

The Enlightenment of Russian Literature

Alibaeva Lola Namazovna

Lecturer, Termez State University, Termez, Uzbekistan

Annotation: The Russian Age of Enlightenment was a period in the 18th century in which the government began to actively encourage the proliferation of arts and sciences, which had a profound impact on Russian culture. During this time, the first Russian university was founded, a library, a theatre, a public museum, as well as relatively independent press.

Keywords: age, culture, irrevocably, political, place

Like other enlightened despots, Catherine the Great played a key role in fostering the arts, sciences, and education. The national Enlightenment in the Russian Empire differed from its Western European counterpart in that it promoted further modernization of all aspects of Russian life and was concerned with abolishing the institution of serfdom in Russia. The Pugachev Rebellion and French Revolution may have shattered the illusions of rapid political change, but the intellectual climate in Russia was altered irrevocably. Russia's place in the world was debated by Denis Fonvizin, Mikhail Shcherbatov, Andrey Bolotov, Alexander Radishchev, and Ivan Boltin; these discussions precipitated the divide between the radical, western, conservative and Slavophile traditions of Russian thought. Intellectuals often used the term *prosveshchenie*, promoting piety, erudition, and commitment to the spread of learning. The history of Russian literature is divided into several periods which can be lengthy or quite short. Before the adoption of Christianity – first by Princess Olga in 957 and then by the Great Prince Vladimir in 988 – there was no written language in Russia. If necessary, Greek, Latin, or Jewish languages were used for written communication. Literary works like fairy tales, songs, and epics were preserved and passed from generation to generation as monuments of oral history.

Old Russian Literature

Old Russian literature covers the period from the eleventh century through the seventeenth century. The Russian literature of this period is represented by religious and secular historical texts created in Kievan Rus and then Muscovite Rus. Vivid examples of literary masterpieces include the Lives of Boris and Gleb, The Tale of Bygone Years, the Tale of Igor's Campaign, the Zadonshchina, and many others.

Russian Enlightenment Literature

Russian literature of the eighteenth century is known as the Russian Enlightenment. Among the founders of Classicism in Russian poetry and prose are Lomonosov, Fonvizin, and Derzhavin, as well as other authors and enlighteners. Their works are multifaceted and dedicated to literature, science and other forms of art. For example, Lomonosov constantly sought to reform the language of literature, to make it the language of philosophy and science, and advocated for the convergence of literary and popular language forms. His odes were also among the first works to be written in accordance with the natural rhythmic structures of the Russian language. Toward the end of this period, Nikolai Karamzin also established Sentimentalism in poetry and prose. His stories, such as "Poor Liza," also represent Enlightenment values in so far as they represent all people, including serfs and peasants, as human beings. Catherine the Great considered herself an enlightened despot. She read the most prominent *philosophes* of the day, including Montesquieu and Voltaire and tried to adhere to Enlightenment ideas.[3] She wished to bring Russia up to par with its neighbors not only in a military sense, but also politically, culturally, and intellectually.

Many of Catherine's contemporaries questioned her adherence to Enlightenment ideals and thought she was an egoist, merely using concepts from the Age of Enlightenment to further her selfish gains.^[4] Gender played a primary role in these criticisms. Contemporaries interpreted her personality as combining masculine strength with feminine vanity.^[4]

"Westernization" carries different meanings in different countries over varying time periods. But in relation to Russia during the 18th century, the term meant legislative changes to economics, politics and culture. It also entails the Russian gentry's adherence to a set standard and its imitation of the Western values.^[5] Westernization in Russia included the modernization of machinery, the refinement of a more efficient bureaucracy, and the acceptance of Western European tastes.^[5]

Russia produced more goods, and enlisted thousands of troops during Catherine's reign. While she acquired new lands, including Crimea and Poland, updated the army, and supported burgeoning manufactures, she really wanted to westernize Russia by reforming it, specifically the lives of the gentry, qualitatively. Bringing Russia to an equal level with the rest of Europe intellectually was a major concern of Catherine's. For this reason she created laws that justified her rule.

Golden Age of Russian Literature

Russian literature of the nineteenth century is considered to be the “golden age” of Russian literature. This is the period when masterpieces of Russian literature, history, and art entered onto the world stage. For Russians, the genius of Pushkin exemplifies this golden age. Having written in all literary genres—narrative poem, lyric, tragedy, the short story, novel, travelogue and history—it was Pushkin who brought everyday Russian language into literary use, and it was Pushkin who first explored many of Russian literature's major themes. Other writers of the period, such as Griboedov, Lermontov, and Gogol, as well as their heirs, Turgenev, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Chekhov, form the links of this golden literary chain. Their works have forever entered the classics of the world literature, and rightly so.

Silver Age of Russian Literature

The “silver age” of Russian literature represents a rather short period from 1890 to 1921, a time of tremendous turmoil, war, and revolution. In this turbulent time, however, Russian poetry flourished, and bold experiments in all forms of art took place. Blok and Briusov, Gumilev and Akhmatova, Tsvetaeva and Mayakovsky, Esenin and Gorky, Bunin and Kuprin are the most prominent representatives of silver age literature.

Soviet and Russian Literature

Soviet literature refers to the literature of all the Soviet peoples from the fifteen republics of the USSR, written in more than 88 languages, with Russian as the predominant language. One characteristic feature of literature during the Soviet period was the development of “socialist realism” as the official literary style, according to which Soviet writers depicted Soviet reality in positive terms, focusing on its revolutionary, educational, and humanistic achievements, and propagating the ideas of the communist party. As IUrii Olesha once said, Soviet writers were the “engineers of human souls.” Among the most notable Soviet realist writers were: Maxim Gorky, Nikolai Ostrovskii, Mikhail Sholokhov, Fedor Gladkov, Aleksandr Fadeev, and others. Behind the curtain of socialist realism, however, were many authors who refused to conform to Soviet realism. Numbered among these anti-Soviet writers are: Mikhail Bulgakov, Boris Pasternak, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Varlam Shalamov, Andrei Siniavskii, Iosif Brodskii, and many others.

Contemporary (Post-Soviet) Russian Literature

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked the beginning of a new era in Russian literature. This era, extending from 1991 to the present, has already been crowned with such outstanding names as Tatiana Tolstaia, Liudmila Ulitskaia, Zakhar Prilepin, Dina Rubina, Boris Akunin, Viktor Pelevin, Ludmila Petrushevskaia, and many more. Natasha Perova has published these new “voices” of Russian literature in English translation from 1991 through 2014 under the series “Glas: New Russian Writing.”

Russian Literature: an interactive timeline

The history of Russian literature, its stages, tendencies, genres, and writers in an interactive timeline. The dates written are not the dates of birth, but the dates pointing the time framework within which a certain writer was or is working. This timeline was made as a project for Multimedia Journalism class at the American University in Bulgaria by Diana Elagina.

Used literature

1. Wolfgang Menzel, *Germany from the Earliest Period Vol. 4*, Kessinger Publishing, 2004, ISBN 1-4191-2171-5, Google Print, p.33
2. John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy*, 1996, ISBN 0-8039-9019-7, p.121.
3. Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848*, Oxford University Press, 1996, ISBN 0-19-820654-2, Google print p.84
4. Henry Eldridge Bourne, *The Revolutionary Period in Europe 1763 to 1815*, Kessinger Publishing, 2005, ISBN 1-4179-3418-2, Google Print p.161
5. Robert Wokler, *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment*, DIANE, ISBN 0-87169-935-4, Google Print, 108

6. Whittaker, Cynthia H. "The Reforming Tsar: The Redefinition of Autocratic Duty in Eighteenth-Century Russia." *Slavic Review* 51.1 (1992): 77-98. Print.
7. Madariaga, Isabela. *Politics and Culture in Eighteenth-century Russia*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman Inc., 1998.