



Boris Gasparov, Dr.

Boris Bakhmeteff Professor of Russian and East European Studies

Columbia University

Born in 1940 in Rostow on the Don, Russia

Studied Russian Language and Literature at Rostow University, Musicology at the Musical Academy, Moscow, Slavic Linguistics at the Moscow Pedagogical University, and Slavic and General Linguistics at the Academy of Science, Minsk

PROJECT

Alexander Pushkin and the World of Early European Romanticism

The project's goal is to assess the impact of major themes and motifs of European early Romanticism (1790s-1810s) on Pushkin's artistic and intellectual evolution. While the early Pushkin easily appropriated such Romantic accessories as the exotic chronotope or the sardonic "Byronic" posture, it was later in his career that his work showed his growing awareness of Romantic metaphysical quests concerning the nature of language, Romantic philosophy of history and nationality, and some deeper features of Romantic subjectivity. Particularly important among the categories of early Romantic metaphysics and aesthetics that left an imprint on Pushkin's mature oeuvre were the personalization of the poetic voice; fragmentariness and polyphonic heterogeneity of poetic discourse; irony and auto-irony, understood as an instrument of relativizing consciousness, i. e., more in a Schlegelian than in a Byronic sense; treatment of language and writing as the principal vehicle of the metaphysical sensibility; and finally, the articulation of national consciousness and historical destiny by means of symbolic imagery tinged with messianism. To a large extent, his path showed the reversal of the pattern of development that was typical for Romanticism at large: from its early concerns with the metaphysical foundations of "Romantic poetry" to an increasing emphasis lately on overt stylistic features and narrative devices. In this sense, integrating Pushkin into the Romantic era can enrich the whole perspective on European Romanticism and its place in literary and intellectual history.

Recommended Reading

Gasparov, Boris. *Poeticheskii iazyk Pushkina kak fakt istorii russkogo literaturnogo iazyka* [Pushkin's Poetics in the History of Russian Literary Language]. Vienna: Wiener slawistischer Almanach, 1992.

A brief English version can be found in: "Pushkin and Romanticism." In *The Pushkin Handbook*, edited by David Bethea, 537-367. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.

___. *Iazyk, pamiat', obraz: Lingvistika iazykovogo sushchestvovaniia* [Language, Memory, and Imagery: Linguistics of Everyday Usage]. Moscow: NLO, 1996.

___. *Five Operas and a Symphony: Word and Music in Russian Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

A failed marriage: early Romantic metaphysical consciousness and its literary echoes.

Among many possible forms of dialogical interaction, the one that carried a particular importance for Romantic consciousness was the relationship between man and woman. In a general way, it symbolized the longing of a subjective self to overstep its own boundaries and to come in touch with a world external to it, be it a world of another person or the world of phenomena. The image of the "Romantic marriage" stood at the center of a rich paradigm of symbolic representations of this key idea. Among those alternative representations, whose very variety signified the drive away from the monologic unity, were Lavoisier's explanation of burning as a process in which the burning matter is transformed by the contact with oxygen; a critique of the traditional idea of God (including Kant's logical proof of God's existence) for its failure to incorporate the feminine element; a "marriage" between philosophy and poetry, whereby philosophy abandons "systems" in favor of a spontaneously evolving narrative, while literature turns into a "meta-literature" constantly reflecting upon itself; the genetic relation between languages of the West and the Orient; the union of word and music, etc. Ultimately, the early Romantics saw their mission in making the whole world "potentialized," or "Romanticized" (Novalis), by setting it into a never-ceasing process of metabolic transformations. The vision of the Romantic element as a total transformative commotion manifested itself in Schlegel's famous definition of Romantic poetry as a "progressive universal poetry" (eine progressive Universalpoesie: "Athenäum Fragmente", no. 116).

Although the Jena movement and its chief organ, the journal "Athenaeum", proved to be short-lived, it made a crucial contribution to the emergence of a new metaphysical consciousness, whose various facets and manifestations spread on the European cultural scene in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Peculiar for this consciousness was a delicate equilibrium between ardent efforts to reach the infiniteness of the objective world and a sober realization that these efforts are doomed to be a perpetual journey without a final arrival. When this equilibrium is disturbed, when the self-subversive side of the pursuit (a crucial component which Schlegel called "Romantic irony") is lost, consequences could be fatal. The dangers of the utopian willfulness were reflected in a pessimistic turn the idea of the "Romantic marriage" took in numerous works of literature in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In my talk I will address some examples of this trend in works by Goethe, Chateaubriand, and Pushkin.

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Gasparov, Boris (Berlin [u.a.], 2010)

Speech, memory, and meaning : intertextuality in everyday language

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1625338414>

Trends in linguistics

<https://kxp.k1oplus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1625338414>