

The Noble Savage's (In)decision: Religious Conversion in the Caucasian Tales of Russian Romanticism

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The Caucasus and its peoples have been the beloved imaginative exotics in Russian Romantic literature since Alexander Pushkin's *Prisoner of the Caucasus* (1822). The narrative poem explores the dichotomy between the "civilized" and the "savage," a long-disputed subject beginning from the Enlightenment. The protagonist, a young Russian traveler, arrives at the Caucasus, wearied by the civilization he encountered in the capital:

Tired of being the victim of the familiar,
Long despised bustle,
The vicious double-dealing,
And the thoughtless slander,
He, the refugee from society, the friend of nature,
Left his homeland
And flew away to the distant grounds,
With the delightful illusion of freedom.¹

The opposition between a repressive society and the freedom of nature championed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau was popular in Russia, although few agreed

¹ Пушкин А.С. Кавказский пленник // Пол. соб. соч. Т. 4. М.-Л., 1937. С. 95. All translations from the Russian and brackets in quotations are mine.

without reservation to his categorical assault on any form of civilization or society.² According to Yuri Lotman, Pushkin's *The Gypsies* (written in 1824) represented the possibility of a "natural" society that had not yet been contaminated by civilization: "The opposition of patriarchal society's freedom to civilization's slavery is very vividly expressed in the fate of the poem's protagonist. The city he left is the kingdom of Law."³ *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, highlighting the Circassians' freedom in the shadow of Decembrist liberalism,⁴ functions as the precursor of this opposition of freedom to law. And yet, the story escapes any simple or clear-cut polarizations: in it, the civilization's son, imprisoned by mountaineers, loses his freedom in the midst of nature. The dichotomy between nature and civilization that underlies the Rousseauistic image of the "noble savage" is deeply unstable; in this essay, we wish to examine the full range of this instability.⁵

Appearances of the Caucasus in Russian Romantic literature have been approached from a postcolonial viewpoint for the past twenty years. However, scholars are noticeably loath to apply the sheer dichotomy between the "West" and the "East"—as described by Edward Said—to Russia. For example, Susan Layton emphasizes "Russia's own semi-Asiatic identity"⁶ and warns: "No historical investigation of these romantic personages can proceed from the a priori assumptions that Russians considered the mountaineers 'alien' and wrote about them in order to 'control' them." She adds; "The steady coexistence of Russia's mythologies of noble and ignoble Caucasian savagery manifested a cultural tension of attraction toward and dissatisfaction from the empire's ideological center."⁷ In other words, the "noble savage" implies Russian writers' sympathy

² Regarding the acceptance of Rousseau in Russia, see: *Лотман Ю.М. Руссо и русская культура XVIII - начала XIX века // История и типология русской культуры. СПб., 2002. С. 383-445; Thomas Barran, Russia Reads Rousseau, 1762-1825* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002).

³ *Лотман Ю.М. Истоки «толстовского направления» в русской литературе 1830-х годов // О русской литературе. СПб., 1997. С. 552.*

⁴ *Томашевский Б. Пушкин. Книга первая. М.-Л., 1956. С. 408-411.*

⁵ The prevalence of the "noble savage" concept in European Enlightenment and Romanticism has been questioned recently, as has been Rousseau's role in propagating it: Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2001). We will use "noble savage" as a term that refers to a variety of morally positive images of the "savage," without strict distinction from "man of nature" or "bon sauvage."

⁶ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 10.

⁷ *Idem*, "Nineteenth-Century Russian Mythologies of Caucasian Savagery," in Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini, eds., *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. 82-83. Nathaniel Knight takes the same position: "Most

for the colonized and antipathy toward imperialism.

On the other hand, it has been articulated that Russia's ambiguous national identity sometimes legitimized its goals of territorial expansion. Katya Hokanson criticizes the traditional admiration for the universality of Russian literature and its embracing of diverse peoples: "[A Romantic critic and writer Orest] Somov now declared a huge territory to be the province of the Russian poet, a veritable empire of *narodnost'*. All was diverse, yet imprinted with a common feature—no matter what its characteristics, it belonged to the Russian imagination. In fact, this was the literary equivalent of colonization [...]"⁸ The nation's proximity to Asia and sympathy for it could serve as grounds for justifying invasion as natural assimilation. It is possible that Russian sympathies for the "noble savage" functioned in a similar way.

The motif of religious conversion that often appears in Caucasian tales written by Russian writers is useful for analyzing the significance of the "noble savage," in that the motif directly concerns the discourses of both Rousseauism and colonialism. In most cases, religious conversion occurs as the result of love between a Christian and a Muslim, and involves protagonists in a conflict between freedom (of love) and (religious) law.⁹ A

obviously, the stark dichotomy between Orient and Occident around which Said's analysis hinges transforms in the Russian context into an awkward triptych: the west, Russia, the east" (Nathaniel Knight, "Grigor'ev in Orenburg, 1851–1862: Russian Orientalism in the Service of Empire?" *Slavic Review* 59:1 (2000), p. 77). Harsh, Saidian criticism of Russian writers exists, but seems to lack a significant degree support by scholars. See: Kalpana Sahni, *Crucifying the Orient: Russian Orientalism and the Colonization of Caucasus and Central Asia* (Bangkok: White Orchid Press, 1997); Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 2000); and Layton's review on the latter in *The Russian Review* 60:1 (2001), pp. 115-116.

⁸ Katya Hokanson, *Writing at Russia's Border* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2008), p. 34. Regarding the dispute on the "ambiguity" of the Russian colonialism, see: *Норимацу К. Проблема границы «России» в кавказских текстах русского романтизма // Эткинд А., Уффельманн Д. и Кукулин И.* (ред.) Там, внутри. Практики внутренней колонизации в культурной истории России. М., 2012. С. 284-308.

⁹ Vasily Narezhny's *A Black Year, or the Mountain Princes* (published posthumously in 1829, assumed to have been written in the 1800s: *Шадурн В. Первый русский роман о Кавказе. Тбилиси, 1947. С. 26*) is a notable exception in this respect. Obeying the Dalai Lama, the medieval Caucasians in the novel worship fictional gods named Makuk and Kukam. One of the protagonists converts to Islam to save a prince captured by Tatar Muslims, and later establishes a mosque in the home country to govern both Islam and the native religion: *Нарежный В. Романы и повести Василия Нарежного. Т. 6-7. СПб., 1836.* Conversion is hardly regarded as a serious violation of law here. This religious expansiveness, due to the absence of Christianity in the story, became outmoded after the Muslim resistance beginning from the late 1820s instilled the idea of Islamic "fanaticism" in Russia. On Narezhny's *A Black Year* in the context of the representation of the Caucasus in Russian literature, see: *Норимацу К. Субъекты колониальной репрезентации в русской литературе XIX века // Tetsuo Mochizuki, ed., Beyond the Empire: Images of Russia in the Eurasian* pp. 180-181.

convert shifts from a religious community to another, often hostile one, as is exemplified in the antagonism between Russia and the Caucasus. The first half of this paper will investigate the images of converts in the works of little known writers of the Romantic era. Their most important features are the precariousness of the “noble savage” converts’ presupposed freedom and their representations as pitiful under the influence of Sentimentalism. Each of these features often makes the figures of the converts congruent with Russian colonialism. Thereafter, we will consider Elena Gan and Mikhail Lermontov as rebels. They resist the conventions typical of conversion stories, revealing their imperialistic basis. This analysis of these “noble savage” converts will show some of the varied attitudes of Russian writers toward colonialism and to the disputable dichotomy between the “civilized” and the “savage.”

1. The “model” conversion story

Jeffrey Brooks argues that Nikolai Zriakhov’s best-selling chapbook *The Battle of the Russians with the Kabardians, or the Beautiful Muslim Woman Dying on the Grave of Her Husband* (1840) “may have served as a model for the later tales” of captivity and conversion in *lubok* literature.¹⁰ In it, Andrei, a young Cossack, captured on the battlefield by the Kabardians, falls in love with their prince’s daughter, Selima. Having been instructed in the values of Christianity and Russian literacy by Andrei, Selima dares to secretly enter Russian territory, following her released lover. Once there, she converts to Christianity and marries Andrei. The bride persuades her father to recognize the matrimony, and their alliance eventually brings peace to the opponents.

The imperialist message of the work, which begins with a lengthy section of

Cultural Context (Sapporo: Slavic Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2008), pp. 180-181.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read: Literacy and Popular Literature, 1861–1917* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2003), p. 222. The novel was published 11 times in the 1840s alone (*Реймблат А.И. Как Пушкин вышел в гении. Историко-социологические очерки.* М., 2001. С. 195), and, according to a book review in 1850, “was disseminated over the face of Russian ground, reaching *fifty thousand copies!*” (*Москвитянин.* Ч. 4. № 13. 1850. Отд. 4. С. 29, italics original). The abridged English translation is given in James von Geldern and Louise McReynolds, eds., *Entertaining Tsarist Russia: Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life, 1779–1917* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 83-93.

admiration for the Russian army, is clear. At the same time, however, much time is spent praising the bravery of the Kabardians. Whatever barriers exist between the two peoples are reduced in the text to a matter of language and religion. Selima somehow manages to converse in Russian from the beginning of the story, and easily admits the superiority of Christianity to Islam. The text's sympathy for the "noble savage" Kabardians and the homogeneity between the "civilized" and the "savage" (Selima's father has traveled in Russia in his youth and "knew European politics very well"¹¹) facilitates the assimilation of the "savage" into the Russian empire.¹²

And yet, Selima is not totally assimilated into the "civilized" culture. Her passionate death, which occurs soon after her husband's, is labeled as "an example of the way Muslim women love," marking her otherness and exoticism. She is praised for "giving the fair sex a model through her gentle love and fidelity," and the author appeals "to dear female readers" in the foreword: "Oh, you sensible and charming Russian ladies! / Take the example of my Muslim woman."¹³ Conversion functions as a device for the "civilized" to incorporate the ideal "nobility" of the "savage."

As is exemplified in this didacticism, the novel, especially its last pages, is reminiscent of Sentimentalism. A tradition of love stories between Europeans and natives of colonies existed as a branch of Sentimental literature in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe,¹⁴ and Nikolai Karamzin's "Poor Liza" has been indicated as the prototype of the plot of *Prisoner of the Caucasus*.¹⁵ Selima, unlike Liza or Pushkin's Circassian girl, is not deserted by her "civilized" lover, but is left alone to die an almost suicidal death. As David Herman has written, "Poor Liza" asserts "that reader and character—any reader and any character—whatever their degree of social or personal difference, might overcome their otherness imaginatively." However, compassion and sympathy suffer an inevitable dilemma: "This is the eternal conceptual difficulty that arises with naïveté. Knowing, understanding, being able to situate and articulate the delights of the country [...] is given only to those who know what it means to be

¹¹ Зряхов Н. Битва русских с кабардинцами, или Прекрасная магометанка, умирающая на гробе своего супруга. Налчик, 1990. Ч. 2. С. 97.

¹² Layton also lists Zriakhov as one of the "little orientalizers" who did not have any doubts about the justice of imperialism: Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, pp. 168-169.

¹³ Зряхов. Битва русских с кабардинцами. Ч. 2. С. 123, 126; Ч. 1. С. 4.

¹⁴ Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 228-233.

¹⁵ Прокурин О. Поэзия Пушкина, или Подвижный палимпсест. М., 1999. С. 120-121.

separated from them.”¹⁶ Sympathy should not dissolve the otherness of its object completely; Zriakhov carefully follows this rule. As we will address later in this essay, Sentimental elements are found in many conversion stories, and form their conventions.

Despite Selima’s readiness to admit the superiority of her lover’s culture, she cannot easily make the decision to convert. She laments; “Ah! If only I had power and freedom, then I would leave with you for your fatherland which should be better than our wild mountains and valleys [...] But, you know, Andrei, I am bound by laws and my parents’ power.” In Caucasian tales, native society is often depicted as being constrained by despotism or religious rigor, and in this respect, it does not gel with the Rousseauistic definition of the “noble savage.” It is Selima who ought to satisfy this definition, by embodying freedom against the religious law. The shift finally occurs when Andrei falls critically ill due to old wounds, and Selima prays to a Christian god to save him. She says to Andrei, “Return me your heart and your tender feelings, which attracted me and made me your slave forever.” In fact, she seems merely to have shifted from being subject to “parents’ power” to being a “slave” of her lover. Although Andrei explains to Selima’s father that “this [conversion] was her voluntary and unforced desire,” he immediately adds; “it is better to say that this was the will of divine Heaven,” and later; “I made a convert of her without her knowing.”¹⁷ The convert’s “freedom” and “voluntary desire” are most precarious.

Religious conversion is a required trope in a love story between a Christian and a Muslim in order that *the lovers can get married*.¹⁸ For example, in *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, a story in which the protagonists’ romance is nipped in the bud, and marriage is hence not an issue, the Circassian girl does not care about religions. Pyotr Kudriashev’s short story, “Prisoner of the Kirghiz” (1826), imitates *Prisoner of the Caucasus*’ plot, but with a happy ending for the two lovers: the Kirgiz girl in question converts, and the couple marries.¹⁹ The Orthodox conversion enterprise conducted in the North Caucasus

¹⁶ David Herman, *Poverty of Imagination: Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature about the Poor* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), pp. 1, 12.

¹⁷ Зряхов. Битва русских с кабардинцами. Ч. 1. С. 71-72, 110; Ч. 2. С. 7, 77.

¹⁸ Unlike Chateaubriand’s *Atala*, the most renowned colonial conversion story, Caucasian tales lack profound speculation about religion, allotting it the rather mechanical space of an obstacle for lovers.

¹⁹ Кудряшев П. Киргизский пленник (Бель Оренбургской линии) // Отечественные записки. Ч. 28. № 79. 1826. С. 273-290. On Kudriashev, see: Paul M. Austin, *The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism* (New York et al.: Peter Lang, 1997), pp. 109-114. A similar alternation of the ending was popular among epigones of *Prisoner of the Caucasus*: Жирмунский В. М. Байрон и Пушкин. Л., 1978. С. 239.

beginning from the eighteenth century met with great difficulty.²⁰ Consequently, as Mikail Mamedov points out, there were many cases of marriages between Russian officers and Caucasian Muslims without incidences of conversion, and, in fact, “religion and ethnicity could not be a serious obstacle to interethnic marriages.”²¹ In literary narratives, however, religion usually becomes the central concern of interethnic marriages.²² In this sense, literature is involved in the history of ideas rather than in reflecting real-world practices.

It should also be noted that the marriage trope is not immutable in the European history of love. According to Niklas Luhmann, the idea of passionate love arose in seventeenth-century France as something extreme, unreasonable and illegal; a relationship outside of “civilized” society with the “savage” satisfies this definition of passionate love. Luhmann writes, “Any distancing from the codex of rights and duties also involves differentiating love from the legal form and regulation of marriage.” This contrast between love and marriage gradually dissolved, as individuals within a society increasingly came to be understood as independent and changeable entities. Love and marriage were finally reconciled within the concept of Romantic love: “Love became the sole legitimate reason for the choice of a partner, and all those moments of passion that were threatening [...] had to be filtered out. What remained was an institutionalized understanding for enraptured passion [...]”²³ Conversion stories that oppose society’s law on love and then have the former acknowledge the latter, are nothing but the “institutionalized understanding” of illegal passion. The conflict between love and law hence loses its previous intensity. The precariousness of Selima’s freedom is related to

²⁰ See: Michel Tarran, “The Orthodox Mission in the North Caucasus: End of the 18th - Beginning of the 19th Century,” *Central Asian Survey* 10:1-2 (1991), pp. 103-117; Firouzeh Mostashari, “Colonial Dilemmas: Russian Politics in the Muslim Caucasus,” in Robert P. Geraci and Michael Khodarkovsky, eds., *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 229-249; Austin Jersild, *Orientalism and Empire: North Caucasus Mountain Peoples and Georgian Frontier, 1845-1917* (Montreal et al.: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), chap. 3.

²¹ Mikail Mamedov, “‘Going Native’ in the Caucasus: Problems of Russian Identity, 1801-64,” *The Russian Review* 67:2 (2008), p. 291.

²² Alexander Shidlovsky’s narrative poem, *Grebensk Cossack* (1831), is exceptional in this respect. A Muslim Lezgian girl, tempted by and eventually married to a Cossack, regrets her betrayal of the family, while paying no attention to religious betrayal: *Шидловский А. Гребенский Казак. Повесть*. СПб., 1831. For a critique of this work, see: Austin, *The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism*, pp. 134-137.

²³ Niklas Luhmann, *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, Jeremy Gaines and Doris L. Jones, trans. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 68, 147. Regarding the connection between the motives of the “noble savage” and Romantic love, see: Hoxie N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961), chap. 11.

this situation, and forms just one example of how debatable the “noble savage’s” freedom actually is.

2. The convert’s freedom

The Battle of the Russians with the Kabardians may be seen as a “model” conversion story: it was widely popular, and contains the straightforward imperialistic message.²⁴ Its plot line, however, is not a dominant one in the genre. For instance, the “civilized” man’s attempt to educate the “savage” is a popular motif in Caucasian tales such as Bestuzhev-Marlinsky’s *Ammalat-bek* (1832), Pavel Kamensky’s *Seeker of Strong Sensations* (1839), and Alexander Druzhinin’s *Mademoiselle Jeanette* (1852), but the project of enlightenment in each ends in failure; attempts at education usually illustrate the distance between the “civilized” and the “savage,” and, in the first two novels mentioned, actually end with the teachers’ death at the students’ hands.

Furthermore, many conversion stories exist in which the figures of the Christian lovers are not Russian, but Georgian or Armenian. These cases complicate the relationship between the “civilized” and the “savage.” Platon Zubov’s novel, *The Karabakh Astrologer, or the Foundation of Shusha Fortress in 1752* (1834), describes the conflict among Christians in Karabakh. The protagonist, Dzhemshid, despite having a fiancée chosen by his uncle and lord, adores another girl—a Muslim mountaineer named Salga—and secretly marries her. Because the bride believes him to be a Muslim, it is only he that violates the law in the marriage. Tormented by this sin, Dzhemshid instills Christian doctrines in Salga’s mind, and she, after discovering her husband’s true faith, becomes ready to convert.

Dzhemshid’s marriage performs another trespass: the breaking of his

²⁴ P. Siianov’s short story, “Tskheni and Dzhembulat” (1830), is more extreme in this regard. The Kabardian Muslim lovers, blocked from marriage by the difference of their statuses, run away to the Russian territory. Alexander I himself gives command to protect them, who both convert to Christianity and marry thereafter. The Kabardian society is accused of subordination to irrational law (“among barbarous peoples these customs are followed more strictly than laws among enlightened peoples are”: *Сиянов П. Цхени и Джембулат // Северный Меркурий. 1830. № 35. С. 138-139*), and Russia is represented as the land of freedom. Here, the evaluation of the “savage” and the “civilized” is precisely reverse to that of Rousseau and Pushkin.

engagement to the daughter of a lord. Dzhemshid declares, “Now I’m free from the barbarian obligation torturing me!” This violation of community law initiates a war among the lords. The couple is assisted in their fight against other, “barbarian” Christians by Hussein, a Tatar Muslim and master of Persian astrology. He saves the two protagonists by launching a battalion of Muslim mountaineers to conquer the entire region of Karabakh. Dzhemshid’s uncle, while himself subject to the effects of astrology, deplors its influence on Karabakh Christians: “Although being Christian, we believe in predestination. This is the Persian influence which Karabakh seriously perceives. We seem to have already become half-Muslims.” These “half-Muslim” Christians are no more than weak “barbarians” defeated by stronger “barbarians”—the mountaineers who are also infected by the influence of the Persians: “Nowadays, we [mountaineers] live in a different time from before, when the freedom of thought and feeling was accepted. Our close relationship with Iranians acquainted us with the excessiveness and eccentricity of Muslim fanaticism.” Dzhemshid is the only person that does not trust astrology: “Own up to it,” he says, “All of your astrological knowledge is total nonsense.”²⁵ Only the scene of Salga’s conversion retains a trace of the construction of Christians and Muslims as the “civilized” and the “savage”; the contrast is blurred in other parts of the novel. In addition, the epilogue states that the Shusha fortress, founded on Hussein’s order by the mountaineers, now contributes to the Russian army which has conquered Karabakh. It is as if Russians are the heirs to the “savages,” thus further undermining the identity of the Christians as a “civilized” people.

Several cases of the conversion of Caucasian (but, not Russian) Christians to Islam also exist.²⁶ In Kamensky’s short story, “Kelish-Bei” (1838), a Kakhnetian Christian girl named Fatima converts to Islam to marry her Abkhazian lover, Aslan. She subsequently follows the trajectory of Karamzin’s Liza, despairing of the chilly attitude of her husband and ultimately committing suicide. The narrator comments on her passionate lament: “I assure you, angel of the European world, this scene is not an invention patterned on your novels [...] Nature is the mother of love. [...] When this teacher is so close, so marvelous, and so powerful, her lessons are directly poured into your heart and

²⁵ *Зубов П.* Карабахский астролог, или Основание крепости Шуши в 1752 году. Исторический закавказский роман. М., 1834. Ч. 1. С. 92, 13, 45-46, 93.

²⁶ Nikolai Gnedich’s poem, “A Caucasian True Story” (published in 1833), exemplifies the Russian resistance to converting to Islam. In it, a Cossack swears conversion and marriage to his Kabardian lover, but cannot follow through with his vow. As a result, his lover is executed by her compatriots as a sinner. *Гнедич Н.И.* Кавказская быль // Стихотворения. Л., 1956. С. 152-154.

penetrate it [...]”²⁷ The former Christian thus personifies the “noble savage,” set apart from European civilization. Unlike “Poor Liza,” however, Aslan is not a “civilized” man but an “ignoble savage,” who assassinates his father, the Abkhazian enlightened monarch Kelish-Bei. His cruelty validates Russia’s civilizing mission, then asserted in the story’s epilogue.²⁸

It is noteworthy that Fatima’s conversion occurs while she is in captivity, after being abducted and sold to a Turkish harem: “I understood my fate: a slave from now on, with the despised name of a mistress.” Although she stubbornly refuses to study the Koran, she makes her mind to convert after falling in love with Aslan. It is dubious, however, whether her decision is really voluntary. She insists it is, and grieves while thinking that Aslan doubts her sincerity: “Now my love seems to him as a slave’s duty, a cold and inevitable obligation.” And Fatima’s Muslim tutor makes the ambivalent comment that, in marrying, Fatima is “now going to be free and belong to Aslan.” Fatima herself says, “I have already loved him as a brother, more than the desired freedom [...]”²⁹ The ensuing marriage appears to be merely a renewed imprisonment, one that she decides to accept.

Alexander Shishkov’s narrative poem, *The Dagestan Prisoner* (1824), relates a similar situation. A Christian slave girl devotes herself to a Muslim lover, but is tortured by betraying her faith, and when her father unexpectedly turns up, she escapes with him. Her passion seems to be caused at least partially by her state of captivity: she says, “Love me, as your slave / I will serve you everywhere.”³⁰ The imprisonment of converts in these stories acts as psychological compensation for the sin of a Christian conversion to Islam, and underscores the converts’ precarious freedom, a fact which is also implied by Zriakhov’s novel. In it, the “civilized” Christian, Andrei, guides Selima toward conversion, while in the works of Kamensky and Shishkov, the “savage” Muslim lovers cannot play the role of “civilizers.” Instead, the state of captivity enables the “noble savages’” decision to convert.

This instability of the convert’s volition is illustrated in the anonymous short story, “Gedzara” (1835). Serkiz, a Christian Kakhetian prince’s son, is fascinated by a

²⁷ Каменский П. Келиш-Бей // Повести и рассказы П. Каменского. Ч. 1. СПб., 1838. С. 37.

²⁸ See: Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, pp. 158-159.

²⁹ Каменский. Келиш-Бей. С. 11, 36, 17, 16.

³⁰ Шишков А.А. Дагестанская узница // Сочинения и переводы Капитана А. А. Шишкова. Ч. 1. СПб., 1834. С. 101.

captive Lezgian Muslim girl, Gedzara. He entrusts her care to a priest, Nartses, with the purpose of converting her in order to be a proper bride. She gradually becomes devoted to the priest's teachings, but Nartses himself succumbs to his sexual impulses and attempts to seduce her. Gedzara runs off. The pursuers sent by Serkiz are annihilated by a sudden storm and earthquake, which impresses the Lezgian beauty and prompts her to go to a Christian convent. The reasoning behind Gedzara's determination to convert despite Nartses's betrayal is left vague. While fleeing, she is tempted by the idea of killing herself, but the priest's teachings detain her: "She ought to decide her fate by herself, discern her duty, choose her faith, and guess Heaven's will." Gedzara seems to "choose" Christianity "by herself." However, what discourages her from committing suicide is not so much her own will, as the impact of the divinely ordained storm and earthquake, and "because the bodily bond ties a human to the worldly existence and overwhelms the influence of gloomy reflection."³¹

As previously discussed, to use the terms of Luhmann's analysis of Romantic love, conversion functions as "institutionalized understanding"; namely, a procedure with which to garner societal approval for free love. A "noble savage" woman who changes her religion against society's law never takes the initiative in the process. When she has a "civilized" lover, he—the one who does not convert, or risk breaking his own society's law—takes the initiative, and when she does not, a state of captivity or a "bodily bond" act as substitutes for him. The actual conflict between law and freedom is prudently avoided by diminishing the significance of the "noble savage's" own free will in her decision to convert.

3. Disastrous freedom: Elena Gan

In the literary works considered so far, all the religious converts have been women; this is indicative of the gender-biased stereotypes of the Caucasians created by Romantic writers. As Layton has shown, the image of the dashing male mountaineer became an object of identification for Russian men, while the idea of the native beauty

³¹ В.П. Гедзара // Московский наблюдатель. 1835. Ч. 4. С. 270, 272.

became a figure of protection, surveillance, or exploitation³²—in other words, something objectified, set apart from Russians, and lacking independent subjectivity. Consequently, sympathy for the female figure extended no further than an expression of pity, which fitted well within the Sentimental plot. The inability of the female religious convert to take the initiative corresponds to this stereotype of Caucasian women.

One intriguing exception is provided by Elena Gan's novel, *Dzhellaledin* (1838), in which a Muslim Tatar man converts to Christianity. Although the story is set not in the Caucasus, but in eighteenth-century Crimea, this work is clearly derived from Caucasian tales, as Vissarion Belinsky remarks: "In its plot and color, *Dzhellaledin* rings out loudly with Marlinism."³³ Bestuzhev-Marlinsky's *Ammalat-bek* seems to affect the delineation of the protagonist, especially his intense passion.

Dzhellaledin is also exceptional among Gan's works, most of which feature female protagonists. Gan is known as one of the main authors of "society tales" (*svetskie povesti*), a popular genre from the 1830s to the early 1840s. The genre was often represented by female writers and has recently drawn attention from a feminist viewpoint.³⁴ Gan's principal concern was the moral decrepitude of the nobility, and in her struggle to expose the suffering of women in high society, she often resorted to Rousseauistic accusations against civilization. *Dzhellaledin* is significant in the contexts of both conversion stories and society tales for its protagonist, who is endowed with "wild," "male" decisiveness: he is "proud, fearless, with a personality that is eager for action [...]"³⁵

This novel is another "Poor Liza"-type story. The protagonist, Dzhellaledin, was born to a high official of the former Crimean Khanate, who hates Russia like a poison. Despite this, the son falls in love with a Russian girl, Lyudmila, and almost marries her,

³² Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, chaps. 5, 10-11.

³³ *Белинский В.Г. Сочинения Зенеиды Р-вой* // Пол. соб. соч. Т. 7. М., 1955. С. 672. Having lived in a hot spring resort in the North Caucasus in 1837 and 1838, Gan used this region as the backdrop for "The Memory of Zheleznovodsk" (written in 1837) and *The Locket* (1839). Her detailed biography is given in: Hugh A. Aplin, "M. S. Zhukova and E. A. Gan: Women Writers and Female Protagonists 1837-1843," Ph.D. diss., University of East Anglia, 1989, chap. 6.

³⁴ Concerning Gan from this angle: Joe Andrew, *Narrative and Desire in Russian Literature, 1822-49: The Feminine and the Masculine* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan, 1993), chap. 4; Catriona Kelly, *A History of Russian Women's Writing 1820-1992* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), chap. 4. Gan has been associated with George Sand: *Шопе Э. Елена Ган – русская Жорж Санд? // Шопе Э. и Хайдер К.* (ред.) Пол гендер культура. Т. 2. М., 2000. С. 171-185.

³⁵ *Ган Е.А.* Пол. соб. соч. Е. А. Гана (Зенеиды Р-вой). СПб., 1905. С. 139-140. Further references to Gan's works will be drawn from this book and cited in parentheses within the text.

sacrificing his family and religion. However, his fiancée betrays him in his absence, which causes him to commit suicide.

Dzhellaledin presents a vivid contrast between the “noble savage” protagonist and the “ignoble civilized” Russians. *Dzhellaledin*’s ardent pride in his country is depicted with sympathy, in contrast to the frivolousness of Belogradov, a Russian boy who arrogantly mocks Islam. Nevertheless, this does not mean an absolute censure of civilization, the positive value of which is represented by enlightenment. The Russians’ “ignobility” is attributed to their backwardness in the reign of Ekaterina II: “Mother Russia, like a child-hero, still luxuriated in the cradle of ignorance [...]” (148). Lyudmila, having lost her mother in her youth, is characterized by her lack of a consistent education: “incomplete education, an orphan’s freedom, and later, her stepmother’s eloquent but often false sermons confused her thought so much that her character became unstable [...]” (150). Conversely, after having come to Petersburg to be baptized, “now he [*Dzhellaledin*] learned about the tyranny of circumstance, felt its yoke in himself, and, agonized, began to study more enthusiastically” (179). Enlightenment stands for the “nobility” of civilization. Since his father’s Islamic fanaticism is negatively described, the essential opposition of this story is not one between the “civilized” and the “savage,” but between the “noble” and the “ignoble.”³⁶

Dzhellaledin’s “savagery” is shown in his bold violations of societal law. The episodes of his duels with Belogradov are perfect examples. The first one occurs when the Russian insults Islam, and *Dzhellaledin* challenges him to “conduct ablutions of a different sort, in your manners, according to the European custom” (158). Belogradov is astonished by the idea (“A duel? With a Tatar?” [158]) and refuses it. His response is a natural one: according to Lotman, a duel is a social game which “cannot be understood without the specific notion of ‘honor’ in the general ethical system of the Europeanized noble society in post-Petrine Russia.”³⁷ A Tatar is simply not qualified for such a game.

³⁶ According to Hayden White, “the Noble Savage idea represents not so much an elevation of the idea of the native as a demotion of the idea of [civilization’s] nobility”: Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), p. 191. *Dzhellaledin* substantiates this analysis, but it is noteworthy that there are few literary works that venture to demote Russia’s nobility in the colonies.

³⁷ *Лотман Ю.М. Беседы о русской культуре. Быт и традиции русского дворянства (XVIII - начало XIX века)*. СПб., 1994. С. 164. Irina Reyfman argues that the duel evolved in Russia to protect the physical inviolability of the noblemen: Irina Reyfman, *Ritualized Violence Russian Style: The Duel in Russian Culture and Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), chap. 3.

Lyudmila intervenes and reconciles the opponents. The infringement on the “European custom” is much more brutal in Dzhellaledin’s second challenge, which is triggered by mistaking Belogradov for Lyudmila’s new bridegroom. Dzhellaledin forces him to choose between two pistols, only one of which is charged, and him to shoot the other person within his reach. Belogradov protests, in vain: “You are the instigator, so you don’t have right to decide the conditions of the duel: this is against all rules!” (199) He is killed in this duel without rules.

The most serious violation made by Dzhellaledin is his conversion. Despite his preparedness to “abandon my family and grounds for you” (168), Lyudmila’s request that he be baptized is difficult for him to accept. He asks, “Do you happen to think that home is not so dear and law is not so sacred for me as they are for you?” (168) Dzhellaledin attempts to persuade his lover to marry without converting, which Lyudmila categorically rejects. Her stepmother, who approves of their relationship due to the fortune they will come into when Dzhellaledin inherits, is optimistic about his conversion: “can’t a young loving man change religion for his love of a girl?” (157) It is revealed that the conversion is forced upon the Muslim by the Christians, a fact which is obscured in other conversion stories. What ultimately impels Dzhellaledin to break the law is his “savage,” “Asian” passion: “all the ardency of Asian feelings for which there is neither limit nor restriction in love as well as in hatred” (161). Lyudmila’s father, having heard of Dzhellaledin’s decision to convert, expresses anxiety about the destructiveness of his passion: “First, please learn our laws and customs, compare them to yours, and examine yourself: if neither reason nor confidence, but solely passion controls your behavior, be careful!” (171) Conversion, as the “institutionalized understanding” of free love as lawful marriage, should not be based only on passion “for which there is neither limit nor restriction.”

The “noble savage’s” decision, however, is never “understood” by society in this novel. The direct motivation for Lyudmila’s treachery is the false news of Dzhellaledin’s death in the war, but it is also suggested that her stepmother induces Lyudmila to break off her engagement after her fiancé is disinherited as a result of his conversion: “Lyudmila is a girl without a dowry; and now you are left just with your salary...” (192) In *Dzhellaledin*, conversion hence marks the incompatibility of love and marriage: Dzhellaledin cannot marry his lover without converting, but he is disqualified from marriage once he converts. The protagonists’ love is thus doomed never to enjoy an “institutionalized understanding.”

Dzhellaledin is also unique in that it describes the effects of the convert on the

community he leaves behind. Other conversion stories concentrate on the convert's initiation into a new community, and rarely pay attention to what happens afterwards in the old one. The effects *Dzhellaledin* depicts are catastrophic: Dzhellaledin's father rages on the son, joins the Ottoman Empire, and is killed in the war with Russia; his mother dies from grief; the family estate is left in ruins. His faithful niece, Emina, who becomes insane and dies after the beloved uncle's suicide, embodies the tragedy of the forsaken "savage," and in this sense resembles Karamzin's Liza even more than Dzhellaledin. Endowing the "noble savage" with a strong, "male" volition, the novel reifies the antagonism between freedom and law that is blurred in other conversion stories, and thus exposes the violence latent in the conversion motif. The "noble savage's" freedom leads nowhere; it merely brings disaster. Dzhellaledin is no more than a "voluntary exile" (183). After his death, "Muslims found in him an apostate and righteous revenge by the prophet; Christians refused [his burial] as he was a sinner and a suicide" (207).

While Gan treats conversion directly in *Dzhellaledin*, her novel *Utballa* (1838) includes an interfaith marriage without conversion, a trope that also highlights the conflict between freedom and law. The heroine, whose name is adopted as the title of the work, is of mixed Russian and Kalmyk parentage and brought up by her rich Russian father in Astrakhan. She turns down a superb marriage proposal by a general, saying, "I appreciate my freedom and will not devote myself to a man who seeks not my love but my father's fortune" (74). Utballa adores her childhood friend Boris, who returns her affections. The lovers are, however, split up by Utballa's relatives, who forcibly remove her to her mother's home to avoid dividing her father's inheritance. Once there, Kalmyk Buddhist nomads repeat what the Russians did to the girl with even more brutality by imprisoning her and forcing her to marry an old prince. These representations of Russian and Kalmyk society that clearly mirror each other advance the blurring of lines between the "civilized" and the "savage," which we have previously seen in *Dzhellaledin*. Regardless of ethnicity, society is inherently "ignoble," persecuting the protagonists.

The interfaith marriage upsets the Kalmyks: although "not law but mere custom prohibits Kalmyks to marry women of a different religion" (98), "most people loudly accused Utballa of her witchcraft [by charming the prince] and the prince of an impious marriage" (100). Utballa commits an even more blatant violation of the law when Boris accidentally arrives at the nomads' camp after five years of separation. He urges her to flee with him: "The pagans wedded you, a Christian, with a pagan, and with force, besides! You are free, Utballa..." (118) Their escape plan fails, however, and Utballa is

compelled to choose one of the alternatives: “to give up seeing Boris forever to save her poor life, or to devote this life to several days of his presence, his love and his happiness” (126), that is, to live with in her lawful, but forced, marriage, or to commit adultery. She chooses the latter, which “no meek European women would decide on. [...] All the energy of Mongolian blood was necessary [...]” (127). As in *Dzhellaledin*, “savage” volition is required to break the law. After a few blissful days of adultery in her husband’s absence, Utballa is executed by furious Kalmyks.

Utballa associates interfaith marriage with adultery as illegal free actions. Conversion legitimizes free love, but *Dzhellaledin* is marked by the impossibility of the “institutionalized understanding” of love. The plot structure of most of Gan’s novels hinges on the impossibility of marrying for love (legitimate love), in contrast to love outside of marriage (love without law) and arranged marriage (law without love), as exemplified by the alternatives available to Utballa. Such structures are found in European society novels at various times; *La Princesse de Clèves* is just one example. However, under the influence of the discourse of Romantic love, Gan regards marriage for love not only as an ideal, but as something that ought to be possible. This leads the author to a harsh criticism of society which impedes love marriages.

In her analysis of society tales, Raisa Iezuitova argues, “The Romanticists come close to the idea that it is impossible for the protagonists to live outside society: personal happiness beyond the limits of society becomes illusory and leads to further tragedy.”³⁸ The “meek European women” protagonists in Gan’s *The Ideal* (1837) and *Society’s Judgment* (1840) dare not step “beyond the limits of society” by committing adultery,³⁹ while *Dzhellaledin* and *Utballa*, with their “savage” passion that knows “neither limit nor restriction,” take this step that only “leads to further tragedy.” Despite their Sentimental plots, in Gan’s novels, the “noble savages” do not remain mere objects of pity, but are identified with Russian women as marginalized entities in “civilized” society.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Иезуитова Р.В.* Светская повесть // *Мейлах Б.С.* (ред.) Русская повесть XIX века. История и проблема жанра. Л., 1973. С. 181.

³⁹ According to Tony Tanner, as marriage was increasingly considered as a personal contract based on love, adultery, accordingly, came to signify a violation of marriage, as well as a serious transgression of societal law: “It is only when marriage is seen to be the invention of man [...] that adultery becomes, not an incidental deviance from the social structure, but a frontal assault on it”: Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), p. 17.

⁴⁰ Julia Douthwaite’s analysis of the representation of exotic women by female writers in ancien régime France is based on a similar concept: “As an outsider to the French system and a female in a patriarchal order, the foreign heroine’s social estrangement corresponds to the woman novelist’s marginal status as regards

On the other hand, it should be noted that the identification of Russians with the “noble savage” is only unilateral. Harsha Ram maintains, “Although arguably a victim of empire, the Noble Savage was not primarily a figure of anticolonial protest. He is better read as a native variant of the romantic hero, an allegorical screen on which the Russian gentry writer could project, and deflect, his own political alienation.”⁴¹ Gan’s belief in the value of enlightenment can align itself with a belief in the civilizing mission. For all these limitations, Gan’s resistance to stripping the “noble savage” of her or his own volition is a rare deviation from the conventions of most conversion stories.

4. Overcoming sentimental society: Mikhail Lermontov

As is seen in other conversion stories, *Dzhellaledin* was written under the considerable influence of Sentimentalism, not only in terms of plot, but of narrative structure. The novel ends with the first person narrator’s account of aged Lyudmila in Moscow high society. This is reminiscent of the ending of “Poor Liza,” in which the narrator meets aging Erast, Liza’s seducer. *Utballa* also concludes with the first person narrator’s reporting the rumors of Boris’s subsequent life. These endings imply ambivalent relationships between the narrators and society: while they are represented as members of high society, their Sentimental tales offer severe criticism of it. *Utballa* begins with the description of a ball party, the participants of which are absorbed in malicious rumors about the protagonist. This scene epitomizes the “ignobility” of the “civilized,” but the narrator also partakes in sharing society’s rumors in the ending. As Gitta Hammarberg writes, “the Sentimental tales could be said to be akin to the salon speech genre of gossip,”⁴² an argument which is supported by the last pages of *Dzhellaledin* and *Utballa*, which nearly equate the whole text of the novels to rumors transmitted in high society.

established men of letters”: Julia Douthwaite, *Exotic Women: Literary Heroines and Cultural Strategies in Ancien Régime France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), p. 13.

⁴¹ Harsha Ram, *The Imperial Sublime: A Russian Poetics of Empire* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), pp. 208-209.

⁴² Gitta Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel: Karamzin’s Sentimentalist Prose* (Cambridge et al.: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 131.

This ambivalence is connected to the essential contradiction of Rousseauistic admiration of nature. Nature was enjoyed as a fashion among the nobility, as Lotman observes: “The ‘unnatural’ mode began provoking negative opinions, while ‘naturalness’ became idealized, and its examples were found in antique figures of women or ‘theatricalized’ peasant manners. Dresses now became simple [...]”⁴³ Nature can be dreamed of only within “unnatural” society;⁴⁴ this is why Gan’s “noble savages,” once having abandoned society, meet with disaster instead of realizing their natural love.

Mikhail Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time* (1840) can be considered as an attempt to overcome the confinement of conversion stories to the Sentimental narrative framework. In the novel’s first chapter, “Bela,” the reader’s attention is drawn several times to the religious differences between Pechorin, a Russian officer, and Bela, the daughter of a Caucasian lord. Bela obstinately rejects Pechorin, when he attempts to seduce her in the following way: “‘Or does your faith prohibit you from loving me?’ She turned pale and remained silent. ‘Believe me, Allah is all the same for every tribe, and if he allows me to love you, for what reason should he prohibit you from rewarding me with mutual love?’”⁴⁵ Pechorin is the only Russian character in Caucasian tales that refers to the religious differences between the lovers and, at the same time, declares it unnecessary to legitimize their interfaith love through conversion (and accordingly, marriage). As in Pushkin’s *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, religious differences are disregarded unless the lovers aspire to marry. Thus, Pechorin’s primary interest is to make Bela commit infringement. Having been abducted—Pechorin is also the sole Russian character in Caucasian tales that abducts a native girl he loves—,⁴⁶ Bela tells him, “I’m your captive [...] your slave. Of course, you can force me” (232). An enforced relationship with a pagan is not regarded as a violation of law. Pechorin, however, clings to his desire to let the girl give herself to him voluntarily, after which Bela says, “I’m not his slave” (241).

⁴³ Лотман. Беседы о русской культуре. С. 52.

⁴⁴ Gan’s “The Memory of Zheleznovodsk” substantiates this point. The captivity narrative that entails a series of Rousseauistic details, such as the analogy of societal life to imprisonment (58-59) and the release from civilization with the assistance of nature (51), is represented as the mere dream of a nobility woman. The highly conventional nature of Caucasian “savagery” is demonstrated here.

⁴⁵ Лермонтов М.Ю. Герой нашего времени // Пол. соб. соч. в 10 т. Т. 6. М., 2000. С. 231. Further references to this book will be cited in parentheses within the text.

⁴⁶ Layton argues that Pechorin’s behavior is more “savage” than the “savage’s,” and reverses the traditional opposition of the “civilized/ savage.” Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*, pp. 213-219; Idem, “Ironies of Ethnic Identity,” in Louis Bagby, ed., *Lermontov’s A Hero of Our Time: A Critical Companion* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp. 64-84.

This process reveals the way in which the convert undergoes a kind of forced volition, a fact which other conversion stories (apart from Gan's) avoid articulating.⁴⁷ As Paul Austin asserts, "[s]he is in fact now still the 'prisoner' and the 'slave' that she once admitted to being since she has surrendered to him of her own free will and this is what he really wanted."⁴⁸

As Bela lies dying, she has a conversation with Maxim Maximych, Pechorin's colleague, who relates the incident to the narrator of the novel:

She began to grieve that she was not a Christian, that in the next world her soul would never meet Grigory Alexandrovich's [Pechorin's] soul, and that another woman would be his partner. I hit upon the idea of having her baptized before death. I proposed that to her. She looked at me with hesitation and could not speak out any words for a long time. At last, she replied that she would die with the same religion to which she was born. (248)

It cannot be overstated that Bela's decision to refuse conversion and marriage (even if in the next world) is a rare instance of a "noble savage" lover's displaying her independent volition. Her determination not to become initiated into "civilized" society, however, retains the illegal nature of her love, a quality Pechorin prefers, and preserves the Sentimental contrast between the "noble savage" woman and the "ignoble civilized" man.

Further traces of Sentimentalism exist in "Bela." According to David Powelstock, "Maxim's recognizably Sentimental literary tastes are made manifest in his manner of narration of the events of 'Bela'."⁴⁹ For example, in front of Bela's grave, Maxim compassionately mourns her death: "I almost tried to erect a cross, but, you know, it was odd; anyway, she was not a Christian..." (250)

Maxim's way of narration bears a more significant relation to Sentimentalism. In the middle of the chapter, he and the narrator share an intimate conversation: "'[...] Now, please tell me the story about Bela to the end. I'm sure it has not ended with that.' / 'Why are you so sure?' The staff-captain [Maxim] replied to me, winking with artful

⁴⁷ In this sense, Peter Scotto's criticism of "Bela," based on the analogy of the heroine's "voluntary" surrender to the annexation of the Caucasus to Russia, seems too stern: Peter Scotto, "Prisoners of the Caucasus: Ideologies of Imperialism in Lermontov's 'Bela,'" *PMLA* 107:2 (1992), pp. 254-255.

⁴⁸ Austin, *The Exotic Prisoner in Russian Romanticism*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ David Powelstock, *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov: The Ironies of Romantic Individualism in Nicholas I's Russia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), pp. 348-349.

smile. / ‘Because this is unreasonable: what started in an extraordinary way should end likewise.’ / ‘Well, you guessed right...’” (239) The narrator expects his readers to share in this anticipation of the story’s extraordinary finale: “But perhaps you want to know the ending of Bela’s story? First, this is not a tale that I am writing, but travel notes; therefore, I cannot make the staff-captain speak before he actually did so” (237). The narrator himself, nevertheless, enjoys Maxim’s talk as a “tale,” as is evident in his response when he hears of Bela’s mutual love for Pechorin: “‘How dull!’ I exclaimed without knowing. Indeed, I had expected a tragic denouement [...]” (233). Hammarberg, regarding “Poor Liza,” writes, “The narrator [...] assumes a narratee cut from the same cloth as he himself. In fact, Erast, too, is presented as acting just like a youthful narrator or narratee might have acted in the same situation [...]”⁵⁰ Similarly, Maxim, the narrator, the implied readers, and Pechorin, all participate in the same literary conventions of Sentimentalism, tropes which prepare a “tragic denouement” for the “noble savage” heroine.

Stephanie Sandler maintains that in *Prisoner of the Caucasus*, the Circassian girl’s refusal of the prisoner’s invitation to flee is the only voice in the text that truly her own; otherwise, as Pushkin’s dedicatory lines to his friend, Nikolai Raevsky, demonstrate, the poem is ever-ready “to use a Circassian woman to liberate a Russian man—and to use her tale to draw closer two male friends.”⁵¹ “Bela” repeats this exploitation of a Caucasian woman: even the heroine’s refusal to convert is used to cement a bonding between men who share in Sentimental narrative.

This bond, however, is fractured in the next chapter, “Maxim Maximych.” Pechorin, encountering Maxim after years of separation, treats him bitterly. Powelstock argues that “Maxim’s self-absorption is deeply connected with his Sentimental and superficial code of friendship. Pechorin’s breach of this code greatly upsets him.”⁵² Furious Maxim gives Pechorin’s journal, which has been in his charge, away to the narrator; the two, also, then “parted pretty dryly” (260). Thus, Pechorin’s journal is delivered to readers through the debris of Sentimental society. It is for its emergence from

⁵⁰ Hammarberg, *From the Idyll to the Novel*, p. 154.

⁵¹ Stephanie Sandler, *Distant Pleasures: Alexander Pushkin and the Writing of Exile* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 164. Monika Greenleaf argues, “In each of the Southern Poems a ‘native girl’ goes a little further in asserting her passion [...however,] in ‘The Prisoner [of the Caucasus]’ and ‘The Fountain [of Bakhchisarai]’ she dies an elliptical, hidden death that returns her to water, silence, and undifferentiation without a trace”: Monika Greenleaf, *Pushkin and Romantic Fashion: Fragment, Elegy, Orient, Irony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 130.

⁵² Powelstock, *Becoming Mikhail Lermontov*, p. 352.

outside the Sentimental friendship that the narrator values the journal, referring to Rousseau: "it is written without vain desire to arouse compassion or amazement. Rousseau's *Confessions* have already the defect of having been read to his friends" (261-262).⁵³

Gan and Lermontov both attempt to subvert the dominant patterns of conversion stories. Most of them depict the "noble savage" convert as a pitiful, passive woman, who lacks free and independent choices. Sentimental sympathy for these characters often reifies imperialism, as it functions on the pretext of protecting and "civilizing" them. Gan and Lermontov are no less under the influence of Sentimentalism, or rather, they are more true to Karamzinian tradition than such authors as Zriakhov, in that they describe the *failure* of the "noble savage's" initiation and assimilation into the "civilized" world. Through this failure, though, the two authors reveal how forcible the conversion actually is. At the same time, their works defy the conventions of Sentimental narrative. Gan's "noble savages" are endowed with a "male" decisiveness, which allows them to transgress society's law; they do what the Russian heroines of Gan's society tales wish to do, but cannot. Lermontov directs his attention to the vehicles of Sentimental narrative; he ruins the homogeneous associations between personages, narrators, and implied readers. Although Rousseauistic images of the "noble savage" are still present and the dichotomy between the "civilized" Russians and the "savage" Caucasians at one level is retained in the works of Gan and Lermontov, Gan's association of the "noble savage" with the repressed Russian women and Lermontov's critical view of the Sentimental society of "civilized" men both suggest the possible ways of moving beyond this dichotomy.

⁵³ Regarding Lermontov's attempt to overcome the cultural conventions of the intimate society of the Russian nobility, see: William M. Todd III, *Fiction and Society in the Age of Pushkin: Ideology, Institutions, and Narrative* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1986), chap. 4. One powerful narrative tool to disrupt the homogeneity with the readers in *A Hero of Our Time* is irony, by which, according to Mary Gilroy, "[r]ather than share a secret meaning with a reader [...] the narrator prefers to play a game of hide-and-seek with his reader": Mary Gilroy, *Lermontov's Ironic Vision* (Birmingham: Birmingham University, 1989), p. 13. See also Powelstock's book and Andrew Barratt and A. D. P. Briggs, *A Wicked Irony: The Rhetoric of Lermontov's A Hero of Our Time* (Bristol: Bristol Classical, 1989).

「高貴な野蛮人」の（不）決断——
ロシア・ロマン主義のカフカスものにおける改宗モチーフ

乗松 亨平

ロマン主義時代のロシア文学で流行したカフカスものでは、ルソー的な文明／自然の二項対立が通底していると同時に揺らいでいる。ブームの火付け役となったプーシキン『カフカスの虜』がすでに、文明の束縛を逃れた主人公が「自由の地」カフカスで捕虜となり自由を失う、というかたちで二項対立を複雑化していた。本論文では、カフカスものにおける文明／自然の二項対立の揺らぎを、このジャンルでしばしばみられる改宗のモチーフに注目して分析する。

改宗モチーフはほとんどの場合、異教徒間（多くはキリスト教徒とイスラーム教徒）の恋愛物語で現れる。恋人たちが結婚しようとするとき、宗教の違いが障害として立ちはだかり、彼らの情熱と社会の法とを対立させるのだ。結婚のために改宗するのはほぼ女性の側であり（イスラーム教徒かカフカスのキリスト教徒）、「高貴な野蛮人」の典型に則り表象される。女性たちはみずからの情熱にしたがい自発的に改宗するかのようだが、実際には文明の側の男性や捕虜の境遇により誘導されており、「自然」な情熱のまま「自由」に決断するわけではない。

自然が文明により強制されているという、文明／自然の二項対立を揺るがすこの事態は、多くの改宗物語では曖昧にされている。この点を曝け出す例外的なテキストとして、本論文の後半では、エレナ・ガンの作品とレールモントフ『現代の英雄』を検討する。ガンは「社交界小説」の作家として知られ、社会の法によって情熱を抑圧される女性たちを描いた。カフカスやクリミアを舞台に同様の物語を展開したガンの作品では、情熱（自然）を法（文明）に適合させる改宗が含みもつ暴力性が明確にされる。同時に、「高貴な野蛮人」が主人公となることで、社交界小説のヒロインがなしえなかった「自由」な決断、社会の法への反抗が敢行される。

一方、レールモントフは、改宗物語の基盤となったセンチメンタリズム的な物語構造の破壊を企てる。カフカスものの改宗物語は、「高貴な野蛮人」の女性が文明の男性と恋に落ち身を滅ぼすという、センチメンタリズムで流行した範型から派生したものである。読者は語り手とともにヒロインに同情して涙を流すが、そんな語り手や読者も文明の側に属している。『現代の英雄』の最初の章をなす改宗物語（ただしヒロインは改宗を拒否する）「ペーラ」もまた、男性主人公・語り手・読者の同質性にもとづき展開する。しかしこの同質的共同体は、小説ののちの章で自壊することになる。

このように、改宗物語のもとづく文明／自然の二項対立が揺らぎを含んでおり、その揺らぎが反省の対象となる過程を、本論文では文学史的にたどってゆく。