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ORIENTAL MOTIFS IN THE NOVEL “EUGENE ONEGIN”

BY ALEXANDER PUSHKIN

Rahimova E.R.

It is known that the East and the Eastern literature were in the centre of constant attention of Russian readers during the Golden Age of Russian poetry. The researchers of the oriental theme in Alexander Pushkin’s works have noted his deep awareness of the Eastern literature and culture. Pushkin’s novel in verse started by him after his first trip to the North Caucasus was completed after the trip to Turkish Arzurum. Oriental motifs in the novel “Eugene Onegin” by Pushkin are analysed in the article. These motives occupies a certain place in the ideological and artistic structure of the novel in verse, which turned to be a kind of connecting link in Pushkin’s creative comprehension of the East, an important niche between his romantic and realistic works.

Keywords: Alexander Pushkin, “Eugene Onegin”, novel, East, motif.

ВОСТОЧНЫЕ МОТИВЫ В РОМАНЕ

А.С. ПУШКИНА «ЕВГЕНИЙ ОНЕГИН»

Рагимова Э.Р.

Известно, что Восток и восточная литература были в центре внимания русских читателей в эпоху золотого века русской поэзии. Исследователи восточной темы в творчестве А.С. Пушкина отмечали его глубокую осведомленность о литературе и культуре Востока. Роман Пушкина «Евгений Онегин», начатый им после первой поездки на Северный Кавказ, был завершён после посещения турецкого Эрзурума. В статье анализируются восточные мотивы в романе Пушкина «Евгений Онегин». Эти мотивы занимают определенное место в идейно-художественной структуре романа в стихах, который оказался своеобразным связующим звеном в творческом осмыслении Востока Пушкиным, важной нишей между его романтическими и реалистическими произведениями.

Ключевые слова: А.С. Пушкин, «Евгений Онегин», роман, Восток, МОТИВ.

There are many articles and monographs dedicated to the novel in verse “Eugene Onegin”. This literary work is regarded as the “encyclopaedia of Russian life”, and the subsequent researchers mainly add something and expand this thought of the critic [1, с. 248].

It should be noted that Pushkin was under the impression of his trips and travel to the East both when starting his work on the novel in verse in 1823 and when completing it during the Boldino autumn in 1830, and it could not but effect the text of “Eugene Onegin”.

It is known that it was during Pushkin’s time that Russia started the consistent study and exploration of the East in general and Eastern literature in particular. It was associated with the opening of departments of oriental languages in the leading educational institutions of St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kazan and Kharkov. The scientific and popular science articles of the faculty members published in magazines and newspapers described different Eastern regions, the life and customs of the locals, their culture, history and literature. The acquaintance with those publications along with his own observations during the above-mentioned travels to the Caucasus determined the breadth of the oriental themes in “Eugene Onegin”, covering such geographical regions as the Caucasus, Crimea, Persia, Turkey, Kalmykia, Egypt, China, Africa and Middle Asia. Such a wide range of coverage of oriental themes, in our opinion, is motivated by the fact that the formation of Pushkin’s realism is inextricably connected with his creative exploration of the East, and therefore, the study of the eastern pages of “Eugene Onegin” can provide additional material for the study of Pushkin’s literary works. At the same time, due to the fact, that the oriental themes appear on the pages of Pushkin’s novel mostly spontaneously, the oriental materials in this article are grouped and analysed according to the respective regions.

As noted above, Pushkin’s novel in verse started by him immediately after his first trip to the North Caucasus was completed immediately after the trip to Arzurum

(Erzurum), the route of which included both the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. It determined the fact that the North Caucasian and Caucasian themes constantly appear in the stanzas of “Eugene Onegin”, in its various chapters. Pushkin’s first reference to this topic is found right in the first chapter of “Eugene Onegin” written between May 9 and October 22, 1823, that is a year after the poet’s trip to the North Caucasus. Therefore, it seems quite logical that it is in this chapter that Pushkin recalls his trip and its main creative output, namely his poem “The prisoner of the Caucasus”. We are talking about the fifty-seventh stanza of the first chapter that, in particular, reads as follows:

Замечу кстати: все поэты –
Любви мечтательной друзья.
Бывало, милые предметы
Мне снились, и душа моя
Их образ тайный сохранила:
Их после муза оживила:
Так я, беспечен, воспевал
И деву гор, мой идеал,
И пленниц берегов Салгира.

*And by the way, the poet’s mind
Reveres the dreamy love, that’s why
The lovely things, I used to find,
Appeared to me in dreams, and I
These covert images retained,
And let my Muse to animate:
Thus, highland virgin I did praise,
Who drew me to a great amaze,
And captives of the Salgir river... [6]*

It is quite telling that Pushkin mentioned “The prisoner of the Caucasus” or, more precisely, its main character, in the preface opening the first edition of the first chapter of the novel in verse dated 1825: “The forward-thinking critics will notice, of

course, the lack of a plan. Everyone is free to pass judgement upon the plan of a whole novel after reading the first chapter thereof. They will also start criticizing the antipoetic character of the main person resembling "The prisoner of the Caucasus"..." [1, c. 231]. It can be concluded from these lines that in the process of working on the first chapter of "Eugene Onegin", Pushkin, being impressed by his recent trip to the North Caucasus, compared his creative thoughts with his own impressions of the Caucasus. Those impressions turned out to be so vivid and memorable that to various extent appeared throughout the whole period of the poet's work on the novel. In our opinion, those impressions preconditioned the author's frequent use of epithets related to the realities of the North Caucasus. Thus, in the second chapter, Onegin's stallion was saddled. In the sixth chapter, introducing Vladimir Lensky's cornerman Zaretsky to the reader and somewhat ironically talking about his feats of arms in the cavalry Pushkin emphasized that Zaretsky had a Kalmyk stallion. And in the sixth chapter the poet included the description of a snow avalanche witnessed by him during his stay in the Caucasus and compared the falling of the mortally wounded Lensky with a block of snow:

Онегин выстрелил... Пробили

Часы урочные: поэт

Роняет, молча, пистолет,

На грудь кладет тихонько руку

И падает. Туманный взор

Изображает смерть, не муку.

Там медленно по скату гор,

На солнце искрами блистая,

Спадает глыба снеговая.

Onegin shot... The clock of fate

Has chimed for Lensky by grave sound.

He drops the pistol on the ground,

Then puts his hand on chest and slowly

Falls on the snow. His hazy eyes

*Not torture show, by death are glowing.
It's like a mass of snow and ice
With sparkles at the bright sun shining
From a hill's slope is slowly sliding [6].*

So, the Caucasian impressions from the trip of the 1820th were reflected not only in the literary works thematically dedicated to the Caucasus, but also in the first chapters of “Eugene Onegin”. The poet also refers to the Caucasian theme in the last chapters of the novel in verse, but there we can see the impact of the second journey to the Caucasus dated 1829. Let us recall that both the eighth chapter of the novel and “The fragments of Onegin’s journey” that was not included in its canonical text, were written by Pushkin after his trip to Arzurum, the route to which ran through the North Caucasus and Transcaucasia. Therefore the pages dedicated to the Caucasus reflected the poet’s new impressions after visiting that region. Thus, in the lyric digression, included by the author at the beginning of the eighth chapter, we read:

Как часто ласковая муза
Мне услаждала путь немой
Волшебством тайного рассказа!
Как часто по скалам Кавказа
Она Ленорой, при луне,
Со мной скакала на коне! [6]
*How often, with some secret story
She'd divert me, or her laughter,
On my long and silent journey;
And in Caucasian gorges, join me,
Like pale Lenore, in moonlit ride,
Galloping onwards at my side! [9]*

Another mentioning of the Caucasus is found in the thirty-first stanza of the eighth chapter, in which doctors recommend Onegin suffering the anguish of love to go to the Caucasian mineral waters:

Все шлют Онегина к врачам,

Те хором шлют его к водам.

They send Onegin to hakeem,

And this prescribes the spa to him [6].

Going beyond this lyric digression connected with the Caucasian theme, Pushkin also sends his literary character to this region in “The fragments of Onegin’s journey”. Let us recall that five verses of the “Fragments” are dedicated to Onegin’s trip to the Caucasus, two of them were included in the printed text, while three of them remained in the manuscript. It should also be noted that the Caucasian theme appears in the “Fragments” from the final lines of the verse describing the hero’s stay in the city of Astrakhan:

Каспийских вод берега сыпучи

Он оставляет в тот же час.

Тоска! Он едет на Кавказ [2].

The crumbly shores of Caspian waters

He forthwith leaves

Ennui! He fares on to the Caucasus [7, p. 263].

Therefore, Pushkin’s character goes from Astrakhan to the Caucasus, though not by sea. Although, as noted above, at the time of writing the “Fragments” (from October 2, 1829 to September 18, 1830), Pushkin visited the Caucasus twice, he never used the route running through Astrakhan along the western coast of the Caspian Sea, but it does not mean that he did not know about that road. Pushkin could learn about this Astrakhan road to the Caucasus from the Notes during a trip from Astrakhan to the Caucasus and Georgia in 1827 by N.N. (Moscow, 1829). The initials belong to N. Nefedyev (1800-1860), an Astrakhan resident and a talented person from the environment of Pushkin’s close friend Nikita Vsevolozhsky. The two copies of this book were in Pushkin’s personal library and served as one of literary sources for “A journey to Arzrum” [1, c. 22-28]. In addition, there is evidence that Pushkin planned to return from his Arzrum (Erzurum) trip along this route through Astrakhan (possibly under the impression of bright and laconic descriptions given by Nefedyev). It was mentioned by I.P. Radozhitsky, a correspondent of the newspaper

“Northern bee”, in his note “Letters from the Caucasian camp” dated August 10, 1829: “A.S. Pushkin was here today. He came to us from Arzrum and the next day continued his trip with the intention to visit the Caucasian Mineral Waters and then to go to Astrakhan through Mozdok and Kizlyar” [1, c. 29]. Although the poet changed his return route at the last moment and gave up the idea of visiting Astrakhan, this very intention of the author shortly before his work on the “Fragments” is very significant and to a certain extent explains the choice of the route of the trip to the Caucasus by “Eugene Onegin”.

When Onegin arrives in the Caucasus, the need for literary sources disappears, and the author, having sent his literary character along the route of his recent Caucasian trip, begins to endow him with his own observations from the travel notes made during his Arzurum trip. Thus, on the one hand, the “Fragments” turned out to be a kind of poetic outline of the future literary work called “A journey to Arzrum”, as its final version for publication in 1835 was to a certain extent prepared on the basis of corresponding stanzas from “Onegin”. And on the other hand, it became an illustration to the essay “Georgian military road” published in the eighth issue of “The Literary Gazette” in 1830. In other words, Pushkin, who endowed “Onegin” with his own Caucasian observations, used self-reference while working on the final version of “A journey to Arzrum”. It is not unexpected that the Caucasian pages of the “Fragments” turn out to be a kind of illustration for the relevant descriptions of “A journey”, which has many times been noted by the researchers of Pushkin’s novel and, therefore, there is no need to go back to this issue.

It is known that the East and Eastern literature were in the centre of constant attention of Russian readers during the Pushkin’s era. In this sense, Pushkin himself was no exception. Among other things, his interest to this part of the world was based on Pushkin’s genealogical roots that can be traced on his mother’s side to Africa, namely to Ethiopia, the native country of his great-grandfather Abram Hannibal. Pushkin was keenly interested in his great-grandfathers on both sides and often made them the heroes of his own literary works. Although, Pushkin’s great-grandfathers are

not mentioned among the characters of “Eugene Onegin”, the first chapter of the novel alludes to the African origin of the author:

Придет ли час моей свободы?
Пора, пора! — взываю к ней;
Брожу над морем, жду погоды,
Маню ветрила кораблей.
Под ризой бурь, с волнами споря,
По вольному распутью моря
Когда ж начну я вольный бег?
Пора покинуть скучный брег
Мне неприязненной стихии
И средь полуденных зыбей,
Под небом Африки моей,
Вздыхать о сумрачной России,
Где я страдал, где я любил,
Где сердце я похоронил.
*Would ever I hear freedom chiming?
It's time, it's time! – I want be free!
I stroll by sea shore weather minding
And beckon boats' sails in the sea.
When shall I leave this boring order?
Clothed by the storms with waves I'll quarrel,
And run to unrestricted span.
It's time to leave the boring land,
The elements to me unpleasing,
And in the midday's wavy space -
In Africa, my old folk's place,
To sigh of gloomy Russian being,
Of where I suffered, where I loved,
And where my heart I've given up [6].*

It is notable that a note to these lines published in the first edition of the novel and containing information about Abram Hannibal, was not included in the subsequent editions according to the author's will. It can be assumed that the popularity of Pushkin's poetry among his contemporaries made his ancestors famous too, due to which there was no need for such a note any more. From his own African roots, Pushkin moves on to the description of the life in the East, which at first glance is not related to the plot of his literary work. However, the constant mentioning of such words as the East and oriental (eastern) in different versions, e.g. "pampered in eastern luxury", "the East is indolently white", "the eastern system is smart", etc., as well as the inclusion in the text of the names of various Eastern ethnic groups (Bukharians, Kalmyks, Tatars) prove that the oriental theme occupies an important place in the structure of Pushkin's novel.

The breadth of Pushkin's oriental knowledge can also be seen in the fact that the stanzas of the novel mention such various Eastern regions as China, Turkey, Crimea, Middle East, Central Asia, Middle East.

The researchers of the eastern theme in Pushkin's works have repeatedly noted his deep awareness of the Eastern literature and culture. The above-mentioned examples related to the use of such symbols as a nightingale and a rose in "Eugene Onegin" also confirm this statement.

Thus, the novel in verse, according to Pushkin, should have begun with mentioning of the teaching of the Eastern sage Confucius, while it ends with a poetic line of the Persian poet Saadi, whose literary heritage was especially popular in Russia during the Pushkin's era. In our opinion, the importance of the eastern themes in the ideological and thematic structure of Pushkin's novel is proved by the fact that its last stanza contains reminiscence from the Eastern poetry, which actually sums up the work:

О те, которым в дружной встрече
Я строфы первые читал...
Иных уж нет, а те далече,
Как Сади некогда сказал.

Без них Онегин дорисован.

А та, с которой образован

Татьяны милый идеал...

О много, много Рок отъял! [6]

But of those, good friends, insistent,

To whom the first few lines were read...

Alas, now some are distant,

Some are no more, as Saadi said.

And yet my Onegin's etched.

And she, whose lines I sketched

For my Tatyana, long forsaken...

Ah, what treasures Fate has taken! [9]

Pushkin fancied the above-mentioned Saadi's line: "Some are distant, some are no more" long time ago and used it in the epigraph to his poem "The fountain of Bakhchisaray" that, in particular, reads as follows: "Many people, like me, visited this fountain, but some of them are no more, while others wander far away" [1, с. 175]. He even considered it more significant than the poem itself: "Just between us, "The fountain of Bakhchisaray" is rubbish, but its epigraph is charming" [1, с. 176]. In addition to this, there are also reminiscences of the above-mentioned Saadi's line in three other poems by Pushkin, including "To B.L. Davydov" (1821), "On the hills of Georgia..." (1829) and "The more the lyceum celebrates..." (1831), which points at the fact, that it had a certain impact on the poet. In light of this, Pushkin's desire to finish his main work with his favourite line is quite understandable, and it once again emphasizes the role of the East and eastern themes in the novel in verse "Eugene Onegin".

In Pushkin studies, it is often mentioned that we can find many literary sources cited and mentioned in "Eugene Onegin", in particular, in the light of the topic studied in this article, we should especially mention the oriental works of such English poets as Thomas Moore and George Byron, as well as Pushkin himself. The oriental works of Moore and Byron were very popular among Russian readers of the

Pushkin's era. Therefore, it seems quite logical that during his work on the first chapters of "Eugene Onegin" that chronologically coincided with the time of writing the cycle of so-called southern poems, in particular "The prisoner of the Caucasus" and "The fountain of Bakhchisaray", Pushkin reread the oriental works of these English poets and in letters addressed to P.A. Vyazemsky, expressed his attitude towards them. In these Pushkin's letters, the oriental works of Moore are sharply criticized and opposed to those written by Byron.

Pushkin's assessment of the oriental works of these English poets found in the text of "Eugene Onegin" is surely of great interest. The readers of Pushkin's novel can find the first mentioning of this kind in one of the lyrical digressions in the third chapter devoted to romanticism:

Британской музы небылицы
Тревожат сон отроковицы,
И стало теперь ее кумир
Или задумчивый Вампир,
Или Мельмот, бродяга мрачный,
Или вечный жид, или Корсар,
Или таинственный Сбогар.
Лорд Байрон прихотью удачной
Облек в унылый романтизм
И безнадежный романтизм... [6]
*All the British Muse's lumber
Now disturbs a young girl's slumber,
Her idol, someone to admire,
Is the blood-sucking Vampire,
Melmoth, Maturin's traveller,
The Corsair or the Wandering Jew,
Nodier's Jean Sbogar too.
Lord Byron with a shrewd despair,
Displays a hopeless egotism*

As saturnine romanticism [8].

Thus, when listing the names of the characters of popular romantic literary works, Pushkin also names the Corsair, the main character of Byron's oriental poem of the same name, emphasizing the role of the latter in the development of romanticism in world literature.

It is interesting that "The fragments of Onegin's journey" contain one more somewhat veiled reference to Byron's oriental poem "The Corsair", used when mentioning the name of Morali (or more correctly, Moor Ali), "the son of the Egyptian land", called by Pushkin a "corsair" [1, c. 223].

The subsequent references to Byron's oriental works in "Eugene Onegin" serve to emphasize their role and significance for the development of new romantic literature. Thus, when describing Onegin's habits in detail, Pushkin does not miss the opportunity to compare his actions with those of Byron, but he replaces the name of the English poet with a metonymy, calling him a "singer, who of Gulnare sings" after the name of the main character of the same oriental poem "The Corsair":

Его вседневные занятия
Я вам подробно опишу,
Онегин жил анахреонтом;
В седьмом часу вставал он летом
И отправлялся налегке
К бегущей под горой реке;
Певцу Гюльнары подражая,
Сей Геллеспонт переплывал,
Потом свой кофе выпивал,
Плохой журнал перебирая,
И одевался...

His everyday routine and studies

I shall in detail introduce.

Onegin lived like real hermit,

He waked up early in the morning,

*And after waking straight from bed
Walked to the river lightly clad.
By singer of Corsair inspired,
This Hellespont he swam across,
Then, coffee drank and in a drowse
To read a magazine desired,
And, then, he dressed... [6]*

In the seventh chapter of the novel, when telling about Onegin's reading habits, Pushkin notes that his literary character disillusioned with books has made an exception for only a few authors and names only Byron's name, using another metonymy "the singer of the Giaour and Juan", meaning the author of such poems as "The Giaour" (from the cycle of oriental poems) and "Don Juan":

Хотя мы знаем, что Евгений
Издавна чтение разлюбил,
Однако ж несколько творений
Он из опалы исключил:
Певца Гяура и Жуана
Да с ним еще два-три романа,
В которых отразился век,
И современный человек
Изображен довольно верно.
*Onegin did not like much reading,
As we have mentioned at right place,
Yet, there were several proceedings,
Which he excluded from disgrace:
Gyaur's and Juan's composer, first,
Plus two-three other novels, most
Depicting modern world and style,
And how a human can survive,
To whom himself makes only treasure,*

*Who is immoral, selfish, cold,
Who is a dreamer in this world
And loves himself beyond all measure.
Whose spiteful mind is restless,
It always boils, but is useless [6].*

Unlike the characters of Byron's oriental poems used by Pushkin in order to provide additional description of the protagonist of his own novel, the hero of Moore's oriental poem is opposed to Pushkin's Tatyana, and the author emphasizes the superiority of the latter.

In addition to the English oriental poems, among the literary sources of "Eugene Onegin" there are other four literary works thematically appealing to the East. We mean Pushkin's own poem "The fountain of Bakhchisaray", "The Crimean sonnets", a series of sonnets written by the Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz, and "Gulistan", a poem written by Saadi, the Persian poet of the 13th century. It is known, that Pushkin quite often used self-reference to his own works written earlier. "Eugene Onegin" is not an exception in this regard. As noted above, when describing Onegin's trip to the Caucasus, Pushkin used his own Caucasian impressions reflected in the poem "The prisoner of the Caucasus" and in the essay "A journey to Arzrum". The poet uses the same literary technique when describing the Crimean journey of his character, namely referring to his poem "The fountain of Bakhchisaray":

Таков ли был я, расцветая?
Скажи, фонтан Бахчисарая!
Такие ль мысли мне на ум,
Навел твой бесконечный шум,
Когда безмолвно пред тобою
Зарему я воображал....
Средь пышных, опустелых зал,
Спустя три года, вслед за мною,
Скитаясь в той же стороне,
Онегин вспомнил обо мне [4].

*Was I like that when I was blooming?
Say, Fountain of Bakhchisaray!
Were such the thoughts that to my mind
Your endless purl suggested
When silently in front of you
Zarema I imagined?...
Midst the sumptuous deserted halls
After the lapse of three years, in my tracks
In the same region wandering, Onegin
Remembered me [5].*

As we can see, Pushkin does not limit himself to mentioning his own journey to Crimea, but also includes the name of Zarema in his poem “The fountain of Bakhchisaray”, in the text of the novel. In addition, when describing Onegin’s journey to Crimea, Pushkin reminds readers of “The Crimean sonnets”, a series of sonnets written by Adam Mickiewicz, who was very popular among Pushkin’s contemporaries:

*Там пел Мицкевич вдохновенный
И посреди прибрежных скал
Свою Литву вспоминал [3].
There sang inspired Mickiewicz
And in the midst of coastal cliffs
Recalled his Lithuania [5].*

Conclusion

As the materials of this article show, the theme of the East occupies a certain place in the ideological and artistic structure of Pushkin’s novel in verse “Eugene Onegin”, which turned to be a kind of connecting link in Pushkin’s creative comprehension of the East, an important niche between his romantic (“The prisoner of the Caucasus”, “The fountain of Bakhchisaray”, “Imitations of the Quran”) and realistic (“A journey to Arzrum”, “Tazit”) oriental works.

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Data about the author:

Rahimova Elnura Rahim gizi – Doctoral Candidate of Baku State University (Baku, Azerbaijan).

Сведения об авторе:

Рагимова Эльнура Рагим гызы – докторант Бакинского государственного университета (Баку, Азербайджан).

E-mail: ellaragimova670@gmail.com.