

**THE 18TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN ELITE AND  
THE TRANSFER OF EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS:**

**MEMBERS OF THE RUSSIAN ELITE AND  
THEIR STUDY EXPERIENCE IN GERMANY**

Analyzing the literary activities of O. P. Kozodavlev and the elites of his period who experienced German education will help us appreciate the role of European literature in the formation of the modern Russian nation in the later 18th and early 19th century.

**1. Introduction and Kozodavlev's biography**

In Russia in the second half of the 18th century, especially during the reign of Catherine II, many of the young elite were sent to German universities by the government, to complete their higher education.

After returning to Russia, they were active in various fields, such as politics, economics and education. Some contributed to the formation of modern Russian literature, introducing European literary works and trends; and it is highly important for understanding the development of this literature to examine the relation between their literary activity and their participation in this cross-cultural initiative.

In this study we will focus especially on the work of Ocip Petrovich Kozodavlev (1754-1819), one of the students sent to Leipzig University by Catherine II's government.

Before analyzing his literary work, however, let us briefly review his biography.

Osip Petrovich Kozodavlev was born in 1754, the son of the captain of a horse-guard regiment. After completing military school, he was sent to Leipzig University in 1769, and remained there until 1774, studying philosophy, politics and literature. At the university, he attended lectures by Professors Platner and Gellert, and other well-known thinkers. Shortly before Kozodavlev's arrival, A. N. Radishchev and A. M. Kutuzov had studied at the same university.

His experiences in Germany had a profound impact on Kozodavlev's work throughout his life. After returning to Russia, he became a member of the Academy of Science, and participated in the preparation of *the Dictionary of the Russian Language*. In addition, beginning in the second half of the 1780s, he joined in the establishment of national schools and served as an acting Minister of Justice. In the beginning of the 19th century, during the reign of Alexander I, he was appointed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and published *the Northern Post Office* (1809-1819) political newspaper for 10 years.

Traditionally, Kozodavlev has been primarily regarded as a politician and economist. However, though not as widely known, as a literary author, as Radishchev for example, he made a significant contribution to the development of Russian literature through his translations, adaptations and original

works.

Most of these works were published in the 1770s-1780s, including one of his main achievements in the context of the history of Russian literature: a translation of Goethe's play, *Clavigo*, which I have discussed in an article published in the academic journal *Russian Literature*.

Here I would like to focus on his poem, *Dream* (*Сновидение*), which appeared in the magazine *Interlocutor for Russian Language Lovers* (*Собеседник любителей русского слова*); and to consider the work in the historical context of Russia in the 1780s.

In 1783, the monthly *Interlocutor for Russian Language Lovers*, whose main editor was Kozodavlev, began publication under the patronage of Empress Catherine II. The editors' main aim was to publish a periodical consisting only of original articles and literary works written in Russian; that is, excluding translations of European literature. Many famous authors, including G. R. Derzhavin, I. F. Bogdanovich, D. I. Fonvizin, I. I. Dmitriev and even Catherine II herself, contributed to the journal.

Though Kozodavlev, who edited the journal along with Madam Dashkova, also wrote several pieces for the journal, little attention has been given to these works, and he is principally known, in this context, for having introduced Derzhavin's poem "Feritca" to readers and other authors, in the first issue of the periodical.

## 2. Kozodavlev's *Dream* in the last issue of *Interlocutor for Russian Language Lovers*

His poem *Dream* appeared in the 16th that is the last issue of the monthly magazine.

According to the only analysis of this poem, in an essay written in the 1850s by N. A. Dobrolyubov, which considered a variety of works published in *Interlocutor for Russian Language Lovers* (1783-1784), "Dream" was composed with 'rhythmical tone and humor'. Beyond this brief reference, however, there is no discussion of the poem, its theme, or Kozodavlev's aim in writing it.

However, I would argue that the poem is, in fact, highly important for understanding the process of enlightenment and education in 1780s Russia, and shall begin with a summary of the story and the structure of the poem.

### a) Beginning of *Dream*

The poem *Dream* begins with a brief introduction by the author-narrator, and the description of the dream follows it.

Снабденный нежною душою  
 Какой-то господин Клитон,  
 Гонимый лютою судьбою  
 Однажды странный видел сон,  
 О коем здесь я повествую.  
 Он был влюбленной человек,  
 И победить свою драгую  
 Старался тщетно целый век.  
 Моя рассказывала Мама

Частенько сказочку об нем.  
 Сия возлюбленная Дама  
 Довольно знала об всем,  
 И прозу и стихи читала,  
 Рассказывала сказки мне,  
 И все то утром толковала,  
 Что ночью видел я во сне.  
 Она примешивать старалась  
 То часто в повестях своих,  
 О чем и в книгах начиталась,  
 И что слыхала от других.

(*Dream in Interlocutor for Russian Language Lovers*, №16, 1784, p. 54)

In the introduction, the narrator recalls that in his youth his mother once told him about the dream of a Kliton, who is an unhappy man, disappointed in love.

According to the narrator, his mother was “a wise woman”, highly cultivated and familiar with literature, even “Homer”. Though not an author herself, she savored the description of Kliton’s dream, with its characters from Classical mythology such as *Phoebe, Amor and Aurora*.

More than a mere recollection of childhood, the scene illustrates how a wise mother educates her son through storytelling; and it joins the broader introduction in articulating the poem’s thematic focus on education and enlightenment.

### **b) Kliton’s dream**

With this in mind, we return to Kliton’s dream itself. Depressed by his unhappy experience in love, Kliton falls asleep one day, and dreams that Amor, one of the gods of Classical mythology, picks him up in a carriage drawn by doves and they fly high into the sky, finally ending up in a beautiful palace, where Kliton is left alone. Amazed and at a loss, Kliton enters the palace and suddenly hears a beautiful voice.

On the way to the palace, flying high in the sky, Kliton is alternately filled with fear and elation, gazing down at the beautiful scenery. In spite of the abnormal situations, he never wakes up from the dream. The narrator himself wonders why Kliton is not troubled by this, but immediately supplies his own answer, namely, that the god Morpheus has encompassed Kliton in a deep sleep, oblivious both to himself and the improbability of his situation in the dream.

The narrator further volunteers that ladies’ naps during public officials’ boring speeches at parties are attributable to the same cause. Thus, freely digressing from the main plot, the narrator refers to trifling events in the real world, attributing them to Morphean pranks.

Consider a further significant instance, wherein the narrator compares the vehicle of the imagination, the “flying carriage”, with a scientific device, the “hot-air balloon”:

По воздуху летать опасно,  
 Кто что теперь ни говори.

Сие искусство мне ужасно, —  
 По мне оно огнем гори.  
 Пускай одне лишь только птицы  
 По воздуху себе парят.  
 Шары, воздушны колесницы,  
 И Монгольфьеров весь снаря  
 Меня ни мало не прельщают,  
 Таких я выдумок страшусь,  
 Хоть их и много похваляют,  
 Летать я право не пущусь.  
 Клитону же тогда казалось,  
 Сие искусство колдовством;  
 (*Dream*, p. 63)

In this scene, the narrator attempts to provide an objective interpretation of the flight in Kliton's dream, through comparison with a hot-air balloon.

The quoted reference to the 'Montgolfier' hot-air balloon, in particular, provides a clue as to where and how Kozodavlev obtained some of the central ideas, motifs and plots of his literary works. In 1783, in France, the Montgolfier brothers performed hot-air balloon flights for the first time in history. Needless to say, this epoch-making event caused a worldwide sensation, and many intellectuals referred to it in their works, among them Kozodavlev in *Dream*.

However, it is certain that, in the case of Kozodavlev, it was the *literary* image of Montgolfier, described in the famous German periodical *Deutsche Mercur*, which attracted his attention, rather than the actual Montgolfier.

This German periodical was edited by C. M. Wieland, a German professor-writer, famous throughout Europe at the time. The periodical was also sold in Russia in those days, and well known to Russian intellectuals. In 1783, immediately after the brothers' success, Wieland wrote an essay about "Montgolfier", printed in the issue of the same year; and in the same issue, published the poem *Clelia and Sinibald* (*Klelia und Sinibald*), in which the motif of "Montgolfier" also appears.

Though there is no proof, it is certain that Kozodavlev was profoundly influenced by Wieland's work, and that he was a regular reader of this journal. In the first issue of *Interlocutor*, for example, Kozodavlev wrote the didactic story *A Pleasant Trip* (*Приятное путешествие*), in which we can clearly observe affinities with

Wieland's *Socrates out of his Senses: or, Dialogues of Diogenes of Sinope* (*Sokrates Mainomenos oder die Dialogen des Diogenes von Sinope*).

Therefore, it is thought that Wieland's work stimulated Kozodavlev to employ the 'Montgolfier' balloon in his *Dream*; we might even suppose that the central action, of flying across the sky, was inspired by Wieland's work.

As we have already seen, Kozodavlev emphasizes the significance of the education of the child in the introduction to *Dream*, and here, in Kliton's dream itself, he attempts to describe the fantastic trip in

the carriage from an objective point of view.

Moreover, we must remember that the narrator, recalling Kliton's dream from his mother's telling in his childhood, is now an adult, and likely describes the dream from his current viewpoint and in his own words.

We may suggest, then, that it was not so much Kliton's dream itself, but the broader scene of domestic education, and the influence of such education on the human sensibility, which Kozodavlev is focusing on in *Dream*. Eventually we would meet him as an illuminist in this poem.

### 3. Historical context: background and environment

Now let us consider the background and environment in which Kozodavlev conceived of *Dream*; that is, his relation to the official Westernizing initiative of the government, and the literary tendencies in 1770s and 1780s Russia.

In the 1780s, Catherine II organized the Commission for public schools, to spearhead the foundation of national schools and universities; and in 1786, she established detailed provisions for students concerning "authorized textbooks", system of the lecture and so on. Importantly, Kozodavlev was a member of the Committee as of 1785.

In addition, we must keep in mind that after the publication of *Interlocutor* was discontinued, Kozodavlev began to publish his long historical essay, *A consideration on the national education in Europe* (*Рассуждение о народном просвещении в Европе*), in which he praises the historical development of the German enlightenment and educational system. We can see in his activity at this time that he is keenly interested in problems facing the Russian educational system.

In Russia at this time, increased interest in childhood education began to appear, not only in national projects but also in journalism and literature. In 1785, for example, one year after the discontinuance of *Interlocutor*, N. I. Novikov began to publish *Reading for Children*, which was the first childrens' magazine in Russia.

Furthermore, in the second half of the 1780s and throughout the 1790s, numerous periodicals concerned with the formation of childhood education emerged; among them Karamzin's *Moscow Journal* and *Reading for Taste and Wise* as an appendix for *Moscow News*.

These historical facts help us understand the background of Kozodavlev's composition of *Dream* in 1784, and its publication in the last issue of *Interlocutor*.

Kozodavlev was deeply interested in the enlightenment initiatives of the Russian government. In 1784, even as the last issue of his journal was being prepared, he felt that he would likely soon be seriously engaged in establishing the foundations of the new educational system, along with his colleague; and it seems reasonable that this prospect would have influenced Kozodavlev in writing and publishing *Dream*, as a symbolic work, in preparation for his subsequent activity.

Finally, we must remind ourselves of the fact that *Dream* is an unfinished poem. When Kliton, in his dream, reaches the beautiful palace, he suddenly hears a female voice.

Он видит сад перед собою  
 На яшмовый ступив балкон.  
 Сей сад природы красотою,

Его зовёт из комнат вон;  
Но вдруг в чертогах поражает  
Приятный глас Клитонов слух;  
Божественный сей глас пленяет  
Наполненный любовью дух.  
Он слышит пение небесно,  
Как будто Тоди там поёт,  
Которая в восторг чудесно  
Сердца чувствительны влечет.  
(*Dream*, p. 69.)

Most of description of the dreams in the stories written in the second half of the 18th century, such as the dreams in the works of A. P. Sumarokov and F. A. Emin, end with the dreamer waking up from his dream. However, at the end of Kozodavlev's dream-story we read, "To be continued." Yet, in fact, both the poem and the journal in which it was published were discontinued.

It is quite likely, then, that Kozodavlev had effectively said, in *Dream*, what he had wished to say.

Kozodavlev's keen interest in enlightenment and education were engendered in his student days at Leipzig, under the influence of German culture. As I have argued, German literature and periodicals, such as the works of Wieland, were decisive inspirations for his conceptualization of the enlightenment and education in general. It is also significant that the first childrens' magazine in Europe appeared in Germany, the *Leipzig Journal*. More detailed analysis of this phenomenon, however, will be reported on at a later opportunity.

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