

Title: Russian Racial Attitudes Before Pushkin

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By now, most scholars have accepted the fact that Alexander Pushkin, father of Russian literature, was of mixed (or bi)-racial background, and that he was descended from African as well as Russian-Slavonic ancestors. Thus, to cite Pushkin's African heritage is to cite his pride in being descended from African people. Yet, before we can assess the racial interplay between Pushkin and his contemporaries, or to examine how his African identity emerged in his work, we need to trace, historically, how and when Russian people developed attitudes about African people, or how and when Russians began to see themselves in terms of a "race." This paper will argue that race consciousness as such resulted from the influence of Europeanization as it developed during the Enlightenment era in the 17th and 18th centuries. Race prejudice was introduced in Russia at this time, coinciding with the birth of Pushkin.

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