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Institute of World History

# OCCIDENTALISM IN RUSSIAN TRAVEL LITERATURE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: EXAMPLE OF NIKOLAJ MIHAILOVICH KARAMZIN

Master Thesis

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# Occidentalism in Russian Travel Literature in the Eighteenth Century: Example of Nikolai Mihailovich Karamzin

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Prague, May 2013
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# Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own independent work and effort. The sources and literature of information used have been all acknowledged at the specified section.

Prague 31 July 2013

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Eleni Stergiopoulou

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# Abstract

Travel literature, a popular genre in the eighteenth century Europe functioned as a cultural vehicle to define one's identity. The material of this study is the *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, a travelogue completed by Nikolaj Karamzin after his journey to the Western Europe in 1789-1790. This research paper demonstrates the mechanisms of construction and projection of a coherent Russian national and cultural identity based on Western paradigms. Theoretical approaches and concepts as Self and Otherness, Orientalism, imagined communities and sublime will be used in order to assist the analysis.

## Occidentalism in Russian Travel Literature in the 18th Century: Example of Nikolaj Mihailovič Karamzin


### Summary

The purpose of this research is to explore how the national and cultural identity of Russia was constructed in the eighteenth century through the vehicle of travel writing. At the heart of this research is a close analysis of the travels of the Russian author Nikolaj Karamzin to the Western Europe. Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveller* is a travelogue in the form of memoir in epistolary arrangement based on his travels through the states of Germany, Switzerland, France and England in 1789-1790.

The era and the author chosen are justified by the graveness that the eighteenth century has for the history of the Russian literature. An era of major transformations in all social and cultural aspects of the till-then known Russian lifestyle set the ground for a move towards modernity. By travelling to the Western Europe and displaying the values and rich greatness of some aspects of the cultural, political and social lives, Karamzin proposes a set of alternative national ideals. These ideals would assist the country and the nation to get closer to the standards of the Western traditions and subsequently closer to 'paradise' and the 'perfect' life.

As a contextual backup for the analysis of Karamzin's *Letters* I dedicate an explanatory chapter with several themes apropos to the understanding of the study which include genre of travel writing, historical and cultural background of eighteenth century Russia, enlightened literature, sentimentalism, national and cultural identity. I then propose the fundamental theme of the research, namely the discussion of the role of the Russian travel writing for the Russian national identity through the appropriation of European traditions.

The second axis developed by the research concerns the study of Self and the Other. Works of classical travel narratives of European literature will be used to analyse concepts such as Constructivism, Imagined Communities, Otherness, Occidentalism and Orientalism, aesthetics and semiotics. All of the background theory proposed generates the question of the national identity and its representation. Therefore, this thesis work is interdisciplinary in nature due to the various tools of scientific analysis.

**Occidentalisme russe dans la littérature de voyage au 18ème siècle: Exemple de Nikolaj Mihailovic Karamzine**

## Résumé

Le but de cette recherche est d'explorer comment l'identité nationale et culturelle de la Russie a été construit dans du XVIIIe siècle par le véhicule de l'écriture de voyage. Au cœur de cette recherche est une analyse minutieuse des voyages de l'écrivain russe Nikolaï Karamzine à l'Europe de l'Ouest. *Les Lettres d'un voyageur russe* de Karamzine est un carnet de voyage sous forme de mémoire dans l'arrangement épistolaire basé sur ses voyages à travers les États de l'Allemagne, la Suisse, la France et l'Angleterre en 1789-1790.

L'époque et l'auteur choisi sont justifiés par l'importance que le dix-huitième siècle a pour l'histoire de la littérature russe. Une ère de transformations majeures dans tous les aspects sociaux et culturels du jusque-là connu comme mode de vie russe prépare le terrain pour une évolution vers la modernité. En voyageant à l'Europe occidentale et affichant la grandeur de valeurs de certains aspects de la vie culturelle, politique et sociale, Karamzine propose un ensemble d'idéaux nationaux alternatifs. Ces idéaux aideraient le pays et la nation à se rapprocher des normes des traditions occidentales et ensuite près du « paradis » et la vie «parfaite».

Dans le but d'une sauvegarde contextuelle pour l'analyse des *Lettres* de Karamzin je dédie un chapitre explicatif qui œuvrent à la compréhension de l'étude où sont analysés la littérature de voyage, historique et culturelle de la Russie du XVIIIe siècle, la littérature éclairée, sentimentalisme, l'identité nationale et culturelle. Je proposerai ensuite le thème fondamental de la recherche, à savoir la discussion sur le rôle des récits de voyage Russe dans l'identité nationale russe à travers l'appropriation des traditions européennes.

Le deuxième axe développé par la recherche concerne l'étude du Soi et de l'Autre. Travaux de récits de voyage classiques de la littérature européenne seront utilisés pour analyser des concepts tels que l'altérité, Occidentalisme et Orientalisme, esthétique, l'histoire des idées et sémiotique. Toute la théorie de fond proposé génère la question de l'identité nationale et sa représentation.

Par conséquent, ce travail de recherche s'inscrit dans une démarche interdisciplinaire grâce aux divers questionnements touchant à l'histoire sociale

et à l'histoire de l'art et grâce également à l'utilisation de divers outils d'analyse scientifique.

## Notes on Transliteration

Romanization System: GOST 7.79-2000, system A; ISO (1995)

Transliteration of Russian Cyrillic alphabet texts into the Latin alphabet.[1]

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| А а | **a** | Р р | **r** |
| Б б | **b** | С с | **s** |
| В в | **v** | Т т | **t** |
| Г г | **g** | У у | **u** |
| Д д | **d** | Ф ф | **f** |
| Е е | **e** | Х х | **h** |
| Ё ё | **ë** | Ц ц | **c** |
| Ж ж | **ž** | Ч ч | **č** |
| З з | **z** | Ш ш | **š** |
| И и | **i** | Щ щ | **ŝ** |
| Й й | **j** | Ъ ъ | **″** |
| К к | **k** | Ы ы | **y** |
| Л л | **l** | Ь ь | **′** |
| М м | **m** | Э э | **è** |
| Н н | **n** | Ю ю | **û** |
| О о | **o** | Я я | **â** |
| П п | **p** | | |

[1] Devised by the National Administration for Geodesy and Cartography of the Soviet Union http://gost.ruscable.ru/cgi-bin/catalog/catalog.cgi?i=6464

# Introduction

## *Research Problem*

The purpose of this research is to explore how the national and cultural identity of Russia was constructed in the eighteenth century through the vehicle of travel writing. At the heart of this research is a close analysis of the travels of the Russian author Nikolaj Karamzin to the Western Europe. Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveller*[2] is a travelogue in the form of memoir in epistolary arrangement based on his travels through the states of Germany, Switzerland, France and England in 1789-1790.

The eighteenth century occupied a unique place in the history of Russian literature. According to Û. Lotman, the prominent cultural and literary scholar: *"The great explosion of the eighteenth century defined the situation of the cultural and literary development of Russia to the twentieth century; the culture of the eighteenth century set our first historical values and the step from which will Russia began to move forward."*[3] The focus is mainly on the second half of the century, which was characterized by many as the "golden age" of cultural history, the Age of Enlightenment. At that era not only in Europe but also in Russia, a modern pattern of thought was carried out. This modern tendency, using the terminology of Habermas, suggested the existence of a sincere belief that *"...the arts and sciences would further not only the control of the forces of nature but also the understanding of self and world, moral progress, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness."*[4]

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[2] The complete series of the *Letters of a Russian Traveller* was published in anthologies of Karamzin's works during his lifetime in 1803, 1814 and 1820. The *Letters* were edited and translated by Florence Jonas, introduced by Leon Stilman, with the title *N. M. Karamzin, Letters of a Russian Traveler, 1789-1790*, London and New York 1957 and in a newer version in 2003 by Andrew Kahn, *Nikolaj Karamzin:"Letters of a Russian traveller"* Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2003. For more information on the history of publication of the *Letters* see N. A. *Marčenko*, "Istoria teksta Pisem russkogo putešestvenika'"[*History of the text Letters of a Russian Traveller*] Leningrad 1984, pp. 607-612. The passages cited from Karamzin's *Letters* in this work are extracted from the translated version of Florence Jonas. For scholarship on the author and his text, see "An Overview of the Work" in the present chapter.

[3] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века*, Из истории русской культуры XVIII нач. XIX в., Москва: Школа "Языки русской культуры", [Û. Lotman, *Essays on the History of Russian Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, In *History of the Russian Culture of Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries*, Moscow] 1996, p. 330. from http://do.rulitru.ru/v8929/лотман_ю.м.,_живов_в.м.,_аверинцев_с.с.,_панченко_а.м._и_др._из_истории_русской_культуры._том_iv_xviii_-_начало_xix_века

[4] S. Benhabib M. P. d'Entrèves (eds.), *Habermas and the Unfinished Project of Modernity: Critical Essays on The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, Massachusetts 1996, p. 45.

Aside from the travel literature's popularity of the era, the social and political conditions of the time played an important role in my decision of the specific writer and his travelogue. It seems that the vast maze of the Russian Empire and the self-identification of its citizens through rituals, practices and nurtured collective spirit, were suddenly disrupted. The ancestors of the north forest area of Russia while empowering their "domestic" practices and identity met the vision of Peter the Great's for the empire's westernization and subsequently "modernization". By domestic practices I mean the habits, customs and rituals that the Russian folk implemented. The Russian empire at the time was mainly rural and agricultural. Caused by the Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century, there was a shift of the heart of the Orthodox culture from the Dnieper Lowland region to the northern forests. This new reality placed the inhabitants in a new state of solidarity in order to stay safe against the dangerous and rough environment.[5] The vast and heterogeneous empire was home to several nationalities due to its conquests, such as Finns, Muslim Tatars and nomadic Kalmyks and with later expansions various nation states of the Baltic area.[6] The multiple ethnic composition of the Russian state prompts scholars dealing with its history to pay special attention to the problem of identity, both on a theoretical and an empirical level.

As the subject of identity is a very complex one by itself, I shall explain at this point what I mean by referring to it. Initially, identity is the idea that refers to the uniqueness one may posses, the values that will make him or her distinctive from others. The term may be used to indicate a person's identity (the set of characteristics, values and beliefs displaying one's personality), or the identity that may unify groups according to belonging (such as ethnic and nation groups that share the same language, traditions, historical facts and memories) or according to interests, such as social movements. Speaking about Russian identity and culture, one shall bear in mind that this task is not easy distinguishable, as it usually is discussed with uncertainty. The particularity of Russia and Russianness is that it is characterised by

[5] Wild forests, animals, unfriendly damp weather and invasions were the characteristics of the daily obstacles and created an environment of battle for survival. D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, New York 2006, p. 10.

[6] D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 28. The empire was also characterized by a great variety of economic production. In Siberia, for example, the empire was occupied with the fabrication of furs and in the Asian part with cotton. A. Maczak, *Travel in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge 1995, p. 189.

various potentials and a set of ambiguities.[7] As the literary theorist Harold Bloom pointed out, Russian identity and culture experienced an "anxiety of influence"[8]. In that instance the empire sought to seek and re-establish its origins, values and identity using the medium of literature.[9] We can say that in that endeavour the Russian empire experienced a certain state of compromising its influences with the "Other", equally existent as imagined. The 'Other' which was challenging for Russia were the western European states, as they saw progress in arts and sciences and their advances was an example to be followed.

There is an increasing interpretation on the grounds of cultural studies that the peak of the Russian Enlightenment was attained closer to the nineteenth century. The reason is the belief that only in the forties of the nineteenth century Russia reached a certain state, when its socio-cultural level could correspond to the age of Enlightenment in France of the eighteenth century. The socio-cultural state of Russia turned into a culture of several characteristics depending on the variety of different subcultures, i.e. Masonic, Voltairean and more. The situation changed in the Seventies of the eighteenth century, when it became clearer that the tendency to realism is bonding the actual cultures into one. This is manifested above all in the still-emerging pursuit to restore the continuity of the national tradition and seek the pre-Petrine *slovesnost*. It is implemented in the effort to bring together secular and ecclesiastical, printed and manuscript, the "new" and "old" traditions.[10]

With such a pluralistic worldviews each of these subcultures offered their concept of the ideal of human existence, developed by its own logic and had its own literature. As a result, the second half of the eighteenth century in Russia generated a "cultural multilingualism".[11] For the implementation of the cultural consistency or the convergence of these subcultures there had to be a sense of their historical limitations.

The eighteenth century in Russia is characterised by a collective effort towards modernization in all the practices of its social life. During that era Russia pursued to answer essential questions of its existence with respect to itself and similarly concerning its role and function in the world. Russia was somewhat delayed in being

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[7] S. Franklin, E. Widdis (eds.), *National Identity in Russian Culture: An Introduction*, New York 2004, p. 4.
[8] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[9] C.A. Singleton, *No Place Like Home: The Literary Artist and Russia's Search for Cultural Identity*, New York 1997, p. 20.
[10] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века,* pp.144-145.
[11] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

a modern enlightened empire comparing to the West enlightened states at the time, but became consciously aware of it and sought for many improvements. In the wake of the Petrine reforms Russia found itself to get acquainted to the western culture, social norms, education and technology. Consequent to this exposure Russia devoted a lot of attention to travel and its record for the first time. Travel writing became the most popular and significant medium for information and education purposes and Russia laid its path for further development.

The concept of providing trustworthy information on foreign lands became the objective of the travellers of the eighteenth century. It was an attracting encounter with "uncommon" human societies and it would be interesting for the audiences back home to become familiar with them. It was an epoch when the European societies were questioning themselves and finding a point of reference to understand the "Self" was critical. It was a time of transition when the neoclassical interest in the human nature was mingled with the sentiments' expression that made the lead for Romanticism.

The records of a traveller may vary a great deal from another travelogue depending on various measures as form, origin, arrangement and methodology. The flexibility applicable to the genre itself makes it questionable as what exactly travel writing is. It is a field that appeals to different scientific domains as history, literary scholars, comparative literature, cultural studies and ethnography. However, as anthropologist Jean Kommers pointed out, anthropologists do not consider travel literature an accurate source of ethnographic research but only a subordinate, when there is deficiency of some better information.[12]

There is a distinctive duality in the form and narrative construction that travel accounts may be comprised of. On one hand they may follow a form of objective, linear documentation based on factual observation. In this case, the travelogue follows a chronological order following the itinerary of the journey. There are no signs of extreme events or highlights and there is absence of demonstrative theatrical constructions[13]. On the other hand, travel accounts may have the form of a carefully arranged work of travel adventures embracing elements of fiction (theoretical, imagery, invented and employed by the author). It may be enclosed in a particular

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[12] J. Kommers, *The Significance of Eighteenth Century Literature about Pacific for the Development of Travel Literature*. In: Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde 144 (1988), No. 4, Leiden, pp. 478-493, here: p. 479.

[13] C. Blanton, *Travel writing: the self and the world*, New York 2002, p. 4.

chronological framework but it will be accompanied by components of the author's emotions, actions, events with climax, conflicts and a certain atmosphere. Yet, both types of narratives fall under the same category as they develop in the same simplified approach: a literary portrayal of a journey. The linear motif of preparation, travel and documentation is distinctive and present in both cases.

The main research questions of my thesis encircle themes of cultural identity, construction of the national realm and their illustration in the chosen travelogue. Travel writing is revealed as a strong weapon that may serve in projecting the Other with the target to create self-awareness. The actuality of this work is the fact that it can be placed in the context of the on-going interdisciplinary research on nation building and particularly on the challenge of finding ways to conceptualize nation as a cultural "product".

Which are the features and characteristics observed and how are they portrayed and justified in order to project the Russian realm? How are the western literary patterns and social practices beneficial in the development of the Russian culture? Is the Self contrasted in some ways with the observed realities? In what ways is the cultural identity shaped during the journey and after the result of publishing the travel accounts? In order to answer the following questions, a set of complimentary questions is used in the analysis of the travelogue. I will analyse and compare many actor groups: how does Karamzin seem to define civilization, what constitutes the "otherness" for him, influences of former travelogues and other sources apart from his observation, how he perceived the crossing of borders within time and space, how he interpreted the data observed (critically, objectively, emotionally, historically, personally etc.), what is their main focus of account (a city, a region, a culture as a whole, social life, politics, manners of people they met etc.).

## *Review of the Theoretical Approaches*

One of the methodological approaches I have employed was the study of other travelogues from the similar era from Western Europe and Russia and the impressions they created on the public at the era. As some travelogues are longwinded, some I

have read primarily (Laurence Sterne *A Sentimental Journey*[14], Fëdor Dostoevskij *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*[15], Alexander Radiŝev *Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*[16], D. Fonvizin *Letters from France*[17] and more) and for some I have used the critics of secondary sources. As I cannot identify myself as a literary critic nor a historian, I would not like to limit this work to a specific academic background. The sources and approaches for this work come from various disciplines namely – literature, history, literary anthropology, history of ideas, cultural history – and for this reason this research has an interdisciplinary character.

I began my research by reading thoroughly Karamzin's *Letters of a Russian Traveller*. While reading the longwinded text (ca. 400 pages) I kept track of Karamzin's itinerary and made critical notes on any details presented that might be referring or inclining behind the lines to be something "different" for the author. Using the framework of various concepts and similar travel case studies mentioned below, I shall try to answer the sought questions. Not surprisingly, the number of studies addressing travels has increased, especially in the last thirty years several individual and collective works have been published.[18]

Some of the main debates concerning travels and travel literature are developed around concepts like Self and Otherness, Orientalism (Said 1978[19], Behdad 1994[20]) and Occidentalism (Carrier 1995[21]), mental mapping, frontiers and border crossing, geographical place and space, perception of domestic and foreign space and their portrayal in narratives. One of the theories of 'Othering', which I will use as a prototype in examining Karamzin's travelogue, is the invention of East Europe – as suggested in the homonymous book of Larry Wolff *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*.

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[14] L. Sterne, *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy*, New York 2004 – originally published London 1768.
[15] F. Dostoevskij, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, trans. D. Patterson, Evanston 1988.
[16] A. Radiŝev, *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, trans. L. Weiner, ed. R. P. Thaler, Cambridge 1958.
[17] D. Fonvizin, *Lettres de France*, trans. H. Grosse, J. Proust, P. Zaborov, Paris 1995.
[18] i.e. I. Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel*, Durham 1996, J. Elsner, J-P. Rubiés (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, London 1999, R. Schlesier, U. Zellmann (eds.), *Mobility and Travel in the Mediterranean from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Mu̇nster – New Brunswick 2004, F. Trivellato, *The Familiarity of Strangers The Sephardic Diaspora, Livorno, and Cross-Cultural Trade in the Early Modern Period*, New Haven 2009.
[19] E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, London 1978.
[20] A. Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution*, Durham 1994.
[21] J. G. Carrier, *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford 1995.

In his book Larry Wolff deals with the question of how the West Europeans 'invented' the idea of East Europe by putting sharp mental boarders within the European Continent. The Eastern part of Europe was perceived as backward, uncivilized and barbarian in some occasions. The impression of an undeveloped and 'embryonic' state of the Eastern Europe, as the West saw it, emerged with the growth of travels to the East side from the West.

The author traces this dichotomy back from the Enlightenment: *"It was Western Europe that invented Eastern Europe as it's complementary other half in the eighteenth century, the age of Enlightenment"*[22] as the two concepts should outline each other by their differences and similarities. Various scholars and writers promoted the idea of 'backward East' through their travels, others without even stepping over the frontiers, as a mean of reviving the intellectual West and taking part in a calculated self-promotion while increasing their own status of superiority.

The approach of the mirroring aims at distinguishing the difference and influences intended for the development and preservation of the self-esteem. Each traveller had a white canvas to draw their impressions on East Europe; however the existing prejudice and the mental detachment from the Orient could only nourish the distance. The author expresses that there was not a physical, selfless division but a cultural creation by Western intellectual ideologies.

The author uses a vast number of different sources as travellers' accounts from West to the East, speeches, personal observations, works from the Enlightenment about East Europe, philosophical reports and letters. His approach to the subject of observation comes from various sources as in chronologically and in nature, from scholars of diverse nationalities and backgrounds giving a wide-range of angles while composing a work of academic history.

G. Delanty has made a similar study where he stresses that the idea of Europe is a product of conflicts based on normative social and political structures that seek to *"strengthen power over periphery"*.[23] The author indicates the process through which Europe firstly became a cultural idea and then a self-conscious political identity. With various quotations from sociologists, writers and philosophers G. Delanty goes through various impressions (i.e. pathological identities which become

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[22] L. Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford 1994, p. 4.
[23] G. Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*. London 1995, p. 1.

dominant ideologies, the 'Otherness', European idea as a synonym with elites and intellectuals, technocracy) which lead him to the assumption that Europeanism is mainly associated with a political state-centred model derived from the need of the 'prosperous' and 'civilized' to centralize the power in the West direction with obvious West border being the Atlantic.[24] Similarly in Karamzin's travelogue concepts of Self and Otherness are present and the traveller corresponds to them according to his perceptions, beliefs and often prejudice. He exposed the perceptions that the West had towards the East – his fatherland Russia – which was often insufficient and false, and tried to reconstruct its image through his memoir.

In the memoirs – epistolary literature there is an attempt to go beyond the traditional literary consciousness of the first half of the eighteenth century's satirical paradigm, of which philologist Lebedeva wrote.[25] It was in the sixties of the eighteenth century, according to philologists and literary scholars Makogonenko and Lazarčuk[26], when "alternative" literature began to enter the closed system of the literary classicism; among some genres, the principal types of work were the memoirs and autobiographical literature. It was in this type of literature that *"the aesthetic principle of freedom of the writer triumphed away from the restraints of the classic creative rules."*[27]

In the second half of the eighteenth century, in terms of the existence of inelastic system of literary and aesthetic rules, it is memoirs and epistolary literature where plentiful freedom is provided for the literary expression of authors. This primarily refers to the actual genre of the memoir.

The memoir which appeared as a genre in Russia in the eighteenth century, have played an important role in the awakening of the "personal identity" of the individuals' new "imperial" epoch, clearly reflecting the change in their world views. As noted by G. Elizavetina, the memoirs *"reflected new stages of development of human self-awareness, understanding of the world in themselves and themselves in*

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[24] *Ibid.*, p.14.
[25] О. Б. Лебедева, *История Русской Литературы XVIII Века* [O.B. Lebedeva, *History of the Russian Literature of the Eighteenth Century*], 2000, electronic version from http://lib.rus.ec/b/420836/read
[26] Р.М Лазарчук, *Переписка Н. М. Карамзина с А. А. Петровым как Литературный Текст: К Проблеме Реконструкции Романа в Письмах, 1996, pp. 135-136.* [R. M. Lazarčuk, *Correspondence of N.M. Karamzin with A.A. Petrov: The Problem of Reconstructing a Novel in Letters, 1996, pp. 135-136]* electronic version from http://pushkinskijdom.ru/Default.aspx?tabid=7577
[27] Г. П. Макогоненко, *Письма Русских Писателей XVIII Века И Литературный Процесс* [G. P. Makogonenko, Letters of Russian Authors of the Eighteenth Century and the Literature Process, 2006] electronic version from http://rvb.ru/18vek/letters_rus_writers/03article/intro.htm

*the world. The best memoirs and autobiographical books – are such milestones on the path of the human spirit, as other great demonstrations of literature".*[28]

The principal value of memoirs and epistolary literature in the Russian Enlightenment was directly related to the specific process of the literary era; one feature was that *"in the minds of people (both writers and readers) there was no clear distinction between fictional and non-fictional texts."*[29] The absence of a clear distinction between pure artistic, artistic – journalism and purely journalistic works, was largely maintained due to the earlier concept of combining genres. A distinction in the memoirs in the eighteenth century was the fact that these texts were written as a rule without the intention of a subsequent publication. They were written by individuals often unknown to each other and with varying degrees of literary talent.

However, even coming from different directions of the literary activity, the travelogues managed to acquire a mutual inter-genre harmony. They were pleasant to read and effectively informative, according to which on the journalistic grounds the "utility" of a work was a significant element. It would demonstrate the didactic value of the work, even when sometimes its "pleasantness" was actually very small. The idea of the value of the aesthetic function of literature, was implemented for the first time in 1791 in the pages of the *Moscow Journal* by N. Karamzin.[30]

In addition, it is important to take into account another factor. Memoirs and epistolary literature due to their focus on the image of reality, the truth of the "bare fact", very often show further courage in their representations. In depicting the "truth of life" they preferred constructive aesthetics of ideal models than the mainstream literary and aesthetic directions. In this case the memoirs truly became *"a kind of literary laboratory, which produced the novelty that later enriched other genres."*[31]

Precisely this background allowed the alternative literature to be an ideal material for the analysis of the mechanism of formation of cultural myths and utopias during the Russian Enlightenment. These factors act as one of the possible systems that provide the necessary integrity of the literary process of the second half of eighteenth century.

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[28] Г. Г. Елизаветина, *Становление Жанра Автобиографии и Мемуаров,* Москва1982 [G. G. Elizavetina, *Establishment of the Autobiographical and the Memoir Genres*, Moscow 1982], p. 148.
[29] О. Б. Лебедева, *История Русской Литературы XVIII Века.*
[30] Г. П. Макогоненко, *Письма Русских Писателей XVIII Века И Литературный Процесс.*
[31] Г. Г. Елизаветина, *Становление Жанра Автобиографии и Мемуаров,* p. 163.

The possibility of an analysis and definition of the literary process of the eighteenth century in Russia is slightly obstructed by the fact that at the time the Russian literature was in a state of "elevated dynamism" [32]. The situation is characterized by following an accelerated development path through mixtures and experimentation. The Russian literature sought not simply to engage itself in some specific European literary tradition, such as the French, but to synthesize from an open spiritual outlook of cultures as a whole.[33]

Taking into consideration these circumstances, a purely chronological principle study of different literary and aesthetic trends simply will not be successful; the theoretical context is made of simultaneous coexistence and also from the act of synthesis. That is why, according to A. Walicki, the construction of particular aesthetic direction (classical, sentimental, enlightened realism) is conditional. The reason is that the authors themselves did not comprehend the specialness and limits of the artistic phenomena[34].

Moreover, in the statements of theorists this spiritual combination of essences articulated appropriately the common need of the Russian artistic expression. The classicism is positioned side by side with sentimentalism; and realism, in essence, is calling for naturalness, adherence to the nature, observation of the living reality, for simplicity and sincerity of expression, sincerity of the character; all these features were ingredients of the artistic aspiration of Russian cultural identity.[35]

## *An Overview of the Work*

There have been various scholarly studies concerning the literary works of Nikolaj Karamzin. An extensive study of the *Letters of a Russian Traveller* appeared in 1899 by the Russian literary scholar and professor V. V. Sipovskij [36]. In 1964 P. N.

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[32] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века,* p. 143.

[33] *Ibid*., p.130.

[34] A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, Stanford 1979.

[35] А. П. Валицкая, *Русская Эстетика XVIII Века: Историко-Проблемный Очерк Просветительской Мысли*, Москва 1983, [A. P. Valickaâ, *Russian Aesthetics of the Eighteenth Century: Historical-Problematic Essay of Enlightenment Thought,* Moscow 1983] p. 226.

[36] В.В. Сиповский**,** *К Литературной Истории Писем Русского Путешественника Н. М. Карамзина,* Известия Отделения Русского Языка и Словесности Императорской Академии Наук. — *СПб., 1897.— Т. II. Кн. 3. С. 629—721. [V.V.Sipovskij, To a Literary History of Karamzin's Letters of a Russian Traveller,* Department of Russian Language and Literature of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, 1897, Vol.2, Book 3, pp. 629-721]

Berkov[37] published a collection of Karamzin's poetry and prose in two volumes and in 1966 a complete version of his works appeared with an extensive introduction of Ûriî Lotman.[38] In a later collaboration in 1984, Lotman, Marchenko and Uspenskij[39] produced an updated empirical version of a textual analysis of the *Letters* with further interpretations and critiques. Other Russian and foreign scholars who were interested in Karamzin's works include Rothe, Cross, Kochetkova, Hammarberg[40] and others.

It is notable that most of the critical literary works on Karamzin's *Letters* have as a central point of their analysis the development of the Russian literary language and the popularity that travel literature gained in Russia after the publication of the *Letters*. However, the *Letters* did not receive as much popularity within the scholars as other works by Karamzin, for example *Istoriâ Gosudarstva Rossijskogo* [*History of the Russian State,* 1816–26], *Zapiska o Drevnej i Novoj Rossii* [*Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia,* 1811] or the sentimental story *Bednaâ Liza* [*Poor Liza,* 1792]. I consider that the works of Karamzin mentioned above have a direct contextual relation with the *Letters of a Russian Traveller,* especially with the trip abroad itself. Going on his journey abroad and upon his return, Karamzin established himself as a sentimental writer and shortly after published the story *Poor Liza*. Two decades later Karamzin was producing works concerning the history of his fatherland while being influenced by the social turmoil of the era and after having experienced the 'other' side, Western Europe.

The novelty of this research is the occurrence that it proposes to take another look at the remaining debatable issue of the identity construction in Karamzin's text. There has not been any recent work in English language on the subject, dealing with a similar approach that I am exploring. In many of the existing studies, the impressions

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[37] П. Берков, *Н. М. Карамзин: Избранные Сочинения в Двух Томах*. Москва, Ленинград 1964 [P. Berkov, *N. M. Karamzin: Selected Works in Two Volumes*, Moscow, Leningrad 1964]

[38] J. G. Garrard, "Karamzin in Recent Soviet Criticism: A Review Article," In *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol.11, No. 4, Winter, Dartmouth College 1967, p. 464.

[39] Ю.М. Лотман, Н.А. Марченко, Б.А. Успенский, *Н. М. Карамзин: Письма Русского Путешественника,* Ленинград 1984 [U. M . Lotman, N. A. Marčenko, B. A. Uspenskij, *N. M. Karamzin: Letters of a Russian Traveller*, Leningrad 1984]

[40] H. Rothe, *N. M. Karamzins europaïsche Reise. Der Beginn des russischen Romans. Philologische Untersuchungen*, Bad Homburg v.d. H. 1968, A. G. Cross, *N. M. Karamzin. A Study of His Literary Career, 1783-1803*, Carbondale 1971, N. D. Kočetkova, *Nikolaj Karamzin,* Boston 1975, G. Hammarberg, "Karamzin After Karamzin: The Case of Prince Šalikov" In *A Window on Russia. Papers form the V. International Conference of the Study-Group of Eighteenth-Century Russia*. Ed. L. Hughes, L., M. di Salvo, Rome 1996.

and ideas of Karamzin are deliberatedly related to the nation (i.e. national character, language, education, Europe, autocracy, conservatism, revolution and more), directly or not. The present study focuses on the examination of the particularities of the *construction of national identity as an imagined entity* as illustrated in the *Letters*. I also pay attention to the role of emotions, as well as to the elements of sublime and beautiful in this identity building reflection.

As a contextual backup for the analysis of Karamzin's *Letters*, I include an explanatory chapter with several themes (genre of travel writing, historical and cultural background of eighteenth century Russia, enlightened literature, sentimentalism, national and cultural identity and more) apropos to the understanding of the study. I then propose the fundamental theme of the research, namely the discussion of the role of the Russian travel writing for the Russian national identity through the appropriation of European traditions by using the travelogue of Nikolaj Karamzin.

My approach to this research has been inspired by the scholarly literature developed in various scientific fields. The main axis of the scholarship used, deals with works of classical travel narratives of European literature, works on concepts as Otherness, Occidentalism and Orientalism, aesthetics, semiotics, historical works on national identity, constructivism, literary works on travel writing and essentially its use as a mirroring of the Self and the Other. All of the background theory proposed generates directly or not the question of the national identity and its representation. Therefore, this thesis work is interdisciplinary in nature due to the various tools of scientific analysis.

With a close analysis of the *Letters* we shall try to distinguish how the Self is projected in a neutral environment and vice versa how the Other is illustrated or better constructed. Literary texts are a form of representation of cultural reality, which individuals and collective groups process, share, disseminate and disclose the ideological and cultural space in which they are placed. In an era of ever-growing homogenization of culture, the travel diaries were a vehicle used to maintain cultural coherence.

The traveller in his journey is identified and specified in relation to the meaning of the "other", the "foreign". In the new lands Karamzin visited, he conveyed with him his particular cultural luggage. This "imported" cultural heritage is also the subject of the study and through literature, as undoubtedly it is a part of a

broader communication process, it indicated the participation of the author in a particular cultural and social life. Literature is a powerful tool to promote understanding of the Self and the Other especially in the eighteenth century Russia when culture became a platform for self-reconstruction.

Especially when dealing with travel literature, the traveller will necessarily participate in the social dynamics of the new place he has chosen. He will sense and get familiarized with the surrounding cultural characteristics of the new place – perhaps assimilate them over time – and in return he will give evidence of his own heritage as experienced at his motherland. It may contribute to a wider cultural comprehension by creating awareness, appreciating the diversity of cultures and dissimilar lifestyles.

This study is based on critical text analysis with subordinate constructivist and semiotic approach, under which the values of the relationship of components will be explored. In the study of the functions of emotions the ideas of cultural studies scholar Sara Ahmed[41] will be considered, describing the methods of constructing the nation as emotional community. The subject of the beautiful and sublime will be examined from the view of aesthetics of Edmund Burke[42], as it allows showing the relation between the work of Karamzin and his worldviews. To disclose the particularities of space and time the ideas of Ûrij Lotman[43] will be used about their simulation function. Being an interface between challenging cultural-literary principles, Russia bore the weight to establish itself and accomplished so through this integration of differences. The *Letters of a Russian Traveller* I believe is a clear representative of that collective effort.

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[41] S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, New York 2004.

[42] E. Burke, 3rd ed., *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful,* London 1761.

[43] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века,* Из истории русской культуры XVIII нач. XIX в., Москва: Школа "Языки русской культуры", 1996, p. 143. [Û. Lotman, *Essays on the History of Russian Culture in the Eighteenth Century*, In History of the Russian Culture of Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries, Moscow 1996 – p. 13-349, from http://do.rulitru.ru/v8929/лотман_ю.м._живов_в.м._аверинцев_с.с._панченко_а.м._и_др._из_истории_русской_культуры._том_iv_xviii_-_начало_xix_века

# Chapter One
# Travelogues, Enlightenment, Cultural Adaptation

## *Prologue*

The following chapter deals with travel and the context of travel writing in the eighteenth century. A brief history of the genre and its evolution will be presented along with its tradition in the Russian culture. The main focus is on the eighteenth century when travelling itself encountered an ample boost due to scientific innovations. In addition there was a growth in empirical philosophy and travel literature appeared as a recognized product. The culture of the Russian travel literature is largely based on patterns borrowed from the western European literature of the Enlightenment. Many major transformations in the Russian Imperial social life and efforts for modernization had their inspiration in the West. The arts, education, social structures and literature bloomed during that era under the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796) fashioning a new lifestyle following Western paradigms.

The era of Peter the Great in the history of Russia is marked by the transition from a religious culture of the Middle Ages to a secular one. The new culture of the time led to the existence and interaction of the period of the pilgrimage walks and secular travels also in the literature and the language used.[44] The pilgrimage walks were centred at the Greek – Slavic traditions while the secular travels followed the Latin and Western traditions. However still in Peter's era the secular travellers would use old Slavic language in portraying Christian practices and diplomatic operations. Nonetheless in the descriptions of the new realities of the everyday life or military and naval matters, expressions loaned from Western European languages began to be used.[45]

Travel writing was one of the most widespread literary genres of the eighteenth century and travel books were utilized as sources of valid incoming scientific information. The popularity of the travel accounts established them as best sellers

[44] A. C. Moser, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Oxford 1992, pp. 9-10.
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 57-58.

during that period. Many of the travel accounts were distinguished as excellent works, attracted the attention of scholars, influenced other authors and were translated in other languages. The eighteenth century stamped the birth of travelogues, in the form closest to our present-day understanding of the genre.[46]

Since antique times, journeys have been a widespread phenomenon and travel literature is surviving since then. Travel narratives are found throughout history and their development produced various forms: diaries of missionaries, letters of noblemen to other intellectuals, artificial conversations with imagined readers, travel accounts of diplomats, maritime diaries and more. There were many categories of travellers and for certain ones, like pilgrims, merchants and explorers, travelling was an essential course. Other types of travel caused by necessity were due to political exiles or soldiers and knights for duties. The aristocracy travelled for educational and amusement reasons, as the famous occurrence of the *Grand Tour* in the seventeenth century demonstrates.[47]

## *1.1 Travel and travel literature: a historical and cultural overview*

> *"The historian of ideas must first understand the medium through which concepts are expressed before examining and interpreting the concepts themselves".*[48]

The action of travelling is much more complex than it appears to be or than most individuals would think it is. Especially when travelling to a place for the first time, one is placed in an altered context, out of his comfort zone and far from what he considers as normal, usual and familiar. This impression might not be so intense nowadays as travelling is a very popular and easy achievable activity and the intermingling of nations and ethnic groups is an actuality that is thoroughly understood and respected.

Some of the first principal categories of travellers were the globe explorers. The first notable movement towards travelling beyond the boundaries of the European continent was the Age of Discovery in the fifteenth century. Throughout the Medieval

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[46] C. Blanton, *Travel Writing: the Self and the World*, New York 2002, pp. 122-123.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[48] C. Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1978, p. 17.

period intellectual creativity was intimidated and the commands of religious powers dominated over personal experience and rational activity. However, the disruption of the narrow frontiers of the Middle Ages in terms of the Church suppression and the limits it planted for literacy, learning and scientific progress nurtured a new growth of humanism and curiosity about the world.[49] The means of transport and accuracy equipment were still in a primitive point, however in the process of development: caravels which allowed higher sailing speeds were innovated, the compass along with maps became more accurate in fifteenth century and astrolabe allows the determination of width and tracking.[50]

Travel literature as a genre has gone through a long journey before its modern formation and development. It has proved to be a flexible genre while quickly adapting to external conditions. The spread of a new printing press and the narratives from distant terrains grew the curiosity and the fortitude of nations stimulating them to commence travels to far lands. The vibrant stories of Marco Polo and other travellers about the kingdoms of Asia and Black Africa were depicted as places abundant with precious metals and products (such as spices, perfumes, sugar etc.) that were difficult to obtain in Europe. These distant lands were a source of attraction for the Europeans who dreamed of immense wealth.[51]

The journey as a subject appeared already in the first known literary texts. It can be perhaps considered the archetypal elements of literary creation, which determined both the birth and development of literary genres. The subject of travel is found in different literary forms such as calendars, novels, letters and short stories. The content, concepts, themes and patterns found in a travelogue, are formulated according to the reason of travel, the era of writing, the artistic purpose of the author, the demand of the audience and so forth. For example as the reason of travel has altered from merchandise to pleasure journeys, the narrative also underwent through essential changes.[52] The spatial heterogeneity that landscapes and cities provide during one's journey may work as a rich source of inspiration. The images, sensations and cultural varieties (i.e. languages, traditions, monuments, customs and so forth)

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[49] C. D. Lindberg, L. R. Numbers (eds.). *When Science and Christianity Meet*, Chicago 2003, pp. 7-9.
[50] S. Berstein, P. Milza, *Histoire de l'Europe, Tome 2, De l'Empire romain à l'Europe*, Athens 1997, p. 285.
[51] H. Murray, M. Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Edinburgh 1845, pp. 17-18.
[52] J. Elsner, J.P. Rubiés, *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, London 1999, pp. 6-10.

that a traveller encounters while being on a "neutral" ground (not in native country), create suitable conditions for contemplation on worldviews and pose questions of identity and comparison.

The travel literature constitutes an artistic phenomenon that could be described by the term cultural-geographical poetics. In the attempt to explain this term I will use the theory on spatial practices of Michel de Certeau. As de Certeau has pointed out in his work on spatial practices, space lacks the characteristic of constancy and is rather comprised of "intersections of mobile elements", which are uncertain and often in conflict.[53] The landscapes that a traveller crosses represent place and space, stability and variability. The social state of the world is uncovered while revealing elements of information on a variety of subjects in abundance. The reality is challenged while one enters in a phase of transition, being nowhere in particular, and the cultural identities are deconstructed and redefined. De Certeau describes geographies as "theatres of actions"[54] which surely implies a certain room for creativity, rearrangement and creation of intercultural activities and relations.

If we observe the travel-literature from the perspective of the author, it is apparent that the perception and writing of the traveller-writer is formed by the social context of his time, his education and his artistic scope. There are writers who travel for the sake of providing scientific information (accounts, travel guides) and others who write in order to travel mentally (autobiography, imaginative literature). In the first category, the journey becomes the central object of the text; it shows the travel space and time realistically, tangibly and the narrative follows mainly a descriptive tone. In the second category – which is freer and unrestrained – the spatial and time frame is based on imagination. That makes the narrative more personal, since the references do not necessarily refer to real and concrete events. In this occasion the journey destination is attributed as the general framework of the story.[55]

Some of the early travellers' accounts like those of Homer (*Odyssey*, 8 B.C.E.) Herodotus (*History of the Persian Wars*, ca. 440 B.C.E.), Strabo (*Geographica*, ca. 23 C.E.) and Pausanias (*Guide to Greece*, ca. 170 C.E.), document the long tradition of

[53] M. de Certeau, *The Practices of Everyday Life*, Berkeley, Los Angeles 1984, p. 117.
[54] *Ibid.*, p. 123.
[55] G. Hooper, T. Youngs (eds.), *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, Aldershot, Burlington 2004, pp. 23-24.

travel writing. *The Travels of Marco Polo* (original *Il Milione*) is one of the earliest acknowledged travel accounts (c. 1298) by the merchant and explorer Marco Polo.[56]

Many of the early travelogues contained religious extracts or described journeys conducted for certain purposes. The crusades in the Holy Lands (c.a. 1100-1300) or the pilgrimage at the Santiago de Compostela are respectable examples among many occurrences. Missionaries, pilgrimage and crusades shared the spiritual motivation of a journey in addition to the individual pursuit. A notable inter-cultural wave on the European grounds was generated with the foundation of the first universities, in Bologna (1088) and Paris (ca. 1150).[57] Students and scholars initiated a wave of migration for educational reasons that caused the mingling of cultures.

With the modern era due to technological and transport advances, journeys have become increasingly regular while the quantity of travellers grew significantly. From the eighteenth century onwards there is an increase of the middle class travellers, while many changes in technological and social conditions are breaking through (i.e. post lines expanding, intensified public transport, lodges and services along the routes, printing technology, national languages expansion, spread of education and literacy).[58]

The Enlightenment era nurtured the curiosity towards every possible direction and the need of the individuals to enhance their universal knowledge. It exalted the influence of reason and science and ideas on the importance of humanism came to the forefront. However, Enlightenment was not a mere repetition of the previous era; it concluded the preceding times and created the necessary perquisites for the development of the Western World. Enlightenment thinkers tried to trace and comprehend the evolution of mankind and managed to develop a rather harmonious and holistic concept regarding the past, present and future. Their ideas challenged and interrogated all the qualities of traditional life and turned to question important concepts as the human nature, laws of nature, reason, progress, future, utopia and the inner sentiments of the humans, a set of qualities and values such as love, pity, compassion, mercy, freedom, equality, justice and so forth, which are inherent in men and the separating elements from all other living beings.[59]

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[56] C. Blanton, *Travel writing: the self and the world*, pp. 6-9.
[57] P. Hulme, T. Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, Cambridge 2002, p. 248.
[58] T. M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson and the Age of Travel*, Athens, Georgia 1976, p. 85.
[59] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, Los Angeles 1996, p. ix.

Seventeenth and early eighteenth-century travellers kept personal records without having the intention to print their manuscripts. The travel records were used as evidences by young individuals that the undertaken journey had a respectable reason. The documents that were published were usually written by academics that escorted young elites on their trips. The elements found in those travelogues had usually brief descriptions of the cities visited, information of some historical importance of the place, its citizens and their customs.[60] The rising popularity of travels in the eighteenth century, partially due to financial and technological improvements, supported the growth of the readers of travel literature. The roads, lodging on the routes and carriages were improved, subsequently intensifying travel from the middle classes next to the prestigious elites. The expansion of travel attracted enthusiasts to go on expeditions, read former travelogues and add their own impressions. The outcome was a shift in the nature of travel writing as it was mingled with enjoyable fiction along with objective depiction of the visited places. That phenomenon of combining actual information with artistic literary fiction illustrates precisely the particularity of the eighteenth century travel narratives.[61] The popularity of the genre increased the available published works and the travelogues replied to the hunger of reading audiences to discover the world. Some of the most admired travel accounts of the time were the *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (1705) by Joseph Addison, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-1727) by Daniel Defoe and *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) by Samuel Johnson.[62]

In the Russian empire the educated elites were the favoured class, which enjoyed the prospect of travelling. Having the chance to travel abroad, the nobles in return mediated the knowledge and impressions gained from Western Europe. By publishing their travel narratives they indicated the current social and political customs of 'modern' Europe. The accounts functioned as a motivating tool for the creation of awareness of the strict church and state authorities and provided impetus to find ways to amend the social and political circumstances.[63] An exemplar is Radiŝev's travel narrative *A Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow* that was a voice against the

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[60] Z. von Martels (ed.), *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction: Studies on Fiction, Literary Tradition, Scholarly Discovery and Observation in Travel Writing*, Leiden 1994, p. 195.
[61] C. Batten, *Pleasurable Instruction: Form and Convention in Eighteenth-Century Travel Literature*, p. 3.
[62] *Ibid*., p. 6,13, 26.
[63] D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, New York 2006, pp. 87-88.

governmental control.[64] The Western paradigms that had the lead at the time in the travel-writing genre imposed a pressure and aroused the question of what a genuine Russian national consciousness was composed of. As the Russian empire was marginalised from the European culture and standards, the need for a literary break through was a necessity for the writers of the time.[65]

The political spectrum and social condition question always played a role in conducting a text and its projection towards the society. The self-importance and self-awareness was one of the major components following the travellers and writers at all times. The dichotomy between 'progress' and 'backwardness' and comparisons of the visited countries and homeland were issues that the travellers encountered from the very beginning of their journeys. During the Enlightenment the cultural and geographical scope of Europe was widened creating the facility for extensive human reasoning. The variety of freshly revealed facts about the social and physical disposition in the world changed the way the travel narratives were created and apprehended.[66]

The development of a new aesthetically driven wave came as an answer to the traditional travelogues that resembled encyclopaedic writing. The linear motifs of narration without any peak points started to fade into a more personal style with features derived from fiction to express action. Ideas of the sublime came on the surface and the personal emotions of the authors started to be present[67]. Subjectivity came to oppose to the efforts of the objective writing and it managed to triumph.

## *1.2 Enlightenment and Sentimentalism in Europe*

In late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries an imitative and educative character stamped Russia, as many elements were accumulated from the Western cultures. I will be essentially focusing on the Enlightenment atmosphere and literature produced in England and France, as from these countries Russia borrowed the most patterns of literature at the era.[68] In the eighteenth century Britain, nearly every recognized writer

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[64] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[65] S. Dickinson, *Breaking Ground: Travel And National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin*, Amsterdam, New York 2006, p. 20.
[66] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. ix.
[67] A. C. Moser, (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, Oxford 1992, pp. 80-81.
[68] D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 66.

was occupied with the genre of travel literature. The books of travels, as they were called, were records of nautical journeys. The diaries of Captain James Cook from his journeys to the Pacific (1768-1779) were very popular and much in request on the market.[69]

In the second half of the eighteenth century England went through important economical, philosophical, social and cultural transformation. Many major changes occurred also in literature and sentimentalism became the leading literary movement. However the first trends of Sentimentalism in literature and philosophy emerged in the mid thirties, largely in the works of the poets of the time, namely, Edward Young, Thomas Gray and James Thomson. Later sentimentalist features are found in prose, like in novels by Henry Mackenzie and Oliver Goldsmith. However, sentimentalism reaches its peak in the work of one of the most distinguished writers of the eighteenth century, Laurence Sterne[70].

The British sentimentalism has its own special characteristics. Its main thematic axis was around the social environment like the frustrating empowering of the bourgeois society and the impoverishment of the masses. Another feature of English sentimentalism is the struggle of the Enlightened with the old aristocratic culture. The genre of sentimentalism appears very egalitarian where the writers are showing awakened interest to the insignificant individual and have compassion to his troubles.

Appeal to the senses as a source of human improvement and rejection of the Enlightenment's rationalism determine the development of the aesthetics of the English sentimentalism. The writings of Francis Hutcheson, Mark Akenside, Lord Kames and James Beattie emphasize the primacy of feelings over reason in the moral development of a person along with their appreciation of beauty.[71]

A special role in the development of the aesthetics of the sublime and subsequent literary movements acquired the book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)[72] by the English essayist and philosopher Edmund Burke. The categories of beautiful and sublime have for Burke completely different foundations: joy and fear. Burke concludes that for the accurate formation of human nature, it requires both positive and negative emotions. On this basis, there are

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[69] P. Hulme, T. Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, p. 584.
[70] *Ibid*., pp. 548-549.
[71] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. 289, 544.
[72] E. Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 3rd ed.,,London 1761.

passions that can change a person. Life misfortunes give to man the opportunity to sympathize with suffering of others. The establishment of ethics and aesthetics of sentimentalism was impacted by separate religious movement. Among the most important was Methodism, with its denial of the dogmas of the Church of England, the glorification of spontaneous feeling and intuitive desire for God.[73]

The sentimentalism in literature on this basis declares the cult of feelings. It pursues to show the richness of emotions and their role in shaping the personality. The writers-sentimentalists aspire to enthuse the souls of the readers by praising the life around nature and exhibiting the destructive nature of the urban civilization. Their works are characterized by a high emotional spirit and at the same time simplicity of expression. Their ambition is to make the reading public believe what they depict, to identify themselves with the adversities of their heroes and subsequently become purer and better.

In the first period of the development of the English sentimentalism the major works were lyrical. They served in the most appropriate way to express emotions and feelings of the individual. In colourful and sensory images they managed to draw emotional outbursts and mood variations.

The most distinctive character of sentimentalists' poetry is a hero close to nature who is her enthusiastic admirer. Poets sang the loneliness of man, how he was left alone and in front of God reflected on his deeds and glorified the beauty of nature. Very often the hero of a sentimental lyric poetry was a young man, a poet. Another theme of sentimentalist poetry, integral with the first mentioned, was the vanity of life, the brevity of its joys and the permanence of its sorrows. The hero reflected the transitory nature of all living things, mourned about the vanished things and mingled them with the sadness of their memories.[74]

One of the first appearances of sentimentalism in poetry was the work of James Thomson (1700-1748), which was a sort of a transitional phenomenon in the English literature. He emerged into literature primarily as the author of the four-part poem *The Seasons.* Relying on the *Georgics* of Virgil as a model, Thomson created a totally

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[73] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. 78.
[74] A. Kauppinen, *Sentimentalism: Good Guides or False Pilots? The Role of Emotions in Moral Judgement*. Dublin 2012, pp. 3-4.

original work, where along with the classicist tradition he applied strong features of sentimentalism. However these trends have not prevailed in his poetry.[75]

Another English poet of the period who gave images of feelings and emotions through his writings was Edward Young (1683-1765). The aesthetic treatise of Young *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759) played an important role in the appreciation of sentimentalism. This work celebrates the senses and the imagination and approves their superiority over reason. Young advocates for the poets an attachment to nature, following its laws in the creative process and orchestration of feelings and thoughts with high morals.[76]

Young began his poetic work in the late 1720s with poems of religious and didactic content. However the biggest popularity was gained by one of his last meditative poems *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742-45) in which the poet writes about the short human life on earth and the eternal future. It was one of chief poems that marked the beginning of the "Graveyard poetry" in the literature of English sentimentalism.[77]

An important role in the development of English sentimental poetry is owed to Thomas Gray (1716-1771). Upon returning to Cambridge from his trip to Europe, which had influence on his writings, Gray began to write odes in classical style but he soon abandons this manner of writing. Gray's poem *Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College* (1742) marks the emergence of a new style. The lyrical hero of this poem vividly feels and admires the beauty of nature, the sadness of memories of bygone forever childhood and the pain from the loss of friends. The old genre of ode functions for the implementation of new experiences through the senses and the imagination.[78]

The same image of man, sensitive and impressionable, occurs in the work of another poet-sentimentalist James Beattie (1735-1803). In his poem *The Minstrel* (1771, 1774) the author shows how the untutored hero of the poem develops a poetic gift. The closeness to nature in which the hero lives becomes a source of his inspiration and melancholy that pervades his work.[79]

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[75] L. A. Tegart, *Sentimentalism and Karamzin*, Vancouver 1976, p. 17.
[76] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. 226.
[77] *Ibid.*, p. 226.
[78] T. Gray, *The poetical works of Thomas Gray*, J. Moultrie (ed), Eton edition, London 1866, p. 93, 114-116.
[79] J. Beattie, *The Minstrel: Or, The Progress of Genius: and Other Poems*, London 1823, pp. v-vi.

During that period more representatives of the school of sentimentalists create their best poems as William Cowper (1731-1800) and George Crabbe (1754-1832). In their poetry, along with the glorification of the solitary life near nature, also social accusatory motifs appear.[80]

More noticeably Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), another representative of sentimentalism, develops these social themes in his poem *The Deserted Village* (1770). The poem combines an idyllic description of the past, when peace and quiet country life was prevailing, with a negation towards the perpetrators of disasters of modern society. The poet furiously describes the ruin of the peasants as a result of the industrial revolution and creation of decorative gardens. Another work of social significance is Goldsmith's *The Citizen of the World*. In this work, in a form of published sequential letters, behind the imaginary character of a Chinese traveller Goldsmith applied criticism to British customs and society.[81]

In the early decades of the eighteenth century in the atmosphere of the French society there are signs of acute critical attitude towards various directions: religion, arbitrary royal power, domination of the prosperous and corruption of the nobles and ministers. These attitudes entered the literature in the form of witty epigrams, daring satirical pamphlets and other performances. Gradually growing, they have resulted in the general works on the theory of law, state government (Montesquieu), the philosophy of history (Voltaire) and critiques of the church and religious dogma (Voltaire, Diderot, Helvetius, d'Holbach)[82].

Montesquieu and Voltaire were the advocates of various political, social and moral issues. Struggle with the church and religious intolerance, fight against despotism and tyranny, proclamation for the foundation of morality and natural human desire for happiness, posing the question of a reasonable government – were some of their main arguments[83].

Greater radicalism as political and philosophical ideas was followed by the materialist philosophers Helvetius, d'Holbach and Diderot. The emergence of the ideas of those philosophers triggered an offensive political and ecclesiastical reaction. Prohibitions were indicted on the works of Helvetius and other authors. The church

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[80] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. 134.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 508.
[82] F. X. J. Coleman, *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment*, Pittsburgh 1971, p. xvi.
[83] D. Brewer, *The Enlightenment Past: Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 107-108.

tried to divert the attention of the masses by encouraging the religious fanaticism and inspired a series of agonizing trials of Protestants and freethinkers. However, the credibility of the philosophers in the public opinion in France and across Europe was already so high that no prosecutions could shake it. Their ideas gained support in various social strata, from the aristocracy to the bourgeois intellectuals.[84]

The alertness of the journalistic activity had close ties with the urgent issues of social life. The French literature started comprising more elements of the nationalistic propulsions that were triggered by the intensity of the revolutionary events. This differed from the literature of the previous century that had a more abstract and generalized embodiment of moral and political problems. The literature of the eighteenth century met the needs of its audience, the social range of which extended markedly. The direct contact of the tense social climate and literature of those years was also strongly directed on the stage (theatres). The activity of the press was also accelerated. The number of magazines and newspapers increased significantly and on their pages acute literary and ideological controversy was conducted.

Another characteristic of the culture of the French Enlightenment was its universalism. The interpenetration of science and literature has left its mark on the style of scholarly essays – elegant, flexible, and ingenious – and on the other hand, gave a theoretical depth and magnitude in the artistic works. Many of the writers of the Enlightenment were well aware not only in humanitarian but also in the natural sciences, and some of them had their say with their own novels. It functioned in the same way with scientists (for example the mathematician D'Alembert[85]): they often addressed problems of aesthetics, literary criticism and moral issues, which have been considered the artistic heritage of French literature. The unifying element of these aspects of spiritual culture was philosophy. It became a synonym for broad views in all areas – scientific, political and artistic – and a synonym with the freethinking in religious matters.[86]

The exclusive roles of reason and enlightenment set in the centre of attention of the writers and thinkers of the eighteenth century the problem of education – the man, the citizen, the leader of the people. The political theory of the "enlightened absolutism" is related to this idea: namely, the enlightened monarch who is surrounded by

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[84] M. P. Cushing, *Baron D'Holbach: A Study of Eighteenth Century Radicalism in France*, New York 1914, pp. 2-16

[85] F. X. J. Coleman, *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment*, p. 36.

[86] D. Brewer, *The Enlightenment Past: Reconstructing Eighteenth-Century French Thought*, pp.15-19.

scientists, philosophers, wise counsellors and ministers.[87] Good examples were the tsars of the Russian empire, Peter I and Catherine II who followed the same scheme.

A fundamental revision of the linear understanding of progress occurs at the final stage of the Enlightenment in France in the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The denial of the beneficial results of civilization, a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of the social preconditions and consequences of progress have been some of the main points of the divergence between Rousseau and other advocates of the Enlightenment.[88]

The influence of the works of the French Enlightenment was spread in Europe and an atmosphere of "essentiality" seemed to grow. In the case of the Russian emperors the ideas of the Enlightenment were conceived as a necessity or at least their visibility was pronounced. Catherine II tied correspondence with Voltaire and Diderot, invited them to the court and arranged encounters with famous writers and scientists.[89] Maybe these gestures were just a statement of fashion or an affair situation and did not have any significant impact on the public life of the country, but in the cultural life they have played a certain role.

In the beginning of the 1760s a powerful ideological and artistic movement spreads in France and to the rest of Europe. Sentimentalism originated somewhat earlier in England and it extended to the whole of European literature. Its spread in France is associated with the works of Rousseau, who in full voice praised the primacy of emotions over reason and heart over mind. His criticism of the progress of civilization, the peak of the urban culture with its sophistication and elegance, leaded him to a reassessment of moral and aesthetic values. In the works of Rousseau there is a worship of nature: an amiable but modest description of the rural landscape, which for the first time was introduced in the literature as an independent image of aesthetic value. The landscape not only reflects the state of the human soul, the life of the heart, but it also affects it.[90]

Another significant element in the artistic culture of the second half of the eighteenth century was the "sentimental", English garden style. It appeared owing to

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[87] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, pp. 1-2.
[88] F. X. J. Coleman, *The Aesthetic Thought of the French Enlightenment*, p. 33.
[89] W.F. Reddaway, (ed.), *Documents of Catherine the Great: The Correspondence with Voltaire* and the *Instruction of 1767 in the English Text of 1768*, Cambridge 1931, pp. xi-xx.
[90] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment*, p. 550-551.

descriptions of Chinese gardens and Portuguese merchants through travel literature.[91] This style gradually decorated the parks of Versailles and other royal and princely estates. The imitation of free, disordered and lowly landscape descriptions in the novels of Rousseau reflected the natural attraction of the period to the world of emotions: feelings that were not biased by the urban way of life and the worldliness of the social life.

As it is acknowledged, in the first half of the eighteenth century the Russian literature integrated several samples of literature genres developed in Europe, mainly from Britain and France, with the endeavour to create their national variants. This effort of identification is also transmitted to the character of the individuals of the time. It was a time of collective search of Self in all the aspects of social and cultural life, especially by mirroring the Occident. At that time every text, genre or poetic identity, sought to find its place, to define itself, to separate itself from others, to secure its distinctiveness and establish itself as the "most proper" (if not "the only possible") in relation to the others. Shadowing and transitional pieces were considered defects, uncertain and lacking of skill. There was a collective feeling, a pacific revolution against the old, or, a strive for its amalgamation with the new. In an epoch of social, political and cultural turbulence, the strengthening of the literary activity was an important medium to maintain the national and cultural coherency[92].

## *1.3 Enlightenment and Sentimentalism in Russia*

The late seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth century in Imperial Russia was a time of blooming in all domains of Russian life with the government promoting education, arts and sciences. During that time the first Russian institution of higher education was created along with a public museum, institution of fine arts, theatre, library and independent press (for a short period in the 1780s and 1790s).[93] With the beginning of progress of the public spaces, the shape of urban Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg) begins to resemble its European counterparts.[94] This

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[91] *Ibid*., p. 179.
[92] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века,* Из истории русской культуры XVIII нач. XIX в., Москва: Школа "Языки русской культуры", 1996, pp.128.
[93] D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 89.
[94] A. Kahn, "Russian Studies: New Synergies," In *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 4, Oxford 2011, p. 497.

openness gave the space for the arts to flourish without major restraints while having the chance to discover imported influences.

Empress Catherine II declined the option of social contract for the citizens of Imperial Russia while holding on absolutism, however she was considered by her supporters to be ruling in an enlightened absolutist regime. She welcomed many ideas from the European Enlightenment with particular devotion to arts but also modifications in the Russian law. She embraced conceptions of enlightened philosophers, namely, Montesquieu and his *The Spirit of the Laws* (*Esprit des lois*) while receiving support from Voltaire by epistolary communication. The *Instruction* (*Nakaz*) of Catherine the Great was a set of legal values infiltrated with the ideas of French Enlightenment substituting the existing canon of laws. The *Instruction* announced condemnation of human tortures and death sentence, equality of all men before the law in order to move the empire forward to a more progressed state.[95] However the question of serfdom was not touched but only blurred (it was completely abolished only in 1861).[96] Her main concern was to empower the monarchy and preserve the constructive reforms of Peter the Great that made Russia a European power.[97] The tsarist Russia very persistently opposed any democratization reforms towards civil rights. The conservative ideology had many supporters while the long established tradition of the tsars' ruling was considered a model and an appropriate way the outsized, peasant Russia could function.[98]

Principally, the nobility constituted the cultivated class in Imperial Russia at the time. The educated nobles were not only active in the cultural deeds, as literature and theatre, but they also participated in the ruling process of the country as influential servicemen. The nobles were engaged in the civil functions of the empire and lived in elite standards approving ideals of humanistic interests, responsibility towards moral standards, praise of education and religious receptivity. Predominantly acquaintances, relatives and friends composed this noble and influential circle. Along with Catherine's II conduction, the nobles lead Russia towards the norms of the European Enlightenment. The main reason behind that trust and concession was the 1773 Pugačëv rebellion. The wide spread of rebellions to the peasantry and Cossacks caused Catherine the Great to consider the wealthy landlords as advantageous support

[95] D. Lieven, *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 119.
[96] *Ibid.*, p. 388.
[97] *Ibid.*, p. 119.
[98] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, 1996, pp. 97-98.

for central state control. Exclusive benefits were given to the privileged group as relief from compulsory military service, granted financial privileges and inherited noble status, exemption from some and more.[99]

Catherine's the Great cultivation of morals, sociability, laws and arts created a general sense of elasticity and acceptance of the imposed authority. The need for the common good of the society did not trigger hostility towards the monarchy but on the contrary, reconciliation with the institutions thought to be the right way to achieve a moral and respectable society.[100] The empress sustained the effort of Peter the Great for the modernization of Russian culture through the amalgamation of western European Enlightenment models. She supported the translation of significant literary works, collected art pieces of exceptional importance, sponsored theatrical plays and funded grand constructions in the style of aristocratic palaces of the West.[101]

The creation of the Imperial Theatre (1759) gave the prospect to the Russian public to face and reflect on their social reality through the plays. The leitmotifs of the plays – social order and conflicts, moral dilemmas, the Enlightenment absolute regime – presented paradigms of the self-perception in contemporary Russian society. The motivation of public activity made a considerable contribution to the "modernizing" process, as there was no great sociability out of the imperial court. The empress recognised that theatre was an essential element of the European's cultural agenda that she sought to integrate.[102]

Besides the theatre, other traces showing the path Russia took towards modernity was the creation of a permanent army, technical education (Lomonosov's researches), centralized administration and professional service classes (public health, education and justice).[103] While the rural agricultural areas remained the living reality for the majority of the empire's population, the social mobility of the noble and educated created a public sphere independent from the court. Along with their participation in the print culture, the creation of civic institutions (courts, schools, boards of social assemblies) engaged the financially privileged to enter into particular social spheres

[99] D. Lieven, *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 78.
[100] E. K. Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater*, Illinois 2003, p. 176.
[101] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, 1996, p. 98.
[102] E. K. Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater*, p. 13.
[103] M. P. Rice (ed), *Russian Intellectual History*, J.C. Osborne (trnsl.), Michigan 1978, p. 168.

sharing common ideologies. Shortly after, educated societies (*obšestvo*) following the structure of the Enlightenment were created in the form of civic engagement.[104]

One of the social groups sharing the same ideological purposes created was the *Intellegenčiâ*. Literally meaning 'the intellectuals', this group was comprised by educated individuals usually practicing independent professions and enjoying independence from the political and social interests of the state.[105]

Concerning the literary works during that time, the Enlightenment culture across Europe is characterized by imitation, piracy, alteration and foreign adaptation. Original pieces of classic literature (i.e. Shakespeare) were modified, translated and adopted without any concern of artistic courtesy or proprietorship. Copyright regulations were too unclear, absent or ineffective which made the literary culture in the eighteenth century a ground of unrestricted trade of literary works. Literary artistic representations would intersect and mix causing an interrogation over originality. However when a Russian author presented a play, no matter if it was copied or remade, it would still represent the values and ideas of a cultivated Russian.[106] A similar justification may be applied to the author of this study, Nikolaj Karamzin. While it is acknowledged that his *Letters* is a well-edited collage of previous travel accounts, actual facts and fictitious events, the significance of the work is not doubted. As the literary critic V. Sipovkii pointed out about Karamzin's originality: *"Karamzin remains clear of any charges for borrowing. If he made an extensive use of guidebooks and other oeuvres, then in his eyes and in the eyes of his contemporaries this should not be seen as a disadvantage rather than a merit to his work."*[107]

Russia's pursue of finding itself and its position in the world on the grounds of national identity, sought the West as a direction to follow. The "backwardness" found a ground for a collective effort to adopt the thoughts and practices of the Western Europe and incorporate them into the Russian social life. The *Intellegenčiâ*, the

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[104] D. Lieven, *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917*, p. 256.
[105] M. P. Rice (ed), *Russian Intellectual History*, p. 172.
[106] E. K. Wirtschafter, *The Play of Ideas in Russian Enlightenment Theater*, p. 172.
[107] Сиповский В. В. *К литературной истории "Писем русского путешественника" Н. М. Карамзина* // Известия Отделения русского языка и словесности Императорской Академии наук. — СПб., 1897. — Т. II. Кн. 3. — С. 629—721, from http://feb-web.ru/feb/izvest/1897/03/973-629.htm, p. 720.

educated elites, undertook the role of establishing Russia's intellectual context and lead the empire to further development.[108]

Some authors based the representations of the domestic space of the Russian empire on Western patterns. The vast landscape was not so familiar and had to be explored at first place. Its individualities of history, identity and tradition met the specifics of the Western culture and triggered the self-exploration and effort for identification. Radiŝev, for example, produced a travelogue (*Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow*, published in 1790) with descriptions of the domestic space where he examined the social and economic situation of Russia. Radiŝev was arrested and exiled for his representations and his work was not encouraged.[109]

Princess Ekaterina Daškova travelled to Western Europe in 1770 and produced two short travel accounts. They were one of the first published travelogues in Russia, blending actuality and the literary art of stylization.[110] Prince Alexander Kurakin studied in Western Europe (1771-1772) and kept a diary, which had aesthetical techniques of narration diverging from the standard impersonal objective accounts of the Petrine era.[111] Along with Karamzin's text, Fonvizin's *Letters from France* is perceived as the cradle of Russian travel writing. His journey in 1777 was comprised of civic narrations with interest in high-class society and culture. His work is distinguished by its vibrancy describing the occurrences of the journey while the hero is presented as a sophisticated traveller. The audience met the unfamiliarity which most of his Western interlocutors had towards Russia and its culture. It seemed that Fonvizin's *Letters* bore a national pride while also tried to moderate the idea of the superiority of the French culture.[112] These first travelogues reinforced the quest for a Russian national identity and were examples of literary background for Karamzin.

Travel narratives have been proven to be a dynamic vehicle of the eighteenth century Russian authors in the pursuit of identifying their national and cultural characters. One of the major questions in this respect is how to reveal subtle textual

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[108] A. Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, Stanford 1979, pp. xvi-xviii.
[109] S. Dickinson, *Breaking Ground: Travel And National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin*, p. 107.
[110] *Ibid.*, p. 42.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 29.
[112] *Ibid.*, p. 48.

mechanisms in the present literary work. Those mechanisms should then be capable to detect the construction of the imaginative nation, in our case – the way of how the nation, or better, a pursued national identity, is illustrated in the text of Karamzin. For contemporary research on national identity in the disciplines of history and cultural studies, questions of aesthetics, politics, nationalism and symbolism are part of the inquiry. The context of the literary culture of the sentimental travelogue provides the space to explore and analyse the variety of discourses.

## *1.4 National identity through travel writing: reality or construction?*

*"In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves, but in Asia we are masters.*
*In Europe we were Tatars, but in Asia we, too, are Europeans."* [113]
*— Fëdor Dostoevskij*

One of the main purposes of the Russian travel diaries of the eighteenth century was the need to identify oneself. In the course of travelling the identity of the "passenger" is questioned, as in being safely marginalized (as the motives of travelling examined are voluntary) but at the same time also reinforced. The natural borders and mental borders are being blurred while the passenger is entering into an acculturation state. The new environment and scenery, even just the conscious awareness and the feeling "being elsewhere", turns the attention of the traveller to the cultural and social references surrounding him. The points of orientation are both interior and exterior, they fade during a journey while challenging the question of identity. However, along with the acculturation process of orientation, observation, understanding and evaluation, the passenger bears his personal cultural weight at all times.

Referring to the characteristics of the Russian national spirit of the time I would like to use the constructivist approach of Benedict Anderson, considering it not as a self-evident reality, but as a kind of imagined community. Anderson wrote: *"In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps*

[113] F. Dostoevskij, *Dnevnik Pisatelya*, 1881, quoted by P. Truscott, *Russia First: Breaking with the West*, London 1997, p. 28.

*even these) are imagined."*[114] From his point of view, literature and the printing press have played an important role in the construction of the nation as an imagined community – the creative potential of the nation's imagination put into the texts themselves, allowing you to explore not how they "reflected" but how they imagined or "created" a community of people defined as nation.

It seems that in Karamzin's *Letters* the elements in determining the specifics of an imaginary national identity may be described as manufactured and produced. His impressions of the national identity are explained in conjunction with imperial practices and with multicultural influences. The same significance of "making" is present in structuralist – semiotic approaches to "production" with specific system of techniques and structural relationship of elements.[115] The specified importance according to the constructivist approach is to understand the making of the nation, which emphasizes the role of the text and discursive practices in its imagination (Anderson, Michel Foucault and others). The term "imaginative national identity" suggests not so much what Karamzin thought about nation but what it represented for him, how he sentimentally perceived it.

The analysis of the question of nation in numerous studies[116] deals with an abundance of elements as the space (i.e. the problem of conceptualizing the national space), the time (i.e. the relationship between the specifics of a "new" era and the modern nation) and emotions (i.e. patriotism and cosmopolitanism, where emotion functions as mechanism of historical change) which may be understood in different ways depending on the angle of the research. Drawing on these studies, we may consider that the basic elements dealing with the construction of the national identity in the text of Karamzin are space, time and emotion. Furthermore, in order to reveal the particularities of the construction, the perspective of the imperial element and Occidentalism has to be considered. From one side there was no firm division between centralised power and the imperial periphery and on the other side there was

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[114] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983, p. 6.
[115] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века*, p. 133
[116] For example: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, New York 1991, E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1990, A.D. Smith, *Nationalism*, Cambridge 2001, H. Rogger, Nationalism and the State: A Russian Dilemma, In *Comparative Studies of Society and History* 4 (1961/62).

a rising nationalism against imperialism. So ideologically, with the social elites welcoming a certain Westernisation process, Imperial Russia can be described as a hybrid composition.[117]

The careful reading of the *Letters* indicates that the imaginative national identity is to a large extent determined by aesthetic elements of the beautiful and the sublime, within a specific context of space, time and emotions. The task of the work is to discover the meaning and function of these divisions, the combination of which makes the visualized national identity an imagined entity. Since the focus of this study is not the set of Karamzin's ideas about the nation and its identity, but its construction and depiction through his work, the genre of the specific work and the selected corpus is representative enough. It allows a closer look at how the imaginative national identity may be revealed in his text. The period when the travelogue was written, Russian national awareness was at a focal point that favoured the construction of an imaginary national identity. It was an era when the reign of Catherine the Great, following Peter's the Great reforms, developed his ideas for Westernisation and managed to reach the point of the minimum cultural distance paralleling the European Enlightenment. The analysis of a text produced during that period demonstrates the nature of changes in the nation's identity.

The chosen epoch was an era of major transformations in most of the social and cultural aspects of the familiar Russian lifestyle and it set the ground for a move towards modernity. The function of the emperor as an absolute driving force of social and political development was diminished and came towards an end in parallel with the French Revolution. The Russian elites and intellectuals were functioning as the mediators between the "backward" Russia and the "advanced" Europe. Being open to the ideas of the West, Russia started following the path towards those practices that lead the Western European states towards the later industrialism and liberal politics[118]. A disagreement was created between the supporters of the Western ideals and those conservative influences from the state or the elites that wished to maintain Russia's current political and social order. This controversial intermediary state in which Russia found itself requested interrogation of issues of identity and the

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[117] D. Lieven, (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. II – Imperial Russia, 1689 – 1917,* pp. 14-16.
[118] P. Truscott, *Russia First: Breaking with the West*, p. 29.

disposition of its social, political and economic advance. An ambience of curiosity towards the exploration of Russia's national identity emerged and some literary works echoed that atmosphere.

By travelling to the Western Europe and displaying the values and rich greatness of some aspects of the cultural, political and social lives, Karamzin proposed a set of alternative national ideals. The role of Karamzin in the context of the development of the Russian national self-awareness is reflected in various ways. The mainly addressed issues are the questions of his admiration of Western values in opposition to his patriotic position, his ideas of conservative traditions, the value of the French Revolution in the evolution of his social and political views and the induction of a new literary language. These ideals would assist the country and the nation in getting closer to the standards of the Western traditions and subsequently closer to "paradise".

In the analysis of the problems of culture and literature in the Russian Empire, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism may be applied. As Said highlighted, *"…neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has any ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other"*.[119] The national pride of the Russian empire, partly comprehended due to the vast surface it covered, generated a concern of the power game of superiority and inferiority towards the West. As Eric Hobsbawm indicated: *"there is nothing like being an imperial people, to make a population conscious of its collective existence as such"*.[120] There was a set of attributes in the Western European culture, which the Enlightenment nurtured, as distinctiveness in art, music, language, dress and customs. The Russian intellectuals possibly initiated this need for uniqueness, after experiencing their Western counterparts taking the lead with *avant-garde* practices in arts and technology. In the pursue to break through as well, the intellectuals portrayed the Western paradigms in all aspects of social life practices while seeking to find their own old bonds of identity. Nikolaj Karamzin was one of those authors who expressed clear awareness of the Western European culture, without losing respect to his

[119] E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, London 1978, p. xvii.
[120] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. Cambridge 1990, p. 38.

homeland. The paradigms of the Occident were an example of "anti-role-model" by which Russia would recognize itself better while seeking its identity to be constructed and further developed. By the term "anti-role-model" I mean that the mirroring process that occurs when meeting the "Other", allows the "Self" to determine its own strengths and faults and act accordingly to the chosen decisions.

# Chapter Two
# Letters of a Russian Traveller: Quest for a National Character

*"Russians' understanding of themselves and their place in Europe, the world and the cosmos was so totally intertwined with literature, music and art…"*[121]

## *2.1 Prologue to Letters of a Russian Traveller*

In order to be able to understand substantially a literary work, it is essential to start with meeting the author and his upbringing circumstances. The background of the author, a short biography, would contribute in our understanding not only to the context in which the work takes place, but also its historic, literary and cultural significance. In the same approach, it is likely that it will assist us in distinguishing some individual qualities belonging to the author, evaluating the characteristics belonging to a certain moment of history and trace its influence at the era of the author's literary activity.

Nikolaj Mihailovič Karamzin was born in 1766 in Mihailovka, a village in the former region of Simbirsk (today Uljânovsk region) to a father who was a former officer.[122] He received a decent home education and in 1780 he moved to Moscow and started studying in the private pension of professor I. M. Schaden alongside taking lectures in the Moscow University. Karamzin received education on a variety of subjects (rhetoric, poetics, philosophy, mythology) and with guiding and influence from I. M. Schaden he became a selective reader and soon he would start working on

[121] D. Lieven, 2006, p.2
[122] N. Kochetkova, *Nikolay Karamzin*, Boston 1975, p.9

translations of some German authors. He mastered the French and German languages and left the pension in 1782. After his studies and with the reference of the director of the Moscow University, Karamzin became acquainted with Nikolaj Novikov and his circle. Novikov, a prominent writer and a mason in a significant position in the masonic circles, introduced Karamzin to a group of influential writers, academics, nobles and intellects whose deeds were crucial for the country's Enlightenment and cultural future. At the same time Karamzin's friendship with the poet Aleksandr A. Petrov and his continual fellowship with men of letters would prove influential for his future works.[123]

In 1789 Karamzin, writer undertook a journey to Europe through Germany (meaning the German lands), Switzerland, France and England. The journey was almost a year and a half long and after his return to Russia (1790) Karamzin started editing his impressions of the journey, *Letters of a Russian Traveller,* analysed in this chapter.

In January 1791 the *Letters* came into the publicity sight for the first time. In the January issue of the *Moscow Journal* (*Moskovskij Žurnal*) the first abstract of the *Letters* were available for the public to read. Nikolai Karamzin was the advocate of the idea to publish a literary journal. Karamzin quoted that *"people judge the superiority of a nation by the success of its authors"*[124] and remarked that Russian literature was not very extensive, poor in quality and reinforced the idea that even the smallest sparks of talent should see the surface in order to gain appreciation. The *Moscow Journal* was a monthly literary magazine speaking in a sentimentalist tone. It was published in Moscow from 1791 to 1792 and altogether eight issues were released. Karamzin was the publisher, the editor and the translator of the journal.

The idea of publishing the *Moscow Journal* appeared to Karamzin while on his trip abroad and it was based on his aspiration to familiarise the Russian reading public with foreign writers and their works. He returned to Russia in 1790s, just at the end of the rule of Catherine and started working in journalism. In the journal, he published his own works *Poor Lisa*, *Letters of a Russian Traveller*, *Natalya the Boyar's*

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[123] V.I. Pokrovskij *Nikolaj Mihailovič Karamzin; His Life and Oeuvres. Collection of Historical and Literary Articles* Moscow 1908, p. 28-29

[124] A. D. Martinsen, *Literary Journals in Imperial Russia*, Cambridge 1997, p.2

*Daughter* [125] and also translations of foreign writers, namely Jean Marmontel, Laurence Sterne, James Macpherson and others. Many Russian writers also contributed in the journal by publishing their works: Gavriil Romanovič Deržavin, Ivan Dmitriev, Mihail Matfeevič Heraskov, Vasilij Kapnist, Ûurij Neledinskij-Mieleč and others. In addition to prose and poetry, the *Moscow Journal* frequently published reviews, critical essays and theatrical critiques. [126] Later Karamzin published the almanac *Aglaya* and the *Messenger of Europe* and became the first representative of the Sentimentalist genre in Russia. The genre of Sentimentalism originated in the works of the European Enlightenment writers and reached popularity in the form of epistolary fiction (i.e. by Rousseau, *The New Heloïse* or by Goethe, *Werther)*. Obviously, Karamzin is not the founder of the genre of Sentimentalism. He borrows this already existing Western literary style incorporates it into the Russian language and tradition through his writings.[127]

Karamzin was a man of letters who had read a lot for his young age and had an evident desire for education itself when he started his journey. Travelling to foreign lands for the sake of the educational cultivation was widespread among the elite culture of the era for the prosperous individuals. Karamzin's thirsty and emotional soul was acquiring information and images through his journeys while age wise he was still in the process of forming his own thoughts and ideas. His young age rendered him flexible and adaptable to the sometimes-uncomfortable means of travel, bad weather or unsatisfactory accommodation. The Russian literary language and sphere were in the process of developing sideways to Karamzin's journey and with his eagerness to do so. [128] He was unconventional by the standards of the epoch because, in his literary work, he dismissed the on-going trend of the time towards mainstream francophone literature education and devotion. Educated under the guidance of Schaden, Karamzin studied the German philosophers and writers and consequently introduced their works to the Russian reading public.[129]

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[125] Cross, A.G. (2004, September). N.M.Karamzin's Messenger of Europe. *Herald of Europe,* Issue 1, p. 1-26. Retrieved June 9, 2012 from http://www.heraldofeurope.co.uk/Article.aspx?ArticleID=2092212088

[126] N. Kochetkova, 1975, p.33

[127] N. Kochetkova, 1975, p.57

[128] Cross, 2004, p.1

[129] V.I. Pokrovskij, 1908, p.22

The *Letters of a Russian Traveller* are pleasant to read and it is noticeable that they were written by an intelligent person who uses a very smooth language, precise pictorial descriptions, incorporates folklore tales and references of well-known personalities. A young man who is curious and willing to see, understand and transfer the image of Western Europe to his compatriots but without bowing in front of it. He speaks from an equal point of view without missing the essential respect to the elderly writers or philosophers he visits (and profoundly admires). Indeed he went on his journey with the ambition to learn, nevertheless he has his own accounts to say and share. He stands at the same level with the European contemporary intellectuals who are reciprocally interested in the young man. These letters are a grand depiction of a life experience and an outstanding literature workload.

The arrangement of the *Letters* has the form of epistolary literature, which has reached the status of an artistic genre at the time, however the writer tried to create the illusion of authenticity. This epistolary form provides unlimited flexibility for the direct expression of thoughts and emotions. All the topics described in the *Letters* – cities, nature, people, events – are shown through the eyes of the protagonist. Û. M. Lotman noted that Karamzin introduced in the *Letters* something that none of the travel authors have done before: the evolution of the soul of the hero. The young man after his travels called the *Letters* a novel about the formation of the soul of a young Russian nobleman who faced the cultural and political life of the contemporary Europe.[130]

While in the beginning of the *Letters* Karamzin declares spontaneity, literary critics have found that the author had well prepared his journey, his itinerary and the places of visit while post-journey text editing and composition has been also adjusted. Vasilij Sipovkij, the first literary critic to analyse the *Letters*, gave thorough description on Karamzin's sources. Much information about the European cities and countries was derived from previous travel guides and travel accounts in which their

[130] Ю.М. Лотман, Б.А. Успенский, *"Письма Русского Путешественника" Карамзина И Их Место В Развитии Русской Культуры* [Karamzin's Letters of a Russian Traveler and their Role in the Development of the Russian Culture]. In N. M. Karamzin, Письма Русского Путешественника [Letters of a Russian Traveler], edited by Û. Lotman and B. Uspenskij. Leningrad 1984 from http://www.rvb.ru/18vek/karamzin/3prp_lp/03addenda/hist_value.htm

authors described the same places Karamzin attended. Some examples are Laurence Sterne, James Thompson, Arthur Young, James Macpherson and more.[131]

One of the main significant aspects that came along with the publishing of those journals was the contribution of Karamzin to formulate, lead and express fundamental ideologies of the Russian society. Customs and manners may vary in different social groups, so any effort to define the exact constitutive elements of a Russian national character would be false and misleading. However we should speak of more general or abstract features, which despite their variances in different lifestyles and historical moments, continue to shape a common sense of a national ideology. Ensuring the nation's harmony are the features of love and loyalty: to the family values and the monarchical principle. That is to say, orthodoxy and autocracy were basic elements of what the eighteenth-century Russian thought constituted. In the form of a polite narrative and depictions of the social European lives, Karamzin traced achievements and values of the West and proposed their incorporation into the Russian tradition, as that would only be beneficial for his homeland.

It is noteworthy to mention that Karamzin was favouring the Western enlightenment to an extent that it would not conflict with his rooted patriotic feelings. Karamzin was a sincere admirer of Peter the Great and his reforms and supported the view that without Peter Russia would need six hundred more years to reach Europe. Karamzin praised autocracy and expressed that it is the only condition that will make Russia catch-up with the European West. As Richard Pipes, in his 1966 translation of Karamzin's *Zapiska o Drevnej I Novoj Rossii* (Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia) quoted Karamzin's lines:

*"Autocracy has founded and resuscitated Russia. Any change in her political constitution has led in the past and must lead in the future to her perdition, for she consists of very many and very different parts, each of which has its own civic needs; what safe unlimited monarchy can produce in such a machine the required unity of action?"*[132]

[131] P. H. Reill, E. J. Wilson, 1996, p.286
[132] R. Pipes (ed.) (transl.), *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, New York 1966, p.ix

This viewpoint, claiming that only autocracy can efficiently generate orderliness to such a large country with a majority of illiterate peasants, was employed by many other influential individuals: namely Aleksander Puškin, Fëdor Dostoevskij, Ûrij Samarin.[133] Karamzin was an intellectual who (not unlike many of his counterparts in Eastern Europe) admired the philosophical principles of the Enlightenment on a general level but as for concrete domestic matters, accepts political autocracy. As Karamzin's later views on nation and identity were repositioned towards a less universal approached, he saw that there was a cost for Russia's acceleration to West European standards as becoming a citizen of the world deprived Russians of parts of themselves.

In the section below I shall look into Karamzin's travelogue in detail, in order to answer the sought questions of this research. The analysis of the *Letters* I believe may lead us to certain conclusions concerning the Russian identity and how it is portrayed, constructed and revealed when it meets the "Other", the Western Europe.

I will go through Karamzin's *Letters* in a chronological order, as it was delineated by the author, with the purpose to follow the itinerary of his journey. In each country and city that Karamzin made a stopover, many details of the local atmosphere are expressed: encounters, conversations, architecture, customs and manners, descriptions of cities, villages and landscapes, places of cultural value, monuments, conditions of the trip, the traveller's emotions and many more. In order to analyse the information provided in a fruitful way, I shall look into the descriptions of the author and extract such passages that may assist in controlling and verifying my hypotheses.

## *2.2 Europe Unveiled*

Karamzin as a traveller is a profound observer. He observed the cities, the villages, nature, monuments, local customs and atmospheres and described them in details in his *Letters*, directed to his friends in Russia. When the traveller left Russia he was impatiently looking forward to what lies ahead, to see from where everything advanced in Russia came from. When he was travelling past the towns of Ivangorod and Narva, which were part of the Russian Empire, Karamzin remarked *"This was*

[133] R. Pipes,1966, p.x

*formerly our frontier. Oh Peter, Oh Peter!"*[134]. As he commented, Narva was part of the German states and Ivangorod Russian. It seems that Karamzin praises the Russian imperialism and the vision of Peter the Great. However, there is unfamiliarity in his attitude towards these areas of the empire distant from what he may consider home. He crossed the borders of the Russian empire and made his first stop in an inn in Kurland.

The author did not seem to pay any specific attention to the act of crossing borders. *I looked with special attention at everything that met my eyes, even though the sights themselves were very ordinary. I felt joy such as I have not experienced since our parting, my dears…'This is the first foreign town' – I thought, as my eyes eagerly sought something unusual, something new."*[135] The above passage mentioning the experience of the first border crossing is the only one expressing the impression of a mental line between Russia and the West. It conveys the idea that there would be significant differences when the author would step out of the Empire. However it was the political borders that Karamzin crossed, possibly the life in a border city close to the Empire still progressed in the same ways.

Besides this remark, the narrator expresses that by the crossing of borders and meeting new things, travellers are subjected to total freedom and to the blessed superiority of humankind in the cosmos. The human soul is flexible, able to surpass physical boundaries, enjoy pleasures and consequently evolve and progress.

*How pleasant, how gay it is, my friends, to travel from land to land, to see new objects which renew the soul, and to experience man's priceless freedom, which truly enables him to be called master of worldly creation. All other living beings, restricted to certain climates, are unable to go beyond the boundaries nature has drawn for them, and die where they are born. But man, through the strength of his own great will, roams from climate to climate – everywhere seeking delights and finding them, everywhere received as the favoured guest of nature, which continually reveals to him new sources."*[136]

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[134] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.35
[135] *Ibid*.,p.36
[136] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.104

The traveller tried to see the entire image of the life in each city and show every aspect of them to the readers. He accurately described the most trivial details – clean sheets in a hotel, the cost of a dinner, a variety of courses in different institutions, the inexpensive cost of staying in a hotel in Saxony or the fine products one may find in Leipzig. An example from an inn in Kurland:

*"When we had gone five miles, we stopped at an inn for the night. The rooms were quite clean, and in readiness for travellers"*[137].

Apart from describing the cities, the traveller also evaluates them. He appreciates in his descriptions the multi-stored houses (with more than three floors) and remarks that this is a measure that signifies the modernity of a city. From his depictions it can be concluded that in Moscow and in St. Petersburg of the time there were already many tall and beautiful buildings. For that reason the cities that are not characterised by high and imposing establishments are causing a little frustration to the traveller. He focuses on the streets that are wide and well paved so as there is enough space for the carriages to ride and the pedestrians to stroll.

Karamzin also pays great attention to the multitude of the inhabitants of the cities. If there are a small number of citizens in a city, it means for him that it is not a prosperous city. The size of the city itself is also important for him and he would address a city being magnificent only if all these parameters are at their highest points. Karamzin mentions that large cities are in need of parks where *"an artisan, artist, or scholar may rest in the fresh air at the end of his work, without the need to go out of the town*".[138]

He often evaluates the economic development of the cities and usually he adds to the general standards of description the local features, like in the case of Königsberg:

"*Königsberg, the capital of Prussia, is one of the largest cities in Europe, being about fifteen versts in circumference…Even today its commerce is fairly important. The city has about four thousand houses and forty thousand inhabitants, not a large number for its size! At present, how- ever, it seems crowded, for a great number of people have gathered here for the fair, which is to open tomorrow. I have seen some*

[137] *Ibid.,* p.36
[138] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.43

*rather fine buildings, but none as large as those in Moscow or Petersburg. In general, though, Konigsberg is probably better constructed than Moscow."*[139]

It seems that when a city does not encompass the standards of a metropolis, with big constructions and impressive artistic establishments, it leaves the author slightly uninterested. The young author was affected by the aesthetics of the Enlightenment, which in regard to urban planning, well-paved streets and well-built buildings in classicist style was preferred.

First in Karamzin's visiting list were philosophers – Kant in Königsberg, Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg in Danzig, Johann Gottfried Herder in Weimar and writers – Philipp Moritz in Danzig, Goethe in Weimar, Johann Kaspar Lavater in Zurich, Charles Bonnet in Geneva, Pierre-Charles Leveque in Paris and many others. The traveller had long conversations with them in which we see that the topics disclosed are particular and determined by themselves while with some he establishes business contacts. For instance Charles Bonnet allowed him to translate his works into the Russian language and even added notes to them unknown to anyone else till that time.[140] The *Letters* were showing to the contemporary reading audience foreign places unvisited by many Russians and brought them closer to the views of some famous intelligent people on various issues.

Karamzin does not hide his love for Rousseau and Voltaire and always pays attention to the attitude towards them from his interlocutors. Moreover it seems that Karamzin would like to enthuse all the potential readers of the *Letters* to grow a positive liking and passion towards them. For example an excerpt from the description of Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

"*He is a rare man, a unique author, fiery in passions and speaking, convincing in the most confusions, the most amiable in weaknesses! A toddler in heart till old age! Misanthrope, full of love! Unhappy in nature between humans and enviously happy in his soul of tenderness in the embrace of nature, in presence of an invisible deity, in the sense of his goodness and beauty of creation! How moving are the ashes of such*

[139] *Ibid.,* p.38
[140] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.159

*author, who influenced deeply your heart, to whom you owe many of your dearest ideas, whose soul was partly flowed into yours*?"[141]

The pedagogical significance in Karamzin's *Letters* lies behind the fact that the young author praised the thirst and need for knowledge. By introducing to the readers places of cultural importance and by giving various information of artists, authors, philosophers and their artistic works, he acted as a mediator of information and knowledge, and, besides that, polished his own public image by the accounts of his encounters with the prominent intellectuals of his time.

Following a first and general assessment of Karamzin's journey, his crossing border experience and his first glance on the European metropolises, I shall continue with summarizing in groups the countries visited by the author and his impressions from each one of them.

### *2.2.1. Countries*

### *Germany*

The traveller familiarises in detail the readers with four different European countries, through which he travels while making stops in particular cities and villages: Germany (Prussia and Saxony), Switzerland, France and England. The first country that Karamzin visited during his journey was Poland, however he only made a stop there without giving any particular reference of his experience. The first important and long stop of Karamzin was Germany. He visited certain big cities, namely Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig and Frankfurt-am-Main. Karamzin was familiar with the German language since early age as he received his education under professor Schaden. German language and culture were at the author's scope of interest and he praised the German philosophers, writers and their works. Karamzin made description of the places of interest in the cities he visited in a graphic manner while giving also statistical information. In the centre of his attention were the questions of education, culture and science. For example in Berlin, Karamzin mentioned his visit to the Royal

[141] *Ibid.,* 350

Library, the Berlin zoo, the theatre and the Opera. The play that Karamzin attended (*The Stranger* by Kotzebue) generated great happiness and deep sensitivity to the author, as he felt that the director *"knew the heart"*. At this instance the author praised the importance of the arts towards the human happiness and expressed it with great enthusiasm:

"*And now let it be proven to me that the Fine Arts do not affect our happiness! No, I shall always be grateful for their effect, so long as a heart beats in my breast—so long as I have feeling!"*[142]

This promotion of education and development can be traced back to his influences through the intellectual and Freemasonry circles. His acquaintance with the intellectual circles of his friend Nikolaj Novikov (journalist and publisher) inspired a positive approach towards the messages and goals of Enlightenment. Nikolaj Novikov was a known supporter and advocate of the movement in Russia[143]. Karamzin had the support of a good education that allowed him to look further than Russia into the literary and artistic works in Europe and subsequently appreciate them. In the *Letters* Karamzin indicated the cultural importance of the spread of education and contributes in his own way with the accounts he provides.

In the city of Dresden the traveller made a remark about the number of the citizens in the city being low for its size and the small size of the houses. He visited the art gallery that *"is considered one of the foremost in Europe"*[144] and described his impressions on famous paintings whilst also providing biographical information about prominent artists as Raphael, Correggio, Veronese, Poussin, Giulio Romano, Tintoretto, Rubens and others.

In Leipzig Karamzin describes the location of the city, its surrounding landscapes and how the planning of the surrounding villages look like. He paid attention to the well-cultivated fields and plantations and described them as elements adding attractiveness, as the city alone is not of significant beauty. From these descriptions it is distinct how much Karamzin appreciates the aesthetical element and how its

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[142] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.61
[143] V.I. Pokrovskiĭ *Nikolai Mihailovič Karamzin; His Life and Oeuvres. Collection of Historical and Literary Articles* Moscow 1908, p. 28-29
[144] ibid., 71

importance has effect on a city and subsequently on the lives of its citizens. From the architecture point of view a city's plan symmetry and cleanliness are few of the virtues that are important for Karamzin, as he mentioned about the city of Meissen:

*"The surroundings are lovely, only the city itself is very unpleasing. Streets are not even and not in line; the houses are all in Gothic style and demonstrate the odd taste of past centuries."*[145]

He attended a lecture in the University of Leipzig on the science of aesthetics given by Dr. Platner and explained its function as improving the sensuous perception. In the Wendler Garden Karamzin saw a monument dedicated to Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (German poet) and began recalling his fables which he was familiar with and praised Gellert for him teaching and praising human virtues.

Germany was also presented to the reading audience as a militant country and Karamzin's attention was drawn to the rudeness of the German authors towards each other. Karamzin writes with disappointment on the German lands where some of his most favourable philosophers were born.

*"I would not thank fate if it would conduct me to always live among these people. One can only talk with them about parades, marches and so forth"*– writes the traveller. *"This war interest seems to be the only distinct case of the militant temperament of the nation. Even the German philosophers and authors are aggressive and irreconcilable with their opponents. What strange people you are! I thought. You cannot live together in harmony. There is hardly a single noted author in Germany who has not quarrelled publicly with someone, and the public reads their diatribes with pleasure."*[146]

Once again the importance of a polite attitude in life, especially by men of letters, is highlighted. His approach suggests that enlightened and prominent people shall also be polite in their manners. It also might imply that polite norms are prevailing in the Russian culture, and yet a moral superiority over the land of philosophers exists.

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[145] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.62
[146] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.69

However, it was on the German soil that some of the most respective philosophers – such as Kant, Moritz, Platner, Herder – were born and flourished to who the traveller expresses constantly his deep admiration. Karamzin emphasises his peace-loving standpoint saying that he is armed against war with all the eloquence he possessed. [147] The fact that he did not spent much time on German soil, just few days in each city, is quite understandable if we assume that the goal of his travel was mainly the other countries visited. From Frankfurt-am-Main, which was Karamzin's last stop on German soil, the traveller passed through Mannheim and Strasbourg on his way to Switzerland.

## *Switzerland*

The city of Basel was the first place the author visited. The days ahead in Zurich the author met repeatedly with the Swiss poet Lavater and attended his public speeches. The following letters of the author are often marked by the time they were written rather than the usual date as before.

Karamzin describes Switzerland to the readers as being harmonious in most of the habitual acts of the life there. Its inhabitants live peacefully in contentment; they are not spoiled in their ordinary lives and all over the country reigns a profound virtue. Even the wealthy housewives do not live in an indolent manner, they have no more than one maid and there are no signs of excess luxury. They dress simply without following the French fashion of the times.

The traveller enjoyed his walks in the Alpine mountains and lakes and he visited memorial sites. He spoke about the features of education and expressed a judgment about the fact that in Lausanne one only could learn French and all other courses should be obtained in the German universities, as there was nowhere a better place for serious education. Like any well-read traveller, Karamzin decided to explore the neighbourhood of Lausanne with a small volume of "Heloise" by Rousseau in order to compare his personal impressions of the places *"where Rousseau placed his romantic lovers"*[148] with the literary descriptions.

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[147] *Ibid.,* p.44
[148] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.141

A special attention is paid to the nature of the places he visited, for example of Lausanne:

–*"If you should now ask me of what I can never tire, I should reply, 'Beautiful scenes'! How many wonderful ones I have seen! And yet I view each new one with the liveliest delight."*[149]

The beauty of the Swiss Alps around which Karamzin travelled for some days subjugates his aesthetic instincts. I suggest there is some influence from Burke's theory on the sublime that affected Karamzin and his expression. The very poetic and picturesque description of the Alps, the awe he experienced and the commemoration of Rousseau's tribute to the perception of nature, might be interpreted as an experience of sublime.

*"I have stood upon the highest step to which mortals can ascend to worship the Almighty. My tongue could not utter a single word, yet never did I pray so fervently as that moment."*[150]

The simplicity of family life that the peasants were following around the Alpine scenery made Karamzin express and admire the innocence and quality in which those villagers lived.

Once again a wide range of philosophers and writers are presented to the readers – Lavater, Tobler, Bonnet, and of course Voltaire. Karamzin visited the village of Ferney, where Voltaire, *"the most illustrious writer of our age"*[151] lived. With pleasure the traveller noted that on the wall of a bedroom in a sanctuary of an old man there was a portrait of the Russian empress hanging embroidered on silk with the inscription: *"Présenté a M. Voltaire par l'auteur"*.[152] This detail displays to the readers a personality familiar and important for the Russian Empire and the empress herself: there is an established relation between Russia and Europe. This relationship gets additional weight, when in the circles of the most prominent European philosophers, the image of the empress appears.

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[149] *Ibid.,* p.140
[150] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.136
[151] *Ibid.,* p.147
[152] *Ibid.*

Karamzin portrayed the citizens of Switzerland as morally pure, polite and organised. He acknowledged a friendly atmosphere of its citizens even in the big cities. On the citizens' attitude in Zürich:

*"Here I found a great many people, all of whom bowed to me as though they knew me. Such is the custom in Zurich. Everyone whom you meet in the street greets you. Politeness is fine, but your hand grows tired from removing your hat—and finally I decided to walk through the town with my head uncovered."*[153]

Karamzin paid attention to the architecture of cities, the width of roads, and checked whether they were well paved, dirty or clean. An example of a negative city portrayal would be about the city of Basel:

*"Basel is the largest city in Switzerland, but, except for the two enormous houses of Sarrasin, the banker, I have noted no fine buildings here, and the streets are very poorly paved. The town has a great many inhabitants for its size. A number of the small streets are overgrown with weeds."*[154]

It seems that Karamzin's model for a modern and aesthetically nice city has to deal with symmetrical analogies of its planning, width of roads, height of buildings and cleanliness. In addition, the number of citizens seem important for him so as the necessary green public spaces.

The first of December 1789 the author turned twenty-three years old. In the early morning he went to the shore of Lake Geneva, reflecting upon the meaning of life and remembering his friends. After spending several months in Switzerland, the traveller headed to France.

## *France*

The first French town on Karamzin's route was Lyon with his last target the city of Paris. The author stopped in Paris for about three months and meticulously visited many places of interest. The impressions from the French capital occupy the longest part in the *Letters, which* makes it the central city of the journey.

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[153] *Ibid.,* 125
[154] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.107

In Paris, the young traveller seems to have visited everything – theatres, boulevards, the Academy, coffee houses, literary salons and private homes. He described in details the streets, the houses and people. The author spends his days in Paris among art galleries, operas, theatre, the Champs Élysées, the Palais Royal and the Tuileries. The descriptions of structures like the Louvre, the Palais du Luxembourg, the Palais Royal or the Notre-Dame Cathedral, demonstrate the usage of previous travel books.

The young traveller described his impressions of the royal family, whom he met in the church by chance. He did not dwell into details but only commented on their purple dress; the colour of mourning was adopted by the court. Karamzin found pleasing the theatre play "Peter the Great" that he watched, executed by the actors very carefully. However he indicated lack of knowledge from the director of the play towards the features of the Russian life.

Another incidence that signified some unawareness from the Parisians towards Russians is presented in a conversation in the Parisian Opera:

*"Cavalier: 'You are Russian! You see, Madame, I guessed as much! J'ai voyage dans le nord; je me connais aux accents; je vous l'ai dit dans le moment'. Beauty: 'I really thought that you were an Englishman. Je raffole de cette nation'. Cavalier: 'Anyone who, like me, has been everywhere and knows languages can never be mistaken. In Russia the people speak German?' – Russian. Cavalier: 'Oh, well, Russian. It's all the same'".*[155]

Karamzin was called by the Countess of Paris to answer to some questions for emigration reasons about his homeland. From these questions it is obvious that the image of Russia in the eyes of Europeans was a wild, harsh and vastly unexplored country. Most people that Karamzin met knew little about Russia and did not really show interest in learning more.

*"Will it be possible for a man with delicate health to tolerate the cruelty of your climate? – Which season is pleasant in your country? How cold does it get in St. Petersburg? For how many months do your ride on sleighs? Do you ride on deers in*

[155] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.229

*the winter? – Which comforts does your social life comprise? – Are foreigners liked in Russia? Are they well received? –Are women respected in Russia? – Is there much game in the Russian countryside? My husband wants to know – he is passionately fond of the chase (adds the countess).”*[156]

While those questions may be characterised as reasonable for someone who does not know much over a certain country or its people, they exactly highlight the extent of the exoticism that was attributed to Russia.

The Parisian coffee-houses attracted the attention of the author as they gave the opportunity to visitors to speak publicly about politics or literature news. Karamzin depicts vividly how pleasant it is going into a cosy place where one can meet Parisian celebrities and ordinary people, relax, listen to poetry or read prose.

The *Letters* are a genuine and picturesque cultural guide for future travellers as they contain plenty and detailed information about the cultural practices and institutions of the European cities. In his *Letters* Karamzin narrates a lot about history, literary heritage, libraries, monuments and also intangible culture of importance. In the Royal Library in Paris Karamzin writes:

“*The Royal Library here is the finest in the world – at least, so the librarian told me. It consists of six tremendous halls crammed with books.”*[157]

The reading public will discover through the pages of the *Letters* the culture, the social life and art in Europe. Many readers will never be able to see all the places described for themselves. Nonetheless the portrayals are given in such a way that it seems that one is travelling along with Karamzin, walking through the museums and exhibition halls, the cities’ streets and experience everything with their own eyes.

Karamzin captured the vibrant atmosphere of Parisian lifestyle and expressed his impressions with some inconvenience:

*“This indescribable hubbub, this wondrous diversity of objects, this extraordinary multitude, this unusual vivacity, struck me with a kind of wonder. I felt as though I*

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[156] *Ibid.,* 248
[157] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.236

*had fallen, like a tiny grain of sand, into a terrible abyss and was spinning around in a vortex."*[158]

Despite the on-going revolution, Paris is still exclusively associated with pleasure:

*"Everything here was buzzing and entertaining – the dancers danced, the musicians played, the singers sang and crowds of people expressed their pleasure with loud applauses. I felt like I was in a different world. What a country! What a nation!"*[159]

The writer refers to Paris as a territory of pleasures and recognises that Paris is a model for other European cities on the grounds of style, fashion and taste. The impressions that Paris generated in Karamzin make it possible to think that the he had already certain clichés about the city. It is probable that the portrayal of Paris in Russia at the time was not very far from the scenery seen by the author.

Karamzin watched in Paris the melodrama *Peter the Great*. The knowledge, appreciation and portrayal of the directors on Russia in a way disappointed him and we can see his impressions in the following remark:

*"It is just a pity that the French dressed the emperor, Menšikov and Lefort in Polish dresses, and Preobraženski's soldiers and officers – in peasant's green coats with yellow ribbons. The audience around me said that this is exactly the way Russians are dressed and me, occupied with drama, thought of it unnecessary to resolve their confusion."*[160]

The young author was a witness of the beginning of the French Revolution. At the time he visited France there was still no terror or dictatorship and he is regarding at all of these events with sympathy.[161] Only in a couple of his writings about Paris does he mention the ongoing revolution:

*"In a small place we found a great gathering of people. – 'What is going on here?' – I asked – 'Your neighbor Andrew' – a young woman answered – 'the inn*

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[158] *Ibid.,* p.180
[159] *Ibid.,* p.228
[160] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.266
[161] G. S. Panofsky, *Nikolai Mikhailovich Karamzin in Germany: Fiction as Facts*, Wiesbaden 2010, p.75

*keeper under the name Cross, declared yesterday in front of each and everyone while being drinking, that he spits on the nation. All the patriots were bothered and wanted to hang him, but finally they soothed, let him to sleep and sober up and forced him to publicly knee today in the church and beg for forgiveness from the Merciful Lord'."*[162]

He does not seem to be troubled about the early manifestations when he wrote *"What is there to say about the French Revolution? You read the newspapers; consequently the events are known to you."*[163] Answering to anticipating questions his friends made about the French Revolution Karamzin wrote: *"Do not think, however, that the entire nation is participating in the tragedy now being played in France*"[164]. When in his later stay in Paris he speaks a bit more about the atmosphere of the revolution around him, Karamzin keeps a peace-making approach and advocates that the revolution is a *"gaping tomb for both virtue and the most terrible villainy"*[165]. He makes examples of stories which justify his cautious position on the Revolution and describes the events to be threatening: *"But all violent shocks are ruinous and every rebel prepares his own scaffold".*[166] He proclaims that under the monarchy the country has seen advancement in arts and sciences and it is better to live quietly in order to enjoy a prosperous life:

*"The French monarchy has produced great kings, great ministers, great men of every kind. Under its benign protection the sciences and arts have come of age, and society has been adorned with the flowers of civility."*[167]

Karamzin also points out that any authority is better than any sort of anarchy and as "Utopia" may be envisaged by many, it may finally be realised through *"the gradual working of time, through the slow but true and safe attainments of the mind, enlightenment, education and good morals"*.[168]

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[162] *Ibid.,* p.215
[163] *Ibid.,* p.192
[164] *Ibid.,* p.193
[165] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.195
[166] *Ibid.,*
[167] *Ibid.*
[168] *Ibid.,*

The support of a peaceful resolution of the turmoil in France shows the conservative nature of the author and his support to the Russian monarchs. Karamzin's trust and worship towards Peter the Great is evident through the whole text with various supportive references. The Enlightenment's absolutism finds the author's encouragement, as it was appreciated within the Enlightenment's intellectual circles.

The beauty of the Bois de Boulogne and Versailles has not left indifferent feelings in Karamzin's heart, but there comes a time to leave Paris and go to London – a goal set back in Russia: "*When I drew up the plan of my journey, Paris and London, the two leading cities of Europe, were its two beacons*."[169] On the boat from Calais the author continues his journey to England. Karamzin leaves Paris with the following sentence: *"I do not leave you with an empty soul"* as *"there remain ideas and memories."*[170]

## *England*

England is presented as a country very different from the other European lands Karamzin has visited. The very first impressions of the author on England suggest a long-standing interest in the country. Individuals in England are able better than anyone to appreciate their labour and make money, as trade is their forte. He admired the universal order and felt a general atmosphere of contentment, *"although not luxury, but plenty."*[171]

When Karamzin entered the city of London he comments on the view of various important buildings and locations: *"The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral rose like a giant above all the other buildings…"* [172] or *"Westminster Abbey, an ancient Gothic structure"*[173] or *"London looked like a heap of glittering tiles; the countless masts on the Thames like rushes in a small stream;"* or *"I alighted from the coach and, gazing*

[169] *Ibid.,* p.266
[170] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.254
[171] *Ibid*, p. 264
[172] *Ibid.,* p.265
[173] *Ibid.*

*at the splendid city, its environs, and the highroad, I forgot everything. If my travelling companions had not missed me, I should have been left alone on the hill and entered London on foot."*

Karamzin visited all major cultural places of attraction in London, as the St. Paul's Cathedral, the Stock Exchange and the Royal Society, the British Museum, the Windsor Park, the Tower of London and many more. He was attracted by everything that the city had to offer, but found Paris more picturesque: *"...Although London has not so many noteworthy sights as Paris, there are things to see here, and every day I spend several hours looking at buildings, public institutions, or cabinets."* [174] Comparing London and Paris might show the magnitude that both cities imposed on the author. His preference of Paris is maybe related to his inadequate knowledge of the English language and possibly many descriptions are mostly taken from previous travelogues.

The details with which Karamzin describes the places of interest and the sensations they cause to the traveller, allow the reader to visualise and explore a cultural journey through Europe. Karamzin's thorough introduction of historical places, philosophers, authors and works of arts reveal his passion for knowledge, education and progress. He illustrates in his writings many solid facts that enlighten the reader through telling stories about the places he visited, describing monuments of art and an insight into different cultures. As mentioned earlier, city planning and urban buildings seem to attract the attention of the author. The cities that are attractive for Karamzin are the ones that are clean, big, with wide roads and tall buildings.

On describing the houses in London:

*"Everything here is simple, clean, and almost like a country house. The entrance hall and rooms are beautifully carpeted. There is shiny mahogany all about. Nowhere do you see a speck of dust."*[175]

Moreover, each person described by the traveller seems to represent a certain type of people, such as one of a specific profession or one's social status. In my opinion, this is quite a controversial topic. On the example of one student, he is trying to depict

[174] *Ibid.*, p. 290
[175] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.276

all the students as a group – mischievous and sharp. In the case of an Englishman who shot himself due to his melancholic nature Karamzin generalises *"out of boredom the rich Englishmen travels; out of boredom he becomes a hunter, squanders money, marries, shoots himself."*[176] It may be said that some generalisations that Karamzin makes came from his literal technique to turn every general encounter with "some" Englishmen to "the" Englishmen. The actual and everyday impression is somehow coloured and masked with his intangible and literal expression.

Karamzin meets people of various social classes and learns from them unexpected information. His hotel-maid in London surprised him when she spoke about the novels of Richardson and Fielding and prefers Lovelace Grandison[177]. He visited London courts and prisons and he dwells into details about the circumstances and the proceedings of the English law. He noted the benefits of a jury, in which human life depends on the law and admired their humanity and insistence on evidences in order not to accuse someone innocent.

The author immediately drew attention to the fact that all well-bred Englishmen, usually knew the French language, they preferred to speak in English. *"How different it is here from Russia…"*[178] exclaims the author feeling pity about that in Russian 'good society' no-one can do without the French language, even if he just knows two words in French.

Karamzin admires the fact that the products of education are given to nations who possess them: "*Whoever wishes to see an enlightened people which, through its own diligence, has attained the highest degree of refinement in living, must go to England.*"[179]

### *2.2.2 European Societies and Characteristics*

Karamzin attributes great importance to the hard work and to accuracy. In the beginning of his trip he made some negative comments about some Estonian and

[176] *Ibid.*, p. 334
[177] *Ibid.*, p.274
[178] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p. 278
[179] *Ibid*., p.68

Livonian peasants while making negative comments about their features as he distinguished them:

*"…their awkwardness, clumsiness, and slow-wittedness, one cannot but think that they are, to put it simply, dullards. The noblemen with whom I managed to speak complained of their indolence, and called them a lethargic people who will do nothing of their own volition".*[180]

Karamzin points out that not only the farmers should be hardworking but the towns-people as well:

*"In praise of the Berlin citizens say they are hard-working and that the very rich and famous people do not waste money on the vanity of luxury and they maintain strict budget on the table, the clothes, the equipage and so forth."*[181]

There should be a certain volume of obedience towards hardworking according to Karamzin. He does not mark traits of extensive laziness in Europe and his position is that hard work and education are the qualities that make nations evolve and advance. Finally, Russia as a country that adopts the best of the European achievements should proceed in the same way and develop these qualities in its people.

Another distinct characteristic of the Enlightened societies that Karamzin points out, is their politeness and hospitality. The act of hospitality in France is described by the traveller to be polite but only demonstrative; it concealed coldness and distantness: "*I was welcomed with a cold caress, as they usually welcome foreigners here, I was called for lunch, dinner, and so on.*"[182]

Karamzin compliments Russians for maintaining a friendly hospitality approach – "*holy virtue, common in the times of the youth of the human race and so rare in our days!"*[183]

These countries are far ahead of Russia in terms of their development, they have acquired a lot but they also have lost much due to the further industrialisation. The traveller is constantly homesick – his friends and the warmth which he left back. *"I*

[180] *Ibid*., p.34
[181] *Ibid*., 50
[182] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.248
[183] *Ibid*., p.5

*do not seek sincerity, a sympathetic heart—I do not seek because I do not hope to find them."*[184] For Karamzin, in some respects, it is better for the state to stay juvenile – pure, real, sensitive, giving and fair.

An additional fact that the traveller pays attention to concerning the villages and the land harvesting, is the weather. The prosperity mentioned earlier would have been impossible to reach without their hard work, but also without a favourable climate. This brings us to perhaps the main reason as what Karamzin highlights the formation of the national character, and even the way the history developed (in Palanga, today Lithuania): *"However the journey is not boring: for everywhere you see rich land, fields, and groves; here and there tiny villages or scattered individual peasant huts."*[185] The land should be fertile, points out Karamzin, and then the farmers will be able to spend much less effort to process it. A comparison with Russia immediately comes to the front – Russia, a north country. Here in order to achieve the same result one must devote much more effort. This shall not be forgotten when comparing the level of development in Europe and Russia:

*"The whole north part of Germany can be called an earthly paradise. The road is smooth, like a table – everywhere there are lovely villages – everywhere there are rich vineyard gardens – all the fruit trees are laden – pears, apples and walnuts grow on the road (a sight leading to a delight to northern residents, accustomed to see sad pine trees and irrigated gardens…). And among all these generous valleys rushes the respected wine-giving Rhine, carrying on an undulating ridge its blessed fruits of its coasts, fruits entertaining the hearts of people in distant countries and not so much blessed by nature!"*[186]

The climate affects also the people themselves. The British people living in an everlasting fog and smoke coming from the burned coal are melancholic and phlegmatic, observes Karamzin:

*"In a word, give the English the sky of Languedoc– they will be healthy, jovial, will sing and dance like the French"…Swiss people are calm and balanced same as their nature is. A Russian? The Russian climate although it is north it is somehow*

[184] *Ibid*, p.176
[185] *Ibid*.,p.37
[186] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.100

*continental. My Russian heart likes to pour itself out in sincere animated conversation. It likes the play of the eyes, sudden changes of expression, a meaningful gesture of the hand."*[187]

When commenting on the atmosphere and attitude of the citizens of a place, it seems that the vibrant Parisians provoke the sense of sadness and non-comfort to the author. He expressed that everyone is in a rush, trying to surpass each other, without making the effort of paying any attention to listen. He compares the Parisians' attitude with the one of the Swiss people, which was measured, exceptionally polite and attentive.[188]

The emotions of the author-traveller towards nature bear a great significance in the *Letters*. One of the most important contemplations of Karamzin was the theme of nature, closely related to his views on the human values and events of world history. In the nature, in Karamzin's opinion a man is clearly exposed to the wisdom and the power of the Creator. Karamzin admires the scenery in every chance with a sacred attention. He admires the landscapes he meets and names it *"nature"*, while calling for a need to return to closer to the nature. His expressions over the nature are possibly unveiling with artistic realisation his theory over civilisation's purity along with its variables and contradictions. Aesthetic features of sublime seem to have influenced the author and his picturesque depictions. An example from the description of the Rhine Falls:

*"Very fine particles of the multiform waves, which roll one after the other with unparalleled swiftness, shoot upward in myriads and form billowy clouds of moist, opaque vapor… Completely drenched by the spray, I stood silent, watched and listened to the various sounds of the falling waves: a roaring concert which stuns the mind! A truly sublime phenomenon! My imagination endowed the cold element with life, gave it feeling and voice…"*[189] or on the carriage to the way to Basel: "*Each breath of air seems to penetrate my heart and fill it with a feeling of joy. What views! What scenes! About two versts from Basel I jumped out of the coach and flung myself upon the flowering bank of the green Rhine, ready to kiss the earth in rapture. Happy*

[187] *Ibid*., p.327-328
[188] *Ibid*., p.183
[189] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.123

*Swiss!"* or *"If I had to die now, at this very moment, I would fall in love into the all-enveloping bosom of Nature with complete confidence that she summons me to a new happiness."*[190]

However he makes no reference of rejecting the big cities, but only a rejection of unnecessary pathos throughout and emphasises the need to remember that nature is the foundation of everything. It seems that these influences about the supremacy of nature derive from his friendship with Alexandr A. Petrov–the founder of "*Družeskoe Učionoe Obŝestvo*" (The Friendly Learned Society). Karamzin valued the opinion of his older friend, a man who mastered few foreign languages and whose opinion mattered in the intellectual circles. Petrov managed to show and make Karamzin embrace the importance of the beauty in the simple, everyday, rural things and how to portray them in literature.[191]

It is noteworthy to mention that some of the traveller's impressions can be called meticulous; some are based on the spontaneous misadventures that the traveller might have gone through during his journey (i.e. bad weather, problems with documentation and so forth) while others are pre-cultivated. When Karamzin is in a good mood everything around him seems pleasant and delightful. If he is in a bad state, everything in his surroundings seems also imperfect. This attitude suggests the sensitive nature of the traveller, while being emotional supposes someone to be easily affected by the world around. For example:

*"I had to travel in a driving rain, and to take it into my head, unfortunately, to go from Petersburg by post-chaise. There were no good kibitkas anywhere. Everything irritated me. Everywhere, it seemed, they overcharged me. At each change we were detained too long…God knows what I felt at that moment! All pleasant thoughts of travel grew clouded in my soul!"*[192]

Karamzin presents himself as a cosmopolitan young man (as far as this definition is applicable to the eighteenth century) and his final evaluation of the European lands as a whole, is a worshipped universality of humanistic nature. All nations develop

[190] *Ibid*., p.116
[191] N. Kochetkova, 1975, p. 20
[192] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.32

from their interactions and mutual influence, but at the front line everyone shall have morals and values and not forget that they are humans.

*"The purely national is nothing next to the all-human. The main thing is to be human beings not Slavs. Whatever is good for all mankind cannot be bad for Russians, and whatever the English or Germans have invented for the use and benefit of man is mine, for I am a man!"*[193]

However not at every time of his visits the traveller would confirm these words. Everywhere in Europe, he profoundly feels and shows his Russian consciousness, being different from others, but with distinct openness. He praised Peter the Great and his achievements at every chance, expressing his proud national feelings and always mentioning his friends left back home with some melancholy. He tried to advocate the Russian cultural characteristics to his European interlocutors – as features about the language, the weather, literature – and assist in creating some awareness, some image of the greatness of his fatherland.

### *2.2.3 Comparison to Russia*

Virtually in the *Letters* there is not an evident comparison to Russia, Russian people and traditions. The writer does not seem to set out the goal of comparison – his task is to discover, study and reveal Europe. The reading audience shall decide for themselves and choose whether they have the need to compare or not. However reading the description of one of many European villages the comparison suggests itself unselective:

*"In the villages you will find the order and cleanliness. You will not see anything here rotting, unrepaired; everything serves convenience and everything you need is in abundance and perfection. This, can be said, flourishing condition of most Swiss farmers occurs because of the fact that they almost do not pay any taxes and live in*

[193] *Ibid.,* p.221

*perfect freedom and independence, giving to the board only a tenth of their field-collected fruits."*[194]

Occasionally the traveller finds traits to which the European cities resemble to the Russian ones (I suppose he is comparing them to Moscow and St. Petersburg). For instance in Berlin:

*"Here on the streets there are hackney coaches for rent as we have the hiring carriages or sleighs. For eight pennies – which at the current rate would be forty cents – one can go anywhere at the city, just only to one place*", or in Paris: "*I walked there and saw about a thousand carriages, but not a single splendid one. This promenade reminded me of our May First in Moscow."*[195]

Given the fact that people usually pay attention to something unusual for them we can imagine that such a description for a Russian village would be atypical and Karamzin's contemporaries would recognise that for sure. An example from a village near the Zurich Lake:

*"All the farmhouse in this village have a very nice appearance, and next to each one of them there is a little garden with fertile trees and ridges where fragrant flowers and cooking herbs grow."*[196]

Emphasizing certain characteristics of a different culture suggests simultaneously the effect of definition towards the author's native culture. Encountering unusual objects or practices, travellers react reminding themselves of what would be "normal" to them. For example, on the road from Dover towards London:

*"Everywhere rich, verdant, fertile fields with numerous herds grazing, their pearly and silvery manes gleaming; everywhere lovely villages with little brick cottages roofed with bright tiles…everywhere the castles of rich lords, surrounded by groves and limpid ponds…What activity! And yet what order! Everything presents an*

[194] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.140
[195] *Ibid.*, p.196
[196] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.131

*aspect of contentment, not of luxury, but of plenty. Not one object from Dover to London reminded me of human poverty."*[197]

Once again, the landscape that attracts the traveller and generates delighted excitement to his mood is the one that looks proper, in order, clean, persistent, taken care after, in one word *'comme il faut'*. While he did not clearly compare the villages he encountered to the ones in his homeland, he emphasised the structure, the order, the cleanliness, the clothing of the inhabitants, their fields and the nature surrounding them. There is a profound delight in their vision that can be perceived as a sign of dissimilarity to his familiar village scenery.

In addition, domestic space, the idea of home and family, were important symbols of the Russian identity since the eighteenth century. It is not very clear which trait indicated a "typical" pre-modern Russian identity; however the duality of human life and ominous nature is one of the oldest images. Household customs and principles strengthened the sense of solidarity and collective identity in distant communities. Nevertheless, the modernizing reforms of Peter the Great left an imprint of dismissal on Russian culture and damaged the existing unity. The elites started leaving their families for education in metropolitan areas following western patterns while demonstrating detachment from home. The weak bonds with home were untied, nevertheless the idea of the home has remained an important symbolic element in the Russian literature.[198]

In some of Karamzin's description of Russia some comparison can be traced uprising the historical value of Russia as equivalent and in some respects even better than the European countries.

*"We had our Charlemagne: Vladimir; our Louis XI—Tsar Ivan; our Cromwell—Godunov; and in addition a sovereign unlike any other anywhere—Peter the Great."*[199]

Over the span of twenty years, Peter the Great has accomplished a lot for the country that without him no one managed to do so for two hundred years; he managed

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[197] *Ibid*., p.264
[198] C.A. Singleton, *No Place Like Home: The Literary Artist and Russia's Search for Cultural Identity*, New York 1997, p. 23
[199] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.281

for the Russian people to become *"flexible, able to learn and to adopt" and "even as Sparta without Lycurgus, so Russia without Peter could not have gained glory."*[200]

Karamzin does not miss the chance to demonstrate any traces related to Russia that he met during his journey. At his visit to the Royal Library in Paris, Karamzin mentioned he attended the Slavic session as he was Russian and he saw *"our empress's Nakaz."*[201] Karamzin presents any traces of Russian features he might have come across during his trip. Apart from the profound pride the author might have genuinely felt facing his nostalgia towards home; these reports also feed and enrich self-awareness and importance. There have been not few reports when Karamzin's interlocutors lacked any basic awareness about Russia and Russian culture. However Karamzin also succeeded to use beneficially such cases, when the image of the "ignorant foreigner" would reach his native readers.

### *2.2.4 Evaluations: Russia and Europe: What European people knew about Russia?*

In some dialogues that Karamzin includes in his *Letters* the question about what Russia and Russian people are is raised. It appears to be one of the main interests of the traveller to depict himself as a Russian cosmopolitan traveller. How he represents his Russian ethos as a traveller and how it is perceived in Europe, occupies a central position in his writings.

Everyone Karamzin meets spoke about Russia as a northern country. Moreover Karamzin always identifies himself as a resident of the north. An example of Karamzin's dialogue with an old man in Alpine village:

*"'On which land were you born?' – Asked the old man sitting on a log. – 'In Russia'. – 'In Russia! Yes, I heard about this land from our elderly. But where is it?'*

[200] *Ibid*., p.282
[201] *Ibid*., p.236

*– 'Far away, my friend – there, just after the mountains, directly to the north'. – 'Yes correct, I remember that'."*[202]

Russians in some places abroad are still a wonder for Europeans, even in neighbouring Germany; an example of a dialogue in Saxony:

*" – 'You are of course, a foreigner, if I may ask?' – 'So it is, madam' – 'Of course you are Englishman? While Englishmen are fluent in German language' – 'Excuse me, madam, I am from Moscow' – 'Moscow? Oh, my God! I have never seen before a person from Moscow!'"*[203]

It is fairly distinct that the knowledge of the average European about Russia is insufficient, vague and often inaccurate. From Karamzin's encounters it seems that the most interested people in Russia are the Germans. That is perhaps due to the geographical position of Russia being neighbouring to the German States but also because of war interests. Russia at that time was a strong military power and led a war with the Ottoman Empire and Sweden.[204] One example of a dialogue in a German tavern:

*"Well, will we have war, Herr Officer?" asked the old inn- keeper in Korlin of my fellow travelers. "I think not," replied the captain. "God grant there will be none", said the innkeeper. "I'm not afraid of the Austrian hussars – but the Russian Cossacks! Oh, what people!" "But how do you know them?"…"They have such dreadful faces that it gives me the shivers to think of them."*[205]

The traveller met two Germans who believed that Russians did not speak foreign languages:

*"They lay down on the grass near me, lit their pipes, and from boredom began to inveigh against the Russian nation. I stopped writing and asked them indifferently whether they had ever been beyond Riga in Russia. 'No', they replied. 'In that case, sirs', I said, 'you cannot judge the Russians, having visited only a frontier town'.*

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[202] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.155
[203] *Ibid*., p.54
[204] D. Lieven, 2006, p. 513
[205] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.48

*They did not consider it advisable to argue, but for a long time refused to take me for a Russian, imagining that we do not know how to speak foreign language."*[206]

An exchange of such a dialogue adds an amusing element to the traveller's incidents during the trip. At the same time, the traveller is presented in a more sophisticated position from his "uninformed" interlocutor, speaking of a topic that is an eminent feature for Russians and that probably everyone should know about. The foreigners are revealed of a poorer cultivation in opposition to the traveller and the reader. Such an approach would strengthen the image of the young traveller – as a young cultivated Russian – while eliminating any inferiority complex that the Russian nation might have had towards the Westerners. Any example of the Europe's ignorance towards Russia works as an amplifier to the message that Karamzin sought to forward to his nationals.

Even some German scholars with whom Karamzin met seem to know very little about Russia:

*"Everyone was gay and talkative. They encouraged me to talk and questioned me about our literature. They were very much surprised to learn that ten cantos of 'The Messiah' had been translated into Russian. 'I would not have believed it possible to express Klopstock's ideas in your language', said a young professor of poetry. 'I will go even further', said I, 'and say that it is a faithful, lucid translation'. To prove that our language is not unpleasant to the ear, I read Russian verses of different meters, and they perceived the expressive harmony."*[207]

In Lyon the traveller met a couple that was interested only in the Russian welfare – and that is all what they mentioned about Russia: *"Russians are all rich as Croesus; when they have no money they do not visit Paris. It is pity that it is very cold where you live.*"[208]

Certainly there are also exceptions that should be mentioned, showing that some individuals whom the traveller met were familiar with Russia. However this familiarity shows only some basic knowledge and not genuine cultural attraction.

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[206] *Ibid*., p.37
[207] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.79-80
[208] *Ibid*., p. 217

Some Russians were known in Europe especially from the intellectual circles (for example, Karamzin himself was in correspondence with Johann Kaspar Lavater).[209] Karamzin also met such Europeans who knew about Russia, for example the German poet Wieland:

*"This is the first time I have seen a Russian such as you. I have met your Sh… a witty man, imbued with the spirit of this old man (pointing to a bust of Voltaire). Your countrymen usually try to imitate the French; but you…—" I: Thank you."*[210]

Another example of someone who had encountered Russians before is the following:

*"Mr. Malley surprised me when he started speaking to me in Russian. – I have lived four years in Moscow – he said – and although it has been long since I moved out of Russia, however I have still not forgotten your language."*[211]

Consequently it seems like Russians were relatively a mystery for the Europeans. They knew little about Russia and what they knew was not always correct. Some Europeans had a rather fair image about Russia, but they were a minority and had essential specific interest: it was either for business reasons (such as the British trade with Russia) or related with Russian military forces (example with the Germans), for political or personal reasons. Thus we can see what was considered interesting about Russia and for which reasons was Russia desirable for Europe: its military competency (the countries that were located even further were not even interested in that) and a political and market partner. As a cultural icon Russia was not yet appealing to Europe. German writer Karl Philipp Moritz was interested in the cultural aspects of Russia as language and literature and affirmed:

*"Perhaps there will come a time" he said, "when we shall also learn Russian; but for that you must write something magnificent". At this an involuntary sigh escaped me."*[212]

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[209] *Ibid*., p.119, 123,137
[210] *Ibid*., p.91
[211] *Ibid*., p.74
[212] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.48

### *2.2.5 Interpreting Karamzin: the Presentation of Europe to the Russian public*

One of the problems that the act of travel implies by itself is the feeling of expectation that it creates. From the beginning of the *Letters* Karamzin expresses his desire to obtain simple pleasure from his trip. It is a literal and symbolic vehicle for him to realise his imaginative pursues; to embrace the images and experiences that he has so far met only through his readings. By travelling Karamzin expected to reach the freedom and pleasure that the restlessness of the human soul often deprives. The expectation for the journey as Karamzin expressed it implied that he was waiting to experience something unprecedented.

What was the purpose of the publication of the *Letters*? First of all to reveal the European continent for his fellow-nationals; their way of life, their habits, their norms. Not many individuals could afford or had the means to travel abroad at the time. Karamzin, by documenting his journey gives the opportunity to the readers to immerse themselves into the sphere of the European life. He describes everything that surrounds him: buildings, the interiors, people, the nature, the weather, roads, food, random conversations, engagements with philosophers and the attractions of the cities. Despite the fact that these descriptions were given plenty of space and time, they are not the main theme of the *Letters*. In the centre of attention is the hero himself. The traveller, the author, the hero, Karamzin – and whatever comes with these characters. The young, intelligent, emotional, curious, with values – and above all Russian – soul is in the centre of the *Letters;* personified and representing the future Russia should follow.

Russia is a vast, remarkable country with its own history (which was still to be chronicled in the era – it would be done by Karamzin himself shortly after the *Letters*), with its distinctive features and values that needed to be appreciated by its nationals first, in order to be further appreciated in the world. Its account is not less interesting and important than the history of other European countries. Karamzin did

not agree with those who expressed that *"our story in itself is less entertaining than others."*[213]

As he expressed:

*"One can select, enliven, colour, and the reader will be surprised how, from Nestor, Nikon, and others, there can emerge something attractive, powerful, deserving of the interest not only of Russians, but of foreigners as well. The genealogy of the princes, their dissensions, internecine wars…That which is not important can be bridged, as Hume did in his History of England, but all the characteristic features which mark the nature of the Russian people, the character of our ancient heroes, our outstanding personages, the truly interesting events should be vividly and strikingly portrayed."*[214]

Russia and Europe at the time had many differences but also a wide common ground. Russia was the Other for Europe, but also vice versa, Europe was in need for an Other in its vicinity in order to locate its power in the world. Karamzin's young traveller succeeded to minimise the distance with his proven sophisticated Russian "Europeanness". Karamzin did not show any specific alertness when he was crossing the borders, from the Empire into the European space, or from country to country. His comments of humanistic freedom imply the universality which he so strongly supported. If we assume that borders are strong representations of division, especially when it comes to the subject of identity which has to be distinct and secured, such examples reveal once more the closeness of the Russian identity with the western one in Karamzin's imagination. In the form of a leisurely travel narrative Karamzin revealed how much the Russian identity is assimilated into the Western culture, as there was no evidence of outstanding alienation. But a foremost common characteristic is that everywhere lived humans, who experienced emotions in the same ways.

The traveller acknowledged that Russia adopts many elements first seen in Europe, it does follow its progress; and he does not see anything wrong, indecent or

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[213] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.280
[214] *Ibid*., p.218

extraordinary in that. Instead he directed his argument beneficially for Russia and spoke of development as a reciprocal performance among all nations:

*"The path to education and enlightenment is the same for all nations; all of them advance on it one after another. Foreigners knew more than Russians, and thus we had to borrow from them, to learn from them, to make use of their experiences. Is it sensible to seek for that which has already been found? Would it have been better if the Russians had built no ships, trained no soldiers, established no academies, constructed no factories, because none of this was originated by Russians? Which people have not borrowed from another? And must we not equal before we can surpass"*[215]

His belief in development is revealed again in this comment. According to Karamzin, Russia was taking many cultural elements from Europe but could also surpass it further on the way. As development presupposes education and enlightenment, it is very possible that Russia would reach the level of Europe artistically and scientifically but also might surpass it.

*"Watch the movement of nature, read the history of the people, go to Syria, to Egypt, to Greece – and tell me what is not possible to expect? Everything rises or falls; the nations on the earth are like flowers in spring; they fade in their time – a wanderer who marvelled once their beauty will come to the place where they were in bloom…Who can guarantee that the whole of France – this finest nation of the world, fairest for its climate, its works, its residents, its paintings and arts – sooner or later would not be similar to present-day Egypt?"*[216]

The nations are always in a process of developing and those that are at their peak now may someday fall into decay. There is some reason in this assumption: if great achievements in arts and sciences have reached certain top levels, there would be no more to explore but for those that have not reached that level yet. Of course, the natural evolution of cultures does not allow steadiness, yet the ones that come second will reach the developed ones through adaptation with prompter steps.

### *2.3.1 Conclusive Remarks on the Countries Visited by Karamzin*

[215] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.219
[216] *Ibid*., p.236

For each country that Karamzin visited, there were certain characteristics that seemed to represent the places as a whole and the people as a nation. As Karamzin mentioned, these countries do not resemble to each other and each one of them had its own distinctive characteristics:

*"...the Englishman triumphs in Parliament and the Exchange, the German in his study, the Frenchman in the theatre."*[217]

The *Letters* concerning Germany introduced the reader to an atmosphere of philosophical and ideological encounters and debates. It is constructed as a series of visits and interviews with the prominent philosophers and men of letters.

Germany is also presented as a highly militant country, where also its greatest philosophers are dominated by certain rudeness. Karamzin did not appreciate the aggressive attitude he noted in German people and with exclamation wondered what kind of people they were. This statement seems to suggest that educated men in Russia bore a certain degree of dignity, manners and peace-loving impulses even towards disputes.

Switzerland and England induce an impression to the traveller of being very enlightened countries. In these countries it is the destiny of women to be with their husbands and raise children. The capability of appreciating family life while being educated, with good morals and triumphing in arts and sciences, gained the author's admiration. The ambiguity between metropolises and rural life has been a characteristic also found in Rousseau's plead for purity, modesty and innocence. The admiration of the woman as a pure and innocent character standing by his husband's side, supposes some romanticism but also conservatism, as it might imply the advantage of men over women.

The traveller emphasised that the constitutional systems of Switzerland and England are the basis of the well-being of these nations. Thus he treated with great sympathy the Swiss republic. In its public and social order, he saw the embodiment of the social ideals of Rousseau. He considered that in this small country the enlightenment of all nation under Rousseau's influence brought great results and gave

[217] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.207

virtues to all men. Thereby he verified that the purpose of a nation shall not be the revolution but education, which would work as a benefit for the people's well-being. Everything that has been reported by the traveller – his observations, facts, reflections and thoughts – would impose to the Russian readers a comparison with the order familiar to them, the way of life in their homeland. It would impose some comparison and provoke consideration about the Russian case and the fate of their country. In the image of Switzerland, which Karamzin admired, he noticed the achievement of morality in its citizens and management of the wealth. The citizens of Switzerland are characterised by mediocrity concerning materialistic goods, equality, freedom and selflessness.

England is portrayed in the *Letters* as a prosperous country without being overpopulated and where citizens are fairly occupied in useful activities. The most important characteristic that Karamzin ascribed to England is the depiction of the private life, the pure family life based on simplicity and good morals that he could observe in the villages. He mentioned the beauty that he found in happy mothers being surrounded by children and the "*modesty and purity of the women*."[218]

England is presented as very clean, spacious, multitude but still tranquil, encased with its mists and characterised by a visible common prosperity:

*"out of the small brick houses, health and content, with a noble and peaceful appearances – Lord and craftsman are coming out, neatly dressed, almost without any distinction; the villager rides in a good carriage with two proud horses."*[219]

The dominant images are order, hard work, practicality and major enterprises. On the English coast the traveller immediately is challenged by images of wealth. At the same time, Karamzin observed the freedom of the individual, the growth of trade and commerce, the patriotism of the citizens and even their proud independent character.

However, further on the way in England, Karamzin comments on some characteristics of the British society which he does not appreciate. He wrote with some bitterness about the traits he observed which were distant and cold for his principles. From the fact that he showed negative feelings towards certain attitudes,

[218] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p. 310
[219] *Ibid*., p.374

we can suppose the presence of some models of the ideal community in his mind: his imaginative community. His ideal community shall possess all the features that made England a developed country, but avoid the ones that disturbed him.

*"Now that I see the English at first hand, I render them their due. I commend them, but my commendation is as cold as they are. In the first place, I would not wish to spend my life in England because of its damp, gloomy, and dismal climate… The Englishman is taciturn, indifferent. He talks as though he were reading, never revealing the sudden impulses of the heart which like an electric shock shake our entire physical system…The examples of Bacon, Newton, Locke, Hobbes prove nothing."*[220]

Karamzin also met an unusual type of hospitality, which is characterised by cordiality and politeness, but only on the surface:

*"I was in a box with a merchant and his family. They offered me the best seat and fed me tarts, but did not think to engage me in conversation."*[221]

The formality of the British character seemed to be bothering for Karamzin. He did not meet the cordiality that he might have expected or imagined. Yet again he makes visible the features or manners that according to his worldview the men shall possess: warm heart, frankness, to be real.

In the *Letters*, a special place is occupied by the section on France and Paris in particular. On the pages devoted to this country, much was written about the lives of different groups in France, on the history of Paris, the appearance of the capital – its palaces, theatres, libraries, monuments, atmospheres and famous people. The life in this city was fast, buzzing, alive, glamorous and hedonistic. Its civilisation and advances were admired by Karamzin who called Paris "*The*" city in the world. He spoke of its contradiction of excessive wealth and poorness, the large houses with narrow streets and the conflicting images Paris could offer. He also finds a cold civility in Paris, and he does not expect to find any warmth. The city is a model for many others, but its citizens are cold.

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[220] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.328-329
[221] *Ibid*., p.272

But central in France was the occurrence of a great event: the Revolution of 1789 was unbolting in front of the eyes of the traveller. It attracted his attention and interest but also evoked confusion and fear. He mentioned examples from revolutions from history of Greece and Rome being *"double-edged sword"* [222] and solicited for peaceful solutions and trust to their monarchs.

Karamzin was ethically opposed to violent upheavals or revolutions. He proposed a peaceful resolution instead of viciousness, and suggested that the attention of the French people should be directed towards education and further development. Not much is written about the Revolution, however, as in the Russia, censorship would be applied against the author and he might get even persecuted.

Nevertheless, being enlightened into the lifestyle of the European society has plentiful of positive influences that would be nice, in the opinion of the traveller, to also be adopted in Russia. Education, moral values, respect to the fellow men and connection with the nature are all examples to be followed. The agreeable, committed and tranquil family life is a great virtue for Karamzin that everyone should seek to find:

*"I have always believed that the further advancement of enlightenment will bind people more closely to domestic life. Is it not emptiness of soul that causes us to seek distractions? The first concern of true philosophy is to turn mankind toward the immutable joys of nature. When the head and heart are pleasantly occupied at home, when one has a book in his hand, a dear wife at his side, and beautiful children around him, will he wish to go to a ball or large supper?*[223]

The self-evaluative conclusion of Karamzin's trip was that no matter how great the success of the European enlightenment were, no matter how interesting conversations with famous philosophers he had, no matter how great and special the Western theatres are, no matter how wonderful views were wide open to the traveller, but the home, fatherland was still dearer. By bringing closer to Russia the Western norms, symbolically and literally through the *Letters*, Karamzin revealed to Russia what deficiencies its society had in front of Europe. Nevertheless, his flexible, open, casual and wanting-to-learn approach created an atmosphere of calmness and hope as

[222] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.194
[223] *Ibid*., p.313

if there is no need to urgently catch up with the Western paradigms, as they were already on the right way anyhow.

In the European countries individuals prefer to speak their native language. Karamzin bitterly writes of the Francophilia that is observed in Russian society just for the sake of fashion:

*"How different it is here from Russia, where even a person who can say only, 'Comment vous portez-vous?' tortures the French language, for no reason whatever except not to speak Russian with a Russian. Why, in our so-called 'best society', you are deaf and dumb without French. Is it not disgraceful? Not to have national self-respect! Why be parrots and apes?"*[224]

Karamzin supported that the Russian language is just as good as any other language:

*"All honor and glory to our mother tongue which, in its pristine richness, with virtually no foreign admixture, flows like a proud, majestic river – roars and thunders – and suddenly, if need be, softens, murmurs like a gentle brook, and pours sweetly into the soul, echoing all the cadences of the human voice!"*[225]

It is important that Karamzin demonstrated and promoted the values of the Russian culture to his co-nationals at first place. An integral element of a culture is of course the shared language. First as an essential tool of communication and second as a tool to maintain consistency with its historical past. Showing the example of what the 'enlightened Europeans' did (they preferred to speak their own languages) might elicit feelings of superiority and protectiveness, along with egocentric attitude and finally respect to one's own language.

The traveller expressed his disappointment that in Europe no one is really interested in Russia. While in Geneva he wrote:

[224] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.278
[225] *Ibid*., p.318

*"But you, poor North, the Genevan does not favour you with his attention! A person here who knows in detail all that is happening in Paris is hardly even aware of the fact that Russia and Sweden are at war."*[226]

Through the *Letters* Karamzin promoted the Russian culture and its values while showing that Russia is not far from the cultures of the European reality. The fact that in general Europeans did not show any genuine enthusiasm towards Russia triggered Karamzin to speak of it. He expressed that it was a pity, for Russia was not alien to Europe and their cultures had distinct closeness, and that little attention was being paid towards his fatherland. In this way, he proposed that Europe had to know Russia and enflamed the national spirits of respect.

Furthermore, he showed that he was not of any inferior values of his European interlocutors and he was able to stand next to famous men. When he went to meet Kant, even without a reference letter as he describes, the door was open to him due to his courage:

*"I am a Russian nobleman. I admire great men and wish to present my compliments to Kant."*[227]

During his journey Karamzin appears to be nostalgic of Russia, for the things he had left behind, including his dear friends. On his return he writes: *"Beware! Fatherland! Bless you! I am in Russia and in a few days I will be with you, my friends…"*[228] He stayed loyal to his fatherland and showed in many occasions that his heart and mind were turned towards Russia. The traveller came back with an entirely different feeling from his initial impatience for his journey: the feeling of reality. He saw both the positive and negative aspects of the European countries and their inhabitants.

*"I left you, my dear Paris, left you with regret and gratitude!...* [229] *Perhaps sometime I shall visit you again and shall compare the past with the present. Perhaps*

[226] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.150
[227] *Ibid*., p.39
[228] *Ibid*., p.440
[229] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p. 254

*then I shall enjoy you even more in my greater maturity of judgment, or sigh with regret over my lost vitality or feeling…"* [230]

Karamzin proposed his ideas, showed the aspects that were examples to follow and aspects that were examples to be avoided. With the usage of fictitious elements, he allowed his imagination to colour his journey, displayed the emotional world of his traveller and the picturesque landscapes of the European grounds. Nevertheless, his core message was *universality* above nations; for him primarily all people shared the same human characteristics. The concept of harmony of the Russian and European cultures lies on his belief in the enlightened development of all nations.

### *2.3.2 Concepts of Interpretation*

For an interpretation that will be carried out in the *Conclusion*, it is necessary to introduce four relevant concepts which throw light on the analysed material. Besides the concepts already mentioned in the Introduction, such as Self and Otherness, the Invention of East Europe and Orientalism, I shall complement this research with the following additive elements: imagined communities, space, time, sublime and beautiful. I believe these concepts are appropriate supplementary elements to the thorough understanding of Karamzin's *Letters* and his endeavour of delineating Russia's cultural and national characteristics.

Therefore I shall approach to the concepts of space and time in terms of semiotic features. To such approach I find important to use the concept of cultural space from Lotman, who understood the space in a literary text, not only as a model of natural geographical space, but also as a space that can simulate different communication patterns of the world: temporal, social, ethical and so forth.[231] From Lotman's point of view, the language of spatial relations is a key way of interpreting reality and has an important place in the political, religious and social model of the world (for example, the oppositions close – far, high – low, may be related with evaluation characteristics of a valuable – worthless, good – bad).

Lotman analytically separated space and time in the text, considering the feature of space more important than time. He understood time with its connection to cultural

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[230] *Ibid., p. 254*

[231] Ю. М. Лотман, *Очерки по истории русской культуры XVIII века,* Из истории русской культуры XVIII нач. XIX в., Москва: Школа "Языки русской культуры", 1996, p.330

attitudes expressed in the text. For example, he notes the importance of the framework of the text, that is, its beginning and end, and its possible relation to different cultural models (eschatological, utopian and so forth). Thus, it appears that for an understanding of the representation of the nation in Karamzin's text the relation of space and time is important. The evaluating characteristics overlapping the spatial-temporal framework are closely related to different characteristics of the nation as an imagined community.

It should be noted that nation in the text may be articulated as a character, and as a space but also the temporal aspect may be emphasised. For example, the subject of a nation can be active – i.e. when it exerts political influence – or passive when the narrator contributes to the spread of culture through it. The space with a variety of natural and social characteristics may correspond to a barbaric or an enlightened nation. Moreover the portrayal of nations may be opposable on a temporal basis as a young versus an old one. The ideal state of a nation can be thought of as a nation that has been accomplished in the past, or as a condition, which should be achieved in the future. In this case all the mentioned aspects are closely interrelated.

In addition, it should be mentioned that a special role in the modelling or the imagination of a nation plays a landscape, as a personal identification of the space. The landscape portrayal in the literary text is not neutral but in certain aspects it may come into contact with ideology, culture or politics. In such a way the representation of landscapes has a constructive function, as it sets a vision of a kind of community, in our case, of a national identity.

This approach may be used to understanding the portrayal of landscapes in Karamzin's *Letters*. For example, Sarah Dickinson directly connects the problem of the image of the landscape in Russian travelogues with questions of constructing a national identity and traces the influence of Karamzin to other authors. She also suggested that the artistic depiction of landscapes in Karamzin's text shows from one side modernism and from the other side his conservatism concerning nation. The intensity and attractiveness in his representations of the European landscapes *"emphasized the importance of domestic landscapes for both literary fashion and the conceptualization of national culture."*[232]

[232] S. Dickinson, *Breaking Ground: Travel and National Culture in Russia from Peter I to the Era of Pushkin*, Amsterdam – New York 2006, p. 107

Considering that the *Letters* were edited before being published and in some parts carefully synchronised – in what the author has read, what he has seen and what he intended to depict – the sincerity of the emotions also can be questioned. As it has already been mentioned, Karamzin was an enthusiast of the European contemporary authors, such as Sterne, Richardson, Rousseau, Young and Thompson; and from those sentimental authors he obtained essential features of his sentimental style. An innocent confession by Karamzin may confirm his meretricious perhaps emotions. In addition he is introducing to the readers the scholarship from whom he might have derived his emotional enthusiasm:

*"For me spring would not be so beautiful had not Thomson and Kleist described to me all its beauties."*[233]

At this point I would like to stress that I do not intend to interrogate whether the emotions described in the *Letters* indicate the actuality of a Russian emotional movement with representative emotional characteristics. While it is problematical to determine which emotions had been experienced in reality, by the author and the Russian society, their description at least implies possibility. The presence of any feelings, attitudes, signs and reactions, regardless of their degree of sincerity or artificiality, indicate that the author saw them as possible in reality. The possibility of those emotions to be understood, appreciated and shared by his contemporaries back home. And therefore the importance is to look into the Russian nation as an imagined emotional community constructed through the text.

In the construction of the national and cultural identity as an imaginary community, the discursive nature of emotions is an important feature in Karamzin's *Letters*. Certain approaches of emotional perception show the emotional relation of the Self and the Other. The emotionality portrayed can be characterised by a rejection of the dichotomy of feelings and reason and the idea that the emotions are not in the strict sense part of the esoteric world of an individual. Their position is determined by the position of being in between and it is the result of social and cultural interaction. Thus, the state of the "in-between" and their interaction play a key role in understanding the specificity of functioning of emotions.

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[233] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.61

Sara Ahmed explores this aspect of emotions. In her book entitled *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* she offers an approach to explore the role of emotions in the design of various communities (i.e. race or nation). Her main concept is that we react in a certain way to the 'Other', not because the 'Other' itself contains the intention for any particular reaction. Meaning, that as a result of an affective meeting with the 'Other', we assign to them positive or negative characteristics and in fact we do not react to the 'Other' but to the creation of its image by us. In her view, the main feature of emotions is the construction of a union or division among subjects, identification with some and de-identification with others. She defines a community as affective as those that are created as a result of a circulation of emotion, and in the definition of a community she uses the metaphor of the body. From her point of view, in the process of reading emotions by creating attachments or divisions, units are created as individual or collective, as for example the nation. In using the phrase *"reading emotions"* Ahmed emphasises the participation of representations, evaluative processes, cultural and social clichés in the interpretation of the emotional contact. Although it is difficult to determine which exact emotions the traveller experienced in reality, the presence of their description in the text indicates at least probability.

In Karamzin's *Letters* we are dealing with the concepts of sublime and beautiful, because of their political aspect and their relation to the imagination of the nation in the text. The main idea of the sublime if examined from different approaches has the objective that it is a constitutive element in the phenomena of a higher order. Although Karamzin did not conceptualise the sublime and the beautiful, on the basis of the analysis of his text we can conclude about their presence in his representations as following deeply employed aesthetic principles. It is necessary to briefly introduce how the sublime and beautiful of Burke's aesthetics may be understood and applied to Karamzin's text. A principal feature of the concept of the sublime for Burke is to experience the emotion of fear or dread when meeting a person with a sublime object that is associated with the idea of the immensity, infinity, danger and strength. In addition to fear and horror, a reaction to the sublime objects can be surprise, awe, respect or admiration. In contrast to the sublime objects, beautiful objects are associated with the idea of pleasure and evoke sympathy or love, which are social in

nature, as they focus on communication and networking. The sources of the beautiful can be objects of small size as smooth lines, bright colours, etc.[234]

An example of the above concepts in the *Letters* can be applied with how Karamzin describes Paris and London when he encountered the cities for the first time. Entering to Paris, Karamzin sees the city in its full length:

*"Finally, there unfolded a vast plain, and covering its expanse —Paris! Our eager eyes turned toward this huge mass of buildings, and our gaze was lost in its heavy shadows. My heart throbbed"…There it is! I see it and soon I shall be in it!"*[235]

In both cases the cities are striking Karamzin with their hugeness, greatness, with auditory and visual impressions and become the source of the sublime experience. The *"huge mass of buildings"* and *"this indescribable hubbub…this extraordinary multitude"* belong to the category of "infinity" used by Burke, as the eye cannot capture them entirely. The noise from crowds or loud noises also apply to the sublime and, according to Burke, as they are able to catch the attention and imagination of people they cannot "*resist joining the mood of the crowd*". And, indeed, the narrator is lost in it as a *"grain of sand"*[236] finding himself unable to control his experience. Both cities seized him as an aesthetic phenomenon, but the cultural element is also present.

For Karamzin, London and Paris are the sources of the sublime in part because his experience is largely determined by the perceptions of London as *"the entire world of trade"*[237] and Paris as *"the city which for so many centuries has been the model for all Europe."*[238] It should be mentioned that the source of the sublime is the hugeness of the cities and their wealth. For example in the *Palais-Royal* the traveller described his experience as follows: *"it is undoubtedly the largest building in Paris and which combines all the architectural orders…Here rich foreigners engage rooms; here brilliant nymphs of the first class reside; here the lowliest also nestle. Everything that can be found in Paris (and what cannot be found in Paris?) is in the Palais-*

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[234] *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1757
[235] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.179
[236] *Ibid.,* p.180
[237] *Ibid.,* p.288
[238] *Ibid.,* p.179

*Royal".*[239] The distinctive reaction of the narrator to all this diversity was dizziness and forgetting himself.

Exploring the relationship between sentimentalism and Russian national identity as portrayed in Karamzin's *Letters*, we can observe that his sentimentalism blurred the boundaries between the social strata. In this respect sentimentalism was not so much a goal but a parallel phenomenon to conceptualise the society as a natural unity in the research of a national identity.

In such depictions of comparison the ideas of Benedict Anderson about the role of literature in the imagination of the nation may be applied. Anderson makes a distinction between the formal conditions of the genre that make it possible to imagine the nation as a community, and the theme of the nation in the text, when the nation becomes the object of a particular image or theme work, or where the plots, images of a literary work can be used in such ideological purposes.

In his opinion, the forming features – that is firstly the structure of the plot, organised in accordance with the principle of "homogeneous empty time" – portray the events being brought together mainly by the fact that they occur simultaneously. A common feature of the narrative and the nation is the particular structure of consciousness, characterised by the simultaneous views of temporality. Thus, the narrative simulates an abstract form of society, which is then conceptualised as a national.[240]

The aim of Anderson was to show the formal conditions for the imagination of the nation as an anonymous community. Therefore, he stressed the importance of understanding the differences between the "formal representation of time and space" and "representation of a particular community of the nation" in the narrative. In this respect, it is interesting that Andrew Kahn, a scholar of Russian literature drew attention on the specifics of representation and the meaning of the "social space" of concrete European nations [241] . But like Anderson, Karamzin nurtures the representation of the importance of monuments, history and the exploration of the roots in order to imagine oneself as a part of the national community.[242] By depicting

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[239] *Ibid.,* p.215

[240] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983, p.51-52

[241] A. Kahn, "Russian Studies: New Synergies," In *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 34 No. 4, Oxford 2011, p. 497

[242] B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983, p.51-52

the domestic space on Western variables, Karamzin creates an atmosphere that is dear to him, while travelling through time and space. The fact that Karamzin compares and applies Western features on his mental depiction of the cities in Russia, implies the desire for demarcation, distinction and finally the construction of an imagined community which is by no means inferior to the place encountered.

If we consider the relationship between the imagined and constructed emotional community with the time in which it is represented we may notice a duality. The past of Karamzin back in his fatherland is permanent, unchangeable and with distinctive slowness. By contrast, the present is characterised by speed, movement and chaotic images and experiences met on the road.

The feeling of nostalgia that Karamzin experiences and describes may be explained as a feeling towards something that is unsure and unfamiliar. A particular melancholia is distinctive in his writings, which may refer to the pride towards his patriotic feelings while meeting the Other and hoping for an advance of his fatherland in some aspects. The young traveller is found in a state of being away from his past literally and only memory can shorten this distance. The nostalgic memory assists in creating heroic images in order to maintain the national pride by repeating the act of remembering.

When the continuity with our familiar life is disrupted there is the chance that one will experience discomfort due to this sudden interruption with the accustomed past. The state of experiencing the disruption with the past may cause the nostalgia that Karamzin so vividly expressed. In order to overcome the agony of the disorder, it is important to attempt and construct for the reader an emotional memory or a connection between the past and the present. For Karamzin ruins, monuments and graves are places where travellers are going in order to reflect on life, their feelings and their identity. In that respect, time plays an important role in constructing an emotional community characterised by the past. The encounter with the Other in the case of Karamzin generates an awe for the beautiful and sublime while connecting the traveller's national identity with its historical past. The communication with his fatherland during his journey by sending letters to his dears, maintained his national coherence and his emotional loyalty towards his home. Thus the intensity of his national feelings was challenged at every sublime substance met on the road and yet it was reinforced due to the maintenance of imagined historical continuity.

## Conclusion

The *Letters of a Russian Traveller* can be described as a window constructed by Nikolay Karamzin for the Russian readership of the eighteenth century. A window with a view over the historical, cultural and social life of the Western European states. The 'Russian traveller' as a creation, becomes the representation of the Russian culture and its relation to Europe in an analogous movement of civilisation towards development.

Karamzin was a smart and educated young man of letters and languages, provided with knowledge on a variety of subjects and curiosity to question deep moral issues. His essential effort was to make culture accessible and widespread and his standpoint was markedly characterised by a quest for universal, i.e. European values.

The question of the national identity came as a step in the European development in the eighteenth century and was adopted by Russia, as were other intellectual constructions. As transplantation is accompanied by transformation, the original ideas of imitation were somewhat altered and the discourse on Russian identity shall be seen as a synthesis of indigenous and foreign elements.

The construction of the Russian national identity is challenged by the cosmopolitan elite culture, as they were the educated and influencing group of individuals on the side of the government and Karamzin did not display any nuisance of conscience about his social status. He stood quite comfortably within the European cultural space and showed no reserve in relation to the European civilisation. There were no signs of infringement of his national dignity. He travelled through Europe and behaved like an Europeanised Russian. He did not feel inferior in dignity, morals or education opposite the 'civilised' habits of his German or French masters. Karamzin actually used his status on his benefit and promoted himself as educated and confident in his actions.

The interpretation of the national identity in the text of Karamzin is reinforced by the interaction of the constituent elements of space, time and emotion. Karamzin was moving in space while still being attached emotionally with the fatherland. The *Letters* suggest that the author was actually sending letters to his friends back home during his journey. This activity maintained a temporal continuity while he was on the road along with a display of devotion towards his identity. His implementation of maintaining the interest and attention of the correspondences presupposes the existence of a reading public. The author's gesture of repeatedly linking himself with his home made the *Letters* suitable for becoming part of the travel-writing genre in Russia. This evaluation brings us back to the semiotic analysis that Lotman proposed concerning the text and its relation with emotions and identity through space and time.

As the emotions occupy a major part in the creation of social relationships and ideological constructs, national identity represents an imagined emotional community. The power of emotions and their expression work in a certain way as part of cultural

practices, as Sarah Ahmed indicated. [243] The repetition of some standpoints continuously produces signs and representations of an entity: a cultural group, a political alliance or national identity. Those representative emotions construct a sphere where 'bodies' of other entities are traceable and either affiliated or marginalised. The traveller's emotions through the *Letters* are characterised by a certain melancholy, flexibility, approachability, openness and loyalty which endorses an alliance out of these elements.

The elements constituting the national identity as an imagined entity are also related to concepts of the beautiful and the sublime. With the employment of Burke's concept, I assume that this construction brings closer Europe and Russia once more. Profound philosophers that Karamzin studied and admired worked out the concept of the sublime. The young author, by using deeply aesthetical principles in his descriptions, once more introduced to the Russian public cultural traits borrowed from the West. The manner how western aesthetical principles are used in Karamzin's depictions does not allow an ordinary reader to easily distinguish their sources: and yet Karamzin manages to reduce the cultural distance between Russia and the Occident by their usage.

The space of the homeland correlates with the nation as an exclusive community and with the space of the empire as an inclusive one. The exclusive homeland is closely related with the ideas of beauty and warmth. Time as an inherent part and precondition of history is a source that assists in creating the continuity and the emotional connection of the nation with its past. The value of time is revealed in the text, highlighting its ability to endure the intended by the author projections of historical values of his nation. Karamzin turned regularly to paradigms from the Russian history while proceeding in his trip and constructing picturesque microcosms. He was also recalling images of his friends, of familiar places in his hometown and how similar something that he saw was to his fatherland. He created temporal endurance that demonstrated the stability of his emotions towards home, his co-nationals and his devotion to the country. These displays of nostalgia and memory, while travelling within the European framework, demonstrate the historical permanence of his nation.

[243] S. Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, New York 2004.

Travel and its narration suggest the examination of notions that include ideas related to the construction of place and space. The frontiers of distinction or division and the actual border intersection, create symbolic spatial grounds, which promote cultural exchange between the neighbouring parties. The consequent mental mapping formulates and structures imagined pictures of the grounds traversed in a particular continuity. The transition also underlines the meaning of borders while moving through the local atmospheres, identities and impressions from neighbouring lands.

As G. Delanty proposed, Europe became a self-conscious idea, which needed to be identified against some 'Other', preferably an 'Other' of inferior type politically, socially and culturally. The mechanism of mirroring, as in introducing the 'Other' (Europe and its cultures) to the 'Self' (the Russian readership) was one of the essential features that the *Letters* demonstrate. This pairing of opposites worked as an advantageous ground for the understanding what were the specialties of the Russian identity, what the dissimilarities with the 'modern' west and whether there was any sort of compatibility.

The 'Self' represents the natives of Karamzin, the people of the Russian empire, who due to sharing a common past, lands, traditions and language have certain characteristics. The 'Self' incorporates also the adapting procedure when moving in time and space, which reinforces the process of differentiation and identification within the social and cultural context of the 'Other'. The encountered 'Other' influences the qualities of the 'Self', especially when the 'Other' is the object of observation. The strength of the emotional dynamics of the 'Self' is challenged and their variability depends on the intensity of the feelings of ownership and control.

From the analyzed extracted passages of the *Letters*, when applying the concept of the "Invented East" by Larry Wolff, it seems that the westerners did have prejudiced view on the East. Russia for most of Karamzin's interlocutors was associated with clichés as a North and cold country and not educated or cultivated. Basic information such as the spoken language in Russia was in few circumstances a mystery for some Europeans.

Edward Said's *Orientalism* demonstrated that the East and the West are two completely different entities with their own reasoning. However the West applied deceptive cultural assumptions to the East enabling the construction of misleading representation of the Eastern reality. The approach of Westerners to Russia suggests that there are traces of 'Orientalism' in Karamzin's depictions. The majority of

Europeans the author met on the road appeared to be uninformed about Russia, its language, its exact location or its cultural distinctiveness. Particular clichés have been assigned to the image of Russians in the mind of his Western interlocutors who often were unable to understand the facts surrounding the life in Russia. As a sincere messenger of the Russian culture to the West, Karamzin benefited from such occasions and presented the appeals of Russian culture. Even more so, by displaying how similar it is with the Western practices, as the Western cultural heritage is inextricably linked with the Russian.

The attention of the readership would be attracted by pleasant displays of the rural ordinary lives. The encouragement and admiration of the blissful family lives of the European villages minimised the distance between elites and peasants, rich and poor. As the *Letters* presented images of developed countries and cities with infrastructure to be admired, the same countries were apparently blessed in their easy family lives.

It is remarkable how the rural innocence and simple living astonished Karamzin and made him affirm that this is the authentic way of life while his traveller seems to carry a different message. The image of the Russian cosmopolitan, who believes in education, evolution and the advantages that the enlightened Western civilisation has to offer, came in disagreement with his plea for return to the primitive state. However, the everlasting traditions and human intimacy found in the rural areas might have in reality impressed the young traveller, in relation to the vibrant and flowing rhythms of a bigger city. In combination with his sentimentalist influences and his admiration of Rousseau, it may be understood and justified.

Karamzin's *Letters* presented in an artistic form an integral concept of nature and the human's place in it. The subject of the relationship between humans and nature seemed to be one of the most important themes for Karamzin. In the *Letters*, the landscapes play an important role, not only to create a certain mental attitude, but also an explanation of national characteristics and events of their time. The ideal relationship between nature and human nature, as the author sees it, would be their "cooperation" – a cooperation that is decorated by the nature while facilitating the conditions of the human lives. From this perception of the ideal, Karamzin examined the European countries he visited. The author's approach both to cities and nature had the same assessment criteria: the principal idea was the connection of nature and city to the needs and the aesthetic recreation of a person. Karamzin remarked that the

landscapes that are unsuitable for cultivation – or unable to arouse to a spectator a strong emotional experience – are uninteresting and boring. The cities that did not ensure the safety and convenience for living and where there were no cultural tributes to adorn life, received a negative evaluation.

Young Karamzin travelled through Europe in order to discover the natural and cultural bonds and frontiers between Europe and Russia. The constructed image of his hero of the *Letters*, illustrates the character of a Russian traveller capable to stand justly both as a cultivated Russian and a young enlightened European at the same time. By presenting a book on Europe full of images and senses, he activates the Russian audience to be conscious and aware about the internal space and culture. The importance of the self is highlighted, while having the chance to see in which areas there is capacity for advancement. Therefore, the significance of the image of the author himself, sometimes bordering on egocentrism, is important for the literary and scholarly activity in Russia.

Karamzin used names of influential personalities of the European history and associated them to figures from the Russian past. By deriving examples from the Russian history, Karamzin triggers the subject of the purported Western superiority over Russia. He used a comparative approach to portray the significance of his homeland in order to create awareness in his readers. This comparison may also indicate a promotion of Russian cities and landscapes and, subsequently, of the domestic travel. Such approach may function as a tool to support and reinforce the national self-esteem and value in front of the Western "idols". The publication of the *Letters* would also have a positive function for the author. As pure genuineness is not a matter of subject in Karamzin's text, the chance for self-promotion and literary experimentation would prove to be valuable. The formation of a personal style by mingling Western appropriations is a great chance for the young author to promote himself and express his national pride towards the audiences.

The trademark of Karamzin is established with this work, where he combines information with his sentimentalist travel-writing mode. Escaping from traditional homogenous encyclopaedic narration, this text uniting the hero and the narrator became the model for future Russian sentimentalist travelogues. From Karamzin's interpretations, Russia is presented as a land of opportunity; a young country with great historical substance that has still all the space and potential to mature and blossom. He highlights Russia's friendly, hospital and plenty with values while

asserting its national cultural autonomy. Karamzin drew attention to the rightfulness of the Russian culture through various examples and occurrences, which highlighted its fairness in the presence of the dominating Western culture.

The *Letters of a Russian Traveller* expressed the thoughts of an enlightened supporter of cultural and historical development. Karamzin's chief stance was humanistic universality. This declarative cosmopolitanism by Karamzin is clearly contrasted to nationalism. Rousseau despised cosmopolitanism but however followed the ideas of Enlightenment about the proposed humanistic equality. From this point of view, Karamzin implicitly suggested that the Europe of his day would be the Russia of tomorrow. The *Letters* were a journey, a window into the future. The importance of the *Letters* highlighted the aspects that had the closest relation to the question of civilisation and development, according to Karamzin. The experience of the European culture through his journey advocates two main issues: the point of the spiritual enrichment of the humans (return to nature, questions of literature, of art, aspects of the spiritual life of man) and the point of the social progress (associated with thoughts about the role of the French revolution, freedom and enlightenment of the people).

Karamzin's sentimentalism is considerably related to Rousseau. For him Rousseau represented the doctrine of national sovereignty, and thus in a sense stands at the cradle of French nationalism. Therefore, it is possible to think that Karamzin develops his national principles along with Rousseau's sentimentalism. It is probable that Karamzin's connection of sentimentalism and national character was not random, but organic in its nature. In the courtyard of the hotel *Dessein* in Calais, where Sterne (sentimentalist, author of *A Sentimental Journey*) had in the past resided, a meeting of kindred spirits occurred.[244] Karamzin and his interlocutors possibly shared the same values and joined emotions over the sentimental travelogue by Sterne. Benedict Anderson's "*imagined communities*" formula appears as appropriate here. Anderson defined the nation as an "*imagined community*" and in our case we may speak of an "*imagined community of Europeans*". In the case of the European sentimental travellers and the readers of sentimental travelogues, the "*imagined community*" are arguably the French, the British and all the people who are presented to be able to imagine themselves as members of one group. The same imagined community of Europeans is presented also here on the occasion of a discussion on Sterne's book.

[244] N. M. Karamzin, 1957, p.255, 256

Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* brought together two British women, a French officer and our Russian traveller. By putting the task of a cultural integration of Russia into Europe, and vice versa, Karamzin proposed a model for self-fashioning in the *Letters*. He presented himself as a young Russian nobleman positioned as an ordinary member of the European public. In this symbolic European community, the "sensitive Russian heart" of Karamzin is portrayed to have been accepted as equal. He could appreciate Sterne's writings and his sensitivity not less than the natives of the country where Stern was born, or the countries in which he wrote his famous book.

The modernisation of Russia initiated by Peter the Great and resulting in the quest for Russian 'Europeanisation', belongs to the constitutive elements of the Russian cultural consciousness of the eighteenth century. What is the essence of the controversy that arose in the question of simultaneous construction of Russian national character and the glorification of Peter the Great?

The construction of the "national spirit" comes to some opposition to the fact that this "spirit" exists outside of the elite: because the worldviews of the intellectual elites of the period can be characterised as predominantly 'non-nationalistic' but pluralistic. The national character was shaped by Peter's vision for modernisation originated from external cultural and ideological practices: the European people, their customs and achievements. For that reason, there is a considerable cultural division within the Russian society: a division that separates the elite from the rest of the population.

Karamzin made the effort to break that barrier. First of all, simply by being a "Russian" traveller and by being confronted with the big unknown Europe, he creates an atmosphere of unison for all Russian nationals. The depiction of nature reminds us of our human and mortal nature and the panhuman equality: being closer to earth, the natural elements, nature and all the organic produce it has to offer to humanity. The naturalness of Rousseau and the emotionality of Sterne, embodied in Karamzin's *Letters*, signified that the life and heart of a "simple" man was not poorer than that of a member of the educated elite.

If we assume that the access to the cultural practices, arts and literature was dominated mainly by the elites, we might suppose that the search for national character has not yet been focusing on the peasantry as its basic incarnation. Another reason for that conjecture is that the word of privileged nobles was influential along with the tsarist government, though they depended on their rulers in a manner inconceivable for their Western counterparts. Nevertheless, in order to create a ground

for national identification, it was essential to unify the division found in the social strata of the empire. The social dilemma was settled with the time span by the smooth incorporation of Western cultural paradigms. Besides the differences between Eastern and Western social norms and cultural practices resulting from their diverging historical development, a shared cultural ground was established. The construction of Russian national identity included Western elements such as those observed, represented and transmitted by Karamzin.

Karamzin's mingling of events and actually visited places with fiction, suggests the author's artistic creativity. The real travel of Karamzin, his road experiences and the narrative finally delivered, are basic for the ideological and artistic nature of the text: the image of Europe constructed for the Russian readers. Karamzin's traveller is knowledgeable and inquisitive, but without displaying excessive amazement at what he sees. It has been proven earlier in the thesis, that a considerable part of what he saw, he usually knew in advance from books, paintings, or spectacles which he had seen in his home country.

He introduced the reader into a world where the West and Russia are not opposed to each other. Europe was neither a significant salvation nor harm for Russia. There are no extraordinary elements of the European culture portrayed that would propose a striking shift in the Russian ideals. In contrary, the distance is minimised as the image of Europe became understandable and familiar. The sights are new, but the cultural tradition is shareable and therefore the journey gives him the joy of recognition of what he long has known. Russia belongs to Europe: this is the message transmitted with Karamzin's traveller at his return home. In a discrete way Karamzin took distance in his conclusion from his earlier proclaimed universality. Probably the open denial of the Enlightenment would also mean the denial of those privileges where the status of the cultural elite was domineering.

Identity is a concept that does not come as a synonym with stability and at the time of Karamzin, Russia was searching to recognise and establish itself. Young Karamzin praised education and the need for development as an integral part of the person's essence, cultivation, and character.

A main point though is that he did not propose precisely any preferable ideas or ideals of how the Russians should follow the western paradigms. He expressed his view in a discrete way, by revealing specific parts of a nation's characteristics that he

either favoured or rejected. Each nation is depicted with its own particularities according to the observations and encounters of the traveller. The German people are presented as highly philosophical but also very confrontational. Many moral issues that he found stimulating were however advocated by great men with assertive attitude. The Swiss people were very enlightened due to the simplicity and good morals they followed in their lives, methodical, devoted to family life and with a remarkable constitutional system that enhanced their well-being. The French were portrayed as very frivolous, buzzy and pleasure seeking. They were passionate but fluctuating with distinct superficial politeness. The British people were very clean and well-ordered, operational and polite, exceptional in commerce, wealthy and fair in the parliament. However they were also moody and only formally polite. It is impressive how with the technique of generalisation, Karamzin makes some individual events to make the impression as if 'all' Englishmen were rude and cold. There were some characteristics that Karamzin continually emphasised in all visited countries. Those were images associated with cleanliness, order, hard work, politeness, morals, or aesthetically symmetric measures as high, wide, tall, big. There should be a genuine harmony, according to him, for the cities, the nature and the humans.

The literary Occidental images that the traveller constructed and portrayed functioned as stimuli for rising further questions about the future of the Russian Empire. The West indeed might have been advanced in some respects, or better more functional, yet to say that it was miles ahead would be an exaggeration. The remarks on European people being callous or polite but not authentically, proposes that he inclined to see himself and his compatriots as sincere, caring, real. It also means that, in his view, some values that are incorporated in the Russian culture are missing from the 'enlightened Europeans'. Maybe with these points Karamzin proposed that the human morals were more significant for a nation comparing to scientific or artistic advances, as these were easier to obtain and could be surpassed by other nations in the course of development.

Finally, the discovery of unfamiliar spheres and the encounter of diversity inescapably centre the traveller's attention on displaying his own particular, cultural or national identity. At this exact point the unfamiliar place develops a stimulus for echoing the representation of one's own image of fatherland. The Russian identity presented by the author is not something consistent. It is open, flexible, incorporating all the capacity to learn, experience and develop. The whole journey portrayed the

possibility of cultural recreation for Russia with the assistance of the west Europeans, while also a chance to assert its own values. From the sets of oppositions depicted in the extracted passages in Chapter 2, we may highlight some basic features accepted by Karamzin: respectable morals and polite manners, devotion and trust to the monarch, genuine hospitality, picturesque language, notable historical past, orthodoxy and family values.

In conclusion, Karamzin affected the Russian national culture by proposing the image of a "hero", both national and European: a traveller, a Russian man living in the big world and incorporating in his heart the values available in this world. In times when Russia was in quest of its 'personality', a figure of this traveller was presented to the public. This hero is deprived of egoism; he remains among people who are interesting and interested in him, lives welcoming and openly among foreign countries and peoples, and makes questions of human existence. Finally, the nostalgia that Karamzin expressed during his trip and the triumphant manifestation of longing and joy about his return instantly proves his deposition about the superiority of his national culture while highlighting the continuous bond with it.

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