

Elegance Beyond the Boundaries: The Russian Fashion Publication *Modnyi magazin* and the Concept of an ‘Elegant Woman’

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Abstract. How did elegance, from being a privilege of aristocracy, acquire inclusive meaning across socially and culturally diverse contexts? Furthermore, as a form of beauty, what impact did it have on broader socio-cultural developments, and by which means? The concept of elegance was popularized in the nineteenth century through fashion magazines, whose commercial purpose and transnational character determined the way it was shaped and diffused. Simultaneously, since one of the periodical press’s functions is to provide readers with the sense of belonging to a particular group, fashion magazines’ emphasis on elegance entailed the development of imagined communities symbolically related to this concept. By referring to the Russian fashion periodical *Modnyi magazin* (1862–83), I present, firstly, how commercialization and transnationalization of the fashion press became the driving factors for the elaboration of the inclusive notion of elegance as related to Parisian fashion but not limited to it. Secondly, I demonstrate how this editorial concept influenced readers’ social habitus and helped to shape new forms of social affiliation beyond class-related and national borders.

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Французское слово *elegance*, которое у нас переводится щегольством, — хотя это и не совсем близко, — происходит от латинского *eligere*, что означает выбирать, избирать. Самый этот корень объясняет, лучше всего, предмет нашего разговора.¹

The development of the Russian fashion press throughout the nineteenth century can be traced along two major lines: the expansion of readership and a gradual shift from a specifically Russian focus to ever-wider appropriation from

¹ ‘Mody’ (‘Fashion’), *Modnyi magazin*, 15 February 1862, p. 89. ‘The French word ‘elegance’, which is translated into Russian as *shchegol’stvo* (although it is not quite close), stems from a Latin word *eligere*, which means to choose, to select. This very root best of all explains the main subject of our magazine.’ All translations are my own.

popular European magazines.² *Modnyi magazin* (literally: ‘Fashion Shop’), arguably one of the most prominent and idiosyncratic fashion magazines in the Russian Empire, is a case in point of this international and social widening of scope in the Russian fashion press. This bi-monthly fashion and literary magazine was founded, published, and edited in Saint-Petersburg by Sofia Rekhnevskaiia-Mei, a well-educated woman of noble origin. This publication signified the transition from mid-century elitist magazines focused on Russian high society — such as *Moda* (‘Fashion’, 1851–61) — and popular periodicals of the later decades — such as *Novyi Russkii bazar* (‘New Russian Bazar’, 1868–98) and *Modnyi svet* (‘Fashionable World’, 1868–1915) — that were targeting primarily the *meshchanstvo* (merchant classes).³ Rekhnevskaiia-Mei’s magazine belonged to both periods, preserving the sophisticated rhetoric of the early aristocratic periodicals while adapting it to an already broader audience.⁴ All of the regular fashion columns were written by the editor herself, while the illustrative material and fashion news were taken from the leading French fashion magazines, with many of which Rekhnevskaiia-Mei officially established exclusive contracts (for example *Revue de la Mode* (1872–1913), *Les Modes Parisiennes* (1843–96), *La Mode Illustrée* (1869–1937) and *La Saison* (1867–1909)). By the 1880s, the big publishing houses (for example, that of German Goppe) with their advanced technological resources monopolized the Russian fashion press market, and in 1883 *Modnyi magazin* was absorbed by the aforementioned periodical *Modnyi svet* and published in an extended version entitled *Modnyi svet i modnyi magazin* until 1915.

Modnyi magazin had a distinct editorial strategy that contributed to shaping the national fashion press’s rhetoric on elegance in line with the European course while preserving its original Russian character. Its editor developed an idiosyncratic notion of *shchegol’stvo* that became her editorial standpoint in guiding her female readers in the world of dressing. In the Russian Empire (especially in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century fashion magazines), the word *shchegol’stvo* had dubious connotations and was often used as an ironic term for those whose aim was to impress others: ‘the stereotype of the affected young male or female socialite mad for foreign luxuries, the *shchegol’* and *shchegolikha*’, as Catriona Kelly defines it.⁵ On the contrary, Rekhnevskaiia-Mei distinguished this trivialized notion associated with superficial and showy gallomania from her idea of ‘true *shchegol’stvo*’, which she implicitly equated to the French word ‘*élégance*’ with its emphasis

² See Christine Ruane, The Development of a Fashion Press in Late Imperial Russia, in *An Improper Profession: Women, Gender, and Journalism in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. by Barbara T. Norton and Jehanne M. Gheith (Durham; London: Duke UP, 2001), pp. 74–92.

³ See Carolyn R. Marks, “Providing Amusement for the Ladies”: The Rise of the Russian Women’s Magazine in the 1880s, in *An Improper Profession*, ed. by Barbara T. Norton and Jehanne M. Gheith (Durham; London: Duke UP, 2001), pp. 93–119.

⁴ Its annual circulation figures reached 6000 copies and were among the highest in 1870s.

⁵ Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: advice literature, polite culture, and gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), p. 139.

on the solidity, simplicity, and modernity of style. By focusing on the fashion editorials, I show how this editorial notion of female *shchegol'stvo* extended the boundaries of the original concept to cover the magazine's diverse audience and contributed to the homogenous cross-cultural diffusion of the concept of elegance by referring to Parisian fashion authority. Furthermore, I demonstrate how this ideal facilitated the formation of modern types of social affiliations, transcending national and class-related borders.

Transcending boundaries: an inclusive aspirational model for a diverse audience

Возьмем за образец светскую и элегантную женщину, которая одевается со вкусом, избегает поразительных нарядов и понимает, что хорошие привычки выказываются относительной простотой костюма.⁶

In the second half of the nineteenth century, illustrated fashion magazines in the Russian Empire were increasing revenue by addressing an ever-broader audience. Socio-economic changes within Russian society (liberal reforms of the 1860s, urbanization, rising literacy, growing wealth of the middle estates) led to the broadening of readerships and reflected the overall pan-European tendency towards the commercialization of the fashion press. In his studies of nineteenth-century British fashion periodicals, Christopher Breward refers to 'a policy of non-specific targeting', which he defines as 'a desire to distribute a magazine across a wide social area rather than emphasize the exclusivity of established fashion publications'.⁷ In the same manner, Russian periodical *Modnyi magazin*, while preserving high society as its essential target group, was pursuing a more inclusive approach. Summing up the first eight years of the magazine's existence, Rekhnevskaiia-Mei estimated her audience as 'very diverse': 'Публика, подписывающаяся на „Модный Магазин” весьма разнообразна: „Модный Магазин” распространен во всех слоях петербургского общества — начиная от высшей аристократии и кончая скромными семействами, не имеющими возможности платить портнихам.'⁸

In the context of this variety, the editor saw herself faced with a double task: to consider the discrepancies in both the incomes and the socio-cultural backgrounds of her readers. From one side, the aristocracy, which constituted the core target audience, was itself not homogeneous and consisted

⁶ 'Mody', *Modnyi magazin*, 1 January 1866, p. 10. 'As a sample, we take a worldly and elegant woman who dresses up with taste, avoids dramatic outfits and understands that good habits express themselves in a relative simplicity of dress.'

⁷ See Christopher Breward, 'Femininity and Consumption: The Problem of the Late Nineteenth-Century Fashion Journal', *Journal of Design History*, 7.2 (1994), 71–89 (p. 73).

⁸ 'Mody', *MM*, 15 December 1869, p. 390. '*Modnyi magazin* is spread in all the circles of Saint-Petersburg society — from the higher aristocracy and to modest households that do not have an opportunity to pay the dressmakers.'

of women of various means.⁹ In the annual editorial addresses aimed at advertising subscriptions for the following year, the purported primary goal of the magazine was meeting the combined needs of both wealthy women and those of more modest means: ‘„Модный Магазин” не ограничивается сообщением сведений о современном состоянии моды: главная задача его состоит в том, чтобы дать читательницам возможность хорошо одеваться домашними средствами.’¹⁰ From the other side, *meshchanstvo* as a class of ‘those with money to spend and little idea on how to spend it’ was growing, and merchants’ wives were becoming active readers of the fashion press and required guidance on refinement.¹¹ As can be seen from the diversity and specificity of the questions that the editor of *Modnyi magazin* answered in the correspondence sections, readers took her advice as ultimate guidelines. Rekhnevskiaia-Mei tried to establish her public authority as a reference point concerning the art of dressing in the broadest sense of the word: ‘главная своя задача, т. е. [...] быть руководителем и советником женщины в одной из необходимейших жизненных потребностей — в одежде.’¹² This publishing strategy required an introduction of a single concept that would unite women with varied social and financial standing. The emphasis on elegance can be seen as a solution to this editorial challenge.

Firstly, elegance was suitable as core concept for *Modnyi magazin*, since its deliberate vagueness allowed it to serve as a universal ideal, flexible enough to be adjusted to different financial circumstances. While the latest fashion in all its sumptuousness was *a priori* not attainable for every woman, elegance was claimed to be. In one of her first fashion columns in 1862, which became programmatic for the editorial agenda, Rekhnevskiaia-Mei claimed: ‘Щегольство не составляет принадлежность богатства. Оно доступно всем и недоступно для женщин, не имеющих внутреннего содержания.’¹³ Secondly, to face the merchant classes’ inclination towards conspicuous consumption and lack of taste, the editor distinguished elegance as a form of grace from luxurious abundance: ‘Небогатая женщина может быть щеголеватее богатой, в особенности если состояние последней досталось ей невзначай, и она не успела очистить своего вкуса и понятий, пока возростало богатство.’¹⁴ The core message of the magazine in this regard could

⁹ On the heterogeneity of the Russian nobility see Kelly, *Refining Russia*, pp. 85–155.

¹⁰ ‘Announcement of the publishing in the year 1865’, *Modnyi magazin*, 15 December 1864. ‘*Modnyi magazin* does not limit itself to informing the readers on the current state of fashion: its main task consists in providing all our readers with the opportunity to dress well by their own means.’

¹¹ Kelly, *Refining Russia*, p. 157.

¹² ‘Mody’, *MM*, 1 January 1877, p. 7. ‘[T]he main task of our magazine, which is [...] to be a guide and advisor of women in one of the most essential needs of life — dressing.’

¹³ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 89. ‘[E]legance does not belong to the rich. It is accessible for everyone and impossible for women who lack inner substance.’

¹⁴ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 89. ‘[A] woman of modest means could be more elegant than a wealthy one, particularly if the latter acquired her opulence all at once and did not have time to clear her taste and concepts whilst the wealth was growing.’

thus be summarized: ‘Мы смотрим на туалет со своей точки зрения. [...] Богатое платье [...] само по себе не придает щеголеватости, составляющей главный аромат туалета. [...] Все дело в том, как платье надето.’¹⁵

In this way, addressing the varied readership placed the main subject of conversation beyond the ephemerality and materiality of fashion and became a fundament for developing an aesthetic principle, simultaneously subtle and inclusive, based on harmony and common sense both equally accessible for women regardless of social standing. She warned her readers against equating elegance with fashion: ‘сколько мы видим дорогих, но безвкусных и смешных туалетов’.¹⁶ Acknowledging her readers’ varied budgets, the editor focused on simple and enduring clothing trends in contrast to those that were ‘эфемерные и скоропреходящие: их хотя и принимает свет, но отвергает экономия’.¹⁷ She promoted the ‘mystery of elegant simplicity’ as the universal ideal and the very essence of the art of dressing: ‘Мы можем сказать благоразумным женщинам: следуйте за модой, но только издали; избегайте всяких эксцентричностей, не надевайте на себя чудовищных шляп; простота в моде — вот истинное щегольство, истинный отпечаток порядочной женщины’.¹⁸ In order to appear genuine and natural, Rekhnevskaiia-Mei claimed, *shchegol'stvo* was to be an everyday practice. Instead of being expensively dressed-up for rare occasions, women were advised to ensure that they were steadily personable and elegant in harmony with their everyday lifestyle and surroundings: ‘Никогда не надо покупать лишнего, на счет необходимого. [...] как щегольство, так и здравый смысл противятся таким приобретениям, от которых должны страдать обыденные туалеты’.¹⁹ It implied that exceeding one’s budget and trying to impress were infractions against elegance rather than tributes to it, an idea that both transcends the commercial essence of fashion and broadens the meaning of the term *shchegol'stvo* from signifying vain foppishness to elegance as the art of selecting.

¹⁵ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 15 January 1873, p. 19. ‘We look at dressing from our own standpoint. [...] Luxurious dress itself [...] does not grant elegance, which is the main scent of the outfit. [...] Everything depends on the way it is worn.’

¹⁶ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 1 March 1865, p. 73. ‘[T]he ability to dress up is among the most necessary skills for every woman. [...] It is a labyrinth, in which it is the easier to get lost the more money one has. [...] How many expensive but tasteless and ridiculous dresses we see.’

¹⁷ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 1 January 1864, p. 10. ‘[E]phemeral and bypassing, accepted by society but rejected by the economy.’

¹⁸ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 1 February, 1881, p. 23. ‘[W]e can tell reasonable women: follow fashion but from afar; avoid any eccentricities, do not put monstrous hats on; simplicity in fashion — that is a true *shchegol'stvo*, a true sign of a decent woman.’

¹⁹ ‘Mody’, *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 92. ‘One should never buy in excess at the expense of the necessary. [...] both *shchegol'stvo* and common sense oppose those acquisitions which require restricting one’s everyday toilettes.’

The editorial agenda on elegance and Parisian fashion authority

The editorial notion of *shchegol'stvo* was developed with a constant reference to the authority of Parisian fashion, both supporting Rekhnevskaja-Mei's own reflections on elegance (in the Western meaning of the term) and granting it credibility. In her studies on the national self-identification of nineteenth-century American women, Kristin Hoganson argues for the symbolic meaning of Parisian fashion in relation to modernity and prestige: '[I]f women from around the world were looking to France for fashion, not to do so would mean being stuck in a provincial backwater, outside the major currents of the time.'²⁰ This claim is applicable to Russian culture as, since the Petrine era, Western fashion has been seen in Russia as a sign of modernity and affiliation with European culture. Therefore, Western news, particularly anything related to Paris, constituted the main interest of the audience of fashion magazines.

In an advertisement for subscription in 1872, Rekhnevskaja-Mei not only called *Modnyi magazin* 'the only original Russian fashion magazine' but also emphasized its connections with the leading French periodicals by describing it as:

Иллюстрированное издание, с великолепными парижскими гравюрами в тексте (*из Moniteur de la mode*), с раскрашенными модными картинками (*из Modes Parisiennes*) и с новейшими парижскими выкройками, избираемыми редакцией Модного Магазина, по своему усмотрению, сообразно с модами, принятыми высшим петербургским обществом и условиями русской жизни.²¹

While its French connections attributed credibility to the Russian magazine, the local audience-aware editorial agenda impacted the editor's standpoint in reporting on Parisian fashion. While describing the finest sartorial details, Rekhnevskaja-Mei was filtering the information to select the trends that she considered to be the most suitable for her readers in accordance with her editorial priorities: 'Туалеты очень великолепны; но между ними есть и такие, которые отличаются простотой и вкусом — мы более обращаем внимание на последние.'²² Apart from informing on the latest fashion, Rekhnevskaja-Mei's editorial contribution consisted of reconceptualizing 'Parisian elegance' and facilitating the internalization of this notion among a Russian audience. She supported her arguments on the primacy of elegance

²⁰ Kristin Hoganson, 'The Fashionable World: Imagined Communities of Dress', in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking With and Through the Nation*, ed. by Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), p. 71.

²¹ 'Bibliographical announcement', *MM*, 15 January 1872, p. 16. '[An] illustrated publication, with marvellous Parisian engravings in the text (from *Moniteur de la Mode*), with coloured fashion plates (from *Modes Parisiennes*) and with the newest Parisian fashion patterns, selected by the editorial staff of *Modnyi magazin*, at its own discretion in accordance with the fashion accepted by the higher Saint-Petersburg society and with the circumstances of Russian life.'

²² 'Mody', *MM*, 15 January 1862, p. 43. 'Toilettes are very sumptuous; but among them there are those that stand out by their simplicity and taste, and we mostly pay attention to the latter.'

in the latest trends with references to Parisian women. As the editor equated fashion with the news of what was worn in Paris, she took a standpoint that might have seemed paradoxical to her readers and claimed that flashy trendiness and excessive spending on clothes were features of provincial French women, rather than of genuinely elegant Parisians:

Отвращение, которое чувствуют к этому *genr*'у порядочные женщины, побудило некоторых парижанок [...] основать клуб под названием: 'Club de la sainte Mousseline'. Девиз его: изящная простота и хороший вкус. [...] женщина, по уставам клуба, не должна отличаться ничем, кроме превосходного покроя своей одежды и личной элегантности своей особы.²³

In line with her editorial strategy on encouraging women of limited means to dress elegantly, Rekhnevskaja-Mei often referred to middle-class Parisians' attitude to dressing:

Парижанка не бросит хорошего платья, оттого что на нем старомодная отделка, а сумеет переделать его сообразно требованию моды. [...] Вот в чем заключается мысль нашего журнала: дать возможность следить за модой, не тратя лишних денег на туалет.²⁴

In her pursuit of the common ideal, the Russian editor referred to Parisians of different social classes and levels of income and provided her readers with suitable role models, which nevertheless all fitted into the same pattern of reserved elegance. Referring to Parisian women as experts on elegance stretched the inclusivity of the concept, which was claimed to be a universal principle relevant for women from different socio-cultural contexts. In this way, this editorial strategy not only contributed to the cross-cultural diffusion of the concept but also facilitated the formation of modern types of social affiliation, bypassing both national and class-related borders.

(Re-)Shaping social affiliations: imagined communities of (elegant) women

The nineteenth century was a turbulent era for Russian women since socio-economic changes affected their lifestyles and challenged the self-identity of women from all social classes.²⁵ Fashion magazines served as a source of

²³ 'Mody', *MM*, 1 February 1866, p. 41. 'The disgust that decent women feel towards this style [excessive fanciness of fashion] incited some Parisians to found a club called *Club de la Sainte Mousseline*. Its motto is graceful simplicity and good taste. [...] According to the club statutes, a woman should stand out by nothing else than the excellent cut of her dress and her personal elegance.'

²⁴ 'Mody', *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 70. 'A Parisian woman will not throw away a decent dress just because it has an old-fashioned ornament but will manage to remake it in accordance with the demands of fashion. [...] That is the core idea of our magazine: to enable women to follow fashion without spending extra money on the outfit.'

²⁵ See Linda Edmondson, 'Feminism and Equality in an Authoritarian State: The Politics of Women's Liberation in Late Imperial Russia', in *Women's Emancipation Movements in the 19th C Europe*, ed. by S. Paletschek and B. Pietrow-Ennker (Stanford: Stanford UP), pp. 221–39.

information on the acceptable patterns of female behaviour in this constantly changing environment. In the chaos of shifting perceptions of social and gender roles, the inclusive editorial concept of female elegance exceeded the boundaries of a merely aesthetic ideal and served as one of a few universal socio-cultural reference points for women.²⁶

The affirmation of elegance as a feature of women's virtue lay at the heart of Rekhnevskia-Mei's editorial standpoint on elegance. This approach addresses a core conflict of nineteenth-century fashion magazines: a contradiction between inner and outer beauty in search of a female ideal. The concept shaped by the editor of *Modnyi magazin* was a multi-layered solution to this problematic dichotomy as she develops an original notion of a perfectly elegant woman whose outer image is a reflection and expression of her inner decency.

С какой бы стороны ни посмотреть на сравнительные отношения между качествами, признанными пустыми, как например, грация, вежливость, щегольство — и положительными добродетелями — всегда придешь к одному и тому же, неизбежному заключению: что эти милые и привлекательные имущества даны в удел только тем, кто вполне обладает основными добродетелями — добротой и великодушием.²⁷

Rekhnevskia-Mei attached genuine *shchegol'stvo* to the entire mode of existence of a woman: to be elegant, '[o]на должна быть изящна в своих словах, мыслях и поступках, и, достигнув своей цели, скромно позабыть об этом'.²⁸ Elegance was presented as opposed to vulgarity in the broader sense: 'Щеголеватая женщина должна сохранять достоинство без чопорности, быть мила без жеманства. Щегольство заключается собственно не в одних нарядах.'²⁹ In this way, the editorial standpoint reconciled conservative morality with the modern trend of consumerism, shaping the female role and justifying its ethical appropriateness in Russia. By incorporating elegance into the broader image of the exemplary woman as seen by society, Rekhnevskia-Mei shaped a clear and universal ideal uniting readers under the common umbrella of femininity. This facilitated the gradual bypassing of the conventional class habitus and, in this way, stimulated the occurrence of a new type of social affiliation based on gender.

Furthermore, the presence of a transnational reference point in relation to elegance also impacted the social habitus of female readers of *Modnyi magazin*.

²⁶ This was especially relevant in the aftermath of the abolition of serfdom in 1861, when profound social shifts provided opportunity for the redefinition of the principles of social grouping.

²⁷ 'Mody', *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 90. 'No matter from which side you look at the correlation between qualities considered as shallow — those of grace, politeness, *shchegol'stvo* — and the positive virtues, you always end up with the same unavoidable conclusion: these attractive advantages are only given to those possessing the core virtues — kindness and generosity.'

²⁸ 'Mody', *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 93. '[S]he should be graceful in her words, thoughts and actions, and, having achieved this goal, modestly forget about it.'

²⁹ 'Mody', *MM*, 15 February 1862, p. 89. 'The elegant woman should maintain dignity without primness, be lovely without affectation. *Shchegol'stvo* consists not only in dresses.'

In Kristin Hoganson's terms, 'fashion writings sold aspirations of belonging',³⁰ and Russians, similar to other women in Europe and worldwide, were following French fashion in order to feel part of the cosmopolitan Paris-centred 'imagined community of dress' associated with modernity and prestige.³¹ Roland Barthes claims in *Fashion System* that 'it is not the object but the name that creates desire; it is not the dream but the meaning that sells'.³² It was not just the presentation of the 'nouveau-tés' but the significance attributed to clothes that fuelled readers' imaginations and broadened their self-perception. Even a simple self-sewn dress would make a woman feel modern, if seen through the prism of universal elegance symbolically attached to Paris.

Promoting the Parisian example entailed the anchoring of elegance as a women's means of individualization and self-expression in the public world. Christine Delhayé claims that in the second half of the nineteenth century the Western European cultural construct of female consumerism became a specifically female means of transforming themselves into individuals, to which fashion editorials significantly contributed as 'sense-making practices'.³³ By promoting the Parisians' elegant approach of dressing-up, Rekhnevskaiia-Mei kept her readers updated on the internal rules of the modern and transnational imagined community of women expressing themselves via their image.

Thus, trying to adopt the Parisian attitude affiliated Russian women with the modern and cosmopolitan group and nurtured their sense of belonging to the wider world. At the same time, this was not a mere transmission of a ready-made European concept but a development of its local version, adjusted to local specificities and enriched by them. This two-way process entailed the elaboration of the transnational imagined community in all its multicultural variety. In other words, by shaping the local, Rekhnevskaiia-Mei, as well as her successors in Russia and colleagues worldwide, contributed to the global.

Conclusion: elegance beyond fashion trends, social classes, and national borders

The *Modnyi magazin's* editorial notion of elegance was developed at the intersection of aesthetics and marketing. While establishing her authority as a public arbiter of taste, the magazine's editor contributed to aesthetics by refocusing the readers' attention from the materiality of fashionable garments to the universal principle of elegance, related to fashion though not exclusively limited to it. Promoting elegance as the main target for an expanding audience served a double purpose. Firstly, elegance was presented as preferable to

³⁰ Delhayé, 'Consumption Culture', p. 67.

³¹ On the 'imagined community of dress', see Hoganson, 'The Fashionable World', pp. 260–87.

³² Roland Barthes, *Fashion System*, trans. by Matthew Ward and Richard Howard (London: University of California Press, 1990), p. xii.

³³ See Delhayé, 'Consumption Culture', pp. 87–115.

fashion, because it was not only desirable but also attainable for women of varied means, unlike expensive dresses and luxurious abundance. Secondly, elegance as something that could not be simply bought but required genuine refinement allowed the editor to establish an aesthetic standard in times when 'the traditional association between spending power and education' was called into question.³⁴ Furthermore, Rekhnevskaja-Mei developed her concept of 'true *shchegol'stvo*' by referring to Parisian women with their symbolic allure of modernity to justify and strengthen her editorial standpoint. In doing so, she contributed to the homogenous transnational diffusion of the concept of elegance characterized by its multidimensional inclusivity: it invited Russian women from ever-broader social classes to participate in the cosmopolitan, Paris-centered, elegant community. The subtleness and comprehensiveness of the editorial standpoint combined with the long-lasting popularity of *Modnyi magazin* propagated the notion of elegance as bypassing not only the volatility of fashion but also national and class borders. In this way, this case serves as the example of how fashion editorials became the platforms whereby the notion and criteria of elegance were formulated, legitimated, and disseminated from the nineteenth century onwards.

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³⁴ Kelly, *Refining Russia*, p. 157.