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REFLECTION

OF THE WORLDVIEW OF THE CLASSICS OF ORIENTAL POETRY IN
THE WORK OF RUSSIAN POETS

REFLEJO DE LA COSMOVISIÓN DE LOS CLÁSICOS DE LA POESÍA ORIENTAL EN LA OBRA DE LOS POETAS RUSOS

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ABSTRACT

The active penetration of Eastern poetry in Europe began in the XVIII century, although works such as the German translation of Saadi's Bustan were known then. For two centuries, the West has been getting acquainted with the masterpieces of Rudaki, Nizami, Firdowsi, Khayyam, Hafiz and other Eastern poets; the Russian cultural environment was no exception. Thus, the Eastern philosophical and religious systems became at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries the basis for the works of such Russian poets as I. Bunin, V. Bryusov, V. Khlebnikov, K. Balmont and many others. Each one took various facets of Eastern poetry, and with their own styles, developed original means of expression, which enriched the national poetic environment. Taking this into consideration, the aim of this article is to analyze the reflection of the worldview of the classics of Eastern poetry in the work of Russian poets.

Keywords: Eastern poetry, philosophical thought, russian poets.

RESUMEN

La penetración activa de la poesía oriental en Europa comenzó en el siglo XVIII aunque entonces se conocían obras como la traducción al alemán del bustán de Saadi. Durante dos siglos, Occidente se ha estado familiarizando con las obras maestras de Rudaki, Nizami, Firdowsi, Khayyam, Hafiz y otros poetas orientales; el entorno cultural ruso no fue la excepción. Así, los sistemas filosóficos y religiosos orientales se convirtieron a finales del siglo XIX y principios del siglo XX en la base de las obras de poetas rusos como I. Bunin, V. Bryusov, V. Khlebnikov, K. Balmont y muchos más. Cada uno tomó de la poesía oriental diversas facetas, y con sus estilos propios, desarrollaron medios de expresión originales lo que enriquecieron el entorno poético nacional. Tomando esto en consideración, el objetivo de este artículo es analizar el reflejo de la cosmovisión de los clásicos de la poesía oriental en la obra de los poetas rusos.

Palabras clave: Poesía oriental, pensamiento filosófico, poetas rusos.

INTRODUCTION

In the eighteenth century, English interest in exploring the Eastern world increased tremendously. Orientalism was recognized as a cultural phenomenon and it had a great influence on architecture, gardening, art and literature too. As for the poets and writers, the oriental environment created a different mood and new modes of expression that inspired them to compose works with the eastern motifs (Mamarasulova & Mamarasulova, 2020). This was extended to European literature and such authors as Montesquieu, Voltaire, A. Hamilton, S. Johnson, D. Hawkesworth, and D. Ridley turned to the Oriental novella. In the case of Russian writers the Oriental fairy tale found its reflection in the works of A.S. Pushkin and V.A. Zhukovsky, while the Eastern novella was a genre used by such well-known Russian writers as M.M. Kheraskov, N.I. Novikov, I.A. Krylov, A.N. Radischev, O.I. Senkovsky, D.P. Oznobishin, A.A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, F.V. Bulgarin, N.G. Chernyshevsky, I.T. Turgenev, L.N. Tolstoy and others (Allamurodova & Rakhmanov, 2019).

In the case of Russian poetry, the interaction with Eastern classics have to be analyzed as a complex and multifaceted historical and literary process. Attempts to comprehend its meaning and course “in passing”, when analyzing the work of one or another Orientalist poet, taken outside the general cause-and-effect series and considered in a closed cycle of his individual connections with the classics of the East and often lead to a misunderstanding or inaccurate perception of the philosophical component. Russian poets, one way or another turned to the eastern artistic heritage, worked in a different national world, in a different social dimension than their great eastern predecessors. But the “stream of times” and socio-philosophical, moral, national differences, dividing the artists of the past and the present, Russia and the East, did not destroy the creative bridges between their souls and minds.

Even before Goethe’s “West-Eastern Divan” was enthusiastically accepted in Russia, the names of the classics of the East, who inspired its author, became known and revered in the Russian cultural environment. In 1796 Saadi’s work was first published in Russian. Around the same time, Radishchev said that he was ready in his philosophical treatise “to write off as an example some passages from Gulistan”.

In two issues of the journal Vestnik Evropy for 1811, an article by S. Uvarov “Thoughts about the establishment of the Asian Academy in Russia” was placed, where the author conducts a deep and meaningful conversation about oriental poetry, its features and the attitude of Russian literature to it: “... We can say that the field of Eastern poetry

is still waiting for an industrious hand, which, having processed it, would show us the genius of the East in all the splendor that belongs to it, and thereby expand the scope of the verbal sciences. The author of the article not only reveals a very deep knowledge of Eastern poetry, striving to make it the property of his compatriots, but also stubbornly pursues the idea of an undoubted enrichment of Russian literature, introduced into the mainstream of the global, including Eastern poetic traditions that interest him primarily, which he considers the most ancient and “original”.

However, as pointed out by Rannit (1973), the complex period in Russian poetry between 1900 and 1917 could almost be called the Persian era of Russian poetry in terms of stylistic affinities. It was characterized by ornate diction, ecstatic praise of erotic as well as Sufiliken’ mystic love, rhetorical and didactic speech, obscure symbolism, and an involuted, arabesque delicacy of design in structure as well as in iconic ideas which reminds one of Persian illuminated manuscripts. This Russian poetry has a special affinity with Persian miniatures in the sensual pleasure derived from the word as such, from its color, combination of sounds, and power to convey the emotional quality of a situation, to which the elaborate wording and the refined form contribute.

Being a subject little studied, the objective of this article is to analyze the reflection of the world view of the classics of Oriental poetry in the work of Russian poets. In order to accomplish this, documents, historical facts and works of some of the most notable Russian poets are analyzed.

DEVELOPMENT

Remaining a nationally distinctive phenomenon, Russian Orientalism acquired the greater originality, the deeper was its penetration into the world of the East and its artistic values. The deep attention of Russian oriental poetry was manifested in the constant artistic “research” of the aesthetic world of the peoples of the East, their classics, mythology, and folklore. The images, onomastics and symbolism of the ancient Eastern sacral and philosophical postulates become the lexical, terminological, artistic fund of the thinking and creative Russia.

Scattered and private manifestations of interest in the poetic culture of the East by the end of the first decade of the 19th century logically led to the idea of the need for some generalizations of experience and the development of a kind of interaction program. An important and very essential part of this program was a fairly wide acquaintance of the Russian intelligentsia of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the inner spiritual-philosophical

and religious life of the East dozens of books, essays, articles appear about various Eastern philosophical systems, ideas, creeds and although there are disputes about their significance for the development of world culture, their understanding and artistic refraction, their role in enriching the Russian national spiritual life was noticeable. Informative reviews are complemented by serious reviews of books and works on Buddhism, Vedic teachings, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and other philosophical and religious systems.

In the journals of the second half of the 19th century, both major phenomena of the literature of the East and imitations of them are published. In "Notes of the Fatherland" Al-Hariri's "Dinariyyat" and an article about "Gulistan" are published, in the "Library for Reading" - a retelling of parts of "Shahnameh". In this series, the imitation of the Russian poet and translator Mikhail Larionovich Mikhailov published in *Sovremennik* to the famous Azerbaijani poet Mirza-Shafi Vazekh, published in *Sovremennik*, arouses interest. M. Mikhailov's poetic imitation of "Song of Mirza Shaffi" is imbued with the spirit of freedom-loving Azerbaijani poet. Also, the Russian poet is attracted by the theme of the emancipation of women, which is not traditional for the Muslim East, captured in the sharp appeals of the Azerbaijani poet. Let's see an example of the above (Mikhailov, 1855, p. 396):

Open the cover! Don't hide yourself!

After all, roses do not hide in your garden ...

... You were created to blossom and shine under the sun.

Stop covering your face with a veil!...

The theme of removing the veil, begun by Saadi and continued by Mirza-Shafi Vazekh, would later become one of the main themes in Russian oriental poetry of the 1920s (S. Yesenin, G. Sannikov and others). Philosophical views and freedom-loving ideas of the classics of oriental poetry are quite strong, subtle, and poetic in the oriental imitations of Afanasy Fet, who claims that "what is eternal is human". A. Fet went down in the history of Russian oriental poetry as one of its most prominent representatives, primarily because he managed to penetrate the world of Saadi and Hafiz, understand the philosophy of their worldview and precisely express those thoughts and emotions that continued to excite people even through the centuries and different way of life.

"Two undoubted truths" attract Fet to the philosophy of the classics of the East: the idea of the originality of Eastern poetry and the understanding of its eternity in art. The lyrical power of oriental poetry, the colorfulness and exoticism of its images, the suddenness of comparisons,

metaphoricality amazed and attracted Fet. For example (Fet, 1959, p. 621):

Hafiz is killed. And what killed him.-

Your black eye, child, you would ask.

Cruel black! How he shoots arrows! Wherever he throws them - everywhere the grave.

In a note to these two bayts, explaining that we are talking about the "black eye of a beauty", compared with a cruel black man smashing arrows, Fet exclaims: "Here is a true jump from the 7th floor, but what a charm!" (Fet, 1959, p. 621). Then, even though Fet met Hafiz through a translation of the German poet Daumer, his contemporaries already noted the originality, unity of the content and style of his imitations. But there is another aspect in Fet's imitation-philosophical work. The philosophical spirit of Eastern poetry, masterfully conveyed by Fet, found a wide response, understanding and was in tune with the moods of a part of Russian society of that period.

Interest in the East, in Eastern philosophical thought and Eastern poetry increased at the beginning of the twentieth century to such an extent that there is the possibility of various kinds of hoaxes under Oriental poetry. In 1901, the collection "Strophes of Niruzam" appeared, with *"approving reviews of literary criticism, which were seriously understood merits and demerits of the poems of the Persian poet"* (Masanov, 1963, p. 110), while their author was Mazurin, who "reversed" his surname.

At the same time, ancient and later Oriental poetry continued to enrich the work of great artists at that time, who developed the Pushkin and Fetov line of interaction between different national poetic cultures. In the literature of the Eastern Renaissance - in the lyrics of Hafiz and Khayyam, in the works of Nizami and Firdowsi, they heard not a simple call to thoughtless pleasure, but a call to reveal the meaning of life as a joy bestowed by nature, for to feel like a person, to historical optimism and spiritual firmness.

Thus, Oriental philosophical and religious systems, being refracted in sharp collisions of Russian social and literary existence, become at the beginning of the 20th century the basis of the works of I. Bunin, V. Bryusov, V. Khlebnikov, K. Balmont, D. Merezhkovsky, VI. Soloviev and others. Oriental classical poetry was widely and peculiarly "re-presented" in the work of K. Balmont. Poems and whole cycles, imitations of Omar Khayyam, Sufi poetry left their mark on many of the poet's poems and determined his creative connections with the aesthetic and philosophical thought of the East.

A deep acquaintance with the classical poetry of the East had a serious impact on the development of Bunin's talent as an orientalist. Bunin's oriental essays are full of quotes and sayings from Saadi. From the poems of Saadi, Bunin-poet borrowed some allegories, traditional images of "Rose of Shiraz" (Bunin, 1966), and motifs and maxims of "Saadi's Testament" for example.

From Eastern poetry, Bunin usually chooses only those motifs and images that do not contradict his own aesthetic system. So, in "Imru-ul-Qais" the main idea of the poem is affirmed precisely on the basis of Bunin's creative perception of artistic images and poetic symbols of the Arab poet (whose name is given to the work), which help to reveal the lyrical oriental character: "*Here the wind blows from the north and south - He won't notice a cute trail*"; "*Night, like a camel, lay down and removed the sacrum from the head*" (Bunin, 1966, p. 306). The first of these images is an almost exact repetition of the words of Imru-ul-Qais, used by Bunin in one of the editions as an epigraph to the poem of the same name. The theme itself and the method of its aesthetic embodiment, as well as a number of visual means, were borrowed by Bunin from the Arab poet of the 11th century.

Another Russian futurist poet V. Khlebnikov creatively uses the plots and images of another oriental classic, the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi. In the large-scale epic poem "Children of the Otter", which affirms Khlebnikov's cardinal idea - the unity of East and West, in the chapter (sail) about the campaigns in Asia of Alexander the Great, the poet referring to wide historical material, used Nizami's famous poem "Iskander-name", citing in particular a retelling of part of the poem of the great Azerbaijani poet. This is evidenced by the well-known literary critic Nikolai Leonidovich Stepanov, noting that Khlebnikov used the book of V. Grigoriev "Russia and Asia", where, in particular, a retelling of part of this poem by Nizami is given (Khlebnikov, 1930).

Khlebnikov borrows from Nizami elements of the historical plot and facets of the characters, contributing to the statement of the main problems of his poem. Khlebnikov's fascination with the motifs of Nizami's work turned out to be enduring; in 1911, based on the well-known poem "Leyli and Majnun" he created his own epic narrative essentially under the same heading, only in a different transcription: "Medlum and Leyli". Another example of the deep respect for the work of the Azerbaijani poet is when Khlebnikov called Nizami's epic "the best story of the Aramaeans" (Khlebnikov, 1930). It is extremely important that in search of heroes, plots and ways of expressing his ideas, Khlebnikov turns to the vast spiritual world of the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami.

The roll call and polemic with an Eastern poet can sometimes be unconscious, sudden: the artist's inner answers to the questions of being itself suddenly become answers to the questions of medieval Eastern sages, set centuries ago in a different language, but living in the artistic consciousness of their descendants.

In the "Iranian Song" by Khlebnikov (1960), upon careful reading, we can notice familiar, albeit altered, Khayyam motifs:

... But when the turn comes,
My meat will become dust
And when the banners are in bulk
The crowd will carry, rejoicing,
I wake up, trampled into the ground,
Yearning with a dusty skull ...

Even forgetting for a moment that we have an "Iranian song" before us, you suddenly begin to feel in this passionate explosion of love of life a kind of roll call with an ancient oriental poet, whose wise ruby about life and death "show through" the lines of the "Iranian song". The passage quoted by Khlebnikov is somewhat perceived as a "continuation" of the thoughts of the Eastern classic Khayyam.

The oriental-poetic influence was also reflected in the work of V. Bryusov. A significant place in his poetry is occupied by the cycles "India", "Persia", "Arabs", etc. Together with Bunin and Khlebnikov, Bryusov at that time acts as the successor of the Pushkin-Fetov humanistic tradition of the interaction of poetic cultures. By naming his Indian cycle "In the spirit of the lyric poets of the XI-XII centuries", Bryusov really conveys the spirit, not the letter, of Eastern poetry. In his Persian Quatrains, Bryusov reproduces not only the form of the rubaiyat, but also the very tone, meaning, spirit and, in general, the philosophy of Omar Khayyam's poetry. Let's see an example (Bryusov, 1973, p. 30):

Isn't the earth full of wise men everywhere?
So let me be swallowed up by the depths of the earth,
And the ashes of the singer who praised the wine, mixed with clay,
It will appear to you as a jug for drunken wine.

These poems are of interest not only as a subtle example of interaction with the eastern predecessor, who in his own way affirmed the idea of the regularity of the cycle of life and death, but also as an experience with which the

poems of other poets of a later period, who inherited both the Khayyam and Bryusov traditions, echo.

V. Bryusov included his imitations of Eastern poets in the book of poems "Experiments in metrics and rhythm, in euphony and consonance, in stanza and forms", published in Moscow in 1918. This book by Bryusov was more than a simple imitation of foreign rhythms, stanzas and euphonies. It was not only an imitation of the form, but also the comprehension of ideas, philosophy, spiritual impulses of oriental geniuses. A man of the East, as a person, his soul, his passions and philosophy, his humanism and ability to step over his age - this is what attracts Russian poets to the Eastern classics.

The defining attitude to the Eastern classics was defined by Yesenin (1966), as vital: "*Understand you too, he convinced G. Benislavskaya, who dissuaded him from a trip to Persia, that I was going to study. I want to go to Shiraz and I think I will definitely go. All the best Persian lyricists were born there. And it is not for nothing that Muslims say: if he does not sing, then he is not from Shushu, if he does not write, then he is not from Shiraz*" (p. 204). Thus, Yesenin himself establishes the "code" and hierarchy of his relationship with the Eastern classics as the interaction of the "student" and "teachers". Yesenin, as his contemporaries testify, repeatedly showed close and deeply conscious attention to the poetic heritage of the East, especially during the creation of Persian Motifs.

The well-known Lermontov scholar, poet V. Manuilov, reproducing some details of Yesenin's stay in Baku, in September 1924, wrote: "*Once in the morning we went for a walk through the old quarters of Baku, which still retained its oriental appearance... Yesenin was fascinated by the East and regretted that he had not read much about its history and had a poor idea of the essence of Islam. He asked me about Sunnis and Shiites*" (Manuylov, 1972, p. 181). Verzhbitsky (1958), also recalled: "*I came across a volume of 'Persian Lyricists of the X-XY Centuries' translated by Academician Korsh.... And then he was in the hands Yesenin, who no longer wanted to part with him. Something deep fascinated Sergei in these verses*" (p. 164). In addition, based on the differences in the transcription of the names of Eastern poets in the Korsh collection and in Persian Motifs, another memoirist, Roizman (1973), makes a fair conclusion that Yesenin "*read many other translations from Persian, Arabic ... before creating his own lyrical masterpiece*": (p. 75)

CONCLUSIONS

Remaining a nationally distinctive phenomenon, Russian Oriental poetry acquired the greater originality, the deeper

was its penetration into the world of the East and its artistic values. This penetration was not a simple worship of the classics of ancient oriental art, it was an enrichment; hence the continuous echoes of humanistic motives and images, ideas, and heroes, hence the development in Russian poetry of those specific forms of reflection of a foreign world, which, for all their diversity, also reveal the general laws of beauty and harmony.

Joining this world, Russian poets felt their roots in it. They took in it what was close to them, but at the same time did not reject, but sought to comprehend and respectfully reproduce what was a feature of the being or spirit of the Eastern peoples and their poets. It has been a way of spiritual communication through the ages.

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