

EVDOKIA NAGRODSKAIA

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Nagrodskaja, Evdokia (1866-1930) was a remarkably candid and *avant-garde* fiction writer in turn-of-the-century Russia. She was the daughter of Avdot'ia Iakovlevna Panaeva (1819-1893), a journalist, prominent salon hostess, and mistress of the poet Nikolai Alekseevich Nekrasov (1821-1877) – a co-worker of Evdokia's father, Apollon Golovachev who worked for the "thick journal" *Sovremennik*. Thus raised in an intellectual environment, Nagrodskaja wrote poetry and several novels, including The White Colonnade (*Belaia Kolonnada*) in 1900, The Bronze Door (*Bronzovazia dver'*) in 1911, Evil Spirits (*Zlye dukhi*) in 1916, and The River of Times (*Reka vremeni*) in 1924.

Nagrodskaja is best known, however, for her novel The Wrath of Dionysus (*Gnev Dionisa*), which became a bestseller in 1910, although it shocked readers unaccustomed to taboo topics like illicit love, female sexuality, and homosexuality. The novel was published in ten editions and was translated into French, Italian, German, and English. Ultimately the novel became a silent movie in theaters across two continents. The heroine of the story is Tatiana Kuznetsova, a painter who cheats on her supportive but boring fiancé when she meets a dashing, brilliant Englishman named Edgar Stark during a train ride. She begins an affair, but when Stark becomes too possessive, jealous even of her art, she pulls away. Accidentally

impregnated by Stark, however, she later decides to stay with him and the baby. Another key character is her homosexual friend Latchinov. The highlight of the story is a dialogue between Tatiana and Latchinov, in which the latter confronts Tatiana with her own homosexuality, explaining that she (a “masculine” woman) and Stark (an effeminate man) are inverted members of their respective genders, and thus complement each other as "normal" men and women do. Suffering from a terminal disease, Latchinov reveals to her his own sexual (but unconsummated) love for Stark, and bids her farewell.

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