



Reinventing Romantic Poetry: Russian Women Poets of the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Studies of the Harriman Institute)

Diana Greene

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Reinventing Romantic Poetry offers a new look at the Russian literary scene in the nineteenth century. While celebrated poets such as Aleksandr Pushkin worked within a male-centered Romantic aesthetic—the poet as a bard or sexual conqueror; nature as a mother or mistress; the poet’s muse as an idealized woman—Russian women attempting to write Romantic poetry found they had to reinvent poetic conventions of the day to express themselves as women and as poets. Comparing the poetry of fourteen men and fourteen women from this period, Diana Greene revives and redefines the women’s writings and offers a thoughtful examination of the sexual politics of reception and literary reputation.

The fourteen women considered wrote poetry in every genre, from visions to verse tales, from love lyrics to metaphysical poetry, as well as prose works and plays. Greene delves into the reasons why their writing was dismissed, focusing in particular on the work of Evdokiia Rostopchina, Nadezhda Khvoshchinskaia, and Karolina Pavlova. Greene also considers class as a factor in literary reputation, comparing canonical male poets with the work of other men whose work, like the women’s, was deemed inferior at the time. The book also features an appendix of significant poems by Russian women discussed in the text. Some, found in archival notebooks, are published here for the first time, and others are reprinted for the first time since the mid-nineteenth century.

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