

University of Alberta

**Mothers, Wives, Housekeepers and More?
Maria Feodorovna and Women's Education in Russia, 1796-1828**

by

Meagan Fairholm

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to challenge the commonly-held notion that Empress Maria Feodorovna's (1759-1828) girls' schools in Russia were meant to raise nothing more than wives, mothers, and housekeepers. Taking Maria Feodorovna's social conservatism into account, it explores the curricula of her educational establishments (1) for noble girls (like Smol'nyi), (2) for girls from the *meshchanstvo*, and (3) the Foundling Homes, and argues that the programs offered, which included training courses for governesses and midwives, were vocational and pragmatic in nature, given the stratified estate system in place in the Russian Empire at that time. Incorporating the persona of the "pedagogical mother" into her "scenario of power," Maria Feodorovna used a mixture of motherly compassion and iron willpower to reinforce her authority. Furthermore, despite the inherent inequality of the estate-divisions in her institutes, Maria Feodorovna, a vigilant micromanager, tried to enforce the concepts of justice and impartiality in her schools.

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Introduction

The Russian Empress Maria Feodorovna (1759-1828), wife of Tsar Paul I, and mother of the Tsars Alexander I and Nicholas I, directed the women's educational system in the Russian Empire for more than three decades (1796-1828). By the time of her death in 1828, she controlled a sprawling network of 27 schools, hospitals and charitable organizations in Western Russia, many of which she had founded herself. Not a figurehead director, Maria Feodorovna's influence on the administrative and pedagogical details—such as the curriculum, staffing, and admissions policies—of the girls' schools under her supervision was vast. Nevertheless, she has generally received a very superficial treatment in scholarly works dealing with schooling in Russia.¹ Catherine II's establishment of the Smol'nyi Institute for Noble Girls in 1764 dominates most discussions of eighteenth-century women's schooling.² Moreover, when women's schooling in the period 1796-1828 has been the subject of a scholarly study, institutional education has not been the focus.³ Furthermore, analyses of nineteenth-century

¹ The gap in the historiography of women's education in Russia from the end of the eighteenth to the first third of the nineteenth century was pointed out in Natal'ia L. Pushkareva, "Russian Noblewomen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18th- and Early 19th-Century Memoirs," in *Women and Gender in 18th century Russia*, ed. Wendy Rosslyn, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 111-112.

² For example, Joseph Laurence Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979). His article, "Educating Women in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Myths and Realities," *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, Vol 20, No 1 (March 1978), 23-43, similarly focuses largely on Catherine II. Anna Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), also spends a chapter of her work on eighteenth-century education discussing the conceptualization of the Smol'nyi institute by Catherine II and Ivan Betskoi, but yet does not touch upon the work of Maria Feodorovna. See also: Carol S. Nash, "The Education of Women in Russia, 1762-1796" (Ph. D. Dissertation, New York University, 1978). Nash does provide short comparisons (normally a couple sentences long) between the policies of Catherine II and Maria Feodorovna at various points throughout her text, although she ultimately does not go outside of her stated temporal scope.

³ There are some excellent studies of women's education in the home, and of advice manuals and pedagogical journals in the early nineteenth century. See, for example, Pushkareva, "Russian

women's education normally begin in mid-century, and concentrate on the growing movement to allow women access to a more egalitarian primary, secondary and post-secondary education.⁴ Especially in twentieth-century works, the pre-1855 schools (with the exception of the Smol'nyi Institute under Catherine II) are generally viewed, and to some extent dismissed, as institutional reinforcements of Christian morality and traditional gender roles.⁵

This is likely due to the fact that, although Maria Feodorovna was a dedicated and capable administrator, she had a distinctly conservative view, first, of how society should be organized, and, secondly of woman's place within it. Having created separate schools for the nobility, the middle estate (*meshchanstvo*),⁶ and the abandoned children of the urban poor, Maria

Noblewomen's Education in the Home"; Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Jessica Tovrov, *The Russian Noble Family: Structure and Change* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1987).

⁴ For example, see: Christine Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); Ruth Arlene Fluck Dudgeon, "Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1905" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1975), Ruth Arlene Fluck Dudgeon, "The Forgotten Minority: Women Students in Imperial Russia, 1872-1917." *Russian History* 9, no. 1 (1982): 1-26.

⁵ Johanson, *Women's Struggle for Higher Education*, 3-6. Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 24-27.

⁶ This is a difficult word to translate. In her own writing, Maria Feodorovna translated *meshchane/meshchanin* into French as *bourgeois(e)*. See, for example, Maria Feodorovna, "Sostavlennyi Imperatritsei Mariei Feodorovnoi plan raspredeleniia vospitanits po klassam i ikh priema v Obshchestvo i Uchilishche," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, ed. N P. Cherepnin, vol. 3 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1915), 204. However, "bourgeois" does not seem like the most appropriate term due to the fact that, despite Maria Feodorovna's usage of it, it is anachronistic to refer to the urban middle estate in Russia as a bona fide "bourgeoisie" at the beginning of the nineteenth century. See: Elise Kimerling Wirtschafter, *Social Identity in Imperial Russia* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 62-99. Thus, we are left with the translations of "middle class" and "middle estate." As Gregory Freeze points out, it is anachronistic to use the word "class" when referring to the early nineteenth century in Russia because no class system existed at that point, and the estate system was still in the process of development. See: Gregory L Freeze, "The *Soslovie* (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 1 (February 1986): 11, 14, 17-18. Thus, we are left to translate "meshchanstvo" as

Feodorovna enforced the policy that students of different estates be given an education that corresponded to their preordained social position. In addition, the girls who attended her educational establishments were, above all, taught that their societal duty was to become wives, mothers and housekeepers. However, to write off Empress Maria's schools as nothing more than a training ground for traditional Russian brides, and to apply the label of "conservative" to her pedagogical ideals is to oversimplify the situation. This Empress, while she did believe that women largely belonged in the domestic sphere, took the financial situation of her students into account when planning the curricula of her institutes. Accordingly, she implemented many programs that allowed her students a measure of vocational training for jobs such as that of the governess, midwife and seamstress, should they fall into financial need. Moreover, the immense amount of power that Maria Feodorovna held over women's education is evidenced by the fact that, not only was it unchallenged during her 32 years of tenure, but her tactics and goals also influenced the Empresses that succeeded her. The present work, therefore, is intended to explore the complex dimensions of Maria Feodorovna's administrative and pedagogical tactics in her network of girls' schools, which, to date, have largely been overlooked by scholars, especially in the English-language historiography.⁷

"middle estate." See the section on Admission Requirements in Chapter 3 for a more thorough overview of how Maria Feodorovna conceived of the *meshchanstvo*.

⁷ I have come across only one English-language work that is specifically about Maria Feodorovna: Rosalind P. Blakesley, "Sculpting in Tiaras: Grand Duchess Maria Feodorovna as a Producer and Consumer of the Arts," in *Women and Material Culture, 1660-1830*, ed. Jennie Batchelor and Cora Kaplan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 71-86. However, as the title suggests, this article does not delve deeply into Maria Feodorovna's work in women's education. There is a paragraph about Maria's pedagogical endeavours (81-82), but, of course, a single paragraph cannot tell the reader anything substantial.

Most of the comprehensive works dealing with the career of Maria Feodorovna were written in the pre-revolutionary period. For example, Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, a nineteenth-century Russian historian and social activist who graduated from the Smol'nyi Institute in 1851, provides the most detailed assessment of the Dowager Empress's career.⁸ She dedicates an entire volume of her three-volume work *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii* to a discussion and analysis of this Empress's pedagogical and charitable endeavours. Here, Likhacheva painstakingly details the foundation of every new educational institute for girls in the 1796-1828 period, both by the Empress Maria and by other individuals like Empress Elizaveta Alekseevna, focusing on the funding efforts, administrative details, curricula, and societal reactions to the institutes. Likhacheva's personal experience as a *smolianka*⁹ certainly provided some stimulus for her opinion on subjects like the curriculum, which she sometimes criticizes.¹⁰ Nevertheless, she seems to have a generally positive view of Maria Feodorovna as an administrator, noting that she was a more attentive director of the girls' schools than was Catherine II.¹¹

Other pre-revolutionary texts on this subject include a three-volume work by N. P. Cherepnin, which focuses on the administrative details of daily operations at Smol'nyi and its associated school for middle-estate girls.¹²

⁸ Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*, vol 2, (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevich, 1899). See Nadezhda Perova, *Smolianki, mariinki, pavlushki...bestuzhevki...Iz istroii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Sankt-Peterburge*, (Saint Petersburg: Petropolis, 2007), 254-280 for a biography of Likhacheva.

⁹ This is a Russian term that designates a girl who studied at Smol'nyi.

¹⁰ See, for example, Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 211.

¹¹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 14.

¹² N. P. Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk 1764-1914*, 3 vols. (St Petersburg, 1914-1915).

Cherepnin's work is an especially valuable resource, not only for the level of detail with which he discusses Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical career, but also for the anthology of previously unpublished primary sources, one hundred pages of which relate to the 1796-1828 time period, that constitutes his third volume. In addition, the roughly 320 pages that Cherepnin dedicates to an overview of Maria Feodorovna's directorship of the Smol'nyi Institute and the associated school for middle-estate girls functions almost as a mini-archive with commentary. For example, Cherepnin includes an abundance of lengthy quotes, often one or two pages in length, in their original languages, from archival sources that have likely been destroyed.¹³ Although Cherepnin's narrative is more descriptive than analytical,¹⁴ he seems to have a generally positive bias towards Maria's work in the institutes. One slight drawback for historians hoping for a more all-encompassing overview is that Cherepnin limits his study solely to the Smol'nyi Institute. Furthermore, since he uses a top-down approach in his work, it is difficult to know what the daily life in the institutes was truly like for the girls.

Another helpful pre-revolutionary source is the 1890 article by Vera V. Timoshchuk which analyzes the first six years of Maria Feodorovna's influence at Smol'nyi.¹⁵ Here, Timoshchuk paints a highly favourable picture of Empress Maria, largely because she feels personally indebted to this Empress's work in the sphere of women's education. Not only was her maternal grandmother a director

¹³ See Marie Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828: Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 19.

¹⁴ The text in his work that is not a direct quote is often a paraphrase (sometimes even a loose translation) of a primary source. This is very obvious in the sections in which Cherepnin discusses the content of the documents that he includes in full in his third volume. Likhacheva's work is more analytical than Cherepnin's.

¹⁵ V. T. Timoshchuk, "Imperatritse Mariia Feodorovna v eia zabotakh o Smol'nom monastyre, 1797-1802," *Russkaia Starina* LXV, no. 3 (March 1890): 809-32.

at Smol'nyi, but her mother also received an education there, and in turn helped to educate her, Timoshchuk, for her Gymnasium entrance exams.¹⁶ Just like in Likhacheva's text, Timoshchuk praises Maria Feodorovna's work on girls' schools above and beyond that of Catherine II. Catherine, being "constantly occupied with governing a vast state and with securing its borders" could not apply the same amount of attention and care to women's education as Maria did.¹⁷ Timoshchuk also reprints several letters, in Russian translation (they were originally written in French), that Empress Maria sent to the directors of Smol'nyi between 1797 and 1801. This is valuable for individuals who do not have access to Russian archives.

The only biography of Empress Maria that was published during the pre-revolutionary period was by Evgenii Sebastianovich Shumigorskii.¹⁸ Unfortunately, this remains an unfinished work, the author having only completed the first volume of the biography, which deals with the period from Maria's birth in 1759 until the death of Catherine the Great in 1796. Due to its unfortunate periodization, it does not have primary relevance to the present work, which will consider the Empress's career from 1796 to 1828. Nevertheless, it is a very valuable resource for any scholars who require a detailed overview of Maria Feodorovna's life and works before her ascension to the Russian throne.

In the twentieth century, several works were published that examined the education of Russian women, yet failed to say anything substantial about the

¹⁶ Ibid., 811.

¹⁷ Ibid., 809.

¹⁸ E. S. Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna (1759-1828) : Eia biografia*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg, Tipografiia I. N. Skorokhodova: 1892).

career of Maria Feodorovna.¹⁹ Barbara Alpern Engel's book *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth Century Russia*, is an example of this trend. Here, Maria Feodorovna is depicted as nothing more than a conservative Empress who "believed that the sole purpose of education was to train girls for domesticity."²⁰ Similarly, in J. L. Black's *Citizens for the Fatherland*, Maria Feodorovna is afforded a mere 1.5 pages in a nineteen-page-long chapter on women's education in the eighteenth century.²¹ Here, she appears as a nagging, overly religious administrator (especially compared to Catherine II) who, despite her desire to micromanage the institution also flouted its established regulations.²² The Soviet work *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR*, compiled by editors M. F. Shabaeva, F. F. Korolev, A. M. Arsen'ev and A. I. Piskunov, is more detailed than most twentieth-century works, despite the fact that it is written from the perspective of the Soviet progress narrative.²³ While emphasizing the "reactionary" nature of Maria's directorship of her private girls' schools, Shabaeva et al. do provide useful information about the establishment and curricula of the Empress's myriad institutes.²⁴ In contrast, one can catch a glimpse of a differing interpretation of Maria Feodorovna's reforms at Smol'nyi in Carol S. Nash's "Educating New Mothers: Women and the

¹⁹ In addition to the works discussed in the body of the text, this category includes the chapter on women's education in Urii Lotman's *Besedy po Russkoi Kulture*, and A. V. Belova, "Istoriia shkoly i pedagogiki: Zhenskoe institutskoe obrazovanie v Rossii," *Pedagogika*, no. 9 (November 1, 2002): 76-83.

²⁰ Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 24. Engel's views are repeated in: Susan Smith Peter, "Educating Peasant Girls for Motherhood: Religion and Primary Education in Mid-Nineteenth Century Russia," *The Russian Review* 66 (July 2007): 394-95.

²¹ See Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 168-170.

²² Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 169.

²³ M. F. Shabaeva et al., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR*, (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1973), 258-261.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 259.

Enlightenment in Russia.”²⁵ While the career of Maria Feodorovna is admittedly outside the scope of Nash’s article—she indicates in her first sentence that she will only be considering the reign of Catherine II—she does admit that Maria Feodorovna ushered in some progressive reforms, in the shape of schools for female teachers.²⁶

One of the best twentieth-century works that touches upon the career of Maria Feodorovna is David Ransel’s *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia*.²⁷ An analysis of the history of the Foundling Homes, and child abandonment more generally, from pre-Petrine Russia until the end of the imperial period, it focuses most strongly on the period between 1764 and 1917, rather than on the pre-history of the Foundling Homes. Here, Ransel gives a detailed overview of the institutional and governmental responses to child abandonment, taking into account the foreign and domestic influences of the Foundling Homes, the policy changes and administrative reforms that they underwent, the Homes’ social impact in Russia and the demographic composition of the individuals connected to the Homes. This study is especially useful to the historian who is interested in a statistical analysis of the population of the Foundling Homes, as Ransel takes pains to include all extant data in his investigation. Unfortunately, one of the focuses of the book is not the curriculum or the daily life in the institutes, which thus leaves room for expansion in this

²⁵ Carol S. Nash, “Educating New Mothers: Women and the Enlightenment in Russia,” *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 310. Nash writes: “Thus, the idea of professionally trained women pedagogues dawned not under Catherine in the “enlightened century,” but under the presumably conservative influence of the empress-mother, Maria Feodorovna, in the nineteenth century.”

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 301, 310.

²⁷ David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

field. Furthermore, since the period under consideration is so broad, Ransel does not spend a lot of time focusing explicitly on the career of Maria Feodorovna.²⁸ Nevertheless, this book is an invaluable resource to anyone who wants to expand his or her knowledge of the Foundling Homes.

No full-length biography of Maria Feodorovna was published until the twenty-first century. *Maria Feodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828*, by French historian Marie Martin, is a breath of fresh air to the historiography concerning this complex woman.²⁹ Here, Maria appears as a socially active, politically opinionated Dowager Empress who was heavily involved in the internal and foreign affairs of the empire. Moreover, Martin attempts to cover Maria's activities in the realm of education without applying twentieth-century value judgements to her curriculum or methodology.³⁰ Here, the Dowager Empress becomes a "pioneer" in the realm of education of handicapped children, a mother figure who was universally loved by the students, and a benefactress who was personally involved in the academic life of many of her institutes.³¹ All the while, Martin still emphasises that Maria Feodorovna educated her students only for the social role that was preordained for them by their birth. Rather than contrasting Empress Maria's pedagogical approach to that of Catherine II as others have done, Martin sees the Dowager Empress's work as an extension of Catherine's legacy. For example, she writes that "Maria Feodorovna knew how to make use of

²⁸ Ibid., 70-76.

²⁹ Marie Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828: Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003).

³⁰ For example, Martin does not criticize Maria Feodorovna's concern for the instruction of religion and morality (Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 147), and her decision to divide her female students according to their social estate (145).

³¹ Ibid., 131, 152-153.

[*exploiter*] Catherine II's heritage and to expand the educational framework, especially for girls, for handicapped children and for individuals of disadvantaged social estates."³²

Martin spends one chapter (approximately 25 pages) of her biography discussing the Dowager Empress's impact on women's education in Russia. While there are no major flaws with her information or argumentation, there is still room for expansion, since she is not able to address every theme relating to women's education in this time period in a sufficient amount of detail. The most glaring omission in Martin's work is that, while her inclusion of primary sources is excellent (like Cherepnin, she has a lengthy appendix of reprinted, and sometimes archival, primary-source documents in the back of her book), she does not attempt an historiography of the available secondary sources in her work.³³ Thus, the present work is not meant as a challenge to Martin's general findings or argumentation, but rather attempts to expand her findings and to fill in some of the details that are missing from her work.

Maria Feodorovna en son temps is not the only work on women's education to be published in the twenty-first century. In the past 13 years, there has been a resurgence in scholarly interest in the history of nineteenth-century private girls' schools in Russia among Russian historians. However, none of these more recent works have been able to match either the length or the level of primary-source detail contained in the pre-revolutionary works of Cherepnin and Likhacheva, or even of Martin's recent biography. Probably the most detailed

³² Ibid., 132.

³³ I have not been able to find any historiographical overviews of this topic, in any language.

twenty-first-century book about Smol'nyi is E. I. Zherikhina's *Smol'nyi: Istoriia zdanii i uchrezhdenii*, which, as the title suggests discusses not only the varying uses of the Smol'nyi grounds from the mid-eighteenth to the twentieth century, but also examines the architectural evolution of the buildings.³⁴ This book contains some information about daily life in the institutes under Empress Maria that is not found in Cherepnin or Likhacheva,³⁵ but Zherikhina's failure to cite her sources regularly makes it difficult for future researchers to assess the accuracy of her information. Another work which is quite comprehensive is Sh. K. Akhmetshin's book *Smolianki*. Based on archival research, it dedicates about sixty pages (out of approximately 500) to a discussion of Maria Feodorovna's directorship of the Institute.³⁶ About half of those sixty pages are devoted to a list of the girls who successfully graduated from the Institute, which includes their names, fathers' occupations and sometimes even details of their future marriage(s), or career in the institutes. This is of great use to those who do not have access to Cherepnin's work, where the list was originally printed.³⁷

³⁴ E. I. Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi: Istoriia zdanii i uchrezhdenii*, (Saint Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2002). Aside from the architectural notes, there does not seem to be much information in this book that is not already found in greater detail in Likhacheva and Cherepnin's works.

³⁵ See, for example, the descriptions of health and hygiene in the institutes in *Ibid.*, 141. However, Zherikhina's account of Maria Feodorovna's directorship is much less detailed than that of Likhacheva or Cherepnin, since it only spans about 15 pages.

³⁶ Sh. K. Akhmetshin, *Smolianki*, (Saint Petersburg: Slaviia, 2011). Akhmetshin also includes a list of all of the graduates of Smol'nyi during Maria's tenure of the Institute, which is also about thirty pages long. Like the works by Cherepnin and Marie Martin, this book includes an appendix with reprinted primary sources (at just over thirty pages long, it is shorter than the document collections published by Cherepnin and Martin). However, the Akhmetshin's inclusion of only one document in the appendix from the era of Maria Feodorovna—and one that was already printed in Cherepnin—attests to the lack of scholarly interest in this specific period of women's education in Russia.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 128-160. Akhmetshin organizes the list in a different way than Cherepnin, separating the girls who earned academic awards upon graduation with those who did not. This list is especially useful because it notes which girls decided to pursue teaching careers at the Institutes after their graduation. However, one cannot rely on this list as a reliable statistical evidence for how many girls became teachers because it does not mention which girls left the Institutes to become

Albina Danilova's work *Blagorodnye devitsy: Vospitannitsy Smol'nogo instituta* takes a different approach to the history of Smol'nyi.³⁸ Here, she provides the biographies of several famous Smol'nyi graduates from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. However, lacking footnotes and a bibliography, this book cannot be classified as anything but a popular history. Similarly, a book by Nadezhda Perova, *Smolianki, mariinki, pavlushki...bestuzhevki...: Iz istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Sankt-Peterburge*, also contains many short biographies of notable graduates from the St. Petersburg women's educational institutes, as well as providing a brief history of the institutes themselves.³⁹ This work is more scholarly than that of Danilova, as it includes a bibliography and footnotes. Still another book, *Mir Russkoi Zhenshchiny: Vospitanie, obrazovanie, sud'ba, XVIII- nachalo XX veka*, written by V. V. Ponomareva and L. B. Khoroshilova, unfortunately is not as useful as the title would suggest.⁴⁰ Although it spends almost a hundred pages discussing many facets of life in the institutes for noble girls, it rarely mentions the period between 1796 and 1828. The reason for this gap is that the authors largely rely on published memoirs as sources, and since memoirs discussing the period under question are much more difficult to find than those from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, the latter era is more privileged in terms of the coverage it

governesses, and which girls received training at the *Pepinière*, but decided to get married directly afterwards.

³⁸ Al'bina Danilova, *Blagorodnye devitsy: Vospitannitsy Smol'nogo instituta*, (Moscow: Eksmo, 2007).

³⁹ Perova, *Smolianki, mariinki, pavlushki...bestuzhevki...*, *passim*.

⁴⁰ V. V. Ponomareva and L. B. Khoroshilova. *Mir Russkoi Zhenshchiny: Vospitanie, Obrazovanie, Sud'ba, XVIII-nachalo XX veka* (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2006).

gets.⁴¹ Furthermore, since the authors generally discuss institute life thematically instead of chronologically, it is sometimes difficult to discern whether there were any changes under the control of different Empresses.

In all, there are a few similarities among the Russian works of the twenty-first century that investigate the subject of women's education in nineteenth-century Russian boarding schools. First, none of them are dedicated explicitly to the first quarter of the nineteenth century; more space is usually dedicated to discussing women's education from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the empire. Secondly, they all focus on women's education in Saint Petersburg (and most of them exclusively on the Smol'nyi Institute), leaving open the question of how women's education was approached in Moscow and in other cities throughout the Russian Empire. Third, none of the authors advance an original argument about the directorship of Maria Feodorovna, all of them simply reiterating themes and arguments that have been circulating since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In terms of primary sources, Maria Feodorovna literally wrote thousands of letters, in French, Russian and German, to the Headmistresses, inspectresses, inspectors of study and council members of the institutes under her care. However, proportionally very few of those letters survive today because one of her dying wishes was to have the entirety of her correspondence burned.⁴²

⁴¹ The book *Institutki : Vospominaniia vospitannits institutov blagorodnykh devits*, eds V. M. Bokovaia, L. G. Sakharova, A. F. Belousov (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001) is a perfect example of the dearth of memoirs in this period. The memoirs of five graduates from Smol'nyi are included, none of whom attended the school between 1797 and 1828.

⁴² Mikhail Ivanovich Semevski, *Pavlovsk, ocherk istori i opisanie*, (Saint-Petersburg: Liga Plious, 1997), 213, Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 18.

Nevertheless, a substantial number of documents remained in various Russian archives, notably those at Pavlovsk and Smol'nyi, for the remainder of the Imperial period.⁴³ While imperial historians, like Shumigorskii, Likhacheva and Cherepnin were able to access these archives for their works in the pre-revolutionary period, the documents did not fare well during the First World War, the 1917 revolutions, the subsequent civil war and the Second World War.⁴⁴ As a result, the archives at Pavlovsk and those at Smol'nyi no longer contain the same volume of documents as they did in the Imperial period.⁴⁵ However, Martin notes that a promising number of documents still exist at the National Library in St. Petersburg, the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in the State Archives in Moscow (GARF).⁴⁶

The present work relies entirely on previously published sources, rather than those found in archives. Many collections of documents have been published, both before and after the Imperial era. For example, the third volume of Cherepnin's work and the second half of Martin's book cumulatively contain hundreds of pages of documents that relate to the administration of Maria Feodorovna's girls' schools between 1796 and 1828. Likhacheva unfortunately does not provide her readers with a primary source anthology, but in the main body of her text, she often cites primary sources at great length, a feature which

⁴³ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19. Cherepnin in particular based his book largely on the archives at Smol'nyi.

⁴⁶ The present study does not make use of the documents in these archives, aside from what Marie Martin published in the back of her book, and the documents that were printed in Likhacheva and Cherepnin.

allows future researchers to take quotations from the text, especially from letters and documents that no longer exist in the archives.

Some of Maria Feodorovna's correspondence, as voluminous as it once was, does still exist. Unfortunately, since the Empress's personal correspondence was burned, the correspondence that remains is very one-sided, containing only letters from the Empress to her administrators (which were saved by the people who received them), and not the letters from the administrators back to the Empress (which were burned). Nevertheless, her letters to Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Golitsyn, the director of all of the Moscow Institutes (1802-1828), as well as those to Mme Pevtsova, the Headmistress of the Moscow Branch of the St. Catherine's Institute (1826-1852) have been published in a two-volume collection.⁴⁷ As well, her correspondence with Ekaterina Nelidova, her long-time friend and the unofficial overseer at Smol'nyi has been published.⁴⁸ This volume is especially valuable because it contains some letters penned by Nelidova to the Empress.

In addition, the Empress's letters to Mukhanov, a member of the Board of Trustees in Moscow, have been published.⁴⁹ However they are less useful to the present work than one would hope since it is mostly dedicated to the administration of the Empress's hospital for the poor in Moscow. More helpful is

⁴⁷ Maria Feodorovna, *Recueil de Lettres de sa Majesté Marie Féodorovna aux tuteurs honoraires et aux supérieures des Instituts de Moscou*, ed. J. Dumouchel, 2 Vols, (Moscow: Fer. Neuberger, 1883-1885).

⁴⁸ Maria Feodorovna and Ekaterina Nelidova, *Correspondance de Sa Majesté l'Impératrice Marie Féodorowna avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff, sa demoiselle d'honneur (1797-1801)*, (Paris, Ernest Lerous, 1896).

⁴⁹ Maria Feodorovna, *Pis'ma gosudaryni imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny avgusteishei osnovatel'nitsy i pokrovitel'nitsy Moskovskoi Mariinskoi bol'nitsy dlia bednykh k pochetnomu opekunu A. I. Mukhanovu, 1800-1828*, (Moscow : Tipografiia N. Iuganson, 1886).

her correspondence with Baranov, another member of the Moscow Board of Trustees, because it details many of the administrative and pedagogical details at the Moscow Foundling Home and the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine's Institute from 1800 to 1819.⁵⁰ Maria Feodorovna's written correspondence with her Petersburg Institutes was less voluminous than that with her Moscow Institutes, simply because she often visited the Institutes in person to make sure that they were being run according to her specifications. Nevertheless, some of her early correspondence with Mme Palmenbach and Mme Lafont, two early headmistresses of Smol'nyi, has been reprinted in the works of Martin and Timoshchuk.⁵¹

In terms of memoirs and eulogies, this study relies on three. First is that of Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset, a student of the St. Petersburg branch of the St. Catherine's Institute in the 1820s. This is by far the most useful of the three, as Smirnova-Rosset dedicates a couple of chapters of her memoir to her recollection of Institute life.⁵² The second, written by Elizaveta Grigorievna Khilkova, is more of a eulogy to the empress than a proper memoir, but nevertheless contains several anecdotes about the late Empress.⁵³ The third is the work of Maria Sergeevna Mukhanova, the daughter of the Empress's Trustee Mukhanov.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Maria Feodorovna, "Pis'ma imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny k pochetnomu opekonu Moskovskago Vospitatel'nago Doma N. I. Baranovu, 1800-1818," *Russkii Arkhiv* VIII, no. 8/9 (1870): 1441-1521.

⁵¹ Timoshchuk, "Mariia Feodorovna v eia zabotakh" 819-832; Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 312-317.

⁵² Aleksandra Osipanova Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia. Pis'ma*, (Moscow : Izdatel'stvo Pravda, 1990).

⁵³ Elizaveta G. Khilkova "Vospominanie kniagini E. G. Khilkovoi ob imperatritse Marii Feodorovne," *Russkii Arkhiv* 11, no. 7 (1873): 1121-30.

⁵⁴ Maria Sergeevna Mukhanova, "Vospominaniia," *Russkii Arkhiv* 1, no. 3 (1878): 299-329.

Therefore, the present work is dedicated to a thorough examination of Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical ideals and administrative tactics in the context of her girls' schools and Foundling Homes. It will take into account only the schools found in Russia's two largest metropolitan areas: Moscow and Saint Petersburg. By including the Moscow schools within the scope of the study, and not just focusing on establishments in Saint Petersburg, as others have done, the point will be made that there was more to women's education than the Smol'nyi institute.

As a whole, the body of this work is divided into four chapters, in addition to having an introduction and a conclusion. The first chapter provides the reader with details about Maria Feodorovna's childhood and upbringing and gives a general chronology of her educational endeavours. In addition, the Dowager Empress's network of schools is compared with those of her predecessor, Catherine II, and with the national school system of her son Alexander I. The comparison between Maria Feodorovna and Catherine II elucidates their common emphasis on the state-oriented nature of girls' schooling, while contrasting their general educational goals. The overview of Alexander I's pedagogical endeavours, in contrast, demonstrates the true degree of independence that the Empress-mother had over her network of girls' schools.

The second chapter contains a detailed examination of the curricula in Empress Maria's institutes, with special emphasis, first, on how she subdivided her students into groups according to their gender, estate, and academic ability, and secondly, on the nature of the education that she sought to give each group.

There is no disagreement with the fact that the Empress-mother applied her staunch social conservatism to the structure and curricula of her institutes. So, instead of focusing on the inherent injustices of this system, in which the students were stratified physically and academically according to their estate and gender, the emphasis is, rather, on how Maria Feodorovna moulded her curricula to help her students succeed within the confines of the patriarchal, estate-society in which they lived. Accordingly, an argument is made in the first chapter for the pragmatic, vocational nature of the educational programs offered in the schools. This discussion includes an overview of the training that the female students were given in terms of housekeeping, in addition to looking at Maria's establishment of the Pepinière, a school for future governesses and class matrons, and the various career-oriented programs, such as the study of midwifery, that existed in the Foundling Homes.

Although there is an effort to disband the notion that Empress Maria strove to raise girls *only* to be good wives, mothers, and housekeepers through a discussion of the various job-oriented programs that were implemented in her institutes, this should not be misinterpreted as an argument that the Empress displayed socially "progressive" tendencies with regards to woman's role in society. Maria Feodorovna's insistence that this training should be put to use, preferably by unmarried women, in the case of extreme financial need, indicates that she did not see a career as an attractive and viable alternative to marriage, but rather as a last resort for her most impoverished students. It also furthers the notion that Maria Feodorovna trained people exactly for their social role of birth;

if they were orphaned or destitute, they would likely need to work; if they were extraordinarily intelligent, they could be of use to society as an instructor of the Empire's youth.

In the next two chapters, the focus shifts towards the power dynamics of Maria Feodorovna's administrative tactics. The third chapter juxtaposes the Empress's maternal qualities with her managerial practices. First, a thorough delineation of the hierarchy of the institute staff will elucidate the nature of the notional family and the faux-domestic setting that Maria Feodorovna tried to foster within her institutes. Although previous scholars have commented on the attempted creation of familial love in her educational establishments, none have explicitly focused on the Dowager Empress's persona as a "pedagogical mother."⁵⁵ Here, I argue against Catriona Kelly's depiction of Catherine II as the last Russian Empress to be a true pedagogical mother by making the case that Maria Feodorovna, mother of two Tsars and dedicated administrator of a network of schools, is a much better candidate for this title.⁵⁶ In doing this, I maintain that the administrative identity of the "pedagogical mother" gave Empress Maria a way in which she could express her sincere concern and affection for the welfare of her students, in addition to functioning as an affirmation of her authority in the institutes, a type of "scenario of power," if you will.⁵⁷ In the second half of the chapter, the narrative will refocus on Maria Feodorovna's administrative procedures with respect to her concern over her students' food and health. Here,

⁵⁵ See, for example, Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 152-54.

⁵⁶ See Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 1-84.

⁵⁷ See Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

the Dowager Empress's motherly nature is contrasted with her attention to detail and drive for perfection.

The emphasis on Maria Feodorovna's involvement in the daily administrative details in her establishments will continue in the fourth chapter, which explores how the Dowager Empress exercised justice in an inherently unjust schooling system. An examination of the issues surrounding the admissions policies, student evaluations, procedures for ensuring the students' academic success, the designation of awards, various staffing issues, and methods of discipline, will juxtapose Empress Maria's desire to promote impartiality in her institutes with her adherence to the inequality of the social status quo. Here, an argument is made that the Dowager Empress believed strongly in the principle of justice, and that this belief manifested itself as much through her compassionate maternal qualities, as through her iron-willed observance of the established rules and regulations.

Therefore, this work, in its examination of Maria Feodorovna's curriculum choices and managerial tactics is designed to explore her character as a pedagogical supervisor. By accepting the fact that the Dowager Empress had a distinctly conservative worldview and thus sought to maintain the inequality of the stratified estate-system of the Russian Empire, this work aspires to look beyond Empress Maria's personal conservatism to analyze the other qualities that defined her tenure as an educational administrator. Generally, this survey seeks to show how Maria Feodorovna's educational establishments were more than an institutionalized method of creating good wives, mothers, and housekeepers. They

can additionally be seen as schools for pragmatic vocational training, as a stage for the Empress's maternal power tactics, and a case study for the function of justice in a socially-stratified educational system.

Chapter 1: Maria Feodorovna's Education, Upbringing, and Pedagogical Endeavours

Maria Feodorovna, originally named Sophie-Dorothea of Wuerttemberg, was born on October 25, 1759 in the small town of Stettin.¹ Her father, Friedrich Eugen (1732-97), who was the third son of the former Duke of Wuerttemberg Karl Alexander (1684-1737), and the younger brother of the reigning Duke, Karl Eugen (1728-93), was serving as the governor of Stettin at the time of Sophie-Dorothea's birth. Although the ruling family of Wuerttemberg was traditionally Catholic by faith, Friedrich Eugen was not religious. When he married Friederike Dorothea of Brandenburg-Schwedt (1736-98), the niece of the Prussian autocrat Frederick II, on November 29, 1753, he vowed to the Prussian ruler that all of his children would be raised Lutheran.² In 1763, Friedrich Eugen, then in the Prussian service, was reassigned to be the governor of Treptow by Frederick II, and in 1769, Friedrich Eugen left this post in order to take up residence in Montbéliard, a region in eastern France then under the control of the Duke of Wuerttemberg.³

Since Sophie-Dorothea's father was the youngest brother of the Duke of Wuerttemberg, he had a relatively modest income (as befitted the third son of a noble family), and thus she did not grow up in the luxury and splendour of many ruling families of the German principalities.⁴ As a result, Sophie-Dorothea's education, supervised and directed by her mother Friederike Dorothea, was

¹ See Marie Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828 : Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 21-38, or Evgenii S. Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna, 1759-1828 : eia biografia*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografii I. N. Skorokhodova, 1892), 1-61, for an account of Maria Feodorovna's childhood. Stettin, now called Szczecin, was also the birthplace of Catherine the Great.

² Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 22-23.

³ *Ibid.*, 24, Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna*, 18.

⁴ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 25

formulated to turn her into a conscientious wife and mother, the head of a large, private manor, rather than a ruler.⁵ Just like much of the German nobility of the eighteenth century, Sophie-Dorothea and her siblings received an education “à la française.”⁶ This, in addition to their residence in Montbéliard, ensured that the children of Friedrich Eugen and Friederike Dorothea had just as much exposure to the culture, language and philosophy of France, as they did to that of their ancestral Wuerttemberg. The influence of Rousseau, and especially of his recent pedagogical treatise *Émile* (1762) was ubiquitous in Sophie-Dorothea’s upbringing. According to Shumigorskii, Friederike Dorothea had not only read and appreciated the text, but had even gone so far as pursue a correspondence with Rousseau, which lasted from September 29, 1763 to February 18, 1765, about the proper methods of raising her young daughter.⁷ As a result, Sophie-Dorothea was taught to respect the familial values of “domestic responsibility, order, economy and...the principles of strict etiquette.”⁸

Friederike Dorothea kept a dairy of her thoughts, on the first page of which she inscribed a poem that originated from Molière’s play *Les Femmes savantes*, which perfectly summarizes her views about the education of women:

*Il n’est pas honnête, et pour beaucoup de causes,
Qu’une femme étudie et sache tant de choses.
Former aux bonnes mœurs l’esprit de ses enfants,
Faire aller son ménage, avoir l’œil sur les gens,*

⁵ Ibid., 23, 26. Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna*, 18.

⁶ Quoted in Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 27.

⁷ Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna*, 19-20, 22. Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 27, finds it doubtful that Friederika Dorothea had read all of Rousseau’s political works, such as the *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men* (1755) and *The Social Contract* (1762), and thus concludes that she had adopted mostly Rousseau’s “virtuous sentimentalism” into the educational programs of her children.

⁸ Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*, vol 2 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevich, 1899), 13.

*Et régler la dépense avec économie :
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie.*⁹

Despite Friederike Dorothea's insistence on giving her daughter training for the domestic sphere, Likhacheva still asserts that Maria Feodorovna's childhood education was "more well-founded than that of Catherine."¹⁰ In fact, Maria Feodorovna's childhood friend, the Baroness of Oberkirch attested to the fact that Friederike Dorthea "hate[d] the frivolity and triviality [*légèreté*] of our French customs" and thus ensured that her daughter's education was directed towards serious subjects.¹¹ The young Sophie-Dorothea undertook an academic curriculum (taught mostly in French by her governess Mlle Bork) that encompassed the subjects of French, German, arithmetic,¹² religion, history, geography, geometry, mythology and, above all, morality.¹³ Through these studies, Sophie-Dorothea became a rather accomplished linguist, having some fluency in French, German, Italian and even Latin prior to moving to Russia in order to marry Paul.¹⁴

Sophie-Dorothea was first involved in charitable and pedagogical efforts long before she arrived in Russia. Shumigorskii notes that "the warm relations of

⁹ Loosely translated into English, it says: It is not respectable and for a lot of reasons/For a woman to study and know so many things/Instilling good morals in her children/Doing the housework, keeping an eye on the servants [literally: on people]/And regulating the budget economically/ Needs to be her study and her philosophy. Quoted (in French) in Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna*, 26, Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 28; Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 13. See also, Molière [Jean-Baptiste Poquelin], *Les Femmes savantes*, 2.7.571-576. References are to act, scene, and line.

¹⁰ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2,13.

¹¹ Quoted in Marin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 31. See also Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Mariia Feodorovna*, 27.

¹² Apparently, Sophie-Dorothea was able to apply her education in arithmetic and household budgeting to a real life scenario as early as the age of nine. Both of her parents, having departed early (in 1768) for Montbéliard, had left their children with their governesses in Treptow. The young Sophie-Dorothea was seemingly left with some measure of control over the household budget in her parents' absence. Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 29. Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Maria Feodorovna*, 30.

¹³ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 14, Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Mariia Feodorovna*, 50.

¹⁴ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 28.

the prince and his spouse [Sophie-Dorothea's parents] with the population of Montbéliard were not without influence on their children, and especially on Sophie-Dorothea."¹⁵ For example, her observation of the operations of the orphanage that her parents patronized in Étupes,¹⁶ which housed twelve girls, likely had a strong effect on her desire to take on so many charitable and educational endeavours once she became the Empress of Russia.¹⁷ Furthermore, her exposure to the local culture of Montbéliard, in which there was a strong emphasis on both male and female education may have also had an impact on her desire to direct and manage schools.¹⁸

By the early 1770s, Sophie-Dorothea's family was already entertaining thoughts of her marriage. Although they had been discussing a possible marriage between their daughter and Catherine II's son Paul in 1771 and 72, he ended up marrying Wilhelmina of Hesse-Darmstadt, later rechristened Natalia Alekseevna, on 29 September/10 October, 1773.¹⁹ When Paul's new bride died in childbirth in April 1776, Catherine II turned her attention immediately back to Sophie-Dorothea in order to find her son a new wife.²⁰ A few short months later, Sophie-Dorothea took on the Russian name of Maria Feodorovna, and married Paul on 26 September/7 October, 1776.²¹

¹⁵ Shumigorskii, *Imperatritsa Mariia Feodorovna*, 52.

¹⁶ The location of her family's summer home, not far from Montbéliard

¹⁷ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 14.

¹⁸ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 24.

¹⁹ Roderick E. McGrew, *Paul I of Russia: 1754-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 84-85.

²⁰ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 38-39, notes that Catherine II wrote a note to Friedrich Eugen concerning the marriage of Sophie-Dorothea to Paul on the very day that her first daughter-in-law had died.

²¹ McGrew, *Paul I*, 104.

Upon her marriage to Paul, Maria Feodorovna took on a backstage role in the imperial scene. On 12/22 December, 1777 the Grand Duchess gave birth to her first child and heir to the Russian throne, Alexander Pavlovich. On this occasion, Catherine II presented the royal couple with 362 desiatins of land not far from Tsarskoe Selo, on which they would later build their palace Pavlovsk.²² The construction of the new palace began in September 1781, when the imperial couple undertook a lengthy tour of Europe, which lasted until 20 November 1782.²³ Pavlovsk and its surrounding villages was the first area in Russia in which Maria Feodorovna had a significant measure of control, and consequently it was the site of her earliest charitable and educational endeavours as a Grand Duchess. In 1790, a “German school” was opened for the inhabitants of the village. Attached to the church and staffed with a single instructor, the village children (both male and female) from 5 to 16 years of age could go there to learn the basics of reading, writing, drawing and the catechism.²⁴ Maria Feodorovna was just as attentive to her students at Pavlovsk as she would be in later years to the students at her various educational establishments—every month she requested that the director submit the pupils’ drawings and notebooks for her perusal.²⁵ Every year, after the public exams in December, the most industrious students were rewarded

²² M. I. Semevskii, *Pavlovsk: Ocherk istorii i opisaniie, 1777-1877*, second ed, (Saint Petersburg: Liga Plus, 1997), 17. Originally printed 1877.

²³ Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 57-61, 83. The tour included visits to Warsaw, Vienna, Naples, Rome, Versailles, Étupes, Brussels, and the Netherlands. When they were in Europe, Paul and Maria purchased art and furniture for their future residence. See also Semevskii, *Pavlovsk*, 25.

²⁴ Semevskii, *Pavlovsk*, 76. In terms of pedagogical principles, Semevskii notes that the director of Pavlovsk was well acquainted with the methods of Fedor Ivanovich Iankovich-de-Mirievo, an Austrian Serb who was appointed in 1782 to head the Commission for the Establishment of Public Schools by Catherine the Great. See Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 130-151.

²⁵ Semevskii, *Pavlovsk*, 76.

with presents and even small monetary gifts (from 2 to 5 roubles) at the behest of the Grand Duchess.²⁶

Besides the “German School,” Maria Feodorovna’s most adventurous and experimental educational institutes were founded in Pavlovsk. One of the most innovative was her school for the deaf.²⁷ Opened in 1807, and modeled after the ideas of the French pedagogue Abbé Sicard, Maria Feodorovna’s school for the deaf was initially able to accommodate twelve children of various ranks, but that number ballooned after 1810 when the school was transferred to a bigger building in St. Petersburg.²⁸ Besides the school for the deaf, she also established a botany school in 1815 (which would make use of her extensive gardens at Pavlovsk), appointing the preeminent botanist Ivan Andreevich Veinman to run it.²⁹ Upon graduation from this school, the students were hired as imperial gardeners.³⁰ She also founded a school to teach children to spin wool into yarn (directed by Georg Gutman) in 1804, and a midwifery institute in 1811.³¹ Of course, not all of Maria’s experimental schools were successful. A school for practical agriculture that she had founded during the reign of Paul I was forced to close in 1804 due to her inability to find competent instructors in the field.³²

Maria Feodorovna’s greatest influence in the realm of education came after she became Empress upon the death of Catherine the Great in 1796. The

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 228-230.

²⁸ Ibid., 229. See also Suzanna Massie, *Pavlovsk, Life of a Russian Palace* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 104-05. Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 132. Martin notes that Maria Feodorovna corresponded with abbé Sicard prior to the opening of the school for the deaf. Marin, 137, also remarks that by 1828, the school for the deaf had 97 pupils enrolled in it.

²⁹ Semevskii, *Pavlovsk*, 230.

³⁰ Ibid., 231.

³¹ Ibid., 227, Massie, *Pavlovsk*, 105.

³² Semevskii, *Pavlovsk*, 226-27 ; Massie, *Pavlovsk*, 105.

newly-crowned Paul I put his wife in charge of the education of girls in Russia on November 12, 1796 by giving her control over the Imperial Society for the Education of Noble Girls (*Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe Obshchestvo Blagorodnykh Devits*).³³ At the time of Maria Feodorovna's accession, the Society only regulated one school—the Smol'nyi Institute in St Petersburg, which had differing departments and curricula for girls from the nobility (established 1764) and middle estate (*meshchanstvo*, established 1765).³⁴ On May 2, 1797, the new Empress's control over educational establishments in the empire was extended when the two Foundling Homes established by Betskoi in 1764 and 1770—in Moscow and in St. Petersburg, respectively—were put under her supervision.³⁵

In addition to running the girls' schools and Foundling Homes that she had inherited from Catherine II, Maria Feodorovna founded several new educational institutes during the reign of Paul I. The first, the Poor Orphans' Home, was established on 26 June, 1797 in Saint Petersburg. Renamed the Mariinskii Institute in 1800, it was meant to educate poor orphan girls and the daughters of the middle estate.³⁶ On 25 May, 1798, Maria Feodorovna opened a second school for noble girls, the St. Catherine's Institute (*Uchilishche Ordena sv. Ekateriny*), in St. Petersburg.³⁷ Though not as prestigious or large as Smol'nyi, the St. Catherine's Institute was quite similar to the former in its curriculum and general admissions policy. Later that year, on 23 December, 1798, yet another school was

³³ *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiskoi Imperii [PSZ]*, 1796, N. 17543, 3.

³⁴ See Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 156-60 for more information about the establishment of the Smol'nyi Institute.

³⁵ *PSZ*, 1797, N. 17952.

³⁶ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

established (although not by the Empress). Originally called the Military-Orphan Home (*Voенно-sirotskii Dom*)—and later renamed the Pavlovskii Institute in 1829—it had a middle-estate and noble branch, and admitted both male and female children whose fathers had been wounded or killed during military service.³⁸ However, this school did come under Maria Feodorovna’s control until 1807.³⁹ The last school that the Empress established before her husband’s assassination was the midwifery branch of the Moscow Foundling Home, which was opened on January 1st, 1801.

Maria Feodorovna’s role as an educational administrator only expanded during the reign of her son, Alexander I. On 8 September, 1802, Alexander I officially replaced Peter the Great’s colleges with ministries as the basis for the bureaucratic structure of the Empire. In the part of the ukaz that dealt with the Ministry of Public Education, the Tsar formally left control of all of the women’s educational institutes of the Empire to his mother, the Dowager Empress.⁴⁰ Maria Feodorovna’s gaze turned from St. Petersburg to Moscow, as she continued to found new schools in the first few years of her son’s reign. For example, on 10 February, 1803, she opened the new Moscow branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute.⁴¹ A school for middle-estate girls, renamed the Aleksandrovskii Institute in 1807, was established in Moscow on 30 August 1805.⁴² With so many schools

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 38. According to Likhacheva, Maria Feodorovna found the administration of the Military-Orphan Home in a state of disarray when she took control.

⁴⁰ *PSZ*, 1802, N. 20406, 246.

⁴¹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 34-35.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 37-38. Maria Feodorovna had actually planned to open five new girls’ schools in various cities around the empire in 1804-05; three for noble girls in Kazan, Kiev and Kharkov, and two for middle-class girls in Moscow and Nizhny Novgorod. Unfortunately, the one in Moscow was the only one that was actually established in that year.

under her direction, the pace at which she founded new ones did slow in the second half of her 32 years of control over women's educational institutes. The last girls' school that she opened was a school for noble girls in Kharkov (established in 1817).⁴³

On 12 November, 1821, Maria Feodorovna celebrated the 25-year anniversary of her direction over the girls' schools of the Empire to great pomp and ceremony.⁴⁴ After the death of her son Alexander I on 1 December/19 November 1825, Maria Feodorovna retained full control of the girls' schools in the empire under the new Tsar Nicholas I, her third son.⁴⁵ She remained an active director of the institutes until 12 October, 1828, when she suddenly fell ill. Dying just under two weeks later on 24 October, 1828, she was buried in the Peter and Paul Fortress in Saint Petersburg.⁴⁶ At the time of her death, she was in control of twenty-seven different educational or charitable organizations in Russia.⁴⁷

Catherine and Betskoi's Curricula Reformed

Catherine II and her educational advisor, Ivan Betskoi (1704-95) established the Society for the Education of Noble Girls in the Smol'nyi Monastery in 1764 as part of a project to create a "new breed" of noblewoman.⁴⁸ Modeled after Madame de Maintenon's girls' school at Saint-Cyr (established 1686), the curriculum at Smol'nyi was engineered to give the girls a moral, civic, and academic education that would enable them to contribute to the prosperity of the Fatherland after their

⁴³ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 46.

⁴⁴ N. P. Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), 541-47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 607-08.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 609.

⁴⁷ Massie, *Pavlovsk*, 106.

⁴⁸ Quoted in A. B. Belova, "Istoriia shkoly i pedagogiki: Zhenskoe institutskoe obrazovanie v Rossii," *Pedagogika*, no. 9, (November 1, 2002): 77.

graduation.⁴⁹ Betskoi was a proponent of Locke's idea that a child's mind was a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate without any predisposition towards vice, which could be moulded towards virtue through the education it received.⁵⁰ As such, he believed that the ideal setting in which to educate the next generation of Russian female citizens was the controlled, isolated environment of a boarding school.⁵¹ In accordance with these principles, every new cohort of pupils were admitted to the institute at the young age of five or six, and would remain in the school for the next twelve years. The girls' parents would even be asked to sign a waiver, promising that they would not remove their daughters from the institute during the course of their education.⁵²

While in the institute, the girls were to progress through four grades that lasted for three years each. In both Smol'nyi and Saint-Cyr, the grades were distinguished by colour, and the girls in each would wear a sash of the corresponding colour in order to physically differentiate them from girls in other grades.⁵³ The curricula in the two schools were quite similar, but there were

⁴⁹ See Anna Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 119-120, Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 155-56.

⁵⁰ See David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 36.

⁵¹ As Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 124, writes, this setting allowed for the girls' "nearly totalitarian surveillance." Ransel, *Mothers of Misery*, 37, notes that the Bestkoi's idea of using the isolated setting of a boarding school evolved from the medieval confraternities of Europe, and that "nowhere outside the religious orders was it practiced so thoroughly as in his schools."

⁵² Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 120, notes that removing the children from their families at such a young age turned them into notional "orphans," the perfect blank slate on which to imprint an education. The girls were allowed to leave the Institute if there was a family tragedy (for example: the death of a close relative), but they were to be readmitted shortly after the funeral.

⁵³ They did not use the same colours to define their grades. From youngest to oldest, the colours used at Saint-Cyr were Red, Green, Yellow and Blue; at Smol'nyi, they were Brown, Blue, Grey and White. See J. Prévot, *La première institutrice de France: Madame de Maintenon* (Paris: Belin, 1981), 48.

differences that stemmed from their respective faith-based affiliations.⁵⁴ While Saint-Cyr was a Catholic school staffed primarily by nuns,⁵⁵ Smol'nyi was a secular, state-run organisation whose administration, despite its strong emphasis on religion (especially during the tenure of Maria Feodorovna) and its location inside a former monastery, was never formally linked with the Orthodox Church.⁵⁶ As such, the girls at Saint-Cyr were discouraged from subjects like theatre, poetry, and even free reading, while the girls at Smol'nyi were not.⁵⁷ The *smolianki* also took on additional subjects like law, science, architecture and heraldry that were not included in the basic curriculum at Saint-Cyr.⁵⁸

This has led some historians to conclude that since “Smolny [*sic*] departed so significantly in content and style from the education, everyday life and image of Saint-Cyr, that the French school ought not be considered the model for Smolny.”⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the extreme structural similarities of the two schools, the fact that Betskoi actually visited Saint-Cyr as an envoy for Empress Elizabeth, and Catherine's assertion that she wanted to create a “Saint Cyr on Russian soil”

⁵⁴ See Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 157 for a chart comparing the curricula of the two institutes. Smol'nyi's curriculum was also considered to be an abridged version of that of the Cadet Corps. Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic* 126.

⁵⁵ Saint-Cyr was turned into a monastery during the early eighteenth century. Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 157.

⁵⁶ See Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 157, Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 123.

⁵⁷ Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 126-27

⁵⁸ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 157. For a good overview of the pedagogical philosophy behind Saint-Cyr see Carolyn C. Lougee, “Noblesse, Domesticity, and Social Reform: The Education of Girls by Fénelon and Saint-Cyr,” *History of Education Quarterly* 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1974): 87-113.

⁵⁹ Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 126. Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 156, also seeks to disband the notion that Smol'nyi was a “carbon copy of Saint-Cyr.”

indicate that Saint-Cyr should not be discounted as a strong influence when Catherine and Betskoi were founding and designing Smol'nyi.⁶⁰

The middle estate (*meshchanstvo*)⁶¹ section of Smol'nyi, established by Catherine II and Betskoi just a few months after the noble branch, differed from the noble section in the type of education its students received. Here, the girls were prepared for their future roles as mothers, wives and housekeepers. Excluded from studying subjects like architecture, heraldry and geometry, they would be expected to become proficient at “every feminine handiwork and labor, that is: to sew, to weave, to knit, to cook, to wash, to clean, and to perform all services related to domestic economy.”⁶² Despite the differences in curricula between the two sections, historian J. Laurence Black reports that, during the era of Catherine II, “young ladies from the noble and bourgeois classes mingled freely at Smol'nyi and there appears to have been very little rank consciousness among its pupils.”⁶³ However, he later notes that due to the difficulties that Catherine and Betskoi experienced in finding enough pupils during Smol'nyi's first few years of existence, the weak class consciousness of its students could be attributed to the fact that the “noble” and “middle-estate” girls were fairly close in rank.⁶⁴

The first conservative turn in the education at Smol'nyi actually came long before Maria Feodorovna took control.⁶⁵ The 1783 Commission on Public

⁶⁰ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 153-154. The quote in this sentence is Black's paraphrase of Catherine's comments in 1761, not the original wording itself.

⁶¹ See section on Admission Requirements in Chapter 3 for details of how the *meshchanstvo* was defined.

⁶² Quoted in Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 131.

⁶³ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 160.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 163-65. Here, Black describes Mirievo's changes to the curriculum at Smol'nyi. He also remarks upon the great disarray in which Mirievo found the school. According to his report, some

Schools, headed by Catherine's new advisor, the Austrian Serb Theodor Iankovich de Mirievo (1741-1814), posed a challenge to the original educational goals of the school. Now, its graduates, both of the nobility and the middle estate, were meant to become "good mistresses of the house [*khoziaki*], faithful spouses, and trustworthy mothers."⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the civic duties of the girls were still emphasized under the new system. 1786 saw the introduction of *On the Duties of Man and Citizen* into the curriculum of all of the schools of the Russian Empire, boys' and girls' alike.⁶⁷ Originally written in German by the Prussian Abbot Johann Ignaz von Felbiger under the title *Instructions of Virtuousness*, this book was translated into Russian by Mirievo himself in 1783.⁶⁸ The text is divided into four sections, which give instructions to its readers about how to live their lives with the appropriate: virtues of character, health and hygiene, patriotic understanding of their place in society, and household order.⁶⁹

The importance of patriotism was especially emphasized throughout the text. For example, it states that:

The true son of the fatherland must be dedicated to the state, its own form of government, its leaders and its laws. *LOVE FOR THE FATHERLAND* consists in showing esteem and gratitude to the

of the middle-class girls were unable to write their own names. Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 136, paints de Mirievo's reforms as more conservative than does Black.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 137.

⁶⁷ Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland*, 134-35. This book was withdrawn from Alexander I's public schools in 1819. Black, 165, notes that this book replaced the 1717 text *Mirror of Integrity from youth* that was required reading in Smol'nyi before 1786. The girls were also given a more female-oriented book, *The Pocket or Memory Book for Young Girls, containing Rules for the Fair Sex*. However, since in all the accounts of Maria Feodorovna's reforms contrast the books *Fatherly Advice* with *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*, we will focus on those two books here.

⁶⁸ Jan Kusber, "Governance, Education and the Problems of Empire in the Age of Catherine II," in *Empire Speaks Out: Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, ed. Ilia Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, and Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 84.

⁶⁹ *Book on the Duties of Man and Citizen: Designated for reading in the Public Schools of the Russian Empire, and published by Royal Command, in Citizens for the Fatherland*, ed. J. L. Black, transl. Elizabeth Gorky (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979), 209-66.

government, in obeying the laws, institutions and just rights of society in which we live, in respecting the advantages of society and using them for the general good...[etc]⁷⁰

Furthermore, in accordance with the social divisions that already existed in the Russian Empire, every class of citizens was instructed to show their “love for the fatherland” as corresponded to their social position, and to be appropriately obedient to “those who give orders [because they] know what is useful to the state.”⁷¹ This book, which Max Okenfuss describes as having a “timid, statist, and conservative” ideological message due to its function as a method of “crowd control” in a post-Pugachev Russia, does not prescribe a role for women outside of the domestic sphere.⁷² For example, it states that “the husband is the head of the family and the wife is his helper; she has to honour and obey him, be subordinate to him and help him in the home building.”⁷³ This book, therefore, gave its female readers a state-oriented vision of the importance and necessity of their future domestic contributions to their country.⁷⁴

Despite the clear conservative tenor of this text, one of Maria Feodorovna’s most controversial moves during her time as the head of this network of girls’ schools was the replacement of *On the duties of Man and Citizen* with Joachim Campe’s *Fatherly Advice for my Daughter* in the girls’ curriculum. Maria Feodorovna’s decision to switch the former book for that of Campe was

⁷⁰ *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*, 246-47.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 249-54.

⁷² Max Okenfuss, *The Rise and Fall of Humanism in Early Modern Russia: Pagan authors, Ukrainians, and the Resiliency of Muscovy* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 198. Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 102-03, gives a good overview of the scholarly debate concerning whether this text, and Catherine’s 1780s educational reforms in general, represented a complete turn from her initial enlightenment principles.

⁷³ *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*, 236.

⁷⁴ Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 138.

motivated by the fact that she found the former to be too general to be of practical use for the girls under her direction; she desired to introduce the girls to a book that spoke more directly to their future social role.⁷⁵ Empress Maria's inclusion of this new book in the curriculum was not much loved by her critics.⁷⁶ Even nineteenth-century commentators on the Dowager Empress's work in the sphere of women's education were opposed to this decision. For example, the historian Likhacheva, a former Smol'nyi student herself, writes that "much of the advice that the author [Campe] gave his daughter was simply immoral."⁷⁷ Hermann, a contemporary inspector of studies at Smol'nyi, even noted that Campe's book was "useless."⁷⁸

Campe (1746-1818) was a German writer and pedagogue who published *Fatherly Advice for my Daughter* (*Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter*) in 1789. In the German principalities, *Fatherly Advice* was the most widely-read book on women's education in the decades following its publication.⁷⁹ As a result, it was reprinted many times, and translated into a handful of other languages in the early

⁷⁵ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 173.

⁷⁶ This decision has been criticized by scholars like: Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 24; Shabaeva, *Ocherki istorii shkoly*, 259; E. I. Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi: Istoriia zdaniia i uchrezhdenii* (Saint Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2002), 138. In Ruth Arlene Fluck Dudgeon, "Women and Higher Education in Russia, 1855–1905" (Ph.D. dissertation, George Washington University, 1975), 5, Dudgeon equates Maria Feodorovna's entire tenure of her educational establishments with the philosophy in *Fatherly Advice*. Even though Maria Feodorovna had *On the Duties of Man and Citizen* removed from her curriculum, it appears that she did not find it so inappropriate for her students that she wanted to prevent them from reading it altogether. At least in 1803, *On the Duties of Man and Citizen* still appeared on a reading list destined for the oldest grade of her *meshchanstvo* institutes. See "Opis' veshcham i knigam, nakhodiashchimsia v klassakh," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 232.

⁷⁷ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 173.

⁷⁸ See *Ibid.*, 216; Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 458.

⁷⁹ James Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 9.

nineteenth century, including French, English and Russian.⁸⁰ While the messages on female education no doubt influenced several German girls' schools of the time period, Maria Feodorovna seems to have been unique in making it mandatory reading in her educational institutes.⁸¹ In contrast to *On the Duties of Man and Citizen*, Campe's work had a less explicitly statist view of the role of women in society. Here, their primary goal was to be supportive domestic helpers to their husband and family, rather than to be citizens of the state.

In the first chapter, Campe advises his daughter to be happy in fulfilling the "natural and social position" of her sex because women are "made to be *happy wives, exemplary mothers and wise housekeepers*."⁸² The domestic vocation of women was not escapable because both "God and society desired that woman be weaker than man...they desired that the weakest would depend on the strongest."⁸³ Above all, pleasing her husband should be "not only the end goal of [a woman's] ambition, but it is also a necessary condition for her own happiness, which is one and the same with the happiness of her husband."⁸⁴ In terms of education, Campe conceded that a few qualities would be beneficial to women: first, he argued that they should be imbued with a sense of thrift, and to be able to balance her budget while escaping fraud in the marketplace, she must be

⁸⁰ Ibid. For my analysis, I will be relying on a nineteenth-century French translation of the work: Joachim Campe, *Conseils d'un Philosophe Allemand à sa fille parvenue à l'age nubile*, Transl. J. D. Grandmottet, (Paris : Huet, 1804). I will also be relying on Likhacheva's extensive commentary on the Russian translation of the work used in Maria Feodorovna's institutes: Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 173-183.

⁸¹ I have found no mention of a German girls' school including it explicitly in their curriculum in either Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women*, or in Peter Petschauer *The Education of Women in Eighteenth-Century Germany: New Directions from the German Female Perspective: Bending the Ivy*, (Lewisburg: The Edwin Mellon Press, 1989).

⁸² Emphasis in Original. Campe, *Conseils d'un philosophe allemand*, 17, 19.

⁸³ Ibid., 218.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 308.

cognisant of the maxims of her faith, and must be able to keep a house in the proper order.⁸⁵ In terms of more academic pursuits, he believed it useful for women to have some knowledge in natural history, but he cautioned his female readers against “having the goal of excelling.”⁸⁶ In contrast, Campe considered many subjects of study, including the arts, music, fiction, poetry and foreign languages, to be not only useless, but even potentially harmful for a woman living solely in the domestic sphere.⁸⁷

Campe’s book remained in the institutes’ curriculum until 1813, when it was replaced by a text, titled *Nravouchenie* (Moral Instruction). This new text, written specially for the Empress by Iakov Voskresenii, reiterated many of the points made by Campe in *Fatherly Advice for my Daughter*. As Likhacheva notes, “it was no different than an abridged second part of *Fatherly Advice*.”⁸⁸ Despite the persistent inclusion of texts such as these in the educational program of the institute, they should not be taken as a verbatim representation of Maria Feodorovna’s views on how to educate women. As we will see in the next chapter, the vocational orientation of many of the programs in her institutes demonstrates that she held a different opinion about the utilitarian nature of foreign languages, music, and art than Campe did.

Besides the change in recommended reading, Maria Feodorovna altered the curriculum of at Smol’nyi from that which had been outlined by Betskoi. The most notable change in this field was the fact that she delayed the age of

⁸⁵ Ibid., 110-140; 270-279.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 142.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 153-158 (foreign languages), 48-53 (musical and artistic talents), 62-89 (literary activities).

⁸⁸ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 183.

admission into her institutes. While Betskoi saw young children as the perfect blank slate on which an education could be imposed, Maria Feodorovna, probably influenced by her own domestic upbringing, believed that it was cruel to remove children from their families at such an early age. According to her new rules, expounded in a report to Emperor Paul I in 1797, noble girls were to be admitted into the Institute at the ages of eight or nine, rather than at age five or six. Maria Feodorovna's goal in this regard was to allow the girls' familial bonds to grow and flourish for a longer time. If they were to leave home too early, they would not be able to remember true filial love.⁸⁹ But if they stayed at home longer, "the morality that they require...will have time to become forever rooted in their gentle hearts."⁹⁰

Beyond the desire to see her students develop strong relationships with the members of their family, Empress Maria emphasised that it was "dangerous," and "almost barbarous" to allow five year-old children to be "tormented...by study" at the Institute.⁹¹ In a 1797 letter to the Board of Trustees, she opined, first, that they could not provide the same supervision and care for each individual student as they would receive at home. Second, she noted that they were more likely to get sick, by simply walking through the cold hallways during the winter. Third, she asserted that a five year-old was too young to derive any benefit from the lessons

⁸⁹ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 320. Original letter from January 4 1797.

⁹⁰ Maria Feodorovna, "Doklad Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny Imperatoru Pavlu o reforme Vospitatel'nago Obshchestva i Meshchanskago Uchilishcha," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 209.

⁹¹ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 320. Original letter from January 4 1797.

they would be given.⁹² To accept the pupils so young, she concluded would thus be superfluous and dangerous.

The Empress enforced a new age of admission for the *meshchanstvo* schools as well, ordering that the girls be accepted at age ten or eleven rather than eight or nine. As Maria Feodorovna wrote in a letter to Paul I in 1797 “if it is unbeneficial and harmful to accept noble girls in the sixth year of their life, then it is even more unbeneficial and harmful to accept middle-estate girls of this age, whose upbringing must differ from the upbringing of noble girls” and thus “it is superfluous for them to remain for twelve years in the...Community.”⁹³ So, while the noble girls’ curriculum was to last for nine years, the middle-estate curriculum would span six, allowing the girls in these institutes to graduate at the age of seventeen.⁹⁴

Besides changing the time span of the curriculum (which inevitably took away from the depth and number of subjects that could be taught), Maria Feodorovna eliminated some of the old courses entirely. For example, architecture and heraldry were no longer to be part of the curriculum, although Likhacheva notes that “they were probably included, according to the tradition of the day, in the instruction of history.”⁹⁵ At the same time, the new Empress also introduced a new subject of Logic for the most advanced noble girls at Smol’nyi, in addition to

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³ Maria Feodorovna, “Doklad o reforme Vospitatel’nago Obshchestva,” 207.

⁹⁴ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 321. Original letter from January 4 1797.

⁹⁵ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 187.

increasing the amount of class time dedicated to the study of religion and the Law of God.⁹⁶

In comparison to the girls' schools of Catherine II, the estate distinctions among the students were also strengthened under Maria Feodorovna's directorship. As historian E. I. Zherikhina reports,

The noble girls and pupils of the Middle-estate institute were isolated: the noble institute was located in the south of the Monastery, and the middle-estate in the north, and there were private apartments in the western corpus of the monastery, where the [two schools] came together, and only servants and teachers passed through these corridors. The girls prayed in different churches, walked in different gardens, used different buildings, and only encountered each other during presentation of the oldest classes of the Petersburg institutes in court.⁹⁷

Besides the estate-driven barriers that were put up in the Smol'nyi institute, Maria Feodorovna reinforced the social status quo by founding entirely separate schools for girls of different estates. In this regard, Maria Feodorovna's practices resembled those of Madame de Maintenon more than those of Catherine the Great. For example, Madame de Maintenon, who had also founded distinct institutes for girls of different social ranks, once wrote to her demoiselles that "nothing is more beautiful than not to leave one's station" (*rien n'est si beau que de ne sortir de son état*).⁹⁸ In another letter that she sent in 1713 to Madame de la Vieville, a fellow educator, she noted that "you must raise your *bourgeoises* as *bourgeoises*."⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi*, 146.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Elizabeth Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited: A Review of Girls' Education in Seventeenth Century France," *Social History* XX, no. 40 (November 1987): 304.

⁹⁹ Madame de Maintenon to Madame de la Vieville, 9 April, 1713, in *Lettres sur l'éducation des Filles*, ed. Théophile Lavallée (Paris: Charpentier, 1854), 314.

Ivan Betskoi's Foundling Homes (established in Moscow in 1764 and Saint Petersburg 1770) also underwent a transformation at the hands of Maria Feodorovna. Having designed the Homes to be a refuge for abandoned, illegitimate, and orphaned children of both sexes, Betskoi formulated the curriculum to create a class of trained professionals who would live in Russia's largest urban centres.¹⁰⁰ Besides being offered vocational training in various fields and a general primary education, the foster children would also undertake a program of moral instruction that was intended to turn them into good, patriotic citizens who would desire to work for the benefit of their country.¹⁰¹ Betskoi accepted any child into the care of the Homes without asking any questions of their "donors" except for the name and baptismal status of the child.¹⁰² However, there were some substantial problems with the Homes. First, the mortality rate in the Homes, which were veritably overflowing with foster children, was extremely high. In 1767, for example, almost 99% of the children admitted to the Moscow Foundling Home died.¹⁰³ Furthermore, in contrast to Betskoi's desire to produce

¹⁰⁰ Ransel, *Mothers of Misery*, 34-35. Ransel, 42-3 notes that the Homes were funded both by private charitable donations and the revenues from the businesses it owned (for example : a pharmacy, workshops, factories, savings-and-loan banks, and a life insurance society).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 38. Ransel calls this "the most liberal admissions policy ever instituted in Europe," He also notes that serf children were not allowed into the homes without the permission of their owner, but this policy was difficult to enforce due to the regulation that prevented staff from asking invasive questions of the parents. Ransel, 40 writes that at first, Betskoi even offered a two-rouble reward to parents who donated their children to the Home, but this practice was soon stopped due to the number of people who were abusing the system by bringing in extremely unhealthy or even dead babies for the two rouble payment.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 45. 1,074 out of 1,089 babies admitted to the Moscow Home in 1767 died that year. This, of course, was an extreme case since there was a smallpox epidemic raging at that time. Ransel, 48, notes that for the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the mortality rate was about 68% on average.

honest, hardworking members of a new urban middle estate, it was found that many of the foster children were actually growing up to be criminals.¹⁰⁴

As a result, Maria Feodorovna instituted some structural changes in the Homes upon taking control in 1797. Due to the high mortality rate, Maria Feodorovna strove to limit the number of children to 500 in each institute, although she did not always meet her goal.¹⁰⁵ In order to do this, she sent an increasing number of children to be raised by peasant families in the countryside.¹⁰⁶ This program was not her innovation. In 1768, Betskoi, as a response to the extreme number of foster children who died in 1767, introduced the policy of sending a proportion of the babies given to the Homes to be cared for by rural families until the age of five, when they would return to the cities to be educated.¹⁰⁷ Betskoi was wholeheartedly against this program, but it nevertheless continued until 1797 largely due to its economic effectiveness. Maria Feodorovna's desire to limit the number of pupils contained in the Foundling Homes meant that a growing number of children would not have the opportunity to return to the city for vocational training.¹⁰⁸ In a further effort to promote health in the Homes, the new Empress also introduced mandatory smallpox vaccinations

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁰⁵ See Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 22-24.

¹⁰⁶ Despite these changes, between 1803 and 1820 the mortality rate still wavered between about 30 and 50% in the Moscow Homes, and about 65 and 77% in the Saint Petersburg Homes. See Ransel, *Mothers of Misery*, 75 for the exact statistics.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 46, 50.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 74, sees Maria Feodorovna's desire to send more and more children into the countryside as a turning point in the character and administrative intent of the Foundling Homes. While Betskoi hoped that they would create a new urban class, Empress Maria's practice of sending children into the countryside turned more of the foster children into peasants.

for these wards.¹⁰⁹ In addition, in 1805, Maria Feodorovna introduced an entirely innovative program, whereby unwed mothers were given a child support payments by the Homes for seven years so that they would be able to raise their own children. By 1815, however, this program was abolished due to the difficulties in preventing abuse of the system.¹¹⁰ Besides these structural changes, the curricula for the boys and girls who returned to the city Homes for an education does not seem to have undergone a substantial change. Under Maria Feodorovna, the focus was still on practical vocational training, and, as we will see in the next chapter, she expanded the number of training programs that were available for the foster children educated in the Foundling Homes.

Despite Maria Feodorovna's changes to the curricula and structure of Catherine's institutes, she still held a state-oriented view of the civilizing powers of education. For example, she once wrote to a newly hired professor at Smol'nyi Institute that "it's a mission of morals and civilisation that I'm entrusting to you."¹¹¹ However, the clearest expression of the idea that her students were being specially primed to raise a new generation of devoted, educated and patriotic Russian subjects was stated in a letter that Maria sent to a new French professor at Smol'nyi, Monsieur Tutey. "These young ladies," she wrote

need to return to their families with good principles and true culture [*la vraie culture*]...They will thus spread good ideas throughout the Empire that will enlighten future generations and will strengthen religious sentiments, love of good, attachment to

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 70. Smallpox was one of the foremost causes of death in the Foundling Home, especially in 1767.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 73-76. A similar program was introduced in France about 30 years after Maria Feodorovna tested it in Russia.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 423.

their sovereigns, devotion to the Fatherland [*la patrie*] within them; they must one day be able to raise their children well.¹¹²

This message demonstrates Maria Feodorovna's belief in the importance of educating women, who, as the primary educators of their young children, would be able to inculcate the correct moral qualities and pro-government ideology within them.¹¹³ Similarly, in reference to the children of the Foundling Home, the Dowager Empress wrote in her will that "my constant preoccupation was to raise them, to guide them towards the good, and to render them useful to the State."¹¹⁴ About this, Cherepnin has remarked that Empress Maria's state-oriented view of the powers of education coincided with that of Catherine II, although the fundamental goals of the two empresses differed.¹¹⁵

Maria Feodorovna's changes to the structure and curricula of her schools were to exist, without significant modification for the next fifty years. While the reforms that she engineered in the educational system implemented by Catherine the Great did alter the original intent of the institutes by giving the curricula a more domestic orientation,¹¹⁶ Maria Feodorovna still offered an education to her students that corresponded with the needs of the state. As we will see in the next chapter, Empress Maria provided vocational instruction for her pupils that corresponded both to their appropriate social estate and gender roles, as well as the future needs of both the Empress's educational institutes and of the Russian Empire in general.

¹¹² Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 423-24.

¹¹³ This was a theme in Fénelon's pedagogical treatise, *Traité de l'éducation des filles*, which both Empresses had read.

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Martin, *Maria Féodorovna*, 322.

¹¹⁵ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 423.

¹¹⁶ For example, Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi*, 139, has written that Maria Feodorovna's practices were "against the spirit and worldview of the Enlightenment."

Contrasts with the Systems of Paul I and Alexander I

In Russia, Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical approach differed both from her husband Paul I and her son Alexander I. Paul did not seem to care for education, especially that of girls. Any influence that he had had upon the education in the Russian Empire has been traditionally painted as reactionary.¹¹⁷ In 1798, for example, he forbade the importation of foreign texts into Russia, in addition to prohibiting Russian students from studying in other countries.¹¹⁸ His most notable contributions to education in the Russian Empire were likely his edicts granting Maria Feodorovna directorship of the Society for the Education of Noble Girls (in 1796) and the Foundling Homes (in 1797).

On the other hand, Alexander I's pedagogical ideals were clearer than Paul's. In 1802, the young tsar established the Ministry of Public Education during his large-scale reform of the bureaucracy, and in January 1803 he published the "Preliminary Regulations for Public Education," in which he took a giant first step towards organizing a system of public schooling in Russia.¹¹⁹ In contrast to Maria Feodorovna's strict estate-based divisions in her institutes, Alexander seemed to embrace a more egalitarian, meritocratic approach to education. The "Preliminary Regulation of 1803" did open with the

¹¹⁷ See William H. E. Johnson, *Russia's Educational Heritage: Teacher Education in the Russian Empire, 1600-1917* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1950), 64.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ PSZ, vol 27, p 246, (No. 20406) and PSZ, vol 27, p. 437-442, (No. 20597). This latter document established a graduated educational system. Six districts were established in the Russian Empire: (*uchebnyi okrug*) in St Petersburg, Moscow, Vilna, Kharkov, Dorpat and Kazan, which would be structured around the University that either existed, or would soon be founded in each circuit. The reforms provided for the establishment of four types of educational institutes: parochial (or village) schools that offered one-year programs, district (*uezd*) schools that offered two-year programs, provincial (*guberniia*) schools or gymnasia that offered four-year programs, and universities.

acknowledgement that the state-run education program was designed “for the moral education of the citizenry, corresponding to the duties and the benefits of each estate,” but the central aims of the reforms were ostensibly much more conducive to social mobility than one might expect based on this statement.¹²⁰

The hierarchically-organized schools were supposed to function as a “democratic ladder,” whereby a student could expect to be admitted to successively higher institutes, assuming that they had completed the prerequisite studies at lower-order establishments.¹²¹ For example, the Statutes of 1804 allowed students “of any estate...regardless of their age or sex” to enter the parochial schools.¹²²

Similarly, students “of any rank” would be accepted to the district schools and the Gymnasia, providing that they had met the requirements of the preceding program (at a parochial school or a district school respectively), or that they had acquired sufficient knowledge to meet the entrance standards elsewhere.¹²³ The Statues again emphasize the possibility of social mobility at the University level when

¹²⁰ PSZ, vol 27, p. 438 (No. 20597); See Nicholas A. Hans, *History of Russian Educational Policy (1701-1917)* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1964), 45-52; James T. Flynn, *The University Reform of Tsar Alexander I, 1802-1835* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 20-21.

¹²¹ Patrick L. Alston, *Education and the State in Tsarist Russia* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1969), 24. The information and general argument in the following paragraph was found in Hans, *Russian Educational Policy*, 51-52.

¹²² PSZ, vol 28, p. 640 (No. 21501). Nicholas Hans also examines the question of whether women were allowed an education in the public schools during the reign of Alexander I, since only the regulations for the parochial schools contained a provision explicitly allowing students of either sex to attend. He notes that mostly the male forms of “pupils” or “students” were used in official collections of statistics in the Ministry of Public Education so it is hard to tell whether the student body was uniformly male, or did indeed contain some girls. However, he notes that in 1808, “the data...show[s] 20 girls in the Vitebsk Gymnasium, 13 in Mogliev, 3 in Novgorod and 7 in Pskov.” He also mentions that “The number of girls in the schools of the Ministry of Public Instruction were as follows: in 1802—2,007 girls, out of which 344 in the Major Schools; in 1824—5,835 girls, out of which 338 in District Schools and 3,420 in private schools.” However, the private schools, largely run by Empress Maria were not included in the “ladder” system. See Hans, *Russian Educational Policy*, 56-57. They are called “private” schools because they were not officially included in the Ministry of Public Education.

¹²³ PSZ, vol 28, p. 637 (No 21501); PSZ, vol 28, p. 627 (No 21501); See Hans, *Russian Educational Policy*, 51.

they state that, “amongst the sciences that are taught in the University are those that are necessary for everyone to study, who desires to be useful to themselves and the Fatherland, no matter what variety of life and whatever service they *choose*” and that students should take courses that “correspond to their future estate.”¹²⁴

However, as many historians of Russian educational reform have pointed out, a great weakness in Alexander’s system was the government’s inability to fund the parochial schools, thus making it much more difficult for poor students to acquire sufficient knowledge to ascend up the educational ladder.¹²⁵ An even greater weakness was the fact that, by giving complete control over the women’s institutes to Maria Feodorovna, Alexander made it more difficult for Russia to pursue a uniform policy of public enlightenment.¹²⁶ Sometimes, however, the independence of the girls’ schools from the Ministry of Public Education directly benefitted these institutions.

In 1817, Alexander merged the Ministry of Public Education with the Ministry of Spiritual affairs, which predictably led to a much stronger presence of Orthodox Christian values in the national school system.¹²⁷ However, as Likhacheva demonstrates, Maria Feodorovna’s schools were completely separate from the Ministry of Public Education and Spiritual Affairs, and even after 1817, she continued to manage her schools according to her own judgement, taking or

¹²⁴ Emphasis added. PSZ, vol 28, p. 581-82 (No. 21498).

¹²⁵ Hans, *Russian Educational Policy*, 59-60; Flynn, *University Reform*, 23-24; Johnson, *Russia’s Educational Heritage*, 75.

¹²⁶ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 16, see also Hans, *Russian Educational Policy*, 57-58.

¹²⁷ See Johnson, *Russia’s Educational Heritage*, 79-86.

leaving the Ministry's new reforms as it suited her.¹²⁸ One part of the newfound emphasis on religious instruction that she did accept into her institutes was the practice of having her students read a chapter of the Gospels before breakfast every morning.¹²⁹ In her memoirs, Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset attested to the Bible Society's influence during her time at the St. Catherine's Institute in St. Petersburg. Here, she writes that "In 1825, the Bible Society still existed and they forced us to read the wonderful book "the School of Piety." To our great delight, all of the copies of it were suddenly taken."¹³⁰ In the end, Maria Feodorovna's acceptance of extra religious instruction probably had more to do with her own strong belief in the necessity for faith-based education than any pressure that was exerted on her from the government.

However, there were just as many ways that Maria Feodorovna explicitly ignored the influence of the Ministry of Public Education and Spiritual Affairs. For example, Likhacheva writes that when the Ministry purged employees like Hermann and Arsen'ev from the St. Petersburg University in 1821, the Empress's "confidence in them was not shaken."¹³¹ She continued to offer them employment in her girls' schools, and, in doing so probably benefitted from the restrictive nature of the Magnitsky-era educational policies. With fewer professional responsibilities, her highly trained teachers who had once been employed at the University could now devote themselves full-time to the instruction of her female pupils. Maria Feodorovna also continued to allow classes in mythology in her

¹²⁸ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 212.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Aleksandra O. Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia. Pis'ma*. 2nd ed (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravda, 1990), 80-81.

¹³¹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 216.

institutes, after it was banned from the imperial Gymnasia as an independent subject.¹³²

Therefore, there were many contrasts and similarities between the pedagogical content of Maria Feodorovna's girls schools and the "systems" of her predecessor Catherine II and her son Alexander I. Most notably, Maria Feodorovna was more conscious of reinforcing the students' social estate, and was more eager to uphold *ancien régime* values in her girls' schools than either of these two Tsars. Something that she had in common with Alexander I and Catherine II was that they all held distinctly statist views on the purpose of education: it was a tool to shape society and to secure political stability. The Dowager Empress's educational establishments were run independently from those of Alexander I, and this trend continued during the short time that her direction of the girls' schools overlapped with the reign of Nicholas I. In the chapters that follow, we will thus explore this Empress's extensive pedagogical career, focusing on the staffing, administrative principles and curricula of the girls' schools and Foundling Homes under Maria Feodorovna's direction in Moscow and Saint Petersburg.

¹³² Ibid., 217.

Chapter 2: The Curriculum

Mother:...every child does not need to know the same thing and what is seemly for one, is often not appropriate for another.

Katin'ka: Why is it so, mother?

Mother: Because, my darling: the goal of every good education consists of giving people the abilities for the condition to which they were born.¹

The curriculum differed in Maria Feodorovna's educational Institutes according to the social estate, academic ability and gender (in the case of the Foundling Homes) of the students.² As we have seen, her pedagogical goals were not consistent with those, first, of Catherine II and her educational advisor Ivan Betskoi, her husband Paul I, but more importantly, those of her reformist son Alexander I and his Ministry of Public Enlightenment.³ Believing firmly in the established social structure that was espoused in the pedagogical writings of Fénelon, and having grown up with the sentimentalist influences of Rousseau, Maria Feodorovna did not wish to encourage women to defy gender norms, or to

¹ "Razgovor materi s docher'iu o znaniakh, nuzhnykh molodoi osobe," *Drug Lunoshestva* (January 1807), 34-35.

² The fact that Maria Feodorovna organized her institutes by social estate is one of the most contentious points of her directorship of the women's institutes. See Joseph Laurence Black, *Citizens for the Fatherland* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1979), 168-170; Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 24-27, M. F. Shabaeva, et al., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR XVIII v.-pervaia polovina XIX v.* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1973), 258-61 For a more accepting view of Maria Feodorovna's strict social divisions within her institutes see Marie Martin, *Maria Féodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828 : Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 129-154, *passim*.

³ Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*, vol 2 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevich, 1899), 16.

rise above the expectations of their estate.⁴ Above all, she wanted to help her young students to achieve their full potential in the life to which they were born. Accordingly, she formulated a curriculum and founded institutions that were both estate- and gender-specific. Her main goal in preparing her students to excel in life was to give them a set of vocational skills that corresponded to their social provenance, financial situation and personal aptitudes. For all her female students, this did indeed mean that they were to be instilled with the necessary abilities for their future careers as good wives, mothers and housekeepers. However, the fact that Maria Feodorovna took academic ability and financial need into account when considering the type of education that her students were to receive meant that she did give her students the opportunity to pursue careers outside of the domestic sphere, such as those of the governess, seamstress, music teacher and midwife. In the following chapter, the focus will be on the divisions that Empress Maria established within her institutes according to social estate, financial need, and academic ability, and the different curricula and vocational training that she deemed appropriate for each section.

The role of one's social status and future occupation

The above epigraph, coming from the January 1807 issue of the Russian pedagogical journal *Drug Lunoshestva* perfectly expresses the reasoning behind Maria Feodorovna's educational goals in her institutes. She was especially concerned that the girls in her institutes not be educated for a future social role that, because of their family's poverty or class, they could not possibly occupy. In

⁴ This has been decried by Soviet, as well as by Western feminist scholars. For example, see Shabaeva, *Ocherki istorii shkkoli*, 258, for the Soviet perspective, and Engel, *Mothers and Daughters*, 24, for the feminist perspective.

this way, the intent of the Empress-mother's curricula came close to the pedagogical philosophies of both Fénelon and Campe, who took similarly strict stances on why girls should be educated only for their foreordained place in society. Maria Feodorovna's institutes thus aimed not to simply provide intellectual enrichment to the students, but to give them a practical set of life skills that corresponded to their social standing, financial situation and intellectual abilities.

Separating girls' schools by class was a ubiquitous trend in the realm of women's education during this time period. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Joshua Fitch, a functionary for the Schools Inquiry Commission reported that "all the sharp lines of demarcation which divide society into classes, and all the jealousies and the suspicions which help to keep these classes apart, are seen in their fullest operation in girls' schools."⁵ It was also exceedingly common in French schools. Even Madame de Campan's institute at Saint-Germain, with its insistence on "égalité" had separate curricula for girls of different social estates.⁶ James Albisetti explains that this trend manifested itself in the German principalities as well. For example, in Frankfurt in 1812, there was official recognition that they needed to found different private schools for every estate because one all-encompassing school could not address the requirements of "the differing classes in civil society."⁷

⁵ Quoted in Christina de Bellaigue, *Educating Women: Schooling and Identity in England and France, 1800-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 21.

⁶ Catherine R. Monfort and J. Terrie Quintana, "Madame de Campan's Institution d'Éducation: A Revolution in the Education of Women," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 33, no. 1 (January 1, 1996): 38.

⁷ Quoted in James Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 43.

Maria Feodorovna expressed this concern in numerous letters and circulars to her institute staff, as well as by delineating them in the curricula and statutes of the educational establishments in question. For example, in 1802, she cautioned Mme Adlerberg, the Headmistress of the Community for the Education of Noble Girls to educate the girls in the middle-estate half of Smol'nyi very vigilantly with respect to their social estate. As she instructed the Headmistress,

Everything that I have just enunciated for the noble girls is to be likewise observed for the bourgeois girls; but with the difference that the education of the latter needs to be even more inclined towards an occupation that conforms with their status, towards handiwork [*l'ouvrage*], which is the only means of subsistence that awaits them upon graduation: it is thus necessary that they learn handiwork of all types.⁸

The Empress often cited vocational pragmatism as a reason for preparing girls for a domestic life, rather than giving them a purely academic training. In addition, she advised that the pedagogical staff take the financial situation, place of residence and the educational level of the girls' family into account as they prepared the young ladies for their future roles in society. If the girls hailed from provincial families, then the institute must “prepare them for their retreat [to the countryside].”⁹ If their parents were poorly educated, then the girls must be taught “to live with people of all types, as long as they are honest.”¹⁰ But most importantly, if the girls were poor, then the teaching staff at the institute must “accustom them to the idea of poverty.”¹¹

⁸ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruksii Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny dolzhnostnym litsam Vospitatel'nago Obschestva blagorodnykh devits,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits: Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1915), 262.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The Empress also focused on the poverty of the students at the Military-Orphan Home in Saint Petersburg, who were of both noble and non-noble provenance, when she deliberated upon the elements that were to be included in their curriculum. “Although the students’ lineage is diverse” she wrote,

they are all poor; thus, it’s necessary to teach them not only the idea of poverty, *but also the idea of dependence*; it’s necessary to train them, on the one hand in knowledge and skills, and on the other, especially in handiwork and personal service...Having furnished them with information that is *necessary for their estate*, make them habituated to being constantly occupied with beneficial tasks.¹²

Poverty, since it played a considerable role in the future life that the girls could expect to lead, could thus be a stronger determining factor than their social estate in the type of education that they would receive. Poor girls of any estate needed to learn how to run a house, balance the budget, and to make a small income with their skills in a time of need.

As another measure for habituating her students to poverty, Maria Feodorovna preferred that the poorest students not get used to wearing fancy clothes as their school uniforms. For example, in her correspondence to Baranov, she noted that they had to make cuts to the clothing budget of the Moscow Foundling Home. As a result, she mandated that they use “good soldiers’ linen” for the students’ clothes because “it seems to be more beneficial for the students

¹² Emphasis in original. Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 165-66. This sentiment is echoed in Empress Maria’s 1811 *ustav* for the Mariinskii Institute, a school that was dedicated to educating poor orphan girls. Here, the Dowager Empress wrote that these students should be made into “honest and virtuous spouses, good and understanding stewards, caring nannies, and trusted, faithful, and diligent governesses in the case of necessity.”

to accustom themselves earlier to the simple clothing that they, upon leaving the Home, will need to use.”¹³

Even the noble girls in the Empress’s most prestigious institute, Smol’nyi, were to be restricted from training in any sphere that Maria Feodorovna did not deem to be appropriate for girls of their social estate and financial situation. In her 1802 instructions to the Headmistress of the Community for the Education of Noble Girls, the Dowager Empress again argued for the pragmatism of only educating girls for the preordained social position. “One cannot,” she wrote,

lose sight for one instant of their [the girls’] status and future destination. Consequently, we will endeavour to separate them carefully from everything that could be contrary to this status and to this destination, everything that could inspire them with a taste for an illusory world, chimeric beings, and exalted sentiments, for this beautiful ideal which is often so damaging to their true wellbeing!¹⁴ What use would there be for a brilliant education that could do nothing but increase the annoyances of their position and would finish by rendering it unbearable to them?¹⁵

Maria Feodorovna’s desire that her female students not grow accustomed to living in a world of fantasy echoes points made in the pedagogical treatises of both Fénelon and Campe.

Specifically, these latter two authors made the point that exposing girls to novels and romantic fiction was dangerous because it would introduce them to a

¹³ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 28 November, 1802, in “Pis’mo imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny k pochetnomu opekunu Moskovskago Vospitatel’nago Doma N. I. Baranovu, 1800-1818,” *Russkii Arkhiv* VIII, no. 8/9 (1870):1456.

¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 261. In Cherepnin, the last two words in this sentence are “beau réel,” which translates to “beautiful reality.” However, in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 167, the last two words in this quote are “bien réel,” which translates to “true wellbeing.” Since Likhacheva’s version makes more sense with the context of the text, that is the one that is used here. However, since in Likhacheva, most of the quote (save the last two words) is printed in Russian translation, Cherepnin remains a better source for the document because it is printed in the original French, albeit with a probable typographical error.

¹⁵ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 261.

world in which they could not live. For his part, Fénelon asserted that a girl who reads indiscriminately “longs to live like these imaginary princesses who in novels are always charming, always worshipped, always independent. How she will hate to descend from this romance to the sordid details of housekeeping!”¹⁶ Similarly, Campe notes that it is dangerous for a girl to indulge in reading fiction because, “transported from reality into the country of illusions, fed by the sentiments of another world, of enchantments, of fairies, of hopes and desires that will never be realized, her spirit will never find what it is looking for.”¹⁷ Campe also employs similar reasoning for why it is not a good idea for girls to be taught the sciences. Once a young woman had “tasted the forbidden fruit of science,” he reasoned, how could she have anything but “repugnance and disgust for the simple food that is presented to her by nature and society?”¹⁸

Thus, Empress Maria, Fénelon and Campe agreed on the undeniably conservative point that it was beneficial to withhold any knowledge of the luxuries or privileges that, because of her position in society, a girl has no right to expect. An educator’s job was to teach his or her female students that they would need to learn to be happy with what they could have. Or, as Maria Feodorovna put it, “the great art of education consists in giving them [the girls] a way of thinking that allows them to find all their pleasures and joys in and around themselves.”¹⁹

Therefore, in order to most effectively teach every group of students to cope with

¹⁶ François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, “Traité de l’éducation des filles,” in *Fénelon on Education: A translation of the ‘Traité de l’éducation des filles’ and other documents illustrating Fénelon’s educational theories and practice, together with an introduction and notes*, ed. and transl. H. C. Barnard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 6.

¹⁷ Joachim Campe, *Conseils d’un philosophe allemand à sa fille parvenue à l’âge nubile*, Transl. J. D. Grandmottet. (Paris: Huet, 1804), 62.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁹ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 261.

their future social position, the Empress divided the classes in all of her institutes along these lines, formulating a specific curriculum that was suitable for every grouping of students.

The Curriculum, According to Age, Academic Merit, and Social Estate

When a girl was admitted to one of the Empress's academic institutes, this did not mean that she was guaranteed the same education as all of her peers. Maria Feodorovna desired to train girls for the social roles to which they were born, and in determining the social role (and, in turn, the education) that was appropriate for each student, personal academic merit was a strong consideration. As a result, those girls who showed themselves to be especially talented in either the academic sphere or in handiwork were trained for different vocations than were those who showed an aptitude for neither. Naturally, the classes were divided by age as well. However, the age restriction of each grade was infrequently disregarded when a student proved to be especially capable in academics, or was required to repeat a grade. Maria Feodorovna was not a figurehead director, so she personally oversaw the creation and implementation of any new elements of the curricula in her institutes; however, as we will see, she sometimes did allow her opinion to be influenced by that of her current Inspectors of Studies.

At Smol'nyi and Other Institutes for Noble Girls

At Smol'nyi, like at Saint-Cyr, the girls were divided into three "grades" or "classes" based on their age. When the students entered the institute, they would be placed in the youngest grade, otherwise known as the "blue" class, for three years. The children would thus remain in the blue class from the age of eight or

nine, until the age of eleven or twelve. The middle grade, also called the “grey” class, hosted children from the age of eleven or twelve until the age of fourteen or fifteen. Finally, the oldest grade, otherwise known as the “white” class, held young ladies from the age of fourteen or fifteen until the age of seventeen or eighteen. Within these grades, the girls would be subdivided into different classes, based on their academic ability.²⁰ The blue class was accordingly separated into two different branches (strongest and weakest), while the grey and white classes were each divided into three distinct units (strongest, middle, and weakest). The different subdivisions in each grade would follow a curriculum that was adjusted to their pace and learning style. Naturally, the strongest classes of each grade had more subjects included in their curriculum than did the weakest classes.²¹ Until 1820, the girls were also tested on a yearly basis to see if they were still in the appropriate subdivision of their grade (strongest, middle, or weakest), and they were shuffled around accordingly.²²

The noble girls enrolled at Smol’nyi had a very full schedule. The blue class had 42 hours of lessons a week, which meant that they would be in class for 8 to 12 hours on the weekdays (except for Wednesdays, on which they had shorter hours), and 2 to 6 hours on Saturdays. The grey and white age groups, in contrast, had an extra 4 hours of class a week, for a total of 46 hours. These four extra hours of class were held on Wednesday and Saturdays (2 hours on each day),

²⁰ This division according to academic strength was another one of the changes that Maria Feodorovna made to Smol’nyi after she took control. No such divisions existed in Catherine’s Institutes.

²¹ Maria Feodorovna, “Sostavlennyi Imperatritsei Mariei Feodorovnoi plan ucheniia dlia Obshchestva Blagorodnykh devits,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 191-192.

²² Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 208.

since the youngest students had only two to four hours of class after lunch on Wednesdays, and free time after lunch on Saturdays.²³ Not all of this time, however, was dedicated to in-class lessons. In practice, the blue class only had 30 hours a week in the classroom, while the older classes had 34; the remaining twelve hours of instructional time was dedicated to the study of subjects “appropriate to the female sex” like dancing, music and needlework.²⁴ These subjects were especially important to the select few students who would join the Empress as a lady-in-waiting upon their graduation. On Sundays and holidays, there were no formal classes; the time was instead dedicated to Church service, reading from religious or moral books, dancing, and even playing games.²⁵

As to the curriculum of the blue class, proportionally a lot of time was dedicated to the study of languages. Out of their 30 hours of class time, 18 hours were dedicated to French, German and Russian reading and writing. Those enrolled in the more academically-oriented branch of the blue grade were also required to study grammar.²⁶ In addition to the study of languages, the girls in the blue class learned the Catechism, geography, history, arithmetic, drawing, dance, music and embroidery.²⁷ The stronger and weaker branches studied these subjects at their own rate until they progressed to the intermediate class three years later. In the intermediate class, the strongest and middle branches began to do easy translations, and the depth of their lessons in History, Geography and Morality

²³ Maria Feodorovna, “Plan ucheniia,” 192.

²⁴ Ibid., 191-92; also Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 190.

²⁵ Sh. K. Akhmetshin, *Smolianki*, (Saint Petersburg: Slaviia, 2011), 113.

²⁶ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 186.

²⁷ Maria Feodorovna, “Plan ucheniia,” 191-92.

was intensified.²⁸ The weakest branch was to concentrate more strongly on the primary subjects that they had already learned in the blue grade. Finally, in the white class, only the strongest students were introduced to the study of Geometry, Physics, Natural History and Logic. The weaker two branches, in contrast, simply continued to study the subjects that they had already begun in the blue and grey classes.²⁹

In 1815, Petr Dmitrievich Lodii, the Inspector of Studies at Smol'nyi and the St. Catherine's Institute in St. Petersburg (1813-1819) engineered a curriculum change at the Institutes. The core subjects taught at Maria Feodorovna's Schools did not undergo a major overhaul. Rather, the curriculum was altered to avoid the "superfluous repetitions" of knowledge that overlapped between grades, and thus broaden the students' knowledge base.³⁰ The academic emphasis at the institutes continued to be on religion, languages and the subjects that pertained to housekeeping, although the girls' study of Russian and world history and geography was expanded, in theory.³¹ Most importantly, the new curriculum sought to do away with rote learning. Maria Feodorovna's circular about the new regulations ordered the Headmistresses to

have teachers make all possible efforts for the students to answer with their own words in all the subjects that are taught to them, so that they do not just learn speeches (*rechami*) and answers by heart, and so to this end, do not only demand that in their answers they repeat exactly the words with which the textbook explained the subject about which they were asked, but on the contrary turn them

²⁸ Ibid., 191-93.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Maria Feodorovna, "Povelenie Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny Sovetu Vospitatel'nago Obshchestva o novom plane ucheniia 1815 g.," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 215.

³¹ Ibid., 216-17.

from this repetition in every possible way, [because it] evidences only a good memory, and not a clear understanding of the subject being taught.³²

Student engagement in the subjects being taught was thus of a primary importance; if the students were not interested in paying attention to the teacher, then they could not learn the required information. This insistence on understanding rather than memorization reflects the practices of Madame de Campan at her girls' school, *l'Institut d'Éducation de Saint-Germain-en-Laye* (colloquially called Saint-Germain, founded in 1795).³³ She, as historians Catherine Monfort and J. Terrie Quintana write, “did not graduate mechanical dolls who could recite facts but not reflect upon them.”³⁴

The instruction of religion and morality (*nravouchenie*) was extremely important to Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical methodology, and was a necessary subject for the students in all of her institutes. The pupils were required to attend Church every Sunday and religious holiday, they would have to “carry out every prescribed regulation of the church with complete precision,” and they would be reprimanded if they misbehaved during their religious education.³⁵ While the Empress believed that her students needed to be instilled with “fear of God and Christian virtues,” her religious emphasis was not on Orthodoxy in particular, but on Christianity in general.³⁶ Most of the students enrolled in her institutes did

³² Ibid., 218.

³³ It is clear that Maria Feodorovna approved of the pedagogical ideals of Madame de Campan, even if she was not directly influenced by them because a copy of Madame de Campan's book on the education of girls was held in the library at Smol'nyi at the time of Maria Feodorovna's death. See Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 457, for a full list of the books in the Smol'nyi library.

³⁴ Monfort and Quintana, “Madame de Campan's Institution d'Éducation,” 38.

³⁵ Maria Feodorovna, “Plan Ucheniia,” 195.

³⁶ Ibid.

indeed practise Orthodox Christianity, but the Empress, who had been brought up Lutheran herself, carried on Catherine II's tradition of providing alternate instruction for students whose families desired that they be instructed in Protestantism or Catholicism.³⁷

At other schools for noble girls, the St. Catherine's Institutes in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and the noble Girls' department of the Military-Orphan Home, the duration of the curriculum was shorter than that of Smol'nyi. These schools had an educational program that lasted for six years, instead of nine.³⁸ Consequently, the girls were divided into two grades instead of three, and, because these schools admitted fewer students than did Smol'nyi, the pupils in each grade were only subdivided into two different classes based on academic ability (instead of three). The shorter curriculum obviously limited the amount of ground that an instructor would be able to cover in any given subject. As a result, certain subjects like geometry, logic, physics and French, German and Russian literature were not broached in these schools in order to make time for the more fundamental topics.³⁹

In Institutes for Girls from the Meshchanstvo

Maria Feodorovna's intentions were clear with regard to how the middle-estate girls were to be educated. As she wrote in her 1797 curriculum, "the

³⁷ Anna Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 132, makes reference to Protestant girls from the Baltic provinces being allowed to practise their religion at Smol'nyi, but does not mention whether Catholic girls were allowed to do the same. In Maria Feodorovna, "Plan Ucheniia," 196, the Empress ordered that a priest be hired from the girl's faith (whether Protestant or Catholic) in order to instruct her properly. Upon entering the white class, the girls would be allowed to attend the Sunday services in their own church at least once every two weeks, would be confirmed in their own faith, and, in the last year of their studies, take Holy Communion there.

³⁸ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 189.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

education of youth, on which the hope for the State's wellbeing is founded, must be appropriate in all cases to the rank of every person, which is determined by birth."⁴⁰ The middle-estate girls were not to be introduced to any part of the curriculum that "surpasses their estate" because it is "entirely foreign and burdensome for them."⁴¹ The curriculum lasted for six years, and, as a result the girls, like those in the St. Catherine's Institutes, were divided into two grades instead of three.

Originally, their education encompassed the subjects of reading, writing and grammatical knowledge of Russian, the Law of God and morality, arithmetic (so that the girls would be able to balance household budgets), drawing, embroidery, and "a brief understanding" of the fields of Russian history and geography.⁴² While the original 1797 curriculum excluded the study of foreign languages, they were reintroduced shortly afterwards when it was found that many of the middle-estate girls admitted in that year could already speak French.⁴³ Accordingly, Maria Feodorovna wrote to the Council that allowing the middle-estate girls to study languages would "thereby give the students a livelihood [*sredstva k zhizni*] in the future."⁴⁴ However, the Empress focused much more strongly on developing the feminine skills that the girls would need in order to fulfill their future role as wives, mothers and housekeepers. The girls were to study their academic subjects in the classroom for 23 hours a week,

⁴⁰ Maria Feodorovna, "Plan Ucheniia," 201.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ E. I. Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi: Istoriiia zdaniia i uchrezhdenii* (Saint Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2002), 140; Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 187.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Zherikhina, 140. Unfortunately, Zherikhina does not cite the provenance of this quote.

generally between 8 am and 12 pm daily, and spend the rest of their class time after lunch on sewing and embroidery.⁴⁵ The subjects of music and dance, generally considered to be more suitable pursuits for noble girls, were not included in the middle-estate curriculum.

In Maria Feodorovna's schools, as elsewhere in Europe, the variety of needlework being taught to the students was indicative of their social estate. While the girls of higher social standing were being taught fine embroidery, the middle- and lower-class girls were taught more practical, less decorative needle arts. This trend manifested itself in many schools in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in the German states; Albisetti notes that the noble girls usually spent their time embroidering, while the middle-estate girls were generally given "vocational training" in sewing, weaving and spinning.⁴⁶ Elizabeth Rapley writes that in seventeenth-century France, "one [could] almost guess at the social level of the school from the handwork that it taught."⁴⁷

There was a stark difference between the education received by the students who were deemed academically capable, and those who were not, and this partially depended on the influence of the current Inspector of Studies. For example, Iakov Malozemov, the Inspector of Studies at Smol'nyi and the Petersburg St. Catherine's Institute from 1799-1812, proposed that the middle-

⁴⁵ Maria Feodorovna, "Plan Ucheniia," 202. Maria Feodorovna, ever attentive to her students' health, ordered that there be a different schedule in the winter, so that the girls would not ruin their eyes at a young age by sewing for long periods of time by candlelight. Consequently, they were to be in the classroom only from 8 to 10 am and from 4 to 6 pm and they would thus be able to complete their sewing and embroidery assignments by the light of day.

⁴⁶ See James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 21-22.

⁴⁷ Elizabeth Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited: A Review of Girls' Education in Seventeenth Century France," *Social History* XX, no. 40 (November 1987): 317.

estate students who had absolutely no propensity towards academics be exempted from the history, geography and German classes so that they could devote more time to perfecting their needlework.⁴⁸ Malozemov did not see this as being detrimental to the girls' education. In 1810, for example, he wrote that

The fact that these students, having much fewer abilities and [much less] education than the nobles, and perhaps not possessing the need for brilliant knowledge because of their future destinations, is possibly why they fall behind the former, [even though] they are capable. But many, with a good heart, obedience, and mediocre knowledge might deservedly have (I say this from many examples) an incomparably better fate...⁴⁹

In contrast, Hermann the inspector of studies at Smol'nyi at the St. Catherine's Institute from 1819 to 1838 did not agree with removing the less-academic branch of the middle-estate girls from their classes in order that they could concentrate more strongly on needlework. According to Likhacheva, the Empress did approve his request to put these girls in a more academically oriented program where the instruction would move at a slower pace.⁵⁰

Although the curriculum in the middle-estate institutes was limited at first, it was gradually expanded throughout the years of Maria Feodorovna's directorship. Part of this had to do with a notable turnover in the institute personnel. Iakov Malozemov, who doubted the potential of the *meshchanstvo* students in the Empress's Institutes, passed away in 1813. He was replaced by Petr Dmitrievich Lodii, who was a professor of logic, metaphysics and moral

⁴⁸ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 196.

⁴⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 211.

philosophy.⁵¹ Lodii, for his part, argued that the girls in the middle-estate schools should have a wider knowledge of history and geography because

Geography is found to be inseparably linked to the ever-helpful subject of history. History includes many examples and nobility and virtues that can conduct girls to the goals that are desired for them. They can become class matrons or governesses and for this not only Russian is needed to be known, but also world geography and history.⁵²

Of course, geography and history were already being taught in the middle-estate branches of the institutes, but Lodii's proposal was to increase the breadth and depth of these studies. Since these goals were entirely consistent with the Empress's desire to psychologically mould her students to become morally-conscientious, and to give vocational opportunities to her poor students, they were accepted into general practice in her Institutes.

While Maria Feodorovna would listen to the suggestions and recommendations of her pedagogical staff, especially of her inspectors of study, and, as demonstrated above, they could have an influence on the institutes' educational programs, she often still stuck to her own opinions. Even with Hermann's insistence that the weakest students should have a more academic education, it seems that the Empress still agreed with the practice of removing less academically-oriented girls from some of their classes. In 1826, for example, she was still recommending that Mme Pevtsova give the students who were not

⁵¹ Ibid., 197-198.

⁵² Quoted in Ibid., 205. See also Maria Feodorovna, "Povelenie o novom plane ucheniia 1815 g.," 218-19.

excelling at their studies extra time to sew.⁵³ Since these girls were not born with the intellectual capabilities for a teaching career, the Empress found it more beneficial to give them additional instruction in a more practical career path: that of the seamstress (of course, that is in addition to their primary profession—that of the wife, mother and housekeeper).

In the Foundling Homes

The majority of the children that passed through the Foundling Home system would remain in the countryside for their entire lives. However, a small minority of children would return to the city to receive a more academic education. In *Mothers of Misery*, David Ransel is not very enthusiastic about the pedagogical programs in the Foundling Homes. He asserts that, “Only a minority of foundlings retained in the central homes had the opportunity to become educated city dwellers, and this aspect of the program became a mere window dressing as the reform channeled more and more children into the countryside.”⁵⁴ Indeed, many children were prepared for their future roles as farmers, which, as the Empress wrote, “the Empire needs” because they “will work the land that remains uninhabited and will increase the yield of this land, which will thus be truly beneficial to the fatherland.”⁵⁵ When the young foster children reached the age of

⁵³ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 18 October, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres de sa Majesté Marie Féodorovna aux tuteurs honoraires et aux supérieures des Instituts de Moscou*, ed. J. Dumouchel, vol 1 (Moscow: Fer. Neuberger, 1883-1885), 6.

⁵⁴ David L. Ransel, *Mothers of Misery: Child Abandonment in Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 73. Ransel sees Maria Feodorovna’s desire to send more and more children into the countryside as a turning point in the character and administrative intent of the Foundling Homes. While Betskoi hoped that they would create a new urban class, Empress Maria’s practice of sending children into the countryside turned more of the foster children into peasants. His opinion of the Homes as a “window dressing” is perhaps why he does not spend undue time talking about their curricula.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 25.

majority, they were officially listed as state peasants.⁵⁶ When they became adults, boys were granted a sum of 18 roubles to buy agricultural equipment, while girls were given 25 roubles as a dowry.⁵⁷ The Foundling Homes also paid the foster parents for their work.⁵⁸ The willing peasant families were given higher remunerations for female children than male, and would receive even more for the care of disabled children. When the child was old enough to contribute to the family's upkeep, the stipend was lowered, and when the child turned seventeen, payment was ceased entirely.⁵⁹

Maria Feodorovna sometimes ordered small groups of the foster children raised in the countryside to be returned to the city so that they could specialize in other occupations beneficial to the Empire. For example, in 1801, Alexander I bought several machines to spin wool for the Aleksandrovskaiia factory in St. Petersburg, and had promised to order some for the Moscow Foundling Home. Consequently the Empress told her Moscow Trustee Baranov that she had already commanded the Moscow Board of Trustees to “send 14 boys and girls raised in the villages here [to St. Petersburg], who will learn to operate such machines.”⁶⁰ After their St. Petersburg training was complete, the newly-employed foster children would return to Moscow to set up and operate the machines there. The Empress was enthusiastic about this proposal both because it would offer a career opportunity to some of her foster children, and because it would encourage other

⁵⁶ Ransel, *Mothers of Misery*, 72.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

⁵⁸ See *Ibid.*, 177-180 for an exploration of how foster families would try to cheat the system to get more money, and of the responses from the Foundling Home officials to deal with this. Unfortunately, Ransel does not elaborate on exactly what the stipends were during the time of Maria Feodorovna.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

⁶⁰ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 9 December, 1801, in “Pis'ma k Baranovu,” 1450.

industrialists and manufacturers to introduce modern machinery into their factories.

Many children did return to the Foundling Homes from the countryside at the age of five in order to receive an education. Just like in all of Empress Maria's other educational establishments, the curriculum of the Homes was designed to train the pupils for trades appropriate for their station in life. After receiving a general education between the ages of six and ten, which consisted of reading and writing in Russian and German, the catechism and sewing (for girls), the pupils would begin to receive a more specialized trade-oriented education.⁶¹ For example, the boys were turned into physicians, tailors, cobblers, bookbinders, scribes, architects, pharmacists, and more, while the girls became mothers, housekeepers, embroiderers, weavers, midwives and teachers.⁶²

There were some meritocratic elements embedded in the Empress's system, especially for the male students. She wrote, for example that if there was a student in the Foundling Homes "whose genius was shown...[to be] elevated above the standard level," then he would be entered into an academy "in order that he have the possibility to develop the talent or science, to which he has a vocation."⁶³ Accordingly, she established "Latin classes" at the Homes in 1807-08, in order to train capable young men for entry into the Medical-Surgical Academy. At first, the class sizes were limited to the 20 most promising students, but they were later increased. M. F. Shabaeva raises the point that, although the

⁶¹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 24-25.

⁶² M. F. Shabaeva, et al., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR XVIII v. - pervaya polovina XIX v.* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1973), 218.

⁶³ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 25.

students were afforded this opportunity, many were not inclined to pursue it, preferring to become clerks and teachers. As a result, only 15 students from the St. Petersburg Foundling Home were accepted to the Academy in 1811.⁶⁴ However, they do not remark on whether the sizes of the Latin classes were increased by 1811. If, in fact, 15 out of a possible 20 pupils pursued a medical career, then this ratio does not seem bad at all. Furthermore, the fact that some applied their education to professions as instructors and clerks would seem to indicate that the male residents of the Foundling Homes, rather than being forced into a solitary career path, could choose between a number of options.

The promising female students of these same institutions were also afforded career opportunities, in addition to their preparation to become future mothers and wives. In 1809, Maria Feodorovna sanctioned the creation of “French classes” for the girls, with the goal that they would become future teachers. Their curriculum consisted of Catechism, Russian, French and German, geography, mathematics, handwriting, dancing, and needlework. Starting in 1818, the girls even had the chance to complete a practicum in the youngest girls’ classes in the Home. Moreover, the same rules were applied to these post-1818 graduates as Alexander I applied to any graduate of a pedagogical school in 1804; they would be required to work as instructors for six years before they were allowed to seek other employment, if this is what they desired.⁶⁵

The girls raised in these institutes also had the option of being accepted into the midwifery schools that were attached to the Foundling Homes in both St.

⁶⁴ Shabaeva, *Ocherki istorii shkoli*, 218.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Petersburg and Moscow. Although a training program for midwives had existed in the St. Petersburg Maternity Hospital since 1785, none existed in Moscow before Maria Feodorovna took control of women's education in the Empire.⁶⁶ In 1800, she commissioned Rikhter, the midwifery professor at Moscow University to set up a new school for the Moscow Foundling Home. It opened on January 1, 1801, with positions available for ten state-funded students.⁶⁷ Although the applicants were only required to be able to read and write in Russian to be accepted into the training program, the Empress still desired to impart the necessity of learning foreign languages on the midwifery students.⁶⁸ For example, she wrote in a letter to Baranov that it seemed that "it would be the most beneficial to teach the subject [of midwifery] in Russian, if it is possible, and do the repetitions only in German, in order that the latter is known to the students so that they understand books, and that the former should make it easier for them to understand the lesson."⁶⁹

According to the Empress's wishes, the midwifery students were taught separately from Rikhter's medical students, in addition to living in different quarters than the other foster children in the Foundling Home.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 33.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶⁸ At the end of the eighteenth century, the literacy rate in the Russian Empire was as follows: male peasants: 1-12 %, urban population: 20-25%, nobility: 84-87%, merchants: 75%. See: Boris N. Mironov, "The Development of Literacy in Russia and the USSR from the Tenth to the Twentieth Centuries," *History of Education Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 233-34. About the literacy rate among women, Mironov writes that "women were far less literate than men, but for the time being, it is impossible to be more precise on the dimensions of the gap between the sexes."

⁶⁹ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 6 March, 1805, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1475-76.

⁷⁰ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 34; see also Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 29 October, 1812, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1505.

Vocational Training: Teaching the Profession of Housekeeping

The subject of housekeeping was, in the Empress's opinion "beneficial for all estates and necessary for the restricted and the poor."⁷¹ Since Empress Maria's pedagogical institutes were established not simply to give the girls a solid academic background, but to train them in a vocation that was practical for their class and beneficial to society, giving the girls substantial skills in housekeeping was an absolute necessity. There is no doubt of the conservative nature of Empress Maria's focus on domestic skills. In fact, the couching of housekeeping and wifely duties as woman's primary profession, and the insistence that women needed formal education in order to be prepared for these socially foreordained roles bears strong resemblance to the writings of Campe, and other German philanthropists of the late eighteenth-century.⁷² In Maria Feodorovna's educational establishments, as in many girls' schools abroad, homemaking was presented not as a set of domestic chores, but as a career that necessitated a specific skill set and psychological disposition. This viewpoint is echoed in much of the pedagogical literature about raising girls that was published in Russia during this period.

Most of the pedagogical literature in Russia during this period focuses specifically on the necessity for women to receive a good education in housekeeping. For example, I. F. Bogdanovich dedicated the last chapter of his

⁷¹ Maria Feodorovna, "Vysochaishee povelenie Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny Sovetu Vospitatel'nago Obschestva blagorodnykh devits otноситel'no obucheniia vospitannits domovodstvu," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 238.

⁷² Peter Petschauer, *The Education of Women in Eighteenth-Century Germany: New Directions from the German Female Perspective: Bending the Ivy* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 250-51.

1807 educational manual, *O vospitanii iunoshestva (On the education of Youth)* to the question of the education of girls. He was not opposed to teaching girls academic or artistic subjects, since if a woman was truly gifted “it would be rather unjust to limit her to a few specialized occupations.”⁷³ However, he was adamant that girls be given the necessary training for their future role in society; that of the housekeeper. “How can you know,” he asked, “that a young lady will definitely get married? How can you know that she won’t become a widow after marriage when she has young children and she’s still in her youth? In this and other situations, she remains a housekeeper.”⁷⁴

Other authors argued that women needed to be well academically-educated so that they can assume their roles as pedagogical mothers, and be the best possible caregivers to their children. In an article from *Vestnik Evropy*, the author, Nikolai Paqui-de-Savigny, a professor at Kharkov University, conceded that women had “the privilege of carrying out the initial upbringing of children, of housework, of the family and of society” and to this end women needed to have a sound knowledge “of her language and Linguistics; she needs to be versed in the Geography and History of her fatherland at least, in Arithmetic, Mythology, and to sufficiently understand a [*kakoi-nibud*] foreign language, especially French.”⁷⁵

Some authors combined the necessity for women to be good pedagogical mothers along with their duty to provide suitable companionship to their

⁷³ Ivan Fedorovich Bogdanovich, “O vospitanii iunoshestva (v sokrashchenii),” in *Antologiya pedagogicheskoi mysli Rossii pervoi poloviny XIX v.*, ed. M. I. Kondakov, Iu. K. Babanskii, et al. (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1987), 114.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁷⁵ Nikolai Nikolaevich Paqui-de-Savigny [*Paki de Savin'i*], “Ob usovershenstvovanii, priobretaemom chrez uprazhnenie v Slovesnykh Naukakh molodymi liud'mi oboego pola,” *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 4 (February 1812): 271.

husbands. For example, the anonymous female author of an article entitled “Nuzhni li zhenshchinam nauki i poznaniia” (Do women need sciences and knowledge?) asked her readers:

Can a woman who doesn't possess any knowledge be a reliable friend of an intelligent and educated youth, share his joys, and lighten his sorrows? Can one forever keep the respect and friendship of one's spouse, adorn and make his domestic, solitary and monotonous life agreeable for him; be a skillful leader of her youthful, inexperienced daughters on this slippery path of life?... Women are entrusted with the education of humankind by nature and society...A mother-instructor needs to have sufficient knowledge about everything.⁷⁶

The consideration of a woman's future social role as a wife, mother and housekeeper was thus always at the forefront when pedagogical writers considered the future education that she should receive. In fact, Olga E. Glagoleva reports that there were some noblemen, beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, “whose concept of an ideal wife included not only material qualifications, but also aesthetic, ethical, and even educational qualities.”⁷⁷ Education was thus gaining increasing importance for women who planned to remain in the domestic sphere.

In her institutes, Maria Feodorovna treated housekeeping like any of her other vocational training programs. For example, in 1818, she implemented a very hands-on curriculum in order to prepare the girls for their future roles as wives,

⁷⁶ K...a P...a, “Nuzhni li zhenshchinam nauki i poznaniia,” *Vestnik Evropy*, no. 9 (May 1811): 58-59.

⁷⁷ Olga E. Glagoleva, *The Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies, 1700-1850*, (Pittsburgh: The Center for Russian and East European Studies, University of Pittsburgh (*The Carl Beck Papers, 1405*), 2000), 22. In this instance, she was referring to the specific requirements of Andrei Bolotov when he was looking for a wife. However, she does note that a cohort of nobles returned from the Seven Years' War, “exposed to European concepts of household practices and, some of them, to Enlightenment ideas,” which incurred a “fusion of patriarchal customs and westernized values.”

mothers and housekeepers.⁷⁸ In this program, the students were to become familiar with daily occupations such as the preparation of food: they would learn about the “cost [of the food], signs of quality, and the quantity of supplies that is proportional to the number of people” being fed. In addition, the girls would be taught “how to maintain order, good organization and cleanliness in the home, [how to] supervise the servants, keep daily records and accounts.”⁷⁹ However, arguably the most important part of the Empress’s housekeeping curriculum related to training her students to keep a positive attitude. As she wrote, the students would “not only get accustomed not to disdain domestic chores, but rather to consider this work to be important and worthy of attention.”⁸⁰ To do this, she recommended that participation in the program be treated like a reward; girls who were being punished for bad behaviour would forfeit their chance to take part in these exercises until their punishment was over.⁸¹

In addition to providing a comprehensive training program for her students in the subject of housekeeping, the Empress also provided another means to ensure that her female students secured advantageous (relative to the girls’ social estate) marriages. Maria Feodorovna often offered to supply her poorest students with a dowry.⁸² Her offer even extended to girls who, after being trained in the *Pepinière*, the teacher training program at the institute, were unable to find a

⁷⁸ Maria Feodorovna, “Vysochaishee povelenie obuchenii vospitannits domovodstvu,” 238-240. Although Maria Feodorovna wrote these directions specifically for the students in the noble and middle-class branch of Smol’nyi, she had already used her Moscow institutes as a testing ground for her new curriculum, so the following regulations actually applied to the Institutes in both metropolitan areas.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² See Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 31, 36.

position as governess. For example, in November 1818, she wrote to Prince Golitsyn that she found it “perfectly reasonable to give her [Nadezhda Dmitrievna] a dowry” because they had been incapable of finding a suitable job for her after her graduation.⁸³

Vocational Training: The Creation of the Pepinière

Historian Carol S. Nash writes that “the idea of professionally trained women pedagogues dawned not under Catherine in the ‘enlightened century,’ but under the presumably conservative influence of the empress-mother, Maria Feodorovna, in the nineteenth century.”⁸⁴ In 1803, Maria Feodorovna established the Pepinière,⁸⁵ a special program designed to train some of her more gifted students to be class matrons, governesses and nannies. After its successful introduction in the Smol’nyi Institute, the Pepinière was integrated into many of the Empress’s educational establishments, both noble and non-noble. This type of program was absolutely unprecedented in the Russian Empire; there had never before been a pedagogical school designed exclusively to train women.⁸⁶ Even abroad, pedagogical training programs specifically for women were not common. In

⁸³ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 November, 1818, in *Recueil de Lettres de sa Majesté Marie Féodorovna aux tuteurs honoraires et aux supérieures des Instituts de Moscou*, ed. J. Dumouchel, vol 2 (Moscow: Fer. Neuberger, 1883-1885), 7.

⁸⁴ Carol S. Nash, “Educating New Mothers: Women and the Enlightenment in Russia,” *History of Education Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Autumn 1981): 310.

⁸⁵ The word “*pepinière*” literally translates into English as “nursery,” and in the modern language it is usually used in an arboreal context. Since there is no direct translation, the original French word will be used in this text.

⁸⁶ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 467. See also Nash, “Educating New Mothers,” 310. However, the graduates of this program, while they were allowed to become governess’s and class matrons in Empress Maria’s institutes, were not considered to be *bona fide* teachers, who were allowed to seek employment in the schools run by the Ministry of Public Education. It was not until the late 1860s that the Ministry of Public Education created teacher-training programs for women, whereby they could seek employment in national public schools. See Christine Johanson, *Women’s Struggle for Higher Education in Russia, 1855-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 29-30.

France, convent schools had existed since the seventeenth century to train nuns to become teachers, but the same training was not normally offered in secular schools.⁸⁷ For example, in nineteenth-century Bavaria, the first lay organization to include pedagogical methodology in its curriculum for women was the Hoehere Toechterschule in Munich, which was established in December 1822.⁸⁸ Most lay women who became governesses or educators in eighteenth century had received a general education, not one that prepared them specifically to be teachers.

One of Empress Maria's central goals in the creation of this vocational school was to give the poorest graduates a chance to learn skills from which they could earn a solid income. The idea that women needed to be educated to the point that they would be able to earn themselves a living in a case of necessity was also one of the principles on which Madame de Campan founded her educational program at Saint Germain.⁸⁹ In this way, Maria Feodorovna was not only concerned for the future welfare of her students, but was also looking to augment the quality of education in the institutes by hiring some of the best graduates to work in her establishments. An examination of the pedagogical principles of the Pepinière is especially valuable because this was the program in which the Empress's representatives taught young women *how to teach young*

⁸⁷ Elizabeth Rapley, "Fénelon Revisited," 301.

⁸⁸ Joanne Schneider, "Enlightened Reforms and Bavarian Girls' Education: Tradition through Innovation," in *German Women in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History*, ed. John C. Fout (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984): 63. This school was established to educate lower middle-class girls. Schneider points out that this accomplished two goals: first, the women would be able to more successfully raise their own children and help them with schoolwork, secondly, if these women fell into dire financial straits, they would be able to find employment as elementary school teachers.

⁸⁹ Monfort and Quintana, "Madame de Campan's Institution d'Éducation," 38. Rather than focusing explicitly on teaching women to be governesses, Madame de Campan preferred to concentrate on music and the arts as an "honest and acceptable way of earning a living." However, several of Campan's graduates did go on to found schools. Furthermore, the idea that women should be able to provide for themselves in a case of necessity was present in both institutions.

women. The qualities and knowledge that the Empress wanted to instill in young girls throughout the Russian Empire needed to be possessed in abundance by the graduates of the Pepinière.

The Dowager Empress outlined her goals for the creation of the Pepinière in a proposal that she submitted to Emperor Alexander I in 1803. Here, Maria remarked that she was quite impressed with the number of students in the graduating class at Smol'nyi who “as much by their application as by their character have perfectly responded to the zeal and indefatigable care of their Inspectress [Mademoiselle Silbereisen].”⁹⁰ However, she also noted that she was equally struck by the “extreme poverty and the state of neglect [*délaissement*] of many of the young ladies who have the most merit and spirit.”⁹¹ As such, she proposed the creation of a year-long program for twelve graduating girls who were chosen by the Headmistress of the institute based on their “character, talents and poverty.”⁹² The Empress’s emphasis on the prerequisite of personal poverty for the girls who sought to be admitted to the Pepinière is significant because it not only reveals her personal predisposition towards charity, but it also accentuates her belief in training her students to cope with the lives, status, and financial situation to which they were born. Furthermore, the fact that Maria Feodorovna designed this program first for the poor nobility differentiates her pedagogical programs from other ones throughout Europe. In France, England and the German states, teacher-training programs for women in the first half of

⁹⁰ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 466.

⁹¹ Quoted in Ibid.

⁹² Quoted in Ibid. The twelve places were not necessarily filled every year.

the nineteenth century were generally designed for members of the middle-estate.⁹³

The training provided in the Pepinière was split between class time and real on-the-job experience. When the Pepinière students were not in class themselves learning pedagogical methodology and expanding their general knowledge, they were required to help out the youngest and least academically-gifted students to rise to the standard of the rest of the students in the class.⁹⁴ For this work, the students were given a salary of 200 roubles a year.⁹⁵ Each student would specialize in a subject, whether academic or domestic, in which she had particular success during her education. Once her specialization was chosen, she could not arbitrarily decide to change it, since both academic knowledge and handiwork were, in the words of the Dowager Empress, “equally honourable and commendable.”⁹⁶

In Maria Feodorovna’s opinion, the most important part of the Pepinière education was to give its participants a thorough character training. In preparation

⁹³ Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women*, 59; Bellaigue, *Educating Women*, 45.

⁹⁴ Maria Feodorovna, “Instructions pour les Demoiselles de la Pepinière,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 236-37. See also Cherepnin, vol 1, 467.

⁹⁵ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 467. The salaries that were offered at the institutes varied by person. As a point of comparison, in 1797, the other pedagogical staff in the institute were compensated as follows: an inspector of studies was earning about 1200 roubles a year, a class matron could be earning anywhere between 575 and 350 roubles a year. See Cherepnin, vol 1, 352. The teachers’ salaries were determined based on the subject they taught, the grade and social estate of the students, the number of hours of lessons a week, and whether or not they were residing in the school. In 1821, the lowest amount a teacher could receive was 32 roubles a year (for one hour a week of lessons) for teaching the Laws of God to the youngest grade (40 roubles per year for the oldest grade). The most one could receive (for one hour a week of teaching) was for teaching subjects like French, History and Geography (60 youngest, 70 middle, 100 oldest). See Cherepnin, vol 3, 226 for complete table of salaries from 1821. In other schools in the Empire in 1804-05, a low salary for a teacher in a gymnasium would be between 240 and 400 roubles/year, a high salary would be between 600 and 800 roubles/year. A university professor would earn between 700 and 2000 roubles a year. See tables 4, 5, 14, and 15 in William H. E. Johnson, *Russia’s Educational Heritage: Teacher Education in the Russian Empire, 1600-1917* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1950), 266-67, 272-73.

⁹⁶ Maria Feodorovna, “Demoiselles de la Pepinière,” 236.

for their future social role, the girls needed to learn the importance of deference to authority. As the Empress wrote, “the first duty of the Girls of the Pepinière is the strictest obedience to their Inspectress, who is personally charged with supervising their conduct and directing their occupations in order to render them capable of one day fulfilling the functions to which they are devoting themselves.”⁹⁷ The governesses-in-training would, in turn, act as “example[s] of obedience, gentleness, diligence and attachment to one’s duties” for the younger girls in the institute.⁹⁸

The Empress’s emphasis on having an unimpeachable moral character in order to be selected for training in the Pepinière was so strong that she counselled Prince Golitsyn that “no candidate should become a governess if she has even the slightest character flaw.”⁹⁹ Similarly, the Empress wrote, they were “engaged in supplying governesses to the provinces, it’s necessary to conscientiously try to do everything we can to make sure that they are quite good.”¹⁰⁰ In a later letter, she likewise noted that

In doing everything possible to correct character flaws, it’s necessary to be very strict on this point in choosing the candidates [for the Pepinière], and to not admit any students in which there are defects of this genre, which are absolutely incompatible with the functions of an instructress. An individual who is charged with raising others above all needs to know how to govern herself.¹⁰¹

In the Empress’s eyes, it was not pure knowledge and skill, but character that was the key to the successful education of youth. Only an individual who had

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 237.

⁹⁹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 16 September, 1824, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 64.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰¹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 18 October, 1824, in Ibid., 66-67.

completely adapted to her set place in society would be able to teach others to do likewise.

As a result of her zeal to provide superb character models for the Russian youth, Dowager Empress was sometimes willing to compromise on the measure of academic competency that her *Pepinière* candidates possessed. For example, she wrote to Madame Pevtsova at the Moscow St. Catherine's Institute that

It is agreeable for me to see that the public seeks out our students to be placed as governesses, and I strongly approve the efforts you took not to recommend any but those who possess the required qualities for this state. But at the same time, you would do well to seek to place those students that are less advanced, with families who are not looking as much for knowledge as for commendable character and conduct.¹⁰²

This is not to say, of course, that Maria Feodorovna would allow someone absolutely charming, but entirely incompetent to occupy a position in this pedagogical program, but her slight preference of character over intellect is clear. This is possibly also due to the fact that the girls who earned the highest academic honours upon graduation had no desire (or, perhaps, familial support for their desire) to become a teacher.

Three middle-estate girls who were selected for the *Pepinière* went through an academic program that was much more enriched than that of their classmates who were not selected. After they completed the necessary six years of training in their program, they would thereafter study with the oldest class of noble girls in a nearby or adjoining institute for three years, and would additionally study with specially-designated tutors who would advance their knowledge in history,

¹⁰² Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 21 January, 1828, in *Ibid.*, vol 1, 30.

geography, arithmetic and French literature.¹⁰³ Then, they would finally be able to enter the actual Pepinière to begin their bona fide pedagogical training. As such, Maria Feodorovna provided her most gifted, financially-aggrieved and obedient students with the opportunity to pursue a career outside the domestic sphere. The most significant thing about this trailblazing institution was that it gave supplementary academic enrichment and some measure of authority to the girls who were the most accepting of the social status quo.

As a final point about the professional opportunities afforded by the Pepinière, it is important to consider the desires of its students and their parents. Some parents, such as the preeminent statesman Mikhail Speranskii, were glad to see their daughters become educators. In a letter of September 2, 1819, Speranskii congratulated his daughter on becoming a teacher. He approved of this profession, not just as a career, but also as a means of expanding one's intellectual horizons. "It's not bad to teach," he wrote, "and it's the best way of learning. In time you'll become Miss Edgeworth."¹⁰⁴ However, many women, even though they might have been training to become instructors or class matrons, would have strongly preferred to become wives.¹⁰⁵ An example of this situation is found in Sofia Khvoshchinskaia's memoir, where she chronicles her life in the Moscow

¹⁰³ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 469.

¹⁰⁴ Mikhail Speranskii to Elizaveta Speranskaia, 2 September, 1819, in "Pis'ma Speranskogo k ego docheri, Elisavete Mikhailovne, s dorogi v Sibir, iz Sibiri i s vozvratnago ottuda puti, 1819 i 1820," *Russkii Arkhiv* 6, no. 11 (1868): 1695. Miss Edgeworth was an Irish children's writer. She also held progressive views on the status of women and education.

¹⁰⁵ All Russian noblewomen may not necessarily have *wanted* to get married, especially at a young age, but most much as they considered it their social duty to do so. Glagoleva, *The Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies*, *passim.*, includes several case-studies of Russian noblewomen, who, despite their lack of affinity for their future husband, stoically accepted their duty to be wives and housekeepers.

Catherine's Institute in the late 1830s to early 1840s.¹⁰⁶ Here, Khvoshchinskaia mentions that one of the class matrons was

very pretty and very poor. She had just begun her career, but she really wanted to get married. This innocent and perfectly understandable ambition lasted all six years I was at the institute. Remembering her makes me sad...¹⁰⁷

As to the other class matrons, Khovshchinskaia, after discussing their inclination to impatience, favouritism, and laziness asks “What else could, in fact, be expected of them? After all, it wasn't goodwill that brought them to the institute, was it? They were all there by sheer necessity.”¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the painter Aleksei Petrovich Bogoliubov mentioned that his mother, Fekla Aleksandrovna Radishcheva,¹⁰⁹ “being an orphan” entered the *Pepinière* and taught for a single year as a class matron.¹¹⁰ Here, he does not associate any desire on the part of his mother with the pursuit of a teaching career—only the necessity engendered by the fact that she was an orphan. Presumably, Fekla Radishcheva left her job the following year so that she could get married and start a family.¹¹¹

Furthermore, Maria Feodorovna preferred to hire teachers that were unmarried. For example, she once wrote to Prince Golitsyn that they needed to employ a woman “who must speak French fluently, *and who does not have a*

¹⁰⁶ Sofiia Khvoshchinskaia, “Reminiscences of Institute Life,” in *Russia through Women's Eyes: Autobiographies from Tsarist Russia*, ed. by Toby W. Clyman and Judith Vowles (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 98. Although her experiences occurred after the death of Empress Maria, they are still useful because we will be considering the ambitions of the mature women working at the schools, most of whom had received their education in one of the Dowager Empress's establishments.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰⁹ Daughter of the famed author, Aleksander Nikolaevich Radishchev (1749-1802).

¹¹⁰ Quoted in E. I. Zherikhina, *Smol'nyi: Istoriia zdaniia i uchrezhdeniia* (Saint Petersburg: Liki Rossii, 2002), 144.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

family, which is very advantageous.”¹¹² However, this is not to say that she refused to hire married women. Mme Brietkopf, the headmistress of the St Petersburg Saint Catherine’s Institute, was married, as was Mme Charpiot, who had become the Melart’s replacement at the Alexandrovskii Institute in Moscow.¹¹³ Thus, while one cannot criticize the fact that these educational opportunities existed for women, one must also be cognisant that some girls who attended the institutes did not intend to apply their newfound skills to a career; they would have by far preferred to get married.

The Instruction of Languages and the Primacy of French

In her draft of the 1797 curriculum, Maria Feodorovna wrote that the “education of the youngest age group begins with reading and writing in the three languages taught in the Society.”¹¹⁴ Similarly, in the new curriculum of 1815, she noted that “primary subject” of study in the institutes was “the instruction of languages.”¹¹⁵ As a result, more class time was dedicated to the study of French, German and Russian than the rest of the academic subjects put together. In the Empress’s opinion, it was by far more important for her students to become proficient in French than German. In fact, she explicitly said as much in one of her first letters to Mme Pevtsova, the Headmistress of the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine’s

¹¹² Emphasis in original. Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 10 October, 1822, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 36.

¹¹³ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 9 January, 1828, in *Ibid.*, 171; Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, undated, in *Correspondance de Sa Majesté l'Impératrice Marie Féodorowna avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff, sa demoiselle d'honneur (1797-1801), suivie des lettres de Mademoiselle de Nélidoff au Prince A.-B. Kourakine, publiée par la Princesse Lise Troubetzkoi* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896), 66.

¹¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna, “Plan ucheniia,” 194.

¹¹⁵ Maria Feodorovna, “Povelenie o novom plane ucheniia 1815 g.,” 215.

Institute.¹¹⁶ Maria Feodorovna's opinion on this point was also expressed through her agreement to exempt the less academically-gifted middle-estate students from German lessons so that they could focus more strongly on learning needlework techniques.¹¹⁷

As a result of Maria Feodorovna's insistence on the primacy of the French language, she required the students in many of her institutes to follow a type of "French Immersion" curriculum, whereby the students would be taught certain subjects in French (besides, of course, the French language classes themselves). For example, when corresponding with Mme Pevtsova about the success of the students at the Moscow St. Catherine's Institute in foreign languages, Maria Feodorovna gave her the following advice:

Your concerns regarding foreign languages, and that the students do not speak enough French amongst themselves, are quite justifiable and I share them, while hoping that you and the Inspector will manage to remedy them. Here, we have introduced a very good method to perfect the French language, and it is by teaching one of the subjects of study in this language, namely physics and natural history, and their success has met the expectations. It would be desirable for you to imitate this example, either in the same sciences, or in something else.¹¹⁸

In addition, the subjects of geometry and zoology were also taught in French at Smol'nyi.¹¹⁹ Maria Feodorovna's insistence on French-language instruction in subjects other than French was truly unique in the public schools of the Empire. At this time, the public school system run by Alexander I was putting emphasis on

¹¹⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 13 November, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 11. See also Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 206.

¹¹⁷ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 196. See also Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 18 October, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 6.

¹¹⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 2 September, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 22-23.

¹¹⁹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 206, 213.

Russian-language education, as was the military educational system run by General Klinger.¹²⁰

French had been the primary language of instruction in many of the classes taught in Catherine II's Smol'nyi as well. This pedagogical decision, influenced as much by her desire for her students to focus on languages as by the lack of suitable Russian teachers, was often criticized by the educated elite, as well as by government functionaries. For example, in 1783 the director of the Commission of Public Schools, Peter Zavadovskii, demanded that Russian become the primary language of instruction in Catherine's girls' schools.¹²¹ However, the dearth of Russian teachers made it impossible to implement his suggestion for reform.¹²² Similarly, the Governmental Committee of 1824 for the Organization of the Education in the Empire (*pravitesl'stvennyi komitet 1824 goda po ustroistvu uchebnoi chasti v Imperii*) was as fundamentally opposed to having French as a primary language of instruction in any of the Empire's schools as was the Commission of 1783.¹²³ In addition to being markedly unpatriotic, Russian students did not grasp the foreign languages well enough to profit from lessons in either French or German.¹²⁴ The late nineteenth-century Russian cultural bias against French-language education is evident in Likhacheva's

¹²⁰ Ibid., 200, 217. This was one of the reasons why Maria Feodorovna had such difficulty finding teachers for her institutes. For example, when she was required to replace the French physics teacher on short notice, the Empress asked Klinger (who directed the cadet corps) if he had a suitable candidate for them. He was unable to help her out because physics and math were taught in Russian in the Corps.

¹²¹ Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic*, 136.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Their rulings had no effect on Maria Feodorovna's girls' schools. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 218.

¹²⁴ This point was made, for example, by the director of the Poltava Kharkov girls' schools. See Ibid., 220.

analysis. “Unfortunately,” she wrote, “Hermann supported the Empress’s opinion of the benefit of teaching certain subjects in foreign languages.”¹²⁵ Nevertheless, Maria Feodorovna was completely undeterred from her desire to have multiple subjects taught in foreign languages for the entirety of her directorship.

Empress Maria put so much emphasis on French both because a lot of literature in Russia was published in French during this period, as well as because it was an employable skill.¹²⁶ Ever focused on the possible career opportunities of her poorer students, she wanted to give them every opportunity to succeed in their future lives. For many, the mastery of the French language was a key part of that. In a letter to Prince Golitsyn, Maria Feodorovna imparted the necessity of strong French lessons in the preparatory class (the class of students training to be class matrons and governesses) in the Moscow Foundling Home. Here, she wrote,

As regards the augmentation of lessons in the French language and the employment of a couple of hours destined for the arts [*beaux ouvrages*] for this end, I consent with all my heart, even if the expense will go beyond what is indicated in Mr. Ulrichs’ note. This language, and especially its pronunciation, is too essential for the students to be concerned about a couple hundred roubles. The arts are assuredly also necessary, but since it will not become the students’ profession and their means of subsistence, they only have to learn enough of it to be able to teach the children that will be entrusted to them, so they have enough time to acquire this degree of perfection.¹²⁷

The Dowager Empress expressed a similar concern with regards to the girls at the Aleksandrovskii Institute. Good French pronunciation, she insisted, “is a very

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 211.

¹²⁶ Here, I am arguing explicitly against scholars like Barbara Alpern Engel, *Mothers and Daughters: Women of the Intelligentsia in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 25. She does not interpret the study of languages to be pragmatic, writing that “when the institutes stressed learning at all, the subject matter was invariably decorative rather than practical in nature: languages, especially French, and manners.”

¹²⁷ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 22 January, 1820, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 12.

important objective, especially for the poorest students, since before knowing their good qualities and means, pronunciation will already serve as a primary recommendation for finding a placement.”¹²⁸ Likewise, the Empress wanted to make sure that the students in the Pepinière at the Moscow St. Catherine’s Institute perfect the French language “above all.”¹²⁹

The Wilmot sisters, on an 1805 visit to Russia from Ireland, reported that the ability to speak French was certainly in demand by Russian nobles seeking trained tutors for their children. As Catherine Wilmot wrote,

I am sorry to say they [the Russians] imitate the French in everything!...there is something childishly Silly in their reprobatng Buonaparte when they can’t eat their dinners without a french Cook to dress it, when they can’t educate their Children without unprincipled adventurers from Paris to act as Tutors and Governesses, when every House of consequence (that I have seen at least) has an outcast Frenchman to instruct the Heir apparent...¹³⁰

Similarly, in December 1806, Martha Wilmot wrote

Never was a Land so overrun with Locusts as this is with french. Will you believe that there is scarcely a House where a Governor for the Boys & a Governante for the Girls is not to be found of that Nations [*sic*]...In short Profession & trade of the domestic kind...swarm with french, & as for Education that of the youth of Russia for a series of years has been *exclusively* in their hands...¹³¹

Putting aside Catherine Wilmot’s criticism of the Russian love of French culture while Russia was fighting a war with France, it is clear that the Russian upper

¹²⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 April, 1824, in *Ibid.*, 50.

¹²⁹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 January, 1824, in *Ibid.*, 46.

¹³⁰ *The Russian Journals of Martha and Catherine Wilmot: Being an Account by two Irish Ladies of their Adventures in Russia as Guests of the celebrated Princess Daschkaw, containing vivid Descriptions of contemporary Court Life and Society, and lively Anecdotes of many interesting historical Characters*, Marchioness of Londonderry and H. M. Hyde, eds, (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1934), 194.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 275.

classes still saw French as a necessary and vital subject in the instruction of their children.

Not everyone in Russian society in this era would have agreed with Maria Feodorovna's emphasis on the primacy of the French language. The turn of the nineteenth century marked the beginning of a wave of nationalist Russian authors who argued that the French language had invaded noble Russian society, and that the Russian language should instead take priority in the education of the youth. One of the most illustrious advocates of this cause was Nikolai Karamzin, who argued in his journal *Vestnik Evropy* that "It's our loss that we all want to speak in French and don't think to cultivate our own language."¹³² Later in this same article, he lamented how a foreign minister once commented to him that Russian, their mother tongue, "is rather obscure, since Russians, speaking together, do not understand each other's comments, and therefore need to switch to French."¹³³ Ironically, Empress Maria ordered that a French translation of Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* be placed in the library at Smol'nyi.¹³⁴

Maria Feodorovna's insistence that her students learn French was also in direct contradiction to the maxims expressed in Campe's book *Fatherly Advice to my Daughter*, which was required reading in her institutes. For example, there is a chapter in Campe's work about the study of languages, in which he writes: "the study of foreign languages is not useful, and perhaps even harmful to a young person of your age and of your rank, destined to be neither French, nor to frequent

¹³² Nikolai Karamzin, "O liubvi k otechestvu i narodnoi gordosti," *Vestnik Evropy* 1, no. 4 (February 1802): 56-69. 68.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 206.

the court, but to preside over a bourgeois family.”¹³⁵ In the Russian translation of the text used in the institutes, the Empress was sure to note her dissatisfaction. Alongside passages such as these, the Russian translator left a note that “this study is necessary for Russian girls of the middle estate.”¹³⁶ On this point, the translator reasoned that French was necessary because Russian literature was not sufficiently developed and thus there was a lot of foreign literature in the Russian markets, and, in addition, it was necessary to be fluent in French to be able to converse with certain upper-class individuals in society who preferred to speak French rather than Russian.

Nevertheless, other Russian literature of the period about educating girls also remarks on the benefits of having them learn French. For example, in an 1807 article in the pedagogical journal *Drug Iunoshestva*, a mother uses the same line of argumentation as the translator of *Fatherly Advice* when she explains the benefits of learning French to her young (middle-estate) daughter Katin’ka. When the daughter remarked that French did not seem very useful to learn because she was not going to go live in France, the mother replied that “many books are written in French that deserve to be read. In addition, you could be in the company of such ladies that do not speak another language—or at least prefer French.”¹³⁷ However, she added later that “I cannot agree that the knowledge of this language should invariably be part of the knowledge that benefits a young lady; I just think that it is not bad to acquire it when you have the time and

¹³⁵ Campe, *Conseils d’un philosophe allemand*, 153-54.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 179-80.

¹³⁷ “Razgovor materi s docher’iu o znaniakh, nuzhnykh molodoi osobe,” 42.

opportunity.”¹³⁸ Similarly, an article that appeared in an 1812 issue of *Vestnik Evropy*,¹³⁹ argued very strongly that both girls and boys should be well acquainted with foreign languages.¹⁴⁰ Here, the author asserts that every girl needs to “satisfactorily understand a [*kakoi-nibud*] foreign language, especially French, which has become necessary for all noble girls in the current century.”¹⁴¹ And in order for a young female pupil to become properly educated, her parents should “entrust her to an intelligent governess, and give her instructors that can perfect her in this knowledge.”¹⁴² The author of this article did not consider where or how these French-speaking governesses could be trained, but Maria Feodorovna did.

Empress Maria’s desire to emphasize French-language instruction in the curriculum thus not only spoke to the desires of most of the contemporary nobility to have their daughters learn French, but also to the need to train governesses and class matrons who could teach French to the Russian youth who were being educated both in and outside of the Empress’s educational institutes. The immediate *employability* of Russian women who could speak French was a factor that was not often considered by individuals who wrote on the benefits or drawbacks of having the Russian girls learn the French language. Thus, in this way, Empress Maria Feodorovna again demonstrated her focus on developing suitable career skills in her young girls.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 43.

¹³⁹ At the time when this article was published, the editor-in-chief of *Vestnik Evropy* was no longer Karamzin, but Mikhail Trofimovich Kachenovskii.

¹⁴⁰ Paqui-de-Savigny, “Ob usovershenstvovanii,” 259-280.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 271.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Vocational Training: Music

The study of music, while deemed to be appropriate for noble girls, was generally regarded to be superfluous for girls of the middle estate. For example, in an article in the Russian journal *Drug Iunoshestva*, a mother tells her daughter that while it is appropriate for noble girls to occupy themselves with music and drawing lessons, these skills “serve[d] only as entertainment” and were thus not essential to the education of non-nobles.¹⁴³ The mother later expanded upon this point to say that “a woman of the middle estate can gain praise through them [music and drawing]; but nobody will reproach her if she is not practiced in them.”¹⁴⁴ A similar sentiment was echoed in the February edition of *Drug Iunoshestva*. The author of an article entitled “O blagopristoinosti devits” chose to briefly address this issue in his introductory sentence, in which he noted that “It is not a vice for girls not to know philosophy, music and not to be able to dance.”¹⁴⁵

Campe similarly denigrates the benefit of teaching artistic and performative talents to middle-estate girls in *Fatherly advice for my daughter*. Essentially, he argues that if a woman spent too much time perfecting her artistic skills then she would not only neglect her wifely duties, but also fall into ill health.¹⁴⁶ Campe writes, for example, “Among one hundred virtuosos capable of obtaining prizes in music, drawing, in the art of PENELOPE and TERPSICORE, etc, barely one could be found, I’m not saying who fulfills, but who knows how to fulfill her duties as a tender and reasonable wife, as a vigilant and active mistress

¹⁴³ “Razgovor materi s docher’iu o znaniakh, nuzhnykh molodoi osobe,” 37.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴⁵ “O blagopristoinosti devits,” *Drug Iunoshestva*, no. 2 (February 1807): 69.

¹⁴⁶ Campe, *Conseils d’un philosophe allemand*, 48-56.

of the house, as an attentive and caring mother.”¹⁴⁷ At a later point, Campe asserts that women who dedicate themselves to the arts will acquire a curved posture and will weaken her nerves and become irritable.¹⁴⁸ The damage to an artistic woman’s health was especially ruinous because she needed all her energy to be able to carry out her natural vocation properly.

In general, Maria Feodorovna adhered to this rule. She included both vocal and instrumental music in her curriculum for the noble girls in her institutes, while excluding them entirely from the middle-estate curriculum.¹⁴⁹ At Smol’nyi, for example, the noble girls were to be instructed not only in singing, but also on the clavichord and the harp.¹⁵⁰ Their instrumental music program was so intensive that the girls were able to form an orchestra, complete with fourteen clavichords, on each of which two girls would play at once, which would be accompanied by a choir during their concerts.¹⁵¹ As always, her goal was to prepare the girls for their appropriate station in life. However, there was one notable exception.

Empress Maria, despite some resistance from her Council, welcomed the study of instrumental music into the curriculum of non-noble girls and boys when she considered it to be a source of vocational training. In this regard, she was operating in a similar way to Madame Campan, who also believed that music and painting offered women “an honest and acceptable way of earning a living.”¹⁵² In

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 49.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 50-51.

¹⁴⁹ See Maria Feodorovna, “Plan Ucheniia,” 191; see also “Programma publichnykh vypusknykh ekzamenov 1824 g,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 234-235. In the exam schedule of 1824, it states that the noble girls were to be tested on vocal and instrumental music, while these subjects are not included in the schedule for the middle-class girls.

¹⁵⁰ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 476.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Montfort and Quintana, “Madame de Campan’s Institution d’Éducation,” 38.

February 1827, while Maria Feodorovna was searching for a new singing teacher, for the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine's Institute, she stumbled upon a perfect candidate to be a music teacher for the Moscow Foundling Home, Hartknoch. His rates were quite expensive—he was asking for 6000 roubles a year in addition to board and lodging and lighting in exchange for giving 30 hours of instruction every week to 20 to 30 students at the Foundling Home.¹⁵³ Despite the high cost of hiring this highly-skilled music instructor, Maria Feodorovna had several reasons for wanting to employ him. First, she hoped that Hartknoch would train enough students (both male and female) to be music teachers that she would be able to staff her network of schools solely with competent music instructors that were trained in one of her Institutes. This, in the Empress's words “could, in time, render our Institutes independent of the pretensions and caprices of strangers.”¹⁵⁴ Secondly, even if the Institutes were not to hire all of these graduates as music instructors, they would all at least have a solid skill with which they could earn themselves a living.¹⁵⁵

There were very few authors of pedagogical tracts that agreed with her. However, the recognition of the employability of artistic and musical talents was expressed in the journal *Patriot*, during the course of a conversation of a mother with her eight year-old daughter. Here, the mother acknowledged that “it is true that music, dance and painting were not as beneficial as reading and sciences,” but

¹⁵³ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 February 1827, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 131.

¹⁵⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 27 February, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

still recognized that they were “not useless.”¹⁵⁶ She later explained that these talents gave the émigrés who came to Russia “the ability to earn themselves a living.” One émigré “taught different arts on an hourly basis,” and another one sold his essays.¹⁵⁷ Thus, they were able to be honourably employed. However, as we have seen, this recognition of the benefits of the arts was rare in the contemporary pedagogical literature. Most writers implicitly assumed that women would simply become wives, and would thus not need to have recourse to such skills in order to provide for themselves and/or their families.

Accordingly, Maria Feodorovna’s reasoning was certainly not shared by everyone on her Council. In her correspondence with Prince Golitsyn, she noted that the Council was unsure about the “degree of utility” of hiring such an instructor.¹⁵⁸ However, she stuck with her opinion, absolutely refusing to hire him for a more practical purpose upon the Council’s urging, namely to be the singing instructor, a position that they had been trying to fill for a few months.¹⁵⁹ As Maria wrote to Golitsyn, Hartknoch would be hired “as a piano teacher, in order to make good masters and mistresses on this instrument, who will not only find employment in our establishments, but will also surely have a good means of subsistence in giving private lessons.”¹⁶⁰ Her will eventually won out over that of the Council; by May 1827, the Dowager Empress was asking to survey the blueprints for the Moscow Foundling Home in order to know where the music

¹⁵⁶ “Razgovor materi s os’mi-letneiu docher’iu.” *Patriot: Zhurnal Vospitaniia* 1, no. 2 (April 1804): 45.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁵⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 27 February, 1827, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 133.

¹⁵⁹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 15 March, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 137.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

teacher should be lodged.¹⁶¹ By October 1827, she was solidifying the final musical curriculum and terms of employment of the new teacher.¹⁶² Hartknoch was to train 15 boys and 15 girls at a time to be piano instructors.

Of course, the other students in the Home were not to partake in the lessons. Since Maria Feodorovna only sanctioned extended musical training for lower-class individuals who were destined to become music instructors, it is clear that she was still dedicated to preparing students for their future station in life. Noble girls would need musical training, both as a pastime and as a skill they could employ in noble society. Middle-estate girls who were destined to be wives were not encouraged to waste time on these occupations. However, the children in the Foundling Home who needed solid employable skills with which they could earn a living were afforded the chance to become music instructors by trade. In this way, Empress Maria still subscribed to the notion that it was generally not useful or beneficial for non-noble individuals to pass their time taking music lessons. However, her battle of wills against the council in hiring Hartknoch demonstrates that she considered the study of music to be pragmatic as well.

Chapter 2 Conclusion

Therefore, in considering what future role her students would occupy in society, Maria Feodorovna took into account not only their social estate, but also their financial situation, state of health and academic aptitude. As such, she attempted to organize educational programs that trained the future students for the vocation that would be the most practical and suitable for each of the students in their

¹⁶¹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 2 May, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶² Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 7 October, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 160.

future lives. There is no doubt about Maria Feodorovna's social conservatism, both in her attitude towards social estate and gender roles. However, her dedication to vocational and professional training, combined with her vigilant directorship of the institutes did open up future possibilities for her students who would not have had access to such advantages if they had been enrolled in one of the Empress's schools. As such, her schools were not only designed to raise new mothers, wives and housekeepers for the Empire.

Chapter 3: Motherly Compassion and Matriarchy

Have you not yet gone to see that charming institute which is the very image of a large and interesting family?¹

Empress Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 17 June, 1800

In her managerial practices, Maria Feodorovna, both a compassionate mother figure and a steely administrator, was a true matriarch. The maternal qualities of the Dowager Empress's administrative character can be elucidated through a discussion of her formal relationship to her pedagogical staff, and of her attention to her students' upkeep. The hierarchy of the institute staff in the Dowager Empress's educational establishments functioned as a conceptual family with Maria Feodorovna at the apex, the notional "pedagogical mother" of her institutional household. In contrast to the work of Catriona Kelly, in which Catherine II is presented as the archetypical "pedagogical mother," this study posits that Maria Feodorovna's educational and philanthropic careers allowed her to embody the role of the "pedagogical mother" more amply than the former empress. An examination of Maria Feodorovna's attention to the quality of her students' food and health will help to contrast her maternal administrative tactics with her drive for perfection and her propensity to micromanage the affairs of her institutes. As such, the Dowager Empress's role as the notional mother of her staff and students both allowed her to display her genuine care for their wellbeing, and reinforced her authority by functioning as a "scenario of power."

¹ Empress Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 17 June, 1800, in *Correspondance de Sa Majesté l'Impératrice Marie Féodorowna avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff, sa demoiselle d'honneur (1797-1801), suivie des lettres de Mademoiselle de Nélidoff au Prince A.-B. Kourakine*, ed. Princess Lise Trubetskoi (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896), 88-89. The Empress was referring to the Saint Petersburg branch of the Saint Catherine's Institute.

A Hierarchy of Love

In Maria Feodorovna's opinion, a child could not be raised properly without being upheld by parental love throughout the educational process. As a result, her employees were compelled to adhere to a strict, bureaucratic hierarchy that relied on the principles of obedience, good order, and familial love.² Displaying parental affection towards the children was a formal requirement of all the female pedagogical employees, while the male teachers and counsellors had no such official directions. However, Maria Feodorovna sometimes insinuated the importance of applying paternal care to their jobs in her personal correspondence with them.³

A Headmistress was at the head of every one of the Empress's establishments. In addition to ensuring that the institute was kept clean, the budget was being followed, and that the affairs were run in an orderly manner, she was in charge of ensuring the students were taught the skills that they would need to succeed within their own social estate.⁴ The Headmistress would monitor the conduct and abilities of the class matrons by conferring with her direct

² Maria Feodorovna delineated the hierarchical structure and the main responsibilities of personnel in the Community of Noble Girls in a series of reports issued on January 11, 1802. Although the report under consideration refers specifically to the duties of the employees at Smol'nyi, a virtually identical organizational structure existed at all of her institutes. See Maria Feodorovna, "Instruksii Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny dolzhnostnym litsam Vospitatel'nago Obshchestva blagorodnykh devits," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits: Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1915), 260-73

³ For other secondary-source discussions of Maria Feodorovna's insistence that her female pedagogical staff become mothers for their students, see, for example, Marie Martin, *Maria Féodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828 : Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 152-54; Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*, vol 2 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevich, 1899), 165; N. P. Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), 482-88.

⁴ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam," 260-61.

subordinates, the Inspectresses, about them, and by sitting in on classes on a regular basis.⁵ Moreover, the Headmistress was to monitor the girls' religious education, and ascertain that they were saying their prayers every morning and evening "not only by habit, but by that personal feeling of duty and joy that she [the Headmistress] needs to instill in them, which a Christian feels in bearing his soul to God."⁶ In order to ensure that the girls were adhering to the principles of good hygiene, she was authorized to have the girls periodically remove the top layer of their clothes so that she could see that they were clean and that their undergarments were unsoiled.⁷ The Headmistress was also required to visit the Institute hospitals and cafeterias several times a week to make sure that sufficient care was being applied to the preparation of the girls' food and that the sick students were getting the help they needed. She also was the ultimate authority in the approval of the daily expenditures; any extravagant purchases or repairs to the Home would have to be confirmed by the Empress and the Board of Trustees.⁸

The preservation of good order was especially important to the Institute. As Maria Feodorovna wrote, "It is not good enough if all things are done well: they must be done properly and at the prescribed time."⁹ However, the Headmistress was not to rule by fear, she was instead to "win the hearts of the Inspectresses, Class Matrons and the Students; she must know how to make

⁵ Ibid., 262; See also Maria Feodorovna to Madame de Palmenbach, 27 February, 1797, in "L'impératrice Maria Féodorovna, de glorieuse mémoire, dans ses soins pour le monastère de Smolny : Essai et lettres réunies par le baron F. A. Biouier," in Marie Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps* (Paris : L'Harmattan, 2003), 313-14.

⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Mme de Palmenbach, 27 February, 1797, in Martin, *Maria Feodorovna*, 314.

⁷ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam," 264.

⁸ Ibid., 263.

⁹ Ibid.

herself liked and respected by them...She needs...to become the Mother of each one of them.”¹⁰ As Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset, a student at the St. Petersburg branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute reports, the students often did use the title *maman* (mother) for the Headmistress with absolute sincerity. As she writes, “We loved the Headmistress Mme Breitkopf so much that we truly called her *maman* from our souls.”¹¹ When Mme Breitkopf passed away in Aleksandra’s last year at the institute, she wrote that “we were all depressed, we had become orphans.”¹² However, the name *maman* could equally be an empty title, without being supported by the students’ genuine love. When Mme Breitkopf died, she was replaced with Mme Krempien, whom the students did not like at all. Accordingly, Smirnova-Rosset noted that “although the next grade called her *maman*, they never loved her.”¹³

The Empress also reinforced the idea that the Headmistresses were the notional mothers of the children at the institutes by giving them the informal title of “maman” in her personal correspondence. For example, when the eighty year-old Headmistress of Smol’nyi, Mme Lafond took seriously ill in 1797, the Empress referred to her as “our good old mother” or “the good mother” in her correspondence with Princess Nelidova.¹⁴ Similarly, Maria Feodorovna referred to Smol’nyi Headmistress Mme Alderberg as “Mütterchen” in her professional

¹⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹¹ Aleksandra O. Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia. Pis'ma*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravda, 1990), 82.

¹² Ibid., 83.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna, *Correspondance avec Nélidoff, passim*. See, for example, Maria Feodorovna to Princess Nelidova, 4 June, 1797, *Correspondance*, 26; or Maria Feodorovna to Princess Nelidova, 11 May, 1797, *Correspondance*, 21.

correspondence with her.¹⁵ Thus, the Headmistress, as the Mother of the educational establishment, was to execute her duties as an educational administrator diligently, while ensuring that good order reigned in the Home.

The Inspectresses were subordinate to the Headmistress. They were also responsible for maintaining the level of education, good order, and hygiene delineated by the Empress in the Institute, as well as surveying the progress and diligence of the students and class matrons under their supervision. They would also be in control of a small portion of the institution's budget, having the authority to request the purchase of the items needed for the girls' upkeep, such as different types of fabric and clothing. The difference between their responsibilities and those of the Headmistress was the scale of their authority; while the Headmistress was in charge of the entire Institute, the Inspectresses were assigned to a specific class.¹⁶

One step further down the chain of command were the class matrons. They, like the Inspectresses, were assigned to specific classes in order to supervise the students and help them with their studies. As such they would have to "make themselves respected" by the students enough that the students would obey their orders. In turn, the class matrons were expected to "blindly obey" their supervising Inspectress.¹⁷ By all appearances, the emphasis on obedience and the adherence to this delineated chain of command remained in place for the entire tenure of Maria's control of the institutions. For example, eighteen years later,

¹⁵ Quoted in N. P. Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 479.

¹⁶ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam," 265.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 262.

Maria was still writing to her Moscow staff that “the opinion and the approval of her Inspectress is [a class matron’s] primary duty.”¹⁸

Just like the Headmistress, the Inspectresses and class matrons were required to apply the principle of maternal love to the execution of their pedagogical duties. “These Ladies,” wrote Maria, “will not inspire love of virtue, the taste for Study and work with cold and sterile sentences...An Inspectress, a class matron, will have fulfilled but a half, but a quarter of her duties by simply attending her students’ lessons and by maintaining order and tranquility.”¹⁹

Consequently, she needed to gain her students’ respect and to “follow the progress of their spirit and the movements of their soul, the different shades of their character step by step; finally, that she live with her students, like a mother lives with her children.”²⁰ This practice was especially important at the Foundling Home, because the vast majority of the children there were either orphans, or had been abandoned by their parents. As a result, the Dowager Empress noted that “these poor children have the misfortune of not knowing the relations of the family and the affection that is born there” and the class matron thus needs to “make up for this by allowing them to taste the joy of a relationship and of feelings between them and their matrons that come close to natural relationships, these feelings that fundamentally affect the perfection of the character.”²¹ The Headmistress, Inspectresses and class matrons were thus obliged to create a

¹⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 3 June, 1820, in *Recueil de Lettres de sa Majesté Marie Féodorovna aux tuteurs honoraires et aux supérieures des Instituts de Moscou*, ed. J. Dumouchel, vol 2 (Moscow: Fer. Neuberger, 1883-1885), 18.

¹⁹ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 266.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 28 January, 1824, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 2, 47-48.

macrocosm of a loving family within the Institutes by applying their maternal care to the execution of their pedagogical duties.

The Empress also employed an Inspector of Studies at every Institute, although sometimes the same man would function as the Inspector for more than one establishment.²² Just as the Headmistress was charged with the selection and supervision of the Inspectresses and Class Matrons, so the Inspector of Studies was responsible for employing the teachers of each subject, ascertaining that each of them was following the curriculum and choosing the textbooks for each course (in conjunction with the Empress).²³ As such, he needed to be a highly educated man with experience teaching, an ability to judge the effectiveness of different pedagogical methodologies, and the drive to keep up with the new developments in each subject of study.²⁴ Just like the Headmistress, he was to attend classes several times a week,²⁵ to make sure that the Instructors were doing their job well and showing up on time, and to evaluate the students' progress. In addition to evaluating the students' biannual exams, the Inspector of Studies would submit the students' progress reports and evaluations of the teachers on a monthly basis

²² See Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 January, 1824, in *Ibid.*, 45 and Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 12 January, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 126. Here, she notes that the Inspector of Studies in Saint Petersburg, Hermann, has enough time to oversee both the Saint Petersburg Foundling Home, and the one at Gatchina without an aide. Ulrichs, originally the Inspector of Studies for the Moscow Foundling Home, was later charged with additionally overseeing the education at the Moscow St. Catherine's Institute and the Aleksandrovsy Institute after the departure of the former Inspector of Studies, Tsvetaev (spelled Zwétaieff in the correspondence).

²³ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam," 269.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

²⁵ While in *Ibid.*, 271, Maria Feodorovna writes that the Inspectors of Studies should attend classes daily, in reality most Inspectors of Studies attended class 2-3 times a week, especially if they were engaged as an inspector in more than one Institute, or if they also had other employment. See, for example, Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 20 December, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 2, 121.

to the Headmistress.²⁶ Maria Feodorovna intended the teachers to be part of her Hierarchy of Love, although she did not specify this point in any of her official circulars regarding the institutes. Rather, in a private letter to her friend Pleshcheev she noted that, with regard to the two Benckendorf orphans for whose education and upbringing she was responsible, they needed to instil in them “the greatest obedience and submission to the wishes of their instructors, whom they need to respect as their second father because they replace him while they are entrusted to their care.”²⁷

The Inspector of Studies was technically subordinate to the Headmistress, but sometimes power struggles emerged in the institutes. For example, in late December 1826, Maria received a report from her Moscow representative, Prince S. M. Golitsyn, that Ulrichs, the current Inspector of Studies at the Moscow Foundling Home, was not respecting the authority of the Headmistresses. Remarking that “Our good Ulrichs’s” treatment of the Headmistresses was “inadmissible,” the Dowager Empress confirmed that Ulrichs was not permitted to treat the Headmistresses as his subordinates. If there were further disagreements, both the Inspector of Studies and Headmistress involved should address themselves directly to Prince Golitsyn for his judgement.²⁸

In an administrative sense, both the Headmistress and the Inspector of Studies were subordinate to the local Board of Trustees, also called the Council, although the members of the Council were not directly involved in the daily

²⁶ Maria Feodorovna, “Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 271.

²⁷ Maria Feodorovna to Pleshcheev, no date, in Marie Martin, *Maria Féodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828 : Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 327.

²⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 20 December, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 2, 121-122.

operation of the Institutes.²⁹ Each of the Trustees would visit the home on a weekly basis in turn in order to ensure that the institute was being kept in the proper order, that the food was suitable for the girls, and that the classes were being run according to the designated curriculum. Outside of the institution, the Council would meet to discuss the budget on a monthly basis (although one of the Trustees would be assigned to oversee the daily expenses), and would submit a corresponding report to the Empress.³⁰ It is unclear whether they had anything more than a nominal authority with respect to the governance of the Institutes, but their function as a bureaucratic body was very much enforced by the Empress. As is demonstrated by her correspondence, every decision that related to the staffing, academic awards, selecting girls to be trained as governesses, or budgetary expenses of the Institute could not be implemented, unless they were approved by both the Empress and the Council.³¹

One final purely administrative employee in the Institute was the Steward. Subordinate to the Board of Trustees and the Headmistress, he was in charge of the School's finances.³² His main duties were to ensure that the expenditures never went over the established budget, to inspect all of the purchases once they arrived at the institute, and to collaborate with the Stewards at other institutes in order to make bulk purchases. All the bills had to be signed by the Steward, the Cashier and the Secretary, and presented daily to the Headmistress for her inspection. At the end of each month, the entire list of expenses was to be

²⁹ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam," 272.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 273.

³¹ See *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 2, *passim*.

³² Maria Feodorovna, "Instruktsii dolzhnostnym litsam," 267.

submitted to the Board for their examination. Once a year, an Architect would look over the Institute's buildings to determine if any large repairs had to be made. Otherwise, the Steward was not allowed to authorize any expansive renovations or reparations.³³

Of course, the Dowager Empress was the unquestioned absolute authority at the head of the chain of command. Her influence was most strongly felt in Saint Petersburg, where she resided for most of the year. Thus, to ensure that the Moscow institutes were being run properly, she employed Prince Golitsyn as her imperial representative. He served in this position from 1802 until Maria's death in 1828. Even Prince Golitsyn, who had a purely administrative role in the daily function of the Moscow Institutes, had a part to play in the notional family of the community. Here, he was the father. Throughout their correspondence, Maria reinforced this point by frequently noting that she would leave the business of running the Institutes to his "paternal care" or "paternal solicitude."³⁴ She also made similar references about the fatherly nature of the undertakings of various members of the Council.³⁵

The Dowager Empress was especially afraid of having her right-hand man retire. When Prince Golitsyn brought up the idea in the summer of 1824, the Dowager Empress responded with the following effusion of sentiment. "If by chance," she began,

³³ Ibid., 267-69.

³⁴ *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 2, *passim*. See, for example, Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 4 April, 1822, in Ibid., 35, or Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 29 May, 1827, in Ibid., 144.

³⁵ For example, she noted that she was counting on the "paternal care" of both Golitsyn, whom she was addressing, and Monsieur Sabline, a member of the Council. See Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 October, 1818, in Ibid., 4.

your mind engenders ideas of retirement, oh, you can be sure that [these ideas] will never enter into mine. No, my dear Prince, *we will stay together, occupied in doing good, in giving the care that we can*, in life and in death, the word separation *in the duties that unite us* is the last one that I would utter: unless you are hoping that I die faster? All in good time, but until then, we will not leave each other.³⁶

The strength of the language that Maria Feodorovna uses here, especially in her insistence that Prince Golitsyn remain united with her in their charitable endeavours until death, figuratively turns her favourite administrator into her philanthropic husband, and emphasizes his role as a father figure over her Moscow institutes.

Empress Maria Feodorovna, as the head of this network of educational establishments, was the quintessential “pedagogical mother” for her students. The concept of the “pedagogical mother” is identified by Catriona Kelly as being prevalent in the mid-eighteenth to early-nineteenth century in Russia.³⁷ As Kelly explains, this concept centred around a belief in the “right of adult women to exert a quasi-maternal civilizing role” upon children under their care, whether or not they were biologically related to them.³⁸ Although Kelly never refers to the career or pedagogical philosophies of Maria Feodorovna in her book, the Dowager Empress fits the mould perfectly. As Maria Sergeevna Mukhanova reports, Maria Feodorovna considered the children in her establishments in general, but in the Foundling Homes in particular, to be her adoptive children. For example, when her father Sergei Il’ich Mukhanov, on one of his trips with the Empress to the

³⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 3 July, 1824, in *Ibid.*, 57.

³⁷ Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia : Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 43, 65.

Foundling Homes, commented on the personal attention that she was applying to the proper upbringing of the young residents, she answered simply “all these abandoned children are now mine and it’s my duty to find the care of which they are deprived.”³⁹

Furthermore, there is evidence to show that the students at the institutes had real daughterly affection for Maria Feodorovna. According to Mukhanova, Maria Feodorovna’s attention towards her institutes “was not a dry, lifeless, patronage, but maternal care. That’s why, upon her arrival in the institute, there was always a real party. We would hear “*Maman, maman! Mütterchen!*” everywhere.”⁴⁰ This highly complimentary image of Maria Feodorovna as the quintessential “mother” is confirmed by a memoir written about her by Elizaveta Khilkova, a former student of the Smol’nyi Institute and lady-in-waiting of the Dowager Empress, on the 44th anniversary of Maria Feodorovna’s death, October 24th, 1872. In the opening paragraph of the eulogy, Khilkova writes that “this was a Sovereign whose beneficence was insatiable, an enlightened protector of all classes of society and a mother for the disadvantaged, for the poor.”⁴¹ But, above all, it was in the “numerous educational establishments that Her Majesty patronized that the semblance of a cult was formed around Her [*qu’on lui portait un espèce de culte*]; it was there that She was looked upon with adoration.”⁴²

Maria Feodorovna’s frequent visits to her institutes were always a “source of joy” for the girls, who, in Khilkova’s words, would “always seek out Her

³⁹ Maria Sergeevna Mukhanova, “Vospominaniia,” *Russkii Arkhiv* 1, no. 3 (1878): 305.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Elizaveta G Khilkova, “Vospominanie kniagini E. G. Khilkovoi ob imperatritse Marii Feodorovne,” *Russkii Arkhiv* 11, no. 7 (1873): 1121.

⁴² *Ibid.*

caresses.”⁴³ Similarly, another *smolianka*, Kostievskaiia, remarked eulogistically that “Everyone obeyed her [Maria] out of love, her caresses made me so happy that for the rest of the day I would kiss the lock of my hair that she had touched while talking to me.”⁴⁴ Kostievskaiia’s juxtaposition of daughterly love with willing obedience is a testament to the effectiveness of Maria Feodorovna’s persona as a pedagogical mother in terms of her administrative principles. Just like a mother to her children, the Dowager Empress would often reward deserving students with positions at court upon their graduation and would give poor orphan girls a dowry so that they could get married appropriately and advantageously.⁴⁵ Khilkova, an unrelenting devotee of the Empress who “looked at Her venerable image with love” and thought about her every day, could say nothing bad about this revered “model of good.”⁴⁶ However, her conviction that “surely several other people do as I do,” combined with common depiction of the Empress in this way in nineteenth-century memoirs and scholarly texts, do indicate that this was a widely held view in the nineteenth century.

Of course, not everyone was as convinced that the Empress’s motherly compassion was genuine. One of those individuals was Prince Ivan Mikhailovich Dolgorukov (1764-1823), who published his views in his book *Kapishche moego serdtsa*, a kind of Russian “who’s who” that contained Dolgorukov’s remarks on all of the preeminent people that he had met in his life.⁴⁷ Dolgorukov’s wife

⁴³ Ibid., 1122.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe Obshchestvo*, vol 1, 612-13.

⁴⁵ Khilkova, “Vospominanie,” 1122-4.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1125-6.

⁴⁷ Ivan M. Dolgorukov, *Kapishche moego serdtsa, ili, Slovar’ vsekh tekh lits, c koimi ia byl v raznykh otnosheniakh v techenie moei zhizni*, ed. Valentin I. Korovin (Moskva: Nauka, 1997).

Evgeniia had once been a *smolianka*, and as such, they both expected that Maria Feodorovna's maternal solicitude would remain with them for the rest of their lives. However, he noted that, while the Empress was very charitable towards them at first, "afterwards she cooled as she got accustomed to her imperial rank, and [as she] started to become more powerful."⁴⁸ Dolgorukov was especially offended that they did not get any of the ancestral lands that Paul I distributed, gaining instead "only three hundred rubles a year as a pension from her [Maria's] pocket."⁴⁹ Most revealingly, Dolgorukov described a visit that he and his wife made to the court in Moscow. About this, he wrote,

my wife presented my two remaining daughters to the Empress, and she, speaking in the court language, very charitably deigned to take them, pinching [them] here and there on the cheek, [she] called [them] her children, but that was the limit of her goodwill, from which my daughters did not gain the tiniest genuine advantage.⁵⁰

Here, Dolgorukov's account is valuable not only because it is as hyperbolically negative as the other accounts are positive, but also because he understood Maria Feodorovna's "mother" persona to be a public act. This lends credence to the theory that it was indeed one of the Dowager Empress's conscious administrative tactics.

These nineteenth-century testimonies hint that Maria Feodorovna's persona as a "pedagogical mother" served to bolster her authority over her educational establishments by functioning as a "scenario of power." Richard

⁴⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 31-2. As Dolgorukov states in his text, he found this to be unacceptable because "simple servants received up to two hundred" rubles.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 32. Dolgorukov's wife Evgeniia, in her dying days, requested that Maria Feodorovna take their eldest daughter Maria as a maid of honour, but Maria Feodorovna did not reply to the request.

Wortman uses the notion of the “scenarios of power” to analyze how the Russian monarchy’s dramatic displays of power, such as those in imperial coronations, celebrations, marriages, and on the parade ground, cemented the identity of each emperor and emphasized his or her autocratic authority.⁵¹ In a subsection titled “The Mother of the Dynasty” Wortman presents Maria Feodorovna as the individual who helped to craft her son Nicholas I’s scenario of the family by imparting the importance of domestic life and traditional Christian morality to him.⁵² However, in Wortman’s text, Maria Feodorovna, not an autocrat herself, is not given a scenario of her own. Nevertheless, the Dowager Empress’s identity as a beneficent mother figure was reinforced publically, and was woven into her administrative program at the institutes much in the same way (although on a smaller scale) as Russian Tsars upheld their scenarios in their own imperial celebrations.

In addition to the personal accounts that we have already seen, where the authors express their daughterly love for the Dowager Empress, Maria Feodorovna’s scenario of pedagogical motherhood was brought to the fore during the public celebrations that took place in her educational establishments. For example, the nature of the allegorical displays during the Dowager Empress’s jubilee in 1821, which marked her twenty-fifth year of control over the Society

⁵¹ Richard S. Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicholas II*, abridged 2nd ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁵² Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 122. In a way, Maria Feodorovna can be said to have promoted Nicholas’s “family” scenario long before he became Tsar, effectively making him the heir of her own scenario.

for the Education of Noble Girls, reinforced her maternal image. According to the program of the celebration,

In the middle of the room, near the back, placed on a platform covered with a drapery of crimson velvet [*velours pourpre*] embroidered with gold, was the bust of Her Majesty the Empress-Mother. It was surrounded with bushes of flowers, alluding to all of the amiable youth that surround Her like their most tender mother, this generous Princess, when she comes to visit those children whom She loves just as much as they adore Her.⁵³

In the words of C. Didelot, the author of the program, upon Maria Feodorovna's entry into the celebration hall, all of the children in the room, that "lovely mass of youth," spontaneously threw themselves at the feet of the Empress, "their mother."⁵⁴ After describing several allegorical dances and arrays of symbolic gift-giving, Didelot similarly noted that "the joy was so vibrant, so pure, that this whole evening resembled a family party."⁵⁵ Even the songs sung by the choir, containing lines like "You [*Ty*] are the mother of the poor and the orphaned," reinforced the Empress's scenario of pedagogical motherhood and semantically accentuated her maternal familiarity with her "children" by using "*ty*" the familiar form of "you" when referring to her.⁵⁶

Despite the fact that Maria Feodorovna is a good candidate for the title of "pedagogical mother," Kelly connects the downfall of pedagogical motherhood in Imperial Russia, especially with reference to the women in the royal family, with the death of Catherine II. She writes, for example, that

⁵³ C. Didelot, "Programma allegoricheskago prazdnika v chest' dvadtsatipiatiletniago iubileia Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 247.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

The decline of ‘pedagogical motherhood’ in the symbolism of the royal house was, of course, linked to the demise of the archetypal ‘pedagogical mother’, Catherine II, and to the concerns of Catherine’s male successors to efface the spectre of her reign by stressing that maternity was a condition dependent upon patriarchal authority.⁵⁷

She asserts that a second conception of a woman’s domestic obligations began to take hold at the beginning of the nineteenth century; that of the faithful wife, rather than that of the mother purely dedicated to raising her children.⁵⁸ However, I would argue that in the context of the royal family, the opposite trend was occurring; with the wives and mothers of the reigning tsars free of any explicit political responsibilities, they were able to more greatly embody the notion of pedagogical motherhood on a symbolic level, simply through their direction and expansion of private girls’ schools, foundling homes, orphanages, and hospitals.

Wortman’s analysis in his article “The Russian Empress as Mother,” which has been accepted by subsequent scholars like Adele Lindenmeyr, would seem to support this interpretation of Maria Feodorovna as pedagogical mother.⁵⁹ Here, Wortman argues that Catherine the Great, being a product of the eighteenth-century imperial practice of “mother avoidance,” was “flagrant in her inconstancy and indifference to the family.”⁶⁰ The nineteenth-century emphasis on the family unit was initiated, Wortman reasons, in 1797 when Paul’s new succession law establishing primogeniture acted as “a first, symbolic step toward transforming

⁵⁷ Kelly, *Refining Russia*, 64.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁵⁹ Richard Wortman, “The Russian Empress as Mother,” in *The Family in Imperial Russia: New Lines of Historical Research*, ed. David L. Ransel (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 60-74. Adele Lindenmeyr, “Public life, Private Virtues: Women in Russian Charity, 1762-1914,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 18, no. 31 (1993): 570.

⁶⁰ Wortman, “The Russian Empress as Mother,” 61.

the empress from a political rival into a helpful member of the imperial family.”⁶¹

Maria Feodorovna, as Paul’s wife, and the mother of two Tsars, thus became a model for the nineteenth-century Empresses as the “mother of the family” in both their family life and their public duties.⁶²

For her part, Maria Feodorovna regarded charity as a social responsibility of noblewomen that was inextricably linked to their obligations as wives and mothers. For example, in a letter to her daughter Anna Pavlovna dating from 9 April, 1820, the Dowager Empress commented on her child’s philanthropic inclinations. “I see,” she began

that your affairs are in good state, my dear child, as since you have been married you have already been able to set aside a little. At the same time you devote yourself to the needs of your court, extending your charity and helping the poor as much as you can. You are behaving as a wise wife and a provident mother. If you go on this way you will be a rich and powerful lady but I am sure you will always regard the duty to be as charitable as possible to be one of your first obligations.⁶³

Maria’s connection of philanthropy with the duties ordained for noblewomen both by their gender and class was incredibly influential, not only within the imperial family, but also among all high-born Russian women of the period.⁶⁴ It was due to her example that Empress Elizabeth, the wife of Alexander I, founded the Women’s Patriotic Society in 1812 to provide assistance to those affected by the

⁶¹ Ibid., 62.

⁶² Ibid., 63.

⁶³ Maria Feodorovna, *Chère Annette: Letters from Russia 1820-1828: The Correspondence of the Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia to her daughter the Grand Duchess Anna Pavlovna, the Princess of Orange*, ed. and transl. S. W. Jackman, (Dover, NH: Alan Sutton Publishing Inc, 1994), 20.

⁶⁴ Wortman, *Scenarios of Power*, 122, writes that “Maria Feodorovna initiated the tradition of secular charity as women’s concern in Russia.”

Napoleonic War.⁶⁵ Maria's daughter Ekaterina Pavlovna (then the Queen of Wuerttemberg), doubtless influenced by her mother, founded a women's school in Stuttgart in 1818 that was modeled after Smol'nyi.⁶⁶ Lindenmeyr even notes that establishing a charity "became virtually part of the job description for the wives of high officials" by the 1830s.⁶⁷

Maria Feodorovna's legacy in the realm of Russian philanthropy was confirmed when, after her death in 1828, all of the charities, hospitals and educational establishments under her control became amalgamated into "The Department of the Institutions of Empress Maria," which was controlled by the Russian government and partially subsidized by the Treasury.⁶⁸ The Russian Empresses who succeeded her were all quite active within this Department, especially in the sphere of women's education.⁶⁹ Therefore, given the fact that Maria Feodorovna was *not* a wife for the majority of her career, but rather the mother of the Tsar who was in charge of providing an education not only for her younger children, but also for all the children entrusted to the care of her institutions whom she considered to be her adoptive children, it seems premature to cap the apex of pedagogical motherhood at the death of Catherine the Great.

⁶⁵ Lindenmeyr, "Public life, Private Virtues," 570.

⁶⁶ James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 29.

⁶⁷ Lindenmeyr, "Public life, Private Virtues," 570.

⁶⁸ Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 75.

⁶⁹ The succeeding Empresses of the nineteenth century all took on some of the responsibility for certain institutes, especially Smol'nyi within the new Department. Martin, *Maria Feodorovna*, 322, prints part of Mari Feodorovna's will, which indicates that Alexandra Feodorovna, the wife of Nicholas I, was to take over control of the Foundling Homes in Moscow, Saint Petersburg and Gatchina.

Food and Health

Back at the institutes, the Dowager Empress blended her maternal nature into her managerial strategies by trying to ensure that the students ate good quality food and stayed in good health, just as a mother would take care of her children's upkeep. While Maria Feodorovna only enjoyed mixed success in both of these endeavours, her constant concern about them emphasized her maternal qualities, while reinforcing her authority at the top of her institutional hierarchy. In an examination of her directions and queries about her pupils' upkeep, some of her harder-edged managerial qualities, such as her drive for perfection, demand for absolute obedience from her staff, and propensity to micromanage the daily affairs of her institutes are also revealed.

Food was one of the most difficult things for the Empress to regulate at her institutes. According to Mukhanova's memoir, the Empress held such a strong affection towards the students in her schools that she would regularly send them candies, inquire after the health of sickly youngsters, and even forgo the dessert prepared for her own dinner in favour of sending it to a nearby educational establishment.⁷⁰ Similarly, in her correspondence with Ekaterina Nelidova, Maria Feodorovna frequently mentions that she is sending fruit to the Community after inquiring about the "lovely little ones whom I embrace in thought."⁷¹ Technically, it was part of the duties of the Headmistress and the Inspectresses and the Council members to visit the cafeterias and send reports about the quality of the food,

⁷⁰ Mukhanova, "Vospominaniia," 305.

⁷¹ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 12/24 September, 1801, in *Correspondance avec mademoiselle de Nélidoff*, 27; See also 26 September 1801, in *Ibid.*, 108; Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 28 June, 1820, in *Ibid.*, 157.

however, Maria Feodorovna would regularly go to dine at the Petersburg Institutes to try to ensure that the food was of the appropriate quality.⁷² In general, she required that the food be “not only healthy and filling, but also of a sufficient quantity” for the students.⁷³ She did, in the end, succeed in providing adequate meals for her students. But they were often entirely unappetizing.

Sometimes, Maria Feodorovna was quite content with the quality of the food. For example, she wrote to her friend Ekaterina Nelidova about a meal that she experienced at the Petersburg branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute. “Dear Nelidova,” she began,

I found the little ones from St. Catherine’s at dinner and I had my meal with them; the soup was pearl barley [*gruau de perle*] with vegetables [*jardinage*], an excellent broth with turnips, a delicious kidney stew with a brown sauce; the ladies had, besides this, green cabbages with potatoes and an excellent roast of veal, [there was] a good, big piece of black bread for every child, and a second if it was requested.⁷⁴

However, it seems that Maria Feodorovna still had doubts about the quality of the food because she remarks directly afterwards that “you will admit, my good friend, that this dinner is better than the one yesterday.”⁷⁵

At other times, she was quite disappointed by the daily fare at her institutes. For example, in May 1806, she wrote to Baranov about the food at the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute. The Empress’s letter truly demonstrates her attention to detail because, as she mentions, “my remarks are not

⁷² Maria Feodorovna, “Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam,” 263, 267, 272.

⁷³ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 13 March, 1814, in “Pis'ma imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny k pochetnomu opekunu Moskovskago Vospitatel'nago Doma N. I. Baranovu, 1800-1818.” *Russkii Arkhiv* VIII, no. 8/9 (1870): 1510.

⁷⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, undated, in *Correspondance avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff*, 96.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

founded on somebody's report, but solely arose from the attention with which I investigated the registers that I received."⁷⁶ She goes on to say:

I have not been satisfied with the students' fare in the above-mentioned Institute, and I sometimes remarked such an arrangement that already makes one sick after a single reading, for example, during lent, *in a single lunch* [there was]: kal'ia [like borshcht], buckwheat groats with poppy oil, and pancakes with syrup, and rather often buckwheat groats with Finnish oil (*which I really love myself, but for girls every day or so, [it] often will bore them*)—usually on these days there is only one type of food. In general, very little changes, and currently there are almost no greens. I don't expect a choice fare and won't endure any excesses in the preparations, but without doing this, it's possible to change the fare.⁷⁷

In order to cut back on expenses so that they would have the extra capital to be able to vary the menu, Maria Feodorovna recommended that they prepare the same food for the class matrons as for the students (previous to this, they had been getting entirely different dishes). The class matrons were allowed more food than the students, so they were allowed one supplementary dish every day, with a total of four dishes being prepared on regular days, and five on holidays.⁷⁸

Despite Maria Feodorovna's concern that her students be happy with their food, Smirnova-Rosset recalls, the "provisions were not bad, but the negligent cooks were absolutely terrible."⁷⁹ The breakfasts were generally edible. After getting up at 7:30 and silently walking in pairs to class, one of the students was assigned to read a chapter from the New Testament and "afterwards the student distributed small loaves of bread for which our parents paid the class matron ten roubles a month, we drank tea with milk again and sometimes we drank tea from

⁷⁶ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 25 May, 1806, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1480.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 1481.

⁷⁹ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 81.

various herbs with treacle and milk. This was called the “decoction” and was absolutely disgusting.”⁸⁰ Their evening meal was usually the best of the day. Smirnova-Rosset recalls that “at five o’clock we went to drink tea, and...we enjoyed rye bread with salt. The bread was baked here in the basement and it was wonderful and wonderfully baked.”⁸¹

However, lunch, their most substantial meal of the day, was absolutely terrible. Smirnova-Rosset recalls that

They grilled some nasty beef with a third *des pommes de terre ou des pois*.⁸² The soup was not unlike that which they brought to Khlestakov⁸³ and the meal was finished off with a pie made from some grey flour, and the filling was prunes or carrots, we ate this rubbish and were healthy. On the first and last weeks of Lent, they gave us pottage and white salmon on Wednesday and Friday, from which the cafeteria had such a stench...and instead of a pie, there was cranberry kissel with honey water. But bread was always in abundance and we made a soup (*tiuria*) of bread and water or kvass, and so we were healthy and full.⁸⁴

No matter how unappetizing the food was at the Institutes, it seems that the Empress did, in the end, succeed in her aim of providing food that was “not only healthy and filling, but also of a sufficient quantity” for the students.⁸⁵

Regulating the students’ food was not the only measure that Maria Feodorovna took to ensure that her students stayed as healthy as possible.⁸⁶ As we

⁸⁰ Ibid., 80.

⁸¹ Ibid., 82.

⁸² In French in the original. Translates as: of potatoes or peas.

⁸³ This is likely a reference to a character in Gogol’s *Government Inspector*. In this play, Khlestakov receives a greasy, tasteless bowl of chicken soup from a restaurant that he finds so vile, he refuses to eat it.

⁸⁴ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 81.

⁸⁵ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 13 March, 1814, in “Pis’ma k Baranovu,” 1510.

⁸⁶ I fully agree with the analysis that Marie Martin makes about the Empress’s concern about the health of her students. This section differs from her analysis on health only in depth, not in the structure of the overall argument. In general, different quotations are used to complement the ones used by Martin, and to elaborate upon this point. See Martin, *Maria Feodorovna en son temps*, 146-148.

will discuss in Chapter 4, she required that the students be subject to two separate doctors' examinations before they were formally admitted into the institutes.⁸⁷ Besides this, she required there to be on-site hospitals at all of her institutes, she regularly inquired about the health of the students at the institutes, had the buildings for the Institutes designed so that they would promote the students' health, and insisted that the institute doctors incorporate new medical technologies, like vaccinations, into their practice at the institutes. Just like most of the medical professionals of the day, the Empress was a proponent of the miasma theory of contagion, which stipulated that miasma, or bad air, was responsible for causing outbreaks of disease. Thus, she was particularly concerned about ventilation in her institutes.

The Dowager Empress's correspondence with Mme Pevtsova is filled with details of the progress of the hospitalized or sick students at the Institute.⁸⁸ In this way, Empress Maria was able to monitor the state of health of sick students such as Chemerzina, Cherepanova, the Davidova sisters, and several others for months.⁸⁹ In her correspondence, Maria Feodorovna frequently asked Pevtsova to "tell our lovely children that I cherish them tenderly."⁹⁰ Similarly, she frequently discussed the health of the children at Smol'nyi in her correspondence with Nelidova. Here, again, Maria Feodorovna displayed maternal care for the sick students, writing, for example, that "the little Pousehkine is sick with a hot

⁸⁷ See section on Admission requirements in Chapter 4.

⁸⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Mme de Pevtsova, 17 October, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 1, 6. The Empress continually requested that Mme Pevtsova give her the details about her sick students.

⁸⁹ See *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 1, *passim*.

⁹⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 25 November, 1826, in *Ibid.*, 14.

fever...you have told me that she is so lovely that, even though I do not know her, I am concerned about her [*je me sens de l'intérêt pour elle*].”⁹¹ She was so well informed about the status of her sick students that she was able to recommend when the institutes’ doctors should be consulted, and when the patient’s parents should be informed.⁹²

At times when many students fell ill at once, Maria Feodorovna even suggested possible causes of, or defences against, their state of ill health. For example, she was informed in November 1826 that the number of sick students was growing ever higher in the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute. Remarking that “it is doubtlessly probable that the weather and the state of the air are contributing to this,” she recommended that something be put in front of the windows in the dormitories to keep drafts from coming in at night.⁹³ Fewer than twenty days later, the Council member Sablin had installed covers over the windows, according to the Empress’s specifications.⁹⁴

As much as possible, Empress Maria had architects modify and design her institutes so that they would have good ventilation systems. In March 1803, she received a report from Mme Perette, the current Headmistress of the Moscow branch of the Saint Catherine’s Institute, regarding the number of vents and windows in the establishment. She replied to Perette’s concerns in a letter to Baranov, writing that

⁹¹ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 27 July, 1797, in *Correspondance avec mademoiselle de Nélidoff*, 36-37.

⁹² Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 2 November, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 1, 8.

⁹³ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 4 November, 1826, in *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 24 November, 1826, in *Ibid.*, 14.

I agree with her [Perette's] opinion that such small vents are not sufficient for the necessary purification of the air, and that, according to her suggestion, it is absolutely necessary to make four vents in each [room]; (tin vents) *ventilators* are not suitable, since besides the fact that they purify the air rather insufficiently, they make noise during school hours, which is distracting: and because of this it is necessary to replace them with vents everywhere on the middle floor.⁹⁵

Maria Feodorovna even suggested installing ventilating pipes in the walls because it would purify the air in the home “more quickly, since a bad odour invariably contaminates the whole home.”⁹⁶

In a later letter, Dowager Empress also prescribed that the Moscow Foundling Home have two separate sick rooms, one for students still in the most violent throes of their illness, and the other for those convalescing. As she wrote, the recovering patients would, “being isolated from the sick and having better air, completely recover more quickly.”⁹⁷ In her memoirs, Smirnova-Rosset confirmed that the Empress “really cared about ventilation, when there was not any possibility of changing the air. In each class, there were two doors, and they were opened when we walked in the hallway at 11:30, and the ventilating window was also opened.”⁹⁸ Thus good ventilation was an absolute necessity in all of the Empress's institutes, and when the quality of the air did not meet her standards, the appropriate renovations to the building were made.

From 1806 to 1808, Maria Feodorovna commissioned a new building to be built by the famous architect Giacomo Quarenghi to house the Community for noble girls. In August 1808, Maria Feodorovna also petitioned Emperor

⁹⁵ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 30 March, 1803, in “Pis'ma k Baranovu,” 1465-66.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1466.

⁹⁷ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 23 September, 1807, in *Ibid.*, 1485.

⁹⁸ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 81.

Alexander I for his approval of the way that she desired the building to be used.

One of her central reasons for desiring a new building was to preserve the health of her students. Here, the problem was not linked to ventilation, but rather to heat.

As she wrote to her son, the current structure did not have

everything that is required for the comfort of the students like, for example, a hall in which they can walk [for exercise] during the winter, and thus they are deprived of the necessary means of preserving their health by exercising. The corridors are cold and there are no means to warm them comfortably, and not only can it not serve for this [walking during the winter], but it also is not suitable for the necessary crossings from the dormitory to the classes, to the cafeteria, and so on, and thus it has an obvious effect on the health of the girls and all the means of averting this and of warming the corridors on my part have not proved to be very successful.⁹⁹

Maria Feodorovna's concern about the health of Smol'nyi students prevailed and the new institute was opened for use in 1809.

The Empress also kept up with recent advances in medicine, such as vaccinations against smallpox and cowpox. Consequently, she ordered Baranov to ensure that all the children born in the Moscow Foundling Home be inoculated against this often fatal disease.¹⁰⁰ She even insisted that "one can inoculate seven, eight, or nine day-old infants against smallpox" without any fear that the vaccination would render them unhealthy.¹⁰¹ In 1789, there was an outbreak of smallpox in the town of Pavlovsk where Maria Feodorovna, as a Grand Duchess, had set up a public school. In order to encourage the villagers to allow their children to be vaccinated, she had two of her own children publically immunized.

⁹⁹ Maria Feodorovna, "Zapiska Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny Imperatoru Aleksandru I ob obmene zdanii Vospitatel'nago Obshchestva i Vdov'iago Doma," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 243.

¹⁰⁰ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 13 December, 1801, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1452.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1451.

As a result, the residents of Pavlovsk were spared a subsequent smallpox epidemic that infected many people in nearby towns.¹⁰²

Sometimes the Empress even chastised the Institutes' doctors for not having certain items in their medicine cabinets. For example, in April 1804, she was irritated because the doctors at the Moscow St. Catherine's Institute did not prescribe wine to sick girls. Accordingly, she wrote to Baranov

In Headmistress Perette's report, I saw that wine is never used for sick girls [in Moscow]. I know, from various experiences, that it can be beneficial in many circumstances. Here [in Saint Petersburg] it is used in the hospitals; thus I request that you have wine in a sufficient quantity and necessary quality for use upon a doctor's prescription *every time it is required*... You can also use kvass in the event of need, of course, upon a doctor's prescription.¹⁰³

There is no indication about whether or not Maria Feodorovna's orders were fulfilled on this account, but one imagines that they were. In either case, this situation contributes evidence to the argument that Maria Feodorovna, supremely detail-oriented in every aspect of institute life, was perhaps even more attentive to the question of the students' health and wellbeing to the point that she considered herself enough of an expert in the field that she felt comfortable telling doctors how to treat their patients.

There are numerous accounts of the Empress's personal attention to sick students. At the very least, her correspondence with Pevtsova evidences a desire to provide maternal care to the students, even when she was not able to come to her bedside. For example, she wrote to the Headmistress about the sickly student

¹⁰² Suzanne Massie, *Pavlovsk: Life of a Russian Palace* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 102. It is unclear which two of her children Maria Feodorovna had inoculated at Pavlovsk.

¹⁰³ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 22 April, 1804, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1468-69.

Chemerzina, requesting that Pevtsova “greet her [the patient] affectionately on my behalf.”¹⁰⁴ In another case, Maria Feodorovna’s attention to sick students was more personal. For example, Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset reports that in childhood, she really enjoyed eating strawberries and, “as a result of this I got a fever. I had had the fever for two months and the doctor did not know what to do. Empress Maria Feodorovna came from Pavlovsk [to Petersburg] and asked me what ailed me. I told her that the doctor in Odessa gave me an emetic, and afterwards something bitter, and the fever had gone away. She ordered someone to write to my mother, who sent the prescription and after three administrations of quinine, the fever ceased and never came back again.”¹⁰⁵

In other accounts, the Empress’s mere presence was able to provide miraculous cures for sick students. For example, in Elizaveta Khilkova’s eulogy for the Empress, she writes

One of her [Maria Feodorovna’s] smiles truly succeeded in reviving a little girl of eight years, an orphan, whom She especially loved and cherished. The child fell dangerously ill, and the doctors expected her to die. Her Majesty, upon hearing the news, came to see her a last time. The little one was not taking any food, was not able to speak, and always had her eyes closed. As soon as she heard the cherished voice, the child opened her eyes and pronounced the following words with a clear voice: “give me your hand to kiss.” The Empress felt much joy and said “I am certain that this child will recover, she has too much vivacity in her eyes.” And she was right: the child recovered her health...and it is she who writes these lines and pronounces these elegies with veneration.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 25 November, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux Tuteurs Honoraires*, vol 1, 14.

¹⁰⁵ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 78.

¹⁰⁶ Khilkova, “Vospominanie,” 1123.

Thus, Maria Feodorovna's attention to and care for sick students allowed her to acquire almost magical qualities in the eyes of some of the girls formerly under her care.

All of these instances demonstrate that Maria Feodorovna took it upon herself to ensure that the students were not being exposed to any undue health and safety risks. Of course, her beneficence alone was not enough to save a great many students from dying from disease in her establishment. On the other hand, her attentiveness to health precautions within the institute likely did save many more students from dying unnecessarily of treatable or preventable illnesses.

Chapter 3 Conclusion

All in all, a few overarching themes run through Maria Feodorovna's maternal administrative tactics in her institutes. The Dowager Empress desired to create a domestic atmosphere for the students in her educational establishments, and thus mandated that her staff form a "hierarchy of love" by showing maternal and paternal care and concern for their pupils. The matriarch of her educational and imperial families, Maria Feodorovna's assumption of the "pedagogical mother" persona helped to solidify her authority at the institutes by creating real and imagined bonds of affection between her and the staff and students. This "scenario" was reinforced in public ceremonies at the institute, like that of her jubilee, and its effectiveness can be confirmed by the warm, familial language that her former pupils and associates used to describe her. Even the more negative memoirs of the Dowager Empress testify to the fact that she adopted the persona of the caring mother as her public image. In her concern for the quality of the food

in the institute and her students' health and wellbeing, Maria Feodorovna was at times, very much the loving mother, and at others was the strict administrator who demanded absolute obedience from her employees. Moreover, the extent of Maria Feodorovna's power is demonstrated through the fact that her approach to women's education and philanthropy in the Russian Empire, and her connection of charity work with the social duty of noblewomen proved to be very influential among other women of high birth for the rest of the imperial period.

Chapter 4: Administering the Institutes

“Justice, my good Prince, is the first law”¹

Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 13 February, 1828

Some commentators went further than to simply discuss the motherly nature of Maria Feodorovna’s administrative tactics. Karamzin, for example, once wrote that the Dowager Empress could have been not only “the best minister of Public Education, but also that of Finances, judging by her intelligent management of children’s education, and her financial direction on the Council of Commerce.”² Similarly, Pletnev called her the “minister of charity,” an unofficial title which gained significance after the Empress’s death, considering the fact that a new government department was created to manage her sprawling network of philanthropic institutions.³ Maria Feodorovna’s organizational abilities have also been noted by Likhacheva, who mentioned that the Empress, having a “methodical mind” was surprised by the “disorder of the daily business of the Society” when she took control of the institutes.⁴ By equating Maria Feodorovna’s skills with those of a highly effective state functionary, these nineteenth-century commentators point out the dual nature of the Empress’s persona as an administrator. Not only was she a compassionate, motherly philanthropist, but she was also a capable, determined director.

¹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 13 February, 1828, in *Recueil de Lettres de sa Majesté Marie Féodorovna aux tuteurs honoraires et aux supérieures des Instituts de Moscou*, ed. J. Dumouchel. Vol 2, (Moscow: Fer. Neuberger, 1883-1885), 177.

² Quoted in N. P. Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914.*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1914), 612.

³ Evgenii S. Shumigorskii, *Imperatrítsa Mariia Feodorovna, 1759-1828 eia biografiia*, vol 1 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia I. N. Skorokhodova, 1892), vi.

⁴ Elena Osipovna Likhacheva, *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskogo obrazovaniia v Rossii*, vol 2 (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. M. Stasiulevich, 1899), 15.

Maria Feodorovna's great attention to detail comes to the foreground upon an examination of her administrative tactics in the regular operations of her institutes. The Dowager Empress wanted to uphold and promote the social status quo, and, as a result, strictly divided her educational establishments according to estate. However, Empress Maria nevertheless believed strongly in the principles of justice and impartiality; she absolutely loved rules and regulations, and mandated that they be adhered to in all circumstances. Here, Maria's protocols with regards to the admission procedures, evaluating the students and ensuring their academic success, selecting recipients of awards, discipline and punishment, and various staffing issues, will be analyzed with reference to the Empress's strict regulation of institute life, of her desire to promote impartiality, and of her genuine care for the students' professional and personal wellbeing. Ultimately, this will shine light on the type of justice that is permitted in an inherently unequal society, as well as revealing many of Maria Feodorovna's more hard-edged managerial qualities.

Divisions Between Social Estates: Admission Requirements in Maria's Institutes

In Smol'nyi and other Institutes for Noble girls

Empress Maria Feodorovna was extremely strict about the admission requirements into all her institutions, but the standards for the institutes for noble girls, and Smol'nyi in particular, were the most stringent.⁵ She placed emphasis

⁵ Maria Feodorovna, "Pis'mo Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny gr. P. V. Zavadovskomu otnositel'no priema v Vospitatel'noe Obshchestvo v 1797 g.," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits. Istoricheskii ocherk, 1764-1914*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3 (Saint Petersburg: Gosudarstvennaia tipografiia, 1915), 210-211.

on the social status of the applicants (that is: their rank and the financial need of their family), their physical wellbeing, and their age. First, the girls accepted into the school had to be of noble birth, and preferably from families that were not wealthy since “the main objective of establishing this Community consists in giving the current poor Russian Nobility the means to educate their children.”⁶ As a result, those selected should be chosen “according to the antiquity of their nobility and the poverty of their condition.”⁷ The Marshal of the Nobility in the girl’s province of residence needed to provide definitive proof of the girl’s estate, age, and christening for the application to be considered complete.⁸ Of the 300 spots in Smol’nyi, 150 of them were reserved for the military nobility.⁹

In the other schools for the education of noble children that fell under the command of Empress Maria, there were similar provisions. Admission to the noble branch of the Military Orphans’ Home was open to children with “sufficient proof of [their] nobility and poverty.”¹⁰ Likewise, the St. Catherine’s Institutes in St. Petersburg and Moscow accepted the daughters of “the poor hereditary nobility of any rank, or of a rank that gives their children nobility, that is to say up to the captain of the army, and the eighth class of state service.”¹¹ There were 60 spots in each of the St. Catherine’s Institutes, and, after 1814, 30 of these 60 spots

⁶ Ibid., 210.

⁷ Ibid.; Maria Feodorovna, “Ustanovlennyya Imperatritsei Mariei Feodorovnoi pravila priema v Vospitatel’noe Obshchestvo,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 212. Included under the blanket term of “noble” were girls “of natural noble heritage that are authenticated by the Marshal of the Nobility” and “the daughters of bureaucrats that have a rank in the Military service not lower than Colonel, and in the State Service not lower than Councillor of the State.”

⁸ Maria Feodorovna, “Pravila priema,” 212.

⁹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 50. The other 150 spots could contain girls from either the military or civil nobility.

¹⁰ Quoted in Ibid., 30.

¹¹ Quoted in Ibid., 50.

were reserved for the military nobility.¹² In the Military-Orphans' Home, all of the vacancies were naturally reserved for children from military families; 50 out of 100 spots were reserved for the military nobility.¹³

Secondly, it was essential that the students be in good health. Proof of a doctor's examination, confirming that the child was healthy, was a compulsory part of the application process.¹⁴ If they were shown to have "an internal illness, a weak constitution, cancer, scabies, injury to any limb, weak vision, etc" then they were to be refused entry into the society.¹⁵ Upon their arrival to the institutes, the girls would be subjected to a *second* doctor's examination to be performed by the school's doctor no later than 1 August of the year the young lady was to be admitted into the establishment. If a girl did not show up on time for her second compulsory examination, and was found to be "sick or mutilated or otherwise unsatisfactory," then she would "forfeit the right to be accepted into the Community."¹⁶

In terms of accepting girls into the Pepinière, Maria Feodorovna took great pains to ensure that dedicated girls with the correct skills were chosen. She did not allow herself to be bullied by parents into letting under-qualified and unmotivated students into the teacher's college. For example, in November 1827, the father of

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna, "Pravila priema," 213; Maria Feodorovna, "Pis'mo gr. Zavadovskomu," 210.

¹⁵ Maria Feodorovna, "Pravila priema," 213.

¹⁶ Ibid., 214. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 51, notes that the rules governing the health and wellbeing of the applicants were enforced by the Institute staff. For example, a prospective student named Maria Farafonteva applied to study at Smol'nyi in 1800. Her rank and supporting documentation was found to be acceptable by the Council members who were judging the admissions process. However, upon the required secondary physical examination by a doctor, she was "shown to be too weak," and thus she was refused admission to the Institute.

the student Tekuteva wrote to the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine's institute, requesting that his daughter be admitted to the pépinière.¹⁷ However, upon examining Tekuteva's academic record, Empress Maria concluded that "if she has neither the necessary knowledge to enter, nor even the desire, then it should not even be under consideration, so I pray that you, my Prince, explain this to the father, regarding his request."¹⁸ In a later letter, Maria Feodorovna strongly reiterated the point that "we cannot keep a young lady at the Institute who does not have the necessary qualities and knowledge to become useful, nor even the desire to stay."¹⁹

Most of the students in Maria Feodorovna's educational establishments had their tuition paid for by grants from the state. For these girls, informally called the "state students," it was mandatory to take part in the rigorous admissions process outlined above.²⁰ However, there was another group of students that were referred to informally as the "pensioners." These were the girls who had a rich sponsor (whether a relative or a member of the imperial family) pay for their tuition. At Smol'nyi, the annual tuition was 503 roubles for the noble girls in 1797; by 1821 it had increased to 1 100 roubles.²¹ The admission regulations for the pensioners were more relaxed than for the students being

¹⁷ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 18 November 1827, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 165.

¹⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 5 December, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 20 December, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 167.

²⁰ Martin Martin, *Maria Féodorovna en son temps, 1759-1828 : Contribution à l'histoire de la Russie et de l'Europe* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2003), 134.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 134, 138-39. Maria Feodorovna personally sponsored the education of a small army of children. In 1806 alone, she was paying the tuition of a total of 306 students in various schools throughout the empire, including Smol'nyi, the Saint Catherine's Institute, the Foundling Homes, and the schools she had established for deaf and blind children. This cost her about 60 375 roubles a year, not including the money that she had donated for the school's upkeep.

sponsored by the state. Maria Feodorovna did not like to admit students in the middle of term, but was often willing to make a grudging (and sometimes not so grudging, if the girls had were joining the program late due to the fact that they had recently become orphaned) exception for these girls.²² Consequently, some of these girls, having received a solid primary education at home often enrolled in the school for only the last three years of the program.²³

In the Institutes for Girls from the Meshchanstvo

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the word *meshchanstvo* had a plurality of meanings. Four distinct definitions of this elusive social category can be detected in the statutes and official documents composed by Catherine II.²⁴ First, the word *meshchanstvo* was used to refer to the type of professional, urban, middle estate that Catherine II sought to create in her cities.²⁵ Secondly, it could refer to the current lower order of city-dwelling, uneducated tradesmen and petty vendors who paid the soul tax.²⁶ Third, it could be used as a catch-all term for any individual who lived in the city. Fourth, it could denote an individual of non-noble and non-agrarian origin.²⁷ An examination of Maria Feodorovna's admission

²² See, for example, Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 11 March, 1819, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 11.

²³ Sometimes, however, Maria Feodorovna determined that a pensioner was not ready to study with the rest of the oldest age group, and would thus put them in with the younger girls. See Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova 30 November, 1826, in *Ibid.*, vol 1, 15. Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, February 16, 1825, in *Ibid.*, vol 2, 82.

²⁴ Hugh D. Hudson Jr., "Urban Estate Engineering in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Catherine the Great and the Elusive Meshchanstvo," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1984): 393-410. For a discussion of the evolution of the word *meshchanstvo* in the nineteenth century, see Lidiia Vasil'evna Koshman, "Meshchanstvo v Rossii v XIX v," *Voprosy istorii* (2008): 3-20.

²⁵ Hudson, "Urban Estate Engineering," 398. This group was to include "those non-gentry yet non-soul-tax-bearing persons engaged in the arts and sciences, in navigation, in wholesale (but not retail) trade, and recipients of degrees from the Adademy of Sciences, Adademy of Arts, universities, seminaries, or Foundling Home, as well as clerks' children studying at state schools."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 398.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 402.

requirements reveals that the word *meshchanstvo*, while officially used to refer to city-dwelling professionals, had a more fluid meaning in practice. Due to the Dowager Empress's desire to have the highest-ranked student body possible in her institutes, she extended the meaning of *meshchanstvo* to include not only the daughters of the professional urban class, but also those of clerical provenance, and especially those whose fathers had personal (not hereditary) nobility in the civil or military service.²⁸

There were four institutions for the education of girls from the middle estate that were run by Maria Feodorovna in Moscow and St. Petersburg: the *meshchantsvo* branch of Smol'nyi (Saint Petersburg), the *meshchanstvo* girls' branch of the Military Orphan Home (Saint Petersburg), the Mariinskii Institute (St. Petersburg), and the Aleksandrovskii Institute (Moscow). The cost of tuition in these institutes was lower than in the noble schools; in 1797, the annual fee for a girl from the "*meshchanstvo*" was 203 roubles. In 1821, the tuition was 600 roubles a year.²⁹ With regard to basic entrance requirements, the Institutes for middle-estate girls operated in a similar way to the Institutes for noble girls. The girls had to undergo the same rigorous doctor's examinations as did the noble girls, and they still had to provide proof of their rank.

In 1800, the Council of the Community for the Education of Noble Girls specified that the following groups of people would qualify as *meshchanstvo*:
 "officers in the civil and court service, those who, not being descended from the

²⁸ According to the Table of Ranks, an individual acquired personal nobility upon being given the lowest rank, XIV. Hereditary nobility was not conferred until the individual ascended to rank VIII in the civil service or VI in the military service. See Janet M. Hartley, *A Social History of the Russian Empire, 1650-1825* (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999), 54.

²⁹ Martin, *Maria Féodorovna en son temps*, 134.

nobility by birth, are in military service with the rank of an ober-ofitser to a captain [ranks XIV to IX] or those in the state or court [service] with a class of up to 8, as well as the daughters of merchants, priests, doctors, physicians, teachers and artists not having the rank of a shtab-ofitser [VIII to VI].”³⁰ To this list drafted by the Council, the Empress also added “daughters of valets who have up to the captain’s rank, doctors, physicians and professors.”³¹

However, Maria would give priority to specific groups of the “middle estate” for admittance into her institutes. In general, those with the highest rank who did not qualify for admission to the Institutes for Noble Girls would be admitted first. Initially, she instructed that 50 of the 100 vacancies in the middle-estate branch of Smol’nyi be reserved for the “daughters of *hof-fuhrer* [a court manservant with a rank of IX], valets, maîtres d’hôtel, low-ranking officers [who hold a rank] up to that of captain [IX], doctors, physicians, professors.” The other 50 places were reserved “for the daughters of the *meshchanstvo*,” that is to say: guildsmen, tradesmen, priests, artists, etc, with no rank.³² However, in the 1806 admissions process at Smol’nyi, out of the 112 girls who applied to the middle-estate branch, 88 were admitted. Out of these, nine were truly from the *meshchanstvo*, the other girls’ fathers held a rank.³³ By 1809, Maria Feodorovna was writing letters to the Headmistress of Smol’nyi, Mme Adlerberg, saying that “only the best classes” should be admitted to the middle-estate branch of the

³⁰ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 50. See also Cherepnin, *Obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits*, vol 1, 417-418.

³¹ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 51.

³² *Ibid.* Priests are not technically part of the *meshchanstvo*, but they were included in this category for the purposes of admission into the Empress’s middle-class establishments.

³³ *Ibid.*, 52.

institute. By 1812, the admissions staff was refusing to place the daughters of “deacons, clerks, [and] the aides of foremen” in the Institute because they “do not have an officer’s rank.”³⁴ “Thus,” Likhacheva writes, “little by little, the school, which was designated for the *meshchanstvo* when it was founded, was transformed into an educational establishment for the lower nobility and bureaucrats.”³⁵

As Likhacheva reports, because the Aleksandrovskii Institute adopted the same admission procedures as Smol’nyi, and the middle-estate branch of the Military-Orphan home was always designated for the children of soldiers and officers, there remained only one school in the Empire that was verifiably, exclusively for the daughters of the *meshchanstvo*: the Mariinskii Institute.³⁶ This was the unfortunate, but inevitable consequence of the Empress’s strict class standards for her institutes for noble girls. Having their daughters barred from the Smol’nyi or the St. Catherine’s Institutes, individuals holding personal, but not hereditary nobility had no choice but to apply to the middle-estate institutes. As a result, the applications from the veritable members of the *meshchanstvo* were edged out, in favour of providing an education to the prospective students from the highest possible social estate who qualified for admission to the Institute.

³⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

In the Foundling Homes

The social estate of the foster children in the Foundling Home was as strictly enforced as those of the girls in the noble and middle-estate schools.³⁷ Just as students whose father's rank was not high enough were barred entry from the Empress's Institutes for noble girls, a child was not considered for admission into the Foundling Homes if the rank of his or her father was *too high*. For example, a nobleman who once requested that his daughter be admitted to the Foundling Home was told by the Empress that admitting children to the Home

whose noble provenance is known does not correspond either with the objective of this establishment, or with the proper respect to the noble rank. Although it is possible that there are noble children [in the Foundling Home] that were given away because of poverty, this provenance is not known to them; the Society for the Education of Noble Girls and the Saint Catherine's Institute are designated for the nobility.³⁸

Thus, the Empress reinforced the status quo of the social structure in the Russian Empire by strictly regulating the admission requirements to all of her institutes. Social mobility, whether down or up, did not conform to the stated goals of her women's educational establishments and was strictly forbidden.

Ensuring Academic Success and the Evaluation Process

Maria Feodorovna's enforcement of traditional class boundaries within her institutions should not be confused with a conscious attempt on her part to withhold her students from succeeding. With the exception of the entrance

³⁷ Unfortunately, Ransel does not elaborate on exactly how the foster children were chosen to re-enter the Home, in contrast to staying permanently in the countryside, and I have been unable to find this information elsewhere. One imagines that many of the unhealthy babies raised in the Home from birth died before the age of five, when their education started, so the program was likely filled with foster children who had indeed made a return from the countryside.

³⁸ Quoted in Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 55.

requirements, she applied the principles of impartiality and justice to all aspects of the administration of the institutes, from the way that she expected the marking to be done, to the manner in which the awards were to be selected, to the process of choosing students for the positions in the Pepinière. Most significantly, she encouraged the teachers and the class matrons to spend as much time with the weaker students as possible, instead of simply concentrating on the success of the most academically gifted children.

Empress Maria took great measures to ensure that there was no favoritism or partiality between the pensioners and the state students. For example, when surveying Golitsyn's list of the most distinguished students in the graduating class at the Moscow branch of the Saint Catherine's Institute in January 1825, she noted with dismay that none of the state-sponsored children had managed to perform well enough academically to merit an award. Maria, concerned, thus asked Golitsyn:

Will this total exclusion of state students not incur false interpretations on the part of the parents? Will they not think that we are neglecting the state students in favour of occupying ourselves with the pensioners? I know that these reproaches have been made at the Institute here [at St. Petersburg]: and I've focused all my attention to avoid this and I've succeeded, having had the satisfaction of seeing the State students merit the first positions [*chiffres*].³⁹

Maria's inquiry into this affair did not stop here; she also contacted Mme de Kroock, the Headmistress of the Moscow branch of the St Catherine's Institute for

³⁹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 31 January, 1825, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 78-79.

a report about this.⁴⁰ In mid-February, she followed up with another letter on this subject to Golitsyn.

Here, Maria expressed her contentment at Mme de Kroock's assertion that "there is absolutely no preference or special protection accorded in any respect."⁴¹ But the Dowager Empress did not let the matter rest there. She continued on to say that the admissions process in the Institute could be fairer because

...the pensioners, sometimes coming very well prepared, only stay at the Institute for a couple of years and graduate decorated, such that it seems that they haven't come for any other reason than to take these awards away from the State students...I've already thought that it wouldn't be good to limit the admission of the pensioners into the small class, and not to admit any directly into the big [class], to put the pensioners more on the same level as the State students.⁴²

Maria took up this issue in mid-March 1825 for a final time. Here, she suggested a numeric method of evaluating the girls at the institute that would allow the staff to be able to compare their success, and thus decide who was deserving of an award, more easily. They were to be graded on a scale of 10 to 100 in each academic subject, as well as conduct, where numbers would be assigned to their level of success: poor, satisfactory, good, and very good. These numbers were to be entered onto a table on which the last column would contain the sum of their scores. If two girls had the same scores, then they would both be re-evaluated for their conduct, character, and so on, by the Headmistress or the Inspector of Studies, to see if one would get a better mark.⁴³ The Empress concluded "I don't think we'll have to worry about even the smallest suspicion of partiality, nor the

⁴⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 16 February, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 81.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 81-82.

⁴³ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 19 March, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 85-86.

slightest appearance of an arbitrary preference, ... [as long as] once the method is introduced it will be followed with the most scrupulous precision.”⁴⁴ Thus, the Dowager Empress showed the utmost concern that the pensioners and the State students who were in the same classes were not evaluated differently by the educational staff.

The examination process itself was quite rigorous. Every three years, the students had to complete a series of written and public oral exams to determine whether they would be advancing to the next grade.⁴⁵ The public oral examinations, which spanned over three days for the nobles and one day for the *meshchanstvo* girls, had existed since the time of Catherine II and were supposed to encourage community interest and involvement in the girls’ education.⁴⁶ After their exams, the girls were ranked, according to the system outlined above, to determine who was eligible to receive an award. The public competitiveness of this type of examination process differentiated the Russian schools from some schools abroad, notably those in the German principalities, where there was much criticism of any educational system that encouraged women to compete against each other.⁴⁷ Originally, mid-term exams were also held annually to make sure that every girl was still placed in the correct class according to her academic ability. However, in 1820 the Inspector of Studies Hermann sought to abolish the

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 187, 197; Cherepnin, *Obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits*, vol 1, 461.

⁴⁶ Anna Kuxhausen, *From the Womb to the Body Politic: Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013), 127. For a schedule of the graduating public exams in 1824, see “Prgramma poblichnykh vypusknykh ekzamenov 1824 g.,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 234-35.

⁴⁷ James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 45-46.

annual exams because they were simply taking too much time away from the girls' classroom instruction.⁴⁸

In between the exams, Maria advocated that the class matrons and girls in the Pepinière spend more time with the students who were not getting good results on their exams, or who were not as well prepared when they came to the Institute. In the "Instructions pour les Demoiselles de la Pepinière," one of the directions stated that "outside of class time, the girls in the Pepinière will be occupied with the youngest and weakest students to help them make progress either in knowledge or arts so that they can reach the level of the class."⁴⁹ Accordingly, she wrote to Mme Pevtsova, "one must not shine with a small number of distinguished students, but allow everyone to progress proportionally to their means."⁵⁰

She reiterated her statement to Pevtsova at a later point, saying that "the wellbeing and utility of our students needs to be our sole goal, rather than the desire to shine by a few isolated subjects, and to thus throw powder in one's eyes to the detriment of the great mass of children."⁵¹ Again, Maria Feodorovna repeated this point in September 1827, when she noted that the method used by the Inspector of Studies in helping weaker students to improve was exemplary. First, she wrote, he sought to become familiar with the students' abilities by giving them detailed exams and then would work with the weakest students in

⁴⁸ Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 461-63.

⁴⁹ Maria Feodorovna, "Instructions pour les Demoiselles de la Pepinière," in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 236-37.

⁵⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 30 November, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

order to help them to progress as much as possible.⁵² “This is how,” she concluded, “one must act when we have the students’ progress and their utility at heart.”⁵³

She even went so far as to suggest a payment incentive program for the class matrons in Moscow, in order to stimulate them to help every student to the best of their abilities. Essentially, the class matrons were to be given a bonus for every one of their students who distinguished herself in any academic subject, but especially conduct.⁵⁴ In the third class (the oldest), the class matrons would get 50 roubles for every student on the honour roll, in the second class they would get 40 roubles, and in the first (youngest) class, they would get thirty. If a class matron in the third class got above a 500-rouble bonus—that is to say, that she had six or more students with exceptional academic success—she would get a further 300 roubles. A class matron in the second class would get a further 240 roubles, and the class matrons would get 180 roubles. The bonuses would be lower in the preparatory classes; they would receive 25 roubles per student, and would receive 250 as a bonus for having six or more exceptional students in the first section, and 20 roubles per student with 120 or 150 roubles as a bonus in the second section.⁵⁵ In order that the class matrons always had a fair chance to receive the bonuses, they would advance along with their class, from the first to the third grades. While there is no evidence that this system was ever adopted by any of the Moscow Institutes, the mere fact that Maria suggested it attests to the fact that she was

⁵² Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 6 September, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 22.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golytsin, 28 January, 1824, in *Ibid.*, vol 2, 47.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

dedicated to motivating her staff in order that as many students as possible would enjoy the maximum academic success.

Therefore, the measures of academic success at Empress Maria's Institutes were highly regulated, engineered to help the students succeed, and rested firmly on the principles of impartiality and justice. Recognizing that the students came into the Institutes from diverse backgrounds, and with varying amounts of academic training, Maria Feodorovna tried to encourage her staff to help the weaker students. In this way, the Empress endeavoured to provide a good education to as many students as possible, rather than simply teaching to the strongest in the class.

Awards

Looking at the way in which Maria Feodorovna authorized the designation of the awards is significant with respect to understanding her character as an administrator. There was a variety of awards and markers of distinction that Maria Feodorovna and her subordinates conferred on deserving students and staff members. Like all awards, they served the dual purpose of congratulating the accomplishments of high-achieving individuals and of encouraging less motivated students or employees to strive for greater success. Since Empress Maria took the designation of awards very seriously, it is a perfect avenue through which her extraordinary attention to detail, her strict, controlling nature, and her drive for "fairness," can be understood.

One of the most striking examples of the Empress's domineering behaviour in this sphere concerns Mme Pevtsova's attempt to give her students

weekly awards for good conduct and academic success, in the form of a bow made out of blue ribbon that could be worn on their school uniform. However, Pevtsova had not written to the Dowager Empress for her approval about the blue bows. Consequently, Maria Feodorovna wrote to Pevtsova in early November 1826 to communicate that she approved of giving students encouragements and distinctions, but that she did not at all think that the blue ribbon was appropriate for young girls.⁵⁶ As she wrote to Pevtsova, Empress Maria thought that “the big bow of blue ribbon...looks too much like a decoration and can give rise to erroneous interpretations.”⁵⁷ Instead, she suggested giving them a red ribbon to tie around their head, or a black cord to put around their neck. More importantly, the Dowager Empress recommended that Pevtsova vary the awards so that the students would not see them as permanent distinctions, and would rather keep striving to earn the new awards.⁵⁸

Awards were also presented to high-achieving students after their annual exams. For those currently in the blue or grey classes, Maria Feodorovna suggested that small gifts be given to the girls to encourage them to continue their academic success. For example, she noted in her 1797 curriculum that items like “a good book cover, a drawing set, [or] a notebook” would be appropriate prizes for these students.⁵⁹ In June 1800, she sent her close friend and supervisor of Smol’nyi, Ekaterina Nelidova a “bagatelle” to be given to her student, “the lovely

⁵⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, November 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ Maria Feodorovna, “Sostavlennyi Imperatritsei Mariei Feodorovnoi plan ucheniia dlia Obshchestva Blagorodnykh devits,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 200.

little Fremandière” to congratulate her for her exemplary conduct.⁶⁰ Of course, the highest distinctions would be given to the young ladies in the graduating class. In general, the top five students would merit a “number” (*un chiffre*) at graduation, and the top three would generally get medals. However, the number of medals and numbers could vary based on the number of students in the graduating class. At Smol’nyi, for example, the classes were so large that often eight to ten girls received a “number” at graduation.⁶¹ Maria Feodorovna, eternally attentive to the administrative details of her institutes, was especially picky when it came to the designation of these awards because she wanted to ensure that their choice of recipient was made in an entirely fair and impartial manner.

When Prince S. Golitsyn wrote to Empress Maria to convince her to award a sixth number in the graduating class of 1822 at the Saint Catherine’s Institute, the Empress argued that “it would not be fair” to confer a sixth number for two reasons.⁶² First, at a mere 75 students, the graduating class was not large enough. Secondly, the Empress felt that only these top five students alone deserved to be recognized because, “after the first five comes a series of fourteen students, starting with Mlle Tilicheeva, who all have equal abilities, but are *inferior* to the first five.”⁶³ Moreover, the Empress felt that Mlle Tilicheeva’s moral conduct was not good enough to merit an award of this magnitude. However, she concluded

⁶⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 13 June, 1800, in *Correspondance de Sa Majesté l’Impératrice Marie Féodorowna avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff, sa demoiselle d’honneur (1797-1801), suivie des lettres de Mademoiselle de Nélidoff au Prince A.-B. Kourakine, publiée par la Princesse Lise Troubetzkoï* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1896), 86.

⁶¹ See the lists of graduating students in Sh. K. Akhmetshin, *Smolianki*, (Saint Petersburg: Slavia, 2011), 128-160.

⁶² Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 20 February, 1822, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 33.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

her letter by noting that if Golitsyn really wanted to assign more awards, he could give one of a lesser value than those conferred upon the first five students.

However, when extra students merited awards at graduation, Maria Feodorovna was happy to give them out. She authorized that an extra number and two extra medals be awarded at the 1825 graduation from the St. Catherine's Institute because the class had done very well on their exams.⁶⁴ Of course, to be as fair as possible, the final number of graduation awards could not be confirmed until it was approved by the Council, which they were a few weeks later.⁶⁵

Empress Maria also refused to confer formal graduation awards on students who were repeating the senior class. She formally established the rule in a letter to Prince S. M. Golitsyn of 19 March, 1825, writing that girls whose parents wanted them to repeat the grade “will no longer share in the distribution of the awards, the advantage that she has over her new classmates, of having completed two courses of the senior class making [the girl's] chances too unequal and too advantageous.”⁶⁶ Just such an occurrence presented itself in 1828. There were two students, a Mlle Teplov and a Mlle Vadbolskii, who had repeated the senior class and had placed fourth and eighth respectively. This meant that Mlle Teplov would have qualified for a medal, and Mlle Vadbolskii would have qualified for a number. However, the Dowager Empress was firm in upholding the established rule; Teplov and Vadbolskii were not to receive any awards because “the advantage that these students have over their classmates of having spent six years in the same class instead of three, and to have repeated thusly the

⁶⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 27 January, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 77.

⁶⁵ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, February 11, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 80.

⁶⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 19 March, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 85.

same course twice, is so great that there would be absolutely no justice in rewarding them equally.”⁶⁷ Maria Feodorovna concluded this letter by adding a note for the Prince in her own handwriting, saying that “Justice, my good Prince, is the first law, and you held yourself to it... I admit that it can be difficult sometimes.”⁶⁸ Thus, Maria Feodorovna adhered to the principles of justice and equality during her tenure at the Institutes. Nevertheless, she was not completely heartless; she sent two small presents to be given to the girls at their graduation, and to have their achievement announced to the audience.⁶⁹

Even when she personally knew and cared for a student who was nominated for an award, the Empress did not think it was appropriate to intervene on her behalf. For example, when her good friend Mme Benkendorff died in 1797, orphaning her two daughters, Maria intervened on the girls’ behalf by having them placed in Smol’nyi.⁷⁰ The eldest Benkendorff daughter was in the graduating class of 1800, but she had not been nominated for any numbers or medals. Maria responded to this by sending a letter to her close friend Ekaterina Nelidova. “I was astounded,” the Empress wrote, “that Benkendorff was not nominated as deserving a number for her studies, where she made astonishing and incredibly rare progress in a language that she did not know. Quite assuredly, *I would not have given it to her* because I was not happy with her character, but it is

⁶⁷ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 13 February, 1828, in *Ibid.*, 176.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Quoted in Vera V. Timoshchuk, *Imperatritsa Mariia Feodorovna v eia zabotakh o Smol'nom monastyre, 1797-1802*,” *Ruskaia Starina* tom LXV, no. 3 (March 1890): 828. The quote is from a letter written by Maria Feodorovna to Mme Lafont and Mme Palmenbach, March 28, 1797.

up to me to refuse it to her, and not to those ladies.”⁷¹ In the end, she decided that it would not be a useful option to talk with the ladies who had failed to nominate Benckendorff because she herself did not feel that the girl deserved distinction.

The students were not the only ones to receive awards. Long-serving employees at the Institutes were sometimes given medals and other distinctions by the Empress in recognition of their exceptional service. For example, Maria Feodorovna advanced the rank of Mme Lafond, the long-time Headmistress of Smol’nyi on 22 November, 1796, thus rendering her a *stats-dama*, a woman with the equivalent of rank of IV on the Table of Ranks who had to be addressed by the term “your excellency.” On April 5, 1797, she was further awarded the Order of St. Catherine, second class.⁷² Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset reports in her memoirs that Maria Feodorovna once gave an award to a teacher, the Priest Naumov at the Petersburg St. Catherine’s Institute, even though the Inspector of Studies and the Headmistress had left him off of their list of distinguished teachers out of spite. She awarded him a clock and five hundred roubles for his exceptional service, and nominated him for a noble rank after his retirement.⁷³ However, she was as strict in policing which teachers were worthy of distinction as with the students. For example, when Prince Golitsyn sent her a list of teachers who had distinguished themselves, Maria was not pleased. She suspected that the individuals who had compiled the list had not considered the teachers’ pedagogical methodology as a

⁷¹ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 10 February, 1800, in *Correspondance avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff*, 73.

⁷² E. I. Zherikhina, *Smol’nyi: Istoriiia zdanii i uchrezhdenii* (Liki Rossii: Saint Petersburg, 2002), 135, 206.

⁷³ Smirnova-Rosset, Aleksandra O., *Vospominaniia. Pis'ma*, 2nd ed (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Pravda, 1990), 87.

factor to determine their merit. “Sokolosky’s name is proof,” she wrote, “because there is nothing but his seniority and his zeal that render him so recommendable: his talent and his method not being what pleased me the most and, *I ask forgiveness from my good Prince Golitsyn, but this is not a distinguished teacher.*”⁷⁴

Maria Feodorovna’s direction over conferring awards and honours on her staff and students was thus founded very firmly on the principle of justice. She was determined that the individuals under her jurisdiction received only the award that he or she deserved based on his or her track record. The Empress’s propensity for micromanaging the daily affairs of her institutes allowed her to become very familiar with the academic records of her students and the abilities and commitment of her employees. At the same time, her imperial distance from the institutes allowed her to make judgements without resorting to favouritism. Surely, she showed compassion in situations like that of Milles Teplov and Vadboldskii, but in the end she was uniformly unwilling to bend her own rules.

Hiring, Firing, Retirement and other Staffing Problems

In her approach towards hiring, firing, retirement and other staffing problems, Maria Feodorovna combined her imperial benevolence with her hard-edged demand for perfection and obedience and her ever-present attention to detail. In the end, however, the shortage of qualified teachers in the Russian Empire prevented her tactics from being completely successful. The hiring process at the institutes was particularly rigorous. Maria Feodorovna, believing that successful

⁷⁴ Emphasis in original. It indicates that the text was written by Empress Maria’s own hand. Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 11 March, 1819, in *Recueil de Letters aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 10.

education of the youth “depend[ed] on the strict, orderly, and impartial selection of people of both sexes” for the positions in her educational institutions, devoted a lot of her attention not only to the selection of suitable employees, but also to ensuring that these individuals, once hired, were capable and diligent workers.⁷⁵ The Empress elaborated on the proper steps that should be taken in employing new workers in a written command to the Council of the Community for the Education for Noble Girls that she issued on 29 November, 1796.⁷⁶

In order to hire a new class matron, the Headmistress of the Institute would first have to find a group of trustworthy ladies that were presently employed by the Community to help her to make a decision. Next, they would gather information about potential candidates, as well as some reliable references. If the information procured in this stage of the process was favourable, the candidate would then be asked to come in for a preliminary interview with the Headmistress and her entourage, during which she would be “ask[ed] various fundamental questions about the education of girls and the knowledge that is appropriate [*prilichnykh*] for them.”⁷⁷ The candidate would later be invited back for a second interview in which the Headmistress and the ladies would become better acquainted with “her morals, her method of thinking, and abilities.”⁷⁸ Once the Headmistress and the Ladies deemed her suitable for the position, they would

⁷⁵ Maria Feodorovna, “Povelenie Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny Sovetu Vospitatel’nago Obshchestva o poriadke vybora lits vospitatel’skago i uchebnago personala,” in *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel’noe obshchestvo*, ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 189.

⁷⁶ Maria Feodorovna, “Povelenie o poriadke vybora lits,” 189-190. The Empress gave very similar instructions about the hiring process in: Maria Feodorovna, “Instruktsii Imperatritsy Marii Feodorovny dolzhnostnym litsam Vospitatel’nago Obshchestva blagorodnykh devits,” ed. N. P. Cherepnin, vol. 3, 270.

⁷⁷ Maria Feodorovna “Povelenie o poriadke vybora lits,” 189.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

provide a written explanation to the Council of the Community and the Empress about why it would be advisable to hire the candidate. Upon receiving this report, the Empress and the Council would also set about gathering references, and if they corroborated the findings of the Headmistress and her ladies, the candidate would be hired with the knowledge that if she did not execute her duties properly she would be let go.⁷⁹

As much as possible, Maria tried to hire individuals trained within her network of Institutes. In 1820, she wrote to Golitsyn that her aim was to replace the less-skilled class matrons with more qualified ones from each successive graduating class of the *Pepinière*.⁸⁰ Even when the Empress did not choose to hire the graduates from her teacher's college, she helped them to find placements as governesses after their successful completion of their education.⁸¹ Similarly, the male students in the Foundling Home were all trained in a specific trade so that they could earn themselves a living after they left the Institute. Often, Maria would try to hire the most skilled graduates for the Foundling Home itself. For example, in a letter to the Moscow Trustee Baranov, she noted that she wanted to keep three promising young students for service in the Home: the first an accountant, the second an architect, and the third a cobbler's apprentice.⁸²

She even endeavoured to train the permanently disabled people who were being treated in the Foundling Home in a trade that they would be able to master,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 190.

⁸⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 23 February, 1820, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 14.

⁸¹ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 3 October, 1818, in Ibid., 4; see also: Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 13 September 13, 1823, in Ibid., 42.

⁸² Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 12 January, 1806, in "Pis'ma k Baranovu," 1478.

given their infirmity. For example, in this same letter to Baranov, Maria discussed the fate of the foster child Pavel Ivanov, who had osteomyelitis on the middle finger of his right hand. The Dowager Empress accordingly suggested that he be taught to write with his left hand. In this way, as Maria wrote, he would “at least be able to earn himself a living, if not in another place, then in the Home by serving as a scribe.”⁸³ As evidenced by the memoir of Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset, Maria did indeed hire disadvantaged individuals for service in the Institutes. “Our servants,” wrote Smirnova-Rosset, “were invalids who lived in the basement, married with their families.”⁸⁴ When they drank tea with milk and cake, “Nikita, a pockmarked, lame invalid” brought the food to the table.⁸⁵

Maria Feodorovna was loath to lose competent and valuable employees. As such, she would frequently try to bribe and guilt her favourite employees into remaining in the service of the Institute when they mentioned that they were considering retirement. For example, when the Inspector of studies at the Moscow branch of the St. Catherine’s Institute, Tsvetaev, brought up just this subject, she ordered Prince Golitsyn to give him an “*appas honorifique ou sonant*” to convince him to stay on.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Maria did not have the power or the desire to refuse the resignation of any of her employees, if they requested it.⁸⁷

In the event that an employee requested to be released from their service at one of the Empress’s Institutes, he or she would typically be offered a severance

⁸³ Ibid., 1478-79.

⁸⁴ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 79.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁸⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 17 June, 1820, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 21.

⁸⁷ This sentiment was expressed in: Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 8 April, 1828, in Ibid., vol 1, 38.

bonus. If an employee had served in the institute for fifteen years, then he or she would qualify for a pension that was equal to half of his or her working salary.⁸⁸ However, if the employee requesting retirement had not worked for the designated amount of time, he or she would normally only qualify for a retirement bonus of the equivalent of one year of his or her salary, given at the time of his or her demission.⁸⁹ Sometimes, however, the Dowager Empress would take pity on these individuals and offer them a pension from her personal funds. For example, when the class matron Mlle Tournier, whose health was not good, requested to be let go from the Institutes so that she could recover in the countryside, Maria Feodorovna offered to personally pay a pension of 300 roubles a year for her.⁹⁰ The fact that Maria Feodorovna made provisions to give her employees (or their widows) pensions at all was very rare in Europe at that time. In the German principalities, for example, very few private schools (let alone state-run institutions) offered any sort of retirement plans to their former employees. While in the second half of the nineteenth century, some private schools, such as the Luise School in Berlin, mandated pensions for their employees, the first general self-help organization, the Association of German Women Teachers and Governesses, was not founded until 1869.⁹¹

Maria Feodorovna, while benevolent towards her long-serving and dependable employees, was quick to correct any deviation from the desired teaching standards in her institutes. When the results of the exams were not as

⁸⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 7 January, 1827, in *Ibid.*, vol 2, 125.

⁸⁹ This was the case with Mlle Lossovicoff, a class matron who had only served for nine years. See *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 August, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 100.

⁹¹ Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women*, 84-86.

good as she had hoped, Maria was quicker to place the blame on the instructor than the students. For example, when the students at St. Catherine's did not succeed on their singing exam in February 1825, she immediately asked Golitsyn whether he was satisfied with the current singing instructor.⁹² By June 1825, she had replaced the former singing teacher with someone she judged to be more competent.⁹³ The Dowager Empress was especially stringent on the issue of the students' French-language education.⁹⁴ When Maria received the poor results of the French exams for the male students of the Moscow Foundling Home, she immediately blamed Ulrichs, the current Inspector of Studies at that institute, for not ensuring that the children received an adequate education. As she wrote to Golitsyn, the progress report that she received "proves that he isn't taking care of this at all because they [the students] are excessively underdeveloped for their age."⁹⁵

If a teacher or class matron proved to be entirely inept and unreliable, Maria Feodorovna did not hesitate to replace him or her. For example, when the Dowager Empress learned that the embroidery teacher at the Moscow St. Catherine's Institute, Mlle Bogoliubova, was not helping her students with their embroidery enough, she wrote to Mme de Pevtsova, the Headmistress, to fire her if she did not improve after the warning.⁹⁶ However, she was not heartless while firing an employee. For example, in June 1800, she wrote to her close friend and

⁹² Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 11 February, 1825, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 80.

⁹³ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 2 June, 1825, in *Ibid.*, 95.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 4 April, 1822, in *Ibid.*, 35.

⁹⁵ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, October 18, 1824, in *Ibid.*, 67

⁹⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, October 7, 1826, in *Ibid.*, vol 1, 5.

the unofficial supervisor of the Saint-Petersburg Institutes, Ekaterina Nelidova, about discharging Devestin, an employee at the Saint Catherine's Institute in Saint Petersburg. Although the empress remarked that she was "shock[ed] that they could employ someone with so few abilities," she was determined not to "dismiss Devestin from his place at the Saint Catherine's Institute until he has another one," and she resolved to take personal control in finding her incompetent employee a new job.⁹⁷

Despite the Dowager Empress's diligent endeavours with regard to staffing, the Institutes were nevertheless filled with incompetent teachers, according to the memoirs of Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset. This young lady had very good memories of the Headmistress of the school, Mme Breitkopf. "Maman Breitkopf," she wrote, "was a woman with a remarkable intelligence and great merit, her view alone instilled respect and love in the children because she understood childhood and loved us."⁹⁸ Similarly, she noted that "the French teacher was an émigré, Mr. Charles de St. Hilaire and he was much loved and respected."⁹⁹ Other teachers that she respected were Petr Aleksandrovich Pletnev, the Russian Grammar teacher, and the abbot Delosh, who taught physics, natural history and astronomy.¹⁰⁰ However, she noted that

The selection of teachers was not very successful, but the worst was the priest. A half-mad old priest came to us from some parish. We learned Platon's catechism by rote and then were admitted to the senior class. There, we were given another priest who was easily annoyed...In the senior class, the French teacher was Mr.

⁹⁷ Maria Feodorovna to Ekaterina Nelidova, 17 June, 1800, in *Correspondance avec Mademoiselle de Nélidoff*, 87.

⁹⁸ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 77.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

Bordé, a listless and wretched Frenchman, an individual with excessive tastes, and we didn't even learn the best verses of Racine and Corneille...¹⁰¹

There were some other teachers that she liked, but whose conduct was far from exemplary. For example, she noted that the geography teacher Uspenskii “was always drunk, but he really knew his stuff and we loved his lessons.”¹⁰² Uspenskii was not the only one who relied on alcohol to get through the day; the drawing teacher Sheman was also “eternally drunk.”¹⁰³ Smirnova-Rosset's memoirs demonstrate that despite Maria Feodorovna's continuous efforts with regard to staffing, that it was simply not possible, given the scarcity of teachers in Russia during this period, to furnish the Institutes only with a full complement of competent educators.

Even at Smol'nyi, the most prestigious of Empress Maria's institutes, finding and retaining competent staff members was a challenge. When the Inspector of Studies, Hermann, was hired in 1819, he noted in his first report to the Headmistress Adlerberg that, overall, the teachers at both Smol'nyi and the St. Catherine's Institutes were not adhering to the curriculum expounded in 1815. For example, modern history was not being taught until the last year of the senior class, when it should have been started in the middle class. Russian literature was not being taught until the year before graduation, and as a result the teachers were not able to complete the course. Finally, he noted that there was nobody able to teach French or German lessons.¹⁰⁴ Smol'nyi, just like the other institutes, thus

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 78-79.

¹⁰² Ibid., 75.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 207.

suffered from a lack of qualified teachers. As Hermann, the Inspector of Studies at Smol'nyi wrote in a report of 13 May, 1822 to the Headmistress Adlerberg, “Good teachers in the lower classes are quite rare, their work is the most difficult, and it is on this work that, in large part, their success in the higher classes depends.”¹⁰⁵ However, in this same report, Hermann noted that the pool of qualified candidates willing to teach at Smol'nyi was indeed growing bigger and more impressive.¹⁰⁶ The presence of these two contrasting facts in the same report indicates how truly difficult it was to fill Smol'nyi with adequate staff members, even some 56 years after its establishment.

Even when they did find very qualified staff members to teach at the Institutes, the Empress still found that there were problems with their pedagogical methods. For example, when they were dissatisfied with a series of teachers who taught physics in the French language at Smol'nyi (first Urvo, who taught from 1802-1807, then Buté, who taught from 1807-1808), Maria Feodorovna finally managed to hire the university professor Vol'mar in 1810 to teach at Smol'nyi.¹⁰⁷ In addition to physics, he was asked to teach geography, history, literature and mathematics to the girls in the teachers college. For this work, he was to receive 600 roubles a year for the physics lessons, and an additional 400 for the other subjects, for a total of ten hours a week of work.¹⁰⁸ His experience was exemplary; during the hiring process in 1808, Empress Maria wrote to Mme Breitkopf, the Headmistress at the Petersburg St. Catherine's Institute, that

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 1, 450.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 194; See also Cherepnin, *Imperatorskoe Vospitatel'noe obshchestvo*, vol 3, 435, for a complete list of all the physics teachers at Smol'nyi.

¹⁰⁸ Likhacheva, *Materialy* vol 2, 194.

Vol'mar "has given public and private lessons in experimental physics and mathematics for many years, even to young ladies."¹⁰⁹

However, the Inspector Kraft, who was charged with the supervision of Vol'mar's physics lessons, soon reported some problems to the Empress. For instance, he noted that Vol'mar was telling the girls "too much about physics, much more than they need."¹¹⁰ Consequently, the Empress commanded that in teaching physics, he should be

limited to the characteristics of the bodies and the phenomena of nature that could prove useful to young ladies in daily life...Information about rain, snow, hail, and so on, is beneficial to girls and for the education of their future children...and sciences like mechanics, statics and hydrostatics for which the girls will subsequently have no use, should not be taught.¹¹¹

In the end, Vol'mar proved unwilling to concede to the Empress's request and asked to be released from his duties at the Institution. Neglect of the prescribed curriculum was thus a serious and ongoing problem, whether the professors were not teaching enough, or whether they were providing the girls with too much information. Moreover, as is evidenced by this case, Maria Feodorovna was not afraid to lose the staff members who did not consent to abide by the pedagogical rules she had delineated or approved. As a side note, since there was rarely a new candidate lined up to assume the new teaching position at the time of the previous teacher's demission, the students were left with sometimes lengthy gaps between teachers in certain subjects. For example, there was a gap of two years between Buté's departure and the commencement of Vol'mar's employment, and then

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.* The text is originally from a letter dated July 13, 1808.

¹¹⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 195.

¹¹¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 195.

another several months between Vol'mar's departure and the time that his replacement, Ferrie, was hired.¹¹²

One other result of the difficulties in staffing is that the Institutes employed quite a few foreign teachers.¹¹³ Since it was necessary for most of the institute's staff to be fluent in French or German, sometimes hiring foreign teachers was the only option.¹¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna's main reservation in hiring staff from abroad was the cost, rather than a sense of loyalty to Russian-born teachers. In 1818, she wrote to Golitsyn that it was too expensive to employ foreign class matrons, but that "if however, by a happy chance, I encounter any who want to come to Russia on conditions that don't surpass our means, you can be certain that I would think of my Institutes."¹¹⁵ Similarly, when she sought to hire a singing teacher from Italy, she rescinded her offer when she heard the price that a potential teacher would cost.¹¹⁶ Therefore, although Smirnova-Rosset's account demonstrates that Maria Feodorovna was not entirely successful in her selection of instructors for the students, an examination of her management of the staffing issues above reveals that the Dowager Empress directed her institute staff with a mixture of benevolence (in giving them pensions), attention to detail (in the hiring process), and, despite her difficulty in finding competent instructors, demanded nothing less than perfection and absolute obedience from her pedagogical staff.

¹¹² Cherepnin, *Obshchestvo blagorodnykh devits*, vol 3, 435.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, vol 1, 448.

¹¹⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 8 April, 1824, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 2, 50.

¹¹⁵ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 24 October, 1818, in *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁶ Maria Feodorovna to Prince Golitsyn, 7 October, 1827, in *Ibid.*, 160.

Order and Discipline in the Institutes

Maria Feodorovna was a stickler for discipline. She sent volumes of letters to the headmistresses, inspectresses, inspectors of study and Council members to ensure that her institutes were being run according to her orders.¹¹⁷ She frequently visited her Petersburg institutes to ensure that the staff members were executing their duties properly, and admonished any staff member who was not fulfilling her expectations. In turn, she requested that myriad reports be sent to her from every one of her institutes, commenting on various aspects of institute life. In the realm of punishment and discipline, Maria Feodorovna exercised the same reliance on justice, order, and maternal sentiment that she did with regard to the curriculum, the marking, the awards, or the staffing at the Institutes. She did not agree with giving students punishments that were more severe than their infraction, and in many cases advised her subordinates to withhold any real punishment altogether, in favour of a verbal admonition.

As has already been mentioned, one of Maria Feodorovna's key guidelines for the position of the Headmistress was that "It's not good enough if all things are done well: they must be done properly and at the prescribed time."¹¹⁸ The Empress demanded nothing less than perfection from the staff and students at her Institutes. Of course, classes needed to begin at the correct time, and the teachers were supervised to make sure that they taught the required material. Besides this, one of the class matrons' central duties was to keep the students "in complete

¹¹⁷ See Timoshchuk, "Imperatritsa Mariia Feodorovna v eia zabortakh," 810.

¹¹⁸ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam," 263.

silence and as attentive as possible.”¹¹⁹ Even when the girls walked through the hallways to their classes, they always travelled in a straight line, two by two, and completely quiet.¹²⁰ As Smirnova-Rosset reports, “in general, the silence was observed.”¹²¹

There were extremely strict rules about when relatives were allowed to visit the children. Parents were allowed to visit their children only on Sundays, in the great hall, under the supervision of the class matrons, and on Wednesdays, by special appointment, in the Headmistress’s apartments. If parents just came whenever they wanted “this would cause an interruption in their studies, detrimental to their progress.”¹²² Relatives were allowed to see their children in urgent cases, but the Headmistress would have to judge whether this should be an exception to the rule. In terms of small gifts, the children were not allowed to accept anything except candy and fruit. The Dowager Empress especially cautioned against accepting bits of fabric for the children to use as a sewing project.¹²³

When Mme Pevtsova assumed the position of Headmistress at the St. Catherine’s Institute in Moscow in 1826, the Dowager Empress soon heard that she was allowing things to take place that “do not correspond with the strict regularity that must be observed in this type of establishment.”¹²⁴ For example, Pevtsova was allowing male relatives (such as brothers and cousins) into the

¹¹⁹ Maria Feodorovna, “Plan ucheniia dlia,” 199.

¹²⁰ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 75.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹²² Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 30 September, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 4.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 29 September, 1826, in *Ibid.*, 3.

institute for the small balls that were held to celebrate the girls' birthdays, which Maria Feodorovna had absolutely forbidden. Even for the bigger parties that were held in her name on major holidays she insisted that "in the same way, we will not admit any male relative...and any man in general unless it is one of the teachers."¹²⁵ During public assemblies, the girls had to remain in the centre of the hall with their class matrons, while all the visitors had to remain on the other side of the balustrade that encircled the room. However, the girls were allowed to talk with their parents on these occasions, under the supervision of the class matrons.¹²⁶ Maria Feodorovna concluded her letter with the assertion that "I am convinced that reasonable parents will be the first to applaud" these measures.

In accordance with the familial atmosphere that Maria Feodorovna wanted to foster in her Institutes, she desired that her punishments be akin to that a mother would give to her children. As a result, she counselled her Headmistresses to "become the Mother" of each student, thus her students and staff would "fear her reproaches more than her punishments."¹²⁷ The Dowager Empress reiterated this point in her correspondence with Mme Pevtsova. She warned her new Headmistress to be vigilant in her supervision of the institute because

in a big house there will never be a lack of small wrongs to correct and reprimands to make. As long as they are fair and that they are made with a maternal solicitude and with kindness, far from turning [the situation] sour, they will bring back those who were on the point of straying from the right path, and will not leave any other impression than the desire to never be lured from it again.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Maria Feodorovna, "Instruksii dolzhnostnym litsam," 264.

¹²⁸ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 28 October, 1826, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 8.

Whether the Empress was actually successful in getting the students to dread the Headmistress's disappointment rather than any penalties that might result from poor behaviour is another question. Either way, the specter of punishment constantly loomed over the students. Maria Feodorovna desired to be informed about any misbehaviour on the part of the students or staff on a regular basis. In her memoir, Aleksandra Smirnova-Rosset noted that "the supervisor of the class matrons had a notebook, where she recorded the smallest misdemeanours in class."¹²⁹

The Empress did not believe that corporal punishments were effective. However, this is not the representation that she has been given in some of the secondary literature. For example, Shabaeva writes that "the use of corporal punishment was permitted in every establishment of Empress Maria's Department. When a pupil tried to escape, she was publically whipped."¹³⁰ While it is true that an individual girl was whipped when she tried to run away, this was not, as we will see below, the type of punishment that Maria Feodorovna normally condoned for children who tried to flee from the institutes.¹³¹ For example, writing to Mme Pevtsova about the way that punishments should be administered in the Saint Catherine's Institute, Maria noted that one must "reserve the label that is attached to the shoulder¹³² for the most serious cases; one must not use a

¹²⁹ Smirnova-Rosset, *Vospominaniia*, 80.

¹³⁰ M. F. Shabaeva et al., *Ocherki istorii shkoly i pedagogicheskoi mysli narodov SSSR XVIII v. - pervaiia polovina XIX v.* (Moscow: Pedagogika, 1973), 260. Shabaeva does not provide any citations to demonstrate where she got her information about the punishments. It was likely from Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 171, in which the incident is reported. However, Likhacheva still notes that the Empress preferred to exercise mercy than to use corporal punishments.

¹³¹ Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 171.

¹³² There is no further explanation of this punishment in any of the Empress's correspondence. However, one imagines that miscreants were required to temporarily wear some type of

method too frequently that needs to maintain all its effectiveness, and I would like to believe that you will never need to have recourse to corporal punishments.”¹³³

At the end of this letter, Empress Maria added, in her own hand, that “one must exercise the greatest restraint in children’s punishments, and not use them until all the other means are exhausted, especially if the child feels humiliated by the punishments, this should not happen except in the most serious cases.”¹³⁴ Thus, if any corporal punishments did take place in the educational institutes between 1796 and 1828, they were done without Empress Maria’s knowledge and approval.

In Maria Feodorovna’s correspondence with Baranov about the Foundling Homes, she actually faced the situation of having two male foster children escape on approximately 2 August, 1809. She did not have them publically whipped. Rather she placed more blame on the supervisors, who were inattentive enough to allow them to escape, than on the students. As she wrote to Baranov, “in this case the supervisor and under-tutor are guiltier than the foster children since [the children] are more inclined towards [being] absent...the supervisors that let them out of their sight deserve a strict reprimand.”¹³⁵ One of the escaped foster children returned immediately, and there is no record that he was punished. As regarded the foster child, Ivan Alekseev, who was still missing, Maria continued on to say when he was returned or was found,

distinguishing mark or label on their shoulder in order to single them out and chastise them into following the rules better the next time. Likhacheva, *Materialy*, vol 2, 171, writes that some miscreants were humiliated and singled out by having a birch rod attached to their shoulder, so it is likely that this is what the Empress is referring to.

¹³³ Maria Feodorovna to Mme Pevtsova, 6 September, 1827, in *Recueil de Lettres aux tuteurs honoraires*, vol 1, 23.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 2 August, 1809, in “Pis’ma k Baranovu,” 1490.

he will be punished for his long absences and the disregard of the reasonable advice of his comrade [who had returned], but without severity, and recognizing his sensitivity to the teachers, additionally explain to him that he should not fear the directors' justified admonishments that are inclined towards his correction and benefit, as much as [to fear] staying in error and to aggravating this with another departure, but I repeat that the punishment should not be strict, because of the reason for the flight, and can, for example, (for one day) give him *only* bread and water *for lunch*, and reprimand him.¹³⁶

By 9 August, 1809, Ivan Alekseev had been found. Maria remained firm that the directors of the Foundling Home “be content with a light punishment” especially because the student was injured during his period of absence.¹³⁷

In the Foundling Homes, Maria's strictest punishment was to volunteer the offender for military service. However, this extreme form of punishment was reserved only for cases when the foster child was guilty of “crime and sin.”¹³⁸ As a result, she exercised extreme caution when considering military service as a punishment for rogue foster children. For example, when two foster children, both pharmacy students, behaved in a manner deemed unacceptable, Maria Feodorovna, after much trepidation, decided that sending them into army service would be too strict a punishment. Instead, she had them removed from the pharmacology school, and decided to use them as clerks for the Foundling Home until they reached the age of majority, when they would be found a position and permanently dismissed from the Home.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Emphasis in original. Ibid., 1491.

¹³⁷ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 9 August, 1809, in Ibid., 1491.

¹³⁸ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 14 December, 1809, in Ibid., 1492.

¹³⁹ Ibid. Maria does not specify exactly what the behaviour was in this case, saying that it could be attributed to “sloth and especially other behaviour.”

Moreover, Empress Maria refused the requests of all the students who demanded to be released from the Foundling Homes so that they could serve in the Russian Army during the Napoleonic Wars. On one occasion, she wrote to Baranov that “discharge to military service is the strictest punishment for the foster children according to our laws” and that if the students were to choose their careers before they legally became adults they could “destroy all the fruits of their education.”¹⁴⁰ On another, she asserted that the two students who desired to enter into military service were not permitted because “they both have not attained the legal age for release [from the Foundling Home]” so therefore “they cannot by any right dispose of their fate, or choose their life path.” Until they attained adulthood, “giving them into military service is exclusively a punishment.”¹⁴¹ Thus, Maria Feodorovna was very careful when considering when to send students into military service. She was determined not to punish students unnecessarily, or to assign them to a fate that she herself deemed to be a punishment.

Chapter 4 Conclusion

Despite the fact that Maria Feodorovna was in charge of hierarchically-organized institutes that promoted both gender and class inequality, she still upheld the principles of justice and equality as much as she possibly could, since she did not have direct, daily contact with any of her institutes. The most patently unequal part of Maria Feodorovna’s management of her educational establishments were the admission procedures, especially those for girls from the so-called

¹⁴⁰ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 26 August, 1812, in *Ibid.*, 1501.

¹⁴¹ Maria Feodorovna to N. I. Baranov, 12 August, 1807, in *Ibid.*, 1484.

meshchanstvo. However, if one looks past the fact that the Dowager Empress's schools were strictly divided according to social estate, one finds that Maria Feodorovna did indeed adhere to the principles of justice and impartiality while running her establishments. The Empress-Mother's management of her educational establishments was detail-oriented and perhaps even overbearing at times, but yet she was still sensitive to the needs of her staff and students. She exercised an iron authority over her subordinates, and she believed strongly that her employees should be perfectly obedient in their adherence to all of the institute's rules and regulations. She used a mixture of love, guilt, bribery, and command to try to convince her best staff members to remain teaching at the institutes. However, the difficulty in finding competent instructors in Russia at that time had the consequence that Maria Feodorovna's search for well-trained, professional, dedicated and submissive employees was not entirely successful.

Empress Maria endeavoured to repay her staff and students fairly for their actions, whether positively or negatively. Her student evaluation system was designed to remove subjectivity and favouritism from the evaluation process, and measures were in place to try to bring the weaker students to the level of the class. When taking punitive measures, the Dowager Empress was always quicker to place blame on the staff than on the students for any misdemeanors that had been committed. She did not officially support corporal punishment, favouring instead public humiliation and chastisement for repeat offenders, although some instances of physical punishments, like whipping, have been recorded. In keeping with her directive that her institutes be run like a large family, Maria's pedagogical staff

were mandated to rule by love, not by fear, and thus try to keep the students on the right path through positive, maternal encouragement, rather than by continuously punishing them. Overall, therefore, the dynamics of the administrative issues at the institutes reveal that Maria Feodorovna combined the characteristics of both a compassionate mother and a strict, autocratic administrator in order to manage her educational establishments effectively.

Conclusion

Maria Feodorovna had a long and fruitful career in the sphere of women's education in Russia. Between 1796 and 1828, she directed her institutes with maternal love and a strict authority, all the while applying socially conservative principles to her pedagogical endeavours. The Dowager Empress's support, on one hand, of an increase of institutional opportunities for women's education, and her lack of interest, on the other hand, in "liberating" women from their subordinate position in society, creates an interesting paradox in her character for a modern scholar. If one focuses solely on her development and expansion of women's educational establishments, one risks writing an apologia for her social conservatism. If one writes her off as "socially conservative," then one misses the importance of the contributions that she has made to the field of women's education in Russia. This work has attempted to navigate between these two tripwires. By accepting the Empress's support of Russia's *ancien régime* social structure, this study has endeavoured to look beyond it in order to analyze other aspects of Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical career, such as her choices in curricula and the power dynamics of the managerial tactics she employed.

The Dowager Empress's effort to provide vocationally pragmatic education for her students reflects both the statist orientation of her pedagogical outlook, as well as her maternal concern for her students' future wellbeing. Empress Maria believed that women needed to be well-educated in order to fulfill their future social role of the wife, mother, and housekeeper. However, as we have seen, she created other types of vocational training programs in her institutes that

afforded impoverished and talented girls the skills to earn themselves a living, if necessary, by becoming seamstresses, teachers and midwives. Moreover, Maria Feodorovna's focus on the students' academic ability and financial situation indicates that she did consider more than their social estate alone when designing the curricula for her institutes.

In order to manage her girls' schools effectively Maria Feodorovna adopted two distinct, yet complimentary, administrative personae. With regards to her educational and charitable endeavours, she assumed the public image of the loving, compassionate pedagogical mother who cared deeply for her students' upkeep and wellbeing and treated her institutes like a large extended family. In this way, the Dowager Empress reinforced her own authority by both allowing her image as a pedagogical mother to act as a "scenario of power," as well as by encouraging other Russian noblewomen and empresses to follow her example by getting involved in philanthropic ventures.

As much as she enforced strict social boundaries within her schools, Maria Feodorovna attempted to promote impartiality among her students. As such, she mandated that her pedagogical staff treat her students fairly when grading and disciplining them. In turn, the Dowager Empress sought to reward the behaviour of her staff or students, whether good or bad, with absolute equity. As the matriarch of an ever-extending network of educational establishments and charitable institutions, Maria Feodorovna had no problem being a strict, decisive, detail-oriented director. Her firm grasp on authority did not allow for any insubordinate behaviour on the part of her employees, and ensured, as much as

possible, that the institutes were being run exactly to her specifications. However, insurmountable problems, like the question of how to find and secure competent instructors were beyond her control.

Since Maria Feodorovna has been omitted from the historical narrative of education in Russia for so long, many opportunities for further research exist in this field. For example, there is room for expansion on the Dowager Empress's career as a philanthropist, whereby her administration of institutes like hospitals, and almshouses, in addition to her educational establishments, is examined. Works like these could also provide a clearer picture of the fundraising efforts that went into the maintenance of her network of charities. Furthermore, while several writers have commented on Maria Feodorovna's girls' schools (to varying degrees of complexity, as we have seen in the introduction), her administration of specialized educational institutes, such as the school for the deaf that she founded at Pavlovsk, merit further study as well. Furthermore, even though the present work has touched upon the subject of Maria Feodorovna's pedagogical influences, a full intellectual-historical analysis would be a good addition to this field of scholarship. Whatever the direction future research takes, it is hoped that the Empress-mother, both a dedicated pedagogue and a staunch social conservative, will be reinserted into accounts of Russian educational history.

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