

Chapter Two

Literary Impacts of Sentimentalist Gender Conceptions in Russia

This chapter addresses literary implications of Sentimentalism's socio-political concepts. It suggests that literature and its ability to transfer issues from the domestic sphere to the public world was potentially able to bridge the gap between the sexes' separate spheres of existence. Salons and literary circles in particular played the role of intermediary between the two spheres of activity, since they were a place of cultural exchange for both sexes, and associated with both the public and the private spheres. The chapter further considers representations of Fate in Russian Romantic literature, which began to emerge in the first two decades of the 19th century.

The feminisation of literary culture

In contrast to Classicist aesthetics, Sentimentalist discourse was descriptive rather than normative, thus broadening the horizon to groups of society previously ignored by the ruling class. One of the consequences was the appearance of the character of the serf and the rise of the 'woman question' in many literary works. Another effect was the high regard in which femininity was held in Sentimentalism, becoming a cultural standard: as scholars have shown, style, language, and genre were adapted to what male writers thought to be pleasing to and customary among women. A smooth type of diction replaced the complicated syntactic structures influenced by Church Slavonic; words borrowed from French began to crop up in Russian texts; and novels and minor poetic genres, such as madrigals, idylls, eclogues, or rondeaus, were given preference to epic works and drama. A further result of the cultural phenomenon of 'feminisation' in Sentimentalism was that it became possible to think of women as readers as well as contributors to journals, and, to some extent, as authors of literary works. Feminist scholars have found that publishing remained a male domain, however; and that men tended to publish women's writings regardless of quality. This is why the Sentimentalist 'feminisation' of culture confined women in essentialist conceptions, traditional gender patterns,

and the roles of amateur or dilettante, rather than allowing them to develop into professional writers.¹ Strongly influenced by French literary models, Sentimentalist literature also projected the notion of goodness onto women. As a result, female

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- 1 Wendy Rosslyn: 'Making their Way into Print. Poems by Eighteenth-Century Russian Women'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 78, 2000, pp. 407–438;
Gitta Hammarberg: 'Women, Critics and Women Critics in Early Russian Women's Journals'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 187–207;
Judith Vowles: 'The "Feminization" of Russian Literature. Women, Language, and Literature in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: Clyman, Toby / Greene, Diana (eds): *Women Writers in Russian Literature*. Praeger: London 1994, pp. 35–60;
Gitta Hammarberg: 'The Feminine Chronotope and Sentimentalist Canon Formation'. In: Cross, Anthony / Smith, Gerald (eds): *Literature, Lives, and Legality in Catherine's Russia*. Astra: Cotgrave 1994, pp. 103–120;
Gitta Hammarberg: 'Reading à la mode. The First Russian Women's Journals'. In: Klein, Joachim et al. (eds): *Reflections on Russia in the Eighteenth Century*. Böhlau: Köln 2001, pp. 218–232;
Wendy Rosslyn: 'Anna Bunina's "Unchaste Relationship with the Muses". Patronage, the Market and the Woman Writer in Early Nineteenth-Century Russia'. *The Slavonic and East European Review* 74, 1996, pp. 223–242;
Wendy Rosslyn: *Anna Bunina (1774–1829) and the Origins of Women's Poetry in Russia*. Mellen: Lewiston 1997;
Karolin Khaider: "'V sei knizhke est' chto-to zanimatel'noe, no...": Vospriatie russkikh pisatel' nits v *Damskom zhurnale*'. In: Shore, Elisabeth (ed.): *Pol. Gender. Kul'tura. Nemetskie i russkie issledovaniia*. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Gumanitarnyi Universitet: Moscow 2000, pp. 131–153;
Carolin Heyder / Arja Rosenholm: 'Feminization as Functionalisation. The Presentation of Femininity by the Sentimentalist Man'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 51–71;
Viktor Zhivov: 'Literaturnyi iazyk i iazyk literatury v Rossii XVIII stoletii'. *Russian Literature. Special Issue. 18th Century Russian Literature* 52, 2002, pp. 1–53;
Wendy Rosslyn: 'Zwischen Öffentlichkeit und Privatleben. Frauen und ihre Schriften im achtzehnten und frühen neunzehnten Jahrhundert in Russland'. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 41–59;
Gitta Hammarberg: 'Gender Ambivalence and Genre Anomalies in Late 18th–Early 19th-Century Russian Literature'. In: *Russian Literature. Special Issue. 18th Century Russian Literature* 52, 2002, pp. 299–326;
Carolin Heyder: 'Vom *Journal für die Lieben zur Sache der Frau*. Zum Frauenbild in den russischen literarischen Frauenzeitschriften des 19. Jahrhunderts'. In: Parnell, Christina (ed.): *Frauenbilder und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe in der russischen Frauenprosa. Materialien*

literary characters had to die if and when they could no longer embody virtue. The conception was associated with Sentimentalism's idealisation of nature and a belief in women's greater affinity with nature than with culture, which manifested itself particularly clearly in the gender patterns of the pastoral.

Notwithstanding a discourse which conceptualised them as beings estranged from culture, girls and women increasingly began to be a part of 18th- and early-19th-century cultural life in Russia. This is reflected, for instance, in girls' increasing educational opportunities. In the 1780s Catherine the Great initiated the creation of a nationwide network of schools, which included the provinces, making at least some education available there, even though most families continued to send their children away to the major cities for their education.² In addition, several boarding schools for girls were created across the Empire. Catherine the Great set up the *Smol'ny* Institute, an exemplary boarding school for young girls of noble extraction.³ In the first two decades of the 19th century, the empress

des wissenschaftlichen Symposiums in Erfurt 1995. Peter Lang Verlag: New York 1996, pp. 63–75;

Gerda Achinger: 'Das gespaltene Ich – Äusserungen zur Problematik des weiblichen Schreibens bei Anna Petrovna Bunina'. In: Parnell, Christina (ed.): *Frauenbilder und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe in der russischen Frauenprosa. Materialien des wissenschaftlichen Symposiums in Erfurt 1995*. Peter Lang Verlag: Frankfurt a.M. 1996, pp. 43–61;

Arja Rosenholm / Irina Savkina: "'How Women Should Write'. Russian Women's Writing in the Nineteenth Century'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Lives and Culture*. Open Book Publishers: Cambridge 2012, pp. 161–207;

Gitta Hammarberg: 'The First Russian Women's Journals and the Construction of the Reader'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 83–104;

Joe Andrew: "'A Crocodile in Flannel or a Dancing Monkey". The Image of the Russian Woman Writer. 1790–1850'. In: Edmondson, Linda (ed.): *Gender in Russian History and Culture*. Palgrave: Basingstoke 2001, pp. 52–72;

Amanda Ewington (ed. and transl.): *Russian Women Poets of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*. Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies at the University of Toronto: Toronto 2014, pp. 1–28.

2 Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, pp. 11–12.

3 To some extent, the *Smol'ny* was inspired by the activities of Mme de Maintenon, the second wife of French king Louis XIV, who in 17th-century France had founded a boarding school for impoverished noble girls. Catherine did not, however, adopt Mme de Maintenon's institution's devotional orientation; see

Mariia Fedorovna, who had assumed responsibility of the *Smol'ny* Institute, initiated and established many more educational institutions. After the French Revolution, members of the French aristocracy arrived in Russia, where they set up private pensions, chiefly in the major cities.⁴ Boarding schools not only provided girls with an education, but could also serve as cultural venues. Most men or women who ran boarding schools were well-known and highly regarded people with a wide circle of acquaintances. For 1819, for instance, N. Brodskii mentions a boarding school in St Petersburg run by a French nobleman who also organised literary evenings in which women were able to participate.⁵ By providing a mixed-sex venue for literary evenings and similar events, boarding schools contributed to the revision of the notion stipulated by Sentimentalism's division of society into a male public and a female private sphere, that women should not become involved in public matters. I will provide an example for this phenomenon in Chapter Six on Naumova.

In late-18th- and early-19th-century Russia, women's involvement in cultural activities was further stimulated by the growing interest in reading. The extent to which reading material was actually available to provincial gentlewomen is a contested question. On the one hand, Karamzin, in his essay 'O knizhnoi torgovle i liubvi k chteniiu v Rossii' (On the Book Trade and the Love of Reading in Russia, 1802), painted a lively picture of the thirst for reading which seized the nobility in

Anna Kuxhausen: *From the Womb to the Body Politic. Raising the Nation in Enlightenment Russia*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 2013, pp. 140–143;

Christa Ebert: 'Erziehung des idealen Menschen? Das Smol'ny-Institut – Katharinas Modellversuch für Frauenbildung in Russland'. In: Lehmann-Carli, Gabriela / Schippan, Michael / Scholz, Birgit / Brohm, Silke (eds): *Russische Aufklärungsrezeption im Kontext offizieller Bildungskonzepte (1700–1825)*. Berlin Verlag: Berlin 2001, pp. 261–268;

Robin Bisha et al. (eds): *Russian Women. 1698–1917. Experience and Expression*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 2002, pp. 159–231.

E. Likhacheva observes that while educational opportunities for women of the aristocracy as well as towns- and lower-class women were improving, they were still falling short, see

E. Likhacheva: *Materialy dlia istorii zhenskago obrazovaniia v Rossii. 1796—1828. Vremia Imperatritsy Marii Fedorovny*. Tipografia M.M. Stasiulevicha: St Petersburg 1893, pp. 250–301.

4 Natal'ia Pushkareva, 'Russian Noblewomen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18th- and Early 19th-Century Memoirs'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 111–128 (113).

5 N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki. Pervaia polovina XIX veka*. Academia: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, pp. 81–87.

the Sentimentalist era, a development which Novikov's contributions to the emergence of the Russian book trade in the 1780s had helped to stimulate.⁶ The interest in reading was reflected in literary works whose protagonists are frequently depicted going for a walk carrying a book in their hand.⁷ Educational institutions, bookshops, publishing houses and public libraries began to appear in provincial towns, although it would take until the 1830s before they became considerable in number.⁸ By the 1820s, reading had gained respect among the aristocracy, both in major cities and in the provinces. One of the first professional women writers of the Empire, Liubov' Krichevskaja (1800–?), lived in Kharkov, where she greatly benefitted from her city's vibrant cultural life.⁹ Books were available even in provincial towns which provided less intellectual stimulation, as Alexandra Kobiakova (1823–1892) reports in her autobiography.¹⁰ That was the time when some noblewomen began to collect books for their own private libraries. Educated women in the provinces had to find ways of obtaining new reading material, e. g. by buying books on their trips to major cities.

On the other hand, intellectual circles whose members would discuss ideas relating to reading tended to be concentrated in the major cities. Women living in remote areas encountered considerable obstacles if they wanted to overcome their

6 Natal'ia Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma. Esteticheskie i khudozhestvennye iskaniiia*. Nauka: St Petersburg 1994, p. 157.

It has to be noted that *belles-lettres* accounted only for 20 to 30 percent of publications, as Gary Marker documents, see

Gary Marker: *Publishing, Printing, and the Origins of Intellectual Life in Russia. 1700–1800*. Princeton University Press: Princeton 1985, p. 230.

7 Olga Glagoleva: 'Imaginary World. Reading in the Lives of Russian Provincial Noblewomen (1750–1825)'. In: Rossllyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 129–146 (p. 131);

Natal'ia Kochetkova: 'Geroi russkogo sentimentalizma. Chtenie v zhizni "chuvstvitel' nogo" gerioia'. In: *Russkaia literatura XVIII—nachala XIX veka v obshchestvenno-kul'turnom kontekste*. Nauka: Leningrad 1983, pp. 121–142 (p. 140),

see also Catherine Evtuhov: *Portrait of a Russian Province. Economy, Society, and Civilisation in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod*. University of Pittsburgh Press: Pittsburgh 2011;

Iurii D. Levin: *The Perception of English Literature in Russia. Investigations and Materials*. Philips, Catherine (transl.). Astra: Nottingham 1994, pp. 175–178.

8 Glagoleva 2000, p. 71.

9 Liubov Krichevskaja: *No Good without Reward. Selected Writings. A Bilingual Edition*. Baer, Brian James (ed.): Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies: Toronto 2011.

10 Toby W. Clyman / Judith Vowles: *Russia Through Women's Eyes*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1996, pp. 60–74.

status as social and intellectual outsiders. One scholar notes that in a provincial town like Kharkov, for instance, books could only be bought during fairs, and were mostly for children or about household matters—a view in stark contrast with Krichevskaiia's depiction of the town's lively cultural life mentioned earlier.¹¹ It is also noteworthy that the poet Anna Bunina moved to St Petersburg from the countryside in search of the wide range of educational opportunities the big city provided.¹² Katherine Pickering Antonova's study of a provincial gentry family in the first half of the 19th century suggests that the provincial gentry did a lot of reading and that a great deal of reading material was available, and also usually exchanged among friends and relatives, but that there was a desire for an even larger amount and greater variety of reading material.¹³

In the Enlightenment, reading was the privilege of a few cultured noblemen educated in a humanist vein and required a serious study of the work in question, often presupposing familiarity with the classical style and topoi. In Sentimentalist discourse, however, reading began to be regarded as a pastime; no one wishing to pass their time in the company of a book was required to be able to identify traditional literary genres. Light fiction, accessible to any literate person with a 'sensitive heart', became Sentimentalism's predominant literary genre, and was particularly popular among young women deprived of a classical education. Books became accessible to a new readership, including merchants, soldiers, vendors, and even serfs.¹⁴

Classicism's one-dimensional and elitist relationship between author and publisher was replaced in the Sentimentalist era by more domestic circles which saw friends gathered informally to read literary works—their own or other writers'—to each other, and to exchange materials and information on new publications. Journals announcing new books which could be ordered by subscription were another source of news about literary works. Early 19th-century Russia also saw the creation of journals for women, such as *Damskii zhurnal* (The Ladies'

11 Brodskii, p. 553.

12 Rosslyn 1997, p. 52.

13 Katherine Pickering Antonova: *An Ordinary Marriage. The World of a Gentry Family in Provincial Russia*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2013, pp. 95–118.

On the availability of reading material in the provinces, see also

Priscilla Roosevelt: *Life on the Russian Country Estate. A Social and Cultural History*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1995, pp. 206–209.

14 Inna Gorbatov: *Formation du concept de Sentimentalisme dans la littérature russe. L'Influence de J.J. Rousseau sur l'œuvre de N.M. Karamzin*. Peter Lang Verlag: Paris 1991, pp. 46.

Magazine, 1806–1816), *Aglaia* (Aglaia, 1808–1812), *Kabinet Aspazii* (Aspasia's Cabinet, 1815), *Modnyi vestnik* (The Fashion Messenger, 1816), or *Vseobshchii modnyi zhurnal* (General Fashion Messenger, 1817). As the number of journals increased, so did the importance attributed to reading; newspaper reading became part of the curriculum of boarding schools for girls.¹⁵

There is no doubting the egalitarian aspect of the wider availability of reading materials, rendering reading accessible to different kinds of social groups, including women. However, the development also affected the literary quality of the works, many of which were trite and trivial. Journals devoted almost as much attention to fashion as to literature, and literally became a part of a lady's accessories. They often had very stylish covers and were put on display next to other fashionable fripperies. As Gitta Hammarberg observes, 'journals were placed in the context of a lady's *toilette* among cosmetics and combs, as if stressing that booklets beautify her as much as cosmetics.'¹⁶ Thus, the connotation of the 'trivialisation' of literature with the female perpetuated the exclusion of women from academic knowledge.

Salons as centres of literary activity

Literary works were frequently discussed in the context of salons. Their emergence offered women the opportunity to educate themselves and become involved in cultural matters. Early-19th-century Russian salons were usually hosted by women. However, as venues situated in Habermas' semi-public world of the authentic public sphere, where men interacted with women, they challenged the paradigm of a female private sphere and a male public reserve. In the context of 20th-century salon culture, Beth Holmgren formulates the paradox as follows:

Whereas a salon is almost always situated in a private home, it projects in various ways a liminal space between private and public—by including public characters, mixing different social groups, eliciting small-scale public dialogue.¹⁷

15 Pushkareva 2003, pp. 118–120;

Grigorii Tishkin: 'Zhenskii vopros i pisatel'skii trud na rubezhe XVIII—XIX vekov'. In: Fainshtein, Mikhail (ed.): *Russkie pisatel'nitsy i literaturnyi protsess v kontse XVIII—pervoi treti XX vv.* Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1995, pp. 29–42 (p. 37);

Glagoleva 2003, p. 131;

Hammarberg 2001, pp. 219–221.

16 Hammarberg 2001, pp. 221–223.

17 Beth Holmgren: 'Stepping Out / Going Under: Women in Russia's Twentieth-Century Salons'. In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia—Women—Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 225–246 (p. 226).

Salon hostesses had to find a balance between offering light-hearted entertainment and creating an environment of inspiration—and criticism—for aspiring poets. Being a salon hostess, then, enabled a woman to occupy an important social position and to receive public recognition for her talents, not least as a co-architect of the authentic public sphere.

In St Petersburg, a prestigious literary society, Alexander Shishkov's (1754–1841) *Beseda Liubitelei Russkogo Slova* (Gathering of Lovers of the Russian Word) included three women authors: Bunina, Volkova, and Ekaterina Urusova (1747–after 1816).

Literary salons and circles emerged not only in the big cities, but also in some provincial centres. Cultured societies organised by women met regularly in Odessa or Kharkov, or in Kazan, as in the case of Alexandra Fuks (c. 1805–1853). Provincial towns such as Kaluga, Kostroma, Smolensk, and Tula also had centres of intellectual life actively involving women. It has to be noted, however, that the greatest numbers of salons were to be found in major cities, whereas considerably fewer salons existed in the provinces.¹⁸

In the first three decades of the 19th century, few cultured circles were open to provincial women with aspirations to become a writer. According to Irina Savkina's study on 1830s to 1840s prose writers including Elena Gan (1814–1842), Alexandra Zrazhevskaja (1805–1867), and Sofia Zakrevskaia (c. 1796–c. 1865), such women were double outsiders, both as a women writers and as a provincial residents, *provintsialki*, provincial women. However, as my chapter on Bolotnikova will suggest, women poets living in the country to whom the term *provintsialka* might be applied existed even before the period covered by Savkina. In this context, some of the women authors which feature in Savkina's study were at least partly educated in St Petersburg prior to moving to the provinces at a later point in their lives. Gan, in contrast, spent her entire life in the country, where she received an outstanding education. Even though these women did not frequent salons or literary circles, they did produce a considerable number of literary works, often as a source of income. Collaboration in journals was an important means of achieving publication: Zakrevskaia, to name just one, sent

18 Glagoleva 2000, p. 12.

In the course of the first two decades of the 19th century, conversations about literary topics occurred not only in salons, but also increasingly in more formal literary societies, see

Alessandra Tosi: *Waiting for Pushkin. Russian Fiction in the Reign of Alexander I (1801–1825)*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 2006, p. 65.

her literary productions to city friends who assisted her in publishing her works in journals.¹⁹

An 18th-century precursor of the Russian salon seems to have existed in the house of Elizaveta Kheraskova, who organised gatherings of famous men—and a few women—of letters.²⁰ Among early-19th-century salon hostesses, we find Alexandra Khvostova (1767–1853), who held literary evenings in her St Petersburg apartment. Two decades later, in 1821, Sofiia Ponomareva set up literary evenings, again in St Petersburg, which attracted the intellectual elite of the day. Emulating the salons of the French *précieuses*, Ponomareva celebrated her central role of salon hostess, seated on a sofa, surrounded by admirers while orchestrating the intellectual exchange. Still in St Petersburg, Alexandra Voeikova (1795–1829) seems to have held a similar type of salon, while Avodoti 'a Kireevskaia-Elagina (1789–1877) did so in 1820s Moscow. Other noteworthy salon hostesses were Zinaida Volkonskaia, Evdokiia Rostopchina, and Karolina Pavlova.²¹

19 Mikhail Fainshtein: *Pisatel' nitsy pushkinskoi pory. Istoriko-literaturnye ocherki*. Nauka: Leningrad 1989, p. 138;

Irina Savkina: *Provintsialki russkoi literatury. Zhenskaia proza 30—40 godov XIX veka*. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1998, pp. 56–60.

On mid-19th-century Russian women writers from the provinces, see also Hilde Hoogenboom: 'The Importance of Being Provincial. Nineteenth-Century Russian Women Writers and the Countryside'. In: Dowler, Lorraine / Carubia, Josephine / Szczygiel, Bonj (eds): *GenderScapes. Renegotiating, Reinterpreting and Reconfiguring the Moral Landscape*. Routledge: New York 2005, pp. 240–253.

20 See Ewington, p. 41, and Sandra Shaw Bennett: "'Parnassian Sisters" of Derzhavin's Acquaintance. Some Observations on Women's Writing in Eighteenth-Century Russia'. In: Salvo, Maria Di and Hughes, Lindsey (eds): *A Window on Russia. Papers from the V International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia*. Gargnano, 1994. La Fenice: Rome 1996, pp. 249–256 (p. 252).

21 Judith Vowles: 'The Inexperienced Muse. Russian Women and Poetry in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In: Barker, Adele / Gheith, Jehanne (eds): *A History of Women's Writing in Russia*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2002, pp. 62–84 (p. 64);

Lina Bernstein: 'Women on the Verge of a New Language. Russian Salon Hostesses in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century'. In: *Russia—Women—Culture*, 1996, pp. 209–224 (p. 209, p. 211);

Deborah Heller: 'Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere'. In: *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, 1998, pp. 59–82 (p. 60);

Mary Zirin: 'Khvostova, Aleksandra Petrovna'. In: Ledkovsky, Marina et al. (eds): *Dictionary of Russian Women Writers*. Greenwood Press: London 1994, pp. 291–292 (p. 291);

With its emphasis on the world of feelings and women's participation in salons, this cultural institution revised male gender roles. The Sentimentalist man claimed to empathise with women and to cherish their feminine nature to such an extent that he adapted his own behaviour, 'feminising' himself. Compassion, friendship, tears and a tender heart became fixtures in the Sentimentalist man's repertoire. As Hammarberg found elsewhere, a more 'feminine' type of man became a model for male behaviour.²² Her study argues that, at the turn of the century, the character of the dandy began to make an appearance in the arena of society life. The male counterpart to the coquette imitated her manners, adopting her interest in looks and clothing, her fascination with French language and culture, her 'feminine' diction and her often exaggeratedly delicate disposition. Some men occupied themselves with activities traditionally considered to belong to the sphere of women, such as embroidery. From the 1790s to the 1810s, Sentimentalism's elevated regard for femininity meant that, in some quarters, it became fashionable for the man to be effeminate.

Egalitarian principles in Sentimentalist literature

Sentimentalist literary works addressed many social issues, among them egalitarian principles and a belief in the unconditional equal value of all human beings. The scholar Grigorii Gukovskii considered Alexander Radishchev (1749–1802) to be the main representative of the democratic and revolutionary trend in Russian Sentimentalism but considered Karamzin, on the other hand, to uphold

Brodskii: p. 96;

Andrew 2001, p. 58;

Glagoleva 2000, pp. 48–49, 53;

Vatsuro, V.: *SDP: Iz istorii literaturnogo byta Pushkinskoi pory*. Kniga: Moscow 1989.

In his study on 18th-century Russian literature, Joachim Klein prefers the term 'literary circle' to 'salon' as he does not think Russia knew a proper salon culture during the 18th century, see

Ioakhim Klein: *Russkaia literature XVIII veka*, Indrik: Moscow 2010, p. 289. There may, however, have existed a salon culture in Russia during the first two decades of the 19th century.

- 22 Hammarberg 1994, pp. 115–120.

Kuxhausen has found that some contemporary educational theorists disliked effeminate men inspired by French literature, culture, and fashion, promoting instead an ideal of masculinity associated with the Russian nation unspoilt by foreign, i.e. French, influences, see

Kuxhausen, pp. 111–114.

reactionary views.²³ The impression is partly confirmed when we consider Karamzin's intention to conserve the patriarchal order in the private sphere of the family, opting for the extension of patriarchal rights to society as a whole. In his *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika* (Letters of a Russian Traveller), he relates the protagonist's suggestion that the inhabitants of a Swiss village should proceed with a young criminal in the same way as a father would if he had to punish his own child: public life becomes a 'semiprivate patriarchal sphere'.²⁴ Other writings by Karamzin reflect similar attitudes, for example the novel *Frol Silin*, which romanticises a time when landowners treated their subordinates as a father would his children. In contrast to Karamzin, Radishchev suggested that human relationships, whether in family or friendship, should be based on natural feelings of respect; he did not, however, extend this kind of equality to women. Nor, as Joe Andrew observes, does he discuss women's rights anywhere in his works.²⁵

To a great extent, the democratic potential of Sentimentalism is due to its celebration of equality on an emotional basis. This is expressed most clearly in Karamzin's *Poor Liza*, a novella in which the female protagonist, a peasant girl, is emotionally equal to an aristocrat and capable of experiencing the same kind of emotions. Owing to the universal human capacity to experience emotions, the Sentimentalist notion of compassion presupposed the unconditional and equal value of all human beings. This is why it allowed authors to include social outsiders such as peasants and women in their work. Many Russian authors who wrote literature which fitted into the paradigm of Classicism at the same time composed works which belonged to lower literary genres, in which peasants and serfs were protagonists, as shown in Iurii Veselovskii's study. Alexander Sumarokov, for example, who addressed sublime and heroic topics in his historical drama *Dmitrii Samozvanets* (Dmitrii the Impostor), also wrote fables which reproduced the language and customs of simple peasants. Iakov Kniazhnin (1742–1791), the author of the historical drama, *Vadim Novgorodskii* (Vadim of Novgorod), about

23 Pavel Orlov: *Russkii sentimentalism*. Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo Universiteta: Moscow 1977, pp. 5–6.

24 Andreas Schönle: 'The Scare of the Self', *Slavic Review* 57, 1998, pp. 723–746 (pp. 736–737).

25 Gorbatov, p. 150;

Joe Andrew: 'Radical Sentimentalism or Sentimental Radicalism? A Feminist Approach to Eighteenth-Century Russian Literature.' In: Kelly, Catriona et al. (eds): *Discontinuous Discourses in Modern Russian Literature*. Macmillan: London 1989, pp. 136–156 (p. 145).

the lost republican freedom of ancient Russia, also composed a simple poem in verse form recounting a conversation between two peasants.²⁶

The topic of serfdom in particular began to appear in literary works, especially in the writings by noblemen who had withdrawn to their estates where they came into closer contact with the reality of serfdom. A literary genre predestined to address the subject of serfdom was the pastoral. Idealising nature and expressing scepticism about civilisation, it was the quintessential Sentimentalist poetic genre. As Terry Gifford observes, 'pastoral is essentially a discourse of retreat which may [...] either simply *escape* from the complexities of the city, the court, the present, "our manners", or *explore* them.'²⁷ Two forces were in opposition to each other, the idealisation of nature as a Garden of Eden versus the presence of hard-working serfs disrupting the idyll. Many aristocrats returning to their estates ignored the social injustice of serfdom, producing poems featuring shepherds frolicking blissfully in an idyllic imaginary scenery glowing in endless spring. Others, however, employed their literary skills to criticise social inequality and unfairness. The democratic potential of Sentimentalist ethics rests upon their tendency to face and explore reality rather than produce idealised accounts.

Traditional pastorals featured two main characters, the shepherd and the agricultural labourer. The shepherd symbolises leisure; while tending his flocks he has time to sing songs and exchange gentle words with his beloved shepherdess. The labourer, on the other hand, is busy working all day long, with only short moments of rest. He is virtuous and contented with the harmonious life on the estate and in his family fold, happy despite all the hard work because it prevents him from leading the life of idleness and vice to which the city-dweller is prone. The labourer's work fulfils and represents the idea of God's Creation; he is the gardener in a terrestrial Eden. The character of the contented agricultural labourer therefore frequently appears in moralist writings such as Marmontel's, which, as Wendy Rosslyn has shown, were widely translated into Russian in the 18th century.²⁸

The character of the shepherd is usually portrayed against the background of a *locus amoenus*, an idyllic landscape with babbling brooks and sheep grazing in perpetual spring. This is how he appears in works by Sentimentalist women writers including Bunina. Her poem 'Vesna' (Spring), for example, depicts a *locus amoenus*

26 Iurii Veselovskii: *Literaturnye ocherki*. Tipografiia Vasil'eva: Moscow 1900, pp. 433–468.

27 Terry Gifford, *Pastoral*, London: Routledge 1999, p. 46.

28 Wendy Rosslyn: *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness. Translations by Russian Women. 1763–1825*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2000, pp. 75–76.

in which shepherdesses lead a carefree life; they are contented with their idyllic environment and the frugal nourishment provided by nature:

В жерло зернистаго граната
Бьет с шумом чистая вода;
На злаках горнаго поката
Пасутся тучныя стада.
В различных купах под кустами,
Со светлыми, как день очами,
Сидят безопасно пастушки.
Их снедь: млеко с суровым хлебом;
Но кто счастливей их под небом!
Забота их: свирель, — рожки.²⁹

*Into an open granite mouth
Fresh water crashes and resounds;
In the fields on rolling hills,
Herds of fattening cattle graze.
In little groups beneath the trees,
Their eyes as bright as any day,
The shepherds sit, all quite carefree.
Their fare is milk with simple bread;
But who is happier than they!
Their only care's the pipe,—the little horns.³⁰*

Portrayals of the agricultural labourer had a tendency to be less idealised than those of the shepherd. Although depictions of his life were far from realistic, descriptions of his work would often list his various tasks, which is why the character lends itself to the criticism of serfdom.³¹ As a result of Sentimentalism's democratic tendency, the agricultural labourer acquired more serf-like traits, losing many of the traditional, idealising features. He was given a voice to deplore the injustice of being forced to live a much worse life than that of his master and mistress, an aspect I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five.

The character of the serf appears in the genre of the comic opera, where, as it seems, he often became a mouthpiece for the author's criticism of the institution

29 Anna Bunina: *Neopytnaia muza Anna Buninoi. Chast' vtoraiia*. Morskaiia tipografia: St Petersburg 1812. 'Vesna', pp. 62–67 (p. 63).

30 Translation by Emily Lygo.

31 Klaus Garber: *Der locus amoenus und der locus terribilis. Bild und Funktion der Natur in der deutschen Schäfer- und Landlebendichtung des 17. Jahrhunderts*. Böhlau: Köln 1974, pp. 82–83.

of serfdom. Veselovskii's exploration of representations of the countryside in 18th-century Russian poetry suggests this view.³² In Iakov Kniazhnin's *Neshchast'e ot karety* (Misfortune from a Coach), for instance, a serf complains about his and his fellow serfs' miserable lives: their masters tell them what to drink and eat, and even decide who they may marry; the serf adds that their masters make fun of the serfs' misfortunes, yet would die from hunger without their hard work. In the comic opera, *Aniuta*, by Mikhail Popov (1742–c. 1790), one of the protagonists criticises the aristocrats who do nothing but eat, drink, go for walks and sleep while the peasants slave away and even have to pay their masters. Serfs appear similarly in fables by Ivan Khemnitser (1745–1784). In *Prazdnik derevenskii* (The Village Feast), for example, they complain that they must plough, reap or sow all year long and can never enjoy a moment of leisure. Drawing on Iurii Lotman's theories, Priscilla R. Roosevelt has suggested that the dramatic arts of late-18th- and early-19th-century Russia had a tendency to invade everyday life, of which the serf in comic opera may be considered a manifestation. The ruling class did not, however, interpret the presence of the serf in comic opera as a call to abolish serfdom, but rather, as Simon Karlinsky argues in his study on Russian drama, to expose the abuses of the institution without changing the system as such.³³

To a certain extent, then, the appearance of the literary character of the serf indicates that the ruling classes were aware of social inequalities. This philanthropic motivation notwithstanding, authors often instrumentalised the serf to express their views on topics other than serfdom. The serf thus became just another dramatic character, often to create a comic effect, as an example from a satirical poem by Denis Fonvizin (1744/45–1792) demonstrates. His 'Poslanie k slugam moim Shumilovu, Van 'ke i Petrushke' (Epistle to my Servants Shumilov, Van 'ka, and Petrushka) dates from 1760, when Sentimentalist ethics were beginning to emerge. The narrator is a nobleman who muses about the meaning of life and of the world. Unable to find the answers, he asks three of his serfs in turn. The first one replies that he does not know the meaning of life, but that he knows he will always have to be a servant. The second serf adds that he lacks the education to know the answer to such a question. He does, however, tell his master how the world works in his opinion: from serf to tsar, everyone wants to fill

32 Veselovskii, pp. 433–468.

33 Priscilla R. Roosevelt: 'Emerald Thrones and Living Statues. Theater and Theatricality on the Russian Estate'. *The Russian Review. An American Quarterly Devoted to Russia Past and Present* 50, 1991, pp. 1–23;
Simon Karlinsky: *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*. University of California Press: Berkeley L.A. 1985, pp. 116–149.

their pockets, which they can only do by deceit. The third serf agrees, suggesting that the only life worth living is a selfish one.³⁴ Fonvizin's use of the serf is less to express criticism of serfdom than of depraved human morals. The character of the serf lends himself to this literary task because he is the silent observer of a world in which he is not supposed to participate. The serf enhances the credibility of the author's message: if even a simple serf can comprehend the corrupted state of human relations, corrupted it must be. The instrumentalisation of the character of the serf impedes a serious examination of his social position. He becomes a topos, a stereotype against which to uphold other, more important views.

Moreover, in addition to his function of enhancing the authenticity of the author's opinions, the juxtaposition of the narrator's quiet way of life with the serf's labours serves the literary purpose of producing a comic effect. In Nikolai L'vov's (1751–1803) comic opera, *Silf, ili mechta molodoi zhenshchiny* (Sylph, or a Young Woman's Dream), the character of the serf also creates an entertaining incident. Andrei, a hard-working servant, complains about his lazy master and protests his lot in an aria, the usual genre in which the subject of serfdom occurs in comic opera:

Право, я не ради свету!
Ну да что, житья мне нету
Уж от ваших прихотей!
Будь и кучер и лакей,
Конюх, дворник, казначей.
Всё исправь, везде поспей,
Да ведь я один Андрей!
Я и дворник, и садовник,
Я и кучер, и лакей,
Конюх, дворник, казначей.
Всё исправь, везде поспей,
Да ведь я один Андрей!³⁵

34 Denis Fonvizin: 'Poslanie k slugam moim Shumilovu, Van 'ke i Petrushke'. In: N. Gaidenkov (ed.): *Russkie poety XIX veka. Khrestomatiia*. Gosudarstvennoe Uchebno-Pedagogicheskoe Izdatel'stvo Ministerstva Prosveshcheniia RSFSR: Moscow 1958, pp. 25–27.

35 Nikolai L'vov: *Izbrannye sochineniia*. Lappo-Danilevskii, K. (ed.): Akropolis: St Petersburg 1994, pp. 219–256 (pp. 232–233).

My thanks to Elena Kukushkina from the *Pushkinskii Dom* in St Petersburg for this reference.

*It's true, I say this not for the world!
What can I say, I have no shelter
From your whims and fancies!
If only there were a driver, lackey,
Groom and yardman, treasurer.
Get it done, be everywhere,
But I'm only one Andrei!
I'm a yardman, and a gardener,
I'm a driver, and a lackey,
A groom, a yardman, and a bursar.
Get it done, be everywhere,
But I'm only one Andrei!*³⁶

According to the stage directions for this scene, the serf sweeping the garden exits to the side. His purpose here is to create an amusing interlude between more important scenes which drive the plot. Although his aria voices criticism of the serfdom's social inequality, its predominant effect is tragicomical. As may befit the genre of comic opera, the character of the serf is endowed with clown-like features rather than those of a critic of social power relations.

Once the character of the serf becomes commonplace in comic opera, the content of his speech begins to lose significance. The serf evolves into an interchangeable puppet whose sole purpose is to entertain the audience, a function which trivialises him and his complaint about his destiny. If spectators sympathise at all with the serf, they do so in a patronising manner rather than with an aim to bring about social change. The trivialised image of the serf turns out to be a way of 'killing the serf into art'. The expression 'to kill women into art' has been used in feminist studies to describe a choice of unrealistic and stereotypical representations of women in art, which 'kill' or obliterate women because they prevent debates on the complexities women face in real life.³⁷ Once the serf makes his appearance in literature—in the guise of a comic character—the privileged classes may feel that they have accomplished their duty and can avoid further examination of the implications of his presence for their own situation. It should

36 Translation by Emily Lygo.

37 Heyder / Rosenholm, p. 52. The expression was inspired by Virginia Woolf's suggestion that women should 'kill the angel in the house'. In: Virginia Woolf: 'Professions for Women'. In: *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*. Harcourt: New York 1942, pp. 236–238.

also be noted that most actors in theatrical performances held on country estates were serfs who were completely at the estate owner's mercy.³⁸

The issue of woman's social rights and societal position was another topic addressed in various Sentimentalist literary works. Karamzin expressed his concern about the oppression of women in one part of his 'Poslanie k zhenshchinam' (Epistle to Women, 1795), even though he seems to think the problem only exists in countries other than Russia. He uses the liberation of women as an excuse for the Russian war against the Ottoman Empire, a country he regards as uncivilised and unenlightened and one in which women are oppressed:

[...] О Азия, раба
Насильств, предрассуждений!
Когда всемогущая судьба
В тебе рассеет мрак несчастных заблуждений
И нежный пол от уз освободит?
Когда познаешь ты приятность вольной страсти?
Когда в тебе любовь сердца соединит,
Не тяжкая рука жестокой, лютотой власти?

Когда не гнусный страж, не крепость мрачных стен,
Но верность красоте хранительницей будет?
Когда в любви тиран-мужчина позабудет,
Что больше женщины он силой наделен?³⁹

38 Laurence Senelick: 'The Erotic Bondage of Serf Theatre'. *The Russian Review. An American Quarterly Devoted to Russia Past and Present* 50, 1991, pp. 24–34;

Catherine Schuler: 'The Gender of Russian Serf Theatre and Performance'. In: Gale, Maggie B. / Gardner, Viv (eds): *Women, Theatre and Performance. New Histories, New Historiographies*. Manchester University Press: Manchester and New York 2000, pp. 216–235; Richard Stites: 'Female Serfs in the Performing World'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*, pp. 24–38.

On Russian women as actresses, see also

Wendy Rosslyn: 'Female Employees in the Russian Imperial Theatres. 1785–1825'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy (ed.): *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 257–277;

Wendy Rosslyn: 'Petersburg Actresses on and off Stage. 1775–1825'. In: Cross, Anthony (ed.): *St Petersburg. 1703–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2003, pp. 119–147;

Wendy Rosslyn: 'The Prehistory of Russian Actresses. Women on Stage in Russia (1704–1757)'. In: Bartlett, Roger / Lehmann-Carli, Gabriela (eds): *Eighteenth-Century Russia. Society, Culture, Economy. Papers from the VII International Conference of the Study Group on Eighteenth-Century Russia, Wittenberg 2004*. LIT: Münster: 2007, pp. 69–81.

39 Nikolai Karamzin: 'Poslanie k zhenshchinam'. In: Kucherov, A. (ed.): *N. Karamzin and I. Dmitriev. Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia. Sovetskii pisatel'*: Leningrad 1953, pp. 169–170;

[...] *Oh, Asia, slave*
Of violence, prejudices!
When will almighty fate
Disperse in you the darkness of unhappy misconceptions
And set free the tender sex from its yoke?
When will you recognise the pleasure of free passion?
When will love unite hearts in you,
And not the heavy hand of cruel and frenzied power?

When will not the foul watchman, not the fortress of gloomy walls,
But faithfulness to beauty be my keeper?
When, in love, will the tyrannical man forget
*That he has been given more power than a woman?*⁴⁰

Karamzin here raises the ‘woman question’, criticising societies which deny women their freedom, tolerating physical violence and coercion into arranged marriages, which became formally illegal in Russia in 1722. It is difficult to say to what extent Karamzin here also hints at the situation of women in Russia, who are not allowed to divorce even a severely abusive husband. In advocating a social system which allows women to choose their spouses according to their inclinations, Karamzin certainly echoes Sentimentalist views; he would also grant women the right to seek sexual fulfilment. The stanza quoted above contains terms which evoke the republican ideals that began to be discussed at the time—‘uzy’, ‘osvobodit’, ‘vol’nyi’, ‘vlast’, and ‘tiran’ (fettters, to liberate, free, power, tyrant)—eventually becoming key words in Decembrist communications about their revolutionary project.

A further sign that the early 19th century saw an emerging discussion of gender roles is the appearance of powerful female characters in the works of some male writers. Konstantin Ryleev’s writings feature heroic women who assume their civil responsibilities just as men do. Karamzin, who cherished the image of the naive girl in his sentimental works, gives an influential role in the public sphere to a courageous, authoritative woman in his novel *Marfa Posadnitsa* (Martha the Mayoress, 1803). Not everyone accepted this image of women. In fact, one of his contemporaries accused Karamzin of Jacobinism for having ‘... made a drunken

Maarten Fraanje: ‘La Sensibilité au pays du froid. Les lumières et le sentimentalisme russe’. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 659–668 (p. 662).

40 Translation by Emily Lygo.

and stupid hag deliver speeches in favour of the liberties of the Novgorodians and orate like Demosthenes.⁴¹

Sentimentalism's elevated regard for women manifested itself in the fact that, at the beginning of the 19th century, men's ideal of a woman began to feature qualities such as intelligence and education. Petr Makarov, for instance, was a Sentimentalist who argued that women should have access to education and knowledge, harshly criticising men who thought that this might reduce a woman's physical attractiveness:

But what shall we think of these people who are firmly convinced that a woman cannot acquire knowledge without losing the attractiveness of her sex, and who, as a consequence, wish that an entire half of humanity (and the better one) does not educate itself?⁴²

Karamzin, too, supported the idea that a woman's attraction did not reside in looks alone: in addition to virtues such as goodness and kindness, she should also have an educated mind. This was one of the reasons why, in the 1960s, scholars began to think of Karamzin as a progressive rather than a reactionary writer. French researcher Jean Breuillard, for instance, identifies democratic tendencies in Karamzin's symbolic elevation of women and in Sentimentalist calls to improve women's educational opportunities.

The way in which women became the focus of attention of male writers in Sentimentalist culture is further illustrated elsewhere in Karamzin's programmatic 'Epistle to Women'. Its opening lines, for instance, address women as follows:

41 Tishkin, pp. 34–38;

Nikolai Karamzin: *Marfa-Posadnitsa, ili pokorenie Novgoroda*. Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989; quotation from Richard Pipes: 'Karamzin's Conception of the Monarchy'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin. Russian Man-of-Letters, Political Thinker, Historian. 1766–1826*. Mouton: The Hague 1975, pp. 105–126 (p. 108).

Natal'ia Pushkareva suggests that this work by Karamzin initiated further interest in female historical characters, see

Natal'ia Pushkareva: *Russkaia zhenshchina. Istoriia i sovremennost'*. Ladimir: Moscow 2002, pp. 11–12.

42 'Mais que penser de ces gens qui sont effectivement persuadés que la femme ne pourra acquérir des connaissances qu'en perdant tous les attraits de son sexe, et qui, en conséquence, souhaitent que la moitié entière (et la meilleure) du genre humain ne s'instruise pas?'. Quoted in: Jean Breuillard: 'Positions féministes dans la vie littéraire russe. Fin du XVIII^e et début du XIX^e siècle'. *L'Enseignement du russe* 22, 1976, pp. 4–24 (pp. 7–13). Translation by Emily Lygo.

О вы, которых мне любезна благосклонность
Любезнее всего! которым с юных лет
Я в жертву приносил, чего дороже нет:

*O you, whose kind favour to me is
Kinder than all others! To whom from my youngest years
I've sacrificed the thing of greatest value:*⁴³

Here Karamzin rehabilitates the notion of femininity after the low standing it had been accorded in Enlightenment aesthetics. Mikhail Lomonosov's (1711–1765) 'Razgovor s Anakreontom' (Conversation with Anakreon), written in the 1760s, for example, suggests that any writer aware of his civic duties should banish love lyrics from his pen. The view supported by Lomonosov's poem is that a mature man should be proud of his achievements as a conscientious citizen and politician, and should not idle his time away in the company of women. In contrast, the narrator of Karamzin's epistle claims to be striving to adopt the feminine values he has found in women's circles, and decides to live a domestic life in their virtuous and kind-hearted company, in preference to the glory and status a warrior's life would afford him.⁴⁴

The functionalisation of women in Sentimentalist literary culture

One of the disadvantages of this kind of conception was that it objectified and functionalised women. Just as in courtly love culture, woman in male Sentimentalist thinking became a remote object of the man's desire, a 'universal ideal emptied of all substance'.⁴⁵ In Karamzin's perception, as expressed in his 'Epistle to Women', women were thought to have a civilising effect on men, which is why women's task was to help men to refine themselves. His epistle depicts how the most ferocious warrior spares the lives of his enemies if his action can gain the favour of the woman of his heart. The narrator further describes how in his mature years the gentle glance of a woman is a reward for the atrocities which he has had to suffer from men. He also relates how much he admires the nuns' charitable work.

43 Translation by Emily Lygo.

44 Karamzin 1953, p. 161;

Mikhail Lomonosov: 'Razgovor s Anakreontom.' In: *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*. Vavilov, S. (ed.). Izdatel' stvo akademii nauk SSSR: Leningrad 1959, pp. 761–767 (pp. 763–764).

45 Slavoj Žižek: 'Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing.' In: Wright, Elizabeth / Wright, Edmond (eds): *The Žižek Reader*. Blackwell: Oxford 1999, pp. 148–173 (p. 148).

Although this observation was meant to encourage men to imitate this laudable example it eventually functionalised women since it did not recognise them as beings with their own rights and claims. In the kind of thinking exposed in Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women', women are idealised either as an authority which offers symbolic rewards for men's military actions, or as exemplars of virtue and refinement from which men were supposed to learn.

The woman reader in particular became a symbol and an abstract point of reference for the Sentimentalist male author because it helped him to construct his conception of literary creation. The main concern of a Sentimentalist writer was that his works should be appealing to female readers. He adapted his style, topics, and linguistic level to what he imagined to be the liking of the 'fair sex'. The desire of pleasing a female readership accompanied and stimulated his writing process. By assigning special importance to the speech of women and to their domain of activity the Sentimentalist man wanted to challenge the rigid Classicist norms of genres. Women were considered to be ideal judges of the quality of a literary work because they were to a great extent unaware of the traditional requirements of genre. Just as Rousseau found the personification of innate goodness in his untutored wife Thérèse, who had a feeling for beauty despite her lack of education, Karamzin regarded women as ideal arbiters of taste precisely because they were considered to be alienated from culture. It is largely due to this feature that many scholars revised the image of Karamzin as a conservative writer and regarded the importance which he attributed to women as readers and arbiters of taste as an extension of democratic ideals to women.⁴⁶

In Hammarberg's view, the importance assigned to the female reader by Sentimentalism is a considerable departure from 'the traditional view of woman as passive and man as active'. It is true that, given their symbolic influence on men, women played quite an important part in the creative process, and that male authors feeling the need to adapt their writing to women's taste adopted more passive features. Nevertheless, Karamzin's new role for women in the process of literary creation defined most of them as readers rather than authors. The Sentimentalist idealisation of women as readers and arbiters of taste differed only marginally from their traditional role as muses who arouse men's poetic feelings, leaving the basic gender paradigm intact. Even though the woman reader became the axis around which Sentimentalist literary production revolved, women were still supposed to manage and monitor rather than create and initiate cultural

46 Kochetkova: *Literatura russkogo sentimentalizma*, 1994, p. 4.

activities. Carolin Heyder and Arja Rosenholm argue that in the perception of Sentimentalist men, 'woman is not a producer of a sign, but functions as a sign'.⁴⁷

Women were further instrumentalised by the fact that Sentimentalism's symbolic elevation of women served to a great extent as a means for the man to explore his emotional capacities. In this respect, the Sentimentalist man emulated the tradition outlined by elegiac poems written from the male point of view, such as in Western European courtly love culture, where the rejection of the beloved woman gives rise to abundant male monologues. As Catherine Bates argues in relation to English Renaissance poetry, the scenario of courtly love culture turns the abject male lover of *amour courtois* into a master of rhetorical wit.⁴⁸ Sentimentalist man exchanges rhetorical mastery for the subtleties of the sensitive soul, yet the way in which he instrumentalised women by perceiving them as objects for his literary creativity has similarities to courtly love culture. Like the male poet in Western love poems, the narrator in Sentimentalist literature is mainly occupied with 'defining his own self', as Jan Montefiore observes.⁴⁹ For Montefiore, the male narrator's introspective examination of his soul's emotional capacities turns out to be a narcissistic activity in which the 'other' helps to construct a reflection of the self.

To be 'sentimental' in the sense of 'sensitive' therefore meant different things to men and women. While it was a means of expressing man's intellectual freedom, it was considered to be a woman's inherent trait. Women were conceptualised as sensitive and passive beings who had to suffer without being able to overcome misery either through intellectual reflection or concrete actions. The gender distinction had a strong impact on the Sentimentalist conception of female death, which male writers tended to associate with concepts of virtue. Because women were considered to be the bearers of moral integrity, their lives could not go on once they had come into conflict with the requirement to epitomise innate goodness. When threatened, their virtue came even more to the fore. This idea could be found frequently in French literature of the 18th and early 19th century, as the following examples show.

In Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's (1773–1814) novel, *Paul et Virginie* (Paul and Virginia, 1788), the female protagonist chooses to drown with a sinking ship rather than be saved, since to be rescued, she would have to remove her heavy dress.

47 Hammarberg 1994, p. 109; Heyder / Rosenholm, p. 59.

48 Catherine Bates: 'Sidney and the Manic Wit of the Abject Male'. *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 41(1), 2001, pp. 1–24.

49 Jan Montefiore: *Feminism and Poetry. Language, Experience, Identity in Women's Writing*. Pandora: London 1987, p. 98.

She dies, hand placed on her heart and her gaze directed heavenwards—the very picture of a saint. François René de Chateaubriand's novel, *Atala* (1801), which was the precursor of his apology for Christianity, *Le Génie du Christianisme* (The Genius of Christianity, 1802), also reproduces the image of a young woman as a self-sacrificing pious virgin. Atala, a Christian girl raised in America, falls in love with a native. Just as they are about to consummate their love, however, Atala decides to poison herself in order to comply with her mother's wish that she should remain a virgin. Rousseau's Julie in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (Julie, or the New Heloise) dies after saving one of her children from drowning, death apparently being her only way to avoid the temptation of committing adultery.⁵⁰

Russian literature reproduced these notions of female virtue and death, the most prominent example being Karamzin's novella, *Poor Liza*. As Natal'ia Kochetkova suggests, the story epitomises the Sentimentalist clash between the ideal and real worlds, a conflict in which woman is the epitome of the ideal, usually with tragic consequences. In this case, Liza commits suicide after being seduced and abandoned. Her death, however, is preceded by a state of saint-like sublime religious illumination. As Christo Manolakev observes, Liza's is the first of quite a number of women's suicides in Russian literature across the following two centuries, from Alexander Ostrovskii's Katerina in *Groza* (Thunderstorm) to Lev Tolstói's Anna Karenina.⁵¹ In Sentimentalist discourse, this type of female death was considered to be a kind of moral victory. In Karamzin's novella *Iulia* (Julia), the female protagonist owes her life to the fact that she has preserved her innate goodness without falling short of the requirements of female virtue. Julia is torn between feelings of passion and virtue, each of which is symbolised by a different man. At the end, Julia's sense of duty and virtue prevails and she finds happiness in a secluded life and fulfilment in her role as a selfless mother and woman. Female death is also glorified in Karamzin's verse epos, *Alina* (1790), in which the female protagonist must die—even though, a devoted wife, she has adhered to the strictest principles of virtue—when her husband Milon feels attracted to another girl. Unlike her husband, Alina has preserved her innate goodness and is ready to sacrifice her life so he may be happy. Her self-sacrificial

50 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Paul et Virginie*. Ehrard, Jean (ed.): Gallimard: Paris 2001; François René de Chateaubriand: *Atala*. Bernex, Raymond (ed.): Bordas: Paris 1985; Rousseau, Jean-Jacques: *Julie, ou, la nouvelle Héloïse*. Launay, Michel (ed.): Flammarion: Paris 1967.

51 Christo Manolakev: 'La Pauvre Lise de N.M. Karamzin et le suicide féminin dans la littérature russe du XIX^e siècle.' *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 729–739.

intention rekindles Milon's feelings for her, but Alina has already poisoned herself and dies.⁵²

Worship of nature as an earthly paradise

The conception of woman as the epitome of goodness, an expectation she had to live up to, was related to the equation of woman with nature. In the course of the 18th century, Sensationalism had prepared the ground in the field of philosophy for an elevated regard for, not to say worship of, nature in both Western Europe and in Russia; the notion was becoming increasingly popular that the human senses were better suited than the human mind to acquire knowledge and truth. It had originally been expounded by philosophers including John Locke (1632–1704), Etienne Bonnot de Condillac (1714–1780), and Charles Bonnet (1720–1793). As a result of Sensationalism's philosophical position, and in reaction against Enlightenment rationalism, early-19th-century literature increasingly began to regard nature as a source of spirituality, which is why nature was held in particularly high esteem.

The trend was intensified by the religious current of Deism, which tried to prove God's existence without reference to the Bible, a cultural phenomenon endorsed by many Western European and Russian writers in the latter half of the 18th century. According to Deism, the individual finds confirmation for religious feelings in his or her own observations of nature. In his novel *Émile* (Emile), Rousseau outlines his concept of religion as 'inner feelings'. In the section entitled, 'Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard' ('The Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar'), he explains that people are capable of sensing divinity without a need for external rites. It is arguably this section which prompted Catherine the Great to prohibit the translation of Rousseau's *Emile*. Nevertheless, it became known among Russian readers, who were either able to read the French original, or because translations of the section included in other works managed to escape the censors.⁵³

Pantheism was another influential religious and philosophical current at the end of the 18th century. Being present in Western European as well as Russian

52 Kochetkova 1983, p. 135;

Gorbatov, pp. 134, 155–156.

53 'Profession de foi du vicaire Savoyard'. In: Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Émile, ou, de l'éducation*. L'Aminot, T. et al. (eds), pp. 320–390;

Wladimir Berelowitch: 'Préface'. In: Mustel, Chantal (ed.): *Rousseau dans le monde russe et soviétique*. Musée Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Montmorency 1995, pp. 5–8 (p. 5).

thought, it contributed considerably to the worship of nature common in Sentimentalism. A pantheistic approach to life requires the individual to discern God's existence in various manifestations of nature. The Bible contains pantheistic features in some of the psalms, which encourage the believer to celebrate God's greatness in every manifestation of Creation, such as the sun, the moon, the stars, the oceans, the mountains, the woods, the meadows, every living thing, all of which carry a spark of paradise in them. Although pantheism and fascination with nature as an earthly paradise became particularly important at the beginning of the 19th century, they already existed in the Middle Ages, both in Russia and in the West. They persisted in the works of religious thinkers such as 17th-century philosopher Blaise Pascal. In his *Les Pensées* (Thoughts), in which he attempted to write an apology for the Christian religion, he tries to convince atheists to adhere to the Christian faith by making them aware of the variety of universes of which nature consists. Similarly, the narrator in Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (Conversations about the Variety of the Worlds), published in France in 1686 and translated into Russian by Anna Trubetskaia in 1802, resorted to astronomy and science to explain the heliocentric planetary system to a lady during their night walks.⁵⁴ The notion of a plurality of worlds is addressed frequently in early-19th-century Russian Sentimentalist literature. It is reflected, for instance, in the title of a chapter, 'Mnozhestvo mirov' (The Multitude of the Worlds), in Karamzin's 1789 translation of Bonnet's *Contemplation de la Nature* (Contemplations of Nature, 1764–1765).⁵⁵

As a result of the deistic and pantheistic currents of culture, many Western European writers of the second half of the 18th century produced literary works which depicted nature as an earthly paradise or tried to demonstrate the existence of God in observations of nature. De Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul and Virginia*,

54 Iurii Lotman: 'Russo i russkaia kul'tura XVIII vek—anachala XIX veka'. In: Zhan-Zhak Russo: *Obshchestvenno-politicheskie traktaty*. [n.ed.] Nauka: Moscow 1969, pp. 555–604 (p. 558);

Blaise Pascal: *Les Pensées*. Kaplan, Francis (ed.). Cerf: Paris 1982, pp. 153–154;

Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle: *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*. Calame, Alexandre (ed.); Didier: Paris 1966;

Anna Trubetskaia (transl.): *Razgovor o mnozhestve mirov. Soch. Fontenelia*. [n.pub.]: Moscow 1802.

55 Bonnet, Charles: *Contemplation de la nature*. Heuback: Lausanne 1770;

F. Kanunova / O. Kafanova: 'Karamzin i Zhukovskii. Vospriiatie "Sozertsaniia prirody" Sh. Bonne'. In: Kochetkova, N. (ed.): [no title.] (XVIII vek 18), Nauka: St Petersburg 1993, pp. 187–202.

mentioned previously, is a pastoral set on a tropical island in the Indian Ocean, a paradise of innocent love and virtue in stark contrast with the corrupted culture in which the author lives. De Saint-Pierre's *Études de la nature* (Studies in Nature), published between 1784 and 1788, were intended to demonstrate that nature was built according to God's plan. The author provides careful observations of the various spectacles of nature, suggesting that they instil religious feelings in the viewer. Chateaubriand's writings are part of a similar cultural trend. In his *Genius of Christianity*, published in 1802, he tries to convince his readers to accept the Christian faith by appealing to their feelings and personal experiences, and by providing descriptions of natural miracles. A further indicator of this cultural trend is the great popularity of a collection of poems by James Thomson (1700–1748), which draw on the Bible and on Virgil's pastoral poems: a German translation of Thomson's *The Seasons* (1726–1730) provided the libretto for the oratorio *Die Jahreszeiten* (1799–1801) by Joseph Haydn (1732–1803), the Classical composer.⁵⁶

During the second half of the 18th century, Russian culture was fascinated with the notion of Paradise. The strong prominence of Freemasonry provides an intriguing example. Masonic thought was virtually obsessed with the idea of catching a glimpse of Paradise; Masonic lodges, often called 'Paradise restored', offered their members a sanctuary to experience 'Paradise within', the internal bliss enjoyed by Prelapsarian man. The Freemasons strove to recover the 'higher wisdom' with which man had been endowed in Paradise, so that they might once again understand God's 'Book of Nature', a capacity lost upon Adam's expulsion. In their lodges the Freemasons also attempted to perceive the 'Eternal Light' God had sent out to his chosen people.⁵⁷

The fascination with the notion of paradise and with nature as its mirror was reflected in Russian literature. Under the influence of the cultural trends of deism, pantheism, fascination with Genesis, and Masonic thought, which shaped his

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- 56 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre: *Études de la nature*. Deterville: Paris 1804;
François René de Chateaubriand: *Le Génie du Christianisme*. Firmin Didot Frères: Paris 1844;
James Thomson: *The Seasons*. Sambrook, James (ed.). Clarendon: Oxford 1981.
A similar fascination with the Book of Genesis had already manifested itself in Haydn's earlier oratorio *Die Schöpfung* ('The Creation, 1796–1798).
- 57 Stephen Lessing Baehr: *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia. Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture*. Stanford University Press: Stanford CA 1991, pp. 90–98.

thinking in his youth, Karamzin translated Christoph Christian Stürm's (1740–1786) *Unterhaltungen mit Gott* (Conversations with God) as *Besedy s bogom*, published 1787–1789. Karamzin's lyrical essay 'Progulka' (A Walk, 1789) is conceived in a similar spirit and clearly part of the literary tradition of describing 'philosophical' country walks, including Rousseau's *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (Reveries of the Solitary Walker, 1782), or Fontenelle's night walks with a lady interested in astronomy. A further source of inspiration for 'A Walk' was Karamzin's 1787 translation of Thomson's *Seasons* mentioned above.⁵⁸ Hammarberg suggests in her study that 'A Walk' describes the narrator's impressions during a country walk, and the reflections arising from his contemplations. As in his *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, excerpts of which were published between 1791 and 1792, Karamzin's aim is to record everything he sees, feels and hears. His nature studies sometimes include scientific elements, for example when he reflects on the infinity of the universe, wondering whether there is life on other planets. To create poetry is to imitate the idea of Creation. At night, when the protagonist cannot observe nature, he is given to philosophical thoughts about human virtue and life after death. The rising sun is greeted with hymns to Creation. His religious state of self-perception at night is reminiscent of Edward Young's (1683–1765) *Night-Thoughts* (1742–1745), a book frequently referred to by Sentimentalist literary figures.⁵⁹

58 For a comprehensive overview of the reception of Thomson's *Seasons* in Russia at the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries, see Levin 1994, pp. 155–195.

Levin details numerous contemporary Russian translations and adaptations, some based on German or French models, of Thomson's *Seasons*, especially in journal contributions; he also demonstrates the resonance throughout Europe of nature worshipped as an earthly paradise.

59 Gorbatov, p. 70;

Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*. Leborgne, Erik (ed.). Flammarion: Paris 1997;

Gitta Hammarberg: 'Karamzin's "Progulka" as Sentimentalist Manifesto'. *Russian Literature* 26, 1989, pp. 249–266;

Kochetkova 1983, p. 127.

It should be noted that Mariia Sushkova, one of Russia's most prolific 18th-century women writers, translated this work into Russian, see Ewington, p. 299.

At the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries, Edward Young and the genre of 'graveyard poetry' became very popular in Russia, especially in Masonic circles, see Levin 1994, pp. 135–152.

The narrator in Karamzin's 'A Walk' is a sensitive man receptive to the beauty of Creation, a feature Karamzin describes in his essay, 'Chto nuzhno avtoru?' (What Does an Author Need?, 1794), where he suggests that a good writer must have a sensitive heart and high virtues. In this concept of the author, there has to be harmony between the external world of inspiration and the author's emotional inner life. Karamzin's essay expresses this view by claiming that a divine gift is spoilt and useless if the vessel which receives it is unclean. In these writings, goodness is an inherent part of a man's character, a concept Karamzin had come to question, however, by the 1790s.⁶⁰

Another way in which Karamzin responded to Sentimentalism's worship of nature was in his reception of Salomon Gessner (1730–1788). The Swiss author wrote idylls populated by shepherds and shepherdesses who sit by the crystalline waters of brooks, or in shady groves, where they listen to the cooing of turtle-doves. Gessner's works had been well-known in Russia since the 1770s. Interest in him, and in Russian translations of his idylls, peaked in the 1790s, but persisted until the 1820s. Joachim Klein argues that, in the 1770s, Gessner's idylls began to eclipse Sumarokov's mainly French-inspired eclogues, whose main topic is love. Gessner's idylls, on the other hand, addressed a wider range of topics including friendship, family, childhood, youth, old age, birth and death, which rendered them appealing to many writers.⁶¹ Numerous works by Karamzin contain references to the Swiss writer, whom he considered the epitome of a virtuous author. Karamzin published his translation of Gessner's idyll 'Das hölzerne Bein' (The Wooden Leg) in 1783; his translation of a Gessner biography appeared in 1792.⁶²

60 Nikolai Karamzin: 'Chto nuzhno avtoru?'. In: Karamzin, Nikolai: *Izbrannyye sochineniia*. Makogonenko, G. (ed.). Khudozhestvennaia literatura: Moscow 1964, pp. 120–122; Rudolf Neuhäuser: 'Karamzin's Spiritual Crisis of 1793 and 1794'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin. Russian Man-of-Letters, Political Thinker, Historian. 1766–1826*. Mouton: The Hague 1975, pp. 56–74, 61.

61 Ioachim Klein: *Puti kul'turnogo importa. Trudy po russkoi literature XVIII veka*. Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury: Moscow 2005, pp. 38, 137–139.

62 Salomon Gessner: *Idyllen*. Voss, Ernst (ed.). Reclam Jun.: Stuttgart 1988; Anthony Cross: 'Karamzin's Versions of the Idyll'. In: Black, J. (ed.): *Essays on Karamzin*, pp. 75–90 (p. 75).

On one of the early Russian women writers to produce an adaptation of Gessner's idylls, Elizaveta Kheraskova, see

Ewington p. 43.

On Gessner's international reception, see

Gabrielle Bersier: 'Arcadia Revitalized. The International Appeal of Gessner's Idylls in the 18th Century'. In: Grimm, Reinhold / Hermand, Jost (eds): *From the Greeks to*

Sentimentalism's symbolic elevation of nature is represented most clearly in the genre of the pastoral. Alluding to the idea of Horace's *Beatus ille*, it celebrates the deliberate and peaceful pace of life in the country away from the hustle and bustle of the cities. Horace opened his second ode with the words, '*Beatus ille, qui procul negotiis...*', i.e., 'Happy he who, far from the cares of business, ...'. Russian imitations of this ancient model were frequent during the first two decades of the 19th century, especially in works by authors who combined an idealised Sentimentalist view of nature with neo-Classical literary ideals. References to the mythological Golden Age, when humans lived in harmony with each other and with 'Creation', were frequent. The poem 'Priiatnost' sel'skoi zhizni' (The Pleasures of Country Life) by Anna Volkova, for example, illustrates this tendency:

Лишь сельскаго коснусь я мыслию жилища,
 Вся восхищаюся природы красотой,
 Пленяюся ея прелестной пестротой:
 Она дарует нам то щастие прямое,
 Которое зовем мы *время золотое*.⁶³

*My thoughts touch only country life,
 I delight forever in nature's beauty,
 Bewitched by her wondrous diversity:
 She gives us that immediate joy
 We call a golden time.*⁶⁴

The idealisation of nature was often associated with literary reflections on the transitoriness of life and its material aspects, such as wealth and rank. This kind of theme was particularly present in Masonic thought with its emphasis on inner values and life after death. Many works by Sumarokov and Kheraskov address the fleeting nature of human life. It is a tendency associated with the high value attributed to the neo-Stoic notion of *spokoïstvie* (tranquillity) in 18th-century Russia. The poem 'Vodopad' (The Waterfall), written by Gavrila Derzhavin (1743–1816) between 1791 and 1794, manifests the notion that a contemplative way of life is preferable to worldly goods and glory. The poem uses metaphors

the Greens. Images of the Simple Life. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison 1989, pp. 34–47.

On Gessner in Russia, see also

R.Iu. Danilevskii: *Rossia i Shveitsariia. Literaturnye sviazi XVIII—XIX vv.* Nauka: Leningrad 1984, pp. 64–78.

63 Anna Volkova: In: *Stikhotvoreniia*. Morskaia Tipografiia: St Petersburg 1807. 'Priiatnost' sel'skoi zhizni', pp. 43–45 (p. 44).

64 Translation by Emily Lygo.

which originate in male domains, e.g. the image of a warlord eager to acquire immortal glory, whose efforts are compared to the noise and short lifespan of the waterfall: Derzhavin's poem suggests that humans will fall from the height of their glory just as the water noisily cascades down the waterfall, which is unfavourably compared to the peaceful babbling of a brook, a literary device which adumbrates literary Sentimentalism.⁶⁵

The equation of woman with nature

The idealisation of nature in Sentimentalist discourse was linked with specific gender patterns. Nature is an earthly paradise, God the world's architect and craftsman, and man the agriculturalist who cultivates God's garden. In panegyric odes, similar features are attributed to the ruler who imitates God's example when restoring a terrestrial paradise in Russia.⁶⁶ The myth of Peter the Great as tsar and carpenter is associated with these images. The place and role of woman, however, is different. Being the symbol of and in tune with nature, she does not work to transform the paradisiacal garden. And as the culture of her time has attributed to her an immaculate soul by virtue of her sex, her very being mirrors Creation. Panegyric odes reveal the difference: while the tsar is considered his country's universal engineer, angelic features are often ascribed to the tsarina.⁶⁷

65 K. Nazaretskaia: 'Ob istokakh russkogo sentimentalizma'. In: Guliaev, N. (ed.): *Voprosy etiki i teorii literatury*. Izd. Kazanskogo Universiteta: Kazan' 1963, pp. 3–34 (pp. 9–11); Andrew Kahn: "'Blazhenstvo ne v luchakh porfira". Histoire et fonction de la tranquillité (spokoïstvie) dans la pensée et la poésie russes du XVIIIe siècle. De Kantemir au sentimentalisme'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 669–688; Gavril Derzhavin: Gukovskii, Grigorii (ed.): *Stikhotvoreniia*. Izdatel'stvo pisatelei v Leningrade: Leningrad 1933. 'Vodopad', pp. 163–177; V. Bazanov: 'Ogliadyvaias' na proidennyi put'. K sporam o Derzhavine i Karamzine'. In: Berkov, P. / Makogonenko, G. / Serman, I. (eds): *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII—nachala XIX veka*. (XVIII vek 8). Nauka: Leningrad 1969, pp. 18–40 (pp. 22–23).

66 Baehr, pp. 65–89.

67 Joachim Klein observes an intriguing inversion of this paradigm in a panegyric ode by Gavril Derzhavin to Alexander I, in which the author ascribes 'feminine', angelic features to the tsar. This ode may well reflect the then current cult of feminisation. I am grateful to Joachim Klein for drawing my attention to his article. Joachim Klein: 'Russisches Herrscherlob. Derzhavin's "Hymne auf die Sanftmut"'. *Das Achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 37, 2013, pp. 42–55.

Karamzin reproduces Sentimentalism's equation of woman with nature in his novella *Poor Liza*: Erast, the aristocratic male protagonist, flees from the allegedly corrupted world of civilisation, seeking refuge in the primordial goodness of nature. He falls in love with Liza, a peasant girl who epitomises Sentimentalism's fascination with nature. The narrator comments on the unrealistic Sentimentalist view of women and nature in the following ironic terms:

Он читывал романы, идиллии; имел довольно живое воображение и часто переселялся мысленно в те времена (бывшие или не бывшие), в которые, если верить стихотворцам, все люди бесечно гуляли по лугам, купались в чистых источниках, целовались, как горлицы, отдыхали под розами и миртами и в счастливой праздности все дни свои проживали. Ему казалось, что он нашел в Лизе то, чего сердце его давно искало. «Натура призывает меня в свои объятия, к чистым своим радостям», — думал он и решил — по крайней мере на время — оставить большой свет.⁶⁸

He read novels, idylls; he had a vivid enough imagination and often transported himself mentally to those times (real or imagined), in which, if the poets are to be believed, all people endlessly wandered through meadows, bathed in pure springs, kissed like doves, rested beneath roses and myrtle and lived all their days in happy idleness. It seemed to him that in Liza he had found what his heart had long sought. 'Nature calls me to her embraces, to her pure joys' he thought, and decided—at least for a time—to leave the everyday world.⁶⁹

In Sentimentalist literature, nature is often called the Creator's 'daughter'. Behind female nature stands a male deity turning nature into the motherless daughter of a patriarchal god whose will, authority and omnipotence manifest themselves in every single aspect of nature, no matter how minute or majestic. Such gender-specific connotations of nature and other natural phenomena are reflected in the works of many Sentimentalist writers, both male and female. In their collection of poems published in 1802, for instance, the sisters Mariia and Elizaveta Moskvina associate the earth with femininity. 'Buria' (The Storm) is a poem in which the earth, initially described in idyllic terms, is being attacked by a storm. Personified earth expresses 'her' suffering in direct speech:

И земля из недр рыдала,
Глас свой к небу простирала:
«Я жестоку казнь терплю!...

On Derzhavin as an author of a more intimate type of panegyric odes, see also N.Iu. Alekseevna: *Russkaia oda. Razvitie odicheskoi formy v XVII—XVIII vekakh*. Nauka: St. Petersburg 2005.

68 Nikolai Karamzin: *Bednaia Liza*. Khudozhestvennaia literatura: Moscow 1950, p. 15.

69 Translation by Emily Lygo.

«Чем же так тебя гневлю?
«Долг свой верно исполняю,
«Всем дары я ристочаю,
«Не смеюся над трудом,
«А отплачена я злом.

*And the world wept from its depths,
It raised its voice to the heavens:
I endure cruel punishments!...
How have I angered you so?
Faithfully I've done my duty,
Given gifts to everyone,
I do not laugh at work to do,
But I'm repaid with spite.⁷⁰*

'Luna i solntse' (The Moon and the Sun), another poem by the Moskvinas, provides a further illustration of the Sentimentalist tendency to associate masculinity with symbols of authority from the natural world. It relates how the lyrical persona was initially fascinated by the beauty of the moon but came to understand the sun to be the true leader of the universe. In many late-18th-century poems, the sun features as a symbol of the Creator, and therefore carries masculine connotations.⁷¹

Images of woman associated with nature, spring and paradise go back to antiquity, to the Greek myth of Persephone, who is abducted into the Underworld by Hades and whose grief transforms the world into a barren, bleak and inhospitable place.⁷² A similar pattern occurs in the pastoral, where a young girl personifies happiness and spring's Edenic nature. If the shepherd's beloved reciprocates his feelings and is close to him, his heart is filled with happiness; nature seems to be an idyllic and pleasant place, or *locus amoenus*. Her absence, by contrast, causes torments described in images recalling depictions of hell; the world becomes a dark and desolate place, a *locus terribilis*.

In Chapter Four on Pospelova I will discuss the fact that late-18th-century descriptions of the *locus terribilis* surrounding the abject shepherd often included

70 Translation by Emily Lygo.

71 Moskvinas, Mariia / Moskvinas, Elizaveta: *Aoniia ili sobranie stikhotvorenii*. Universitetskaja Tipografija: Moscow 1802. 'Buria', p. 27; 'Luna i solntse', p. 38.

For more information on the Moskvinas sisters, see Ewington, pp. 423–427.

72 'Persephone. Kore'. In: *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike* (16 vols). Canick, Hubert / Schneider, Helmuth (eds): 16 vols., Metzler: Stuttgart 2000, Vol. IX, pp. 600–603.

Gothic imagery such as graveyards and otherworldly visions of the beloved. Russian readers became acquainted with Gothic literature in the 1780s, which is when translations of Thomas Gray's (1716–1771) 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751) began to appear. Karamzin's 1792 adaptation of a poem by Ludwig Kosegarten, 'Des Grabes Furchtbarkeit und Lieblichkeit' ('The Awesomeness and Loveliness of the Grave'),⁷³ was his response to the Gothic aesthetic outlined in German and English Romanticism; his 1794 novel, *Ostrov Borngol' m* (The Island of Bornholm), also reproduces Gothic imagery in its depiction of a tyrant who holds a young woman in a dungeon.⁷⁴

Sumarokov and other classicist poets employ imagery from Petrarchan love lyrics to describe the shepherd's emotional hell, describing the abject male lover's heart as burning, with poison running through his veins, and the glances of the beloved person striking him like arrows. He cannot appreciate the beauty of blossoming nature while his beloved is absent; on the contrary, he suffers all the more acutely. Eventually, death seems to be the only escape from his pain.

In pastorals, it is usually the male shepherd who complains about unrequited love.⁷⁵ The absence of his beloved causes him to express his feelings in abundant lyrical monologues. The underlying gender pattern functionalises woman insofar as her role is to create happiness. To test the authenticity of his feelings, and to demonstrate her virtuous character, she often feigns indifference towards the shepherd. Her own feelings, by contrast, remain unspoken; she never expresses despair in the face of unrequited love. She is a mute symbol of happiness and spring, always in tune with the beauty of Creation.

73 See Ludwig Theoboul Kosegarten: *Poesien*. Gräff: Leipzig 1788/1798, pp. 233–245.

74 Neuhäuser 1975, p. 60.

On the Gothic in Russian literature, see the following collection of articles:

Cornwell, Neil (ed.): *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 1999.

In particular, the following contributions in this collection pertain to the topic outlined above:

Derek Offord: 'Karamzin's Gothic Tale. *The Island of Bornholm*', pp. 37–58;

Alessandra Tosi: 'At the Origins of the Russian Gothic Novel. Nikolai Gnedich's *Don Corrado de Gerra* (1803)', pp. 59–82;

Michael Pursglove: 'Does the Russian Gothic Verse Exist? The Case of Vasilii Zhukovskii', pp. 83–101.

75 Joachim Klein: *Die Schäferdichtung des russischen Klassizismus*. Harrasowitz: Berlin 1988, p. 75.

The female character of Fate in emerging Romanticism

The first two decades of the 19th century saw an increasing interest in folk culture, which found its reflection in literary works. Poets both male and female began to merge classical characters, including the uncontrollable force of Fate, with divinities from Russian folklore. Frequent references to the uncontrollable force of Fate during this period express the Romantic scepticism about the goodness of the (male) human heart, which had prevailed in Sentimentalist thought.

Evgenii i Iulia, (Eugene and Julia, 1784), is the first of Karamzin's writings to focus on the influence of fate. Her destructive powers feature most distinctly, however, in his novella *The Island of Bornholm* (1793), where he expresses a pessimistic worldview insofar as his characters are incapable not only of moral self-improvement by means of education, but also of overcoming anti-social instincts. By now Karamzin has completely abandoned the belief in innate goodness adopted from Rousseau after his break from the Freemasons in his youth. His novella *Moia ispoved'* (My Confession, 1802) is a sarcastic response to Rousseau's *Confessions*.⁷⁶

Russian literature from 1800 until 1820 presents Fate in a way that reveals some of the character's evolutionary stages. As the personification of forces beyond human control, Fate is invariably female, appearing either—in antiquity—as a demigoddess endowed with the authority to reign over life and death, or—in political ideology—as a disruptive element. In Greek and Roman mythology, the Fates are three women who spin, weave and cut the thread and fabric of human lives. The myth has survived Christianisation; as Mary Kelly has found in her study on ritual textiles among Slav village women, it crops up in Slavonic folk traditions:

In Bulgaria, when a baby (for example, a prematurely born infant) was in danger of dying, a magic ritual that echoes Russian practice was enacted. A shirt was made by three women who, in the darkness of night, stripped off their clothes and let their hair loose. Standing on the roof of the house, they had to weave a piece of cloth there and sew it into a baby's shirt before the first rooster crowed. This magic shirt was then put

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- 76 G. Ionin: 'Anakreonticheskie stikhi Karamazina i Derzhavina'. In: Berkov, P. (ed.): *Derzhavin i Karamzin v literaturnom dvizhenii XVIII—nachala XIX veka*. (XVIII vek 8), Nauka: Leningrad 1969, pp. 162–178 (p. 177);
Neuhäuser 1975, p. 63;
Gorbatov, p. 81;
V. Vatsuro: 'Literaturno-filosofskaia problematika povesti Karamzina *Ostrov Borngol'* m'. In: Berkov, P. (ed.): *Derzhavin i Karamzin*, pp. 190–209 (pp. 206–208);
Ilya Serman: 'Chateaubriand et Karamzin, témoins de leur temps'. *Revue des études slaves* 74, 2002–2003, pp. 701–718 (pp. 706–707).

immediately on the baby to keep it alive. [...] Ukrainian tradition preserves a similar housetop ritual.⁷⁷

There is a striking resemblance between the three Fates and the three women's activity of weaving and being in charge of a human life. Their loose hair, moreover, is in keeping with the unbraided hair which, as Faith Wigzell observes, was an essential element in invocations of pagan (hence unclean) powers during divination rituals.⁷⁸

Fortune as the personification of an indomitable power appears in a number of 18th- and early-19th-century Russian literary works by women and men. It is commonplace to complain about her unfairness and unpredictability. As in Volkova's poem 'K moei podruge' (To My Lady Friend),⁷⁹ the name of Fortune very often simply serves as a metaphor for (economic) wealth. Also quite frequent is the idea that one may be able to shield oneself from Fortune's blows by retreating to a life of contemplation in the country—but only if one is receptive to nature's beauty. When saying that nature has taught her to abhor the transitoriness of Fortune's gifts, Volkova's lyrical persona openly expresses her disdain for the high value attributed to wealth. In her view, Fortune (representing economic wealth) is opposed to nature; true happiness resides in a pure soul and can only be achieved through the appreciation of nature.⁸⁰

The notion that a Horatian idealisation of the countryside helps people to develop inner strength and to grow indifferent to the upheavals of life also appears in the writings of Kheraskov, the author of a number of moralising poems. In 'Spokoïstvie' (Tranquillity), his narrator claims that man can only avoid being 'Fortune's slave' by living far from the temptations of the city, for example on a nobleman's estate. Here the Stoicist believes to have achieved such a degree of inner

77 Mary Kelly: 'The Ritual Fabrics of Russian Village Women.' In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia—Women—Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 152–176 (174–175).

78 Faith Wigzell: *Reading Russian Fortunes. Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998, p. 47.

79 Volkova 1807, 'K moei podruge', pp. 67–71 (p. 71).

80 The idealisation of nature and virtue as opposed to the corrupting effect of wealth which features in the works of many contemporary authors may have been influenced by the French author Jean-François Marmontel (1723–1799). His works, which include moralising tales, were translated by many Russian women and men from the 1760s onwards; see

Rosslyn, *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness*, 2000, pp. 75–76.

strength that he dares to challenge Fortune to try and upset his calm.⁸¹ However, his tone implies that he needs to rely upon (latent) aggression in his dealings with Fortune and her inconsistent machinations, a position which contradicts stoic indifference. Parallels with underlying gender-specific aspects related to republican ideals suggest that for man to be in control of his passions, he must suppress any female or feminine aspects.

In the works of Nikolai L'vov (1751–1803), a writer, architect and collector of Russian folk songs, Fortune is explicitly associated with sexual connotations. The lyrical persona in 'Fortuna' (Fortune), a poem written in 1797 from his country estate to a friend, shows respect for, as well as anger towards, the female character. He protests that he has been unable to catch this 'fickle', 'flying', 'naked Madam', to whom humans are as insignificant as toads or grass-snakes. Here, Fortune is not only sexually provocative ('naked'), she can also fly like a witch. Any attempts at a rational, scientific explanation of her dealings are futile because hers is a dark, devilish force:

Зовет фортуной свет ученый
Сию мадам: но тут не тот
(Прости, господь) у них расчет:
Они морочат мир крещеный!
Поверь мне, друг мой, это черт...⁸²

*The educated world call this lady
Fortune: but in this they have
(Forgive me, God), not reckoned right:
They do deceive the Christian world!
Believe me, friend, this is the devil...⁸³*

Well aware that Fortune will not be pleased to hear these words, the narrator tempers the sharpness of his outbursts pretending to have lost his mind. As in Kheraskov, the beneficial effect of the countryside is a panacea for the blows of Fortune. It also brings a Sentimentalist re-evaluation of the domestic sphere insofar as those fortunate enough to live in the countryside can spend their evenings in the company of their families, resting beneath lime trees. Rural domestic bliss is the reward for men who have renounced material pursuits such as a career in

81 G. Pospelov: 'U istokov russkogo sentimentalizma'. *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta* 1, 1948, pp. 3–17 (pp. 11–16).

82 Nikolai L'vov: 'Fortuna'. In: Serman, Il'ia / Makogonenko, Georgii (eds): *Poety XVIII veka. 1780—1790kh godov*. Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1972, pp. 236–240 (p. 240).

83 Translation by Emily Lygo.

the city or at court. L'vov's 'Fortune' presents a courtier who might well be Fortune's 'favourite,' but whose busy life brings him no happiness: he has no freedom, he is obliged to 'dance,' and finds no time to sleep because to do so would lose him Fortune's benevolence.

The description of a courtier's hectic life illustrates a common scepticism in Sentimentalist culture towards careerism and Enlightenment ideals of activism in the pursuit of public virtue. The notion of service has begun to be associated with self-interest. Moreover, the character of Fortune as a woman who reigns at court and of whom men seek favour is reminiscent of Catherine the Great's rule and favouritism, which often took on the guise of a gamble.⁸⁴ The poem may well be an expression of male frustration at being unable to exert any influence in the public sphere of the state. Another feature which L'vov ascribes to Fortune is that of the evil and irresponsible mother (*matushka chrezmerno bestolkova*). Finally, in another poem, 'Schast'e i Fortuna' (Happiness and Fortune), L'vov associates Fortune with the notion of luxury when he depicts her as a wealthy bride, whose abundant dowry and need for social interaction render the life of her partner, Happiness, unbearable, compelling him to leave her to go and live in the family of Love.⁸⁵

Explicit female connotations with Fortune also occur in the work of Ivan Dmitriev (1760–1837), a poet and friend of Karamzin's. In 'Iskateli Fortuny' (Seekers of Fortune), having declared that Fortune is a woman (*Fortuna zhenshchina*), the male narrator advises the reader to treat her like any other woman: ignoring Fortune will force her to pay attention to him. In another poem, 'Pustynnik i

84 Iurii Lotman: *Izbrannye stat'i*, 3 vols., Aleksandra: Tallin 1992, (3 vols). Vol. II, pp. 240–242;

In the 1790s, toward the end of Catherine the Great's reign, pornographic caricatures of the empress printed in London began to appear and pornographic depictions of her were published in Western fiction; see

John T. Alexander: 'Catherine the Great as Porn Queen'. In: Levitt, M. / Toporkov, A. (eds): *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*. Ladomir: Moscow 1999, pp. 237–248, and

Larry Wolff: 'The Fantasy of Catherine in the Fiction of the Enlightenment. From Baron Munchausen to the Marquis de Sade'. In: Levitt, M. / Toporkov, A. (eds): *Eros and Pornography*, pp. 249–261.

On pornography in the age of Enlightenment, see also the following articles in the same collection: Manfred Schrubba: 'K spetsifike barkoviany na fone frantsuzskoi pornografii', pp. 200–218; and

Marcus C. Levitt: 'Barkoviana and Russian Classicism', pp. 219–236.

85 L'vov: 'Schast'e i Fortuna'. In: *Poety XVIII veka*, pp. 397–400.

Fortuna' (The Hermit and Fortune), Fortune is depicted as a wealthy woman of loose morals who attempts to lure him away from his faithful wife, destroying the protagonist's peaceful family life in a humble cabin.⁸⁶

One of the attributes of luxury associated with Fortune is the chariot, as illustrated by Volkova's poem, 'Razmyshlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastia' (Reflection on the Vicissitudes and Inconstancy of Luck). Here the lyrical persona muses about a world in which

... каждый быв страстей в неволе
Клянет немилосердый рок,
Вздыхает в злополучной доле,
И горьких слез лиет поток;
Фортуны гордой к колеснице
Прикован в след ея течет,
Непостоянной сей Царице
Всечасно гимны в честь поет;
К ней длани робки простирая,
В душе сомнение храня,
Ея улыбки ожидая
Проводит дни свои стена.⁸⁷

*All who've been in thrall to passions
Curse merciless fortune,
Sigh in their ill-received lot,
And weep a flood of tears;
Bound to follow in the wake
Of proud fortune's chariot,
And to sing eternally
Hymns in praise of this protean Queen;
Stretching humble hands to her,
Nursing doubt within his soul,
Always waiting for her smile
His wretched days are filled with moans.⁸⁸*

86 Ivan Dmitriev: 'Iskateli Fortuny'. 'Pustynnik i Fortuna', In: Nikolai Karamzin / Ivan Dmitriev: *Izbrannye stikhotvoreniia*. Kucherov, A. (ed.): Sovetskii pisatel': Leningrad 1953, pp. 373–375, 384–385.

87 Volkova 1807, 'Razmyshlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastia' pp. 62–66 (p. 62).

88 Translation by Emily Lygo.

Here, even though there is none of the aggression and challenges which occur in the works by Kheraskov, L'vov or Dmitriev, Fortune is presented as a proud and inconsistent woman.

Urusova's 'K sud'be' (To Fate, 1811) does not address Fortune, who delivers worldly goods, but Fate, who determines people's lives. It displays aspects of late-18th-century pietistic and stoic tendencies. The way in which the lyrical persona confesses her guilt makes it clear that humans ought to accept Fate's dealings:

Судьба! перед тобой виновна я была;
Тобой довольна быть я в жизни не могла;
Тебя винила я, против тебя роптала,
Тебя всех бедств моих причиною считала.

*Fate! I was guilty before you;
Never satisfied with you in life;
I muttered accusations against you,
And thought you the cause of all my woes.*⁸⁹

These lines show respect for a female authority. In prayer-like words, the humble narrator asks to be forgiven for her complaints. Rather than Fortune, L'vov's force of darkness, Fate is a source of light and enlightenment:

Ты тайно действуешь, премудро управляешь,
И нашу тьму своим сияньем разгоняешь.
Ты чистою себя любовью воспаменя,
Сражалась много раз со мною за меня.⁹⁰

*You work in secret, direct things most wisely,
And banish darkness with your radiance.
And blazing with your purest love,
You've often battled me for my own sake.*⁹¹

Fighting for her protégés' souls, Fate here symbolises Christian values; later on, she is described as beneficent and generous. Although the poem contains notions of a battle, it feels different from Kheraskov's. Here, it is Fate herself who is struggling to prevent humans from vain pursuits, trying to protect them from these evils with her own hands, teaching detachment from worldly gains, and providing happiness

89 Translation by Emily Lygo.

90 Urusova: 'K sud'be'. In: *Chtenie* 4, 1811, pp. 105–106.

For a biographical background, recent studies, and translations of some of Urusova's poems, see Ewington 2014, pp. 59–295.

91 Translation by Emily Lygo.

and peace. Urusova's Fate is perceived as a saviour, with whom the lyrical persona does not quarrel, submitting to her will instead.

Summary

Chapter Two has discussed some of the literary impacts of Sentimentalist gender conceptions in Russia. The feminisation of literary culture had a positive impact insofar as it made education more accessible to women, a tendency which manifested itself in the increase of boarding schools for girls, for instance. Sentimentalist interest in reading may have contributed to this development: Unlike during Classicism, when reading was the privilege of an elite, reading now became accessible to people from all social classes, including women. Novels and minor poetic genres became fashionable; they replaced drama and epic prose, the genres which had been most highly regarded during Classicism. Despite these tendencies towards democratisation, most people living in Russia were illiterate and excluded from these cultural achievements. A similar ambiguity can be found in the increase of women's magazines. On the one hand, they provided women with reading material, helping them to participate in the cultural debates of their time. On the other hand, however, many of them focused on fashion rather than literature, and tended to trivialise women.

Literary salons, whose number began to increase during the first decades of the 19th century, offered women an opportunity to enhance their education and a platform for intellectual exchange. In the provinces, cultural centres and salons providing women with occasions to participate in culture also began to emerge. The major cities, however, remained the centres for this type of activity. Even though it became easier to embrace reading and culture, living in the provinces still presented a disadvantage for women who wished for recognition as writers.

Sentimentalism's egalitarian principles were reflected in literary works, which began to discuss the notion of the unconditional value of all human beings. The institution of serfdom was criticised, especially after the nobles, released from state service, had returned to their estates, where they came into close proximity with the consequences of serfdom. The use of the genre of the pastoral reflected the dichotomy which resulted from this more direct observation of nature and serfdom. The figure of the agricultural worker in pastorals was used to criticise serfdom, whereas the figure of the shepherd represents the genre's idealising tendencies. In the genre of the comic opera, the figure of the serf was even trivialised and functionalised.

Sentimentalism's democratic tendency further manifested itself in discussions about women's social inequality, in parts of Karamzin's 'Epistle to Women,'

for example, which includes Decembrist vocabulary albeit applied to the woman question. The downside of the Sentimentalist elevation of femininity was that it objectified and functionalised women, whose alleged innate goodness was considered to be an ideal precondition for them to judge the quality of literary works, but not necessarily to become authors.

A typical feature of Sentimentalism was its worship of nature and its conception of nature as an earthly paradise, as manifested in Karamzin's well known 'A Walk' and in his response to Gessner's works. Nature was perceived in female terms, which reflected itself in many pastorals and also in Karamzin's novella *Poor Liza*. Eventually, the character of Fate as an element which disrupts idyllic country life also appeared in many early Romanticist works. Fate was always perceived in female terms; in works written by men, references to her often carried sexual connotations.

