

Chapter Six

Revisions of Sentimentalist Gender Concepts: Anna Naumova

This chapter explores the metaphors which Sentimentalism's connotation of poetry with the feminine offered a woman author in order to justify her activity as a writer. The focus is on the literary and socio-political activity of Anna Naumova (c. 1787–1862), a woman writer who lived near Kazan, a city some seven-hundred kilometres east of Moscow, and who witnessed many of the city's socio-political events. My analysis of her work will argue that by endorsing Sentimentalism's conception of women as bearers of virtue, for example by referring to components of an idyllic landscape, she was able to enter the public sphere of authorship without overtly conflicting with gender expectations. I will further suggest that the guise of the morally superior being enabled her to speak out against various Sentimentalist clichés about women, such as the image and function of the country maiden in the pastoral, or the notion that women could not overcome emotional grief. Rather than embodying the harmonious and vulnerable female demanded by Sentimentalist discourse, many of Naumova's female literary characters are endowed with an authority which allows them to be in charge of their lives. This revision of Sentimentalism's characterisation of women manifests itself particularly strongly in Naumova's portrayal of Fate as an outspoken character, and in her advice to women to act on the basis of rational thinking rather than emotional impulses.

Biographical background

Naumova grew up during the last decade of the 18th century.¹ Her precise year of birth is unknown; only the year of her death is documented. The author of an article about her, M.A. Vasil'ev, refers to an epistle by Naumova, written in 1819,

1 I am greatly indebted to Professor Wendy Rosslyn for drawing my attention to Anna Naumova at a very early stage of this study. As it developed further, Rosslyn made numerous suggestions on improvements to the chapter on Naumova, and pointed me to further important sources, including M.A. Vasil'ev: 'A.A. Naumova v obshchestvennykh motivakh ee tvorchestva'. In: [n.ed.]: *Izvestiia Obshchestva Arkheologii, Istorii i Etnografii pri Kazanskom Gosudarstvennom Universitete*. Kazanskii Gosudarstvennyi Universitet: Kazan' 1926, pp. 149–174 (pp. 149–150).

in which the narrator says that she had already entered her thirty-second year. Vasil'ev therefore assumes the year of Naumova's birth to have been 1787, two years prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution. If this assumption is correct, Naumova would have been some nine years old when Catharine the Great (1729–1796) died. The ensuing authoritarian reign of Paul I (1754–1801), which may have affected her from age nine to about fifteen, may have laid the foundation for her life-long, strongly pro-monarchist convictions. Naumova was about twenty-five years old in 1812, the year of the war against Napoleon. This event gave rise to a number of patriotic poems among Russian authors, and Vasil'ev mentions that Naumova herself commemorated it in a poem printed in 1814, the year which marks the beginning of her appearance in the public sphere of literary publication, in which she remained up to the 1820s.

Her youth, and her early twenties in particular, were marked by two socio-literary trends. On the one hand, there was light-hearted salon poetry, initiated by the literary reforms of the Sentimentalist Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826). Then there was the political and patriotic style of the emerging Decembrists, the country's young and rebellious elite, who unsuccessfully tried to introduce their republican ideals into the political system. Their radical plans were fuelled by the seemingly liberal climate at the beginning of the reign of Alexander I (1777–1825). Naumova however, as I will discuss below, strictly condemned any attempts which might have threatened the existing social order.

Like Mariia Bolotnikova (published in 1817), whose work I discussed in the previous chapter, Naumova was a provincial woman writer. In contrast to Bolotnikova, we know that Naumova was actively involved in the cultural life which began to develop in the provinces during the first two decades of the 19th century, and that one of her main occupations was to provide an education to young girls, many of whom were orphans. She was born and spent her entire life in the village of Ziuzin. Although her landowner parents were rather poor, she managed to achieve financial stability and even wealth. She had a large number of wards, some of them from good families, who lived at her home, with Naumova looking after their matrimonial interests once they had grown up. Her concern about young girls' education may have been influenced by the 1812 war against Napoleon, which left many orphaned children. Her interest was also in keeping with the advice of the *Domostroi*, a domestic handbook, which listed the care for young girls and homeless people among a Russian person's duties.² Naumova

2 Nada Boškovska: *Die russische Frau im 17. Jahrhundert*. Böhlau: Köln 1998, p. 245: 'Der Kompilator des *Domostroj*, Silvester, schreibt im „Brief und Vermahnung eines Vaters

sacrificed a substantial part of her fortune when providing her wards with dowries in order to enable them to get married. In so doing, she fulfilled one of the Russian noble mother's most important duties towards her daughters. An account of Naumova's life by Vladimir Panaev, who was a young man when he met her, mentions that she was then in charge of some thirty girls, and that they were mainly occupied with handicraft.³ This was the kind of training likely to enable help them to earn a living after they had left her care.

Naumova benefited from the expansion of education and cultural life in the provinces, which began to manifest itself during the first two decades of the 19th century. It was the time when in and around Kazan a few cultured societies and literary circles emerged, manifestations of an authentic public sphere, some of which were accessible to women. Naumova was among the few women writers to enliven the literary landscape around Kazan, a region which was to produce other women poets such as Alexandra Fuks (c. 1805–1853).⁴ Naumova's small home town of Ziuzin was located approximately eight and a half kilometres from Emel'ianivka, the nearest centre of active literary life. We do not know to what extent she participated in cultured societies there, but Vasil'ev's article indicates that in her youth she frequented literary circles in Kazan.

When she was in her twenties, the Panaev family, who played a key role in Kazan's cultural life, seem to have supported her literary endeavours. One of the members of this family, Vladimir Panaev (1792–1859), was famous for his idylls in the style of Swiss author Salomon Gessner (1730–1788). Their works doubtlessly had an impact on Naumova's writing, since she takes issue with this literary genre. She was also a close friend of his two sisters, Glafira and Poliksena Panaeva. Poliksena married a man of letters from Kazan, F. Ryndovskii, and is known to

an den Sohn“; nachdem er dargelegt hat, dass er selbst zahlreiche Waisen ernährt und ausgebildet habe: „Deine Mutter aber hat viele junge Mädchen und obdachlose bedürftige Witwen in guter Vermahnung erzogen, sie in Handarbeit und jeglicher Hauswirtschaft unterrichtet, ihnen eine Aussteuer gegeben und sie verheiratet.“

In English: 'Having explained that he himself had fed and educated numerous orphans, the compiler of the *Domostroi*, Silvester, writes in "Letter and Warning of a Father to the Son": "Your mother, however, instructed many a young girl and homeless, needy widow in good faith, teaching them handicrafts and all manner of housekeeping, and giving them a dowry and marrying them off."³

3 Valerian Panaev: 'Vospominaniia'. *Russkaia starina. Ezhemesiachnoe istoricheskoe izdanie* 24, 1893, pp. 461–468.

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

have held regular literary evenings, with readings of literary works and performances of plays taking place in her home and Naumova a frequent visitor.⁵

Panaev, Naumova's mentor in this literary circle, introduced her to another cultured society, *Obshchestvo liubitelei otechestvennoi slovesnosti pri Kazanskom Universitete* (The Society of Lovers of National Philology at the University of Kazan).⁶ It was made accessible to people outside university, and welcomed at least one woman writer, making Naumova one of its members. Although it failed to live up to its goal of presenting a highly academic literary circle to the public, it nevertheless offered a platform for cultural exchange for novices in the field of literature as well as for more established writers. It had its own statutes and, by 1818, counted 75 active and 25 honorary members.⁷ Naumova's friendship with the Panaevs brought her an introduction to A. Izmailov (1818–1826), editor of the journal *Blagonamerennyi* (The Well-Intentioned). He was known to help people who had only just begun to write, and provincial authors in particular, and printed some of Naumova's poems in his journal.⁸

In addition to these involvements in Kazan's cultural life, Naumova's home seems to have served as a place for social and intellectual gatherings, which reflects the salon culture at its peak during the second decade of the 19th century, as described in Chapter Two. Naumova's collection of poems reproduces many aspects of salon culture, such as the way in which guests entertained themselves

5 B. Bokova: *Epokha tainykh obshchestv. Russkie obshchestvennye ob''edineniia pervoi treti XIX v.* Realin: Moscow 2003, p. 190.

On the fashion of presenting dramatic performances on provincial estates from the second half of the 18th century, see

Richard Stites: 'Female Serfs in the Performing World'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 24–38.

6 This society was originally a student circle founded in 1807 as the *Society of Free Exercises in Russian Philology* (*Obshchestvo vol'nykh uprazhnenii v rossiiskoi slovesnosti*). The existence of this literary circle illustrates the early 19th-century emergence of cultural institutions in the provinces. In 1790, Kazan already boasted a theatre and a literary circle, and in 1805 the University of Kazan was inaugurated, encouraging some of its students to set up the *Society*. Among its members were some sons of the Panaev family. They met on Saturdays to read and critique their literary output. In 1812 the Society became the more formal *Society of the Lovers of National Philology at the University of Kazan*.

7 S. Aksakov: *Semeinaia khronika. Vospominaniia*. Izdatel'stvo I.P. Dadyzhnikov: Berlin 1921, pp. 545–546; Bokova, pp. 188–190.

8 Vasil'ev 1926, pp. 153–154.

with games and amateur poetry: in her work we find poems about parlour games as well as album entries, which were also a part of salon culture. Naumova may well have had a wide network of acquaintances, as she must have had connections with people in Moscow, where she published her collection of poems and where her work was read during a session of the *Society of Lovers of Russian Philology at the Imperial Moscow University* (Obshchestvo liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti pri Imperatorskom Moskovskom Universitete).⁹ Her network of acquaintances helped her to function as a kind of matchmaker for her wards, a fact which further challenges the cliché about provincial women's secluded lives. Naumova's vivacious and convivial nature also manifested itself in her predilection for organising evenings during which her girls presented dances, with some of them even performing for the tsar.¹⁰

In the 1820s Naumova's participation in Kazan's educated society unwittingly brought her in contact with a circle which shared the Decembrists' revolutionary ideas, and counted Decembrists such as Vasilii Ivashev and Dmitrii Zavalishin among its members, as Vasil'ev's study shows. Naumova, introduced to this society by her cousins, was not initially aware of its political nature. She welcomed the moral and religious debates as they corresponded to her own ideals of honour, virtue, and courage. In her youth Naumova was an avid reader of tales of chivalry, which celebrated such ideals, and she admits to having adored them all her life. The circle in which she participated had emerged from a society with semi-Masonic rites. Freemasonry was an important feature of Kazan's authentic public sphere, as were secret political societies. With its emphasis on moral self-perfection, inspired by Masonic ideology, the circle which Naumova frequented appealed to her. However, she condemned plans about the restructuring of the political order as soon as they became a frequent topic in the circle. In 1823 Naumova heard that Vladimir Panaev frequented and supported revolutionary circles in St Petersburg, where he was living at the time. Opposed to any political movement directed against the monarchy, she found it difficult to believe that Panaev, who had celebrated arcadian harmony in his idylls, should be involved in such circles. After the Decembrist uprising, the frankness with which Naumova wrote about the revolutionary ideals of the circle she had frequented brought her into conflict with both state officials and many of Kazan's noble families which had supported the Decembrists. She withdrew to her estate in Ziuzin and, although

9 A. Merzliakov: 'O sochineniiakh Gospozhi Naumovoi'. *Trudy obshchestva liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti pri imperatorskom Moskovskom universitete* 20, 1820, pp. 66–79.

10 Panaev, p. 467.

in her writings she still frequently commented on socio-political events, she concentrated her attention on the education and matrimonial interests of her wards.

In contrast to Mariia Pospelova (1780, 1783, or 1784–1805) discussed in Chapter Four, reports on Naumova present her as an authoritative, sprightly, and strong-willed woman. Vladimir Panaev, who was an adolescent or young man when he visited Naumova's home with his father, admits to having feared and respected her. He further emphasises Naumova's temperament when mentioning her interest in horse riding, which did not seem to have diminished even after she suffered an accident in her youth which caused her to lose her eyesight and hearing on one side, a fact on which she comments in one of her poems.¹¹

Publications by Naumova and reviews of her work

The works of several authors, as well as various literary trends, are likely to have shaped Naumova's writing style. Apart from the tales of chivalry which Naumova read in her youth and the ideals of which she continued to worship throughout her life, she was, according to Vasil'ev, also familiar with the French language and French classicist literature.¹² Moreover, she is reported to have read the works of the Russian classicist and scientist Mikhail Lomonosov (1711–1765); the classicist poet Gavrila Derzhavin (1743–1816); Karamzin, the founder of Sentimentalist literature; Vasilii Zhukovskii (1783–1852), the initiator of the Romantic movement in Russian literature; Ivan Dmitriev (1760–1837), the Sentimentalist; and Alexei Merzliakov (1778–1830), the poet and man of literature whose folk poems seem to have inspired her to compose a few poems in this genre. In 1814 two of Naumova's folk-style poems addressing the destruction of Moscow during the war against Napoleon were published in a collection dedicated to this event, containing poems by famous writers such as Derzhavin and Zhukovskii, but also by minor poets. In 1815 two poems by Naumova appeared in *Trudy Kazanskago obshchestva liubitelei rossiiskoi slovesnosti* (Works of the Kazan Society of Lovers of Russian Philology). One of them is 'K iunoshe, ostavliaiushchemu rodinu' (To the Young Man Leaving His Homeland). In this poem the narrator warns a young man, who sets out to travel the world, that misfortune and evil may strike anywhere, and that escaping abroad will make them even harder to bear:

11 Panaev, pp. 467–468;

Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaia tipografia: Moscow 1819. 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75 (p. 69).

12 Vasil'ev 1926, pp. 149–155.

О юноша! поверь, сам опытом узнаешь
Что под луной нигде без горя счастья нет;
Разврат, который здесь быть может проклинаешь,
Гораздо более тебя там ужаснет.¹³

*O youth! believe me, experience will teach you,
There is no earthly happiness without sorrow;
Vice, which here perhaps you curse,
There will horrify you more.*¹⁴

The poem is an early example of Naumova's predilection for presenting her lyrical persona as a wise old teacher who advises young people on how to cope with life's difficulties.

In 1819 Naumova published a collection of poems under the title, *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov* ('The Solitary Muse from the Kama Shores').¹⁵ This work gained her relative fame as a writer, and it seems that travellers passing through Kazan often called at her house in order to meet the renowned woman poet.¹⁶ Like many other women writers, she was also dubbed the 'Russian Sappho'. However, the term was often used in order to refer to an 'unprofessional' style of women's writing. Either because of this connotation or out of modesty, Naumova rejected it for herself in one of her poems, as the ensuing discussion of this topic will suggest. Among Naumova's further publications, there are a few poems which appeared in Izmailov's literary journal, *The Well-Intentioned*.

From 1820 to 1830 Naumova continued to write, as her substantial collection of manuscripts shows; there is no evidence, however, that any of her works were published. Apart from poetry, which she often used to comment on current social events, in 1821 she also wrote two plays: *Vladimir i Mstislav ili sila liubvi i dobrodeteli nad chelovecheskim velikodushiem. Drama s khorami v 3 deistviakh* (Vladimir and Mstislav, or, The Strength of Love and Virtue over Human Magnanimity. A Drama with Chorus in Three Acts), and *Epitidy ili liubov' i mshchenie* (The Aepyti,

13 Anna Naumova: 'K iunoshe, ostavliaiushchemu rodinu'. *Trudy Kazanskago obshchestva liubiteli otechestvennoi slovesnosti* 1, 1815, pp. 276–277 (p. 276).

14 Translation by Emily Lygo.

15 Anna Naumova: *Uedinennaia muza zakamskikh beregov*. Universitetskaya tipografiya: Moscow 1819.

16 M. De-Pule: 'Otets i syn: Opyt kul'turno-biograficheskoi khroniki. 1815–1822'. *Russkii Vestnik* 7, 1875, pp. 56–79 (p. 78).

or, Love and Vengeance).¹⁷ Performances of these plays may well have been part of the entertainment in the literary circles hosted or attended by Naumova.

When Naumova's 1819 collection of poems was presented during a meeting of the *Society of Lovers of Russian Philology at the Imperial Moscow University*, she was celebrated as evidence of the fact that Russia had moved forward into an age of cultural refinement. In his comments on her work, Aleksei Merzliakov followed the Classicist conceptions of *translatio imperii* (transfer of rule), i.e. the notion that times of great literary achievement transfer themselves from one nation to another. He mentions ancient Greece and Rome, Renaissance Italy, the France of Louis XIV and the Germany of the previous century, and expects Russia to be next in line. He refers to the long-standing critical topos according to which the participation of women in literary endeavours is regarded as a sign of the high status of culture in a nation. He considers the achievements of Catherine the Great to be the necessary and ideal preconditions for this development, and honours Naumova as a highly gifted writer who has continued this legacy.¹⁸

Other critics, such as the author of a short review in 1881 of her work, reiterate the image which Sentimentalism had presented of women poets when declaring that Naumova spent her life contemplating the landscape around Kazan and enjoying herself by occasionally writing 'verselets'. He adds that her work contains the usual 'ahs' and 'ohs' common in Sentimentalist literature. Even though some emotional exclamations can be found in Naumova's poetry, this comment could give an inadequate impression of her work. Nature, for instance, does not feature prominently in Naumova's work. Her poems are also far from being sentimental 'verselets'.¹⁹

17 Vasil'ev 1926, p. 173.

On 18th-century Russian women writers as producers and translators of plays, see also

Lurana Donnels O'Malley: 'Signs from Empresses and Actresses. Women and Theatre in the Eighteenth Century'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Russian Culture and Society. 1700–1825*. Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke 2007, pp. 9–23.

18 Merzliakov 1820, pp. 66–79.

19 P. Vasil'ev: 'Kratkiia svedeniia o Kazanskikh zhenshchinakh-pistel' nitsakh'. In: Nazar'ev, V. (ed.): *Kalendar'-ukazatel' goroda Kazani*. Tipografiia gubernskago pravleniia: Kazan' 1881, pp. 138–141 (p. 139).

Overview of the poems in Naumova's collection

One of the main topics in Naumova's collection of poems is the Sentimentalist theme of friendship. Naumova's poetry often expresses grief about the lack of real friendship. Her lyrical persona regrets that people whom she had considered to be her friends have turned out to be dishonest, or that they have begun to avoid her without her knowing the reason for this emotional distance. Often the narrator addresses them directly.

In 'Vozzvanie k druž'iam' (Appeal to My Friends), for instance, she asks to know what she has done to deserve their rejection. In 'K Sashe' (To Sasha) or 'K Temire' (To Temira), she appeals to her readers to remember the now absent but once sincere friendship they had shared. Another characteristic theme in Naumova's collection is the Sentimentalist scepticism about the big city's glory, wealth and luxury. The narrator contrasts them with the simple but far more sincere way of life in the country. In the poem 'Na ot' 'ezd vernago druga v Moskvu' (On the Departure of a Sincere Friend to Moscow), for instance, the lyrical persona warns her addressee not to be too impressed by the corrupt life he will encounter in the city, and asks him to remember his children and the goodness of his wife Sasha, who are left behind in the country. Even though simple country life is an important ideal for the narrator, she also dissociates herself from the gender connotations which male authors of Sentimentalist literature had created for this topos.

The absence of sincere friendship is at odds with the image of the carefree country maiden, as poems such as 'Schastliva Delia' (Happy is Delia) suggest. There are also a few poems in which the narrator describes the importance of writing poetry. In some of them, such as 'K Fantazii' (To Imagination) or 'K Muzam' (To the Muses), the lyrical persona expresses to female poetic personae her appreciation of her gift of writing. A considerable part of Naumova's work revolves around salon culture, divination, fate, and the relations between the sexes; examples include 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba' (Yesterday's Reading), 'K sud'be' (To Fate), or 'Vozrazhenie sud'by' (Fate's Rebuttal). In poems such as 'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.' (On A.L.S.'s Precious Casket), 'V al'bom moemu drugu L.N.' (For My Friend L.N.'s Album), 'Urok molodym devushkam' (A Lesson to Young Girls) or 'Kupidonova lotereia' (Cupid's Lottery), the narrator emphasises how important it is for a young woman to choose the right husband. There are also a few poems in which she quite openly expresses her opinion on current socio-political issues. One of them is 'Na vol'nodumstvo' (On Free-Thinking), in which she condemns the social unrest free-thinking could bring. In poems such as 'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam' (Appeal to Russian Women), she criticises the lack of patriotic feelings in contemporary society. Elsewhere, for example in 'Na smert'

Derzhavina' (On the Death of Derzhavin), she honours great Russian writers of her time. 'Russkii pesni' (Russian Songs) and 'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila' (The Young Woman Walked across the Field) are among her few works to imitate folk poetry.²⁰

In none of Naumova's poems can we find the enthusiastic descriptions of nature which were such a crucial feature of Sentimentalist literature at the time when she was writing. In her work, nature is of secondary importance. When she refers to idyllic scenery, it is usually to deconstruct the cultural meaning associated with it. Her focus has shifted to questions of interpersonal relationships and the impact of Fate on human life.

Some of the topics in Naumova's poetry originate in domains strongly associated with women, such as marriage and salon culture. As I have outlined, Naumova was a fairly well-known author in her time. However, her choice of topics may have been considered too personal, which is most likely the reason why she later fell out of favour with readers and critics. It may well be that the works of women authors of that period have been overlooked by readers and scholars for such a long time because women writers were expected to have different standards of originality in their poems about topics which were part of the female sphere of life rather than subjects in line with male-established norms.

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- 20 Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k druž'iam', pp. 7–17;
'K Sashe', pp. 89–91;
'K Temire', pp. 89–102;
'Na ot ' 'ezd vernago druga v Moskvu', pp. 85–88;
'Schastliva Deliia, Poet uedinennyi', pp. 130–135;
'K Fantazii', pp. 8–23;
'K Muzam', pp. 143–150;
'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84;
'K sud 'be', pp. 59–64;
'Vozrazhenie sud 'by', pp. 65–75;
'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.', p. 44;
'V al 'bom moemu drugu L.N.', p. 45;
'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37;
'Kupidonova loteria', pp. 50–48;
'Na vol 'nodumstvo', pp. 162–165;
'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam', pp. 188–193;
'Na smert' Derzhavina', pp. 24–29;
'Russkii pesni', pp. 38–39;
'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila', pp. 40–43.

Naumova creates her self-image as a woman poet

The first poem of Naumova's collection is called 'K sviatomu kliuchu' (To the Holy Spring). In it, Naumova crucially establishes her self-image as a woman poet, thereby justifying her activity as a writer. Unlike in other poems in which she addresses the importance of writing to her, such as 'To Imagination' or 'To the Muses', Naumova here hints at the elements of a typically Sentimentalist idyllic landscape. Her lyrical persona adopts the guise of the modest country maiden, expressing her hesitation to ascend Mount Parnassus, a metaphor for poetry in Classicist discourse, declaring that she has chosen a different and more contemplative mode of writing symbolised by the holy waters of the Well of Hippocrene:

Оставя помysl дерзновенной,
Мечтой к Парнассу не лечу,
Но в меланхолии смиренной
Ключу Святому дань плачу.
Парнасс, чрезчур гора крутая,
Ну, мнелъ взбираться на нее?
Попытка в том былаб пустая.
И так оставлю я ее.

Довольствуюсь в иную пору,
Уединяясь вечерком,
Всходить на ту високу гору,
Котора над Святым ключем,
На ней сижу и размышляю,
Иль с книгою в руках лежу,
Иль мысль прошедшим забавляю,
Иль вниз на ключь Святой гляжу.

На что мне воды Иппокрены?
Напьюсь в охоту из него;
Судьбы и время перемены
Напомнят мне струи его. —
Его водой я умываюсь,
Его теченьем веселюсь,
Его я музой называюсь,
Им утешаюсь, им живлюсь.²¹

*I've left behind my daring designs,
I dream no longer of Parnassus,
But with melancholic acceptance*

21 Naumova 1819, 'K sviatomu kliuchu', pp. 3–6 (pp. 3–4).

*I pay my tribute to the Sacred spring.
Parnassus is a peak too steep,
Should I be trying to ascend?
I know it's futile even to try,
And so I let the idea go.*

*Being content another time
Spending the evening on my own,
To climb up to that highest peak
That rises above the Sacred spring,
There I sit and think my thoughts,
Or lie, a book clasped in my hands,
Or entertain some thoughts of old,
Or once again look on the Sacred spring.*

*What are the waters of Hippocrene to me?
I'll gladly drink my fill from them;
Fates and changes over time
Its streams bring to my mind.
I wash myself with those waters,
I calm myself with that current,
I call myself these waters' muse,
Take comfort, even life from them.²²*

These octets express the kind of understatement expected of authors at the time—nd of women in particular: a declaration that they were unable to or would not compete with established writers.²³

A reply to Naumova's opening poem suggests how important it was at the time for a woman writer to profess modesty and gratitude for her male mentors' support. Merzliakov responded to Naumova's work with a few lines, taking up the image of the muse and the Holy Spring of Hippocrene, yet complaining that her poems did not mention him explicitly enough as her poetic model. In her reply, Naumova reassured him of the importance of his support, apologising for her muse's thoughtlessness. Naumova's use of the image of the muse as an excuse for

22 Translation by Emily Lygo.

23 Vasil'ev 1926, p. 154.

A similar gesture occurs in the foreword to Mariia Bolotnikova's collection of poems, for example, where she reassures her readers that she has no intention whatsoever to measure herself against more gifted and better educated authors, but that she simply enjoys writing poetry for her closest friends, see M. Bolotnikova: 'Predislovie'. In: *Der-evenskaia lira, ili chasy uedineniia*. Tipografiia Reshetnikova: Moscow 1817, pp. i-iv, as discussed in Chapter Five.

her non-conformity demonstrates how the poet has endowed this female character with features of irrationality and fickleness, and that it is not Naumova herself who has forgotten to mention her mentor. As mentioned in Chapter Three, women authors projected these features onto the female character of the muse in order to apologise for their non-conformist behaviour in the male-dominated world of literature.

Not only does Naumova's opening poem profess modesty with regard to her writing skills; to a certain extent it also implies dissociation from the Classicist canon. Her verses hint at the opening of *L'Art poétique* (The Art of Poetry, 1674) by French author Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711). Well known in Russia both in its original version and in translations, it revived neo-Classicism at the beginning of the 19th century, when Anna Bunina's (1774–1829) translation of its first canto was published.²⁴ In the first lines of *The Art of Poetry*, the French 'Legislator of Parnassus', as Boileau was called in France, issues a warning to aspiring poets, advising them to consider carefully whether they have the talent and necessary strength to undertake the writing of poetry:

C'est en vain qu'au Parnasse un téméraire auteur
Pense de l'art des vers atteindre la hauteur:
S'il ne sent point du ciel l'influence secrète,
Si son astre en naissant ne l'a formé poète,
Dans son génie étroit il est toujours captif:
[...]
Craignez d'un vain plaisir les trompeuses amorces,
Et consultez longtemps votre esprit et vos forces.

*Rash Author, 'tis a vain presumptuous Crime
To undertake the Sacred Art of Rhyme;
If at thy Birth the Stars that rul'd thy Sense
Shone not with a Poetic Influence:
In thy strait Genius thou still be bound*

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- 24 J. Klein: 'Sumarokov und Boileau. Die Epistel „Über die Verskunst“ in ihrem Verhältnis zur „Art poétique“. Kontextwechsel als Kategorie der vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft'. *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 50, 1990, pp. 254–304;
D. Lang: 'Boileau and Sumarokov. The Manifesto of Russian Classicism'. *The Modern Language Review* 43, 1948, pp. 500–506;
I. Klein: 'Russkii Bualo? Epistola Sumarokova „O Stikhotvorstve“ v vospriatii sovremennikov'. In: XVIII vek 18, Nauka: St Petersburg 1993, pp. 40–58;
A. Bunina: 'Nauka o stikhotvorstve iz G. Boalo'. *Neopytnaia muza*. Tipografia Shnora: St Petersburg 1809. 'Nauka o stikhotvorstve iz G. Boalo', pp. 91–100.

[...]

*Fear the allurements of a specious Bait,
And well consider your own Force and Weight.*²⁵

Choosing an alternative poetic metaphor to Boileau's Mount Parnassus, Naumova's narrator climbs Helicon, the other mountain dedicated to poets, and delights in the Holy Spring of Hippocrene. According to ancient mythology, this source sprang up when Pegasus' hoof struck Helicon, and ever since has quenched aspiring poets' thirst of inspiration. Both Parnassus and Helicon were seats of Apollo and the Muses. However, Naumova is careful to elaborate only upon the image of the muses and the idyllic scenery of the source which evokes arcadian landscapes typical of Sentimentalist literature. As the narrator washes herself in the refreshing, comforting water of the spring, she considers herself one of its muses.

The woman poet as a muse is incompatible with male representations of the poet, and contrasts sharply with the masculine language of Boileau's *Art of Poetry*, which brims with rhetoric of the sublime, i.e. allusions to vigour, mountains and the creative genius. Naumova, on the other hand, associates the woman poet with calmness and melancholy, echoing Sentimentalist concepts of the writing of poetry as a spontaneous act.²⁶

As in her prayer 'To Imagination', Naumova's poetry frequently evokes female characters, in this case an inspirational female deity in white surrounded by roses and lilies.²⁷ Naumova's poem 'To the Muses' also associates the creative process with female characters. Revising Sentimentalist images about the writing process, where it is Creation which inspires the poet, the narrator in 'To the Muses' declares that it is not nature but the muses who have taught her how to write:

Вы управляли всеконечно
Умом, и сердцем, и душой,
Стараясь добросердечно
Образовать талант и мой.²⁸

*You always held sway over me,
My mind, my heart and my soul,*

25 Nicolas Boileau: *Satires, Épitres, Art poétique*. J. Collinet (ed.): Gallimard: Paris 1985, pp. 227–258 (p. 227);

Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux: *The Art of Poetry*. Soames, William (transl.): Bentley and Magnès: London 1683, p. 1; sadly, Soames' English translation does not convey Boileau's comparison of poetry with a dangerously high mountain.

26 In this respect, there is a resemblance between Pospelova's and Naumova's works.

27 Naumova 1819, 'K Fantazii', pp. 18–23.

28 Naumova 1819, 'K muzam', pp. 143–150 (p. 143; p. 147).

*Trying hard, sincerely,
To shape my talent as well.*²⁹

Contrary to the way in which the muses are often presented in poetry written by men, i.e. as charming sources of inspiration, here they are imperious authorities:

Велите — воспою Темиру,
Невинность, счастье, любовь;
Велите — и тотчас прославлю
Я благоденство юных лет

*Command me—I will sing of Temira,
Innocence, joy and love;
Command me—and at once I'll praise
The flowering of youth.*

The verb 'command' (*velite*) is repeated twice more in this poem and expresses the woman poet's deference to the muses' authority. If they tell her to do so, she will also sing the glory of the tsar on her lyre. However, in contrast with the Classicist and male-connoted imagery imposed by leading poets such as Boileau, she will not praise him with loud trumpet-blasts, but pour out her unpretentious, yet sincere feelings for him through the lyre:

Пусть те трубами восхищают,
Я лирой чувства изъясню.

*Let them take delight in trumpets,
I'll express my feelings with the lyre.*

The trumpet (*truba*) and the lyre (*lira*) have specific poetic meanings. While the loud and heroic trumpet is a symbol of high genres of poetry such as the ode—often the panegyric ode at that, announcing wars and victories—the lyre symbolises the genre of poetry as such; it could also be associated with middle genres such as the Anacreontic ode, whose theme is love.³⁰ In Sentimentalism, and in Naumova's work in particular, the lyre stands for poetry ranking lower in the Classicist genre system.

The use of symbols which diverge from male-connoted Classicist models, such as substituting the lyre for the trumpet, for example, helps women poets create their self-image as authors, and enables them to justify their activity as writers. Despite its essentialist assumptions, the Sentimentalist concept of the woman writer

29 Translation by Emily Lygo.

30 Joachim Klein: 'Trompete, Schalmei, Lyra und Fiedel (Poetologische Sinnbilder) im russischen Klassizismus.' *Zeitschrift für slavische Philologie* 44, 1984, pp. 1–19.

turns out to be beneficial for women poets as creatures outside the (masculine) tradition, assuming their innate goodness, and thereby allowing them to pour out their feelings in poetry.

In her poem 'To the Holy Spring', Naumova reverts to a tradition established for the so-called weaker sex, heeding Boileau's advice that only the strong and chosen ones should follow the path he has outlined. This becomes clear from the continuation of her opening poem, in which a brook springs from the Holy Spring of Hippocrene. The muse-poet enjoys sitting on the banks of the stream, reflecting on the ephemeral nature and inconsistencies of life:

О милый ключь, о ключь мой милой!
Течешь в долине ты ручьем,
И сердцу непостижной силой
Гласишь журчанием своим:
«Я и теперь не пременялся,
«Хоть много видел перемен;
«В теченьи я не изменился,
«Но был свидетелем измен.³¹

*O sweet spring, my dear sweet spring!
Your stream flows through this valley,
And with incomprehensible strength
Your burbling speaks to my heart:
'Still now I have not changed at all,
Though I've seen many other changes,
My current has not changed one bit,
Though I have witnessed treachery.³²*

Like other women authors of the 18th and early 19th centuries, Naumova uses the topos of the brook in her opening poem as a means of creating her self-image and to justify her activity as a poet: the idyllic landscape around her inspires her to contemplate human nature.

Inspired by the French writer Antoinette du Ligier de La Garde Deshoulières (c. 1638–1694) and her poem, 'Le ruisseau' (The Brook), many Russian women poets employed this topos. Among them were Mariia Sushkova (1752–1803), Ekaterina Urusova (1747–?), Alexandra Khvostova (1767–1853), Mariia Pospelova, Anna Volkova (1781–1834), and Mariia Bolotnikova, as outlined in Chapter Three. The topos is attractive to these women writers because of Sentimentalism's predilection for the pastoral and its view of women as being particularly in tune

31 Naumova 1819, 'К sviatomu kliuchu', pp. 3–6 (p. 4).

32 Translation by Emily Lygo.

with nature. Also, it excludes love, a particularly delicate, not to say immoral subject for women of that time to write about. Many poems use the brook metaphor to focus on the grief caused by the insincerity of false friends.

As in Urusova's 'Ruchei' (The Brook), the clear waters are often associated with the lyrical persona's mood.³³ The same is true of Naumova's poem, in which the brook is given a voice to declare that

«Струи мои и днесь прозрачны,
«По тем же камешкам теку;
«Твои же мысли стали мрачны
«Ты часто чувствуешь тоску.»

*My waters are still flowing clear,
I'm running over these same stones;
Your thoughts have grown despondent,
You're often filled with sorrow.*

As in other poems using this topos, the brook in Naumova's poem supplants the friend in whom the narrator has been accustomed to confide her thoughts.

By reproducing images of women as solitary beings who go for walks in the country and whose only friend is a brook, Naumova avoids conflict with Sentimentalist concepts about women poets.

Deconstructing the Sentimentalist topos of woman's closeness to nature

If, at the beginning of her collection, Naumova refers to the Sentimentalist topos of woman's closeness to nature in order to construct her self-image as an author, she takes issue with this concept in her poems, 'K Delii' (To Delia) and 'Happy is Delia'.³⁴ As frequently occurs in her work, the two poems are a dialogue between the representative of a poetic tradition (To Delia), and a narrator who criticises this view (Happy is Delia).³⁵

33 Ekaterina Urusova: 'Ruchei'. In: Göpfert, Frank / Fainshtein, Mikhail (eds): *Predstatel' nitsy muz. Russkie poetessy XVIII veka*. Göpfert: Wilhelmshorst 1998, pp. 216–217.

For an English translation of this poem by Urusova, see Ewington, pp. 276–280.

34 Naumova 1819, 'K Delii', pp. 127–129; 'Schastliiva Delii, Poet uedinennyi...'. pp. 130–135. The full Russian text of these two poems and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

35 The genre of a poetic dialogue can also be found in the works by other contemporary women poets, see Frank Göpfert: 'Russische Dichterinnen des 18. Jahrhunderts im

‘To Delia’ is written from a male poet’s point of view. He envies Delia for her peaceful life in a little cabin in the country, close to nature and far away from the city’s hustle and bustle, expressing his hope that she—innocent and free from harmful passions—will continue to run across fields and walk in groves. Just like Erast at the beginning of Karamzin’s archetypical Sentimentalist novel *Bednaia Liza* (Poor Liza, 1792), the male persona in this poem associates woman with nature and absence of conflict. In his eyes both women and nature are uncorrupted by civilisation and the human vices it has engendered. He literally equates woman with nature when he says of Delia that she blossoms like a flower:

Меж тем в полях своих, невинная душой,
Ты, Делия, цветешь, не зная злой кручины.³⁶

*While in your fields, your soul is innocent,
You blossom, never knowing evil sorrow.*³⁷

It is this equation of woman with nature and happiness which Naumova challenges in her reply, ‘Happy is Delia.’ The poem opens with the word ‘Schastliiva’ (Happy...), a variation on the standard translation of the Horatian *Beatus ille*, i.e. ‘Blazhen, kto’ (Blessed he who). By alluding to the Horatian model, Naumova evokes the idea that happiness can only be found in the peaceful countryside. She dissociates herself from the pastoral tradition, however, when her narrator gives an ironic account of the man’s description of Delia in the previous poem. She mocks his sentimental tone and imitates his comparison of Delia with a pure, innocent, heavenly creature who spends her carefree days outside, or in the solitude of her little cabin. The female lyrical persona’s irony manifests itself in repetitions such as ‘tak milo, milo’ (so sweetly, sweetly) to describe the man’s way of extolling his Delia, and in criticism of his endowing Delia with all kinds of charming epithets, claiming that he must have been inspired by an angel to be thinking of weaving a wreath of myrtle and lilies for Delia. Naumova’s narrator further ridicules the male perception of women according to which Delia’s feelings are more sublime than those of mere mortals, and man’s object of adoration a symbol of Eden.

She then asks the man to tell her where the wonderful Delia lives, because if she really existed, she would go to her straight away and spend her days with Delia

Selbst- und Fremdverständnis klassizistischer Dichtung. Elizaveta Cheraskova und Ekaterina Urusova. In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 21–40.

36 Naumova 1819, ‘K Delii’, pp. 127–129 (p. 128).

37 Translation by Emily Lygo.

in her peaceful solitude, going for walks with her along a little brook and singing songs with her. She repeats her question to the poet and insists that he show her the way to his beloved, expressing her impatience in phrases such as 'no gdezl' (yet where now) and the word 'gde' (where) several times. Subsequent lines imply that the male poet has failed to explain where such a miraculous creature might live and the narrator, eager to expose the truth, declares that there is no such happiness on earth, accusing him of having invented Delia.

In order to illustrate the collision between ideal and reality, the lyrical persona next asks the poet whether his description was really true and requests him to say whether, when portraying Delia like this, a fantasy had gripped him. She suspects him of behaving been deceived by how things looked, and of having judged Delia by rumour without knowing the truth, accusing him of emotional immaturity and maintaining he did not yet know people at thirty. She also repeats her warning that appearances could sometimes be deceptive because a cheerful face may often hide sorrow, and goes on to reveal that he might find suffering, depression, tears and melancholy behind the façade of the *beata illa*, the ever-happy and angelic girl. The one-dimensional and idealising depictions of the pastoral tradition contrast sharply with her view according to which the man searches in vain for heavenly bliss and complete perfection.

'Happy is Delia' ends with Naumova's lyrical persona assuming a role which also occurs in her other poems, i.e. that of a wise woman who advises people on how to proceed in life. In this role, she requests the poet to stop envying his dearest Delia, and not to live the way he wished but as God ordered. Finally, she tells him to admit that Delia is a dream.

The poem can be interpreted at two levels. One is in accord with the traditional interpretation of the Sentimentalist topos of regret about the loss of sincerity since humans emerged from the mythological Golden Age: it is reproduced by the narrator's reply to the poet as she laments the absence of someone who might achieve the high standards of virtue established by Sentimentalist discourse. In the world she lives in, people are mean and dishonest; someone as virtuous and sincere as Delia does not exist. On a different level, Naumova criticises the perception of women as idealised and angelic beings removed from civilisation, and the oft-reproduced Sentimentalist association of woman and nature with subordination. Karamzin's *Poor Liza*, for instance, suggests that woman is closer to nature, yet easily discarded if and when the male protagonist considers culture and its material interests to be of greater importance.

Naumova's narrator expresses the view that a character such as Delia, who has lived a life untouched by the evils engendered by human society, is a product of male imagination. She criticises men for equating women with innate goodness,

and for projecting purity and virtue upon the female sex alone. These stereotypes force women to strive for impossible, even ‘terrible perfection’ to use Barbara Heldt’s title of her study of this topic in Russian literature.³⁸ Naumova’s criticism deconstructs the cultural myth which functionalises women, forcing them to assume the unrealistically passive, virtuous role of being, for example, a source of inspiration for men. By divorcing reality from art and introducing a negative aspect, i.e. women’s unhappiness even in an idyllic rural setting, she exposes an idealised perception of women.

Idealised concepts of women and nature are further revised in Naumova’s ‘K El’vire’ (To Elvira) and the ensuing ‘Otvét’ (Reply).³⁹ ‘To Elvira’ reproduces typical patterns of Sentimentalist love lyrics inspired by Gessner-style idylls. As mentioned in Chapter Two, his works were very popular in Russia during the first two decades of the 19th century. Naumova’s friendship with Vladimir Panaev, writer of idylls who was considered to be the Russian Gessner, is very likely to have influenced her when writing these two poems. They take up the motif of two tenderly affectionate doves very popular at the time. In Gessner’s work, it appears in prose poems such as ‘Damon. Phyllis’ (Damon. Phillis), where a man tries to overcome a woman’s resistance by asking her to emulate the doves’ example. It also features in his pastoral novel *Daphnis* and in the unpublished poem, ‘Die Dauben’ (The Doves).⁴⁰ In Russian literature of the first two decades of the 19th century, the dove motif became so popular that it was even used to represent ideal relationships between brothers and sisters.⁴¹

38 Barbara Heldt: *Terrible Perfection. Women and Russian Literature*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1992.

39 Naumova 1819, ‘K El’vire’, pp. 136–137; ‘Otvét’, pp. 138–142.

The entire Russian originals and English translations of these poems can be found in the Appendix.

40 Salomon Gessner: ‘Damon. Phyllis’ (Damon. Phyllis). In: Kesselmann, Heidemarie: *Die Idyllen Salomon Gessners im Beziehungsfeld von Ästhetik und Geschichte im 18. Jahrhundert*. Scriptor: Kronberg 1976, pp. 33–35.

On the motif of the doves in ‘Daphnis’ (Daphnis) and ‘Die Dauben’ (The Doves), see Voss’ comment in Salomon Gessner: *Idyllen*. Voss, Ernst (ed.): Reclam Jun.: Stuttgart 1988, p. 147.

41 The poem ‘Liubov’ brata s sestroiú’ (The Love of Brother and Sister), published in *Det-skaia biblioteka* (1820), gives evidence of this popularity: ‘Brother: // Sister, look at these doves / How in love with each other they seem! / How comfortable they are together! How friendly! / If one is gay, the other is gay, / When that one frowns, this one grows sad; / Their friendship is great; you know they are brothers and sisters. // Sister: / I think

Naumova's 'To Elvira' presents a man observing two doves. He encourages his beloved Elvira to look at and imitate them. Then he complains that, unlike the doves, she has broken her word and is now in love with someone else. In response to the requirements of modesty imposed on women, Naumova's interpretation of the dove topos is more virtuous than Gessner's original. In her poem, the birds symbolise fidelity between the lovers rather than an encouragement for the woman to yield to the man's entreaties.

In Naumova's 'Reply', the lyrical persona takes the man to task for accusing Elvira of having broken her word. Softening the message, the poem opens with a typically Sentimentalist statement of regret for the loss of sincere feelings in humans. Then the narrator overtly attacks the man for his behaviour, suggesting that the fault might be on his side, that he might be jealous, or that he may have lost his love for Elvira, and that he is looking for a pretext to abandon her. She asks him to question his own feelings and actions, to be honest with himself and, if he really is a hypocrite, to be ashamed of himself and to apologise to Elvira. If he should fail to do so, the narrator will expose his lie to the world: having the gift of writing, this is what she must do. The remainder of the poem considers that Elvira might indeed have been unfaithful and in love with somebody else, in which case there is no point in complaining about her. The man with whom she is now in love will soon abandon her if he realises that she was unfaithful to someone else. At that point, the narrator in 'Reply' suggests that the unhappy lover should forgive Elvira and live a happy life with her.

'Reply' challenges the Gessner-style love idyll, as well as men's practice of the elegy, deconstructing the cliché of woman symbolising an unattainable object of attraction for the man, and woman's rejection providing an occasion for him to recognise and describe his feelings with poetic eloquence, as outlined in Chapter Two. Naumova exposes this stereotype, demonstrating how detached it has become from reality. The lyrical persona in 'Reply' takes the woman's side, revising the elegy's gender pattern. When she requires the man to investigate his own motives rather than uttering empty complaints, the narrator deprives him of the opportunity to express feelings of disappointed love; in so doing, she silences him. Thus, the narrator questions a poetic tradition that objectifies women, and stipulates a type of behaviour which more closely reflects the reality of both sexes.

so too; you and I like them, / In agreement pass the day. / Where you are not, there is nothing gay for Parasha, / All my happiness is in the happiness of Nikolasha; / More devoted to you, no one could be; / Oh, we will love each other thus forever.' Quoted (in English) in J. Tovrov: *The Russian Noble Family. Structure and Change*. Garland Publishing: New York 1987, p. 228.

Assuming the mission of exposing the truth, the lyrical persona here not only criticises cultural images; by deconstructing the pattern with disarming frankness, she debunks a cherished Sentimentalist tradition.

Re-writing the myth of Sappho's death

Naumova also reinvents the myth concerning the death of Sappho, the woman poet from Greek mythology usually represented as having been driven to suicide by throwing herself into the sea from the Leucadian cliff because her lover Phaon had rejected her. As outlined in Chapter Three, several 19th-century women writers dissociated themselves from the patriarchal interpretation of this myth, and from the notion that women were unable to cope with rejection. Naumova's work provides an early example of this tendency in Russian literature. Her poems alluding to the myth of Sappho are 'Ot pustynnik-a-poeta' (From the Hermit Poet) and 'K pustynniku-poetu' (To the Hermit Poet).⁴² They also reflect a surge of interest in Sappho in Russia during the first two decades of the 19th century, and the tendency to equate the name of Sappho with 'woman poet'.

In the first poem, 'From the Hermit Poet', a hermit poet pays compliments to a woman poet by praising her, asking her where she has obtained her gift, and calling her a Russian Sappho. In her response to this poem, 'To the Hermit Poet', however, the woman poet rejects Sappho's name because her modesty—reinforced by her looking at the ground—does not allow her to compare herself to such a famous literary model:

Имя Сафы я не стою;
Мне ли Русской Сафой слыть?
Мне ли арфою святою
Так как ей известной быть?⁴³

*I don't deserve the name of Sappho;
Could 'Russian Sappho' be my name?
Could I, armed with the sacred harp
Achieve the level of her fame?*⁴⁴

42 Naumova 1819, 'Ot pustynnik-a-poeta', pp. 113–114;
'K pustynniku-poetu', pp. 115–119.

The Russian originals of these texts and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

43 Naumova 1819, 'Ot pustynnik-a-poeta', pp. 113–114.

44 Translation by Emily Lygo.

The woman poet's refusal to be called a Russian Sappho is a way of paying lip service to the Sentimentalist concept of female modesty. However, her statement might also be a reaction to derogatory associations with this name during the second decade of the 19th century, when it began to have sarcastic connotations because of its frequent use. The ensuing question of the woman suggests both these views:

Не в насмешку ли искусство
Превозносишь ты мое?

*And when you elevate my art
Perhaps you're really mocking me?*

When the hermit poet of 'From the Hermit Poet' asks her why she is such a gifted poet, her answer in 'To the Hermit Poet' refers to her heart:

Но на сердце указала,
Здесь умею грусть терпеть.⁴⁵

*But as she gestured to her heart,
Said, 'Here can I put up with grief.'⁴⁶*

This is another way of saying that her writing occurs 'naturally,' without her having any profound knowledge of classical models. It is Naumova's way of conforming to the Sentimentalist idea of the writing process as a result of individual sensitivity. However, by pointing to her heart and declaring that sadness motivates her creativity, she not only does justice to the Sentimentalist cult of the 'tender heart,' but also hints at the elegiac nature of Sappho's poetry. The narrator's suggestion that Sappho mined her emotional disappointments for her poems, revises the idea that a woman poet is incapable of overcoming grief through writing.

As befits the Sentimentalist cult of friendship, the woman poet in 'To the Hermit Poet' has experienced disappointment—not in love, but due to the insincerity of people she trusted. In contrast with the model of Sappho's death, however, the lyrical persona here declares that her sorrow will not push her to commit suicide:

На утес крутой Левкада,
Хоть и горько — не взойду,
И от пасмурного взгляда
Вниз с него не упаду.

45 Naumova 1819, 'K pustynniku-poetu', pp. 115–119 (115).

46 Translation by Emily Lygo.

Не хочу в ключе забвенья
Вод целительных я пить;

*Though things are tough I will not climb
The heights of the Levkada cliffs,
And at a dark, foreboding glance,
I will not throw myself below.*

*I do not wish to quench my thirst
With waters of oblivion*

Her grief does not cast the lyrical persona into an ocean of emotional numbness, nor silence her as it silenced the mythological Sappho. In this way, Naumova revises the myth about women's inability to cope with sorrow.

In Naumova's work the notion of writing as a means of overcoming grief appears frequently, for example, in 'K dolgo slyvshemu moemu drugu' (To Him Whom I Long Considered My Friend).⁴⁷ Preceding a poetic dialogue with the hermit poet, this poem describes the narrator's feelings of disappointment. It evokes the elegiac genre as it laments the absence or loss of a beloved. However, unusually for the genre, it is written from the woman's point of view. The narrator grieves over the absence of a man who was a dear friend. In a characteristically Sentimentalist manner, she carefully recalls and describes the moments they spent together talking, reading Karamzin, and going for walks.

In only two lines evoking the lyrical persona's feelings for a woman, 'To Him Whom I Long Considered My Friend' further tells how this friend reassured her in her bewilderment over a woman who was also close to her heart. Although the two lines do not permit a conclusive interpretation, Naumova might be alluding to Sappho as a woman writer whose poems express her passion for women. Another interpretation would read these lines as an expression of the Sentimentalist cult of friendship—in this case between two women, and of regret about the end of her friendship with the man.

By describing the feelings of disappointment and sadness that the narrator experiences, the poem is an expression of Naumova's re-writing of the idea that despite their creative gift and the ability to use feelings as material for poems, women were unable to endure grief and rejection.

Another poem in which Naumova's narrator declares her creative gift to be a means for her to withstand betrayal in friendship is 'Sibirskomu sladkopevtstu pustynniku-poetu' (To the Siberian Bard and Hermit Poet), which follows immediately on the poem mentioned above:

47 Naumova 1819, 'K dolgo slyvshemu moemu drugu', pp. 103–112.

Так лучше, на лире от скуки играя,
Любезнейшим Музам веночки свивать,
Чем грустью томяся, как свечка старая,
Всечасно напрасно в душе унывать.⁴⁸

*It's better, when playing the lyre from boredom,
To weave for the gentlest Muses a wreath,
Than to give in to sadness, burn away like a candle,
It's always in vain that you pine in your soul.*⁴⁹

Just like other women poets who rejected the idea that women were unable to cope with sorrow, Naumova makes her lyrical persona declare that Fate's heavy blows are no reason for her to despair, but inspire her to be creative instead. Moreover, she states that her troubles have taught her to adopt a more rational approach to life:

«Коль жертвою были коварства людскаго,
«То опытом надо разумнее жить.

*If you fall victim to human cunning,
Learn from experience how to be wise.*

Naumova's narrator claims that the bitter lessons life has taught her have made her wiser and more careful. In this, Naumova again resembles Bolotnikova, whose lyrical persona at the end of 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women' declares that she will learn from difficult experiences.⁵⁰ In other words, Naumova not only revises the patriarchal myth of Sappho's death, but also the Sentimentalist concept of women as naive creatures.

'A Lesson to Young Girls'

Another challenge to the Sentimentalist image of women as emotional and irrational creatures is 'Urok molodym devushkam' or 'A Lesson to Young Girls'.⁵¹ It advises young women on how to proceed in matters of courtship. Matrimonial concerns, as well as salon culture, are an important topic in Naumova's collection, as revealed by other poems, such as 'On A.L.S.'s Precious Casket' and 'For

48 Naumova 1819, 'Simbirskomu sladkopevtu pustynniku-poetu', pp. 122–126 (p. 124).

49 Translation by Emily Lygo.

50 Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 52–55.

51 Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37. The Russian original of this poem and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

My Friend L.N.'s Album'.⁵² These two poems reproduce entries in an album, which were an important element in salon culture for young women. As often in Naumova's work, 'A Lesson to Young Women' is told from the point of view of a female character who offers guidance to young people. Here, the advice concerns the kind of behaviour young women should adopt in courtship and marriage. Female characters who provided instruction on 'good conduct and rational behaviour' were popular in the press at the end of the 18th century, as Catriona Kelly has shown.⁵³ Naumova introduces such a character to the field of literature.

The poem reflects an important element in the education of young girls, namely the role of the mother as the person who advises her daughter on how to deport herself in the company of a potential future husband. This type of literary conversation was strongly gendered; it occurred among women only. If a man chose to give advice to his daughter, then it was usually either on scholarly questions or on more abstract virtues. In Volkova's *Utrenniaia beseda slepago startsa s svoeiu docher'iu* (Morning Conversation of a Blind Old Man with His Daughter), for instance, an old man appears as a teacher of virtue to his daughter.⁵⁴

'A Lesson to Young Girls' is also an attempt to revise the model of the naive girl which literary works such as Karamzin's *Poor Liza* suggest—a justified attempt considering the popularity of novels about romantic love at the time, especially among young girls, who occasionally empathised with the female protagonists to such an extent that it brought them, as Natal'ia Pushkareva suggests, 'to the point of serious psychological breakdowns'.⁵⁵ By contrast, real-life romantic love rarely mattered in decisions about marriage, and—as I have outlined in Chapter One—it was generally believed that love could blossom after marriage just as well as before. Spontaneous feelings of the heart tended to be regarded with suspicion and a daughter was expected to accept the husband her mother had chosen for her.

52 Naumova 1819, 'Na kovanoi larets A.L.S.', p. 45; 'V al 'bom moemu drugu L.N.', p. 46.

53 Catriona Kelly: 'Educating Tat'yana. Manners, Motherhood and Moral Education (Vospitanie). 1760–1840'. In: Edmondson, Linda (ed.): *Gender in Russian History and Culture*. Palgrave: Basingstoke 2001, pp. 1–28 (p. 16).

54 Anna Volkova: *Utrenniaia beseda slepago startsa s svoeiu docher'iu*. Tipografiia imperatorskoi rossiiskoi akademii: St Petersburg 1824.

On this topic, see also Susan Smith-Peter: 'Educating Peasant Girls for Motherhood. Religion and Primary Education in Mid-Eighteenth Century Russia'. *Russian Review* 66, 2007, pp. 391–405.

55 Natal'ia Pushkareva: 'Russian Noblewomen's Education in the Home as Revealed in Late 18th- and Early 19th-Century Memoirs'. In: *Women and Gender in 18th-Century Russia*. Ashgate: Aldershot 2003, pp. 111–128 (p. 121).

The title of 'A Lesson to Young Girls' alludes to popular plays in which a lesson is taught to different groups of society, for instance Ivan Krylov's (1769–1844) *Urok dochkam* (Lesson to the Daughters), or a play with the title of *Urok volokitam* (A Lesson to Philanderers).⁵⁶ Naumova follows the trend of producing a moralistic piece of literature, however using poetry, similar to Bolotnikova, whose poem 'My Butler's Thoughts' may also have been inspired by a scene from a play, as I have suggested in Chapter Five.⁵⁷

'A Lesson to Young Girls' opens with an appeal to young women not to be rash and naive; instead, they are encouraged to regard men's promises with scepticism:

Любезны девушки! страшитесь
 Всегдашних вы врагов своих,
 Мужчин коварных берегитесь,
 Не слушайте ласкательств их;
 Не редко так, как змей лукавый,
 Пленивший Евву, нашу мать,
 Они польстят вам счастьем, славой,
 А там — ужь поздно горевать.⁵⁸

*Dear girls! You should be wary of
 Our age-old enemies,
 Protect yourselves from cunning men,
 Ignore their flattery.
 Too often, like the treacherous snake,
 That tricked our mother Eve,
 They promise glory, happiness,
 Then it's too late to grieve.*⁵⁹

56 I. Krylov: *Urok dochkam*. Tipografiia imperatorskago teatra: St Petersburg 1816.

Krylov's play written in 1807 saw several quite successful private and provincial productions until the mid-19th century. As Simon Karlinsky has suggested, this adaptation of Molière's *Les précieuses ridicules* criticized Gallomania. Alexander Shakhovskoi's similarly entitled play *Urok koketkam, ili Lipetskie vody*, became very popular from 1815 in Moscow as well as the provinces, see

Simon Karlinsky: *Russian Drama from Its Beginnings to the Age of Pushkin*. University of California Press: Berkeley L.A. 1985, pp. 182–183; 227; 232–239.

See also N. Brodskii: *Literaturnye salony i kruzhki*. Pervaia polovina XIX veka. Aca-
 demica: Leningrad 1930; repr. Olms: Zürich 1984, p. 52.

57 Bolotnikova, 'Razsuzhdenie moego Dvoret'skago', pp. 18–22.

58 Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 30).

59 Translation by Emily Lygo.

The allusion to the snake and the Fall is here contrasted with the more common interpretation of this event, since the weight of the blame is placed on men, who are equated with the snake, and not on women, who are usually held responsible for giving in to temptation. By explicitly calling Eve 'our mother' (nashu mat'), the narrator evokes female solidarity. Later on in the poem, the narrator invokes the supposed maternal authority over a daughter, and appeals to young girls to adopt a rational approach when choosing a husband. Only after careful consideration should a girl give her heart to a man. Naumova's narrator appeals to an audience of young unmarried girls such as those in her care, fulfilling the task of a mother, which is to assist her daughter in her eventual search for a husband.

The lyrical persona warns young women that men rarely show their true face, and to be particularly careful when a man attempts to engage them in courtship. Men are further described as hypocrites and traitors, promising heaven on earth but not keeping their word. The lines are clearly drawn between two camps: men try to mislead and flatter, while women must develop strategies to make it across the mire of delusion and hypocritical machinations. In the narrator's view, courtship is not a frivolous game, but a risky struggle which, if wrongly fought, may ruin a woman's happiness forever.

Courtship is even compared to a kind of war, in which man is the enemy, a reference the lyrical persona makes twice. In Bolotnikova's work, words such as 'raby' (slaves), 'okovy' (chains), and 'tirany' (tyrants) highlight the gravity of the implications of marriage for women. They reappear in Naumova's poem where, however, they do not evoke claims from the domain of civil rights, as in Bolotnikova, but seem to stem from an effort to revise a repertoire of metaphors typical of Sentimentalist love lyrics. To compare the pain of love with 'chains', to call oneself a 'slave' of one's feelings for the beloved, or to regard the desired person as a 'tyrant' were verbal devices commonly used by the *précieuses* of 17th-century French salon culture, with which Russian Sentimentalism bears many similarities. Both hinge on a playful conception of courtship and idealise woman as a superior being worthy of adoration. 'A Lesson to Young Girls' exposes the potential impact of this playful understanding of courtship on the lives of women. Naumova reveals the effects of a marriage game in which the adored woman ceases to be the absolute sovereign over a man's feelings, ending up reduced to the status of a slave incapable of removing the fetters and chains of marriage.

Like Bolotnikova, who tried to undermine cultural patterns which idealise women, Naumova's 'A Lesson to Young Girls' criticises courting men for flattering women, and turning into tyrants once they have made their conquest and are married. As an illustration, the narrator refers to Milena and Milon: Milena, the lyrical persona states, was as cheerful as a butterfly, but then dashing, knight-like

Milon appeared and captured Milena's heart. Disregarding the advice from those close to her, she has married him and everyone can see her present grief. The description of Milon, who appears in his armour and impresses everyone with his victories, implies that the woman he courts is merely one more trophy. It is the kind of behaviour also denounced in Bolotnikova's 'An Answer to an Epistle to Women', in which the narrator reproaches the original epistle's anonymous author for regarding women as gifts from the gods but actually treating them disrespectfully.⁶⁰ In this context, Naumova's choice of name is also significant as 'Milon' was the name for protagonists of good character in 18th-century Russian Classicist drama.⁶¹ In 'A Lesson to Young Girls', the lyrical persona warns that, despite their names, the apparent goodness of the Milons of this world is a sham.

The episode with Milena and Milon in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' deconstructs the pattern established by the genre of the eclogue, which describes the resolution of misunderstandings between two lovers, usually a shepherd and a shepherdess, who eventually profess their love for each other. An important feature of the eclogue is the dramatic element enhancing the impression of immediacy and distinguishing the genre from the elegy and from the love idyll, where a single poetic persona deplores being unhappy in love. At first sight, 'A Lesson to Young Girls' seems to imitate the eclogue in presenting two lovers and allowing the reader to participate in the most dramatic moment of the love plot: he declares his love, she blushes, love penetrates her breast, she is incapable of hiding her feelings, after which the man is sure of his victory and promises her that she will always be happy with him. Contrary to the typical eclogue pattern, however, a sudden divergence occurs between ideal and reality, and we learn what happens instead of the 'happy ever after' if the spouses are mismatched as a result of the man's false promises. In a striking deconstruction of the genre of the eclogue, Naumova's narrator paints a grim picture of the changes that Milon's treachery has caused in Milena.

Milena's behaviour reproduces the Sentimentalist concept of 'naturalness', which prizes the sincerity of feeling. While this requires men to emulate Erast in Karamzin's *Poor Liza* in pouring out their regret about their lack of goodness, the implication for women is that they must give evidence of their honesty in their deportment. Naumova's Milena is honest, does not hide her feelings, blushes and

60 Bolotnikova, 'Otvét na poslanie k zhenshchinám', pp. 52–55.

61 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. 140).

is confused when Milon declares his love to her. Her body reacts more spontaneously and therefore more ‘honestly’ and naturally than Milon’s, who attempts to conceal his real intentions, and is therefore assumed to be further estranged from nature. In typical Sentimentalist heroine fashion, Milena’s response marks her difference as a woman, evidence of her supposedly more ‘natural’ character. ‘A Lesson to Young Women’ criticises gender stereotypes by denouncing men’s hypocrisy and advising women to use their minds when choosing a spouse rather than relying on emotion as a guide.

In encouraging young women to compare the way men behave at home and in society, the narrator suggests they should adopt a pragmatic, rational approach. Frequent terms associated with notions of truth allude to the veil of falsehood shrouding semi-public salon life: the narrator wonders whether men’s words ‘rang true’ (soglasnal’ s pravdoi); she asks young women to make sure they discover men’s ‘true glory’ (istu slavu), and to find out the ‘truth’ (sprav’ tesia vernei) about them. These terms contrast with allusions to fakery, including ‘masks’ (maski, lichiny), ‘act a part’ (pritvorstvuiut), and ‘different words’ (inoe [...] drugoe) and ‘hold two views’ (dva razlichnykh vida). It takes sophistication to see through the feints and unnaturalness which society life forces on people: as though male behaviour were an object to be studied, the narrator instructs her girls to compare, ‘find out’ (spravtes’ ia), and to ‘discover’ (uznavajte). Far from regarding women as irrational beings, here they are seen as careful observers who apply logical, rational strategies. This also becomes evident from Naumova’s choice of ‘to start with’ (sperva) and ‘then’ (togda), terms that enhance the impression that these warnings imply specific instructions—a sharp contrast indeed with the way love and its implications are presented in Sentimentalist novels.

The image of the opposite sex in ‘A Lesson to Young Girls’ is quite unflattering: men are as false as snakes; they wear masks and pretend to possess positive qualities. Popular prejudice has ascribed such traits to women, who have traditionally been criticised for being two-faced, incomprehensible and busy hatching plots. Naumova’s lyrical persona revises this opinion, inverting the pattern and blaming men for these very flaws. She explicitly accuses men of posturing as characters who belie their true selves:

Поверьте — все они Милоны,
Не свой умеют вид казать:

Любитель Бахуса усердный
Вам мнится трезвой человек,
Цирцей боготворитель вредный
От них представится далек,

Ревнивец видится безпечным,
Роскошным кажется скупец,
А злой тиран добросердечным,
И самой скромностью — глупец.⁶²

*But all of them are Milons, though
They keep this truth a secret.*

*Even Bacchus's faithful love
Will seem a sober man,
While Circe's bad admirer seems
A million miles from them,
An envious man will seem carefree,
The miser to splash out,
A fool embodies modesty,
The tyrant a kind heart.⁶³*

In 'A Lesson to Young Girls', the narrator draws a clear distinction between places where men wear masks and where they reveal their true characters. The home and society are two opposing spheres of existence. The fact that Naumova's character encourages her pupils to monitor and analyse the manners displayed by men at home and in society suggests that women were able to move freely between the public and private spheres, and the semi-public sphere of salon culture in particular.

Conflict ensued as Sentimentalist discourse encouraged women to carry the notion of naturalness, which was thought to be an inherently female trait, from the home into the semi-public world of social gatherings. Naumova's narrator advises young women to remember that Sentimentalist ingenuity and naturalness is less than helpful to interpret the semi-public world of social gatherings.

The narrator in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' warns that women's well-being in the private sphere may be affected by men's unnatural behaviour in the public domain, depicting in grim detail the impact of men's pretence and unnaturalness on the intimacy of the home. She attempts to nurture a sense of justice in young women, which Sentimentalist men such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) thought to be lacking in women. Her exhortation to carefully observe and compare male behaviour in the two distinct spheres of the home and worldly society is an effort to establish criteria for the choice of a partner based not only on love, but on a notion of justice common in the public domain. A man's tyrannical or drunken behaviour may have serious consequences in the public arena of

62 Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 35).

63 Translation by Emily Lygo.

civil virtues and justice; the narrator warns women that these flaws are equally intolerable in the intimate sphere of the family home. I would argue that this is Naumova's attempt to foster something akin to civil awareness in women.

The lyrical persona's aim is not only to show how women were affected in the private sphere of the home by men's unnatural behaviour in social gatherings. She also provides quite specific guidelines to prevent tragedies of the kind suffered by female literary characters such as Karamzin's Liza. Naumova's poem therefore goes beyond simply stating a negative example intended to deter girls from behaving according to patterns outlined in Sentimentalist novels. By instructing young women, 'A Lesson to Young Girls' counterbalances the Sentimentalist view that women are no more than emotional creatures incapable of making rational decisions.

The enraged woman teacher of virtue

The narrator in 'A Lesson to Young Girls' stipulates a sincerity which is not based on naivety and is exercised by men and women alike. Nor are women exempt from the reproach of insincerity, as the final stanza of the poem reveals, in which she warns women:

Не сделайтеся хамелеоны
И сами вы для них под час,
Чтобы и их сердечны стоны
Во лжи не обличили вас.⁶⁴

*Don't turn into chameleons
Because you want to please,
Make sure their heartfelt groans will not
Discover that you've lied.*⁶⁵

The plea to women to be true to their own selves is a frequent occurrence in Naumova's poetry; it appears, for example, in 'Appeal to Women' and 'Appeal to Russian Women'.⁶⁶ Good relations between spouses are something Naumova's narrator is much concerned with and she has made it her chief mission to exhort people to be modest and sincere. In 'Appeal to Women', the narrator explicitly assures her audience that she will not spare them from her desire to expose pretence and to reveal

64 Naumova 1819, 'Urok molodym devushkam', pp. 30–37 (p. 37).

65 Translation by Emily Lygo.

66 Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161;
'Vozzvanie k Rossiankam', pp. 188–193.

the truth. She declares that she may well have torn the masks from men's faces but that now it is women's turn to hear the truth about their behaviour:

Голубки, душеньки, сестрицы!
Про вас я песенку спою.
Простите смелость вы певицы,
А правду слушайте мою,
Как слушали ее мужчины,
Когда за вас возстала я,
Когда сорвавши здесь личины,
Карала Муза их моя.

Но и за них на вас возстану,
Как их и вас изблечу,
Пред вас Фемидою предстану,⁶⁷
Как их и вас я проучу.⁶⁸

Sweethearts, dearest sisters!
I sing a song of you.
Forgive the boldness of the singer,
But listen to my truth,

Just as the men listened to it, too,
When I stood up for you,
When once I'd torn the masks away,
My Muse took them to task.

But now I'll stand up to you for them,
Like them, I'll expose you too,
I put before you Femida,
I'll teach you a lesson too.⁶⁹

The narrator accuses women of being coquettish and unfair towards men, and declares women to be accountable for their own choices. She asks women whether it was not they who had chosen their partners, implying that women would have no reason to complain about unhappiness in marriage if they were sensible in courtship and if their behaviour in marriage was sincere.

Later on in the poem, the lyrical persona asks women why they regard men as tyrants, and blames women's hypocrisy for being among the causes why men show the world such hard faces. There is no room for victimisation in this line of

67 Themis is the ancient Greek goddess of natural and divine laws; she also presides over good relations between men and women.

68 Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 151).

69 Translation by Emily Lygo.

argument as both sexes are largely responsible for their own happiness, provided Fate does not interfere—an issue I will discuss further below. The narrator's suggestions and criticism of human behaviour in 'Appeal to Women' betray her strong sense of justice. The fact that she metes out similar chastisements to both sexes may also have been one of the few acceptable ways of expressing criticism of women's situation, for only if she criticised both sexes equally could she be sure not to offend either sex in too obvious a way.

Naumova's lyrical persona often adopts the role of an angry teacher who has set herself the mission of unmasking people's hypocrisy, exhorting them to be modest. This feisty female narrator is a far cry from the gentle and tender woman poet who sings the beauty of God's Creation in earlier Sentimentalist poetry such as Pospelova's. Naumova's portrayal of her narrator as an authoritative and furious woman manifests itself very clearly in the part of 'Appeal to Women' in which the narrator announces her intention of holding up a mirror to all those who do not see their own pretence:

Нет, ни одной я льстить не стану,
Вам истый облик покажу,
Вообще противу всех возстану,
Всем правду смело я скажу.

Вещайте! «робкой Музы лира
«Тамбуром снова днесь звучит.⁷⁰

*No, I'll not flatter a single one,
I'll show you the genuine picture,
And I'll rebel against them all,
I'll boldly tell the truth to all.
Tell all, 'the lyre of the timid muse
Now sounds once more like a drum.⁷¹*

It is probably because she wants to fit into the Sentimentalist cliché of female modesty that the lyrical persona calls herself a 'timid muse'. This muse, however, is clearly anything but timid. Vocal, outspoken and enraged, she is the very opposite of the Sentimentalist ideal of the tender and naive girl.

In this part of 'Appeal to Women', Naumova's use of musical instruments is intriguing. The narrator declares that her lyre, her poetry, will be so powerful that it will sound as loudly as a tambourine. In both the opening poem and in

70 Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 152).

71 Translation by Emily Lygo.

‘To the Muses’, she dissociates herself from the heroic imagery and loud musical instruments of male-connoted poetic genres, refusing to use the trumpet in order to praise the tsar. When, however, she aims to extirpate arrogance and pretentiousness from this world, her lyre takes on the intensity of a tambourine, a percussion instrument not usually associated with Sentimentalism’s images of femininity but frequently used in military bands. By avoiding the trumpet and resorting to the tambourine, Naumova keeps her distance from the Classicist system of genres and their respective metaphors.

Only in ‘K pastyriu’ (To the Pastor) does Naumova’s lyrical persona relinquish her mission to a religious authority. She praises God’s servant for fulfilling his duty with astonishing excellence, and—a feature typical of Sentimentalist egalitarian discourse—expresses particular appreciation that he applies similar moral criteria to all classes of society:

Что вижу за осьмое диво?
И днесь нашелся человек,
Которой истину правдиво
Великим, мочным людям рек.⁷²

*What do I see as the world’s eighth wonder?
That now I’ve found a person,
Who told the truth and all the truth
To great and powerful people.*⁷³

Elsewhere—in ‘Appeal to Women’, for example—this task falls to the lyrical persona herself. Her muse, the poet’s alter ego, becomes a fury, a goddess of revenge driven by a self-imposed mission to exhort the poet to use her writing talent to chastise the depraved and immodest. The narrator presents herself as morally impeccable; her clear conscience shields her from the liars’ false accusations:

Мечите стрелы, — я смеюся,
И вот пред вами грудь моя.

Вы раните вить не опасно;
Безвинна совесть — твердой щит.⁷⁴

*Aim your arrows and I will laugh,
And here before you is my breast.*

72 Naumova 1819, ‘K pastyriu’, pp. 92–95 (p. 92).

73 Translation by Emily Lygo.

74 Naumova 1819, ‘Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam’, pp. 151–161 (p. 153).

*But the wounds you give aren't dangerous;
A clear conscience is a sturdy shield.*⁷⁵

The arrows and the shield most likely refer to the biblical 'armour of God' and the 'shield of faith' protecting the righteous, an allusion also made by Pospelova as shown in Chapter Four.⁷⁶ These examples demonstrate the use female authors make of the Sentimentalist ideal of women as pious and virtuous beings in order to gain access to the public world of authorship.

In 'Appeal to Women', the intentions of Naumova's lyrical persona challenge Sentimentalist gender ideals. Naumova's character holds that both men and women ought to learn how to be virtuous and morally impeccable, applying to both sexes the virtues assigned to girls alone in Sentimentalist discourse. Naumova opens the door of the private realm of the home, allowing supposedly superior female virtues to fly out into the male-dominated public sphere, where she hopes they will leave a lasting mark. In doing so she heeds the Sentimentalist call for women to have a beneficial influence on the morals of children and men. By adopting the role of the female teacher, Naumova's character uses the argument of inherently female moral superiority as a means of entering the public forum. Evidently hoping to instil such superiority in her peers, she steps into the public arena to lecture men and women alike on how to become more virtuous.

Queen of Spades vs King of Diamonds

A powerful female character also appears in Naumova's poem about a visit to a fortune-teller, 'Yesterday's Reading', which includes elements of folk culture and matriarchal pagan beliefs, and illustrates their clash with Christian values.⁷⁷ Just as other poems in Naumova's work including 'For My Friend L.N.'s Album' or 'Cupid's Lottery', the poem addresses fate, magic and love intrigues, elements important in salon culture, and of particular significance in women's lives.

In its detailed description of a visit to a fortune-teller, 'Yesterday's Reading' is a literary manifestation of emergent Romanticism's fascination with supernatural phenomena and magic, as Faith Wigzell has shown in *Reading Russian Fortunes*, her comprehensive study on the subject of divination. According to Wigzell, the first two decades of the 19th century saw an increase in visits to fortune-tellers by both men and women of the fashionable society. Among male authors reported

75 Translation by Emily Lygo.

76 Ephesians 6, 13:23.

77 Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84.

to have visited fortune-tellers, Wigzell lists prominent figures including Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), the most highly acclaimed poet of Russia's Golden Age of literature. Interest in fortune-telling was reflected in literature, for instance in the fortune-telling scene which opens a story by Alexander Bestuzhev-Marlinskii (1797–1837), or a clairvoyant's prediction of Pechorin's death, the protagonist in the novel *Geroi nashego vremeni* (A Hero of Our Time, 1839), by Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841). Afanasii Fet (1820–1892) wrote two poems about divination.⁷⁸

Fortune-telling was mostly about love, as suggested by an excerpt from a divinatory oracle popular in the first two decades of the 19th century, which includes questions to bachelors, unwed maidens, and married men and women. People who consulted fortune-tellers and oracles wanted to know if their marriage was going to be happy or whether their spouse was faithful.⁷⁹ 'Yesterday's Reading' illustrates a divination ritual for girls whose chief interest was to know what kind of husband they were going to have. Knowing about their domestic fortunes mattered greatly to women, as they were more closely bound to the home than men. As Wigzell observes, divination soon became an integral part of women's lives. Hoping to glean predictions of future matrimonial bliss, they entered into divination activities and rituals such as dropping two grease-smearred needles into a bowl of water to predict a couple's future happiness, or a hen pecking at various symbols, or rituals involving mirrors. Some divination activities could only be executed during specific days of the year such as Yuletide when a girl hoping for her future husband to appear to her in her dream would put a magical object such as a herb or fortune-telling cards under her pillow, or when people would pour liquid

78 Faith Wigzell: *Reading Russian Fortunes. Print Culture, Gender and Divination in Russia from 1765*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1998, p. 52, pp. 118–140.

Karlinsky mentions a comic opera entitled *Kofeinitsa* (The FortuneTeller) by Ivan Krylov, see Karlinsky, p. 180.

79 Martin Zadek: 'The Ancient and Modern Divinatory Oracle'. In: Geldern, James von / McReynolds, Louise (eds): *Entertaining Tsarist Russia. Tales, Songs, Plays, Movies, Jokes, Ads, and Images from Russian Urban Life. 1779–1917*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1998, pp. 12–15.

The fascination with the supernatural was also reflected in literary works from the first half of the 19th century that addressed folk and peasant beliefs, as Christine D. Worobec has shown, see Christine D. Worobec: *Possessed. Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*. Northern Illinois University Press: DeKalb 2001, pp. 109–147.

For a study of contemporary Russian rural women's folk culture, see Laura J. Olson and Svetlana Adonyeva: *The Worlds of Russian Village Women. Tradition, Transgression, Compromise*. University of Wisconsin Press: Madison Wis. 2012.

wax or tin into a bowl of cold water to tell the future by interpreting the resulting shapes. The risk of invoking dark, unclean powers failed to discourage the many practitioners of other popular Yuletide rituals, which, as Wigzell reminds us, again were reflected in literary works: Tat'iana Larina, the protagonist of Pushkin's verse novel *Evgenii Onegin* (Eugene Onegin), practices Yuletide divination, as does Svetlana, the female protagonist of Zhukovskii's (1783–1852) eponymous ballad.⁸⁰

Although foretellings could be obtained by other means including palmistry, cartomancy carried a specifically female connotation: according to Wigzell, women across all spheres of society used cards to tell the future. Pushkin's Tat'iana Larina is a cartomancer, as is Vasilisa Egorovna, a female character in another of his novels, *Kapitanskaia doch'* (The Captain's Daughter, 1836). A feminine alternative to gambling with cards, cartomancy was often viewed as a meaningless, frivolous occupation for the female sex, a notion which prevailed even if both activities were attempts to divine future destinies based on a minimum of information, as Russian culturologist Iurii Lotman suggests.⁸¹ Among the most prominent literary examples of card gaming is Pushkin's novella *Pikovaia dama* (Queen of Spades, 1834), whose protagonist tries to overcome the randomness of the cards by coaxing their secret out of an elderly countess. When the anticipated fortune fails to materialise, however, he loses his mind.

'Yesterday's Reading' is written from the point of view of a woman who consults a cartomancer to find out about her chances of winning the heart of the King of Diamonds. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator affirms her faith in fortune-telling; her belief in the truthfulness of the cards wavers, however, when the clairvoyant declares that an evil woman, the Queen of Spades, is plotting against her:

80 Wigzell, pp. 52, 118, 140;

L.N. Vinogradova: 'Devich' i gadaniia o zamuzhestve v tsikle slavianskoi kalendarnoi obriadnosti (zapadno-vostochnoslavianskie paralleli)'. In: Tolstoi, Nikita (ed.): *Slavianskii i balkanskii fol'klor. Obriad, Tekst*. Nauka: Moscow 1981, pp. 13–34;

W.F. Ryan / Faith Wigzell: 'Gullible Girls and Dreadful Dreams. Zhukovskii, Pushkin, and Popular Divination'. *Slavonic and East European Review* 70, 1992, pp. 647–669.

81 Iurii Lotman: '*Pikovaia dama* i tema kart i kartochnoi igry v russkoi literature nachala XIX veka'. *Izbrannyye stat'i*, 3 vols. Aleksandra: Tallin 1992, Vol. II, pp. 389–415 (pp. 394–395).

On Gothic features in Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*, see

Claire Whitehead: 'The Fantastic in Russian Romantic Prose. Pushkin's *Queen of Spades*'. In: Cornwell, Neil (ed.): *The Gothic-Fantastic in Nineteenth-Century Russian Literature*. Rodopi: Amsterdam 1999, pp. 103–125.

«Но — вот другая,
«Пикова дама,
«Хитро, лукаво
«Сеет меж их
«Грусть, сокрушенье
«Недоуменье,
«Ложь и обманы,
«Ссоры, вражду.⁸²

*But here's one more,
The Queen of spades,
And sly intrigue
She sows for them;
Now sorrow, grief,
And now confusion,
Lies, deceit,
And enmity.⁸³*

The narrator admits her belief in the cards despite herself, declaring also that she is unafraid and, supported by her firm belief in the Christian virtues of hope, faith, friendship and love, is ready to face the Queen of Spades' evil machinations. Her conviction is emphasised by her dramatically clasping an anchor in her left hand and a cross in her right. The poem ends on a powerful diatribe against the dark powers embodied by the Queen of Spades, which are diminished by a tempest reminiscent of the Biblical Flood: the Christian values represented by the King of Diamonds prevail.

'Yesterday's Reading' addresses women's fear of being thought irrational due to their belief in the cards. The fear reveals itself when the protagonist declares that her commonsense forbids her to believe what the cards say:

— Будет, довольно;
Я не желаю
Горестной правды
Более знать;
Здравой разсудок
Мне запрещает,
О ворожейка!
Верить тебе.⁸⁴

82 Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84 (pp. 76–77). This poem in Russian and its English translation can be found in the Appendix.

83 Translation by Emily Lygo.

84 Naumova 1819, 'Vcherashniaia vorozhba', pp. 76–84 (p. 77).

*It's clear enough
So spare me from
Discovering more
This sorry truth.
My common sense
Does not allow
Me, fortune-teller,
To believe.*⁸⁵

Here, fortune-telling has become a superstitious act which enlightened, rational people ought to shun. Wigzell observes that few women chose to write about this topic; in order to avoid associations with irrationality, many women authors clearly dissociated themselves from this expression of popular culture, preferring to address more intellectual topics.⁸⁶ Naumova pre-empts this by referring to the Christian values which protect her narrator against the Queen of Spades' intrigues.

Two cultural movements—pagan beliefs and Christian values—clash when Naumova's lyrical persona sets her Christian faith, here represented by the King of Diamonds, against the Queen of Spades' machinations. As has been mentioned, the Queen of Spades embodies the dark powers whose origins lie in pagan folklore. 'Yesterday's Reading' exemplifies Joanna Hubbs's thesis in her study, *Mother Russia*, that the strong matriarchal elements in Russian pagan beliefs survived in literary works of the Romantic period and beyond. According to Hubbs, the introduction of a Christian patriarchal doctrine in the 10th century met with intense resistance from worshippers of matriarchal pagan cults. If the new patriarchal dogma was to be in any way successful, pre-existing matriarchal rituals had to be adopted and adapted by the new Christian ones. For instance, rather than emphasising the negative image of Eve the Sinner, church officials gave pre-eminence to the positive image of the Mother of God, who soon absorbed the features of venerated female pagan deities including 'rusalki', goddesses of the rivers and forests, and Baba Yaga, the feared yet revered goddess of fertility and death.⁸⁷

85 Translation by Emily Lygo.

86 Wigzell, p. 109.

87 Joanna Hubbs: *Mother Russia. The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1993, p. 96.

The notion of a co-existence of pagan and Christian beliefs is contested by some researchers mentioned by Barbara Alpern Engel in her study: 'Women and Urban Culture'. In: Rosslyn, Wendy / Tosi, Alessandra (eds): *Women in Nineteenth-Century Russia. Lives and Culture*. Open Book Publishers: Cambridge 2012, pp. 19–62 (pp. 44–45).

In ‘Yesterday’s Reading,’ the Queen of Spades is the King of Diamond’s adversary. While he is described as someone with a pure and unblemished soul—a wise, kind, friendly, tender and prudent man, a good, angelic-looking king who always smiles—the Queen of Spades is cunning, evil and crafty, and is said to act with trickery and villainy; her ‘suit’ looks black and ominous. She is the harbinger of destruction, drawing her malicious powers from a realm of darkness, which means that she can conjure up dark clouds, severe storms and perhaps even Hell itself to cause harm to ordinary humans. Naumova’s narrator compares the Queen of Spades to a cunning fox, a grass-snake and a toad—powerful images for someone who, according to the plot of the poem, attempts to defeat her (human) rival in order to gain the King of Spades’ favour. The emphasis suggests that Naumova aims to represent the Queen of Spades as a most powerful female character.

The machinations of the Queen of Spades in ‘Yesterday’s Reading’ allude to the love intrigues which frequently occurred in salon settings. Other allusions such as the three key symbols of the Christian faith, i.e. the heart, cross and anchor, which frequently appear in friendship albums exchanged in salons, confirm this affinity.⁸⁸ Moreover, some of the terms in ‘Yesterday’s Reading’ echo the language used by the *précieuses*. The Queen of Spades, for example, is said to be shooting ‘strel’y kaleny’ (burning arrows) and to be pouring ‘tletvornoi iad’ (noxious poison) into the King of Diamonds’ soul. Such expressions were also common in pastoral love lyrics, where a woman’s glance was often compared to an arrow piercing and poisoning the heart of her beloved. When saying of the Queen of Spades that she is an evil sorceress who practices black magic, Naumova uses such terms in combination with elements from divination rituals.

The Queen of Spades in ‘Yesterday’s Reading’ evokes the mythical pagan character of Baba Yaga, who makes an occasional appearance in Romantic literary works, for example in a poem by author and folk-song collector, Mikhail Chulkov (1744–1792), about the disappearance of Slavic pagan beliefs.⁸⁹ As Hubbs suggests, Pushkin’s *Queen of Spades* also evokes Baba Yaga in the character of the old Countess pestered by the male protagonist Hermann to share the secret of the cards with him so he may outwit the power of fate. She lures him into his own trap. When she tells him her secret in a dream, the ace assumes the shape

88 Gitta Hammarberg: ‘Flirting with Words. Domestic Albums. 1770–1840’. In: Goscilo, Helena / Holmgren, Beth (eds): *Russia—Women—Culture*. Indiana University Press: Bloomington 1996, pp. 297–320 (p. 307).

89 Iurii Veselovskii: *Literaturnye ocherki*. Tipografia Vasil’eva: Moscow 1900, pp. 459–485.

‘of an enormous spider’. As Hubbs argues, the spider ‘is known to consume her mate after coupling with him, like the Great Mother Goddesses of archaic times’. In ‘Yesterday’s Reading’, the lyrical persona compares how the Queen of Spades plots intrigues with a spider weaving her web. In other words, the spider-like Queen of Spades threatens the King of Diamonds, symbol of the patriarchal values of Christian dogma.

As Hubbs shows, pagan cults of Baba Yaga also feature a snake or serpent, embodiments of the pagan goddess’ (phallic) omnipotence. The Russian cult of St. George most visibly illustrates the threat of ‘pagan resistance to conversion’ which Baba Yaga poses to the Christian patriarchal belief system.⁹⁰ As Hubbs argues, the spear of St. George pierces the serpent, all but eradicating the ancient female cult by the patriarchal system. In the famous Russian equestrian statue of the Bronze Horseman, the evil snake symbolising superstition and resistance to progressive forces is crushed. Naumova’s Queen of Spades is a snake who sharpens her sting and attempts to hurt innocent people with her infernal malice. Like the Bronze Horseman of the statue, Naumova’s King of Diamonds ‘tramples over / The low and base / Lies of the spades.’ (Топчет ногами / Пиковой масти / Гнусную ложь).

According to the poem, however, the King of Diamonds’ presence and strategies fail to defeat the Queen of Spades’ evil powers. Is the narrator to stand a chance against the Queen of Spades’ dark machinations, she needs to own the King of Diamonds’ Christian virtues. This is why Naumova describes the lyrical persona as a steadfast woman of faithful heart, who can rely on God’s approval and protection of the good, the innocent and the upright.

People often consulted clairvoyants and folk healers in an attempt to nullify the black magic inflicted by sorcerers and practitioners of the dark arts.⁹¹ The narrator of ‘Yesterday’s Reading’, however, does not ask the clairvoyant to help her reverse the Queen of Spades’ evil spell, adopting the folk-healer’s role instead and turning herself into a powerful female character. She repeatedly invokes the Queen of Spades throughout the poem, as though conjuring up her evil spirit to demonstrate to her how well her Christian faith has armed her against sinister powers. Like many traditional healers, Naumova’s narrator resorts to spell-like incantations to ward off evil, eleven times using expressions that mean ‘in vain’, such as *tshchetno*, *vtune*, or *ponaprasnu*, and reciting words evoking key Christian elements such as

90 Hubbs, pp. 182–222.

91 On spells, see Andrei L. Toporkov: ‘Verbal Charms against Authorities and Judges in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Russia.’ *Russian History* 40 (3–4), 2013, pp. 532–539.

blowing, bliss and virtue; faith, friendship, hope, love and purity; heaven and humility; the guardian angel, protector and providence; the heart, the anchor and the cross. Underscoring her new role of folk healer, she recites them with great frequency, a strategy which eventually enables her to vanquish the Queen of Spades during a violent storm. In the end God restores Christian order; Christianity triumphs; the pagan powers are destroyed: Baba Yaga's matriarchy must make way for the new patriarchal system.

Naumova's apparent deference to patriarchal values may be regarded as a woman writer's strategy of putting up a smoke-screen of obedience to conceal her rebellion. In keeping with my introduction, however, I would argue that it is the Sentimentalist interpretation of Christianity which enables Naumova to allow Christianity to triumph over pagan beliefs. As outlined in Chapter One, the Sentimentalist image of God was surprisingly feminine and far less patriarchal than previously. Naumova champions an ideal of virtues which originates in Christian belief, stipulating that everyone's chances of attaining moral perfection are equal. At first glance, her Christian god, represented by the King of Diamonds, may be a defender of patriarchal values because he fights the matriarchal pagan goddess. On closer consideration, however, he turns out to have precisely the characteristics which define Christianity as a belief which supports 'feminine' values: he is tenderly loving; he shows kindness and sensitivity; his smile is proof of his humility; he wants virtue to rule the world. I would like to argue that the 'feminine' version of Christianity in Sentimentalism is one of the reasons why Naumova allows Christianity to win in this poem. Moreover, she will also have been inspired by the tales of chivalry with their ideals of honesty, braveness, forgiveness, and virtue, which she read as a young girl and which continued to fascinate her throughout her life.

Another reason why Christianity triumphs in 'Yesterday's Reading' is that the powerful character of Baba Yaga was not entirely eclipsed by Christianity, but—as we have seen—transformed into the fervent teacher of virtue, a role frequently adopted by Naumova's female narrators. In this new guise, Baba Yaga has acquired a position of public influence. Just as the Christian figure of Mary absorbed many of the features of influential Russian pagan deities, Naumova's lyrical persona has absorbed some of Baba Yaga's authoritative traits, which further blend with a strong, typically Sentimentalist emphasis on Christian virtue.

'Cupid's Lottery'

The kind of divination rituals described in 'Yesterday's Reading' occurred not only during visits to clairvoyants, but were also practised as a kind of entertainment.

Illustrating another important element in Naumova's work, which often reflects the light-hearted salon atmosphere where people made playful attempts to cope with their fate, the salon guests in 'Cupid's Lottery', for example, divert themselves by engaging in divination.⁹²

As has been outlined in Chapter Two, salons provided a platform for intellectual exchange. They were also realms of feminine values, flirtation, subtle allusions, and love intrigue. Parlour games, amateur poetry readings, dancing and music made for gallant entertainment. The writing of album entries was another popular salon activity, according to Gitta Hammarberg's study. One of their purposes was to alert young women to the dangers of flirtation, and of being unchaste and unreasonable in their behaviour. Hence, album entries often featured warnings about suitors with dishonest intentions, provided advice—sometimes in the form of a poem—on how to identify such men, and warned girls to 'reject flatterers, old men who declare their passions, important men who try to impress by rank, dandies who sigh a lot, heroes who aim for yet another conquest, or Croesuses who tempt with gold.'⁹³

An integral part of Russian Sentimentalist salon culture was the figure of Cupid, whose statues were offered as presents to women guests. Album inscriptions would make reference to such gifts. Pencil drawings of Cupid accompanied love poems including the following one, which claims Cupid to be far weaker than the woman to whom the verse is addressed:

Не махай божок крылами,
Преломи колчан свой новый:
Власть разить сердца стрелами
Отдана Струговщиной.⁹⁴

*Little god, don't flap your wings,
Take your new quiver and break it;*

92 Naumova 1819, 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–58. The entire Russian original and an English translation of this poem can be found in the Appendix.

93 Hammarberg 1996, p. 306;

Gitta Hammarberg: 'Women, Wit, and Wordplay. Bouts-Rimés and the Subversive Feminization of Culture.' In: Rosenholm, Arja / Göpfert, Frank (eds): *Vieldeutiges Nicht-zu-Ende-Sprechen. Thesen und Momentaufnahmen aus der Geschichte russischer Dichterinnen*. Göpfert: Fichtenwalde 2002, pp. 61–77.

In the early 19th century, the poet Vasilii Zhukovskii enjoyed this type of salon culture with its exchanges of albums and diaries, literary games, theatre performances, and musical evenings, see Olga E. Glagoleva: *Dream and Reality of Russian Provincial Young Ladies. 1700–1850*. Carl Beck Papers: Pittsburgh 2000, p. 40.

94 Hammarberg 1996, p. 309. Poem quoted in Latin characters.

*The power to strike at hearts with arrows
Has passed to Strugovshchika.*⁹⁵

Hammarberg further describes an album entry depicting the goddess Athena leading a child away while blindfolded Cupid is dozing. In the accompanying lines, Athena encourages the child to run away from the perilous little god.

These representations of Cupid illustrate the trivialisation of Classicist metaphors in early-19th-century Russian salon culture. According to Renate Lachmann, gallant love lyrics in general, and the image of Cupid in particular, only began to appear in Russia at the end of the 17th century.⁹⁶ Before that time, Anacreontic or Petrarchan love lyrics, or Medieval *Minnesang* with its sophisticated metaphors in praise of love and women as rulers of men's hearts, were unknown in Russian literature. It was only during the Petrine era, on the back of chivalrous romances and tales of adventure, that terminology to express romantic feelings began to be used. Although they did contain some typically Anacreontic metaphors—a woman's gaze compared to arrows wounding the man—they lacked the gallantry of Western European love lyrics. Love was a brutish affair often suspected to be the devil's work, the effect being that woman was perceived as evil rather than a creature worthy of elevation.

It was only in the late 17th century that this misogynist tendency began to abate. During his stay in Paris in 1730, Vasilii Trediakovskii (1703–1768) became acquainted with Western European love lyrics, and soon claimed to be Russia's first love poet. He draws the typical image of Cupid, the blonde stealer of hearts with his bow, arrow and quiver. Introducing Anacreontic-style love lyrics to Russia in lighter, more pleasant verses, Sumarokov used similar metaphors. Ippolit Bogdanovich's (1743–1803) *Dushen'ka* (1783), featured playful gods—Venus and her son Cupid, in particular. Early-19th-century Russian salon culture saw Cupid in this light-hearted guise, and often associated him with courtship and marriage.

Divination also features in 'Cupid's Lottery'. While adopting a playful tone, the narrator's voice betrays a certain degree of concern for the future conjugal happiness of her protégées. Cupid, the god of love, surprises the assembly by suggesting that they draw lots to find out what kind of person they would marry. The poem echoes a note by Naumova that divination games were among the entertainments

95 Translation by Emily Lygo.

96 Renate Lachmann: 'Pokin, Kupido, Strel'y. Bemerkungen zur Topik der russischen Liebesdichtung des 18. Jahrhunderts.' In: Koschmieder, Erwin / Braun, Maximilian (eds): *Slavistische Studien zum VI. Internationalen Kongress in Prag 1968*. Trofenik: München 1968, pp. 449–474.

offered to her guests.⁹⁷ The most likely setting of 'Cupid's Lottery' is a salon, as we can infer from the beginning of the poem, which describes Cupid's sudden appearance, startling the guests:

Вдруг явился перед нами
Бог всечтимый, милой, злой;
Полон был колчан стрелами,
Лук в руках и с тетивой.
Испугавшись Амура,
Мы вскричали: Купидон!
«Что, узнали белокура!»

Нам сказал с усмешкой он,
И примолвил: «Успокойтесь!
«Не стрелять в сердца хочу;
«Хитрых умыслов не бойтесь:
«Мир я с вами заключу.»
Золотыми он ключами
Отпер ковanej ларец,
И рассыпал перед нами
Он тьму тьмущую сердец.⁹⁸

*Suddenly he stood before us,
Much-esteemed, a god who's kind, yet
Cruel, his quiver full of arrows,
Bow in hand, the string pulled taut.
After taking fright at Eros,
'Cupid!', we exclaimed aloud.
With a laugh he spoke to us,
'So, you recognized my curls!'*

*Then he added, 'Calm yourselves,
I don't want to pierce your hearts,
Do not fear my cunning tricks,
I am here to make my peace.'
Then he took a golden key,
Opened up his tempered casket,
Scattered from it at our feet
Innumerable little hearts.'⁹⁹*

97 Panaev, p. 468.

98 Naumova 1819, 'Kupidonova lotereia', pp. 50–58 (p. 50).

99 Translation by Emily Lygo.

After Cupid's suggestion that the company should draw lots to settle their matrimonial futures, Naumova provides a complex overview of possible marriage scenarios. Alina's lot, for instance, tells her that she will have a fine, if flighty (vertoprakh) husband, who may mismanage their estate. Alina is hardly better off than Flora, whose future spouse will spend his time—and their fortune—drinking and gambling. Nor will Flena find happiness, because her husband, as wealthy as Croesus, will also be jealous. Men, too, are at the mercy of Fate's cruel game: Liubim's future wife will make evil use of her cleverness, causing his early death. A good match can provide wealth, as Temira's fate shows: her material well-being will be secured by a marriage to an old man whose death will make her a rich widow. Aurora's is one of the few matches in which wealth is irrelevant: due to her interest in poetry, she will meet and eventually marry a pupil of the muses. As on previous occasions, Naumova is careful to underscore the fact that Aurora's future young husband will have been tutored by the muses. In other words, rather than being mere sources of inspiration, they will retain their authority over him.

'Cupid's Lottery' again emphasises the notion of modesty, an important theme which runs through Naumova's collection. The fervent woman teacher of virtue reappears to exhort people to behave with modesty, which can provide happiness. While the notion of modesty in Sentimentalist discourse was chiefly used to glorify female humility, here it serves to expose both men's and women's vices. Arrogant Bogaton, for instance, whose name spells wealth, is punished when his lot predicts that he will end up as a cuckold. Ida's approach to life is more modest, a quality for which she will be rewarded by Fate. Similarly, Liodor is advised to accept his lot and be patient, an attitude which will eventually grant him matrimonial bliss.

Modesty is a virtue which men are most warmly recommended to adopt. This is illustrated by Milovzor's example (his name tells us that he is handsome, from 'milyi', dear, and 'vzor', look), whose looks and great house fail to give him the spiritual comforts afforded by a modest heart. Milovid (whose name also alludes to his physical attractiveness), too, learns that looks matter less than inner values: his bride is quite plain, but modest and insightful, qualities which will ensure his happiness. There are good tidings also for Vsemilov (whose name tells us that he is his very dear, from 'vse', all, and 'milyi', dear), whose future wife's heart seems to be untainted by her beauty, intelligence and noble heart, rendering the size of her dowry irrelevant. Cupid's role and presence in 'Cupid's Lottery' combine a classical metaphor with the topic of marriage, which did not feature in Russian love poetry prior to the end of the 18th century.

Naumova depicts Cupid in keeping with his image in early-19th-century friendship-album and salon culture, i.e. as a playful and fairly ineffectual character, a tendency already present in the collection's preceding poem, 'Zhaloby steniashchago

Amura' (The Complaints of Moaning Cupid): here the god of love has lost much of his power over people. Despairing that they no longer believe in him, he asks the gods to return people's hearts to him.¹⁰⁰ Cupid's loss of power is even greater in 'Cupid's Lottery'. Here, rather than shooting arrows, he allows people to draw lots, placing the responsibility for their destinies into their own hands. His contribution to the game is reduced to preparing the lots, reducing him from an initiator, the principal driving force of people's love matches, to a mere spectator. As his power has diminished, people seem to have taken ownership of their destinies.

However, they are still not in charge of their own lives: they pick their partners blindly, not knowing whose name is written on their lot. The power they have over their own lives is illusory. Ultimately, it is chance—or fate—which determines the matches that will be made, rather than Cupid's (sometimes sadistic) pleasure, or love, or people's dealings and choices.

In 'Cupid's Lottery' the importance of fate is underscored by the frequent use of words alluding to fate, including *sud'ba*, *sud'bina*, or *zhrebi*. Almost every third stanza contains a reference to fate, emphasising the fact that, despite a rather frivolous allusion to the god of love in the title, the poem addresses the unpredictability of fate and the human desire to catch at least a glimpse of what the future may hold, no matter how futile any attempts to control or regulate one's destiny may be. Fate cannot be defeated, it is inescapable. Cupid's appearance merely provides an amusing interlude. Evidence of his fading importance can be found not only in the reduction of a once powerful allegory to mere mediatorship, but also in his declared wish to make peace with the people he has disturbed. Cupid no longer instils fear—quite unlike the far more terrifying character of Fate which looms on the horizon.

'Reproaches to Fate' and 'Fate's Rebuttal'

The way in which Naumova links the classical character of Cupid with the presence of fate reflects a time of increasing interest not only in divination, but also in folk culture. As a result of this trend, both male and female poets began to combine classical characters with deities, including Fate, which originated in Russian folklore. In early-19th-century literature the presence of fate as an uncontrollable force assumed increasing importance. As argued in Chapters One and Two, this may be seen as an expression of the Romantic scepticism about (male) human

100 Naumova 1819, 'Zhaloby steniashchago Amura', pp. 46–49 (p. 49).

goodness, signifying individual insecurity in a world shaken by social and ideological crises.

Fate features in several poems of Naumova's collection, most explicitly in 'To Fate' and 'Fate's Rebuttal'.¹⁰¹ The poems appear in the first third of the collection, which address salon culture and young women's thoughts about marriage. Later in the collection she presents poems which focus on the Sentimentalist topos of loss of friendship and the deconstruction of Sentimentalist poetic genres.

'To Fate' presents a female narrator who expresses her anger about Fate's machinations. The presence of a woman protagonist not only revises the tradition of poems about Fate containing a male lyrical persona, but also the Sentimentalist image of women as humble beings. From the very beginning of the poem, Naumova's female character expresses harsh criticism of Fate:

Скажи, проказница старушка,
Которую зовут Судьбой!
Уже ли я тебе игрушка,
Что так мудришь ты со мной?

То вдруг меня ты приласкаешь,
То прочь с досадой оттолкнешь;
То близко к счастью подпускаешь,
То в пропасть лютых бед столкнешь.¹⁰²

*Tell me, whimsical old lady,
Whom we usually know as Fate!
Do you see me as a plaything,
Since you treat me in this way?*

*Now you see fit to caress me,
Now, annoyed, push me away,
Now you let me near to joy, yet,
Now I'm back to misery.¹⁰³*

Fate is accused of unpredictability in the way she treats the protagonist, casting her from one extreme to the other, sometimes surrounding her with friends, then depriving her of them, placing her in evil company instead. In contrast to Urusova's poem on Fate mentioned in Chapter Two, Fate does not appear as a

101 Naumova 1819, 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64;
'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75.

The poems in Russian and their English translations can be found in the Appendix.

102 Naumova, 1819, 'K sud'be', pp. 59–64.

103 Translation by Emily Lygo.

benevolent female presence. Rather, the narrator calls Fate a ‘whimsical old lady’ who treats people as little more than a plaything (*igrushka*) and who is almost as careless and sadistic to humans as the Cupid of classical literature. Later on Fate is a terrifying creature who shakes her head wildly and is cruel towards people, the narrator in particular, who further complains that whenever Fate visits her cabin she takes something away—happiness, peace, health—until the only thing left is hope, which our protagonist categorically refuses to relinquish.

The poem conjures up the image of a powerful female character in conflict with Christian values, a feature we have already observed in ‘Yesterday’s Reading’. The narrator admonishes Fate to remember her place in the heavenly hierarchy:

Ты сколько ни грозись, не можешь
Противу правды ничего;
Ты истину не переможешь.
Убойся Бога самого!

*Nothing that you say can change,
Do anything against the truth.
You cannot change reality,
And even you fear God himself.*

These lines contain a hidden reproach that Fate did not conform to Christian precepts. The same view is reflected in the narrator’s bold assertion that Fate will never be able to quash hope—a key element of Christian doctrine—and that she is powerless against (Christian) truth. The narrator is far from showing the humility displayed in Urusova’s ‘To Fate’. On the contrary, she quite audaciously tells Fate to do better by teaching the crafty rather than punish the innocent, and is bold enough to remind Fate of her duties.

The next poem is ‘Fate’s Rebuttal’. It is Fate’s reply to the complaint voiced by the narrator of ‘To Fate’. By presenting an actual confrontation between Fate and the lyrical persona, Naumova’s work differs from poems by Kheraskov, L’vov or Dmitriev mentioned in Chapter Two, in which Fate is mute and fails to respond to human threats and criticism.

Did Naumova know the works of the above-mentioned three authors? Was she familiar with their presentations of Fate? We may never know. Her inspiration to provide a different image of Fate may stem from her knowledge of folk culture and divination rituals; she may not necessarily have made a deliberate attempt to revise their images of Fate. In ‘Fate’s Rebuttal’, Fate appears in the flesh—active, full of terrifying rage and power. She is a fierce woman unlike any the world has ever seen and, as the first stanza of the poem reveals, even in old age displays the agility of a much younger woman:

Старуха предо мной явилась,
Каких не видывал и свет;
Нахмуря брови, так бодрилась,
Как женщина во цвете лет.
Ко мне взор строгой обращает,
Ты вызов сделала Судьбе?
Она с надменностью вещает:
Я здесь ответствовать тебе.¹⁰⁴

*An aged woman appeared before me,
The like the world has never seen,
With knitted brow, her spirits fine,
She's like a woman in her prime.
She looks at me, her countenance stern,
Are you the one who challenged Fate?
She haughtily lays down the law:
I've come to answer your complaint.¹⁰⁵*

There is a moment of surprise when Fate suddenly stands not just before the lyrical persona but the reader as well. The narrator does not expect Fate to appear; any complaints uttered against her seem to belong to the usual repertoire of this topic.

In addition to granting Fate an unexpected appearance, 'Fate's Rebuttal' offers a detailed description of Fate's various activities. She is portrayed as a busy woman in charge of the wheel of fortune, who, although prepared to reply to the lyrical persona from the previous poem, is annoyed and distracted by people's never-ending complaints against her. Naumova's Fate wields impressive power; she is virtually omnipotent, flying like a bird in order to foresee everything and to reach everywhere in time. If in Pospelova's poetry the universe was firmly in the hands of a male god, in Naumova's work Fate has taken over and is in charge of the whole world:

Я всей вселенною верчу;
Там милую, а здесь караю, —
Творю, что только захочу.

Ненастье в ведро обративши,
В день ясный насылаю гром;
Как лужу море возмутивши,
Из тишины творю содом;

104 Naumova 1819, 'Vozrazhenie sud 'by', pp. 65–75.

105 Translation by Emily Lygo.

Царей я делаю рабами,
Рабов в вельможи вывожу;
Явлю безумцев мудрецами,
Героя в трусе покажу.

*I have the world to spin around.
While here I punish, there I'm kind,
I do whatever comes to mind.*

*I whip a storm up in a teacup,
Send thunder on a summer's day;
I churn the sea like it's a puddle,
Make Sodom where before peace reigned.
Then I'll transform kings into slaves,
While slaves turn out to be grandees,
I make a fool appear a wise man,
Expose the hero in the coward.*

These lines allude to the wheel traditionally associated with Fortune, which also features in Bolotnikova's poem, 'K nei zhe' (To the Same Woman), where Fortune and her wheel fly into the houses of the wealthy.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to Bolotnikova, Naumova takes great care to depict all the dramatic effects of Fate's turning her wheel. As the following display of her power demonstrates, Fate has very nearly recovered the ancient Fates' power over human lives (see Chapter One):

Мной каждому не понапрасна
Определение дано.
Даю, беру и возвращаю
Блаженство, славу и покой;
Тому польщу, сему стращаю,
Сих тешу, тех крушу тоской.¹⁰⁷

*You'll all receive, all without fail,
Your destiny worked out by me.
I give, I take, and I give back,
Now bliss, now fame, now peace and quiet,
I favour one, but scare another,
Help some, others crush with sorrow.¹⁰⁸*

106 Bolotnikova, 'K nei zhe', pp. 41–43 (pp. 42–43).

107 Naumova 1819, p. 67.

108 Translation by Emily Lygo.

Although she is mighty, Fate strongly objects to the accusation of ignoring Christian dogma, correcting the obviously misguided lyrical persona by referring to God as her superior:

Я действую по Божьей воле,
А вы творите по моей;¹⁰⁹

*I act according to God's will,
And you in turn are ruled by mine;*¹¹⁰

The heavenly hierarchy remains intact even though the lines in which Fate asserts her autonomy vastly outnumber the mere two lines given to this acknowledgement of the patriarchal Christian order.

The very act of speaking in her own voice is an emancipatory step, as becomes apparent if we compare Naumova's Fate with the representation of Fortune in Volkova's poem, 'Chelovek i vremia' (Person and Time), where God speaks directly, claiming authority over Fortune: 'Lish' ia Edinni upravliu Fortuny shchedroi rukoi' (I alone govern Fortune with a generous hand).¹¹¹ Naumova's Fate is more independent than Fortune and on a superior hierarchical level: a metaphor for wealth has been transformed into an autonomous authority over human lives.

Another sign of Fate's newly acquired authority is the way in which her chariot is described. There is a clear difference between descriptions of the chariot in Volkova's more conservative 'Razmyshlenie o prevratnosti i nepostoianstve shchastia' (Reflection on the Vicissitudes and Inconstancy of Luck), and Naumova's more progressive 'Fate's Rebuttal'. In Volkova's poem, Fortune is not explicitly in command, whereas Naumova's Fate is very clearly in charge, demonstrating her authority when she describes her task of steering the chariot as 'no joke' (ne shutka pravit' kolesnitsei).

The lessons taught by Fate

Naumova's Fate forces people to learn life's lessons, as she states when saying that all will grow wiser from experience, and will stop hurting other people's feelings. The advice to learn from experience is a key feature in the prevailing Medieval representations of this demi-goddess, who instructed people to learn from her by observing and accepting her dealings. As outlined in Chapter One, no-one dared

109 Naumova 1819, p. 68.

110 Translation by Emily Lygo.

111 Anna Volkova, 'Chelovek i vremia'. *Otchet imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteki za 1892 god* 39, 1895, p. 105.

to argue with Fortune, let alone attack her. Naumova's allegory is frighteningly intense and therefore bears greater resemblance to the Medieval image, which was quite common until Renaissance man's will to power attempted to overcome and suppress this incarnation of female authority, resulting in a tamer, Machiavellian personification. However, Naumova does not reproduce the idea of Fate as a negligent mother or sexually provocative woman.

The lesson taught by Naumova's Fate is that humans must take responsibility of their own lives. At first this may seem paradoxical; after all, it is precisely Fate's influence which prevents people from making autonomous decisions. They are even strongly advised to accept her dealings, but this does not result in mere passivity. Within the limits of Fate's machinations, people are responsible for their lives to the extent that they cannot blame the consequences of mentally immature behaviour on Fate. This attitude manifests itself in Fate's reproach to the lyrical persona for having naively, even blindly welcomed manipulative, deceitful people into her life. Fate also declines responsibility for the lyrical persona's temper which often drives her to expose her fellow men and women's lies, behaviour which disrupts friendship and isolates the narrator.

Naumova frequently warns young girls in particular not to trust others blindly. This warning's repeated occurrence here is evidence of the scepticism with which women began to perceive the Sentimentalist ideal of femininity. When Fate states that it is no longer fashionable to speak the language of the heart, she addresses a subtle warning to the lyrical persona, perhaps expressing a typically Sentimentalist regret for the loss of a mythological Golden Age when people's behaviour was directed by sincere feelings only. On the other hand, Fate's warning against innocent trustfulness may indicate that Sentimentalist aesthetics of female ingenuity and innocence have now become obsolete.

If Fate scolds the narrator for being too trusting, she also subtly hints at her moral superiority. However, Naumova cannot distance herself completely from the Sentimentalist pattern, conforming, at least to some extent, to the ideal of the guileless, ingenuous, morally pure woman. In 'Fate's Rebuttal', for example, she adopts the Sentimentalist view that women are driven by innate goodness and therefore virtuous by nature. On the other hand, she also has Fate scold her narrator for being too naive. In other words, she expresses a critical view of the ideal of the perfectly moral, trusting and virtuous creature who resembles Karamzin's Liza. When her character steps into the public sphere adopting the pose of the angry woman teacher of virtue, Naumova subverts Sentimentalist expectations of women in order to make her point.

In contrast to the way in which many male authors tried to cope with Fate, i.e. by repressing the female element (see Chapter One), Naumova's Fate calls on

both men and women to make sensible life decisions, granting them some (limited) autonomy. However, if they want to make use of it, any gender distinctions between the naturally innocent and trusting (female) group and the controlling, rational (male) one must be abolished.

Naumova's work supports the view that no good can possibly result from the kind of ingenuous behaviour and ill-considered decisions Sentimentalist culture expected from women. The principle of equality helps Fate accomplish one of her most important tasks, which is to establish positive relations between spouses.

Naumova's Fate also presents herself as a teacher of virtue when announcing that she will make people live more modest lives:

Заставлю жить я поскромнее
И добродетель уважать;
Все ставши опытом умнее,
Не будут ближних обижать;
Старухи умничать не станут,
Повес проклятых усмирю;
Кокетки мудрить перестанут,
Мужей с женами примирю.¹¹²

*I make them live more modestly,
Make them hold virtue in esteem,
Once wiser from experience,
They won't offend dear ones again;
Old women won't start getting clever,
I'll deal with all the wretched rakes;
Coquettes will stop their scheming ways,
Husbands and wives will make their peace.*¹¹³

The fact that this was also a central matter of concern for Naumova's angry muse is suggested by 'Appeal to Women', where the muse threatens to tell the truth, rising against everyone, or declares that she will teach women as she has taught men.¹¹⁴

Naumova's Fate displays maternal features; she is in charge of directing and instructing all of humanity: Naumova's alter ego attempts to provide guidance to her protégés. 'Fate's Rebuttal' may well be a response to the idealised early-19th-century view of mothers as the protectors of virtue and teachers of morals

112 Naumova 1819, 'Vozrazhenie sud'by', pp. 65–75 (74).

113 Translation by Emily Lygo.

114 Naumova 1819, 'Vozzvanie k zhenshchinam', pp. 151–161 (p. 151).

(see Kelly's study on manners, motherhood and moral education).¹¹⁵ Rather than expressing an effort to conform to literary Sentimentalist ideals about women, Fate's repeated emphasis of the importance of virtue in Naumova's poem may also be an expression of this socio-cultural trend.

At the end of 'Fate's Rebuttal', Fate asks the narrator not to bother her with any more complaints, telling her not to behave as foolishly as other people who complain about their lives, yet do not want to accept or understand Fate's lessons. Intimidated by Fate's speech, the narrator promises not to repeat her mistake but to live a more humble life.

A comparison of Naumova's poems on Fate with Urusova's poem on the same subject (see Chapter Two) shows that both authors reach similar conclusions: they accept the dealings of Fate, forcing their protagonists to go through a learning process. Impertinent at the beginning and rebellious against Fate's influence, both eventually acknowledge Fate's power.

Where the two authors differ is in how they present this process. In keeping with the pietistic doctrine of her day, Urusova's protagonist has begun to understand and appreciate Fate's secret, wise dealings and stops complaining about Fate. The tone of the poem becomes meek and humble. In contrast, Naumova's writings are indignant in tone, and her character is not in a pietistic state of self-contemplation. Despite a conclusion almost identical to Urusova's, Naumova may well have chosen such a radically different road towards acceptance of Fate's lessons because she wanted to portray a powerful female character.

Naumova's Fate therefore personifies the dark powers that man, having realised that divine providence does not exist and nature cannot provide virtue, was to struggle with during Romanticism. The presentation of Fate as a frightening and outspoken woman may well have been inspired by Naumova's affinity with folk culture reflected elsewhere in her work, for instance in the two folk-song inspired poems mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, i.e. 'The Young Woman Walked across the Field', and 'Russian Songs', which features the folk character of

115 Kelly shows the contemporary idealisation of motherhood in a poem by Zhukovskii dedicated to the Grand Duchess Alexandra Feodorovna (1798–1860) on the birth of one of her children in 1818. The poem praises royal maternity as 'loving watchfulness and protection against harm, rather than active intellectual guidance', and draws a parallel between the royal mother and Fate, both being 'all-seeing' and charged with protecting their children. Kelly also argues that 'virtue was essential as a means to independence; it was not primarily an instrument of female subjugation'; see Kelly 2001, p. 5, p. 17.

the bird-girl.¹¹⁶ As has been said before, divination may have been another source of inspiration for Naumova's Fate.

The portrayal of Fate as a powerful character may also have been Naumova's reaction to the cult of masculinity which underpinned Sentimentalist discourse and its distinction between a private world of feminine virtues and a public sphere of civil virtues reserved for men. Naumova's Fate is no domestic angel but a frightening and dark character who disrupts the Sentimentalist gender dichotomy; she is the 'madwoman in the attic' who has refused to stay locked in, to echo the iconic phrase from Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's study on women writers and literary imagination.¹¹⁷ As uncontrollable as Baba Yaga, she can be as cunning and mischievous as the Queen of Spades in 'Yesterday's Reading'. Fate stands for the irrational fear of a female element of disorder which men have attempted to annihilate. She claims a voice and a position of her own in a universe of male republican ideals which have tried to control her. At a time when mythological patricide seemed to repeat itself in the Decembrist plans to abolish the tsar's power, the reappearance of an overpowering mother figure suggests that these ideals of manliness were based on a doubtful gender dichotomy.

As I have noted, Naumova placed this revision of Sentimentalist gender patterns in the first third of her collection. Subsequent poems also question Sentimentalist literary models, for example when the lyrical persona deconstructs the cliché of the carefree country maiden. The last third of Naumova's anthology features poems whose protagonists express their opinions on socio-political topics such as the dangers of free-thinking. The collection concludes on a calmer note and gentler tone, with epitaphs commemorating people close to Naumova.

Summary: A woman in charge

This chapter has explored the ways in which women authors such as Naumova articulated the impact of representations of femininity on women during the dying days of Sentimentalist discourse and the emerging Romanticism of the early 19th century. I have argued that the female character of a teacher of virtue was instrumental to Naumova's endeavour to disrupt literary and cultural patterns which objectified women, idealising them for their alleged innate goodness. An angry muse was an instrument of questioning and rewriting literary characters

116 Naumova 1819, 'Russkia pesni', pp. 38–39;
'Molodushka molodaia po poliu khodila', pp. 40–43.

117 Sandra Gilbert / Susan Gubar: *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale University Press: New Haven 1979.

such as Karamzin's Liza, or Sappho, or the (usually mute) female to whom a Sentimentalist man disappointed in love addresses his complaints in Gessner-style elegies and love idylls.

My study has also shown that, in focusing on salon culture and courtship, Naumova addresses spheres of life which often set the course for women's matrimonial destiny. Her poems suggest that it was possible for a woman to disregard the boundaries between public and private, disguising her rebellion by adopting a virtuous stance, adhering to Christian values, and calling for sincerity, rationality and equality in both sexes. In poems which address traditional folk practices such as divination and cartomancy, Naumova gives a voice to powerful female characters reminiscent of Baba Yaga and evocative of pagan mythology.

Naumova's portrayal of Fate as an outspoken, wilful demi-goddess whom mere humans are unable to control, challenges Sentimentalist notions of women as meek creatures, and is an expression of Romanticist gender dichotomy. By calling on men and women to act within their boundaries and to make rational decisions, Naumova's work revises conceptions about social interaction in which woman alone is required to embody virtue.