ways to court her and win her love and affection completely. While chapter 12 outlines the duties of a wife, chapter 13 deals with relations concerning women other than one's wife.

Biography

It is believed that Koka Pandit hailed from a Kashmiri Brahmin family and was the protégé of King Vainyadatta, who lived from 830 to 960 CE.

KOKILA RAVI

Edition

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Further Reading

The four known untranslated commentaries on *Rati Rahasya* are by Kancinatha, Avantya Ramacandra, Kavi Prabhu, and Srngarasabandha Pradhipika.

KUPRIN, ALEXANDER

1870–1938
Russian novelist and short story writer

Alexander Ivanovich Kuprin's *Iama* [*The Pit*] is the longest and most notorious of prerevolutionary Russia's literary works devoted to the problem of prostitution. It is a virtual catalogue of all the motifs and clichés associated with the topic in the previous half-century, but it also goes many steps further than its predecessors. If prostitutes had previously been either supporting characters in a larger story devoted to other issues and themes (Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* [1864], Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* [1863]), the subjects of shorters works (Vsevolod Garshin's "An Occurence" [1875], "Nadezhda Nikolaevna" [1885]), or the embodiment of the male protagonist's own moral dilemma (Lev Tolstoy's *Resurrection* [1899]), *The Pit* allows the prostitutes themselves to share center stage with the men: in at least a few of the large, extended chunks that compose the novel, these women are the heroines of their own stories.

Part of the novel's immense popular appeal was that it purported to give an unvarnished account of daily life in a brothel. Most of Part 1 of the novel verges more on documentary than on fiction, with the male and female characters serving largely as vehicles for the author's almost journalistic descriptions of the prostitute's world. As in Chekhov's 1888 short story, "A Nervous Breakdown," the reader follows a group of young men on an expedition to the brothels in a notorious red-light district. Like Chekhov's young men, the protagonists of *The Pit* represent a carefully selected cross section of Russian professional and intellectual life: Yarchenko the classicist, Ramzes the lawyer, Sobashnikov and Likhonin the students, and Platonov the reporter. As they talk each other into visiting the brothel, they, with no small amount of irony, discuss their project as if it were a scientific expedition: prostitution is a crucial social problem that must be investigated by members of the intelligentsia. And indeed, their discussions of prostitution go into a greater detail and greater depth than any previous representations of sex-for-hire trades in Russian fiction: from the relationship between the prostitutes and the madam to the relationships among the prostitutes themselves, even making a reference to the frequency with which these women's disgust for their male clients pushes them toward lesbianism. Yet this scientific veneer can easily be seen as an exercise in self-justification, not only for the characters, but by extension for the author and even the readers: the journey to the brothel is not the result of anything so vulgar as mere sexual desire, while the literary depiction of the topic is therefore scientific rather than pornographic.

These men are clearly far more informed than any of their literary predecessors. But it is precisely their level of knowledge that only increases the irony of their encounter with the prostitutes and calls into question the value of their discussions. Not only does Kuprin have the benefit of his familiarity with the earlier Russian literature on the question, but so do his male characters: their visit to the brothel is inevitably colored by the fact that they have read the same books on the subject as Kuprin's readers. Thus they tend to approach the subject as an abstract, philosophic, and even aesthetic phenomenon. One of the men even points out that to date, Russian literature's engagement with the problem has been woefully inadequate, since the best it could produce was Sonya Marmeladova, the saintly prostitute who saves the hero's soul in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866). As the same man argues, the prostitute has heretofore remained unknown and unknowable to the Russian intellectual, along with that other eternally mysterious figure, the Russian peasant (also the frequent subject of semidocumentary exposés throughout the nineteenth century). And even as they go to the brothel, they lament the impossibility of ever actually discovering the "truth" about the prostitutes: the women are used to being asked how they got to their sorry state and are used to providing standard-issue lies as a response. Moreover, there is even an acknowledgment on one of the men's parts that they have no right to expect any more: why should the women be expected to tell the men anything?

Once the men become involved with the prostitutes, their self-consciousness does them little good, and despite themselves they begin to behave according to the standard literary script. Inevitably, one of the men tries to "rescue" a young woman from the brothel, and soon the rest join in what becomes a veritable orgy of liberal interventionism. No cliché is left untouched: there is even talk of buying poor Lyubka a sewing machine, which was the standard instrument for the prostitute's by-her-bootstraps redemption since Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*

Instead, the uniqueness of *The Pit* lies in the careful attention paid to the women themselves, to the world of the brothel. In scenes reminiscent of Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Kuprin almost overwhelms the reader with a wealth of detail about the women's expenses, income, and rules of conduct. More gripping are his plots that center on the women themselves. Kuprin tells the story of Zhenka, a prostitute who, when she realizes she has syphilis, decides to take revenge on the entire male sex by infecting as many clients as she can before dying. Here as elsewhere, Kuprin walks a fine line between the standard sentimentalization of the prostitute as victim and the male fantasy of the vengeful, demonic female. Ultimately, Zhenka resolves her situation in a way far more typical of Russian heroines: she kills herself, and her death is mourned publicly by all the prostitutes, as, in a rare demonstration of solidarity, her body is accompanied to the cemetery by women from all the brothels in the district. But nothing changes for the better in the women's lives: the entire district is closed as a result of a virtual pogrom against prostitutes on the part of a group of angry sailors who complain that they were overcharged, forcing the prostitutes to live and work on the streets.

The novel's rather abrupt ending can be attributed to the vagaries of serial publication: six years passed between the publication of the first and last parts, and Kuprin may well have finished the book hastily after another author published his own conclusion to the story. Yet despite the novel's unevenness, it has had a lasting appeal among Russian readers. Still in print during Soviet times because of Kuprin's status as a canonical author, it was one of the few "erotic" texts readily available in the USSR.

Biography

Born August 26 in Narovchat, Penza oblast. Studied at the Second Moscow Military High School (Cadet Corps) from 1880 to 1888, followed by the Alexander Military Academy from 1888 to 1890. Served in the army from 1890 through 1894, whereupon he began to write for various newspapers in Kiev. In the 1890s he made a name for himself as an author who focused on Russia's social problems, most notably in *Poedinok* [*The Duel*] (1905) and *Iama* (1908–1915). After the 1917 Revolution, he emigrated to France, where he continued to write, although with far less critical and commercial success. He returned to the Soviet Union in 1937 and died of cancer the following year.

Eliot Borenstein

Selected Works

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Matich, Olga. "A Typology of Fallen Women in Nineteenth Century Russian Literature." *American Contributions to the Ninth International Congress of Slavists.* Vol. 2, 325–43. Columbus, OH: Slavic Press, 1983.

Siegel, George. "The Fallen Woman in Nineteenth Century Literature." *Harvard Slavic Studies* 5 (1970): 81–108.

KUZMIN, MIKHAIL

1872–1936

Russian poet, prose writer, playwright, and critic

Primary Work: *Wings*

A musician turned poet and prose writer, Mikhail Alekseevich Kuzmin created a sensation with the publication of *Kryl'ia* [*Wings*], a novella that dealt openly with the subject of same-sex desire and that helped earn Kuzmin the epithet "the Russian Oscar Wilde." *Wings* first appeared in the journal *Vesy* [*Scales*] in 1906 and was published in book form in 1907. It went through several editions, including a post-revolutionary one published in Berlin in 1923. Its frank treatment of homosexuality made a Soviet edition unthinkable, and it was not republished in Russia in book form until 1994. Initial reception of *Wings* was varied. It was criticized by a number of critics and writers as pornographic but was praised by others, although positive reviews tended to ignore or play down the central theme of homosexuality.

The novella is divided into three parts, and its structure combines elements of the *Bildungsroman,* or novel of self-education, and the philosophical novel in the tradition of Voltaire's *Candide* (Bogomolov, 21). Against the backdrop of Vania Smurov's coming of age, Kuzmin offers philosophical discussions on the nature of love and the relationship of the body and the spirit. The novella opens with Vania, a recently orphaned adolescent, being sent to live with the Kazanskii family in St. Petersburg. There he meets the elegant and charismatic Larion Dmitrievich Stroop, who is part Russian and part English, suggesting a vague association with Oscar Wilde and aestheticism. It soon becomes clear that Stroop is homosexual. *Wings* traces Vania's gradual acceptance of Stroop as his male "guide"—a recurring theme in Kuzmin's work—and of his own homosexual desires.

Vania's journey of self-discovery is predicted early in the novella by Stroop when he tells the adolescent that he has it in him "to become a completely transformed being" (Granoien and Green, 14). His personal transformation mirrors that of Russian society in the tumultuous first years of the twentieth century, when, in the words of Mr. Kazanskii, "everything is awakening" (6). The loosening of censorship restrictions made possible relatively frank representations of sexuality and eroticism, creating the impression that Russia—like Vania—was experiencing a sexual awakening.

While Vania is initially fascinated by Stroop, he is horrified—and perhaps jealous—when he discovers that Stroop is having an affair with Fedor, a bathhouse attendant who has been hired by Stroop as his servant. This relationship, founded on Stroop's physical lust and Fedor's desire for money, is associated with death and