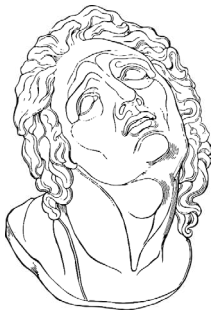
Assessment of Russian Historicist Architecture of the 1820–1840s in the Works of Russian Writers of the Romanticism Era

Natalia Polunina

Natalia Polunina is a distance PhD student specialising in nineteenth-century architecture. Her previous research in Lomonosov Moscow State University, from where she holds her BA and MA, was dedicated to British manorial architecture. Her current research is dedicated to Medieval Revivals in the nineteenth-century architecture of Imperial Russia. Her broader research interests include the whole history of Western architecture, decorative arts and design.

The history of Russian architecture of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries differs significantly from Western architecture in terms of the relationship between classical and extra-classical architectural tradition. The periods of domination of classical tendencies were relatively short, and, at the same time with strict and sublime classicism, notable and interesting non-classical tendencies emerged in Russian architecture as well. Thus, along with the "strict classicism" of the Catherinian era, in Russian architecture of the second half of the eighteenth – early nineteenth century, various non-classical and "exotic" styles existed, starting with the chinoiserie and turquerie within the Rococo, and ending with the most striking non-classical phenomenon in Russian architecture of this time—early Gothic Revival, or "Enlightenment Gothic." The latter term, first used by Sergey Khachaturov,[1] seems to be the most neutral and yet fully expresses the specificity of this phenomenon. However, these experiments, such as the Chinese Palace in Oranienbaum (1762–68) or the turquerie Divan Room in the Peterhof palace (1770), were largely employed for private purposes and were few and far between, offering nothing new and nothing radical. "Enlightenment Gothic" may be called an exception, as it became not just the preserve of the upper classes but spread widely throughout Russia and left behind a number of full-fledged significant ensembles. Nevertheless, it became exceptional when the Russian Empire Style dominated architectural practice with its large-scale town-planning ensembles and the desire for unification and proportionality. In effect, it remained primarily in the architecture of provincial churches, such as St Nicholas Church in Mozhaisk (Fig. 1, 1811–1820). In general, we can say that at this time all non-classical tendencies of the eighteenth century either acted as an experiment or faded away.



The era of the Russian Empire Style, which is, in fact, the final phase of Russian classicism, was marked by the construction of a number of outstanding architectural ensembles. Empire Style was primarily an urban style and it radically changed the appearance of many Russian cities, including Petersburg and Moscow. In St Petersburg the structures included notable ensembles such as the Old Saint Petersburg Stock Exchange building on the spit of Vasilyevsky Island, Kazan Cathedral and the square in front of it, the Admiralty building, and the General staff arch and building. What was regarded as the artistic merits and compositional perfection of these buildings were noted both by contemporaries and subsequent scholars. However, by the 1820–1830s, when late Classicism dominated the streets of Russian cities (Fig. 2, 1830–35), it became obvious that the Classicist tradition had been exhausted, a crisis that was reflected in various sources of the time, from correspondence to critical pamphlets.

Aspectus, Issue 6, Fall 2024
DOI: 10.15124/yao-hnq7-4n65
ISSN: 2732-561X
Pages 15-30
University of York

Figure 1. Alexey Bakarev, St Nicholas Cathedral in Mozhaisk, 1811–1820. © Ludvig14.

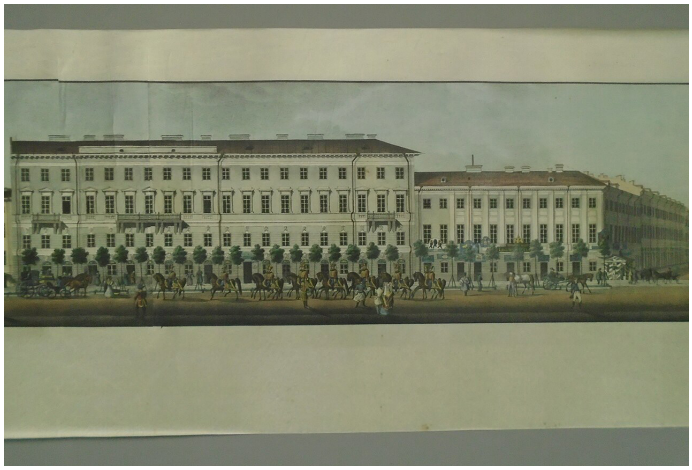


Figure 2. Vasily Sadovnikov, Fragment of a panoramic view of the Nevsky prospect in 1830s, 1830–1835. Library of the Russian Academy of Sciences. © Vyacheslav Kirillin.

This article does not aim to fully examine all architectural criticism of the 1820s–1830s, especially as this has already been done in the works of Svetozar Zavarikhin[2] and Eugenia Kirichenko.[3] Rather, it will set out the main issues, problems and ideas discussed in Russian architectural criticism of this period, firstly in periodicals, but also in literature, such as Pyotr Chaadayev's *Philosophical Letters*.[4] Anglophone scholarship has already addressed the problem of Romanticism in Russian literature and criticism and the history of nineteenth-century Russian architecture has also been considered, for instance in the works of such scholars as William Brumfield or Dmitry Shvidkovsky. An important source for the study of Russian literature of the first half of the 19th century abroad were the reviews of contemporaries in the English newspaper *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, later scrutinised by Eileen M. Curran in her article *The Foreign Quarterly Review on Russian and Polish Literature*.[5] In particular, it was in *The Foreign Quarterly Review*'s article *Present State of Art in Russia* that *The Artistic Newspaper* and its influence on the state of Russian art were first mentioned.[6] Gogol's utopian views on architecture were touched upon in Ann Nesbeth's article *"The Building to Be Built": Gogol, Belyi, Eisenstein, and the Architecture of the Future*,[7] and examined thoroughly by William Keyes in his article *Meditations on Form and Meaning in Gogol's "On Present-Day Architecture."*[8] The most studied personalities are Gogol and Chaadayev, whose role in the history of Russian literature and public thought is undoubtedly significant and could not have been overlooked by researchers, but this article, in addition to their own statements, includes those by figures from the purely architectural sphere, which are new material for Anglophone scholarship. In particular, Sviyazev's and Bykovsky's publications have not been considered in the Anglophone scholarly literature so far. The aim of the article is to identify the main assessments of nineteenth-century architecture in the literature that are contemporary to them, to trace what factors influenced them, and to determine what real role these assessments played in the artistic life of Russia during this period. In addition, an important aim of this article is to place the sources under consideration in a pan-European context. While several Russian scholars, such as Evgenia Kirichenko, have noted the deep connection with the ideas of German Romanticism, the article will not only study this connection thoroughly but also trace a certain consonance of ideas in Russian and English architectural criticism of this time.

In his doctoral dissertation *"Russian Architectural Criticism: Criticism in the Context of the Architectural Process up to 1917,"* Svetozar Zavarikhin analysed many of these sources in detail, noting that the development of Russian periodicals in the middle of the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century was avalanche-like. During this period in the Russian Empire more than sixty titles of various magazines and newspapers appeared (in many respects, this surge is associated with the fact that in 1769 private printing houses were legalised).[9] At the same time, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century the issue of the relationship between the authorities and journalism in the Russian Empire became

more acute. The censorship statute adopted in 1826, the first year of the reign of Nicholas I, was nicknamed "cast-iron" because of its rigidity. The censorship statute of 1828, although somewhat more democratic, still forbade the printing of any "works of literature" that contained "anything tending to shake the doctrine of the Orthodox Church," "anything violating the inviolability of the supreme autocratic power or respect for the imperial house and anything contrary to the fundamental state regulations," "anything offending good morals and decency," and so on.[10] Compliance with the censorship statutes in all spheres of literary and theatre life was closely monitored by the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery headed by Alexander von Benckendorff.

As for architectural criticism specifically, it had not yet emerged as a separate genre but developed within the framework of general art criticism of the period. At the time, there were no independent periodicals on architectural topics in Russia, such as John Claudius Loudon's *Architectural Journal* in Britain. Architectural reviews, pamphlets and reflections on architecture were published in journals devoted to art in general, as well as in magazines and newspapers on literary and general topics. Nevertheless, by the 1820s and especially 1830s dissatisfaction with the state of contemporary architecture was being expressed with a clear demand for the emergence of something new, fresh and free. The answer seemed to lie in growing popularity for any style other than classicism, or fresher interpretations of that heritage (the Greek Revival style, or, as it was called in Russia, "Neogrecque"). However, not all the results of stylistic experiments were welcomed, and it quickly became clear that turning to other styles was not a quick solution to problems accumulated in Russian architecture.

The article will focus on the following works:

- An anonymous article, *New Buildings in Peterhof*, printed in *The Artistic Newspaper* (edited by Nestor Kukolnik and Alexander Strugovschikov), No. 11 for 1837;
- Nikolai Gogol's article *On the Architecture of the Present Time* in the collection *Arabesques*, 1835;
- A speech *On the unfoundedness of the opinion that the Greek, or Greco-Roman architecture, can be universal, and that the beauty of architecture is based on the five known rules* delivered by the architect Mikhail Bykovsky in the Moscow Palace School of Architecture in 1834;
- Pyotr Chaadayev's article *On the Architecture*, published in *The Telescope* (edited by Nikolai Nadezhdin), No. 11 for 1832;
- Prefaces to Ivan Sviyazev's architectural textbooks for the Mining Institute, published in 1833 and 1839, and his 1845 commentary on the drawings of the Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Semyonovsky Regiment in St Petersburg by Konstantin Ton.

For clarity, it is worth explaining the basic principle that led to the selection of these particular works for analysis. The first three texts clearly illustrate the views of the Russian intellectual elite of the second quarter of the nineteenth century and are, above all, excellent examples of Russian journalism of the time, but they contain mainly general discussions on style, aesthetics, and beauty, largely inspired by the philosophy of European Romanticism. In contrast, Sviyazev's texts are prefaces to utilitarian textbooks or blueprints, and are written by a practising architect, which certainly has its impact on his views and argumentation, but also shows the evolution of judgement that a fairly average architect of this time undergoes and how he is influenced by the same cultural and philosophical context.

The 1820s and 30s in Russian architecture were marked by a number of stylistic experiments that stood out against the backdrop of general classicist tendencies. A convenient field for these experiments was the imperial parks, since in park buildings originality, rather than practicality, was valued above all, and architects were given considerable freedom in design. Thus, in the 1820s, Auguste Montferrand (1786–1858) designed an original complex

of predominantly Gothic Revival buildings in Ekaterinhof Park, and a series of Gothic Revival buildings in the parks of Tsarskoye Selo and Alexandria Park in Peterhof were also built (Fig. 3, 4). At the same time, the Egyptian Bridge in St Petersburg and the Egyptian Gate in Tsarskoye Selo were constructed and Count Mikhail Vorontsov commissioned the English architect Edward Blore (1787–1879) to design a palace in Alupka, in which Tudor and Moorish motifs were combined. The search for inspiration in the forms of national architecture began at this time, with folk wooden architecture attracting the attention of architects: the first designs of "Russian huts" for imperial parks, by Carlo Rossi (1775–1849) and Auguste Montferrand, appeared in the 1810–1820s.[11]

Figure 3. Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Gothic Chapel' in Peterhof, 1831–33. © Anna Anichkova.

Figure 4. Adam Menelaws, Arsenal in Alexander Park, Tsarskoe Selo, 1819–1834. © Александровы АГ.

These new and original buildings were not ignored in the architectural criticism of the time. They became the subject of an anonymous article "New Buildings in Peterhof" in an issue of *The Artistic Newspaper*[12] (edited by Nestor Kukolnik (Fig. 5, 1809–1868) and Alexander Strugovshchikov (Fig. 6, 1808/9–1879). This periodical functioned largely as a digest of Russian and European cultural life; it included pieces on new exhibitions and books of interest, on new buildings and works of art, on competitions for painters, sculptors and architects; it even contained travelling notes and obituaries. The article on *The Artistic Newspaper* in *The Foreign Quarterly Review* notes that it was not the first attempt to establish a periodical on fine arts in Russia, but it was the first expectedly successful one; the author contrasts the many failed attempts to produce such a publication in England with successful precedents in Germany and, as *The Artistic Newspaper* shows, in Russia.[13] Although the inclusion of certain events and publications was determined by the editors, *The Artistic Newspaper* is still an invaluable source of information, providing insight to a cross-section of the cultural life of the late 1830s, just as the author of the article in *The Foreign Quarterly Review* expected. Unfortunately, despite all its influence and even its fame abroad, *The Artistic Newspaper* did not last long. At first Nestor Kukolnik published the newspaper entirely on his own, but it proved impossible for one person to undertake the functions of publisher, editor and, in many cases, author. Difficulties emerged in 1839, meaning that year the newspaper was not published at all. In 1840 Kukolnik handed the newspaper over to Struhovshchikov, retaining the right to participate and cooperate in its editing. Under Strugovshchikov, the periodical existed for another year, after which it was closed in 1841 because of the general "unfavourable" state of Russian journalism, which made it difficult and unprofitable to publish a private specialised newspaper, compounded by the fact that the task at hand was too ambitious.[14]

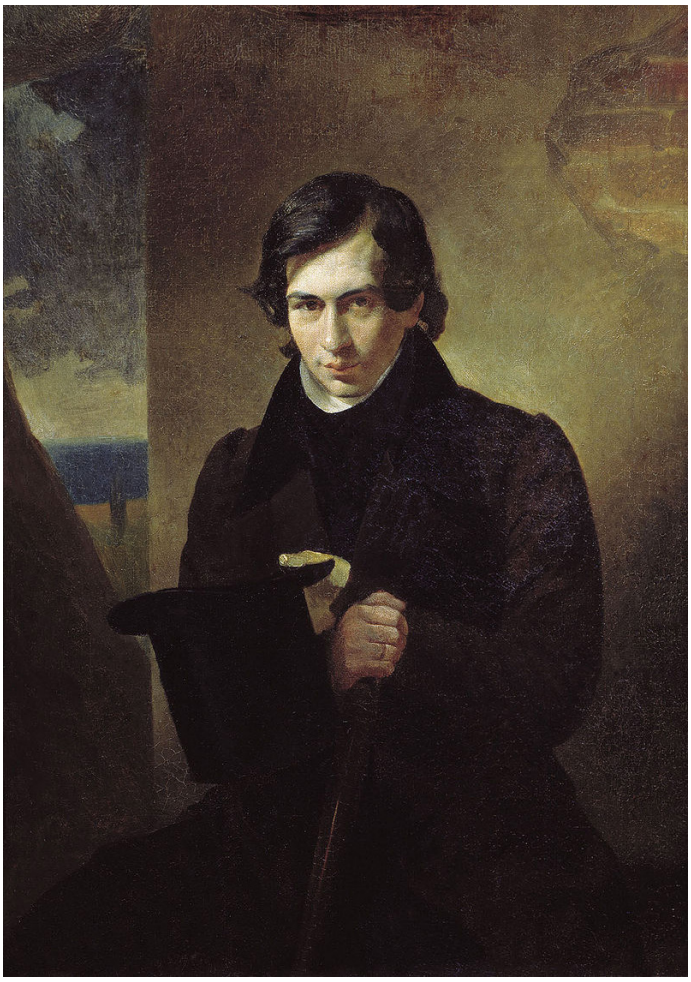


Figure 5. (left) Karl Bryullov, Portrait of the writer Nestor Kukolnik, 1836, oil on canvas, 117 x 81.7 cm, Moscow, The State Tretyakov Gallery. © The State Tretyakov Gallery.

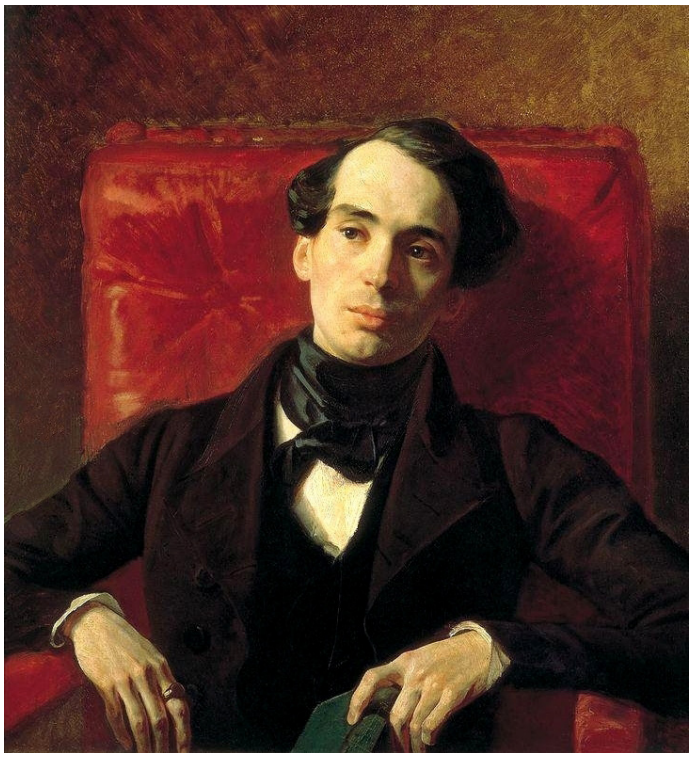


Figure 6. (right) Karl Bryullov, Portrait of the writer Alexander Strugovshchikov, 1840, oil on canvas, 80 x 66.4 cm. Moscow, The State Tretyakov Gallery. © The State Tretyakov Gallery.

Figure 7. Otto Friedrich Theodor von Möller, Portrait of Nikolai Gogol, early 1840s, oil on canvas, 59 x 47 cm. Moscow, The State Tretyakov Gallery. © The State Tretyakov Gallery.

The article on the new Buildings in Peterhof can, in general, be considered a manifesto of the new architecture. Here, as in Gogol's article, the monotonous architecture of modern capitals is condemned. It even cites a charming anecdote by Jules Jeanin about a provincial who could hardly find an inn in Paris because he knew only that the building he needed had a portico, but half of Parisian buildings had porticos, including even the stable next door to the inn.[15] The author extolled diversity and proclaimed that "our age is *eclectic*; *wise choice* is its characteristic in everything."[16] The term "eclectic" is used here for the first time in Russian architectural commentary and it is important to note that it is devoid of any negative connotation. By the twentieth century, the term "eclecticism" had become entirely perjured, even while being used as a universal name for a stylistic system or for a whole period in the history of architecture. The anonymous author of the article in *The Artistic Newspaper*, on the other hand, fully welcomed and accepted "eclecticism":

> Parthenon and other remnants of Greek architecture, Moorish Algamra,[17] Gothic cathedrals of the old and new style, Italian architecture of Palladius, Sansovino, Brunelleschi, Banarotti, etc., Venetian ancient [architecture], which one famous Russian artist [...] called so aptly 'architecture upside down', Indian with Byzantine its development, — to sum up, all genera of architecture must be elegant, and each of them concludes considerable proofs to that; all of them mutually use their means, intermingle and produce new genera.[18]

According to the author, all the many styles listed above are equal, as is their combination. Moreover, the very formulation of the principle of "wise choice" is important; this implies the possibility of choosing one style out of many equally important ones for specific needs. As for the term "eclecticism" itself, it is worth noting that its appearance in Russian art criticism, in the absence of any negative connotation, is a very early and curious precedent. While in European historiography the term "eclecticism" is associated primarily with architecture of the second half of the nineteenth century, in Russian historiography the term was introduced much earlier and has been actively used since.

Nikolai Gogol (Fig. 7, 1809–1852), one of the most influential writers of the time, also praised a variety of styles with great enthusiasm. This coincided with his general interest in the topic of Catholicism, reflected in a number of articles in the collection *Arabesques* (1835), in letters written during his numerous travels in Europe from 1836 to 1848, and even in the second edition of Taras Bulba (1842) — in the scene where Andriy enters the Catholic church, the beauty fascinates him and, along with his feelings for a Polish girl, becomes the catalyst for his inner changes. Gogol was not alone in his fascination with Catholicism: Orthodoxy was in crisis in the first third of the nineteenth century, whilst on the contrary mystical sentiments were growing and finding their expression outside the Orthodox Church. As Elena Annenkova notes in her monograph *Gogol and Russian Society*, the number of conversions to Catholicism in the Russian nobility (especially among the ladies of high society) increased dramatically in the early nineteenth century, but a new wave of conversions followed in the 1830s and 1840s.[19] Interest in Catholicism can be traced, for example, in the works of the Decembrist Mikhail Lunin, written by him during his exile; of the scholar and poet Vladimir Pecherin, later deprived of citizenship for his writings, who emigrated to Ireland and joined the Redemptorist order; and of Pyotr Chaadaev, whose views and fate will be described below. Nikolai Gogol's view on the question of Catholicism, as on many others, was less radical and more comprehensive than that of the above-mentioned writers. His philosophical and historical ideas surprisingly intersected with both Slavophile and Westerner ideologies, which made his figure very significant for both of these opposing camps and, moreover, saved him much of the trouble that Nicholas I's censorship could have caused excessively radical authors.

Gogol published the article *On the Architecture of the Present Time* in the collection *Arabesques* in 1835. Being extremely fond of the Middle Ages in general (this fascination is reflected in another article, *On the Middle Ages*, also published in Arabesques), he gave his absolute preference to Gothic architecture - Cologne Cathedral for him was the pinnacle of architectural perfection. Gothic architecture fascinated him also because its high spires could dominate the cityscape, a feature, in Gogol's opinion, that was sorely lacking in his contemporary urban planning:

> The huge, colossal towers are necessary for the city, not to mention the importance of their purpose for Christian churches. In addition to the fact that they constitute a view and decoration, they are needed to inform the city of sharp signs, to serve as a beacon, pointing the way for everyone, not allowing them to go astray... the structure should rise immeasurably almost above the viewer's head; so that he became, struck with sudden surprise, barely being able to look over its top with his eyes. And therefore a structure is always better if it stands in a crowded square. A street may run to it, showing it in perspective, from afar, but it must have a striking grandeur at close quarters. Shall the road pass by it! Shall the carriages rattle at its very foot! Shall the people be moulded under it, and their smallness – increased its grandeur![20]

This judgement lies in direct opposition to the urban planning ideas of the Empire Style, where the main role was played by a wide open space, as in the ensemble of the spit of Vasilevsky Island in St Petersburg, and at Manezh Square in Moscow.

Gothic architecture was not the only style about which Gogol speaks with awe. He admired oriental and, in particular, Indian architecture, which he describes as "a very special, separate world from which Europe has drawn the least of all," and Egyptian architecture, whilst warning that it should never be used "for small bridges"[21] (here he refers to the recently demolished Egyptian bridge over the Fontanka River in St Petersburg, built in 1826 by the engineers Tretter and Khristianovich (Fig. 8, 1860). In addition, unlike the anonymous author of "New Buildings in Peterhof," Gogol fiercely opposes the mixing of styles within one building: "Do not mix in one building a multitude of different tastes and types of architecture. Let each one carry something whole and original in itself, but let the opposition between these originals related to each other be sharp and strong."[22]

Figure 8. Alfred Lorens, Photo of the Egyptian Chain Bridge across Fontanka, c. 1860. © Alfred Lorens.

At the end of his article Gogol expresses an original idea: in his opinion, the city should become a kind of chronicle of history, just as architecture itself is a "chronicle of the world." For this purpose, the city should contain examples of all possible styles, forming a vivid and picturesque ensemble:

> Let gloomy Gothic, and Oriental, laden with the luxury of ornaments, and colossal Egyptian, and slender, proportional Greek, rise on the same street. Let the lightly convex milky dome, the religious infinite steeple, the oriental mitre, the flate Italianate roof, the high figured Flemish one, the four-sided pyramid, the round column, and the angular obelisk be seen in it. Let the houses merge as seldom as possible into one smooth, uniform wall, but slope upwards and downwards. Let towers of various kinds as often as possible diversify the streets.[23]

This thesis, just like the theses from the article in *The Artistic Newspaper*, echoes the assertions of August Wilhelm Schlegel, one of the greatest theorists of German Romanticism, as stated by him in his *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*:

> The world is wide, and affords room for a great diversity of objects. Narrow and blindly adopted prepossessions will never constitute a genuine critic or connoisseur, who ought, on the contrary, to possess the power of dwelling with liberal impartiality on the most discrepant views, renouncing the while all personal inclinations.[24]

Here, however, it is important to note that diversity for diversity's sake is by no means considered a universal solution to the crisis, and those who welcome "eclecticism" specifically stipulated that they did not mean blind imitation and mindless mixing. The author of the article in *The Artistic Newspaper* notes immediately, after the passage about "new kinds of architecture," that "these kinds of architecture are only graceful and original, when they retain harmony in the parts and greatness in the whole."[25] Gogol also repeatedly added to his arguments that in order for all the diversity of world architecture to be qualitatively reproduced, the original monuments must be thoroughly studied and correctly understood:

> All genera are good when they are good in their own way. Whatever architecture may be: the smooth massive Egyptian, the huge, colourful Hindus, the luxurious Moors, the inspired and sombre Gothic, the graceful Greek - all are good when adapted to the purpose of the structure; all will be majestic when only truly comprehended.[26]

Figure 9 Michel Angelo Pietro Scotti, Portrait of the architect Mikhail Bykovsky, 1852, Evgenia Kirichenko, Moscow Architectural Society in the History of Russian Culture. 1867-1932 [Московское архитектурное общество в истории русской культуры. 1867-1932] (Moscow: Union of Moscow Architects, 2007), 1.

Another manifesto, which succinctly set out the most pressing problems and ideas of architectural criticism in the 1830s, was a speech delivered by the young architect Mikhail Bykovsky (Fig. 9, 1801–1885) at the "solemn act" of the Moscow Palace School of Architecture.[27] The main idea of the speech is set out in its title: *"On the unfoundedness of the opinion that the Greek, or Greco-Roman architecture, can be universal, and that the beauty of architecture is based on the five known rules."*[28] Bykovsky states that fine art cannot be "subordinated to identical, universal and in no case unchanging formulas" and that blind and unchanging adherence to the same architectural language is "a reckless intention to suppress the fine arts." We can see similar theses set out by the anonymous author of *New Buildings in Peterhof*, and by Gogol, and especially by Ivan Sviyazev, whose works will be examined in the article later. Bykovsky's speech expresses some reservations about the superficial and thoughtless mixing of different styles, it being as bad for architecture as a mechanical imitation of the same samples. He laments:

> ...we, having in our hands so many works on architecture, and in front of our eyes so many different samples of buildings, do not care to find the reasons for this or that taste of architecture, we take pictures of all existing buildings, imitate all nations, consequently forget the highest part of imitation and bring art in impotence.[29]

As we can see from the examples, early in the nineteenth century eclecticism was consciously accepted and welcomed in Russia. The mixing of styles itself was not considered something categorically unacceptable, and the task of archaeologically reproducing accurately one or another style (as Gothic Revivalists in early Victorian England sought to reproduce with antiquarian meticulousness down to the specific century) was not initially set before architects. It would be a mistake, however, to claim that there was no dispute on styles in Russia, like the confrontation between Classicists and Gothicists in England, and that there were no ardent apologists for any particular style. Gothic was openly favoured by Gogol, but the most consistent advocate of the Gothic was Pyotr Chaadayev (Fig. 10, 1794–1856). In 1832 he had two of his written pieces, including *On the Architecture*, anonymously published in *The Telescope*,[30] and in 1836 his first *Philosophical letter* was published, also anonymously, in another issue of the journal, an act that later led to drastic consequences for both Chaadayev himself and Nikolai Nadezhdin (Fig. 11, 1804–1856), the chief editor of the journal.

Figure 10. (left) Sándor Kozina, Portrait of the writer Pyotr Chaadayev, early 1840s, oil on canvas. Moscow, State Historical Museum. © State Historical Museum.

Figure 11. (right) Petr Borel, Portrait of Nikolai Nadezhdin, 1864–1869, lithograph. Galerie de portraits de célébrités Russes published by A. Munster, vol. 2.

In 1832 Nadezhdin published several passages by Chaadayev without knowing him personally; interestingly, the passages were originally written by Chaadayev in French, but published in a translated form.[31] The first *Philosophical letter*, which was written as early as 1829 and circulated in manuscripts before publication, had a bombshell effect after its publication. Unlike the rather abstract philosophical discourse published in 1832, it contained an extremely sharp criticism of Russia and Russian society. Although the discourse on Russia and its historical role was not the only, nor the main, one in Chaadayev's general religious and philosophical programme, it was the one that provoked the most heated public debate and led to state repressions. *The Telescope* was closed in 1836, Nadezhdin, who was considered no less guilty of the incident than Chaadayev despite his own relatively pro-state position and the open disagreement with Chaadayev clearly indicated in the introduction to his article, was subjected to a humiliating trial and subsequently sent into exile. Chaadayev was legally and publicly declared as "insane" and sentenced to constant observation by doctors—one of the first cases of "punitive psychiatry" in Russia.[32]

At the same time, the passages published in 1832, including *On the Architecture*, reveal Chaadayev's religious and aesthetic views to no lesser extent than the *Philosophical Letter*. In his article examining ancient architecture, Chaadayev compared Gothic and Egyptian architecture, and contrasted them with Greek. In his opinion, vertical lines, triangular and pyramidal forms inherent in Gothic and Egyptian buildings, give them a special monumentality and, therefore, spirituality, an appeal to the "needs of morality," "an impulse towards heaven and its bliss."[33] This quality contrasted Egyptian and Gothic architecture with more down-to-earth, "horizontal" Greek and Roman architecture, in which the viewer could find only "a sense of sedentariness, domesticity, attachment to the land and its comforts."[34] As Mrs Kirichenko notes, for Chaadayev the classical tradition and, in particular, Russian classicism embodied the lowest and worst that can be found in reality.[35] Like Gogol, he was attracted to the spiritual side of Gothic architecture; for him, the Gothic tower is "a strong and beautiful thought, alone bursting towards the heavens, not an ordinary earthly idea, but a marvellous revelation, without reason and earthly roots, taking us out of this world and carrying us to a better world."[36]

This perception of the Gothic of both Gogol and Chaadayev is akin to Augustus Pugin (1812–1852), for whom morality was also the main feature of Gothic architecture in Britain and Western Europe. Pugin set out such theses in his treatise *The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841), and consistently defended in his earlier polemical essay, *Contrasts* (1836). Nevertheless, there are also significant differences. While Chaadayev, a maximalist and anti-utilitarian, was attracted to Gothic architecture, as well as Egyptian, by its emphatic anti-utilitarianism—"beautiful uselessness," as he put it, quoting Madame de Staël[37] —Pugin reasoned precisely in terms of the right balance between beauty, convenience and architectural appropriateness.[38] In this sense, Pugin's position is closer to that of Gogol, who points out that the chosen styles are "good when adapted to the purpose of the building;"[39] for both of them, the utility and appropriateness of the chosen styles did not play a minor role. In addition, while the dispute between Classicists and Gothicists in England had an unambiguously political association, being largely connected with the struggle between governing and ecclesiastical parties, in Russia the dichotomy was different, although it too had a political basis. Here, the dispute about styles was between the "intelligentsia" and the "guardians," and regardless of whether Gothic Revivalism or the whole variety of styles existing in human history is opposed to classicism, was played out on the field of freedom versus constraint.

In Chaadayev's *Philosophical Letters*, the influence of German classical philosophy and German romanticism is quite noticeable, a fact which can be explained by Chaadayev's familiarity with German philosophy in general, and that he was in personal correspondence with Friedrich Schelling. Whilst it cannot be said that Chaadayev imitated Schelling, Schelling inspired him, but Chaadayev himself wrote to him: "I have often had to come in

the end not where you came."[40] Schelling was not as extreme an anti-utilitarian as Chaadayev, who invariably associated utilitarianism with the extreme pragmatism and barracks-like monotony of late classicist architecture. Their views on styles differed radically: Schelling, for example, regarded Gothic architecture as "the lowest stage of the crudest art."[41] Nevertheless, Schelling, who belongs to the circle of early Jena Romantics, was still fascinated with the organicity and sublimity of Gothic churches, a fascination which is quite noticeable despite his reservations about the crudeness of Gothic architecture.[42] He also states that "the absolute in general is beautiful only insofar as it is contemplated in limitation, in other words, in the particular" — the attention to the 'particular' became one of the most characteristic features of the architecture of Eclecticism.[43]

Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829), one of the founders of German Romanticism and another representative of the Jena school, gave architecture the role of a fundamental form of art, from which the renewal should begin.[44] Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to speak about "Romanticism architecture" in Germany, in Europe as a whole, and in Russia. In her monograph *Russian Architecture in the Age of Romanticism*, Elena Borisova quotes the German historian and journalist Eckart Klessman, who argued that "Romanticism was not a style, it was a worldview. [...] Romanticism never developed as a style in the sense of identified formal canons. The art of Romanticism has been defined by its content and expression to unrestrained passions."[45] Indeed, contrary to Schlegel's claims, Romanticism did not begin with architecture, and architecture did not play a decisive role in its development; it was never reflected in a unified architectural style. Gothic Revival, on the other hand, far from always embodies the ideals of Romanticism (for example, Pugin never identified himself as a Romantic, though he did, to some extent, approach the Romantic ideal in his own way), and the buildings, which were understood as having a basis in Romantic ideas, are not always built in the Gothic Revival style. Walhalla Hall of Fame in Bavaria (1830–1842), built in the Greek Revival style, provides the most striking example. In other words, Romanticism was reflected in the *ideas* about the renewal of architecture, in the setting of new tasks and in the assertion of new ideals. Spirituality, sublimity, majesty, freedom of imagination are what, in the eyes of the German Romantics, defined the properties of Romanticism in architecture, and we can find the same ideas in Gogol and Chaadayev's works. At the same time, August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845), brother of Friedrich Schlegel, also consistently criticised classicism for its unsuitability to the northern climate and cultural foreignness in Northern Europe, for which Gothic is much more natural, and, as a closed architectural system, no less perfect. Borisova notes that the ideas of August Schlegel could not but influence Nestor Kukolnik (1809–1868), the chief editor of The Artistic Newspaper, as well as the anonymous author of the article about the new buildings in Peterhof, and Gogol.[46] There is also a closeness of opinion in the positions of Schlegel and Ivan Sviyazev (1797–1874, no portrait preserved), who both criticised classicism for the same shortcomings, and advocated the idea that adherence to a national style was the best way out of the crisis of architecture at the time.

Ivan Sviyazev's views underwent a very significant evolution, which we can trace by comparing the prefaces to two of his practical textbooks for the Mining Institute, where he taught mining architecture from 1832 to 1839 and from 1846 to 1871. Sviyazev, unlike most of the previously mentioned authors (Kukolnik, Strugovshchikov, Gogol, Chaadaev were the descendants of Russian, Ukrainian or Polish nobility), was born into the family of a domestic servant of Princess Shakhovskaya and was bought out by the Academy of Arts after he had completed a full course of study and received a silver medal. Throughout his career he was first and foremost a practising architect, and his assessments and views, as articulated in his textbooks, were aimed at a different target audience—not at the intellectual elite of predominantly noble origin, but at future architects studying at the Mining Institute.

As Eugenia Kirichenko points out, in the early 1830s Sviyazev advocated a position directly opposed to the idealistic position of the Russian Romantic writers.[47] Sviyazev literally advocates what they condemned: he calls for minimalism and utilitarianism, opposing the beautiful and the useful, clearly distinguishing between "fine architecture" and "practical architecture." For him, as he states in his 1833 textbook, "Fine Architecture, like all fine arts, is the luxury of the mind."[48] At the same time, he argues that "luxury does not constitute elegance, and wastefulness in decorations rather proves the lack of perfection of taste, but simplicity, proportionality, correctness, purity of style, harmony—you can demand them from the most unluxurious building, of course, if it's comfortable and durable," a very typical statement for the apologist of utilitarian classicism of the 1830s.[49] Nevertheless, he also treats other styles from a practical point of view, tracing their history and noting their unique role for the nations that played a part in their development.

These ideas were further developed in the 1839 textbook, but by this time Sviyazev's position had changed significantly under the influence of Romantic ideas. He already perceived classical architecture in a more negative light, and at the same time showed an increasing interest in "national styles." Sviyazev listed even more names of different styles in the preface to his textbook (Indian, Chinese, Egyptian, Mexican, Persian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Arabic, Moorish, Romanesque, Gothic or Nordic, Italian).[50] Still, he believed that inspiration should be drawn from national identity, which gives architecture a special character. For him, the styles named were not equivalent: the grandeur ("enormity") of Indian, Egyptian, and Mexican architecture was "a consequence of some moral necessity inseparable from the infancy of mankind."[51] Further, as the various civilisations developed, each invented the architectural style that best suited their needs—until the Italians "revived" classical art by

> reverently sketching the monuments of the Greeks and Romans at their fingertips, and bringing everything under the ruler and the circular... appeared, however, the Italian architecture, and the notes of it, poorly overheard from the ancients, were played by the whole Europe.[52]

Here, Sviyazev was one of the first to raise the question of the need to form a national style that would best reflect the features of Russian culture, which at the same time would be practical and suitable for the climate. This statement loosely appears in his first preface in 1833, and becomes more articulated from that point on, until Sviyazev becomes a fierce apologist of the national styles in the 1840s. In his preface to Konstantin Ton's drawings, he specifically outlined the impracticality of the Classicist architecture in Russian climate and even sarcastically compared the architecture of classicism in Russia with the Italian beauty who came to the country, "a little upset, often sick, can't live a single day without a doctor and his medicine, but how fancy she is: eats pasta with horseradish, [...] wears an Italian hat with a fur coat, etc., etc.!!!"[53] It is interesting that August Schlegel, in his *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, also resorted to the argument of 'climatic kinship,' arguing for the equivalence of Gothic and Classical architecture and defending the right of Northern European peoples to admire the Gothic architectural system as no less perfect than the Classical one, and in some ways even more native.[54] In addition, Sviyazev, as a practitioner, argues in all his texts about the appropriateness of certain styles or elements, which, paradoxically, brings him in line with the views of Pugin to some extent. Pugin also advocated a national architectural style, which, in his case, was Gothic, and, at the same time, insisted that architecture should never depart "from essential construction for the sake of ornament."[55]

The influence of German culture on the Russian intellectual life of this time is evident. Russian students studying in German universities and prominent Russian writers who translated German literature served as conduits of German philosophical ideas. German works, including philosophical treatises, were actively read in the higher circles of Russian

society (firstly, in the capital). Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to believe that the ideas of Romanticism in Russia, and in particular in Russian architecture and architectural criticism, were borrowed from Germany. Literary scholar Maria Virolainen notes that Russian literature of this time almost simultaneously assimilated different ideas of German, French and English Romanticism, with the result that Russian Romantic literature did not establish a specific character.[56] In the same way, the ideas of Romanticism in architecture and architectural criticism, although based on German ideas, still relied on sources from other countries—this can be clearly proven by references to Europe-wide scientific and philosophical works in *The Artistic Newspaper*.[57]

While English Romanticism penetrated Russian culture, primarily through literature and especially the work of Lord Byron, Russian architectural theory was only indirectly aware of the main tendencies of English architecture. Unlike the works of Schelling and the Schlegel brothers, the works of Augustus Pugin, *Contrasts*, as well as *The True Principles*, do not seem to have reached Russia at that time, and were not translated into Russian until later. Yet, a comparison reveals an interesting similarity between Pugin's ideas and those of Gogol and, especially, Chaadayev. Curious parallels emerge: Russia had its own dispute on styles, which was clearly political in nature, and its own visionary who was drawn to Catholicism and Gothicism in search of a higher ideal (Chaadayev). In this respect, the situation in Russia is much more analogous to the situation in England than in Germany, where there was no politically motivated dispute on styles as such, and the philosophical discourse on architecture was rather abstract. At the same time, the need to search for a national style, which would be comfortable, organic and natural, and would embody the history of the nation, was circulating in all three countries in the early nineteenth century.

To sum up, many ideas do in fact relate Russian writers, theorists, and critics of the 1820s–1840s to the Western European Romantics. This is the idealisation of the past, which such Romantics as Novalis or Robert Southey sought to relate to social development;[58] and a broader, democratic view of the concepts of beauty and style, formulated in *Fantasies on Art* by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder[59] and, more specifically in its application to architecture, by August Schlegel; and a turn towards spiritual, religious enquiry, towards Christianity and morality, often fuelled by the public debates about religion that were unfolding at this time in England and Russia, for example. Thus, in the spiritual and philosophical quests of Gogol and Chaadaev, religion also plays a major role, influencing their views on architecture, and the theses about the diversity of beauty echo the ideas about the permissibility of the coexistence of multiple architectural styles where appropriate.

Nevertheless, there are also features that clearly distinguish Russian architectural criticism of the 1820s and 1830s from that of its European counterparts. From the very beginning its character is both practical and polemical. Despite individual divergences, the authors were quite unanimous in their ideas about how to escape the deplorable state in which architecture had stalled by the 1830s, and the difference in judgements does not lead to extensive polemics between the authors themselves, as all were united by the same 'opponent': down-to-earth, utilitarian, 'barrack-like' late Classicism. While Classicism was also criticised in both England and Germany, in Russia its criticism acquired a special acuteness. The question about architecture and its further development becomes one of the occasions for a debate about Russia's historical path, a debate which, under the conditions of Nicholas I's regime, could lead to serious problems for those whose point of view differed significantly from that of the state. Chaadaev's fate is an extreme case, but both Gogol and Kukolnik had to deal with censorship and exercise caution. There is no record of any problems with censorship for Sviyazev or Bykovsky, which may be because their statements were not intended for a wide readership and were practical rather than polemical in nature. Nevertheless, the sharpness of the disputation, coupled with a general fatigue with the architecture of late classicism, explains why Eclecticism was so warmly welcomed at an early stage: diversity was considered

a particularly important virtue. It can be hypothesised that this determined the peculiarities of the further development of Eclecticism in Russia, later it would experience some influence of the Slavophile-Westerner dispute, but this would not have a decisive impact on it, and the relative equality of different styles, so warmly welcomed in the 1830s, would persist for a long time.

References

1 Sergei Khachaturov, Anna Korndorf, *Готика Просвещения* [The Enlightenment Gothic] (Moscow: In Artibus, 2017).

2 Svetozar Zavarikhin, *Русская архитектурная критика: критика в контексте архитектурного процесса до 1917 года* [Russian Architectural Criticism] (Doctor of Sciences dissertation), Saint Petersburg State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, 1991.

3 Evgenia Kirichenko, Архитектурные теории XIX века в России [Architectural Theories of the Nineteeth Century in Russia] (Moscow, Leningrad: Iskusstvo, 1986), 61.

4 Pyotr Chaadayev, "Философические письма" ["Philosophical Letters"], in Полное собрание сочинений и избранные письма: в 2-х т. [Complete Works and Selected Letters: in 2 volumes] (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 441-443.

5 Eileen M. Curran, "'The Foreign Quarterly Review' on Russian and Polish Literature," The Slavonic and East European Review 40, no. 94 (1961): 206-219.

6 "Present State of Art in Russia", in The Foreign Quarterly Review, 20 (1838): 328–339.

7 Anne Nesbet, "'The Building to Be Built': Gogol, Belyi, Eisen stein, and the Architecture of the Future," The Russian Review 65, No. 3 (2006): 491-511.

8 William Keyes, "Meditations on Form and Meaning in Gogol's "On Present-Day Architecture"", Russian History 37, no. 4 (January 2010): 378-388.

9 Zavarikhin, Русская архитектурная критика [Russian Architectural Criticism], 59.

10 Svetlana Voloshina, Власть и журналистика. Николай I, Андрей Краевский и другие [Power and Journalism. Nicholas I, Andrei Kraevsky and others] (Moscow: Editing house "Delo," 2022), 29–30.

11 Andrei Punin, Архитектура Петербурга середины и второй половины XIX века. 1830–1860-е годы: ранняя эклектика [Architecture of St Petersburg in the middle and second half of the nineteenth century. 1830–860s: early Eclecticism] (Saint Petersburg: Kriga, 2009), 90.

12 Stated as 'Khudozhestvennaya Gazeta in The Foreign Quarterly Review; current translation by me.

13 "Present State of Art in Russia," in The Foreign Quarterly Review 20 (1838): 329.

14 Nikolai Belyaev, Художественная газета Нестора Кукольника и Александра Струговщикова: указатель содержания (1836-1838, 1840-1841 гг.) [The Artistic newspaper by Nestor Kukolnik and Alexander Strugovshchikov: index of contents (1836–1838, 1840–1841)], St Petersburg Library of Russian Academy of Sciences, 2013.

15 "Новые постройки в Петергофе" ["New Buildings in Peterhof"], in Художественная газета [The Artistic Newspaper] no. 11 (1837): 115.

16 Ibid., 116.

17 Hereinafter the author's orthography is preserved.

18 Ibid., 116.

19 Elena Annenkova, Гоголь и русское общество [Gogol and Russian society] (Rostok, 2012, 95).

20 Nikolai Gogol, Об архитектуре нынешнего времени [On the Architecture of the Present Time], in Гоголь Н. В. Полное собрание сочинений. Том 8: Статьи [Gogol N. V. Complete works, Vol. 8: Articles](Moscow, Leningrad: Publishing House of the USSR Academy of Sciences, 1952), 61-62.

21 Ibid., 66.

22 Ibid., 64.

23 Ibid., 71.

24 August Wilhelm Schlegel, Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, translated into English by John Black, Esq. (New York: AMS Press, 1965), 23.

25 "Новые постройки в Петергофе" ["New Buildings in Peterhof"], 116.

26 Gogol, Об архитектуре нынешнего времени [On the Architecture of the Present Time], 64.

27 Punin, Архитектура Петербурга середины и второй половины XIX века. 1830–1860-е р. годы: ранняя эклектика [Architecture of St Petersburg in the Middle and Second half of the Nineteenth Century. 1830-1860s: Early Eclecticism], 36.

28 Mikhail Bykovsky, О неосновательности мнения, что архитектура греческая, или греко-римская, может быть всеобщею и что красота архитектуры основывается на пяти известных чиноположениях [On the unfoundedness of the opinion that the Greek, or Greco-Roman architecture, can be universal], Moscow, 1834.

29 Ibid.

30 Pyotr Chaadayev, "Об архитектуре" [On the Architecture], in Телескоп [The Telescope], no. 11 (1832): 351-352.

31 Mikhail Lemke, Николаевские жандармы и литература 1826–1855 гг.: По подлинным делам Третьего отделения Собственной Его Императоского Величества Канцелярии [Nicholas I's Gendarmes and Literature 1826–1855: On the Original Cases of the Third Department of His Imperial Majesty's Own Chancellery] (Knigovek Book Club, 2019), 432.

32 Ibid., 448.

33 Chaadayev, "Об архитектуре" [On the Architecture], in Полное собрание сочинений и избранные письма, т. 1 [Complete Works and Selected Letters, vol. 1], 441.

34 Ibid., 441.

35 Kirichenko, Архитектурные теории XIX века в России [Architectural Theories of the Nineteeth Century in Russia], 61.

36 Chaadayev, "Об архитектуре" [On the Architecture], 442-443.

37 Ibid., 443.

38 Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, The True Principles of Pointed, or Christian Architecture (London: W. Hughes, 1841), 2.

39 Gogol. Об архитектуре нынешнего времени [On the Architecture of the Present Time], 64.

40 Pyotr Chaadayev, "Ф. Шеллингу" ["To F. Schelling"], in Полное собрание сочинений и избранные письма, том 2 [Complete Works and Selected Letters, vol. 2] (Moscow: Nauka, 1991), 75.

41 Friedrich Schelling. Философия искусства [The Philosophy of Art], translated into Russian by P. S. Popov (Moscow: Mysl, 1966), 289.

42 Andrei Zhurin, "У истоков перехода от классицизма к эклектике: Шеллинг об архитектуре" [At the Origin of the Transition from Classicism to Eclecticism: Schelling on Architecture], Культурное наследие Сибири [Cultural Heritage of Siberia] 4, no. 22 (2017): 77.

43 Schelling. Философия искусства [The Philosophy of Art], 97.

44 Elena Borisova. Русская архитектура в эпоху романтизма [Russian Architecture in the Romanticism era] (Moscow: D. Bulanin, 1997), 8.

45 Ibid., 12.

46 Ibid., 16.

47 Kirichenko, Архитектурные теории XIX века в России [Architectural Theories of the Nineteeth Century in Russia], 114.

48 Ivan Sviyazev, Руководство к архитектуре, составленное для студентов Горного института архитектором Свиязевым [Guide to Architecture, compiled for students of the Mining Institute by Architect Sviyazev](Saint Petersburg: Konrad Wiegenberg's Typography, 1833), 20.

49 Ibid., 22.

50 Ivan Sviyazev. Учебное руководство к архитектуре, для

преподавания в Горном институте, Главном инженерном училище, Училище гражданских инженеров, Кондукторской школе Путей сообщения, Морском учебном экипаже,Технологическом институте, в Школе земледелия и горнозаводских наук графини Строгановой и в других учебных заведениях [Textbook of Architecture, for teaching at the Mining Institute] (St Petersburg: V. Polyakov, 1841), 3.

51 Ibid., 4.

52 Ibid., 6.

53 Ivan Sviyazev, Практические чертежи по устройству церкви Введения во храм Пресвятой Богородицы в Семеновском полку в Петербурге, составленные и исполненные архитектором Е.И.В.и профессором архитектуры императорской Академии художеств и членом разных иностранных Академий Константином Тоном [Practical Drawings for the Construction of the Church of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Semyonovsky Regiment in St Petersburg], Moscow, 1845, 2-4.

54 August Wilhelm Schlegel, Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, 22-23.

55 Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, The True Principles of Pointed, or Christian Architecture, 8.

56 Maria Virolainen, Русский романтизм в проекции на европейскую романтическую литературу [Russian Romanticism in projection on European Romantic literature], in Мир русского слова [The World of Russian Word], no. 4 (2015), 59.

57 Belyaev, Художественная газета Нестора Кукольника и Александра Струговщикова: указатель содержания (1836–1838, 1840–1841 гг.) [The Artistic newspaper by Nestor Kukolnik and Alexander Strugovshchikov: index of contents (1836–1838, 1840–1841)].

58 Alexander Dmitriev, "Теория западноевропейского романтизма" [The Theory of Western European Romanticism], in Литературные манифесты западноевропейских романтиков [Literary Manifestos of the Western European Romantics] (Moscow: Moscow University Press, 1980), 11.

59 Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, "A Few Words on Universality, Tolerance and Love of Humanity in Art," in Литературные манифесты западноевропейских романтиков [Literary Manifestos of the Western European Romantics], translated into Russian by unknown translator, 73.