

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE HERO'S IMAGE IN RUSSIAN LITERATURE OF THE  
XVIII CENTURY**

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**Annotation**

The article examines the evolution of the hero's image in 18th-century Russian literature in the context of changing artistic trends and the transformation of aesthetic paradigms of the era. The movement from the normative-allegorical model of personality in the system of classicism to the socio-educational and further to the emotional-psychological concept of a person in sentimentalism is analyzed. Based on the works of Alexander Sumarokov, Mikhail Lomonosov, Denis Fonvizin, Gavriil Derzhavin, Alexander Radishchev and Nikolai Karamzin, structural changes in the characterological organization of the hero, the principles of motivation of his actions and ways of artistic representation of the inner world are revealed.

**Keywords**

The evolution of the hero, classicism, sentimentalism, enlightenment, psychology, artistic typology.

The evolution of the hero's image in Russian literature of the 18th century is a natural historical and literary process caused by a change in artistic trends, a transformation of aesthetic attitudes and a change in socio-philosophical ideas of the era. Over the course of a century, Russian literature has been moving from the normative poetics of classicism to the emotional and psychological system of sentimentalism, which is directly reflected in the typology of the literary hero, his value orientation, characterological structure and methods of artistic representation. In the first third of the 18th century, classicism dominated, influenced by Western European aesthetics and the theoretical positions of N. Boileau; in Russian literature, its principles are realized in the works of Antioch Cantemir, Vasily Trediakovsky, Mikhail Lomonosov and especially Alexander Sumarokov. The hero of a classic work is built as a bearer of a state and moral idea; he is devoid of individual psychological depth, since his function is to embody an abstract virtue or vice. In Sumarokov's tragedies, such as Dimitri the Impostor and Khorev, the hero is defined primarily by the category of duty; his actions are motivated by a rational choice between personal feeling and public obligation, while priority is invariably given to the state interest. The conflict is of a normative nature, and the character of the hero is static and subordinated to the principle of typification; psychologism boils down to the declarative expression of affects corresponding to the canons of the "high" genre. In Lomonosov's odes, the hero acts as an idealized monarch or citizen expressing the idea of serving the Fatherland.; The individual principle is dissolved in patriotic pathos, which reflects the enlightenment concept of the individual as part of the state integrity. Thus, at the early stage of the 18th century, the hero was a rhetorical figure subject to normative aesthetics and a hierarchy of genres. In the second half of the century, educational issues intensified in Russian literature, which led to a complication of the character of the hero and a gradual departure from schematism; Denis Fonvizin's work, primarily his comedy Nedorosl, played a significant role in this process. The hero of Fonvizin's comedy is no longer an abstract allegory; he is correlated with a specific

social environment, and his character is formed under the influence of upbringing and social circumstances. The image of Mitrofan typifies noble ignorance, but there is a household authenticity in it, which indicates the transition from an abstract model to socio-psychological specifics. At the same time, the positive characters embody the ideal of a "reasonable nobleman", correlated with the enlightenment concept of civic virtue. By the end of the 18th century, a qualitative change was taking place, associated with the formation of sentimentalism, which shifted the focus of artistic attention from the social function of the hero to his inner world; Nikolai Karamzin, the author of the story Poor Lisa, was crucial here. In sentimentalism, the hero is determined not by social status or public duty, but by the ability to feel; sincerity of experience becomes a value category, and the dynamics of mental states becomes the main subject of the image. Lisa, as the heroine of the Karamzin story, represents a new type of character in which social insecurity is combined with moral purity; the tragedy of her fate is not due to a violation of public duty, but to a conflict between sincere feelings and the cruelty of social reality. Erast, in turn, is characterized by psychological inconsistency, which indicates the emergence of internal conflict as a structural element of the hero's image. The narrator actively intervenes in the text, expressing empathy and directing the reader's perception, thereby forming a new model of reception focused on emotional participation. The change in speech organization is also significant: if classicism is dominated by declamatory rhetoric, then sentimentalism asserts the intonation of intimate confession, which enhances the effect of psychological credibility. The evolution of the hero is also manifested in the transformation of the spatial and temporal organization of the work: from the conditional historical space of the tragedy to the concretized natural landscape, which performs the function of a correlate of the character's inner state. Thus, within the XVIII century, the image of the hero goes through three main stages of development: normative-allegorical, socio-educational and emotional-psychological. The first stage is characterized by the dominance of the rationalistic concept of personality and the subordination of the individual principle to the state idea; The second is the strengthening of social analysis and critical understanding of reality; the third is the affirmation of the value of individual feeling and inner autonomy of a person. This process reflects the general dynamics of Russian culture of the 18th century, in which the idea of personality as an independent spiritual value is being formed. By the end of the century, prerequisites were emerging for the further development of the realistic typology of the hero in 19th-century literature, as sentimentalism introduced in-depth psychologism and attention to internal conflict into artistic practice. Consequently, the evolution of the hero's image in 18th-century Russian literature is not an accidental change of artistic techniques, but a natural result of the interaction of aesthetic systems and historical and cultural factors that determined the transition from a rhetorical personality model to a psychologically motivated artistic character.

The further development of the hero's image in Russian literature of the 18th century is associated with the deepening of philosophical and anthropological issues and the expansion of the genre spectrum, which led to the complication of the character's character structure and a change in his functional role in the literary text. If in the system of early classicism the individual obeyed the idea of serving the state and embodied the normative ideal of civic virtue, then in the second half of the century there was a reorientation towards the inner world of man as an autonomous value. An essential stage in this process is the work of Gavriil Derzhavin, in whose poetry the hero for the first time receives a pronounced individual authorial coloring. In the ode "Felica" and other works by Derzhavin, the lyrical subject combines the functions of a citizen and a private person; he is capable of self-irony, reflection on his own position and inner state, which indicates the erosion of a rigid classical hierarchy. The hero of Derzhavin's lyrics does not completely dissolve into the state idea, but demonstrates a personal intonation, thereby

anticipating the romantic model of the subject. At the same time, attention to the topic of private life, everyday specifics and individual experience is increasing, which forms a new optics of the image of a person. An important direction of evolution is the development of memoir-diary and epistolary prose, where the hero appears as a carrier of subjective experience; this form helps to deepen psychological motivation and accentuates the process of introspection. In Russian culture at the end of the 18th century, an attitude towards "sensitive reading" developed, suggesting emotional identification with a character, which changes the very mechanism of artistic communication between the author and the addressee. The experience of Alexander Radishchev, the author of *The Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, where the narrator combines the functions of an observer and a moral judge, is indicative in this regard. In Radishchev's text, personality is understood as a carrier of civic consciousness and a critical attitude to social reality.; the hero not only feels, but also analyzes, compares facts, and forms an ethical position. Unlike the classical model, where the conflict is resolved in accordance with a given norm, Radishchev has a tragic sense of historical disharmony, which gives the hero's image dramatic tension. His inner monologue and journalistic intonation indicate the transition to a new form of subjectivity, combining emotionality and rational argumentation. In parallel, the line of the "natural man" is developing, going back to the philosophy of J.-J. Rousseau, which is reflected in the interest in the inner sincerity and moral purity of the character; in this context, the characters of the Karamzin circle demonstrate the opposition of natural feeling and social convention. It should be emphasized that the evolution of the hero's image in the 18th century is closely related to changing ideas about human nature: if classicism proceeded from the idea of a rationally organized personality capable of subordinating passions to duty, then sentimentalism asserted the priority of feelings as the basis of morality. This leads to a change in compositional principles: the role of psychological detail increases in the narrative, the landscape begins to function as an emotional correlate, and inner speech becomes a structure-forming element of the text. The change in the gender typology of the hero is also significant: in classicism, female characters more often perform an auxiliary function, whereas in sentimentalism it is female sensitivity that becomes the center of the narrative, which indicates a reassessment of the values of the era. Thus, by the end of the 18th century, a new model of the artistic hero was emerging, which was dominated by individualization, psychological motivation and attention to private life. This process prepares the transition to the romantic and realistic tradition of the 19th century, as it introduces into literature the idea of personality as internally contradictory, historically conditioned and capable of introspection. The evolution of the hero's image in Russian literature of the 18th century demonstrates a progressive movement from a normative rhetorical scheme to a complex psychological structure, where a person is understood not only as a social function, but also as a unique spiritual reality with autonomy and internal drama.

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