gave me so

⁵²Dashkov, Memoirs, p. 82.

much pleasure that I immediately forgot all the very justifiable anger I felt towards her."⁵³

When the Empress told her that an apartment would be ready for her the next day, she requested that she wait for her husband's arrival to move in. As they were leaving the Palace, Dashkova informed Panin and Count Razumovski that she was convinced that the Empress and Orlov were lovers. As he had done in the past, Panin tried to keep Dashkova in the dark about the relationships existing between the Empress and the other conspirators, including Orlov. Panin argued that fatigue had affected her youthful imagination leading her to suspect things that were not true. In the following days as the conspirators were rewarded with money, titles, and decorations, Orlov's favored position was so obvious that Dashkova called a Panin a fool for trying to deny it.⁵⁴

Despite her difficult behavior the months between the coup and coronation were a sort of Indian Summer before the chill set in on Dashkova's relationship with Catherine II.

⁵³Ibid, 83.

⁵⁴Ibid, 84-85. Dashkova repeatedly denies that she accepted any money from anyone for her participation in the coup. According to her account, friends had to convince her that it would displease the Empress if she refused the reward given to all the major conspirators. Dashkova used her cash award of 24,000 rubles to repay some of her husband's many creditors. Even this amount, however, was not enough to save Dashkova from serious financial problems after the Prince's death. Dashkova also received the Order of St. Catherine which she had angrily refused to accept earlier.

The Dashkovs moved into apartments in the Palace and Prince Dashkov was given command of the Cuirassier Regiment.

Dashkova soon became pregnant again. Altogether this was an almost euphoric time for Dashkova who was reveling in the close relationships with her husband and her imperial friend, as she referred to Catherine, so unlike the situation she described growing up in her uncle's home. As Dashkova described Catherine during this time,

I really believe there has never been anyone in the world, and certainly never any Sovereign, to equal her in the sheer magic of personality, in the resources of the mind, in versatility, and above all in the charm with which she displayed these gifts.⁵⁵

Conflict with the Orlovs continued, often conducted through their clients.⁵⁶ Even more important, Dashkova's own pride and willingness to accept credit for the coup undermined her position at Court. Two different conversations that Dashkova relates illustrate the problem. When Ivan Betskoi asked the Empress by whom had she been placed on the throne, her answer was, "I owe my accession to God and to my good and faithful subjects."⁵⁷ However, when the Empress Elizabeth's former Chancellor Bestuzhev returned to

⁵⁵Ibid, 92.

⁵⁶Ibid, 92 - 96. Dashkova describes a very complicated situation involving Michael Pushkin and the Orlovs which caused some tension between her and the Empress. However, she categorically denies that she ever fell into disgrace despite the efforts of the Orlovs and others jealous of her relationship with Catherine.

⁵⁷Ibid, 83.

court, the Empress introduced Dashkova to him by saying, "This is Princess Dashkov. Would you have thought that I would owe the Crown to the young daughter of Count Roman Vorontsov?!"⁵⁸ It was not only Dashkova's willingness to accept credit for Catherine's successful accession to the throne was not all that troubled the Empress. The real problem was that others involved quickly began behaving as if a conspiracy had never existed and supported the fiction that Catherine had a legitimate claim to the throne based upon the will of God and the nation.⁵⁹

Dashkova's response to the death of Peter III illustrates her totally self-centered view of her position at court. She could not bring herself to visit the Empress the day she learned of it, even though she blamed the Orlovs and not her friend. When she did go to the Empress' apartments, Catherine told her that she was truly shocked and dismayed by this death. Dashkova simply replied, "It comes too early for your good fame, and for mine."⁶⁰ Ruhliere's made a very valid point about Dashkova when he concluded that,

⁵⁸Ibid, 88.

⁵⁹Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 33-37.

⁶⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 89 - 90. Apparently Dashkova actually saw Alexis Orlov's letter to Catherine confessing the murder of Peter III and was aware that the Empress kept it in her own strong box. Dashkova believed that it demonstrated beyond any doubt that Catherine had nothing to do with the murder and took a great deal of satisfaction that a copy of the letter was preserved by her family.

Her projects of liberty, her eagerness to take a lead in state affairs; the intelligence received from foreign countries, in which the honour of the conspiracy was universally ascribed to her, whereas Catharine wished it to appear, that she had been elevated to the throne by election, and had perhaps actually persuaded herself that this was the case; in a word, the whole taken together, gave high offense; and her disgrace was already resolved on, during the days of a bright sunshine of favour, which was granted to keep up appearance.⁶¹

In fact, the bright sunshine of Catherine's favor toward Dashkova did seem to continue until "Her Majesty went to Moscow to have herself crowned," as Dashkova put it.⁶² The Princess rode with Catherine in her carriage and Prince Dashkov was also in the imperial entourage. Before entering Moscow they stopped at Petrovskoye, Count Razumovski's country estate. Dashkova was very anxious to go to her mother-in-law's home to see her son, Michael, whom she had left in his grandmother's care when she returned to St. Petersburg more than a year earlier. Prince Dashkov gave over the unpleasant task of informing Dashkova that their infant son had died to the Empress. Grief-stricken, Dashkova retreated to the home where her young son had spent his life to share her sorrow with her mother-in-law. She did not rejoin the Imperial party or participate in

⁶¹Ruhliere, *Histoire*, 158. Despite the significance he grants her in his account Dashkova described Ruhliere as one of the "present-day French writers who pile up remorselessly lie upon lie and thus rob history of any consolation or profit that might be derived from it."

⁶²Dashkov, *Memoirs*, 97.

Catherine's triumphant procession into Moscow. Although she visited the Empress daily, Dashkova did not accept the apartments prepared for her in the palace and could not endure the festivities prior to the coronation. According to Dashkova during her absence the Orlovs contrived to humiliate her by suggesting to the Master of Ceremonies that seating in the cathedral be organized by military rank. This meant that as a colonel's wife, Dashkova would be placed in the very back of the public seating erected in the back of the cathedral. The Orlovs and Dashkova's own friends assumed that she would be hurt and humiliated. As she described the scene,

On the 22nd September, the day of the Coronation, I went to see the Empress, but much earlier that time. The Grand Duke was ill and there was no Imperial Family, so I followed immediately after the Empress as she came out of her private apartments. As soon as we arrived in the cathedral I went with a smile to my humble post, where I suffered no inconvenience other than that of not knowing a single of those individuals who, like me, were occupying the only places to which they were entitled.⁶³

After the ceremony, Catherine announced, along with many other appointments, the promotion of the Dashkovs to lady and gentleman-in-waiting.⁶⁴ Prince Dashkov was also appointed to head Catherine's newly formed Commission for the

⁶³Ibid, 99.

⁶⁴In one of her few letters written in Russian, Dashkova told her brother Alexander Vorontsov about her appointment. See E. R. Dashkova to A. R. Vorontsov, 23 September 1762, in AKV, 5: 163.

Reconstruction in Masonry of Moscow and St. Petersburg which was in effect an urban planning agency charged with economic development and recovery in the capitals.⁶⁵

Although that long, Russian winter was spent in celebration, the spring of 1763 brought more family tragedy and public controversy to Dashkova. In April Prince Dashkov's younger sister, Nastasia, to whom Dashkova had grown very close during her earlier stay in Moscow, died after a long and painful illness. Dashkova herself was suffering as she approached the birth of her third child in four years of marriage. These difficulties did not make her immune from the political intrigues of the discontented nobility in Moscow.⁶⁶

The issue of Catherine's possible remarriage was of great concern to not only Catherine and the Orlovs but to those nobles who were becoming increasingly uncomfortable with Gregory Orlov's rise to prominence. Former Chancellor Bestuzhev circulated a petition supporting remarriage as a dynastic necessity given Grand Duke Paul's fragile health. Some nobles signed the petition; but many like Dashkova's uncle, Chancellor Vorontsov, were opposed to the whole idea. One of the most prominent conspirators, Captain Fedor Khitr-ovo, was particularly opposed and claimed that a counter-conspiracy including Count Panin was brewing to seize the

⁶⁵Alexander, Catherine the Great, 79.

⁶⁶Dashkov, Memoirs, 100.

Orlovs. Khitrovo was arrested on May 27 and questioned about his allegations.⁶⁷ Later Prince Dashkov was informed that Khitrovo was specifically asked if he had been in contact with Dashkova. Although he admitted that she was receiving no one at this time, he was sure that she, too, would have opposed Catherine's marriage to Gregory Orlov. Dashkova described his response to torture and interrogation in very flattering terms,

he denied nothing and proudly answered that he would be the first to thrust his sword into Gregory's breast and himself suffer death in consequence rather than live with the humiliating thought that the only result of the Revolution had been to bring about the dangerous rise of Orlov.⁶⁸

Dashkova claimed that she was ignorant of all the rumors circulating in Moscow, "a city renowned for avid gossipmongering."⁶⁹ Khitrovo had attempted to contact Dashkova concerning a number of times. Mourning her sister-in-law's recent death and suffering her own advanced pregnancy, Dashkova refused to receive him. Even this did not remove all suspicion concerning her. On May 12th, Dashkova gave birth to a son, whom she named Paul. The next day Prince Dashkov was asked to meet Catherine's secretary on the street. He was given a note from Catherine which warned Dashkova that she had heard that Dashkova was

⁶⁷Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 34.

⁶⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 101.

⁶⁹Alexander, Catherine the Great, 74.

threatening her. That evening Count Panin and his brother came to the Dashkov's home to discuss the situation. Dashkova claimed that she was not concerned because she expected this sort of thing from the Orlovs. She even asked Panin to remind the Empress that she had offered to be godmother and attend the christening of Dashkova's new baby which she begrudgingly did later.⁷⁰ The incident with Khitrovo in which so many prominent conspirators were named was very alarming to Catherine. Silencing Dashkova with a personal note was certainly not adequate. Khitrovo was banished to his estates and an order which came to be known as the "Manifesto of Silence" was hastily issued commanding all residents of Moscow to cease gossiping about state matters.⁷¹

The stress of all of this provoked one of the most serious of the many health crises in Dashkova's life. Having suffered the death of her sister-in-law, the birth of her third child and public disgrace, Dashkova's health declined precipitously. She genuinely believed she was dying. She went so far as to call for her children to bless

⁷⁰Ibid, 102.

⁷¹Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 34.

them. Her husband's response in this situation seemed to Dashkova to be evidence of his love for her.⁷²

After the Court returned to St. Petersburg, Dashkova remained in Moscow until her husband's departure for his regiment in July. She remained at their estate outside Moscow until December when she joined her husband in the capital where he had rented a home belonging to her old friend, Odart. When Catherine decided to place her former lover, Stanislaus Poniatowski, on the throne of Poland, she chose Prince Dashkov to go with the Russian forces guaranteeing his election. During the Prince's absence Dashkova became involved in events that were not only damaging to her reputation but also put her in real danger.

General Panin, after being appointed to the Senate and the Council, required a residence in St. Petersburg. While he secured one, in order to cut down on her living expenses, Dashkova offered the house she and her children were occupying to him and confined her family to a separate wing. Unfortunately, the leader of a plot to free Ivan VI from the fortress where he had been imprisoned since 1740 and overthrow Catherine, Lt. Mirovich, was one of the many people who came with petitions for Panin while he was living in Dashkova's house. Catherine first learned of Ivan's death

⁷²Dashkov, Memoirs, 103. Severe post-partum depression seems a more reasonable and certainly more charitable evaluation of Dashkova's interpretation of this situation than simple neuroses.

during Mirovich's attempt to free him in a letter from Alexis Orlov sent to her during her trip to Riga. Orlov added in a postscript that Mirovich had been seen several times entering Dashkova's home early in morning. According to the story told Dashkova, Catherine's secretary, Elagin, came to her defense by informing the Empress that Dashkova rarely went out or received anyone, much less someone like Mirovich. After the Court's return to St. Petersburg, Elagin informed General Panin of Orlov's letter. He also defended Dashkova explaining first to her secretary and then to Catherine herself that Mirovich had been to see him regarding the recovery of his family's lands. Dashkova was very fortunate to have such able advocates. Mirovich was convicted of high treason. In the first public execution in St. Petersburg for twenty-two years, Mirovich was beheaded, his body was exposed and then burned.⁷³

Having narrowly escaped arrest and perhaps interrogation in this matter even greater hardship awaited Dashkova. When the courier arrived with news of Poniatowski's election, another messenger brought the news of Prince Dashkov's death. Her response was typically dramatic, "My children were brought to me and I trembled and shook all over as I took them in my arms. For about a fortnight I hovered between life and death and my limbs hung

⁷³Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 36.

from their sockets like useless pieces of wood."⁷⁴ The Panins brought Dashkova and her children to their home and cared for them. Prince Dashkov had requested that Nikita Panin be named guardian of his family and property. He persuaded the Empress to allow the sale of property to settle the Prince's many outstanding debts. Dashkova preferred to beg for more direct aid from the Empress which allowed to keep her property. After satisfying the most urgent demands of her creditors, Dashkova left for Moscow in March of 1765 pridefully determined to pay back all of her husband's debts and build up her children's inheritance.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 110.

⁷⁵Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 102-105.

CHAPTER III

DASHKOVA'S GRAND TOUR

After the terrible losses Dashkova suffered between 1762 and 1764 the decade from 1765 to 1775 was a period of recovery away from the demands of court life. From 1765 to 1768 Dashkova concentrated on domestic matters: rearing her children, managing her estates, and paying back her husband's debts. After straightening out the financial mess left by her husband's death, Dashkova was able to fulfill her desire to travel within the Russian Empire and abroad. Her travels in Russia deepened her pride in her country's heritage and her conviction of its superiority over Western Europe. In 1770 Dashkova began her first tour of Europe and it proved to be a turning point in her life for several reasons.

First, as she experienced other cultures Dashkova's own national identity became more sharply defined and her slavophilism grew. Second, her admiration for England was bolstered in two ways: she formed lifelong English friends among fellow travelers and she spent almost six weeks in England enjoying its most impressive sites. Third, she established herself as an international figure by forming relationships with Voltaire and Diderot and many others.

Finally, directly and indirectly her activities in Europe helped improve her relationship with Catherine the Great. When she returned to Russia, Dashkova's understanding of both England and Russia had matured and her position at Court though still tenuous had improved. The foundation for much of her later accomplishments had been established.

From 1765 to 1768 Dashkova focussed almost entirely on caring for her young children and living as frugally as possible in order to pay back her husband's debts and add to her property. A letter she wrote to her brother from Moscow in June 1765 illustrates her life during this time,

Mon cher frère,

Au retour d'un petit voyage j'ai fait sur une de mes terres, j'ai reçu votre dernière avec cette satisfaction que j'éprouve toujours en recevant de vos chères nouvelles. Je crois que vous en avez déjà reçu des miennes par m-me France, gouvernante de ma fille. Ainsi j'ajouterai seulement que je ne me porte pas bien et que les spasmes hypochondriques me tourmentent excessivement. Du moins ai je a présent la consolation de voir que mes enfans se rétablissent petit-a-petit et commencent a vaincre la faiblesse dans les nerfs, qui les réduisoit à languir. Voilà, mon cher ami, ce que j'ai à vous dire, qui m'affecte le plus; car au reste, je mène une vie si uniforme et tranquille que je ne trouve rien de remarquable dans son courant à être dépeint. J'ai des amis dont la société fort douce et agréable me défend de cette noire mélancolie, qui après la mort du Prince avait pris sur mon esprit un cruel ascendant.¹

Rather than improving her reputation, this period served to add fodder to the gossip mongers of Moscow. Her

¹E. R. Dashkova to A. R. Vorontsov, 10 June 1765, in AKV, 5: 174.

reputation as a miser was obviously enlarged during this time. In addition, her direct involvement in childrearing was definitely a break with tradition which opened her up for more criticism. Her later difficulties with her daughter and even her son's untimely death were undoubtedly no surprise to some in Moscow. Another noble mother was warned that this sort of exaggerated love was sinful and would result in God's punishment. She learned her lesson when her infant died.² This period, but not her intense concern for her children, came to an end when Dashkova began traveling in 1768.

In 1768 Dashkova began petitioning Catherine for permission to go abroad for her children's health. The Empress did not even given her the favor of a reply. Determined, Dashkova made a thirteen hundred mile trip from Moscow to Kiev with side trips to the recently established German colonies. This trip was a great success improving her children's health, costing very little, and confirming her belief in Russian superiority. Buoyed by this success and knowledge, Dashkova ventured to the capital the following year to request in person the Empress's permission to travel to Europe.³

²Patrick Dunn, "'That Enemy is the Baby,' Childhood in Imperial Russia," in The History of Childhood ed. Lloyd de Mause (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 392.

³Dashkov, Memoirs, 114.

Dashkova's actions and Catherine's response in this situation indicate the extreme insecurity of Dashkova's position at this time. Dashkova followed a careful strategy to make it very difficult for Catherine to refuse. She did not approach the Empress directly at first. Dashkova began by telling everyone she met that she planned to make a lengthy journey abroad. When they asked if she had Catherine's permission, she responded that she did not yet but that surely it could not be refused as she had done nothing to lose a right possessed by all the nobility. At an opportune moment Dashkova asked Catherine for permission to travel abroad for her children's health. Although not as friendly as Dashkova might have hoped, the permission was granted. Dashkova immediately requested that Panin prepare her passport.⁴

Dashkova's reputation for frugality grew tremendously during this first trip abroad. When people asked her how she could afford such a trip, she responded that she planned to travel under an assumed name to avoid expensive social and court functions and limit her expenses to food and horses. Dashkova left for Riga at the end of December 1769 after receiving a generous gift of four thousand rubles from the Empress which she promptly used to pay debts incurred while preparing for this trip. From Riga she started toward

⁴Ibid, 114.

Berlin and stopping briefly in Koenigsberg.⁵

At Danzig an incident occurred which foreshadowed Dashkova's defense of all things Russian as she traveled throughout Europe. When she arrived at the Hotel de Russie, she was shocked to find two paintings portraying Russian defeats by the Prussians army. When she asked the Russian Charge d'affaires why he did not do anything about this affront, he responded that he could not even though the paintings had also offended Count Alexis Orlov. Dashkova responded that if she had as much money as the Orlovs she would have bought them and thrown them into the fire. As she was poor by comparison, she would find a more creative solution. That night Dashkova and her companions locked the doors, despite the appearance of impropriety, and repainted the uniforms of the soldiers so that victors became the abject victims and the Russian soldiers triumphed. From Danzig Dashkova's party proceeded to Berlin where they stayed for two eventful months.⁶

The time Dashkova spent in Prussia was a turning point for her. In Berlin the futility of traveling incognito became obvious but Dashkova continued to attempt to limit her expenditures. The Prussian imperial family was very curious about this notorious Russian conspirator and

⁵Ibid, 115.

⁶Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 110-111; Dashkov, Memoirs, 116.

demanded that she appear at Court. When she declined on the basis that changing her name again in order to appear at Court correctly would really create the wrong impression, Frederick the Great replied that she was to be received under any name she chose. Dashkova was, therefore, forced to incur the unplanned expenditure of purchasing a new black mourning dress for the occasion. At the Prussian Court Dashkova experienced the celebrity and respect that she had been denied in Russia and relished the two months she spent there. Despite the incident involving the paintings at Danzig, she concluded that, "If outstanding genius as well as constant and unflinching zeal in working for the benefit of one's subjects make for greatness, Frederick was unquestioningly one of the greatest of kings."⁷

From Berlin, Dashkova proceeded to Aachen and Spa to take advantage of their baths and waters.⁸ This was to prove one of the most important parts of her journey, for at Spa she met Catherine Hamilton and Elizabeth Morgan who proved to be a lifelong friends. Dashkova enjoyed a pleasant stay in Aachen and proceeded to Spa. At Spa

⁷Dashkov, Memoirs, 117.

⁸E. R. Dashkova to R. I. Vorontsov, 30 August 1770, 10 February 1771, 15/26 March 1771, 16/27 July 1771, 29 July 1771, in AKV, 24: 130-139. These are some of the very few letters between Dashkova and her father. They are brief and in Russian. Roman Vorontsov did not respond to this overture from his daughter. Later Dashkova wrote to her brother asking why her father had not written back after many months. See E. R. Dashkova to A. R. Vorontsov, 1/12 June 1771, AKV 5: 180.

Dashkova also met the future French Finance Minister Necker and his wife, but as she put it, " only with the English did I live on terms of friendly intimacy."⁹ Lord and Lady Sussex took the time to bring her English books and teach her to both read and speak English fairly well. This pleasant experience lead Dashkova to decide to go on to England for at least a brief visit.¹⁰

Although she only spent about a month and a half in England, this visit was very important for Dashkova. It confirmed her admiration for England which had been developed from reading the works of the Enlightenment. Her trip also strenthened her desire to educate her son there. It also contributed to the growing cultural contact between Catherinian Russia and England. The Russian minister in England, Pushkin, and his wife had prepared a home for her in London and befriended her during the first three weeks she spent there. This trip was devoted mainly to sightseeing and visits to such places as Bath, Bristol and Oxford. Although she took her daughter on this excursion, Dashkova decided to spare her young son the rigors of sightseeing. She left him in the care of the Pushkins during these excursions, but was understandably very anxious about being apart. Madame Pushkin took him sightseeing in

⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 119. It is important to be aware that Dashkova met Madame Necker here because of events which took place when Dashkova arrived in Paris.

¹⁰Ibid, 118.

London and sent news and a note from him to Dashkova every other day.¹¹

Dashkova also carefully recorded all that she saw in England. In 1775 she published a forty page description of this tour of England in the journal of the Free Economic Society. Dashkova's article was the first of its kind ever to be published in Russia. In it she described the beauty of the English countryside, gardens, and towns. She praised also British institutions, particularly Oxford where several young Russians were studying at the time. Dashkova's enthusiasm helped to promote the growing interest in England among other educated Russians in the 1770s.¹²

When she returned to London, Dashkova met the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. At their home she was presented to Horace Walpole who was very curious about this Russian conspirator. This occasion illustrates Dashkova's efforts to acquaint Western Europeans with Russian customs and culture. In a letter to a friend Walpole provided a now famous English response to Dashkova

Well! I have seen Princess Daschioff, and she is well worth seeing--not for her person, though for an absolute Tartar she is not ugly; her smile is pleasing, but her eyes have a very Cataline fierceness. Her behaviour is extraordinarily frank and easy. She talks on all subjects, and not ill nor with striking pedantry, and is very

¹¹Ibid, 120.

¹²A. G. Cross, "By the Banks of the Thames": Russians in Eighteenth Century Britain (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1980), 236.

quick and very animated. She puts herself above all attention to dress and everything feminine, and yet sings tenderly and agreeably with a pretty voice. She and a Russian lady that accompanies her sung two songs of the people who are all musical; one was grave, the other lively but with very tender turns, and both resembling extremely the Venetian barcaroles. She speaks English a little, understands it easily; French is very familiar to her and she knows Latin.¹³

Having promised to spend the winter with Mrs. Hamilton at Aix-en-Provence, Dashkova returned to the Continent after this brief tour in England. Her voyage, however, was terrifying for these unexperienced travelers and provided an interesting glimpse of the Princess as mother and spiritual guide to her young children. As she described it,

Our crossing from Dover to Calais was not very pleasant. There was a terrible wind, which might have been favourable for those going to India, but for us merely represented twenty-six hours of constant danger, with the waves splashing water over us even in our cabins.

My children were quite terrified and sobbed their hearts out, while I took advantage of all this to make them feel how much courage was superior to cowardice, I drew their attention to the behaviour in such critical situation of the English captain and sailors, and after impressing upon them that the Divine Will demands submission and is always wise, I bade them be quiet. I was obeyed beyond all expectations, for soon, as I was happy to see, they were peacefully asleep in spite of the raging storm.¹⁴

After arriving at Calais, Dashkova went through Brussels and Antwerp on the way to her first visit to Paris. Dashkova's odd and unsociable behaviour during the seventeen

¹³Ibid, 237.

¹⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 121.

days she spent in Paris certainly contributed to her growing reputation for eccentricity and miserliness. She visited the requisite churches and monuments and famous artists' studios. She also attended the many theatre performances always sitting "in the gallery among the humblest members of the audience, wearing an old black dress and shawl and a close cap in order to escape all notice."¹⁵

Dashkova's primary purpose for going to Paris at this time was to meet the famous philosophe, Denis Diderot. She was able to spend quite a bit of time with him discussing mutual interests, which she regarded as profitable. However, she managed to offend many other Parisians who wished to meet the celebrated Princess Dashkova. One evening the famous salonieres, Madame Necker and Madame Geoffrin, came to Diderot's home in the hopes of meeting her. Diderot quickly told her servant to inform the ladies that Dashkova was out which she did. Dashkova was very surprised that he would refuse to see them. Diderot explained that he was sure that these two ladies could not possibly understand or appreciate Dashkova without more time to get to know her. Although they continued to request to see her, Dashkova begged illness and refused to meet them.¹⁶

Diderot also protected Dashkova from the consequences of receiving Rulhiere who was an old acquaintance from his

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid, 122.

days at the French Embassy in Russia. When he called on Dashkova, Diderot advised her that if she ever hoped to return to Russia, she should not receive Rulhiere. He informed her that upon his return from Russia Rulhiere had written an account of the coup which had been circulating in the salons of Paris and was the basis of Dashkova's celebrity in that city. Rulhiere's account had an elegant symmetry to it. He portrayed Catherine as the mastermind with Dashkova and Orlov sharing equally important subordinate roles. Despite the disparaging remarks he made concerning Dashkova's virtue, the account was flattering in the conspiratorial significance he assigns Dashkova. It was not so flattering to Catherine, openly describing her as a usurper albeit a charming one. As a result the Empress had attempted to purchase all the copies of the manuscript to stop its dissemination. By receiving Rulhiere, Dashkova would have added credence to his work and undoubtedly angered the Empress. She wisely followed Diderot's advise and refused to receive him the whole time she was visiting Paris. Diderot, in turn, wrote to the Empress to inform her that Dashkova's actions had done more to undermine the credibility of Rulhiere's account than anything her agents or philosophes such as himself could accomplish.¹⁷

¹⁷Denis Diderot, Correspondence, ed. Georges Roth (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1955), 10: 165-172. Diderot also informed Falconet and Grimm of the time he spent with Dashkova and her admiration for Catherine II. Interestingly, Rulhiere was not offended by Dashkova's

The highlight of Dashkova's time in Paris was her conversations with Diderot. They provided the sort of intellectual stimulation that had also drawn her to Catherine in the beginning of their relationship. The only portion of conversation that Dashkova recorded dealt with those basic Russian institutions: serfdom and autocracy. It is very significant that Dashkova defended serfdom only in the context of the autocracy. She explained to Diderot that she had attempted to give the peasants on one of her estates greater freedom but they simply became the victims of the greed and corruption of provincial officials. She went on to argue that since the peasants were the source of the nobles' wealth, "The gentry serve as intermediaries between the peasants and the Crown, and it is in their interest to defend the peasants against the rapacity of

behavior. In a letter he wrote, "Some persons it is true, who were acquainted with the Princess d'Aschekof, when on her travels, did not distinguish in her the young Princess who had interested them in hearing my narrative. I entreat them to observe, that she is there painted at the age of eighteen, and that I myself have announced, before I conclude, the change which her disgrace produced upon her. She feels already...that melancholy undeception, which is the ordinary fruit of tardy experience. She has lost, at an age so tender, all the illusions of fortune, of friendship, and of glory. Humiliation has blighted that ardent and generous character, which prompted her to sacrifice her family, which inspired her with enthusiasm and credulity, which, in her first emotions of dissatisfaction with the Empress, drew from her this open declaration: 'I thought I was acting right, but I deceived myself.' The long disgrace which she has undergone, and the frightful sentiment of the slavery to which she is subjected, have soured her temper, without her daring henceforth to wear the appearance of discontent."

Provincial governors and officials."¹⁸ Diderot argued that freedom would increase the peasants' understanding and knowledge and, therefore, increase the wealth of the whole country. Dashkova responded by stating the basic dilemma facing any Russian ruler attempting to deal with the problem of serfdom,

If, by breaking a few links of the chain that ties the peasants to the gentry, the Sovereign were also to break a few links that keep the gentry chained to the whims of their Sovereign, I should cheerfully sign with my blood the declaration of the peasants' freedom.¹⁹

Although she probably did not, as she claimed, convince Diderot of the necessity of serfdom in Russia, she certainly delineated the problem more clearly for him during her short time in Paris

In response to his conversations with Dashkova Diderot wrote a very lengthy description of her. He reviewed her prominent part in the conspiracy to put Catherine on the throne indicating his acceptance of her account. He also described her looks, many strengths, and few weaknesses. Diderot noted her tender affection for her children, her taste for English ways and her admiration of Catherine in his portrait of Dashkova. After she left Paris, Diderot wrote to Dashkova while she was still on the Continent. She was still unwelcome in St. Petersburg when Diderot visited

¹⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 122.

¹⁹Ibid, 123.

there. So he wrote several letters to her describing his time with Catherine. Based on the brief time they spent together in Paris, Diderot and Dashkova maintained a close relationship until the philosophe's death.²⁰

From Paris Dashkova fulfilled her promise to Mrs. Hamilton by going back to Aix-en-Provence for the winter. This was a very pleasant time for Dashkova and important for its contribution to her anglomania. She spent these months with the English families wintering there, improving her English and making excursions with them to surrounding places of interest. In the spring Dashkova and her new English friends decided to visit Switzerland. On their way they stopped in Lyons to witness the festivities arranged for the Princess of Piedmont who was coming to France to the Count of Artois. This was such an unpleasant experience that Dashkova decided to leave the theatre. As they were trying to leave, guards were attempting to keep the crowd back and as she described the scene and indicated her conclusions about the nature of French society

Whether out of excessive zeal or misplaced sense of humour, these gentlemen were dealing out blows to persons going out as well as to those who were

²⁰Diderot's correspondence with Dashkova is scattered through his collected works. Oddly, the editor of his papers uses a 1859 retranslation of Dashkova's Memoirs based on Martha Wilmot Bradford's English translation to explain Dashkova's relationship with the philosophe. See Diderot, Correspondence, 10: 165-175, 11:17-21, 13: 134-138, 152-155. Diderot's letters and his "Portraiture of The Princess Daschkaw" were also translated by Martha Wilmot Bradford and published in Bradford, Memoirs 2: 158-190.

trying to come in, and I received a blow even though I belonged to the former--and more reasonable--category. I might perhaps have been knocked down altogether before reaching the street, had I not given my name of Princess Dashkov--proof enough that the alleged civility of the French does not come from the heart.²¹

Fortunately, Dashkova's experience in Switzerland proved much more pleasant. The day after her party arrived in Geneva, Dashkova sent a message asking Voltaire to grant her an audience and he agreed despite his weak condition. Upon meeting Princess Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova for the first time in May 1771, Voltaire felt compelled to thank her for the honor of meeting such a worthy friend of Tomiris, referring to Catherine the Great. He immediately wrote to inform Catherine of his meeting with Dashkova and of her obvious devotion to the Empress. He stated that Dashkova's eyes moistened at the mere sight of a portrait of Catherine. According to Voltaire, she then proceeded to talk for four hours running about her Imperial Majesty, yet it seemed to him that she had only spoken for four minutes.²² Her visit with the great man was disappointing for Dashkova. His extreme physical discomfort obviously put a damper on the evening and Dashkova told him she would have been more honored by his trust that she would be able to understand the need to postpone a visit than by his suffering through a

²¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 130.

²² Voltaire, The Complete Works of Voltaire: Correspondence and related documents (Banbury: Cheney & Sons, Ltd., 1975), 395, 397.

difficult evening for her sake. The next day she was able to see Voltaire when he felt better and without the distractions of other guests. This visit was much more like what Dashkova had expected and they were able to talk at length, particularly about the object of their mutual admiration, Catherine. Voltaire wrote very flatteringly to the Empress about Dashkova. Although the cumulative effect of his letters and other reports coming to her about the Princess may have helped improve Catherine's attitude toward Dashkova, her initial response to Voltaire's description of her devotion was cool.²³ In addition to Voltaire, Dashkova also met and charmed his friend the great artist, Huber, with her representation of Russian customs and songs.²⁴

From Switzerland, Dashkova and her friends took two large boats down the Rhine. They stopped many times along the way to visit the villages along the river. Dashkova believed that by wearing a simply black dress and straw hat and taking only one Russian servant with her she was passing unknown throughout the Rhineland. However, immediately upon her arrival at Karlsruhe, the Grand Master of the Court of the Margrave of Baden arrived to invite them to the Palace. Once again Dashkova begged off with the excuse that she had nothing appropriate to wear to court. However, the

²³Ibid, 446.

²⁴Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova, 130.

Margravine outwitted her and she ended up not only having to pay court but staying overnight in the Palace. Dashkova's party then proceeded through the many beautiful towns along the Rhine including Dusseldorf and Frankfurt.²⁵

Dashkova finally returned to Spa where she made the acquaintance of Prince Charles of Sweden, later the Duke of Sudermania, which would prove important during Russia's war with Sweden several years later. At Spa she also promised Mrs. Hamilton that before five years were up she would return to spend another winter with her dear English friend for it was time for her to return to Russia. Her journey was pleasant through Dresden and Berlin and was a harbinger of a much improved situation for her in Russia upon her return.²⁶

When Dashkova arrived in Riga she received a letter from her brother, Alexander, warning her that there had been an outbreak of the plague in Moscow. He had retreated to one of their mother's estates about ninety miles from Moscow. Her steward from Troitskoye wrote to confirm that forty-five of her servants had died and the rest were quarantined. He was also unable to send her anything to St. Petersburg from an infected area. As was her pattern, this news precipitated another health crisis of her own for Dashkova. She remained for three weeks in Riga, as Count

²⁵Ibid, 133-135.

²⁶Ibid, 136.

Panin had sold her house in Moscow at half its value. Dashkova finally wrote her sister, Elizabeth now Madame Polyanski, asking to stay with her until she could rent a home and obtain servants. Despite these inconveniences, her arrival at St. Petersburg signaled the beginning of better relationships with her family and the Empress.²⁷

During the decade after the coup Dashkova recovered from the deaths and disappointments of the early 1760s. Both in Russia and abroad she laid the foundation for lifelong friendships and accomplishments. Initially she focussed on rearing her children and setting her house in order in Russia. Dashkova then broadened her own and her children's horizons through extensive travel. Every leg of her journey through Europe contributed something to her growth. The reception she received in Prussia restored Dashkova's confidence was restored. In France she established relationships with Diderot and Voltaire which opened the door to developing other connections during her second trip to Europe. The philosophes also helped mend her relationship with Catherine. Dashkova's visit to England and her published description of that time contributed to Russian awareness of English ways. Her time there solidified her own admiration for England as well. Finally, as she traveled and shared Russian customs and culture with those she met in Europe, Dashkova seemed to develop a

²⁷Ibid, 137.

greater appreciation for her own country. She returned to Russia determined to make the most of the strengths of both her homeland and the countries she had seen, particularly England.

CHAPTER IV
THE EDUCATION OF PRINCE DASHKOV

During Dashkova's absence abroad, Gregory Orlov lost his place as Catherine's favorite thereby removing one of the major obstacles in Catherine's relationship with Dashkova. Hearing of Dashkova's plight, Catherine sent her ten thousand rubles to set up housekeeping. When Dashkova appeared at Court, Catherine received her kindly. She followed this up with a gift of sixty thousand rubles for the purchase of the requisite country estate near St. Petersburg where she established her family in the spring. The dramatic change in Catherine's attitude and actions toward her after ten years of coldness and silence surprised even Dashkova. It may have been the result of Panin's increasing importance at this time.¹ She used twenty-three thousand of these rubles to help effect a reconciliation with her father who was facing a large claim against him by the Crown. Her father seemed willing to forget the gossip

¹Ransel, The Politics of Catherinian Russia, 233.

about Panin's paternity and treated Dashkova kindly during the last years of his life.²

Dashkova also made the acquaintance of Prince Gregory Potemkin. When he arrived with the news of the Russian victory over the Turks at Chesme, Dashkova was recovering from her son's illness and her own health problems. Therefore, she did not participate in the celebrations. She sent a painting by Angelica Kauffmann of a beautiful Greek girl to the Empress which pleased her. In the fall of 1773, Dashkova returned to Moscow at least in part to satisfy the demands of her mother-in-law to see her grandchildren. Dashkova and her children lived at Troiskoye but visited their grandmother every two weeks.³ During one of those visits to Moscow, Dashkova met Potemkin whom she described

²Dashkov, *Memoirs*, 136 - 138. Her father's attitude had been a terrible source of pain for Dashkova. In addition to robbing her of his love and affection, it seemed to add credence to the gossip that Panin may have had a youthful liaison with her mother although he may have only been angered that Dashkova was said to have bragged about the affair. As she put it, "I should like to believe that this is nothing but ghastly slander and that the veneration I have always had for the memory of my mother (whom I never had the happiness of knowing, since I lost her at the age of two) was as well-deserved as it was profound."

³Ibid, 140. Dashkova also placed the money that Catherine had given her in safe keeping in order that her daughter "might eventually have it instead of squandering any more of her father's fortune, which I wanted my son to get intact." This is an important indication of the many financial troubles her daughter would later experience and Dashkova's obvious and hurtful preference for her son that would cause so much trouble toward the end of her life.

as, "the favorite, nay, more, the friend, of his Sovereign."⁴ Dashkova was thus able to reconcile herself to Potemkin's status in a way that she never could to the situation with Orlov. On this occasion, Dashkova even gave Potemkin advice on how to avoid the "scandalous public scenes, which the Grand Duke Paul would not have failed to make in order to injure Potemkin and annoy his own mother."⁵

Although Catherine spent most of 1775 in Moscow, family tragedy once again prevented Dashkova from participating in Court activities. Dashkova remained with her mother-in-law constantly during a lengthy illness which led to her mother-in-law's death. Dashkova accompanied the remains to the monastery where they were buried.⁶ After her mother-in-law's death, Dashkova was free to begin traveling again. In December she requested permission from the Empress to go abroad again to educate her son. Although Catherine granted Dashkova's wish, she was angered that

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid, 141 - 142. Although Dashkova claimed that she was only doing what her beloved husband would have wished, in her description of this event she took the opportunity to complain a bit about the Empress. Dashkova's mother-in-law understandably wanted to be buried beside her husband. However, in order to equalize profits among Moscow's many monasteries the Empress had established a rotating order which established one monastery each year for the dead to be interred. Dashkova requested an exception for the mother-in-law but her request was denied forcing her in her weakened condition to make the long trip to a monastery forty-four miles outside the city.

Dashkova did not find the improvements she had been making in higher education adequate for her own son. Catherine's answer was very cold and Dashkova was not allowed to take leave of the Empress privately. When he learned about this treatment, a older relative of Catherine's made an odd statement to Dashkova. He said that he was glad that "all pretence had been dropped in the attitude adopted towards me, which was of a piece with all the rest."⁷ He then assured her that a time would come when she would be treated more fairly. That time would not arrive, however, until Dashkova returned from Europe in 1782 and would not last more than a dozen years.

In preparation for the long stay necessary for her son's education, Dashkova made a very poor choice regarding her daughter. Whatever version of the story of Dashkova's marriage to the Prince is accepted, neither family arranged it. Yet that was exactly what Dashkova chose to do with her daughter, with disastrous results. After receiving the Empress's permission to travel, Dashkova returned to Troitskoye and "married off" her immature, fifteen-year-old daughter to Brigadier Scherbinin, a melancholy and passive young man. Her apparent motivation was to find a husband who could be easily controlled. His presence on their journey abroad would help avoid any of the scandal possible if the young princess had remained single. To insure

⁷Ibid, 142.

Scherbinin's father's cooperation Dashkova guaranteed it would cost him nothing. If the young couple lived in her home, Dashkova promised to give them sufficient capital that they could live off the interest. It should not have been a surprise that a marriage such begun would not end well. As Dashkova admitted,

Criticism and malicious gossip, which I could treat with contempt in the perfect confidence that I was acting as a good mother should, were not, unfortunately, the only sorrows that that marriage brought me.⁸

After these arrangements were made, Dashkova and her party set out. They made a brief visit to Shcherbinin's parents in Pskov, but Dashkova was so bored that they cut their visit short. At Grodno the young Prince Dashkov contracted the measles and his sister soon followed. They were forced to remain there for five weeks. When her children's health returned, Dashkova proceeded to Warsaw where she spent a great deal of time with the King.⁹ She enjoyed

⁸Ibid, 142-143.

⁹Ibid, 144. Dashkova provided in her memoirs a very poignant picture of the fate of Catherine's former lover, whose election to the throne had led to her own husband's death. She wrote, "He had a noble and compassionate heart and a distinguished mind, and his taste for the fine arts, of which he had a connoisseur's appreciation, made his conversation as varied as it was interesting. He deserved to be happy, and the Crown of Poland was for him more of a curse than a source of happiness. As a private citizen, pleasant and esteemed, he would have made the most of those qualities and gifts which Nature had lavished on him and education had improved, and he would have been loved; as King of a turbulent nation, the incoherent constitution of which could only produce contradictions in the character of the people, he was not liked because he could not be

her time there at least in part because of Warsaw's connection with her late husband. From Warsaw they went through Berlin to Spa where Dashkova rented a house.¹⁰

At least by the time she reached Spa Dashkova had arrived at a decision regarding the university her son would attend. At first glance, the University of Edinburgh may seem an odd choice for the preparation of a young Russian officer. However, personal experience, financial considerations, and the quality of education available at Edinburgh made it very attractive to the frugal Princess. In the last half of the eighteenth century the reputations of Oxford and Cambridge had declined considerably as costs had increased. As a result of these factors, in 1761 the first Russian students, Semen Desnitskii and Ivan Tretiakov, were sent to Glasgow whose reputation was growing. The fact that not only tuition but also living expenses were lower also made it attractive. They both earned M. A.'s from the University, but not without severe financial difficulties. These two students returned to Moscow in 1768 to take faculty positions at the University and began distinguished careers in jurisprudence. However, from 1762 the University

appreciated; as a neighbour of two great Powers he was often forced to act against his principles and his own inclination, while the intrigues of the Polish magnates were partly responsible for his being blamed for faults he never had.

¹⁰Ibid, 144 - 145. However, at his father's urging Dashkova's son-in-law parted company with them at this point leaving Dashkova with her unhappily married daughter.

of Edinburgh under the direction of William Robertson gradually eclipsed Glasgow as the center of the Scottish Enlightenment.¹¹

From Spa Dashkova wrote to Robertson to inform him that she was coming there to stay while her son completed his education. She admitted that she needed his guidance and all the information he could provide as her son was only thirteen years old. Robertson wrote back urging that she postpone entering her son in the University until he was older and better prepared. This did not dampen Dashkova's enthusiasm for her plans, and when the season ended she left Spa for London. From London, in a letter dated October 5, Dashkova answered Robertson's objections. First, she made it very clear that she never intended for him to board at the school. She planned for him to live with her because she did not spoil him and because she felt she had nothing to hide from her children. The only other house she could have allowed her son to live in would have been Robertson's own as she was concerned with the development of his character than his popularity. Dashkova also made it very clear that it was impossible for her to wait another four years before beginning her son's studies. The whole purpose of Prince Dashkov's education was to qualify him to become a Russian officer, not a English gentleman. To advance in the Russian military, her son's career had to begin early. She

¹¹Cross, By the Banks of the Thames, 121 - 145.

argued that her son was already accomplished in Latin, English, German, French, Belles Lettres, mathematics, history and government.¹² She then outlined a rigorous three-year plan of study for her son which she was sure could be accomplished,

without trespassing upon any of the time necessary to his professional advancement, in seeking the acquisition of such branches of knowledge as in theory or practice may have little or no connexion with the objects of his military career; a service which, in the estimation of our country, is the most respected and most suited to an elevated soul, and into which, in one sense, he may be said to have already entered.¹³

Anxious to begin her son's education, Dashkova only stayed in London a short time before going to Scotland. She accepted Lord and Lady Sussex's invitation to visit their country estate on the way. While there she made a very importance acquaintance, Edward Wilmot, the father of Martha and Catherine Wilmot. Having met Dashkova this way Wilmot was willing to allow his daughters to make the long and dangerous journey to her home in Russia years later. Dashkova and her children then proceeded to Edinburgh and settled in an apartment in a fashionable area of town rather than the section where students usually lived. Robertson agreed to accept Prince Dashkov into the University and Dashkova stated that, "indeed, this period of my existence

¹²E. R. Dashkova to William Robertson, 5 October, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 117-122.

¹³Ibid, 122.

was both the happiest and most peaceful that has ever fallen to my lot in this world."¹⁴

Although Dashkova claimed not to be concerned that her son have many acquaintances, she went to great lengths to ensure that they derived the most possible benefit from their time in Edinburgh. She had University professors such as Robertson, Blair, Smith, and Ferguson to her home twice a week. Whether or not this was really beneficial to her son, the relationships she formed with these scholars proved very valuable when Dashkova became Director of the Academy of Sciences. Dashkova also scheduled a dance at her home every week for her son. She sent him to riding school and engaged a fencing master to give him lessons every other day. Dashkova claimed to have fulfilled all the duties of a tutor to her son.¹⁵ In fact, in addition to all the other activities before leaving Moscow Dashkova had hired a tutor to help the young prince with his academic work.¹⁶

¹⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 147.

¹⁵Ibid, 149.

¹⁶A. G. Cross, "Dispute with a Tutor: An Episode from Princess Dashkova's Residence in Edinburgh," Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia Newsletter, (September 1991), 22 - 29. Cross identifies Prince Dashkov's tutor as Jean-Frederic Herman, a graduate of the University of Strasbourg. He had been a tutor to Hetman Razumovskii's sons and one of Dashkova's nephews prior to being employed by Dashkova herself in January of 1773. His contract was to last nine years, however, in the summer of 1778 Dashkova dismissed him. Herman then brought the eighteenth century equivalent of a wrongful severance suit against Dashkova before the magistrates of Edinburgh. Although the suit was decided in her favor and she gave Herman 120 pounds in parting, this

Even summer vacations were not restful with Dashkova in charge. During the summer of 1777 they toured the Highlands with Catherine Hamilton.¹⁷ Typical of her descriptions of this period Dashkova wrote,

her presence increased the total sum of happiness which even the violent bouts of rheumatism I had caught in the mountains could not affect. For I had become hardened to physical ills and lived entirely outside myself--that is, wholly for others and for the sake of my love for my children--with the result that I was able to laugh in the midst of acute pain.¹⁸

The following year her doctor ordered her to go to Buxton and Matlock to take the waters and then to Scarborough to bathe in the sea. Dashkova only agreed to this, of course, because it would not detract from her son's studies. At Scarborough, Dashkova became very ill and once again believed she was on her deathbed. Her English friends stayed with her constantly and even promised to look after her children in the event of her death. Fortunately, she

episode could not have but added to her reputation as a calculating miser.

¹⁷Dashkova kept a journal during this trip in 1777. Martha Wilmot copied it in May 1804 while staying with Dashkova at Troitskoe. However, that copy has been lost and only a typescript remains in the possession of Dr. A. G. Cross. His Russian translation of her "Petit Tour dans les Highlands" will appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal XVIII published in Leningrad.

¹⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 147.

recovered in time to return to Edinburgh before the beginning of her son's next term.¹⁹

Prince Dashkov completed his studies and sat for public examinations in May of 1779. Dashkova was obviously thrilled that her son received his Master of Arts from such a fine university and could return to Russia with no doubt about his qualifications to embark on his military career. Before they left for further travels on the way back to Russia, Dashkova wrote a lengthy letter to her son. In it she emphasized the responsibility that such an education brought with it. His conduct, she said, would be more closely scrutinized because of the privileges he had enjoyed. Dashkova concluded that she expected him to conduct himself in such a way as to bring honor not only to himself and his family but also to his Sovereign and Russia.²⁰

In June 1779 Dashkova and her family left for Ireland where they stayed for a year enjoying the company of friends

¹⁹Ibid, 148-149. Describing her return to Edinburgh, Dashkova again emphasized her willing sacrifices for her children when she wrote, "Although I was still suffering from rheumatism in the knees and my digestion was out of order, I was glad to be able to fulfill the duties of a mother and a mentor to the best of my abilities and never sparing myself. My quietly cheerful and gentle disposition amazed all those who came to see me." And she was able to do all of this despite as she put it, the "...modesty of my children's fortune and my own poverty."

²⁰E. R. Dashkova to P. M. Dashkov, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 122-130.

from their earlier tour. In Ireland Dashkova experienced the security and close relationships for which she longed and had not often enjoyed among her family or friends in Russia. The love and respect she received in the British Empire stood in sharp contrast to the tension she endured in her relationships with her own family and her mother-in-law and the extreme vacillations she suffered in her friendship with the Empress. As she described it,

My stay in Dublin even now seems to me like a happy dream which lasted a whole year. But my enjoyment of it was no illusion, for the care and affection of my two friends, Mrs. Hamilton and Mrs. Morgan, and the attention and respect of their families anticipated my every wish and made my days flow in peace and contentment.²¹

Growing up in her uncle's home, Dashkova's admiration for England was secondhand, the result of what she had read and heard about it. As an adult, however, her anglomania had a firm foundation in the deep personal satisfaction she had enjoyed during her lengthy stay in Great Britain.

Dashkova could never have enjoyed her time in Ireland if it had been idle and unproductive. She kept her family and friends very busy and productive for that year. As soon as she settled in Dublin she found a dancing master to give her son lessons twice a week. She also engaged a man to teach him Italian and another tutor to review the subjects he had studied in Edinburgh. In the evenings they enjoyed the best that Dublin society could offer, frequently attend-

²¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 149.

ing the theatre. Dashkova concluded that all these activities "kept my children cheerful and healthy."²²

In addition to deepening her friendships with the women she met during her first tour of Europe, Dashkova also made the acquaintance of many of the most famous people of her time. One of the most treasured of these new friends was the aging philanthropist, Lady Arabella Denny. Having lost her own mother so early in her life, Dashkova became completely devoted to Lady Denny and treasured her memories and the letters she wrote.²³

The necessity of getting her son back to Russia to begin his military career finally forced Dashkova to leave Dublin and begin the trip home. Before leaving Ireland they visited many places including Kilkenny, Killarney, Cork, Lota and Limerick. Lota was the country seat of Martha Wilmot's great uncle. In her description of her time at Lota, Dashkova returns to the joys of a happy family,

²²Ibid, 150.

²³Lady Arabella Denny to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 137-144. These two letters are written in the most complementary tones possible with Lady Denny frequently referring to Dashkova as "your highness". They also indicate some of Dashkova's activities while in Ireland. Lady Denny refers to honoring Dashkova's memory by watering the trees that she had planted "(three of which are in a promising state)". She also mentions a paper Dashkova wrote and read aloud to her describing Ireland and indicates that she wished she had asked for a copy of it. Unfortunately, any insights Dashkova had into the political or economic conditions of Ireland that might have been recorded in this paper have apparently not been preserved.

He gave a small but very elegant reception in my honour, and the morning I spent there was made delightful for me not only because I enjoyed the natural beauties of that wonderful place, but also, and mainly, because of the varied and very superior accomplishments and the distinguished and attentive manners of every member of his family.²⁴

Early in 1780 Dashkova left Ireland. Despite the urging of her friend, Mrs. Hamilton, and much later the Wilmots she was never able to return to the place where she had enjoyed such rare peace and contentment.

From Ireland Dashkova journeyed through Wales and finally arrived in London. Dashkova was presented to the King and Queen and her attention was once again focussed on family matters. She communicated her gratitude and respect when she stated, "I had rarely enjoyed such untroubled happiness as I had in their dominions; my son, especially, had derived great benefit from the education he had received, and I as a mother was deeply thankful for this."²⁵ Dashkova treasured the memory of the Queen's answer, which has to be considered one of the greatest understatements of the eighteenth century, "I have always known that there are few mothers like you."²⁶ Dashkova returned the compliment and was rewarded by getting to meet all of the Queen's many children. After further sightseeing and visits to Bath and

²⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 151.

²⁵Ibid, 151.

²⁶Ibid.

Bristol, Dashkova left for the Continent for the last leg of her journey back to Russia which lasted almost two years.²⁷

Dashkova left England from Margate and landed at Ostend. From there she went to Brussels which served as a sort of base from which she had a very enjoyable and eventful tour of Holland. From Brussels Dashkova went to Paris and settled in at the Hotel de la Chine for a lengthy stay. Unlike her first trip through Paris, Dashkova did not limit herself to sightseeing and conversation with Diderot. No longer completely out of favour with the Empress, Dashkova confidently entered into the fray of Parisian high society renewing old friendships and making many new acquaintances. However, Dashkova was not nearly as impressed with the French as she had been with the English, and many in French society were equally unimpressed with her.

Most of her time in Paris was spent making and returning social calls for many were curious to meet or get to know better this woman who played such a prominent part in revolutions and possibly murders. In the salons of Paris she socialized with many of the most famous people of that era: not only Diderot, but Abbe Raynal²⁸, Madame de Sabran,

²⁷Ibid, 152-158.

²⁸Abbe Raynal to E. R. Dashkova, 29 July 1782, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 194-195. Raynal's letter is in response to one from Dashkova which does not appear to be extant. He concludes his letters by stating, "I cannot allow myself to doubt but you will meet with that reception on your return to Russia which has greeted you in every other part of Europe. If your principles be there adopted

Houdon, the Bishop of Autun, Monsieur Guibert, Monsieur De Malesherbes, and many others. At Madame Necker's she met Rulhiere. Diderot and others had assured her that he had treated her very well in his book, so she told him that she was glad to see him. She explained that her refusal to receive him during her earlier visit had simply been a necessity for maintaining the privacy of traveling incognito. Dashkova was not completely without reservations. When her Parisian friends told her of some of the things Rulhiere had written about the Empress, she refuted them.²⁹

When Dashkova arrived in Paris, she was informed that the Queen wished her to come to Versailles. Her response in this situation is particularly revealing of the conflict Dashkova felt between her personal life and her public role,

my reply was that I was never so much out of my element as at Court. I always felt such a simple little soul when I was there, for all that I was

and your ideas followed up in the spirit with which they are conceived, the state will derive new glory and new advantages. As for us, we should desire nothing better than that it should rest with you to fix the destiny of empires. The more I read history, and the more attentively I observe the present age, the more do you appear to me a being advanced beyond it."

²⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 159-160. Dashkova's response to the publication of Rulhiere's book was typical of her way of dealing with unpleasantness in relationships. When she found out that the rumor concerning her alleged affair with Panin was repeated in his account of the revolution along with other errors, Dashkova concluded that "Rulhiere's alleged book was entirely apocryphal." According to her way of thinking, no one that she had known well could possibly have written such things.

Countess Vorontsov by birth and Princess Dashkov by marriage. I did not mind what kind of seat I sat on, provided it was not too uncomfortable, and that I attached scant value to high birth and could view with complacency a French Duchess, herself a daughter of some rich tax farmer, occupying the 'tabouret'--considered a seat of honour at the Court of Versailles--but as lady-in-waiting to the Empress of Russia, I could not be responsible for any slight to my rank.³⁰

The Queen graciously responded through Madame de Sabran that a meeting could be arranged at Madame de Polignac's home at Versailles that would avoid any etiquette problems. When their appointment arrived, Dashkova still managed to make a major social blunder. The Queen complimented Dashkova's children on their dancing ability and expressed regret that she soon would be considered too old to dance. Dashkova replied that people should be allowed to dance as long as they were able as it was more natural and healthy form of recreation than playing cards. Unfortunately, the French Queen was passionately fond of card games. Although the Queen did not demonstrate any displeasure at Dashkova's remark, it was repeated all over Paris that the Russian

³⁰Ibid, 158. This quote also points out another of Dashkov's conflicts and that is with her own lineage which was not nearly as ancient as she liked to present it. In fact, her own father was not a Count when she was born. Until Elizabeth's reign the men in her family were minor provincial officials, and the reason her mother was so wealthy was that her grandfather was a very successful grain merchant.

Princess had presumed to lecture the Queen about the idleness of the card table.³¹

Another acquaintance Dashkova made in Paris provided a welcome break from French etiquette and gossip. Benjamin Franklin was serving as the United States' Minister to France at this time and Dashkova was anxious to meet the famous scientist. Before leaving London, Dashkova gave her banker a letter of introduction for herself to Franklin which was later forwarded to him.³² In January of 1781 Franklin wrote back to de Neufville in Amsterdam indicating that he appreciated the information about Dashkova.³³ Georgiana Shipley wrote to Franklin,

I wish you extremely to be acquainted with her & her mother the Princess Daschkaw, who is a woman of uncommon good parts & great strength of understanding, my father was quite charm'd with her, & you agree with him on so many subjects, that I do not believe you will differ on this."³⁴

³¹Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 158.

³²American Philosophical Library. This letter is also included in the Calendar of the Papers of Benjamin Franklin in the Library of the American Philosophical Society, ed. I. Minis Hayes, (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1908), 2: 325.

³³"Benjamin Franklin Papers", Library of Congress, Series 1, 5: 11.

³⁴G. Shipley to B. Franklin, 6 January 1781, American Philosophical Library, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.

This letter provided Dashkova with an opportunity to communicate with Franklin. On Wednesday, January 24, 1781, she sent the letter on to him and wrote in English,

The Princess of Daschkaw presents her best compliments to Dr. Franklin, hopes he is well, and sends him a letter which her daughter has received from one of her female friends for the Doctor. The Princess cannot let slip this opportunity without testifying how happy she would be if she were acquainted with the Doctor whom the Princess esteems and respects beforehand. Hotel de la Chine, Wednesday morning³⁵

Although no account of their meeting remains,³⁶ Franklin wrote back to Georgiana Shipley agreeing with her description of Dashkova. In this letter he also indicates that Dashkova saw him several times during her stay in Paris.³⁷ When they had each returned to their homelands, these two citizens of the Republic of Letters nominated each other for corresponding memberships in their countries' learned societies. Their relationship, established in the

³⁵E. R. Dashkova to Benjamin Franklin, American Philosophical Society Library.

³⁶Part of Journal 1780-1781, Benjamin Franklin's Autobiographical Writings, selected and edited by Carl Van Doren (New York: The Viking Press, 1945), 500. Franklin mentions going to the Hotel de Chine the next day, but Dashkova was not there. There is unfortunately no comment on the visit that did finally take place. Dashkova also did not describe her visit with Franklin possibly because Catherine regarded him as a terribly dangerous revolutionary.

³⁷A. Woronzoff-Dashkoff, "Disguise and Gender in Princess Dashkova's Memoirs", Canadian Slavonic Papers, 33 (March 1991): 69. In a note Woronzoff-Dashkoff cites an unpublished fragment of a letter from Franklin to Shipley in February or March 1781 located in the archive of The Papers of Benjamin Franklin, Yale University Library.

salons of Paris, became an important element in Russo-American scientific and cultural relations.

For the next year Dashkova toured Europe with her children seeing as much as possible, particularly if it had anything to do with military science. During this leg of her trip, Dashkova acted most like a tourist, albeit a well-educated one. She and her children visited museums, churches and art galleries in the Swiss and Italian cities they passed through. She also continued collecting fossils and botanical samples everywhere she went. When the heat and malaria made it dangerous to travel, Dashkova spent nine weeks at the Baths of Pisa. Unable to go on visiting garrison towns and citadels, Dashkova determined to keep up her son's education by organizing a course of reading which they pursued together.³⁸

Their stay in Pisa culminated in a ball for the Italian nobility celebrating the anniversary of Catherine's accession to the throne. From Pisa the Dashkovs went on to the Republic of Lucca which Dashkova found very interesting politically. From there they went to Leghorn where the Grand Duke Leopold had built a new quarantine hospital. Dashkova acquired the plans of the hospital and forwarded them to Catherine to indicate her continued interest in her country's welfare. She reminded Catherine of the sacrifices she had made to provide her son the education necessary to

³⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 169.

serve his Sovereign with distinction and begged her to put Dashkova's mind at rest about his advancement.³⁹

Having done what she could about that troubling situation, Dashkova continued her tour of Italy. In Rome she not only met Pope Pius VI, but also found English residents to travel with throughout the rest of Italy. Dashkova also enjoyed restored peace of mind during her stay in Naples. There she received a kind letter from Catherine assuring her that when they returned to St. Petersburg, her son would receive appropriate promotion in the Guards.⁴⁰ Catherine also indicated that he would be appointed Gentlemen of the Chamber. Dashkova wrote back begging her not to give him a title at Court. Dashkova assured the Empress that her only wish for her son was to serve his Sovereign with distinction in a Guards Regiment. Catherine's kind note

³⁹Ibid, 170-173.

⁴⁰Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, 22 December 1781, in Bradford, Memoirs, 82-83. Catherine did seem as kind and interested as Dashkova believed when she wrote thanking her for the hospital plans and adding, "...I must be permitted to express to you, at the same time, the satisfaction I have felt on finding you not only always occupied for the good of your country but actuated also by the most zealous attachment to my person. The same sentiments, I am sure, have been imbibed by your children, who possess a twofold title to my interest, from the affection I have experienced from both their parents. I have ordered that my godson should have a commission in the guards, in whichever regiment you may prefer; and in assuring you of the continuation of my regard, I have pleasure in adding that it is no less sincere than affectionate."

made Dashkova determined to return to Russia even more quickly, perhaps before the Empress' feelings altered.⁴¹

At Vienna Dashkova made it very clear that all of her travels had not lessened her pride in her own country's history and accomplishments. She was invited to dine at the home of the Austrian Prime Minister, Prince Kaunitz, who believed himself to be an expert on Russia. When the conversation turned to the subject of Peter I, Dashkova could not tolerate his opinions any further. Kaunitz declared that Peter the Great was the creator of Russia. Dashkova, who did not share her Sovereign's reverence for the Petrine tradition,⁴² responded by pointing out the great military accomplishments of Muscovy and the earlier cultural and religious achievements of Kievan Rus. The Prince then asked Dashkova, "Do you count for nothing the fact that he drew Russia nearer to Europe and that it is only since his day that she has become known?"⁴³ Dashkova's lengthy answer bears repeating because it presages the basic criticisms

⁴¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 174-181.

⁴²Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 274. In one of the conversations Dashkova recorded she expressed to Catherine sentiments similar to those found in the discussion with Kaunitz. She stated that Peter I, "had spirit, Madame, but he lacked insight and had little judgment. His love of novelty or rather his glorying in universal change made him do some futile things, sometimes even hurtful, and this often produced the impression that he deprecated the Russian nation and considered it below the level of others."

⁴³Dashkov, Memoirs, 183.

levelled against Peter by later Slavophiles. According to her memory of this dinner conversation, she told the Austrian Minister,

A great Empire, Prince, with all the resources of wealth and power, such as Russia possesses, has no need to be drawn nearer to anything. When a body as formidable as my country is well governed, it draws others towards itself. If Russia remained unknown till the period you mention, you will forgive me, Your Grace, if I conclude that this only proves the ignorance or folly of the European countries which remained indifferent to the existence of so formidable a Power. And to prove to you that I am not in the least prejudiced against the Emperor Peter I, let me give you my sincere opinion of that extraordinary man. He had genius, energy and zeal for improvement, but his total lack of education had left him with unbridled passions which completely swayed his reason; quick-tempered, brutal and despotic, he treated all people without distinction as slaves who must bear with everything; his ignorance did not allow him to see that many reforms introduced by him through violence were being introduced quietly and peacefully by trade, exchange, the passage of time and the example of other nations. He would not have destroyed that priceless heritage which was our ancestors' character if he had not valued foreigners so much above Russians.⁴⁴

She went on to criticize Peter's whirlwind of legislative activity as counterproductive, weakening rather than strengthening the legal foundation of the country. Dashkova also believed that the great Peter had taken away the rights of not only the nobility but also the peasants. She attacked the Table of Ranks as the basis for the most despotic form of military government. In her monologue she concluded with a description of the folly and misery caused

⁴⁴Ibid, 184.

by the construction of St. Petersburg, a product of Peter's vanity. She then compared his accomplishments very unfavorably with Catherine the Great's. Prince Kaunitz prompted her to continue by praising Peter's hands-on approach to acquiring skills and technology for his country. She suggested that the Prince must be joking for he knew that,

"Peter I...was failing in his duties and in the important work and cares of State for which he was responsible by staying in Saardam, becoming a carpenter and mutilating the Russian language with Dutch terms and word-endings which invade his edicts and all naval phraseology."⁴⁵

Dashkova's remarks caused a stir in Vienna when Kaunitz repeated them to the Austrian Emperor. The Emperor met her briefly as she toured the Imperial Gallery and offered her any duplicates she wanted from his natural history collection. His attention was flattering and what Dashkova had come to expect after her years away from Russia. The warm, but insincere, sentiments he expressed toward Catherine also pleased her. Dashkova left Austria the next day to

⁴⁵Ibid, 185. It is interesting to note that long before she became President of the Russian Academy Dashkova was outraged by the corruption of the Russian language by foreign terms. Dashkova's criticism of Peter's actions in this regard provoked a particularly sharp counter attack by Kliuchevskii who referred to her and her husband as "refined pedants" who could not appreciate "a working-man Tsar". See Kliuchevskii, 4: 114, 209.

fulfill arrangements made with Frederick the Great for her son to learn about the Prussian military.⁴⁶

Dashkova continued visiting garrisons and gathering samples to add to her natural history collection through Prague and Dresden on the way to Berlin. From there her son was allowed to go to Potsdam to follow Frederick the Great as he reviewed his troops and conducted manoeuvres. The Prussian King made an exception to his rule and allowed Dashkova to be present at the review of his troops when they returned to Berlin. After reuniting with her son, Dashkova hurried on toward St. Petersburg making only brief stops at Koenigsberg and Riga.⁴⁷

For Dashkova her years abroad were a complete success. Her relationship with the philosophes, Diderot and Voltaire, is often pointed to as the most significant result of her tour. It is true that Dashkova remained enthralled by these great men and loved to reminisce about this exciting time in her life. The Englishwomen who became lifelong friends, such as Catherine Hamilton, and the English education she acquired for her son were much more important to her. What had begun as admiration for the abstract principles of English government and society, matured into a deep love for the country where Dashkova was able to realize all of her wishes for her son and herself. By the time she

⁴⁶Dashkov, Memoirs, 186.

⁴⁷Ibid, 187 - 188.

returned to Russia Dashkova seems to have turned become disillusioned with the French despite her affection for Diderot. During her time at Edinburgh she developed a respect for the scholars who led the Scottish Enlightenment. She contributed to the growing contact between Russia and England. When she returned to Russia, an older and wiser Dashkova was able to draw upon what she had experienced abroad and the contacts she had made to benefit the homeland that she had passionately defended to all who would listen from Paris to Vienna.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Ibid, 188 - 189.

CHAPTER V

A TRIUMPHANT RETURN

When Dashkova arrived in St. Petersburg in July 1782, everything had changed. With the end of the American Revolution, the necessity for the League of Armed Neutrality had also ended relieving much of the tension in the relationship between England and Russia. Anglophiles like Dashkova and her family were once again prominent at Court as Catherine engaged in a major rapprochement with the Vorontsovs and others whose expertise she needed. In her relationship with Catherine, Dashkova found an important ally in Prince Potemkin, the only favorite with whom Dashkova could ever get along. Without having to choose between her friend and lover, Catherine was able to draw upon the abilities and affections of both to accomplish her goals. During the period from 1782 to 1794 Dashkova, therefore, enjoyed unexpectedly renewed public service and imperial favor.

In 1783, Catherine the Great appointed Dashkova President of the Academy of Sciences and later that same year made her President of the newly-created Russian Academy of Letters. Initially Dashkova protested her appointment, particularly on the basis that it was not appropriate for a

woman to hold such prominent, public positions. Upon accepting these jobs, she set to work with characteristic devotion and energy. Although enormously vain and difficult to work with, Dashkova helped to revitalize the Academy of Sciences after years of decline. Both her admiration for England and her devotion to Russian culture were constantly demonstrated in her actions in the Academies. Dashkova made significant contributions to the Academy of Sciences in four areas. The most obvious was in the material realm. The financial and material resources of the Academy grew as Dashkova acted as a channel for contributions from interested nobles and Catherine herself. Dashkova was also very aggressive in recruiting new Russian and foreign members to the Academy which added to its prestige. Many of the regular and corresponding members admitted during this period were educated in Great Britain and shared Dashkova's anglomania. As private publishing developed after 1783, Dashkova oversaw the changes in the Academy's role as a publishing house. Under her direction the Academy adapted to its change from the major publisher of works by Russian authors to a more narrow role as a publisher of scholarly texts. Finally, during Dashkova's administration the teaching function of the Academy was more narrowly defined. The number of Russian faculty and students in the gymnasium was increased while the university was phased out of existence. In many ways these years were a transitional

period for the Academy and Dashkova's energy and administrative ability were crucial factors in the survival of the Academy.

The Russian Academy was established during a time when a reaction against the flood of Western ideas and customs began. As President Dashkova helped redirect the talents and energies of some Russian intellectuals away from the translation of Western works and toward the study of their own language and literature. The major vehicle for this was the compilation of the first scholarly dictionary of the Russian language and its first systematic grammar. She was involved in a number of other projects intended to promote the knowledge and appreciation of Russian literature. This included a journal to which she and Catherine II contributed. Having been appointed on an imperial whim, Dashkova suffered because of the insecurity and vulnerability of her position despite her hard work. The final rupture in the relationship between the Empress and Dashkova was the result of the princess's literary activities. In 1793 Dashkova allowed the Academy to publish a play entitled "Vadim of Novgorod" by Y.B. Knyazhin which praised representative forms of government too highly for the Empress after the excesses of the French Revolution. At the urging of her favorite, Catherine II reprimanded Dashkova severely and had all copies of the play destroyed. After this final embar-

rassment, and exhausted by the demands of court life Dashkova left the Academy and life at court in St. Petersburg.

In the weeks following her arrival in St. Petersburg in 1782, Catherine showered Dashkova with gifts and invitations often with the help of Potemkin. After a lengthy correspondence between Dashkova and Potemkin on the matter, Catherine also gave her possession of a village named Krugloye and the surrounding land and peasants which were located in Belorussia.¹ The Empress also purchased a house for her in town.² Dashkova's real attitude toward all this is made clear in the following statement,

I mention this to show that everything that could give rise to envy and was of no real value was lavished on me at this time. This sort of thing always makes many enemies for one at Court, yet my fortune was always less than modest.³

During this time Dashkova made many efforts to repair the damage done to her relationship with her family, the Vorontsovs, during the 1760s. To this end Dashkova employed Potemkin to petition Catherine to make her niece a lady-in-waiting in lieu of other material rewards. As Dashkova

¹D. P. Burtulin to A. R. Vorontsov, 12 July 1782, in AKV 32: 213.

²Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, 15 August 1782, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 83. In a note sent from "Czarskose-lo," Catherine wrote to Dashkova, "If you have been gratified by what I have done in providing you a residence in town and in the country, believe me, madam, that it is a real satisfaction to find that you are leased with them, and more so to be assured of the sentiments which you continue to entertain for me."

³Dashkov, Memoirs, 198.

told Potemkin, "I saw my sister every day...she was greatly depressed, and no amount of favours from Her Majesty could efface my feelings of being at least partly responsible for her downfall in 1762."⁴ Although typically indolent, Potemkin managed to acquire this as a sort of present for Dashkova's name day on November 24, 1782. Madame Polyanski was, of course, ecstatic when Dashkova brought her the news and any ill feelings remaining between the two sisters were erased.⁵

After twenty years Dashkova was not the only Russian with unresolved feelings arising from the events of 1762. Potemkin's interest in a niece other than his own may be explained by the sudden reappearance of Gregory Orlov at Court.⁶ Dashkova had crossed paths with the Orlovs in Europe, but he returned to Russia earlier in 1782 than she did. Orlov's wife died while they were in Lausanne in June 1781 and her death apparently accelerated his psychological breakdown.⁷ In fact, according to a dispatch from Sir James Harris to Lord Grantham dated November 15, 1782, Orlov ap-

⁴Ibid, 202.

⁵Ibid, 202.

⁶Potemkin was notorious for his promiscuity including relationships with five of his nieces. See George Soloveytchik, Potemkin: A Picture of Catherine's Russia (London: Thurnton Butterwork Ltd., 1938).

⁷Alexander, Catherine the Great, 206-207.

peared to be perfectly insane. Describing Catherine's response to this, Harris wrote,

it should appear that at no period of her life, her feelings were so strongly and painfully moved as by this melancholy event, which has befallen her earliest favorite, and a man who at all times has been the first object of her affections, if not of her passions.⁸

As a result, Catherine received Orlov anytime he called on her day or night and refused to allow any harsh methods or confinement to restrain him. According to Harris,

His situation of mind, when he is there, his wild and incoherent discourse ever affect her to tears, and discompose her so entirely, that for the remainder of the day she can enjoy neither pleasure nor business. She is sometimes exposed to hear the most unwelcome of all language, and a few nights ago he exclaimed, of a sudden, that remorse and compunction of conscience had deprived him of his senses, and that the share he had in a transaction long since past, had brought down on him the judgment of Heaven.⁹

Catherine was not the only one distraught by Orlov's behavior. According to Harris, Orlov's actions had "raised a storm in the interior of the palace." At the time both Potemkin and Lansky, Catherine's younger favorite, were claiming illness and receiving no one. Harris believed they were jealous and trying to convince Catherine to have Orlov

⁸Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris First Earl of Malmesbury: Containing an Account of His Missions to the Courts of Madrid, Frederick the Great, Catherine the Second, and the Hague; and his special missions to Berlin, Brunswick, and the French Republic, edited by his Grandson, the Third Earl (London: Richard Bentley, 1844), 2: 11.

⁹Ibid, 2: 11-12. The transaction to which he refers is, of course, the murder of Peter III.

removed before he did or said something in a lucid moment that turned her against them. Beyond his momentary indisposition, Potemkin particularly seemed upset by all this. According to Harris,

Indeed, on the whole, the character and conduct of Prince Potemkin are so materially changed within these six months, that it is very worthy of remark. He rises early, attends to business, is become not only visible but affable to everybody, and, what is still more extraordinary, he is now endeavouring to reconcile himself with his most implacable enemies, Besberodko and the Woronzoffs, whom he has been uniformly attempting for these last three years to upset and disgrace.¹⁰

Although Harris does not mention Dashkova directly in his dispatches to London, Potemkin's behavior toward her fits the pattern he describes toward the Vorontsovs in general and attributes to Orlov's bizarre actions and influence over Catherine. Perhaps by allying himself with another of the original conspirators and an outspoken critic of the Orlovs, Potemkin hoped to strengthen his position in this struggle among former favorites. In any case, during the events that followed in Dashkova's life, Potemkin played an important supporting role.¹¹

Seventeen eighty- three could be characterized as a year of death and renewal in Russia. The deaths of Nikita Panin, Gregori Orlov, and Field Marshal Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Golitsyn who represented the generation that

¹⁰Ibid, 13 - 14.

¹¹Soloveytchik, Potemkin, 258.

put Catherine on the throne made it a black year for her.¹² The health problems of Lansky and Potemkin also added to the Empress's worries. Perhaps these reminders of mortality help explain the aging Empress's returned favor toward Dashkova. In front of all her guests at a Court ball, Catherine indicated that she wished to speak to Dashkova. As she remembered the scene, Dashkova had "the impression of falling from the clouds" and was dumbstruck when Catherine told her that she planned to appoint her to the post of Director of the Academy of Sciences. When she regained her voice, Dashkova unequivocally refused. She even accused the Empress of making fun of her by offering a job for which she was totally unqualified. In response Catherine accused her of being unwilling to obey an imperial command and lacking affection for her personally. Unswayed, Dashkova offered instead to be put in charge of Catherine's washerwomen by stating,

Your Majesty thinks she knows me, and yet you are not aware that I have enough pride in me to imagine that any employment you might grant me would gain in dignity by my acceptance of it. As soon as I am at the head of your washerwomen this will become a great Court office which everyone will envy me. I have no idea how to do the laundry, but the mistakes that I shall make as a result of my ignorance will be of no consequence, while the faults committed by the Director of the Academy of

¹²John T. Alexander, "Catherine the Great and the Foundation of the Russian Academy," Study Group on Eighteenth Century Russia Newsletter, (1985), 17 -18.

Sciences will all be serious and will bring discredit on the Sovereign who has selected him.¹³

Catherine swept away all of her objections and cut her conversation with Dashkova short with the statement, "As to your refusal, it has only confirmed my opinion that I could not have made a better choice."¹⁴

As soon as the ball was over, Dashkova went home to put her refusal on paper. In her letter she reiterated her reasons for refusing the directorate of the Academy. She added that, "God himself, by creating me a woman, had exempted me from accepting the employment of a Director of an Academy of Sciences."¹⁵ Dashkova also brought up her own lack of formal academic training as evidence of her unsuitability for this post.¹⁶ When she finished her let-

¹³Dashkov, Memoirs, 204.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶E. R. Dashkova to Catherine Hamilton in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 150-151. Dashkova's lack of a formal education such as her brothers received remained an issue for her throughout her life. In one of the few surviving letters she wrote to Mrs. Hamilton Dashkova stated, "Certain persons have considered me learned, and represented me as such. Not only have I invariably rejected such a claim, but I have frequently repeated to those who would listen to me, that it was impossible I should be so, unless learning came by inspiration. My education, which, in the time of my youth, was thought the best of all possible educations, was confined to the German, French, and Italian languages, history, geography, arithmetic, the dogmas of the Greek church, drawing, and dancing. I had a very lively desire, it is true, for instruction, and there was scarcely a book which fell in my way that I did not devour. But reading of this desultory nature, without selection or method, could scarcely make me learned. At fifteen, I fell in love with

ter, Dashkova went for the first time to Prince Potemkin's home to discuss the matter with him. When she told him what had happened, Potemkin informed her that he already knew of Catherine's plans because her heart was set on entrusting the administration of the Academy to Dashkova. Potemkin then attempted to persuade Dashkova to accept Catherine's offer by explaining in the same conciliatory tone found in other conversations recorded by Dashkova,

Listen to what I have to say, Princess, before you lose your temper. You are very attached to Her Majesty; no one doubts that. Why then do you want to offend and distress her?--for I have already told you she has been thinking of nothing else these last two days. However, if you really persist in your refusal--here is a pen; all you have to do, Princess, is to give yourself the not very serious trouble of writing another letter. I am speaking to you as a man who has your interests at heart and I must tell you, too, that the Empress considers this appointment as the best means of securing your companionship and keeping you in Petersburg. She is bored by the fools who surround her.¹⁷

In parting Dashkova told Potemkin that she would write a more restrained letter, but begged his support in changing Catherine's mind on this subject. She sent her letter to Catherine and immediately received this reply,

You are an earlier riser than I am, my fair lady, and have sent me a note for my breakfast. In replying to you, I shall begin my day more agreeably than usual. First then, since you do not

him who became my husband. Then followed marriage, children, sicknesses, and afterwards sorrows; circumstances, it will be admitted, most unfavourable to the acquisition of those literary attainments I so much coveted."

¹⁷Dashkov, Memoirs, 205.

absolutely refuse my proposal, I may forgive all you mean to say by the word incapacity, though I shall reserve to myself the opportunity of time and place to present you with my own commentary upon it. What you are pleased to call my right, I have long known to call by the more appropriate name of my gratitude; but it is quite a new discovery to find that I have outrivalled Dame Nature herself in endowing you with all the strength of your character. However, be this as it may, rest assured that on all occasions where you think I can be of use it will afford me pleasure to assist you, both in word and deed.¹⁸

Catherine sent a letter and a copy of the ukase appointing her Director of the Academy of Sciences to Dashkova and the Academy. She also took this opportunity to dissolve the Commission administering it at the time because of complaints lodged against the previous appointee, Domashnev, a protege of Gregory Orlov.¹⁹

Catherine wrote to F. M. Grimm that she had appointed Dashkova to this job in order to keep a busybody occupied.²⁰ Perhaps, in a less negative sense, Catherine had finally realized that it was in her best interest to channel Dashkova's energies along lines that she could control. With her children's education complete Dashkova needed something else to command her attention. After the disastrous results of relegating her to Moscow in 1762,

¹⁸Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 83-84.

¹⁹Nova Acta Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitanae (St. Petersburg: Akademii Nauk, 1783) 1: 3-5.

²⁰Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 535.

Potemkin was probably correct in stating that Catherine wanted to keep Dashkova in St. Petersburg and away from that focal point for noble discontent. On a more positive note, Catherine also seemed to realized that Dashkova shared her workaholic ways and attention to detail. These qualities were desperately needed to put the Academy back in order after decades of neglect. The Academy faced major challenges in its roles as a censor, a publishing house, and as an academic institution which only a major commitment of time, energy and attention to detail could possibly address. Even more importantly, though, Dashkova also had in common with the Empress pride in Russia's cultural and intellectual heritage. With Dashkova as Director, Catherine could hope that the Academy would build on that heritage and bring more glory to Russia and its Sovereign during a critical period in Russian intellectual life.

To understand Dashkova's situation it is necessary to review briefly the history of the Academy up to the time of her appointment. Soon after Peter the Great's death in 1725, the St. Petersburg Academy of Science was established. It represented the culmination of Peter's efforts to bring Russia up to Western economic, military, and intellectual standards. In January 1724 the Senate approved the foundation of an academy to advance scientific knowledge and provide necessary technical assistance to the government. Peter was strongly influenced by Leibniz and the Berlin

Society of Sciences as models for his new institution. The Academy was to deal with mathematical sciences, theoretical or experimental sciences, and the humanities. Western scholars were recruited to provide a foundation for the development of the new institution and Russian science. Foreign scholars continued to dominate the Academy throughout the eighteenth century.²¹

From its foundation the Academy struggled with administrative and financial problems as well as its dependence on foreign scholars. Peter's widow, Catherine I, fulfilled her husband's wishes to open the Academy, but she did not share his vision for its role in Russian society. The Academy was very dependent financially upon the sovereign. When Catherine I and Peter II chose to return the imperial court to Moscow, the Academy suffered from its absence in St. Petersburg. The first President of the Academy, Peter's court physician, L. L. Blumentrost, went with the court to Moscow. This left J. D. Schumacher, a bureaucrat in charge of Peter's library, in charge of the Academy. Even after the court's return to St. Petersburg in 1730 Schumacher continued to dominate the Academy. This established a tradition of a strong directorate and weak presidency occupied by a court favorite.²²

²¹Alexander Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1917-1970) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 6-11.

²²Ibid, 11-20.

For the first twenty years of its existence the Academy functioned as a state agency without a charter. Beginning with Schumacher it was administered by foreign bureaucrats who were more closely tied to the government than science. Administrators arbitrarily promoted and dismissed academicians. Often in response to government demands research was ordered without prior input from academicians and scholars were given assignments outside their fields. The fact that they were not included in the table of ranks exacerbated the powerlessness of these scholars. This meant they had no legally defined status and no place in Russian society. This was also a problem for the university and gymnasium attached to the Academy. As academic achievement did not result in advancement in the table of ranks, the schools were very unappealing to young Russians, particularly nobles. In the 1730s it was not uncommon for there to be more academicians than students. As late as 1743 an administrator complained to the Senate about the academicians' inability and unwillingness to learn and use the Russian language so that students might be more attracted to the Academy's schools.²³

Major changes occurred in the Academy during Empress Elizabeth's reign, 1740-1762, but its problems persisted. Throughout the 1740s academicians salaries were slow to be paid. In 1726 the Academy had begun publication of its

²³Ibid, 12-20.

journal, Commentarii Academiae Scientiarum Imperialis Petropolitanae. It also published abridged Russian translations of the articles appearing in the Commentarii. From 1741 to 1746 the Academy did not publish its journal. In 1747 the Academy was finally given a charter. This charter affirmed the administrative power of the chancellery over the duties of the academicians. It also separated the university from the Academy giving scholars who taught the title of professor and assigning scholars who did research the title of academician. Further, the charter relegated the humanities to the university leaving only the natural sciences as topics for research.²⁴

The position of Russian scholars in the Academy was improved during Elizabeth's reign. The best example of this is found in the career of M. V. Lomonosov, but there were others. Lomonosov was the first Russian to become a full member of the Academy in 1745. He was then given a position in the table of ranks as a state counselor as a reward for his patriotic poetry. Toward the end of the 1750s Elizabeth appointed him to be one of the three chancellors who administered the Academy, a position he held until his death in 1765.²⁵

²⁴Ibid, 11, 15-23.

²⁵Ibid, 15-23.

When Catherine II ascended the throne in 1762, the Academy was in turmoil. Lomonosov pressed for the abolition of the chancellery and greater numbers of Russian scholars. In May 1763 Catherine almost forced him to retire. In 1764 Lomonosov proposed a new charter for the Academy which would have allowed it to be administered by a representative council of academicians. His death did not end this struggle for greater academic autonomy. In 1766 Leonard Euler, who had been one of the most brilliant foreign members of the Academy from 1727 to 1741, returned to Russia. Although his salary was raised and family members given lucrative posts, Euler's demands to be named vice-president and given a place in the table of ranks were not met. His hopes of building on Lomonosov's successes for greater autonomy and status for academicians were frustrated throughout the remaining years in Russia.²⁶

Despite these difficulties progress was made during Catherine's reign. Between 1762 and 1794 fourteen of the thirty-three regular academicians admitted to the Academy were born in Russia. Catherine also sought to compromise with the demands of the academicians for more autonomy. In 1766 she issued a decree proclaiming that she intended to bring it under her control and reverse its decline. The chancellery was abolished and replaced by a special commission which was supposed to draft a new charter. Like

²⁶Ibid, 23-29.

other more famous Catherinian commissions this one was not very effective in dealing with the problems assigned to it.²⁷ Catherine appointed Gregory Orlov's younger brother, Vladimir, as the Academy's first director at the age of twenty-three. Orlov's qualifications for the job included three years at the University of Leipzig.²⁸ Dashkova described him as "a man of shallow mind who had derived from his studies in Germany nothing but a pedantic tone and an entirely unfortunate conviction of his own deep learning."²⁹ Although not entirely incompetent, his declining health and court obligations interfered with his duties as director. Orlov did share Dashkova's anglomania as a result of his tour there in 1772-1773.³⁰ When he was present at the Academy, Orlov was as dictatorial as the chancellery had been. When he retired, Catherine appointed one of the Orlovs' supporters, S. G. Domashnev. Domashnev completely ignored the recommendations of the commission and continued to make arbitrary administrative decisions based on personal whim. His most serious offense was misuse of Academy funds for personal use and pet research projects. The complaints of the commission concerning these matters along with the

²⁷Ibid, 29.

²⁸Cross, "By the Banks of the Thames", 241.

²⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 135.

³⁰Cross, "By the Banks of the Thames", 241.

decline of the Orlovs' power at court may have contributed to his dismissal in 1783.³¹

Dashkova became Director of the Academy of Sciences at a very critical time. Catherine the Great was facing a dilemma. On one side, the demand to maintain the Petrine tradition she revered required that Russia remain open to Western ideas and published works. Her famous "free press" order of January 1783 indicates this commitment. Catherine and Dashkova were initially drawn to each other by their common interest in Western ideas with which they became familiar through the published works of Western writers increasingly available in Russia. On the other side, not all of these ideas were compatible with Russia's system based on autocracy and serfdom and some works were perceived as genuine threats to that system. As Le Donne puts it in his work, Ruling Russia,

Censorship was considered the best way to combat the growing influence of a body of native and imported literature which could not simply be banned without rejecting the entire policy of opening a window on Western Europe, symbolized by the transfer of the Court to Petersburg."³²

The Academy of Sciences was one of the major censors of printed material in Russia. The Academy had to approve all imported books after they passed through customs. All

³¹Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge, 28-29.

³²John P. LeDonne, Ruling Russia: Politics and Administration in the Age of Absolutism 1762 - 1796 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 109.

domestic publications also had to receive authorization from one of several government organs including the Academy. Finally, the Academy functioned as an agent of ex post facto censorship by requiring publishers to send a copy of every work they printed and a catalog of their publications to the Academy.³³ In choosing Dashkova, Catherine could be sure that the Director of the Academy was as devoted to the welfare of Russia as the Empress and thoroughly aware of the ideas circulating in the West and entering Russia through published works.

In addition to dealing with Western ideas, the Academy was also facing a major change in its role as one of the primary publishers of works by Russian writers. Catherine's policy of allowing greater freedom of the press culminating in the ukase of January 1783 put the Academy in a very difficult economic situation by requiring it to, in effect, compete with private publishers. By the time Dashkova became Director not only authors, but also translators and printers were leaving the Academy for more lucrative careers in private publishing. So she was faced with losing valuable personnel, declining readership, and what had become a very inefficient method of operating a publishing house. Having spent a lifetime straightening out financial and administrative messes created by men in authority,

³³Ibid, 110.

Dashkova was perhaps uniquely qualified to handle the challenges facing the Academy of Sciences in the 1780s.³⁴

Finally, the Academy was no longer functioning effectively as a learned society. Academicians, disgusted by the activities of Dashkova's predecessors, had ceased attending its meetings. Publication of its proceedings had declined along with attendance. Even the number of students in its school had dropped off sharply. Therefore, Dashkova had the monumental task of not only straightening out the financial and administrative mess created by minions of the Orlovs, but also restoring the confidence of the academicians in the institution and the reputation of the Academy at home and abroad. This task was all the more difficult because she was a "political appointee" herself. With all the recently bestowed signs of imperial favor and close ties to Potemkin, Princess Dashkova's directorate could not have appeared very different to the professors of the Academy from that of Count Orlov or Domashnev to the professors of the Academy. However, she set out immediately and energetically, if not joyfully, to prove them wrong.

Describing her response to receiving the news of her appointment, Dashkova wrote, "Here I was, harnessed to the plough which, broken-down as it was, became my respon-

³⁴Gary Marker, Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700 - 1800 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 121 - 122.

sibility."³⁵ Dashkova immediately forwarded a copy of the imperial decree to the Academy with the request the Commission remain in charge for two more days to give her time to inform herself as much as possible about the situation at the Academy. She also asked for as much information as could be provided about the structure and personnel of the Academy to be presented to her in person by the heads of various branches the following day. Dashkova requested from the Commission a detailed job description for her position. Finally, she addressed the issue of confidence. As she described her initial contact with the Academy, "I begged these gentlemen to believe, and to assure their colleagues, that one of the duties I had prescribed to myself was to have for them every consideration that their knowledge and their talents deserved."³⁶

The next day Dashkova began attending the Empress's morning meeting with major officials and was reassured of her confidence in Dashkova's appointment.³⁷ Catherine made it very clear to Dashkova that she would no longer tolerate any questions concerning her judgment in this matter. This rebuke was softened by the information that Dashkova was invited to dine at the Empress's private table at her own

³⁵Dashkov, Memoirs, 206.

³⁶Ibid, 206 - 207.

³⁷Letter from A. Ia. Protasova to S. R. Vorontsov in AKV 15: 33-35.

convenience whenever she wished. Dashkova felt, as she had so often in the past, very isolated and anxious in this new role. Although she attributed the absence of congratulations to other courtiers' discretion, she concluded that, "all generally felt jealous, all the more so as my somewhat awkward behaviour at Court made them regard me as a very minor figure."³⁸

Before the work week began Dashkova began preparing for her new responsibilities. Dashkova received all the Academy personnel at her home the Sunday after she received her appointment. She informed them that she would, in effect, report to work the next morning and that they should feel free to come unannounced to her office at any time to discuss their concerns. She then spent the evening poring over the reports they had brought her trying to comprehend the labyrinth into she was about to plunge. Terribly anxious about even the smallest error, Dashkova even tried to memorize the names of all the Academy's officers and inspectors. She was convinced that her lack of formal academic training as much as her gender would make her the

³⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 208. This is another example of a theme that recurs throughout the Memoirs, that of appearances being deceiving. When Dashkova was treated as a celebrity at foreign courts she felt like such a simple, little soul; yet in Russia when she was in a genuinely powerful position, she felt that she was regarded by others as only a minor court figure.

object of intense public scrutiny and was determined to avoid as many mistakes as possible.³⁹

On her way to the Academy the next morning, Dashkova took her first step toward restoring the lost prestige of that institution and made it clear that she intended to use all her connections to benefit the Academy. She paid a visit to the great mathematician Leonard Euler and begged him to accompany her to the Academy for her first appearance there. Although he had abandoned the Academy to the maladministration of the Orlovs, Euler agreed to introduce her. When they entered the Academy Conference Hall, Dashkova told the assembled faculty that she could find no better way to pay her respects to science than by being introduced by the great Academician Euler. The seat next to the director's was being occupied by the Professor of Allegory, Stahlin, whose, "rank was as allegorical as his science and, indeed, the whole of his personality."⁴⁰ Dashkova brought tears of respect to the eyes of these crusty, old Academicians by telling the dying Euler that wherever he chose to sit would always be considered the first place in the room.⁴¹ By invoking the image of this venerated old man and securing the continued participation in the Academy of his son and grandson, Dashkova had very quickly accomplished a major

³⁹Ibid, 209.

⁴⁰Ibid, 209.

⁴¹Nova Acta, 1: 6.

improvement in the morale and prestige of this learned society.⁴²

Throughout her administration Dashkova was very aggressive in recruiting new members, both regular and corresponding.⁴³ During her first appearance at the Academy she nominated two of the scholars she had known at Edinburgh, William Robertson and Joseph Blair.⁴⁴ Dashkova also nominated British residents of Russia such as the Admiral of Kronstadt, Samuel Greig,⁴⁵ in 1783 and in 1792 William Tooke who later translated Castner's biography of Catherine.⁴⁶ Other corresponding members came from all the learned societies throughout Europe that Dashkova had come in contact with during her travels. From 1782 to 1794 four Russians were admitted as regular Academicians: N. P. Sokolov in chemistry, A. K. Konopov in physics, V. M. Severgin in mineralogy, and Ia. D. Zakarov in chemistry.⁴⁷

Dashkova also worked to improve the condition of the gymnasium attached to the Academy. She initially raised the

⁴²Ibid, 1: 6, 9; Dashkov, Memoirs, 209-210.

⁴³Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge, 30.

⁴⁴Nova Acta, 1:8.

⁴⁵Ibid, 1: 20.

⁴⁶A. G. Cross, "The Reverend William Tooke's Contribution to English Knowledge of Russia at the End of the Eighteenth Century," Canadian Slavic Studies (Spring 1969) 3: 107.

⁴⁷Spisok Deistvitelnykh Chlenov Akademii Nauk: 1725-1925 (Leningrad: Akademii Nauk, 1925), 12.

number of students admitted to the Academy's school from seventeen to fifty and the number of artisans being trained from twenty-one to forty. Dashkova also ordered the establishment of public lecture courses in mathematics, geometry, and natural history to be given free of charge in Russian by native professors.⁴⁸ The gymnasium had originally been intended to provide staff for the Academy itself. By Dashkova's time, though, it was training students to fill a variety of government and academic posts which required a Western education. Many of the students there were not from noble background and the gymnasium was a very important force in their political, social, and intellectual development.⁴⁹ These measures expanded the Academy's contact with the population of St. Petersburg and helped improve its perception of the Academy and its work.⁵⁰

Addressing the financial and administrative problems of the Academy was more difficult for Dashkova. Visiting the

⁴⁸Nova Acta, 2: 2-6.

⁴⁹Samuel C. Ramer, "Vasilii Popugaev, the Free Society of Lovers of Literature, Sciences, and the Arts, and the Enlightenment Tradition in Russia," Canadian-American Slavic Studies 16 (Fall Winter 1982): 493. Although Popugaev attended the gymnasium during Dashkova's tenure, typically Ramer does not mention her in this article.

⁵⁰Dashkov, Memoirs, 210 - 212. It was this sort of action that has won Dashkova favorable treatment by Soviet historians who have focussed on the struggle between foreign and Russian elements in the Academy. See David M. Griffiths, "The Early Years of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences as Reflected in Recent Soviet Literature," Canadian-American Slavic Studies, 14 (Fall, 1980), 436 - 445.

Chancellery after her success with the professors, Dashkova informed its personnel that public confidence was very low and it was widely believed that the Academy was in financial ruins due to embezzlement. To reverse this situation, Dashkova wisely dealt with the root of the problem by promising to raise the salary of those who worked hard to put an end to inefficiency and misappropriations. Later that week after her swearing in before the Senate, Dashkova asked the Minister of Justice, Prince Vyazemski, for all the documents relating to financial wrongdoing in the Academy so that she could form a clearer picture of the problem that she faced and begin to deal effectively with it. After reviewing the charges and explanations offered in these papers, Dashkova quickly began to take steps to remedy the Academy's financial woes.⁵¹

The Academy's financial problems were related to both misuse of funds and its publishing activities. As Dashkova understood it, the Academy had two accounts, an administrative fund and a state fund. The state fund was the primary operating account for the business of the Academy as described in the original charter. The administrative fund was under the control of the Director and could be used for awarding bonuses to employees or making purchases not provided for in the original charter.

⁵¹Nova Acta, 1: 6-9; Dashkov, Memoirs, 210-211.

According to Dashkova, both funds were practically empty when she took office and the Academy had accumulated debts to booksellers in Russia and abroad. To deal with this immediate problem, Dashkova made the first step in dealing with the long term problem of reorganizing the publishing operations of the Academy. This step was to offer the existing stock of the Academy's works at a 30 percent discount. Resulting sales made it possible to pay off the Academy's debts to booksellers and end the deficit in the state fund. She was also able to resume publication of the Academy's Bulletins with money from the state fund.⁵²

To prevent recurrence of this same sort of problem the Academy ended its practice of storing as much as three-fourths of what it published. Greater efforts were made to determine the demand for a work before its publication to end the chronic over supply. The Academy also became more generous with its royalties to authors who now could choose among private publishers in Russia. During Dashkova's tenure the Academy successfully adjusted to a role as an educational publisher in a more competitive market.⁵³

⁵²Dashkov, Memoirs, 210 - 212.

⁵³Marker, Publishing, Printing and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 121-122, 263 note 55. Although he discusses the Academy's achievements in the area of publishing during the 1780s and 1790s, Marker never mentions Dashkova in the text. Her name only appears in a footnote dealing with what he alleges to be threats to translators seeking to leave the Academy for better paying jobs elsewhere. In the footnote he mistakenly identifies her as "President Dashkova" rather than Director.

In addition to salaries and royalties, the material resources of the Academy were greatly enhanced during Dashkova's administration.⁵⁴ The Academy's laboratories were provided with more modern equipment such as parabolic mirrors, chronometers, and microscopes.⁵⁵ The Academy received large additions to its library and natural history collections from other learned societies, Russian nobles, as well as Catherine herself.⁵⁶ The highpoint Dashkova's accomplishments in this area was Catherine's grant for a magnificent new building to house the Academy. This structure is an architectural jewel for which Catherine received much praise particularly from foreigners visiting St. Petersburg.⁵⁷

What appears to be a lack of credibility with the Minister of Justice, Prince Vyazemski, who had brought up the issue of whether a woman should even be publicly sworn

⁵⁴Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge, 29. Vucinich argues that this was Dashkova's only real accomplishment as Director.

⁵⁵Nova Acta, 3: 25-26.

⁵⁶Ibid, 1: 29-57, 2: 20-49. 3: 25-49, 4: 12-32, 5: 11-30, 6: 9-23. The sections of this journal dealing with transactions of the Academy are full of references to donations and purchase of equipment, books, and natural history specimens.

⁵⁷William Tooke, View of the Russian Empire, during the Reign of Catherine the Second and to the Close of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Arno, 1970), 1: 16-17.

in, appears to have hampered Dashkova's work.⁵⁸ According to Dashkova, on one occasion he ignored some of her frequent recommendations for promotions which he had to forward to the Senate. Vyazemski also failed to supply the information Dashkova requested to bring the Academy's maps in line with Catherine's reorganization of provincial governments. When she requested that information from the provincial governors, Vyazemski did not forward it to her. Dashkova finally went to the Empress and threatened to resign when the Minister of Justice requested a monthly report of the administrative fund along with the state fund report he had always received. Dashkova was particularly outraged by this request made indirectly through the Academy Treasurer because Domashnev had never had to supply such information even though complaints had been lodged against him for misuse of the fund. It is interesting that Dashkova did not identify lack of trust in a woman to manage the fund as the basis for Vyazemski's actions in this matter. She believed

⁵⁸Dashkov, Memoirs, 210 - 211. Catherine's answer to Vyazemski is as revealing of his discomfort as his question concerning swearing in Dashkova. She replied, "Unquestionably, for I have never made a secret of Princess Dashkova's appointment to the Directorship of the Academy; true enough, I have no need for fresh assurances of her loyalty to me and the country, but the ceremony would give me pleasure because her appointment would thereby gain in sanction and publicity." However, Dashkova admitted that she, too, was uncomfortable with the ceremony because of the impropriety of a woman appearing in the Senate Chamber. The only other time she had made appearance before the Senate occurred on the day of the coup and she was still dressed in her Guards uniform.

that he disliked her because she had given employment to people he had dismissed. Some of the satirical poetry published in a new Academy journal also offended him because he believed they were directed at him and his wife. Although the Empress reprimanded him for his actions, Dashkova's working relationship with Vyazemski was never cordial.⁵⁹

Dashkova was at least partially distracted from worries about the Academy by the Empress' invitation to join her on a brief trip to Finland to meet Gustavus III. Catherine took this opportunity to inform the King of Sweden of Russia imminent occupation the Crimea and the possibility of renewed warfare with the Porte. No major political decisions or discussions took place at this meeting.⁶⁰ In fact, Catherine asked Dashkova to occupy some of the King's time so that she could have more time for herself. For her part, Dashkova was unimpressed his French sympathies and did all she could to enlighten him on the true nature of French society as she had experienced it. The only detraction from this demonstration of imperial favor and trust was continued wrangling with Lanskoy.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid, 215 - 217.

⁶⁰Alexander, Catherine the Great, 251.

⁶¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 230.

During her years at the Academy, Dashkova enjoyed a close relationship and frequent contact with Catherine.⁶² According to Dashkova, during a walk in the garden at Tsarskoye Selo, she was discussing the beauty and richness of the Russian language. Dashkova expressed surprise that Catherine had never established an Academy devoted to the language. She also pointed out the need for systematic grammatical rules and a scholarly dictionary to combat the corruption of Russian by foreign words and structures. Catherine heartily agreed and commanded Dashkova to prepare a plan for such an Academy. Before she went to bed that night Dashkova sketched the outlines of the basic elements of what she thought should be included in such an Academy. Dashkova was astonished when Catherine signed this outline and issued an ukase appointing her President. When it became clear that Catherine would not listen to any of Dashkova's objections, the new President set to work establishing this new institution.⁶³

⁶²Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 82-103. These are undated notes from the Empress which indicate frequent conversations and exchanges of materials relating to the Academy.

⁶³John T. Alexander, "Catherine the Great and the Foundation of the Russian Academy," Study Group for Eighteenth Century Russia Newsletter (1985): 16-24; Daskhov, Memoirs, 217 - 218. Although he has been a great help and encouragement in the preparation of this dissertation, Alexander's attitude toward Dashkova is not unusual in his article about the Russian Academy. He essentially set out to disprove Dashkova's claims about her part in prompting Catherine to establish the Academy. In his conclusion he admits that, "Catherine's part in the foundation of Russian

Catherine's new Academy quickly took shape under Dashkova's direction despite the great budgetary pressures caused by war and colonization. She proposed to Catherine that the five thousand rubles that had been budgeted for translations be used for the new Academy as Dashkova believed that the previous Directors had been using it as "pocket money" or not using it all.⁶⁴

It is obvious from her opening address to the Academy that Dashkova also seemed convinced that granting that sum for the translations of the classics into Russian without an established grammar and dictionary was like putting the cart before the horse. Perhaps even more important, she believed that preserving and publishing ancient Russian documents was an equally urgent task to that of translating Greek or Roman works into Russian. For Dashkova, the new Academy served as a platform for her Slavophile views. The money previously budgeted only for translations would be used for supplies

Academy leaves me somewhat surprised and puzzled: surprised in the manifestly peripheral nature of her involvement - I had anticipated that her part would have been both larger and clearer - and puzzled by the causes of her apparently abrupt alienation from the new institution that she had originally welcomed."

⁶⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 218. Also see, Gary Marker, Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia, 1700 - 1800 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 91 -95, for a serious discussion of Catherine's original grant of five thousand rubles for translations in 1768. It is interesting to note that as is so often the case, Marker discusses the demise of this Translation Society headed by Novikov in 1783 without ever mentioning the creation of the Russian Academy or Dashkova.

and salaries of two secretaries, two translators, and a treasurer. Dashkova also employed four disabled veterans to act as custodians and guards. Dashkova did not budget a salary for herself or the members of the Academy of Sciences whom she expected to work for the new Academy in addition to their existing duties. For her part the Empress provided a beautiful, new building to house the offices and library of the Academy and an additional 1250 rubles for casts and medals.⁶⁵

The shoestring budget of the Academy may not have indicated the grandiose purposes Catherine and Dashkova seemed to have had in mind. In her opening address to the new Academy's members, Dashkova made her goals clear. She also cut short any criticism of the Academy's charter or her qualifications to be president by admitting her shortcomings and reminding those present of her unique relationship with the Empress:

GENTLEMEN, a new instance of the solicitude of our august empress for the instruction of her subjects has this day assembled us together. That genius which has already diffused so many benefits over Russia has now given a proof of its protective energy in behalf of the Russian language, the parent and source of so many others. The riches and copiousness of our language to you are well known. Our mother tongue unites not only these advantages, gentlemen, but even in all the subtleties of philosophy, in their affinities and oppositions, it furnishes appropriate expressions, and terms the most applicable and descriptive. But with such resources we have to lament the want

⁶⁵Alexander, "Catherine the Great and the Foundation of the Russian Academy," 19 - 20; Dashkov, Memoirs, 218-221.

of determinate rules--rules for the inflexions of words, as well as an authorized definition and limitation of their meaning. Hence have arisen those varieties of construction, those improprieties of imitation and foreign idiom, which have hitherto disfigured and depressed our language. The object of the establishment of the Imperial Russian Academy is to render it perfect, to raise it to a standard of elevation suitable to the glorious age of Catherine II. The different memorials of antiquity spread over the vast surface of the Russian empire, our numerous chronicles, those precious records of the great actions of our ancestors, of which few of the nations of Europe now existing can boast an equal number; present a vast field for our exertions, upon which we are led to advance under the guidance of the enlightened genius of our august protectress. The high deeds of our princes, the exploits of the past and the present ever-memorable age, present an almost boundless range of subjects worthy of our labor. But, gentlemen, the first fruits of our endeavours, the first offering to be laid at the feet of our immortal sovereign, is a grammar of our language, exact and methodical, and a rich and copious dictionary. Believe me, gentlemen, that the zeal which enkindles in my heart the love of that country will never be extinguished, and that in everything which may tend to render our society flourishing and successful, I shall endeavour to supply, by indefatigable application, the deficiency of other qualifications of which I am most sensible. I deem it an indispensable duty, on this first occasion of our meeting, to place before you a sketch which I have had the honour of submitting to the consideration of her majesty, in order that it may have the benefit of your remarks, and the addition of whatever may be considered further necessary to establish the basis of our constitution. Any imperfections which here present themselves will surely not escape your penetration; but there are two considerations which solicit your indulgence. The first is that I have contracted the habit of exposing to our incomparable sovereign my ideas, however undigested and unarranged they may be, with entire confidence and sincerity, which she is pleased to receive with kindness, from a persuasion of the purity of my intentions. The other that it never entered my contemplation, and I trust such a vain idea never can, that I though placed at the head of this Academy, should be

capable, in my own person, of upholding the labours and glory of such an institution. It is on your aid, gentlemen, that I count, and the confidence which I place in it is the strongest proof I can give of my profound esteem for you.⁶⁶

Catherine allowed Dashkova a free hand with the new Academy. Two possible explanations for Catherine's approach are that she did not want to offend her overly sensitive friend and she was just as uncomfortable about her own academic deficiencies as Dashkova.⁶⁷ A basic difference between the two women over the Academy's first project may also help to explain the distance Catherine put between herself and the Academy. The major accomplishment of the Academy under Dashkova's direction was the completion of a dictionary which was organized on an etymological basis. Catherine and many of her courtiers found this approach very inconvenient and confusing.⁶⁸ Dashkova was equally annoyed and confused by their lack of enthusiasm for her project. As she put it, "I do not know why the Empress, who had a

⁶⁶"Discourse Delivered at the Opening of the Imperial Russian Academy by its President the Princess Daschkaw," in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 144 - 147. Dashkova delivered this speech in Russian and gave a copy of it to Martha Wilmot who translated it into English for inclusion in her edition of Dashkova's Memoirs. A published copy of the speech in Russian is included in the papers donated to the British Museum Library by Miss Wilmot's daughter.

⁶⁷Alexander, "Catherine the Great and the Foundation of the Russian Academy," 19.

⁶⁸Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova, 275. Dashkova recorded a conversation in which Catherine commented that everyone seemed to be unwilling to admit to her that they had had anything to do with the production of the Dictionary.

facility for understanding even the most profound things, seemed not to grasp my meaning, but I do know that I was very annoyed."⁶⁹

Dashkova took the Empress's objections to the Academicians preparing the dictionary. They, of course, agreed with Dashkova's plan. At the time, Catherine was very involved in her own pet project, a comparative dictionary of the languages of the world edited by Academician P. S. Pallas. Catherine went to great expense sending couriers throughout the Russian Empire and Europe to gather samples of all the different languages and dialects they could find. Given the meager budget with which Dashkova had to work, it is not surprising that she was nonplussed by the whole concept and wrote that, "useless and imperfect as this peculiar work was, it was pronounced to be an admirable dictionary and caused my considerable annoyance."⁷⁰

To produce the Academy's etymological dictionary Dashkova recruited Academicians to accept responsibility for specific letters of the Cyrillic alphabet and collect all the words beginning with them and trace their roots.

⁶⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, 220.

⁷⁰Ibid, 221. This was not Dashkova's only conflict with Pallas. He was actually one of the most prominent members of the Academy. His efforts to professionalize and systematize the study of natural history were not fully appreciated by Dashkova who had a genuine, albeit amateur, passion for collecting specimens of natural history. See Vucinich, Empire of Knowledge, 25-28.

Dashkova herself took on three letters of the alphabet which included many of the words dealing with morality and government. Once again, Dashkova drew upon her connections with English backgrounds. Scholars such as Tretiakov and Desnitskii from Glasgow, Vasilii Nikitich Nikitin, Prokhor Ignatevich Suvorov, and Catherine's own librarian and court poet Vasilii Petrov were named to the Academy by Dashkova.⁷¹ Frequently, the Academicians were assigned letters that corresponded with their areas of expertise. Desnitskii, who later became known as the "father of Russian jurisprudence" and translated Blackstone's Commentaries into Russian, was assigned letters that began words dealing with the law, for example. He was one of the most diligent of the scholars who met with Dashkova every Saturday to work on the dictionary. Their Etymological Dictionary of the Russian Language was completed in 1789 and published in six volumes containing over forty-three thousand words. Dashkova promised Catherine that a dictionary would be produced which listed words in alphabetical order for her convenience, but it was not completed until 1806.⁷²

When the compilation was complete and the first volume published, Catherine wrote her congratulations to Dashkova but could not resist mentioning her own dictionary. Written from Tsarskoe Selo in July 1789, Catherine's note also gives

⁷¹Alexander, "By the Banks of the Thames", 99-113.

⁷²Dashkov, Memoirs, 222 and note 220.

an interesting glimpse into her own workaholic, perfectionist ways when she writes,

The most ignorant, madam, cannot but view with admiration the stupendous work which the Russian Academy has just sent forth into the world, and which has not been in preparation more than six years. I congratulate you sincerely on the occasion; and as I have a passion for prefaces, I shall read this of our great Dictionary quite through. On turning over its leaves, I have already observed the opinion of the Russian Academy on an abundance of subjects, either to be admitted or rejected, and on many words of which the generality of people had little or no knowledge. The honourable notice which the Academy has been pleased to take of the poor little dictionary of The Comparison of all the Languages in the World, cannot but give it credit which it could scarcely hope to obtain, having supplied only about a dozen words or so to the immortal work which has just appeared. Proud, however, it may doubtless be of this little service rendered to its voluminous younger brother. With every sentiment which you deserve from me, madam, believe me ever yours. It is a pity that there are some errors of the press in the preface; amongst others observe in page xi. The ignorant will find, in the paragraph in page xv., an ample subject for their remarks; but let me not, by any indiscreet babbling on my part, anticipate their clamours.⁷³

By the end of 1783, Dashkova was as content as she had ever been in Russia. The work of both Academy's kept her very busy. She settled into a routine that would continue throughout her years at the Academies. Dashkova's days were divided into time spent attending to the administrative affairs of the Academy of Sciences, compiling and then publishing the Russian Academy's dictionary, and attending court functions to be with Catherine. Despite squabbling

⁷³Catherine the Great to E. R. Dashkova, July 21, 1789, in Bradford, Memoirs, 87.

with courtiers over her dictionary, Dashkova's relationship with Catherine was at its peak. And when her son came home on leave that winter, Dashkova was able to sign over his property to him free of debt and greatly enlarged from the time of his father's death. This freed her from the burden of responsibility for managing his estates as well as her own. Twenty years into Catherine's reign Dashkova seemed to have finally found some of the peace and contentment in Russia that she had experienced in England.⁷⁴

In 1791 Dashkova received an unexpected recognition for her work at the Academy. Although Russia and Sweden were at war, the Swedish King's brother whom Dashkova had met while traveling in Europe forwarded her a packet which he found on a captured vessel. In the packet was a letter from Benjamin Franklin informing her of her election to the American Philosophical Society and her certificate of membership. This indication of Franklin's respect flattered Dashkova for she, "considered him to be a very superior man who combined profound erudition with simplicity of dress and manner, whose modesty was unaffected, and who had great indulgence for other people."⁷⁵ Although Catherine would not allow Dashkova to write back to the Swedish Duke who had rescued this important parcel, she did let Dashkova respond

⁷⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 222.

⁷⁵Ibid, 232.

graciously to the American. In a letter dated August 2, 1791, Dashkova wrote back to the Society,

Your favour of the 15th of May 1789 did not reach my hand till last week. I take the earliest opportunity of thanking you for the obliging manner in which you communicate to me the resolution of the American Philosophical Society by which I am admitted a Member of that learned body. It is certainly to the kind suggestions of my worthy friend the late Dr. Franklin that I am indebted for this distinguished honour.

Be pleased, gentlemen, to present my respects to the President and fellows of the American Philosophical Society for promoting useful knowledge, and assure them that I feel myself highly flattered by their attention; that I shall cheerfully embrace every opportunity of coinciding with their generous views, and be at all times ready to give them every Information concerning the natural history, productions, etc. of this extensive and flourishing empire in particular, as they may occasionally require, and my situation enables me to procure.⁷⁶

In April 1792 the secretaries of the Society wrote back to Dashkova thanking her for the books she had sent along with her letter. They included an extract of the minutes of the Society's meeting of April 6 during which receipt of her letter had been announced.⁷⁷ Her name was subsequently published in the list of foreign members in the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia for promoting Useful Knowledge.⁷⁸ As a result of her fri-

⁷⁶American Philosophical Society Library.

⁷⁷American Philosophical Society Library.

⁷⁸Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, held at Philadelphia for promoting Useful Knowledge, Reprint (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1966), 3: xxxiii. Dashkova is listed as, "The Princess Catharine Romanowna Daschkaw, Chevaliere of the order of St. Anne,

endship with Franklin, Dashkova became the first woman and the second Russian member of the Society.⁷⁹

Even this recognition from abroad did not make Dashkova immune to criticism at home. In 1793 she was approached on behalf of the widow of the famous playwright, Knyazhnin. She agreed that the Academy would publish one of his last plays entitled, "Vadim of Novgorod," if the Academy's censors found that it met the usual standard of containing nothing contrary to law or religion. The censor's report assured Dashkova that the play was based on historical facts

Directress of the Imperial Academy of Arts and Sciences at Petersburg, and Maid of Honor to her Imperial Majesty."

⁷⁹ Eufrosina Dvoichenko-Markoff, "Benjamin Franklin, The American Philosophical Society, and the Russian Academy of Science," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 91 (1947): 250-57, and "The American Philosophical Society and Early Russian-American Relations," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society, 94 (1950): 549-575. Dashkova also nominated Franklin for membership in the Academy of Sciences. There seems to be some confusion about cause and effect in this matter. Dvoichenko-Markoff indicates that Franklin reported to the APS in February 1789 that he had received a letter thanking him for a copy of the Society's Transactions. In April Dashkova was elected to the APS as a foreign member. In November of 1789 Dashkova nominated Franklin for membership in the Academy of Sciences and wrote to him of his selection. Dvoichenko-Markoff states that the packet informing Dashkova of her selection must have reached her in the summer of 1789 and prompted her to check the Academy's records concerning Franklin's membership. Her basis for this assertion is apparently the statement in the Academy's transactions that Dashkova was amazed to learn that Franklin was not a member. However, Dvoichenko-Markoff goes on to quote in its entirety the letter quoted above that plainly states that Dashkova did not receive the packet until August of 1791 due to wartime interruptions. It seems that Dashkova's nomination of Franklin like his of Dashkova was a result of mutual esteem rather than repayment of the favor.

and concluded with the triumph of the monarch over seditious Novgorod. Dashkova issued the appropriate instructions for the play to be published and included in the last volume of the Academy's anthology The Russian Theatre. When Catherine's new favorite, Platon Zubov, learned of the play, he informed the Empress that Dashkova had allowed the Academy to publish such a dangerous piece of literature. As a result Dashkova received a very curt note from Catherine regarding the play which stated,

There has just appeared a Russian tragedy, called Vadine of Novogorod, printed at the press of the Academy, according to its title-page. It is said to be not a little severe and bitter against sovereign authority. You will do to stop the sale of it till I have time to look at it. Good night. Have you read it?⁸⁰

A visit from the police followed this note and they carried orders to confiscate all copies of the play. The Minister of Justice also seemed to indicate that Catherine connected the publication of this play by Dashkova to the publication of A Journey from Petersburg to Moscow by Radishchev who had been a protege of Alexander Vorontsov. Later Dashkova made her regular appearance at Court and confronted Catherine about this matter denying both that the play was in any way seditious and that she had any interest in its publication. Catherine seemed to accept this

⁸⁰Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 101.

explanation and the two old friends returned to their normal activities.⁸¹

This incident over Kniagnin's play revealed Dashkova's vulnerability at Court despite her hard work at the Academy. Dashkova had never been able to get along with Catherine's favorites and all the young men who succeeded Potemkin hated her. Perhaps they were jealous of not only Catherine's generosity toward Dashkova but also of her presumption of a relationship among equals that they did not enjoy. Whatever their motivations, Potemkin's support of Dashkova prevented any action against her beyond petty annoyances. With Potemkin's death in 1791 Dashkova lost her most powerful ally at Court and her position became very insecure.⁸²

Dashkova resolved to retire to the peace and quiet of Troitskoe and requested Catherine's permission. The Empress would only agree to a two-year leave of absence and asked Dashkova to appoint interim heads for the two Academies.⁸³ Dashkova was not without regrets about leaving the capital and Catherine. She summarized her feelings toward Catherine in the following terms,

My love for her was quite disinterested, for I had been passionately fond of her at a time when she was not Sovereign yet, and I was in the position

⁸¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 242-45.

⁸²Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 195.

⁸³Markov to S. R. Vorontsov, 9 February 1795, in AKV, 20: 60.

to be of far greater service to her than she was to me. And though in her treatment of me she did not always obey the dictates of her heart and mind, I continued to love her, admired her whenever she gave me occasion to do so, and considered her far superior to any of the most famous Sovereigns that had ever sat on the Russian throne.⁸⁴

After a decade of life at Court even her affection for Catherine could not persuade her to remain in such a volatile situation. The final proof of the need to leave came on the eve of her departure. Dashkova had made every effort to settle her daughter's complicated financial affairs and debts before she left Petersburg. However, before she could take her leave from Catherine privately, Zubov informed her that there was still an outstanding debt that Dashkova had failed to pay. When Dashkova went into Catherine's apartments to kiss her hand, the Empress seemed inexplicably angered to Dashkova. Dashkova later learned the reason for Catherine's sudden displeasure and was grieved that this typical sort of court intrigue could spoil their last moments together for Dashkova did not return to St. Petersburg before Catherine's death in 1796.⁸⁵

⁸⁴Dashkov, Memoirs, 248.

⁸⁵E. R. Dashkova to A. R. Vorontsov, 16 November 1793, in AKV, 5: 216-226; Dashkov, Memoirs, 249-51. Dashkova wrote a long tirade against Lanskoï to her brother relating to this incident. Privately, her brother's agreed that the timing of the publication of the place was unwise. See A. R. Vorontsov to S. R. Vorontsov, in AKV, 12: 96.

CHAPTER VI

EXILE

The eleven years Dashkova spent at the head of the two Academies certainly represented the pinnacle of her public life. Her family and personal life during this time cannot be characterized in such positive terms. As her children became young adults and began attempting to function independently in the treacherous realm of Russian noble society, Dashkova's relationships with them were filled with tension and heartache. On a personal level, it is more useful to look at Dashkova's life from 1783 to 1803. Despite her public success with the Academies, Dashkova became increasingly isolated personally and politically. Death played a major role in this process as she simply outlived many of her contemporaries; and Dashkova was unable to forge new relationships with the younger generation which included her own children and Catherine's successors. On a personal level, conflict with her son over his attachments with women and conflict with her daughter over financial troubles permanently damaged those relationships. Politically, her ties with Catherine alienated her completely from Paul I and caused her to be exiled. Even after Paul's death, Dashkova could find no place for herself in Alexander's reign despite

his kindness. By 1802 Dashkova had experienced the greatest extremes of favor and disgrace. Although she had survived there was little joy left as she faced the years ahead with little comfort from family or friends.

The first relationship to suffer during this time was the one in which Dashkova had invested the most, with her son. The presence of Gregory Orlov and gossip concerning her son had marred her trip through the Low Countries on her way back to Russia in 1781. When Dashkova went to Leyden, Orlov offered to have Dashkova's son transferred to his regiment which would result in a promotion for the young man. Privately, Dashkova declined his offer for fear of offending the Empress and Potemkin, to whom she had already written concerning her son. She thanked Orlov for his offer and promised that she would let him know what she heard from St. Petersburg. He assured Dashkova that he would not hold her refusal against her son.¹

When Dashkova returned to Brussels, Orlov and his party once again paid her an unexpected visit even less pleasant than the first one. According to Dashkova, Orlov looked straight at her son and expressed regret that he would not be in St. Petersburg when he arrived there. Orlov ruefully joked that it had been his job to console Catherine's other displaced favorites for some time. He stated that he would be glad to perform this duty if it meant making room for

¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 155.

Dashkova's handsome, young son. Orlov concluded that he was certain that Catherine would replace her current lover with Prince Dashkov as soon as he arrived in Russia.² Dashkova sent her son to another room and then expressed her outrage at Orlov's presumption. Orlov soon left Brussels and had left Paris by the time Dashkova arrived. The gossip Orlov had begun continued to complicate matters for Dashkova throughout the remainder of her time in Europe and her return to Russia.³

Gossip concerning her son's future and uncertainty about his military career clouded Dashkova's second stay in Paris. Dashkova learned from Diderot that Falconet and Mademoiselle Collot were in Paris. Dashkova learned from Collot that Count Andrew Shuvalov's home was the source of renewed rumors concerning the possibility that Prince Dashkov was being groomed for the position of favorite. In Shuvalov's version, it was Dashkova's own ambition that was behind the plot making it sure to fail. According to Dashkova, Collot heatedly disputed this report at the Shuvalov's because,

She knew my principles and therefore knew that I of all people, would never propose Prince Dashkov as a candidate for the place of favorite, and being the boy's mother I should be even less likely to do so. I had always avoided those who had occupied it, and the great Catherine had sufficient respect for me to show some restraint in her

²Ibid, 156.

³Ibid, 157-158.

attitude to those gentlemen in my presence. Indeed, on occasions when the three of us--the Empress, her favorite and I--were alone together, she condescended to treat him merely as a general who enjoyed her confidence and esteem.⁴

Having suffered the wrath of a favorite before, Dashkova was distraught over the possibility that this gossip would reach Potemkin and endanger the real career for which Dashkova had worked so hard to prepare her son. The fact that Potemkin had not responded to a letter she had written him concerning her son's career added to her anxiety because she believed that, "despite all his negligence Potemkin would never have dared behave in this way if he had not been sure of the Empress's indifference."⁵ And the Empress, after all, was at the root of the whole problem.⁶ It seemed impossible to counter Orlov's gossip without further damaging Catherine's reputation. Therefore, Dashkova began meeting with other Russians in Paris to deal with this issue. Finally, she received the assurance of Potemkin's nephew, Samoilov, that his letter must have been

⁴Ibid, 161.

⁵Ibid, 162.

⁶In fact, Catherine may have inadvertently contributed to the continuing gossip which resurfaced when the Dashkovs returned to Russia concerning the possibility of the Prince becoming her favorite. In a letter to Grimm written in July of 1781, Catherine stated, "Je suis tres aise du bien que vous me dites du fils de la princesse Daschkof; c'est un enfant auquel je me suis toujours interessee, parce qu'il paraissait avoir le coeur excellent." See Letter from Catherine II to F. M. Grimm in Pisma Imperatritsi Ekaterini II k Grimmu (1774-1796) (St. Petersburg: Akademii Nauk, 1878), 218.

lost and, in any case, he would warn Potemkin of Orlov's slander against her. Dashkova left Paris in March of 1781 with no real certainty that her old foe, Gregory Orlov, had been defeated.⁷

When Dashkova arrived in St. Petersburg in July 1782, her first priority was finalizing arrangements for her son's commission in a Guards regiment. As she did not have a house in town, Dashkova had to settle on the estate she had acquired shortly before the coup which she had named Kirianovo. From there she had to reestablish communication with Empress. Fortunately a niece of Potemkin's was recovering from childbirth at another country estate near Dashkova's. She sent a servant there asking that the Prince send one of his nephews to convey a message for her. When Potemkin sent his nephew the next day, Dashkova asked that the Prince help her obtain Catherine's permission to present her children to the Empress at Tsarskoye Selo. She also asked for news concerning her son's position and rank. As a result, Dashkova and her children were commanded to come to Tsarskoye Selo to dine with Catherine the following Sunday and Dashkova was assured that she would learn then all that she wanted to know about her son's military career. Unfortunately, first the Prince and then Dashkova fell ill.

⁷E. R. Dashkova to S. R. Vorontsov, 17/28 June 1782, in AKV 12: 326; Dashkov, Memoirs, 163-165. In one of the few letters Dashkova wrote to her younger brother, Simon, she confided her concerns about her son's career as she prepared to return to Russia.

Despite Dr. Rogerson's diligent care, Dashkova was unable to go to Tsarskoye Selo for almost three weeks. When she was finally strong enough, the long years of disfavor and suspicion seemed to have been left behind and forgotten.⁸

When she arrived, Catherine approached Dashkova and kindly expressed how glad she was that Dashkova had returned. She then presented her children to the Empress and accompanied her to the Chapel. Still weakened by her long illness, Dashkova trailed behind the Imperial suite on the way to the Grand Hall. When she finally arrived there, Potemkin immediately came up and asked her about her son's current rank and what her desires were concerning him. She replied he and the Empress should know her desires for her son's promotion and they should know more than his mother about his rank as it had not changed since he was commissioned as an ensign when he was seven. Potemkin's immediate departure for St. Petersburg confused and worried Dashkova. Her worries, but not her irritation, were set aside when Empress commanded Dashkova and her children to dine with her. Dashkova remembered Catherine's words and her feelings about them in this way,

I wanted your son to remain ensign for just today and have dinner with me to prove that I shall always make a distinction between your children and others.' These few words deeply touched me. Indeed, no one but her could, with so much sub-

⁸Ibid, 193-194.

tlety and tact, have turned the forgetfulness of a promise into such a flattering compliment.⁹

The Empress continued to flatter Dashkova with her attention throughout dinner and her usual evening walk. After conferring with Potemkin, Catherine promoted Prince Dashkov to junior captain in the Semenovskii Guards Regiment.⁸ Dashkova was, of course, happy and relieved to have this matter settled. It seemed that all of her efforts on her son's behalf had been worthwhile.⁹

In 1783 Dashkova's new responsibilities as head of the Academy of Sciences did not completely distract her from her son's welfare. The issues of his success in his military career in which Dashkova had invested so much and the gossip concerning the possibility that he might become Catherine's favorite continued to concern her. Early in the spring of 1783 Prince Dashkov left St. Petersburg with Potemkin to rejoin the army. Dashkova was so concerned about her son that she seems to have gone to the Empress about his depar-

⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, p. 195.

⁸In Catherine's notes to Potemkin, there is an undated one in which the Empress simply asked him in which regiment and at what rank she should appoint Dashkova's son. See Letters D'Amour de Catherine II a Potemkine, ed. Georges Oudard (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1934), 335.

⁹D. P. Burtulin to A. R. Vorontsov, 12 July 1782, in AKV 32: 213; S. R. Vorontsov to R. I. Vorontsov, 18 July 1782, in Ibid, 12: 25. News of Prince Dashkov's traveled quickly among the Vorontsovs. Despite his strained relationship with Dashkova, Simon Vorontsov was very impressed by her son's accomplishments.

ture. In a note to Dashkova, Catherine attempted to reassure her friend by writing,

I have this moment received the letter which you set me by Prince Potemkin, and be assured, madam, I will take the most particular care in whatever regards the fortune and interest of your son. As I am but just come out of the bath, I can receive only yourself. You must therefore beg the prince to accept my kind wishes for his journey. Though you will naturally feel his loss, do not take his departure too much to heart, but endeavor to support his absence with courage, and be assured of the unceasing interest I take in all your concerns.¹⁰

Perhaps as a result of this, Prince Dashkov was allowed to ride in Potemkin's own coach and Dashkova was content that her son was being well supervised. Despite this and her son's frequent letters, she missed him terribly during their first separation after years of travelling together.¹¹

Dashkova was overjoyed to see her son briefly in July when he brought the news of Potemkin's victories in the annexation of the Crimea which was a key element in Catherine's "Greek Project." Catherine promoted Dashkov to the rank of Colonel for his efforts. Renewed speculation about her son becoming favorite clouded Dashkova's happiness. When Count Shuvalov returned from Paris, he apparently repeated the rumors begun by Gregory Orlov to the current favorite, Lanskoj. The young Lanskoj's position was unenviable at best in relation to Catherine's old friends

¹⁰Catherine II to E. R. Dashkova, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 213.

¹¹Dashkov, Memoirs, 213-214.

such as the Orlovs, Potemkin, and even Dashkova. Already miffed by Catherine's generous gifts both large and small to Dashkova, the possibility of being replaced by her son obviously outraged Lanskoj. From that point he lost no opportunity to criticize and harass the Dashkovs.¹² Unlike the situation with the Orlovs, Catherine seemed able to ignore the tension between her young favorite and her old friend and their quarreling did not prevent her from appointing Dashkova President of the Russian Academy.¹³

Dashkova's son was not the only family member she had to be concerned about in this period. Dashkova's relationship with her daughter had always been problematic as evidenced by her poorly arranged marriage. This marriage combined with Shcherbinina's financial extravagance created serious problems for Dashkova. These difficulties marred what should have been a very happy time for her because in the summer of 1784 Dashkova's dearest friend from Ireland, Catherine Hamilton came to spend a year with her in Russia.¹⁴

¹²Ibid, 214 - 215. Dashkova described a typical argument over a bust of Catherine the Empress decided to give her. Lanskoj protested that she had already promised to him but, "The empress told him he was mistaken, at which he threw a furious glance at me, and I answered back with one expressing nothing but contempt. Ever since then Her Majesty would always interrupt him to put a stop to his wrangling."

¹³Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, 535.

¹⁴Ibid, 222.

When she arrived, Dashkova took a three month leave of absence from the Academies to spend with her friend. The harmonious blend of anglomania and slavophilism is very obvious in the activities Dashkova planned for her guest. On the one hand, in order to show her friend Russia, Dashkova took her away from Peter's window on the west to Moscow. After seeing all the curious and interesting sights of the ancient Russian capital, they went to Dashkova's nearby estate, Troitskoye. Dashkova arranged a celebration for her friend at a newly built village on her estate so that she could see Russian dances and customs and taste real Russian food. She even presented the villagers with the traditional gifts of bread and salt in honor of her friend and insisted that the new village be named Hamilton after her. On the other hand, Dashkova was very proud of her English style gardens and her friend's response to them pleased her. After visiting her other estates, Dashkova and Hamilton returned to St. Petersburg.¹⁵

For her friend's benefit, Dashkova appeared at the yearly public meeting of the Academy of Sciences where prizes were distributed to scholars who had presented papers for competition. Dashkova's lack of confidence concerning her academic credentials is very plain despite her friend's encouragement. She admitted that she didn't relish appearing at the public sessions of the Academy's scientific

¹⁵Nova Acta, 2: 7-9 and Dashkov, Memoirs, 222-223.

conferences. Dashkova only made a brief speech and even then felt like she would faint. After this experience, she never presided over a public session of the Academy while she was Director.¹⁶

A major breach in her relationship with her daughter during this time marred Dashkova's pleasure at her friend's company. Dashkova's daughter had never lived with her husband since he returned to Russia. When she learned of her father-in-law's death, Shcherbinina wrote to her husband offering to return to him. In addition to freeing herself from her mother's control, Nastasia Shcherbinina seems to have hoped to enjoy her husband's family's wealth. Dashkova tried to convince her not to do this because she clearly understood her daughter's extravagance and foresaw the "fatal embarrassments into which it would soon lead her."¹⁷ Although Shcherbinina promised her mother that she would not stay in St. Petersburg, Dashkova was terribly worried about her and her physical health suffered because of it. Although she recovered physically from the blow of her daughter's actions, Dashkova was again saddened by Catherine Hamilton's return to Ireland during the summer of 1785.¹⁸

During the years Dashkova was enjoying her greatest public achievements her relationship with her daughter

¹⁶Nova Acta, 2: 9-12; Dashkov, Memoirs, 223-224.

¹⁷Dashkov, Memoirs, p. 224.

¹⁸Ibid, 225.

caused her the greatest personal pain. Dashkova's daughter continued her extravagant lifestyle breaking the promises she had made to her mother. At one point her debts were so great that imprisonment became a possibility. Dashkova paid her debts and arranged for her to go abroad to regain her health. After taking the prescribed treatment of baths, Shcherbinin squandered all of the money her mother had given her. In Warsaw she was actually in danger because of the unrest caused by the final partition of Poland.¹⁹ Dashkova finally arranged for her son to retrieve her daughter from Warsaw and return her at least to Kiev. This was so humiliating for Dashkova that she considered suicide and years later it was difficult for her to discuss.²⁰

Dashkova's concerns about her children were doubled when her son returned to St. Petersburg in 1784. Lanskoy's death in the summer of 1784 renewed the possibility of Dashkov becoming Catherine's favorite. The Prince was staying at his mother's home and one day one of Potemkin's nephew's called when he was not there. The young man indi-

¹⁹D. P. Burtulin to A. R. Vorontsov, 3 May 1794, in AKV 32: 232.

²⁰Ibid, 236-240. Catherine was so concerned by Dashkova's depression that she encouraged her to write a play to get her mind off this troubling situation. It is revealing that Dashkova's subject was about "the most universal type of all--a man with a weak character--unfortunately so common in our society." When it was performed at the Hermitage, Catherine's secretary pronounced that it was a "drunken comedy." See A. V. Khrapovitskii, Dnevnik 1782-1798 (St. Petersburg: A. O. Bazunova, 1874), 5.

cated to Dashkova that Potemkin wished to see Prince Dashkov early in the afternoon during the time that was generally recognized as the "lover's hour." Dashkova's reaction was similar to her actions toward Gregory Orlov's earlier suggestion. She was somewhat more deferential to Catherine in this situation than she had been in the past. She assured Potemkin's nephew that her affection for the Empress would keep her from opposing anything Catherine desired, but she refused to have any part in the situation. Dashkova also told him, "if ever my son became favourite I would use his influence but once only--to obtain leave of absence for several years and a passport to go abroad."²¹

As worrisome as these rumours were, the cause of their cessation was even worse for Dashkova. Although for a brief time courtiers treated him as a serious contender, Catherine apparently did not find Dashkov acceptable. He returned to Kiev where he was stationed and from that distant point caused his mother more grief and embarrassment than he ever could have as favorite. On the same day that she received news of her selection to the American Philosophical Society, Dashkova learned that her son had gotten married.²² She was

²¹Alexander, Catherine the Great, 202; Dashkov, Memoirs, 226. Alexander describes Dashkova's response as "prissy", but he also uses this incident to point out how little is known of female opinion of Catherine's sexuality. Dashkova's comment is apparently the only direct reference made by a woman about Catherine's favorites that this scholar was able to find in his extensive research.

²²Khrapovitskii, Dnevnik, 66.

completely outraged that he had not asked her permission as her husband had asked his mother. Dashkova also found reprehensible the fact that her new daughter-in-law possessed, "neither beauty nor wit nor education."²³ When Prince Dashkov finally wrote to ask her permission for a marriage already made, she curtly informed him of her sentiments. She refused to receive or even see his wife. Although Dashkova remained in contact with her son, they were never fully reconciled.²⁴

Politically, Dashkova also became isolated during this period. As difficult as her situation had been at court dealing with jealous favorite, it was immeasurably worse after Catherine II's death in 1796. During the years that she lived in St. Petersburg, Dashkova made every effort to stay out of the growing conflict between Catherine and her son, Paul, over his rights to succeed her. Dashkova's efforts proved futile. Initially Paul simply dismissed her from her posts at the academies. This was in keeping with his general approach of overturning his mother's plans. In December 1796, Dashkova received orders to leave Moscow and go to her country estate and ponder the events of 1762. Dashkova described eloquently the feelings of the nobility during this time in her Memoirs:

²³Dashkov, Memoirs, p. 234.

²⁴Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov, 192-193.

From the very moment he ascended the throne Paul gave expression to his hatred and contempt for his mother. He hastened to break, or rather destroy, all she had done, and her wisest measures were superseded by arbitrary or fantastic acts. Appointments and dismissals succeeded each other so rapidly that hardly was a person's appointment announced in the press than he was made to give up his functions. It was impossible to know to whom to apply. Exile and detention left few families without a victim. The general feeling was that of terror producing suspicion and destroying the trust which should have existed among people related by ties of blood. Bewilderment and fear gave rise to apathy and stupor, fatal to the most important of all virtues--the love of one's country. The future seemed to hold nothing for us but misfortune without end.²⁵

Dashkova's misgivings about further reprisals proved correct, for Paul was not satisfied to relegate her to Troitskoye. He ordered her to leave for a distant estate of her son's located in the northern part of the Province of Novgorod. As Dashkova had never visited these lands, a peasant from there was located in Moscow to guide her to her place of exile, a village called Korotova. Despite ill health Dashkova began her journey in December 1796 with her daughter and an English servant known as Miss Bates. Her journey took more than two weeks because of the bitterly cold weather and snow. When she arrived at Korotova, she took up residence in a peasant's hut and her companions were placed in other smaller huts in this isolated village.²⁶

²⁵Dashkov, Memoirs, 259.

²⁶Ibid, 263-268.

One of the most difficult aspects of Dashkova's exile was that this village was on the road to Siberia. This meant that she witnessed the other even less fortunate victims of Paul's disfavor as they pushed farther north. Some had apparently been tortured. Others were kept in sealed carts throughout their journeys. The images of these cruelties haunted Dashkova for the rest of her life and help explain her bitterness toward Paul.²⁷

Dashkova was allowed to have any visitors brave enough to make the journey to Korotova. This obviously helped ease the isolation. When she learned that flooding caused by the spring thaw cut off the village completely, Dashkova decided to take a relative's advice to petition Paul through his wife.²⁸ She wrote a very humble letter to Paul begging to be allowed to return to her own estate.²⁹ Paul responded very simply, "Since you wish to return to your estate in the Province of Kaluga, you may do so. I remain your well-wisher and very affectionate, Paul."³⁰ After three months of exile, Dashkova returned to Troitskoe at the end of March 1797.

²⁷The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot, 50-51.

²⁸Prince Repnin to E. R. Dashkova, in AKV, 5: 470.

²⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, n. 273.

³⁰Ibid, 274.

Dashkova survived her ordeal as she had previous reversals of her fortunes. Paul eventually allowed to return to Troitskoye, but forbade her to be in St. Petersburg or Moscow when the Imperial family was present. In 1801 Paul was the victim of a palace coup which placed his son, Alexander, on the throne. Alexander offered Dashkova her appointments back, but she declined for reasons of age and health. She was allowed the sort of honored place in his coronation that the Orlovs had kept her from in 1762.³¹ Although Dashkova had established a good relationship with Alexander during her years at the Academy,³² she was not comfortable at Alexander's court because Catherine's memory was not sufficiently revered. Without being forced to, she withdrew from public life altogether and settled down to a quiet old age at her favorite estate, the Dashkov's family home for generations, Troitskoye.³³

³¹A. L. Nikolai to A. R. Vorontsov, in AKV 22: 110.

³²Letters from A. Ia. Protasoba to S. R. Vorontsov, 28 November 1795, 20 February 1795, in AKV, 15: 33-35, 40.

³³Dashkov, Memoirs, 282-287.

CHAPTER VII

THE WILMOTS

The last decade of Dashkova's life was a culmination of the attitudes and roles that had been developing through each stage of her life. She continued to admire England and treasure the memory of her time there. This is demonstrated in her relationship with the two Anglo-Irish ladies, Martha and Catherine Wilmot, who visited her from 1803 to 1808. Despite the hardships she had experienced, Dashkova remained proud of her own country's language, customs and heritage. She insisted that the Wilmots attempt to learn Russian, practice local customs, and see as much as possible of the Russian Empire to learn of its glorious history. Dashkova's age, wealth, and friendly relationship with Catherine's grandson, Tsar Alexander I, made her somewhat less vulnerable to the dramatic shifts of fortune she had so often experienced before at the hand of Russian autocrats. Perhaps even more importantly she was simply no longer directly involved in Russian politics and, therefore, less likely to make enemies at court. In a sense, during this period, Dashkova became a source of security to others who flattered and attempted to manipulate her for financial and political support. In relationships, Dashkova continued to

be devoted and loyal to the memory of her husband, Catherine the Great, and women friends like Catherine Hamilton.

Dashkova also heaped that same intense affection on her new friends, the Wilmots. During this period the damage done over the years to her relationships with her children proved irreparable. Her son died without ever being reconciled to Dashkova and she became completely estranged from her daughter. The fullest expression of all the qualities of Dashkova's multi-faceted life is her autobiography which she titled Mon Histoire written at the urging of the Wilmots between 1803 and 1804. In her last years Dashkova maintained most of the same interests and prejudices that had characterized her life.

As was often the case in Dashkova's life, the Wilmots' visit was the result of the combination of a tragic event with a vast network of close, personal friendships. In this case, the untimely death of Martha Wilmot's favourite brother, Charles, overwhelmed her with grief. Martha's older sister Catherine was travelling the Continent and through her letters the possibility that travel might help to alleviate Martha's depression was presented. The decision to travel to Russia was made on the basis of a complicated network of family and friends. Martha Wilmot was related to Dashkova's old friend, Catherine Hamilton. During her visit to Ireland, Hamilton had introduced Dashkova to Martha Wilmot's father. When Martha Wilmot shared her grief with

Hamilton, she suggested to the Wilmots that the girl go to Russia to visit Dashkova. Dashkova wrote to the Wilmots extending the invitation and they reluctantly agreed to allow their daughter to take the long journey.¹

When Wilmot arrived in London she contacted Dashkova's brother, the Russian Ambassador, Count Simon Romanovich Vorontsov. Despite the strained relationship between him and his sister, Count Vorontsov assured her that he would provide her with a passport and letters of introduction to friends in Petersburg. He did not, however, respond eagerly to Martha's offer to convey any letters or parcels he might wish to send to his sister. Indicative of the growing contact between England and Russia, Martha wrote to her sister Harriet that, "I am in high spirits and feel half Russian already. I have met with so many people, Women as well as Men who have been in Russia twice and three times that I begin to think no more of the Voyage than of one from England to Ireland."²

After a month of sightseeing and visiting similar to the time spent in London, Martha finally set out for Dashkova's estate near Moscow with a great deal of anxiety. While staying at Madame Poliansky's she had been exposed to all

¹Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot, xviii-xix.

²Ibid, 6-21.

the rumors describing Dashkova's legendary eccentricities in the most negative possible light

She was represented to me as a most cruel and vindictive person, violent in her temper, and destructive of the happiness of every creature who was unfortunate enough to approach her. I was told that she lived in a castle situated in a dreary solitude, far removed from the society of any civilized beings, where she was all-powerful, and so devoid of principle that she would invariably break open and read the letters which came to me, and those I sent to my friends, taking care to suppress any that might be displeasing to her.³

Fortunately, Dashkova's lifelong love of England and genuine generosity toward those she loved eased this initial awkwardness. Dashkova quickly dispelled some of Martha's anxiety by greeting her in English and spending their first evening together discussing her acquaintances in England. She had prepared two trunks of English things to help Martha feel more at home. Although her appearance was a bit strange, in this instance, a "Man's night cap and black hat with a sort of dark robe de chambre,"⁴ Martha recorded that her manners were easy and there was "a certain something that distinguishes her not unpleasingly from the common herd."⁵ Her estate was also far from the dreary place Martha had been expecting. As she described Dashkova's beloved Troitskoe, "Her English taste provides, and she has

³Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 224-5.

⁴Wilmot, Russian Journals, 45.

⁵Ibid, 45.

really created from rather a barren situation one of the mostly lovely and magnificent places that is to be found anywhere!"⁶

Although Martha continued to be homesick and anxious for news from Ireland, Dashkova's interest in her homeland was a comfort. Dashkova received the English papers and inspired Martha to write, "The Princess is, you know, a red hot English Woman, so we read the papers and fight with a degree of Valour that would amaze you under the British flag."⁷ Dashkova even had an answer to the problem of Irish home rule. She suggested to Martha that the King reside and call Parliament in Ireland periodically to understand that country more fully and win the support of its people.⁸

From the start Dashkova was very open with the Wilmots about the events of her life, habits, and beliefs. Martha described her day in a letter to her parents and stated that around noon each day she visited the Princess in her apartment to chat "sometimes about Kings and Empresses and sometimes about Wheat and rye for half an hour or so."⁹ Similar time was spent each evening and within a month of her

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid, 50.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid, 48.

arrival Dashkova had informed her that she had dethroned her godfather, Peter III, when she was only eighteen.¹⁰

When Dashkova returned to Moscow she also seems to have rediscovered the Orthodox faith she had been trained in as a child. Dashkova impressed Martha Wilmot with her devotion to Orthodoxy. Dashkova frequently took Martha to church with her. On one occasions Dashkova freely and loudly corrected the young man as he attempted to read the service until she could no longer bear it. Then, "having with much devotion & even tears saluted two or three Images she would not wait for the remainder of their ceremonys (sic) but abruptly quitted the Church."¹¹ After collecting one of the dogs she doted on so completely, Dashkova returned to the grounds of her estate as was her habit to work along side her serfs for several hours before and after dinner.¹²

The immense inequality among Russians bothered the Irishwoman terribly, at least in part because she could find no place for herself in the categories of nobility and peasantry. To her father Wilmot wrote, "It is the genius of this country to be every thing of nothing. A middle state such as happy England boasts is not understood."¹³ The poverty and flattery so prevalent among the Russian

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid, 52.

¹²Ibid, 53.

¹³Ibid, 55.

nobility was repugnant to her. Martha was not nearly so critical of her generous hostess's vanity and domineering relational style although she was able to describe it perfectly for her father,

her establish'd opinion of herself is such that...it is as if she was distinct from herself and look'd at her own acts and deeds and character with a degree of admiration that she never attempts to express the expression of, and that with a sort of artlessness that makes one almost forgive her. Her principles are noble and possesss'd of influence which extends to absolute dominion over the happiness and prosperity of some thousands of Subjects. She invariably exerts it for thier welfare, entering into their circumstances; and by kindness as a Landlord and forbearance & &, placing them in a situation of prosperity not very universally known in this country. As a relation she is everything to her family many of whom, even distant branches, she has push'd forward in life to situations that without her they wou'd never have known.¹⁴

In December Dashkova habitually went to her home in Moscow for the winter. From her palace on the Nikitsky Boulevard west of the Kremlin, the Princess introduced Martha Wilmot to all the best of what was left of Catherinian Russia, including Alexis Orlov.¹⁵ Throughout all of this, the Princess delighted in making sure that Martha scrupulously adhered to every Russian custom including visiting the recently bereaved and providing expensive housewarming gifts referred to as "Bread and Salt."¹⁶

¹⁴Ibid, 55-56.

¹⁵Ibid, 67-68.

¹⁶Ibid, 73-74.

By this stage of Dashkova's life she had become a source of security to other Russian nobles. Therefore, Dashkova's devotion to Martha Wilmot quickly caused Wilmot to become the object of both flattery and jealousy from Dashkova's family and friends. Wilmot described a countess visiting the princess who barely paid any attention to Martha at all when she first arrived. When the countess noticed, Dashkova's obvious affection for the young woman, she "was seiz'd with a sudden Colic of admiration"¹⁷ for Martha which won Dashkova's attention and regard. A clear indication of the basis of the problem of jealousy that would sour her last year in Russia can be seen in Martha's description of her relationship with Dashkova during her first trip to Moscow. In a letter to her mother Martha describes the depth of Dashkova's affection for her as almost that which she holds for her own children. Added to that affection was a strong element of sympathy or pity for a person so far from home. Toward the end of their stay in Moscow, Martha wrote to her father that Dashkova's concern over conditions in Ireland was so great that she had suggested that the entire Wilmot family consider emigrating to Russia. After their return from Moscow to Dashkova's estate, Dashkova gave Martha one thousand pounds sterling and prepared another packet for her to prevent her being strand-

¹⁷Ibid, 75-76.

ed in Russia in the event of Dashkova's death.¹⁸ Given the strained nature of Dashkova's relationships with her children and the estate involved, it was not surprising that her daughter came to regard Martha as a serious threat.

An aspect of Dashkova's slavophilism that was not very obvious earlier in her life appears during her last years. Shortly before their departure from Moscow the season of Lent began and Dashkova's behavior further convinced Martha that her critics' charges of a lack of faith were unfounded. Although her health prevented Dashkova from observing the rigors of the Lenten fast, a priest said Mass twice every day at her Palace during the last week they were there and this practice was continued at Troitskoe. Dashkova received communion and made her confession as early as she was able to. When they returned to Troitskoe, the princess stopped at the church to hear a Te Deum before entering her home. Two days later the Priest was back at her house to perform a Mass for the Princess's birthday. Although this service did not produce the tears were the normal result Dashkova's religious exercises, she still demonstrated more devotion than most of those present.¹⁹ As Martha Wilmot's first Easter in Russia approached, she noted that every detail was

¹⁸Ibid, 76-90.

¹⁹Ibid, 86-89.

observed on the estate and Dashkova herself was involved in every step including the great feast ending the fast.²⁰

When things had returned to a more normal routine, Dashkova continued to inform Wilmot about her life at court giving her the full benefit of her knowledge and opinions of Russia's autocrats. One evening they read the letters Dashkova had saved from Catherine II. The friendship evident in the tone of these letters and the differences between the ones written before and after Catherine became Empress impressed Wilmot. She noticed that Catherine's

style changed into more measured phrases & greater formality conceal'd under apparent respect & consideration. However her natural charming flow of language and animated turn of her mind (wch the Princess assures me was often the unaffected playfulness of a Child) appears thro' her affected reserve, sometimes too a sparkle of satire & always the dignity of a great personage who felt she had every eye fix'd upon her and was resolv'd to be everything she thought worthy of her.²¹

Dashkova frequently compared Russia's other rulers unfavorably to Catherine. The vulnerability of the nobility to the whims and cruelty of the autocrat was a frequent theme in these conversations. According to the Princess, Paul I was so suspicious of everyone that his apartments were heavily guarded at all times while Catherine had been much more open and accessible because of the confidence she had in the nation that had chosen her to rule. Peter the

²⁰Ibid, 94-99.

²¹Ibid, 100.

Great was a particular target of Dashkova's criticism in these late night discussions. She frequently recalled instances of his cruelty toward his courtiers and their many humiliations at his hands. But she also remained equally critical of his choice to learn technical skills himself and require nobles to do the same. Even though Dashkova enjoyed working alongside her peasants on the gardens and buildings of her estate, she convinced Wilmot that Peter's practice could not be considered enlightenment of his nation because his only real purpose was to make Russia his passive tool. Dashkova also criticized the Empress Anne for her practice of playing humiliating jokes on her courtiers. In sharp contrast, conversations praising the great qualities of Catherine II literally lasted all night.²²

Despite her continuing health problems, Dashkova was determined to show Wilmot as much of the Russian Empire as possible. At the end of June 1804, the Dashkova took Wilmot to the estate in Poland which had been given to her by the Catherine. During their time in Poland Dashkova continued to disprove the legends growing up around her concerning her miserliness and reclusive nature. She bought all the members of her entourage gifts at local markets. Dashkova also received visitors frequently and arranged for parties and

²²Ibid, 100-106.

balls for Wilmot to meet all the local dignitaries including the leading families of the Jewish community.²³

In September Dashkova and Wilmot began the journey back to Troitskoe. They attended a ball at the Governor's in Smolensk in order Martha to have another opportunity to learn more about Russia, its people, and music. Dashkova's neice even managed to get Martha to practice speaking Russian for the benefit of those who did not speak French or English. A week later they arrived at Troitskoe and performed the same ritual Martha had witnessed on their return from Moscow: before entering the house, they visited the Church to hear a brief Te Deum and kiss the icons.²⁴

Although Martha never became completely comfortable with Orthodox practice, she was deeply impressed by Dashkkova's spirituality. As she described it in her journal a month after their return to Troitskoe:

After supper we sat up later than usual, & no wonder. I don't think I ever saw the dear Princess more charming. She conversed with us on the subject of Religion & express'd so much elevation of mind & such true devotion to her Creator with so much simplicity & energy as was really edifying. 'tis seldom her powers of intellect shew themselves in the delightful manner they have appear'd this Eveg for, as she says too truly, the business of a mere Steward is her constant employment & absorbs her almost entirely. The goodness of her heart has everlasting practice, but 'tis her lot to leave in repose one of the most richly cultivated understandings that perhaps ever existed, besides a power of Comprehension & a Memory so

²³Ibid, 113-129.

²⁴Ibid, 129-131.

perfect that Nothing is abstruse to her, & when she conveys her ideas 'tis in a language as simple and clear as it is forcible.²⁵

In December, Dashkova's household once again returned to Moscow for the holidays. Dashkova took the same approach to Martha Wilmot's education as she had her own son's. She hired a master to continue Wilmot's instruction in Russian, which the Irishwoman found to be very tiresome. She was much more pleased when Dashkova provided her with a little library of about one hundred volumes of the major works of the French Enlightenment. Dashkova also kept up her other favorite activities, visiting her relatives and writing. They had dinners with the Prince Dashkov and Count Alexander Vorontsov among others. Dashkova also wrote a satirical reply to an article on agriculture which was published in a monthly journal of the Free Economic Society. As usual they returned to Troitskoe at the beginning of Lent.²⁶

As the anniversary of the coup that brought Catherine II to the throne neared, Dashkova frequently reminisced to Martha Wilmot about her life. Dashkova gave her a large gold snuff box which commemorated the event along with coins, medallions, and precious stones. On another occasion, the Princess recalled that the Empress knew all the traditional Russian folk tales and songs and frequently had them performed at the Hermitage. According to Dashkova the

²⁵Ibid, 131.

²⁶Ibid, 134-138.

encouragement of this sort of cultural life added to the Empress's popularity. Dashkova's also discussed her travels through Europe and the great men she met there such as Voltaire and Diderot.²⁷

Catherine Wilmot joined her sister in Moscow in September 1805. Older and more sophisticated than Martha Wilmot, her insights into Dashkova's life provide a valuable and perhaps more realistic assessment of the Princess at the end of her long lifetime than her younger sister's observations. Dashkova apparently looked forward to Catherine's arrival and attempted to ease any anxiety by making efforts similar to those she had undertaken on Martha's behalf. When she arrived in Cronstadt, Catherine received a letter written by Martha but sealed by Dashkova with the word "Welcome" engraved on it. Despite her travels on the Continent, Catherine Wilmot was almost as overwhelmed as Martha had been initially for she wrote to her sister that she expected it to be a fairy tale year in Russia.²⁸

In her letters home Catherine immediately began appraising Dashkova's character and habits. After complaining bitterly about the Russian nobility imitating French ways, she contrasted that unfortunate tendency with Dashkova stating that she was a "lovely oddity" and "if ever there

²⁷Ibid, 135-142.

²⁸Ibid, 156-169.

was an Original upon the face of the Earth it is herself."²⁹ As Dashkova had done for Martha, she spoke in English to Catherine and translated the conversation into Russian for those around her at the parties and balls they attended for the enjoyment of the Wilmots. Catherine quickly noticed that these efforts were uniquely for the benefit of her beloved Irishwomen and were not enjoyed by others less fortunate. The self-importance and tactlessness that had always caused Dashkova difficulties remained only softened perhaps by age.³⁰

In her most well known description of Dashkova, Catherine Wilmot eloquently captured the contradictions and frustrations embodied in this person limited primarily by her gender and the age in which she lived. In a letter home she wrote,

In the midst of this immense Establishment and in the center of riches and honours I wish you were to see the Princess go out to take a walk, or rather to look over her subjects! An old brown great coat and a silk handkerchief about her neck worn to rags is her dress, & well may it be worn to rags for she has worn in 18 years and will continue to do so as long as she lives because it belong'd to Mrs. Hamilton. Her originality her appearance, her manner of speaking, her doing every description of thing, (for she helps the masons to build walls, she assists with her own hands in making the roads, she feeds the cows, she composes music, she sings & plays, she writes for the press, she shells the corn, she talks out loud in Church and corrects the Priest if he is not devout, she talks out loud in her little

²⁹Ibid, 194-195.

³⁰Ibid, 196.

Theatre and puts in the Performers when they are out in their parts, she is a Doctor, an Apothecary, a Surgeon, a Farrier, a Carpenter, a Magistrate, a Lawyer; in short she hourly practices every species of incongruity, corresponds with her brother, who holds the first post in the Empire, on his trade, with Authors, with Philosophers, with Jews, with Poets, with her Son, with all her Relations, and yet appears as if she had her time a burthen on her hands) altogether gives me eternally the idea of her being a Fairy!³¹

Dashkova also allowed Catherine Wilmot to read her collection of letters from the great figures of the Enlightenment and the Empress herself. Although the elder Wilmot spent hours talking with Dashkova, she did seem to find tiresome Dashkova's constant references to Catherine's reign and the portraits of her in every room. Wilmot complained that it was necessary to be well acquainted with all the major figures and events of that period in order to follow Dashkova's perpetual allusions to it. In fact, she stated that she was so familiar with the events after just a month at Troitskoe that she was beginning to feel that she had participated in the revolution that brought Catherine to the throne.³²

As was her custom, Dashkova once again took her guests to Moscow for the Christmas holidays. This holiday season was marked with tragedy, however, for upon their arrival they received the news that Dashkova's brother, Alexander,

³¹Ibid, 200-201.

³²Ibid, 201-208.

had died. Despite her mourning, Dashkova made sure that the Wilmots continued to attend all the social functions available in Moscow. Dashkova and her circle of aging Muscovite friends soon lost their charm for Catherine Wilmot. Their constant self-serving praise of Catherine and criticism of Alexander I bored her.³³

Despite their affection for her, Dashkova was basically unable to win over the opinions of the Wilmots concerning Russian autocracy and serfdom. Martha and Catherine Wilmot were impressed with the material standard of living of the Russian peasants they saw particularly in comparison with the wretched conditions endured by the poor in Ireland. The Wilmots were also convinced that Dashkova was a good and kind owner committed to the welfare of the souls in her charge. They frequently commented in their writings on the concern and affection the Princess seemed to feel for her peasants and their return of that sentiment. Dashkova's performance could not hide the impact of serfdom and autocracy on both noble and peasant. The unthinking servility and flattery that characterized all relationships in Russian society frequently appalled the Wilmots. As Catherine Wilmot wrote to a relative after their return to Troitskoe in March of 1806, " I look upon every Noble as an iron link in the massy chain that manacles this Realm & 'tis

³³Ibid, 212-214.

impossible to be in their company without recollecting that they are Subjects under a Despotism."³⁴

During this summer at Troitskoe the fairy tale that Catherine had hoped for began to fade. The possibility that Martha would return with her Ireland created such anguish for Dashkova that Martha was unwilling to leave. Therefore, in July Dashkova petitioned the Dowager Empress Marie to become Martha Wilmot's protectress upon the event of the Princess's death. She also set aside a large sum of money in the Empress Mother's guardianship for Martha's return to Ireland.³⁵

When Dashkova and the Wilmots visited Moscow in August, the situation worsened when they learned that Dashkova's daughter viewed her as an enemy and was spreading every sort of calumny against her to anyone who visited Prince Dashkov's home where she resided. Adding to the pain of this situation, it appeared that Prince Dashkov did nothing to defend Martha from these attacks. The effect of Shcherbinina's bitterness was so great that when the Princess and her party returned to Moscow in November, they did not enter into Moscow society functions as they had in the past and all communication with Dashkova's children

³⁴Ibid, 223-224.

³⁵E. R. Dashkova to the Dowager Empress Marie, 13 July 1806, in Bradford, Memoirs, 2: 206-209.

ceased. This separation made the events to come even more painful for all involved.³⁶

In January 1807, as Russia prepared for the possibility of war with Napoleon, public crisis and personal tragedy once again combined in Dashkova's life. According to Martha Wilmot's diary, Dashkova's son as Marshall of the Nobility was involved in the selection of the officers for the militia. The next week, a party at Dashkova's home was interrupted with the news that the Prince was very ill. Dashkova did not believe this initial report thinking it only a ploy to force a reconciliation. Yet less than a week later he was dead.³⁷

In any family, the loss of a child would be disastrous. Dashkova had always been deeply concerned with the perpetuation of the family name which would also immortalize her relationship with Catherine the Great and Prince Dashkov was the last male in the line. Later Dashkova chose to solve this problem by choosing one of her nephews to be her heir on the condition that he add Dashkov to his name.³⁸

Adding to the tragedy was the fact that Dashkova's anger at not being consulted in his marriage had never

³⁶Russian Journals, 267-275.

³⁷P. A. Nikolai to S. R. Vorontsov, 17 February 1807, in AKV, 22: 388.

³⁸Letter from P. A. Nikolai to S. R. Vorontsov in AKV, 22: 388; N. M. Longinova to S. R. Vorontsov, 19 February 1807, in AKV 23: 34.

diminished. For four years after his marriage, there was no contact between mother and son; even after their reconciliation Dashkova never received her daughter-in-law. Although the Prince never divorced his wife, she was sent to live on one of his country estates and he had not seen her for several years prior to his death. The unfortunate young Princess Dashkova was even denied his inheritance which passed to his sister. The eccentricity of the older Princess was never clearer than at this point. After her son's death, Dashkova brought the daughter-in-law she had never seen to Troitskoe and began showering her with the affection she had been denied for twenty years and purchasing her a new home nearby to be able to continue comforting one another.³⁹

No such comfort existed for Martha Wilmot in this situation. Although she had never been as critical of Russia as her sister, the events surrounding the death of Prince Dashkov embittered her toward all of Russia and its inhabitants with the exception of Dashkova. In addition to the sorrow of losing one of the Russians she had admired the most, Martha Wilmot felt compelled to remain with Dashkova in her time of mourning rather than returning to Ireland with her sister. This was obviously a sacrifice for Martha

³⁹Russian Journals, 242-243, 286-287.

Wilmot. But Dashkova insisted that she could not survive another loss at this point in her life.⁴⁰

Possibly the most painful part in this tragedy for Martha Wilmot and Dashkova was her daughter's conduct. Shcherbinina did not allow anyone, including Dashkova to see her brother during his illness. Dashkova was finally able to give him a blessing before he died, but he seemed completely unaware of his mother's presence. At the funeral Shcherbinina attempted to prevent Martha Wilmot's from viewing the remains making a very ugly public scene. When news of this reached Dashkova, she was, of course, distraught and the result was her daughter's complete exclusion from her will.⁴¹

The insecurity of the Muscovite nobility became very plain in the aftermath of Prince Dashkov's death. Many people whom Martha Wilmot had regarded as friends treated her as a nonentity because of the things Dashkova's daughter said about her. She also began to realize her social position in regard to Dashkova in the eyes of Russian society. Martha compared herself to a prime minister to whom those wishing to gain Dashkova's favor paid court. Not realizing their motives Martha made no attempt to influence Dashkova's behavior toward them. When their wishes were not granted, they blamed the unwitting "Prime Minister" Wilmot

⁴⁰Ibid, 244.

⁴¹Ibid, 277-281.

for her failure to repay their kindness.⁴² Returning to Troitskoe was with Prince Dashkov's widow reconciled to the Princess was a welcome relief for all from the intrigues of Moscow. By the time they returned in December Shcherbinina's influence had waned to the point that she could no longer harm her mother or the object of her intense jealousy, Martha Wilmot.⁴³

In June preparations began for Catherine Wilmot's return to Ireland. Dashkova arranged another round of sightseeing and traditional entertainments in Moscow for the Wilmots and included her newly discovered daughter-in-law. They proceeded to St. Petersburg, but Catherine's departure was delayed by confusion over her passport and the corruption and inefficiency of the Russian bureaucracy.⁴⁴ The announcement of the Treaty of Tilsit between Alexander I and Napoleon and the resulting deterioration of relations with England added uncertainty to the situation. In August Catherine Wilmot left her younger sister behind with Dashkova and set out for Ireland. After a voyage plagued by bad weather and the dangers of wartime, she finally arrived in Cork in October, 1807, more than a year before Martha was finally able to extricate herself from clutches of the Bear

⁴²Ibid, 298-299.

⁴³Ibid, 304-312.

⁴⁴E. R. Dashkova to O. I. Kiselev, August 1807, in Sbornik Starinnykh bumag, khraniashchisksia v muzee P. I. Shchukina, 9: 62-64.

of the North, as Dashkova jokingly referred to herself.⁴⁵

The last year of Dashkova's time with Martha was an agonizing period of attempting to make arrangements for her return to Ireland in the midst of a deteriorating international situation. Although Dashkova made every effort to secure a safe passage for Martha, it was so painful for her to consider that she was unable to continue the correspondence she had developed with the Wilmots during Martha's stay with her. The numerous false starts and returns were exhausting both physically and emotionally for both Dashkova and Martha Wilmot. However, now possessing a more jaundiced view of Russian society, Miss Wilmot was able to make some very interesting observations about the qualities of Dashkova's character that had formed the basis for some of her critics' charges. Martha was surprised that she took no interest in fashion and could not distinguish between fine materials and cheap imitations. Dashkova was very critical of the absurd standards of fashion practiced by the nobility which required that they not only go into debt putting on balls and dinners but also go so far as to borrow each others clothes and jewels in order to maintain the facade of wealth and luxury. Although Martha Wilmot was willing to excuse Dashkova's flaws, the Russians who were the object of her open contempt were not so forgiving.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Wilmot, Russian Journals, 250-260.

⁴⁶Ibid, 354-360.

Finally in September of 1808, Martha Wilmot's return to Ireland was successfully arranged after many setbacks and failures. It was so painful for Dashkova that being with the young woman was difficult. She even allowed herself to be deceived about the exact time of Martha's departure, so that she was able to leave for Moscow in the evening after Dashkova had retired saving them both from an excruciating separation. After many more delays, the young Irishwoman was finally able to depart from St. Petersburg in October and arrived back in England in December. The events surrounding her departure only contributed to the controversy Princess Dashkova and marked the beginning of the final stage of this remarkable woman's long life.⁴⁷

The circumstances surrounding Dashkova's death in 1810 and their meaning have become clouded. By 1810 almost all of her close friends and relatives had died. All of the important men in her life were gone -- her father, older brother, husband, and son. Even Nikita Panin whose role in her life had varied from alleged father and lover to guardian of her children and her enemies, the Orlovs, had been dead for many years. The other two Catherines in her life, the Empress and Mrs. Hamilton, had died before the turn of the century. Dashkova was completely estranged from her daughter and never recognized her son's illegitimate

⁴⁷Ibid, 278-415.

children. She died alone and for the most part forgotten, a relic from the previous century.⁴⁸

Writing in May of 1805, Dashkova summarized her judgments about her life in the following statement which is in many ways similar to Catherine the Great's own epitaph:

In conclusion, I may truly say that I have done all the good it has been in my power to do; that I have never done any harm to anybody; that oblivion and contempt have been my only revenge for the injustice, the intrigues and the slander of which I have been victim; that I have done my duty as well as I have been able to perceive and understand it; that my heart was honest and my intentions pure and I was thus able to bear with bitter sorrows to which, but for the comfort of my own conscience, my excessive sensitivity would have made me succumb; and lastly, that I contemplate the approach of my own dissolution without fear or apprehension.⁴⁹

The publication of her Memoirs in 1840 by Martha Wilmot Bradford rekindled the controversy and fame of this remarkable woman. Since then she has become a symbol of a wide variety of things depending on the purposes of the one invoking her memory. Dashkova's life and works are valuable sources for those who seek to understand the basic qualities of Russian life in many areas--social, intellectual, political life and family relationships. The reason for this can be found in an acrostic of Dashkova's name found among the papers brought back to Ireland by Martha Wilmot

⁴⁸Letter from N. M. Longinova to S. R. Vorontsov in AKV 23: 45.

⁴⁹Dashkov, Memoirs, p. 288-89.

and now located in the British Library. After praising her many good qualities and accomplishments, the author of the acrostic concludes that even when she was exiled by the Tsar Dashkova was, "in her heart --a Russian."⁵⁰

⁵⁰T...T...C...B, "Akrostikh," British Museum Manuscript Collection, Additional MSS 31911.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

There is a serious need to begin to reassess the life of Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova. Two issues in Catherinian scholarship have undermined efforts to understand Dashkova's life. First, beginning in the eighteenth century Western observers have been fascinated by the sexual activities of all the women who ruled Russia. Catherine's long and robust sexual life provoked intense interest among Western diplomats and travelers in Russia. They believed and reported that Catherine, even more than her predecessors, allowed herself and her country to be dominated by her passions and her favorites. This view of Catherine also pervaded Western scholarship from Catherine's first biographers, Castera-Tooke, to the present. It is impossible to fit a serious personal and professional relationship with another woman such as Dashkova into this picture of Catherine as a nymphomaniac. To deal with this, historians have dismissed Dashkova as a significant figure in two ways. In Castera-Tooke's work and other contemporary accounts it was assumed that Dashkova shared her friend's promiscuous lifestyle. The opposite but equally derogatory view that she was totally naive and prudish and, therefore, unlikely to be genuinely liked and trusted by a sophisticate

such as Catherine replaced that interpretation of Dashkova. Although H. M. Hyde's work on Dashkova is very detailed, it suffers because it reflects this fascination in its lengthy discussion of the Regent Anna's bisexuality and assumptions about the number of lovers Catherine had and the children she had by them. Recent Catherinian scholarship by John T. Alexander, A. G. Cross, and Isabel de Madariaga, however, has emphasized Catherine's independence from her favorites and her real neurosis, workaholism rather than nymphomania. Madariaga recognizes Dashkova's literary accomplishments in her work Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great, and states that Dashkova was a "quarrelsome, mean, vain, and cantankerous woman," and her appointments were one way for Catherine II to keep a busybody busy.¹ There is a need to begin to reexamine Dashkova's career in light of recent scholarship on Catherine's life and reign.

A second issue in Catherinian scholarship that bears on Dashkova is the issue of Catherine's character. This issue is usually discussed in terms of the sincerity of her commitment to the principles of the Enlightenment. Russian and Western scholars, such as Alexander Kizevetter, have argued that Catherine's espousal of enlightened views was essentially a hypocritical public relations maneuver to win the approval of Europeans and build up her authority at

¹Isabel de Madariaga, Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 535.

home.² This view of Catherine as a cold-blooded Machiavellian also has an impact on an understanding of Dashkova's life and her relationship with the Empress. If one assumes that Catherine was consistently insincere and manipulative in all of her relationships, it is impossible to take her correspondence with Dashkova seriously. This in turn diminishes Dashkova herself, particularly as a participant in the coup that put Catherine on the throne and as head of the Academies. However, David Griffiths has provided a reinterpretation of Catherine's reign that sheds light on her relationship with not only the Enlightenment but also Dashkova. He argues that the traditional view of Catherine is, "unconvincing from the point of view of personality theory, since it assumes that the empress passed her entire adult life in a state of tension between her liberal utterances and her conservative policies."³ Griffiths argues that, in fact, Catherine's actions were in harmony with her own statements and Enlightenment principles adapted to Russian conditions. If Dashkova's relationship with Catherine is viewed from this perspective it becomes possible to understand that it was based on mutual affection and respect. When viewed with a less jaundiced eye toward

²Marc Raeff, ed. Catherine the Great: A Profile (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972) 4-17.

³David Griffiths, "Catherine II: The Republican Empress," Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas 21 (1973): 324.

its author, the bulk of Catherine's correspondence with Dashkova reveals an effective personal and working relationship between the two women. As critics caricatured Catherine by negative assumptions about her integrity, they demeaned Dashkova by portraying her as a vain puppet of a master manipulator. Therefore, there is also a need to reassess Dashkova's life in light of this new appreciation of Catherine's character.

The major source that must be dealt with in reassessing Dashkova is her own Memoirs and correspondence. Between 1805 and her death in 1810, two Irish ladies named Martha and Catherine Wilmot stayed with Dashkova and encouraged her to record her memories of life in Russia. The sisters managed to smuggle a copy of her memoirs back to Ireland and it were published for the first time in English in 1840. One of the manuscripts of Dashkova's memoirs which she titled, Mon histoire, was deposited in the British Library by the Wilmots' descendants. In addition to the memoirs, the Wilmots brought back copies and originals of Dashkova's correspondence with Catherine the Great and others. Some of these were also given to the British Library. In her translation of the Memoirs Martha Wilmot Bradford included these documents and other correspondence not found in the British Library collection. The other manuscript copy of the Memoirs which Dashkova kept with her after the Wilmots left Russia was published as volume 21 of the Arkhiiv kniazia

Vorontsova.⁴ Dashkova's correspondence with her family and letters mentioning her are found throughout the forty volumes of the AKV. These collections represent the largest quantity of material available about Dashkova's life and are available on microfilm.

Dashkova's Memoirs constitute one of only three eye witness accounts of the coup that put Catherine the Great on the throne of Russia. As such its publication generated a great deal of interest among Russian historians. The Memoirs quickly became regarded as a standard source on eighteenth-century Russia and subjected to intense scrutiny.⁵ In his work, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkova⁶, H. Montgomery Hyde scrupulously verified the events and people mentioned by Dashkova using other standard sources. Kyril Fitzlyon continued this process in his translation of the Memoirs. Fitzlyon provides footnotes and a lengthy section identifying the people Dashkova mentions in her narrative.⁷

⁴Arkhiiv khiazia Vorontsova, ed. P. Bartenev, 40 vols. (Moscow: A. I. Mamontova and K. Bolshaia Dmitrovka, 1870-1895).

⁵For a discussion of this scrutiny and the differences between the manuscript versions of the Memoirs see A. Woronzoff-Dashkoff, "Additions and Notes in Princess Dashkova's Mon Histoire," Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia 19 (September 1991): 15-21.

⁶H. Montgomery Hyde, The Empress Catherine and the Princess Dashkov (London: Chapman and Hall, 1935).

⁷E. R. Dashkova, The Memoirs of the Princess Dashkov, ed. Kyril Fitzlyon (London: John Calder, 1958).

The Russian revolutionary, Alexander Herzen, saw in Dashkova a symbol of opposition to autocracy and felt strongly that her Memoirs along with the journals of the Wilmot sisters be published. In 1859 Trubner and company published a Russian translation of the 1840 English version of Dashkova's Memoirs with a preface by Herzen in London. Herzen advertised their publication in his paper Kolokol. Since then numerous versions of the work have been translated and retranslated into French, English, German and Russian.⁸ Like Dashkova, Herzen combined elements of the Westernizers and the Slavophiles in his view of Russian society. The progress evident in a comparison of Russian society in the 1850s with the pictures drawn by Dashkova and the Wilmot sisters in their letters and memoirs thrilled him. Herzen found in Dashkova a symbol of resistance to Russian autocracy and very much wanted her Memoirs to be made known in Russia.⁹ In 1857 he published a very lengthy article about Dashkova in The Pole Star based primarily on Martha Wilmot Bradford's version of her Memoirs. After quoting Catherine Wilmot's whimsical description of Dashkova, Herzen wrote,

All that is true, but Miss Wilmot forgets that, in addition to all that, Princess Dashkov was born

⁸Kyryl Fitzlyon, "Introduction," in E. R. Dashkova, Memoirs, 18-22.

⁹Alexander Herzen, My Past and Thoughts: The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen, ed. Humphrey Higgins (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), 2: 449.

a woman, and remained a woman all her life. She was unusually well developed on the side of the heart, of tenderness of feeling, of devotion. For us this is specially important. In Princess Dashkov the personality of the Russian woman, awakened by the havoc wrought by Peter, emerges from her seclusion, displays her capacity, demands her share in politics, in science, in the reformation of Russia, and boldly takes her stand beside Catherine the Great. In Princess Dashkov we are conscious of that very force, still formless, which was struggling into life and freedom from under the mildew of Muscovite stagnation, something powerful, many-sided, active, something of Peter and Lomonosov, but softened by aristocratic breeding. The memoirs of a woman who took a foremost part in the revolution of 1762, and who was a close witness of all the events from the death of Elizabeth to the Peace of Tilsit, are exceedingly important in Russian history which is so poor in striking personalities; the more so that we know very little of our eighteenth century. To rehearse the story of those times is very profitable, both for the government, that it may not forget, and for us, that we may not despair.¹⁰

In this statement Herzen echoes Dashkova's complaints about the chaos created by Peter while proclaiming the superiority of Russia over Western Europe. Herzen also joins with her in a lengthy criticism of the growth of Russian autocracy. He concludes this article with a long summary of Dashkova's Memoirs which includes numerous comparisons with the situation in Russia in his time. Two years later Herzen published his Russian translation of the Bradford version of the Memoirs and made them available for the first time in the country of Dashkova's birth. Herzen's version is still available and his descriptions of Dashkovs are still widely known among Russians.

¹⁰Ibid, 4: 1585-1586.

However, in writing her own story so late in her life and claiming so much for herself, Dashkova set the terms of the historical debate about herself. Much that has been written about her has been focussed on either proving or disproving her own claims. In writing about the coup, Dashkova is dismissed because of her youth and Catherine the Great's disavowal of her role. Discussions of the Academy during her years as director dismiss her because of her gender and close relationship with Catherine. Her Memoirs are viewed as the ravings of an embittered old woman. Allowing her claims of exaggerated importance to control the discussion blinds us to the valuable lessons to be learned from Dashkova's life about the insecurity of the Russian nobility, the conflict between their private lives and state service, and the relationship between their admiration for the West and their love and pride in Russia.

In addition to her own Memoirs the diaries and letters of the Wilmots for the period they stayed with Dashkova have been published as The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot. The manuscript version of these documents is housed at the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin and parts are available on microfilm. Other primary sources include, of course, the Memoirs of Catherine the Great as well as her extensive correspondence with all those who knew or knew of Dashkova such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Grimm. Because of her controversial role in the coup that brought Catherine II

to power and the extent of her travels in the 1770s, many of the most famous and powerful figures of the eighteenth century met and commented about Dashkova in the journals and letters, including, for example, Horace Walpole.

Secondary sources concerning Dashkova are rather limited, particularly in English. The one work available in English devoted to her relationship with Catherine II, Hyde's The Empress Catherine and Princess Dashkova, focusses too much upon the romantic exploits and sexual preferences of the Russian and autocrats and lacks a complete bibliography and footnotes. It is also outdated in light of recent research on eighteenth century Russia and changes in attitudes and research concerning women. In many other works dealing with the reign of Catherine the Great, Dashkova only occasionally gets mentioned and then often in derogatory terms, such as busybody. For nationalist historians such as Kliuchevskii Dashkova did not hold the charm that she had for Herzen. Kliuchevskii was very critical of Dashkova, whom he perceived as a social diletante out of touch with the realities of Russian life. What he saw as Dashkova's betrayal of Russia to the French Enlightenment particularly outraged Kliuchevskii and he perpetuated the "rat story" to illustrate that point. In Kliuchevskii's very critical treatment of Catherine the Great whose reign he characterizes as cultural savagery, Dashkova is pictured as a pathetic even disgusting symbol of

the tragedy of Russia's unrealized potential. Summarizing the impact of the French Enlightenment on Russia, Kliuchevskii wrote,

Always there lurked behind the new words, behind the new tastes and ideas, the old hardness and crudity of civic and moral consciousness. That hardness, at times, took forms repellent outright. Thus, although the Princess Dashkov, in her youth, leant strongly towards the literature of France, and came to a shining light as President of the Academy of Sciences, she, in her old age, grew insensible enough to let all her affections go upon rats which she succeeded in taming in her mansion in Moscow. Truly none but an Elizabethan Russian could start off with Voltaire, and end with rat-taming.¹¹

This story has proven to be the most lasting image of Dashkova, particularly in popular Russian culture. Kliuchevskii's story may be based on an incident which occurred as Martha Wilmot was leaving Russia. Peace had just been reached with Napoleon and all British travelers were subjected to strict scrutiny when departing Russia. Martha's departure was repeatedly delayed and she learned that all of her luggage was to be searched. Panicking she smuggled the copy of the Memoirs and other papers Dashkova had entrusted to her off the boat and burned them. Martha's fears were realized and the police searched her things. Among the papers in her writing box the investigator found what he considered to be suspicious documents Martha had written in Russian with corrections made by Dashkova. When

¹¹V. O. Kliuchevskii, History of Russia, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), 4: 107 - 108.

questioned, Martha expressed surprise that her written exercises in that language would cause such alarm. On one of the pages she had written a little story about finding a mouse in her room. Martha felt sorry for it and could not bring herself to kill it, so she took it outside and set it free. In her story she relates that Dashkova reprimanded her for her soft heartedness toward the rodent. Dashkova said she would have killed it for her had she known as it would probably try to come right back in. The inspector was very embarrassed when Martha laughed about the possibility of him presenting her little story to his superiors. Given the possibility of unclear antecedents in such a multilingual conversation and simple malice on the part of the humiliated investigator combined with Dashkova's reputation for eccentricity, this little incident could have served as the basis for what might be called the "rat story" repeated to this day.

In the past decade, with the growth of eighteenth-century studies Dashkova has received renewed scholarly attention. The Russian Academy of Sciences published a biography by L. Ia. Lozinskaia. It was rather superficial and unfortunately did not utilize many new sources from Soviet archives. Several articles by A. G. Cross and J. T. Alexander have dealt with specific events in Dashkova's life particularly during her time in England and her relationship with Catherine. Alexander Woronzoff-Dashkoff and Barbara

Heldt have also begun work on the Memoirs as a literary rather than historical document. In her work Terrible Perfection noting that the historical aspects of the Memoirs had been exhaustively worked over, the feminist author Barbara Heldt shifted attention to the inner conflict between Dashkova's public and private selves as expressed through the Memoirs as a literary genre. Heldt concludes her study of Russian women with a poem about Dashkova by a Leningrad poet, Elena Shvarts. In it the "rat story" is repeated, but Dashkova is shown as a symbol of the helplessness and isolation of female old age.

The Old Age of Princess Dashkova

Princess Dashkova presides no more
 At the Academy on the Isle
 In her old age
 She's left for Moscow
 Who will pity the rats?
 Who will pity the rats?
 For a rat, you know,
 Neither reaps nor sows,
 And is not a thing of beauty.
 Hey, rats, run
 Fast
 Into that house on the corner
 Onto the roof, into the drain
 But all the same you're too late--
 Your patron is in her grave.
 A wake. In the kitchen gossiping, gossiping.
 No one, but no one weeps for her.
 'A small rat brings morning greetings to her bed,
 It squeaks something in her ear,
 She returns the compliment,
 And lifts some sugar to its snout
 With her white hand.
 Her son died.
 She buried him without a tear--
 God gave, God took away,
 Not for us to judge, they say.
 But Mashenka, the rat, pinched her tail

She cried so hard and boxed the servants' ears all
 day.'
 Consciousness dims,
 The icon-lamp smokes,
 Voltaire and Rousseau
 In far-away tombs.
 Yes, old age is freedom
 You do what you please
 Then why are you crying
 What are you muttering for?
 'Are these the coffin's walls
 Or the walls of a cradle?
 Now a rat is over me
 In a black and knitted shawl.
 Dearest, how much you look
 Like Grandma--you're as tender
 And you mix solace with tears
 Just the way she did.'
 The rat rocks the tidy coffin
 Touches the poor yellow shoulders
 Its words incomprehensible
 Like grownup talk to children
 The fool blows his tin whistle
 Live on until that day
 When you bind up grave and cradle
 In fantastic, evil play.¹²

Recently, Dashkova has become a symbol for a new generation of feminists in Russia and this country. In Tatyana Mamonova's brief article, "The Two Catherines," she states that, "There is no doubt that only an intelligent woman of power could have shared Catherine's friendship and fame. Dashkova turned out to have no less influence on Russia in the eighteenth century than the Empress herself."¹³ For Russian feminists like Mamonova, Dashkova is a symbol of powerful Russian women who are equal to the great men of

¹²Barbara Heldt, Terrible Perfection, 158 - 159.

¹³Tatyana Mamonova, Russian Women's Studies: Essays on Sexism in Soviet Culture (New York: Pergamon Press, 1989), 9.

Russian history. As A. G. Cross wrote, Dashkova's star is once again rising. New sources will undoubtedly be found as the archives of the former Soviet Union are opened up to researchers. For example, recently when a manuscript catalog of Dashkova's gem collection in her own handwriting was unearthed in the Hermitage Archives, researchers discovered that Dashkova presented her gem collection to Catherine the Great and it is still housed in the Hermitage.¹⁴

In surveying the secondary literature, it is in a sense more revealing to point out where Dashkova has been overlooked than to count how very frequently her Memoirs are cited. In many works dealing with Russia in the eighteenth century she is often not mentioned at all, as in the case of Paul Duke's, Catherine the Great and the Russian Nobility and even Marc Raeff's Origins of the Russian Intelligentsia. In the study of the Enlightenment it often seems that many scholars believe that Enlightenment thought never made its way east of the Rhine. But in other works on this period another bias becomes obvious in that there are few women mentioned except in volumes devoted only to their contributions.¹⁵

¹⁴Oleg Neverov, "Gems from the Collection of Princess Dashkov," Journal of the History of Collections, 2: 66.

¹⁵See, for example, Peter Gay, The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, 2 vols (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1969).

Finally, the study of Russian women has not, for the most part, stressed the contributions of eighteenth-century ladies-in-waiting. Much of the best work done in this field has dealt with women involved in nineteenth-century revolutionary movements or those who can be studied by employing the methods of social and quantitative history such as students in state institutions or women factory workers.¹⁶ Many women's historians have focussed their efforts on studying Russian women's lives after their "sudden awakening to consciousness in the middle of the nineteenth century," to use Richard Stites phrase. He views Dashkova as entirely because,

The history of eighteenth-century Russia was studded with examples of telescoped development and sociologically freakish phenomena. One of these was the number of highly educated women of European culture. Beginning in the age of Empress Elizabeth and reaching their numerical zenith during the reign of Catherine II, scores of well-read, witty, polyglot, literary-minded women appeared in both capitals, eagerly emulating the Russian gentlemen who sought to be more Gallic than the Gauls. Princess Dashkova, whom the tsarina appointed as president of the Academy of Sciences in 1782, was only the most spectacular and highly placed of this bright cluster of women. But, like much else in the Russian enlightenment,

¹⁶See for example, Barbara Alpern-Engel, Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin, and Gail Lapidus, eds., Women in Russia (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977); Rose L. Glickman, Russian Factory Women: Workplace and Society, 1880 - 1914 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism, 1860-1930 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

the appearance was misleading and the promise deceptive. Catherine and Dashkova were both self-taught, and most of the brilliant women of the salons were privately tutored by expensive imported personnel. They were in no way representative even of the gentry women as a whole.¹⁷

Although Catherine the Great or Voltaire often overshadow her or the interests of historians in a variety of fields lead them to ignore her, Princess Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova made significant contributions to the rise of the Empress to power, the Russian Academies, and changing roles for women in eighteenth-century Russia.

¹⁷Richard Stites, The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 14-15.

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