

Asgar Zeynalov

**Victor Hugo's Eastern
View**



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The great French writer Victor Hugo said at the funeral of his friend on 20 August 1850, “Balzac was one of that powerful generation of writers of the XIX century who came after Napoleon...” Victor Hugo was also one of that powerful generation of writers of the XIX-century French literature who came after Napoleon.

Asgar ZEYNALOV

In a speech to mark the centenary of Voltaire’s death in 1878, Victor Hugo said: “He was not just a person. He was a century.” The same words can be attributed to Victor Hugo as well.

Asgar ZEYNALOV

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This book by PhD Asgar Zeynalov has been devoted to Victor Hugo’s creative activity. The monograph deals with the French writer’s life, the Azerbaijani translation of his works and their studies. It presents the analysis of Hugo’s collection of poems “Les Orientales”, his verses dedicated to the death of his daughter Leopoldine as well as the novels “The Hunchback of Notre Dame” and “Les Miserables”. The book also touches upon the lives and creative activities of the writers, who were Hugo’s contemporaries.

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PREFACE

ASGAR ZEYNALOV

(Preface to the English translation of the monograph)

Asgar Mammad oghlu Zeynalov was born in the village of Yukhari Nejili of the Ulukhanli district not far from Irevan on 27 September 1951. He graduated from the French Faculty of Azerbaijan University of Languages in 1974. PhD and member of the Azerbaijan Union of Writers and Journalists, Asgar Zeynalov is the author of more than 30 books and over 350 scientific and journalistic articles. He has published articles in Iran, Turkey and Moscow, also books in St. Petersburg (2011), Moscow (2013), France (2015), Germany (2016) and USA (2016). The first monographs about Voltaire and Hugo in the Azerbaijani literary studies belong to A. Zeynalov. In 2003 he defended his doctoral thesis on “The East in French Literature” (on the basis of Voltaire’s creative activity).

In 2014 his monograph “Hugo” was submitted to the State Prize of the Republic of Azerbaijan. A. Zeynalov is well known as the scholar specialized in French literature, especially in Hugo in France as well. The outstanding French scholar Jean Louis Bacque-Grammont wrote a review to his monograph “The East in French Literature” (1997). The newspaper “L’Est Republicain” published articles about A. Zeynalov as a Hugo specialist on 11 August 2007 and 24 July 2014. Arnaud Laster, the President of the Society of Hugo’s Friends contributed an article about the Azerbaijani scholar to the bulletin of the Society in Paris in 2013. The literary scholar A. Zeynalov published articles on La Fontaine, Voltaire, Hugo, Balzac, Stendhal, Dumas, George Sand, Flaubert, Merimee and Maupassant at different times. At present he works at Azerbaijan University of Languages.

THE ORIENTAL MOTIVES IN VICTOR HUGO'S POETRY

While Europe has long been interested in the East, as it is pointed out by the researchers, only the late XVIII century saw the formation of a new science, Oriental Studies; societies began to appear in Europe in the late XVIII century.

The XVIII century carried out its decent task of introducing the East to Europe. Especially, through two important events: through the translations of "The Arabian Nights" and "Avesta". However, one cannot but mention the works written on the theme of the East in Europe in that period either. The researcher I.M.Kessel, who deals with the works created on the Oriental theme in those countries in different centuries, wrote, "These literary facts state that Western literature was being enriched with Oriental characters from century to century".

What was the situation like in the XIX-century European literature in this regard?

First, it should be mentioned that while in the XIX-century West the most significant works related to the Oriental themes were mainly created in France, the XIX century saw the appearance of strong pieces of art on this theme in different countries. Among them, one should especially mention two works, the British poet Byron's "Oriental Tales" (1813-1816), the German poet Goethe's "West-Eastern Diwan" (1819). However, besides this, H.T.Moore, V.Rott, T.Hop, H.Heine, J.Morier and other artists in European literature created their works on or related to the East. What was the situation like in French literature in this period?

In the XIX-century French literature the interest in the East, the appeal to the Oriental themes extended its scopes ever more. In that century, most French writers and poets created their works on the Oriental themes or related to the East: Chateaubriand, Jule Verne, Lamartine, Gotye, George Sand, and Balzac. It should be admitted that none of the works created in this period could attract the attention as much as "The Persian Letters", "Zadig" and "Zair".

The outstanding writer Victor Hugo was one of the representatives of the XIX-century French literature who turned to this theme. Hugo, who was one of the irreplaceable giants of world literature, wrote his poems on this topic in 1826-1828 and published them as a book titled "Les Orientales" on 14 January 1829.

Victor Hugo, whom the Azerbaijani readers know as the author of novels, is also a great poet.

The poet, who started writing his poetry at the age of thirteen and thus earned the title of "the master of poetry", wrote "The Odes" (1822), "Autumn Leaves" (1831), "The Rays and Shadows" (1840), "The Inner Voices" (1837), "The Revenge" (1853), "The Audience" (1856), "The Horrible Year" (1871) and finally, in 1859-1870 the poetic works "The Legend of the Ages" in four volumes. For the sake of comparison, it should be stated that Hugo is the author of 20-volume novels, whereas his poetry books comprise 26 volumes.

Hugo's book "Les Orientales" was published in 1829. But what was the reason behind that appeal to the Oriental theme?

Many researchers, who bear the feeling of rancour against the Turks, consider the Turkish-Greek war (1821-1829) ongoing in that period to be the main reason for the creation of "Les Orientales". Or, when speaking about this work of the poet, they try to present it in such a way as if this book consisted of the poems dedicated to the Turkish-Greek war, that is, the poems targeted at the Turks.

LES
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PAR VICTOR HUGO

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Certainly, this “rancorous attitude” is not recent. This was the continuation of the attitude targeted at the Turks that existed for many centuries, during the crusade in 1096-1270, especially following the collapse of the Byzantine Empire and the formation of the Ottoman Empire.

Back in the XII century, the Pope of Rome would send orders in all directions and call for “the sacred war” against “infidel” Turks.

Many Medieval works describe the Turks only in battlefields. According to some Western sources, for a long time the Turks had been described as “wild” in Europe. However, the great personalities of Europe would express their scathing opinion against false attitudes. Voltaire’s opinion is typical in this regard. “The Turks would not treat the Christians wildly as we always think of it and imagine it. The Turks would allow all the Greeks to build churches most of which were collegial”.

The Turks would treat violently neither the population nor the historical monuments in the areas they occupied.

Even after the invasion of Constantinople, Sultan Mohammad II declared himself the protector of the Greek Church.

Owing to the Turks’ sincere attitude, the Greeks preferred them to the Pope of Rome.

The statue erected to Sultan Salim in Hungary proves that with their raids the Turks have brought also culture to Europe.

It should be mentioned that Hugo’s works could not have passed over the Turkish-Greek war either. Since, this war was in the focus of attention of all the European countries. Especially, Byron’s death in the city of Missolonghi (of Greece) on 19 April 1824 started as if a new stage of the war and further inflamed the sparkle against the Turks in the Western countries.

As Hugo pointed out, the entire Europe encountered Byron’s death as a common sorrow, general misfortune and national mourning.

In this sense, Hugo’s writing poems related to the Turkish-Greek war was not a coincidence. The French writers Delfine Gueux, Alphonse de Lamartine, Casimir Delavigne also wrote poems related to the Greek struggle.

However, the idea that the Turkish-Greek war was the main reason for the creation of Hugo’s “Les Orientales” is nothing but an idea completely false and biased. Since, prior to the outbreak of the war, back in

the XIX century a great many works were created on the theme of the East (Byron, Goethe).

What was behind the creation of these series?

To this question, Hugo himself had the best answer: “This period sees the unprecedented involvement in the East. The study of the East has never developed so much before. They are now specialists in the Oriental Studies, whereas under Louis XIV (1643-1715 – A.Z.) they were Hellenists”.

When speaking about Goethe’s “West-Eastern Diwan”, the eminent scholar Braginski wrote expressing his opinion about the reasons for the XIX-century European poets’ appeal to these themes, “The Eastern exotics “Orientalism”, as it is known, was one of the literary devices of the Romantics”.

In the outstanding French writer Andre Maurois’ words, “The East was in fashion in this period”.

What sources did Hugo suggest while creating “Les Orientales”?

A.Maurois points out that there were enough sources to create the Oriental theme: the Bible, the scholar in Oriental studies Ernest Fuine, Byron’s poems, above all, Spain, whose Romainseraux the poet recalls singing.

Some researchers suggest that Hugo learnt from Byron and Goethe. However, besides all this, he was aware of the Oriental sources used by Voltaire as well as Al-Kuran, the works by Sadi, Hafiz, Jalaladdin Rumi, Firdowsi. By the way, it should be noted that Sadi’s work “Gulustan” was translated into French in 1634, and Andre du Ryer translated Al-Kuran into French in 1647.

Firdowsi’s work “Shahnameh” translated into English by W.Johnson in the XVIII century was long afterwards also translated into French (1830-1878) by J.Malya and published in five volumes in Paris.

In his article about Byron, Hugo’s reference to the Oriental byword was due to such awareness, “When the drop falls into the sea, it turns into a pearl”.

Even some traces prove his awareness of the Eastern mythology and its separate Turkish branch.

Byron’s “Oriental Tales” consists of six works: “The Giaour”, “The Bride of Abydos”, “Corsair”, “Lara”, “The Siege of Corinth”,

“Parisina”. Goethe divided his “West-Eastern Diwan” into twelve main parts: “The Tale of the Singer”, “The Tale of the Wine-bearer”, etc. Whereas Hugo had none of these divisions. The researchers divide the poet’s “Les Orientales” into three relative parts: Turkish-Greek, Arabic-Persian and Spain.

Willing or unwilling, the reader is sure to think over a question: Why Spain? The poet himself answers the question, “Since, Spain is also the East: Spain is half African and Africa is half Asian”. As it is known, the Oriental culture has mainly spread to Europe through Spain.

After the Moors invaded Spain in 711-714, they considerably developed culture there. They ruled this area approximately seven hundred years. This government even began to be known as the Arabic Spain. Of two major scientific centres of the Medieval Arabic culture, one was Baghdad and another, Cordova, the capital of Spain. While Europe was embraced by wild ignorance and strife all over, it was this kingdom (Cordova – A.Z.) alone that held the bright torch of ethics and culture before the Western world.

Thus, the profound representation of the Oriental culture in the ancient cities of Spain was not a coincidence. As Hugo stated, “The Mosque in the Gothic style erected in the ancient, beautiful city and the Eastern mosque with tin and bronze minarets among the fig and pine trees at the other edge of the city... The Kur’anic verses inscribed on all the doors, the sanctuaries where the floors and walls were dazzling with mosaics”.

A.Maurois noted that these features were stronger in Grenade than Istanbul.

Thus, through all this, Hugo indicated the high status the Eastern culture enjoyed in Spain.

Hugo’s “Les Orientales” includes poems that are on typical Oriental themes. His poem “The Djinns” is one of them.

The concept of “a djinn” as an output of the Oriental mythology, that is, Arabic mythology was later disseminated also among the other nations who adopted Islam.

This character deeply rooted in the monuments of folklore (“The Arabian Nights”) gradually entered the written French literature as well.

Hugo introduced it to French poetry. The djinns are usually described to be invisible, only their actions are perceived. Hugo also describes them in this very way.

Two kinds of beauty are not always found together. Zara is, at the same time, extremely lazy. Laziness and friskiness are characteristics of most of the beauties. However, it is interesting that Zara admits her own laziness.

A wise man said, "When a stupid says, 'I am a stupid man', he decreases his stupidity a bit; however, even if a lazy man admits his laziness, he still remains to be lazy".

The poet described the industrious people who love labour. They are Zara's friends.

Lazy and industrious people, the two contradicting, opposite poles like day and night, one of the colourful features of life.

Zara wanted to be a Sultan's wife, and what does the Sultana, the Sultan's wife think?

The Sultana (in the poem "The Moonlight") is not a frivolous lady who spends her life in golden waters. She is a romantic woman who can enjoy life.

She is absorbed in her realm of dreams watching the sea stretching along the shore, the moonlight dancing in the waters, dozing islands, the white patterns touching the rocks.

Captivity: Women's captivity. How can the burden of this captivity be measured? Certainly, in their minds the captives have many dreams which might be realized or not. However, one dream never leaves them: Motherland. And she wanted to realize the dreams of her mind. However... If she were not a captive.

One of the interesting points in "Les Orientales" is the poet's choice of epigraphs appropriate to the content of each poem. For instance, in the poem "The Djinns" Hugo picked out the words from Dante's comedy "The Divine", "As soon as the cranes set their long train in the air, they will sing their soothing songs full of moaning, so I noticed this moaning stretching in the attractive shadows parting from this storm".

The citation from the comedy "The Divine" as an epigraph to the poem is not a coincidence.

Since, these works are close to each other by nature. Or the words "The birds' song as harmonious as poetry was heard" quoted from Sadi's "Gulistan" in the work "The Captive" accomplish the captive's touchy song.

The poet's verse "The Veil" is one of the poems demonstrating the Oriental character, the features peculiar to the East to their subtleties. Hugo took Shakespeare's line "Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?" as an epigraph to this poem. The entire essence, strength, enormousness of the great English writer's immortal work "Othello" was as if built on this line. "Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?" This is the point when Othello, whose eyes are as furious as those of a tiger out of jealousy, distrust, and thus see nothing for fury, would strangle Desdemona in her bed a little later.

The epigraph, which Hugo cited from Shakespeare, informs the reader in advance, though not exactly, about the content or the end of the poet's verse "The Veil".

"...The girl enters. She sees her brothers in a furious state and asks in panics,

What has happened, my brothers? Your spirit to-day
Some secret sorrow damps
There's a cloud on your brow. What has happened? Oh, say,
For your eyeballs glare out with a sinister ray
Like the light of funeral lamps.
And the blades of your poniards are half unsheathed
In your belt—and ye frown on me!
There's a woe untold, there's a pang unbreathed
In your bosom, my brothers three!

Eldest brother

Gulnara, make answer! Hast thou, since the dawn,
To the eye of a stranger thy veil withdrawn?

Thus, the trace of the events begins unfolding, now the reason for fury gradually clears out.

His sister states that she has gone to the bathhouse today, hidden from the sharp looks of the Moors and Albans and that she was covered with her veil while passing by the mosque. However, she says, she unfolded for a moment her veil as the afternoon heat was stifling her,

The sister

As I came, oh, my brother! at noon—from the bath—
As I came—it was noon, my lords—
And your sister had then, as she constantly hath,
Drawn her veil close around her, aware that the path
Is beset by these foreign hordes.
But the weight of the noonday's sultry hour
Near the mosque was so oppressive
That—forgetting a moment the eye of the Giaour—
I yielded to th' heat excessive.

Second brother

Gulnara, make answer! Whom, then, hast thou seen,
In a turban of white and a caftan of green?

The sister starts to stutter:

The sister

Nay, *he* might have been there; but I muffled me so,
He could scarcely have seen my figure.—
But why to your sister thus dark do you grow?
What words to yourselves do you mutter thus low,
Of "blood" and "an intriguer"?
Oh! ye cannot of murder bring down the red guilt
On your souls, my brothers, surely!
Though I fear—from the hands that are chafing the hilt,
And the hints you give obscurely.

Third brother

Gulnara, this evening when sank the red sun,
Didst thou mark how like blood in descending it shone?

The verdict of death has already been given. At this point, the ideas straddle, “Have you prayed to-night, Desdemona?” Now the final decision is clear.

The sister realizes that she is living her last and that it is time to say good-bye to life. Nevertheless, she begs her brothers; her begging resembles the last straw,

The sister

Mercy! Allah! have pity! oh, spare!
See! I cling to your knees repenting!
Kind brothers, forgive me! for mercy, forbear!
Be appeased at the cry of a sister's despair,
For our mother's sake relenting.
O God! must I die? They are deaf to my cries!
Their sister's life-blood shedding;
They have stabbed me each one – I faint – o'er my eyes
A *veil of Death* is spreading!

The brothers

Gulnara, farewell! take *that* veil; 'tis the gift
Of thy brothers – a veil thou wilt never lift!

In both “Othello” and the poem “The Veil” the incident of murder takes place approximately at the same time – after the evening. “The night is pregnant, who knows what it will bear tomorrow?”

Jealousy is a feature settled in the blood of the East, which is due to the strength of love. The Oriental man is so sensitive that he can immediately notice “the trace of an alien look on the face of his beloved”.

It reminds us a *bayati* [a piece of Azerbaijani folk poetry],

Язизим бахды йарым

Юмрүмүн тахты йарым

Цзүндя эюз изи вар,

Сяня ким бахды йарым.

Oh my dear, my luck
You are the throne of my life
There is a trace on your face,
Who has looked at you?

However, unlike “Othello”, in the verse “The Veil” the incident appears more clearly. The sister admits taking off her veil. Certainly, this would cause rumours and harm the brother’s honour.

Their sister is not Hugo’s Fantine. Fantine, who yielded to the adventurous mystery of youth, finds out that she is pregnant”.

In the Western realm, there lives a Fantine, who gives birth to a child out of wedlock and makes efforts to grow it up.

However, in this environment – in the environment of the veil there is no room for Fantines.

And the brothers consider the murder of their sister as the only solution. It should be reminded that Othello, who strangled Desdemona, was also the son of this environment. That is why, he couldn’t have chosen some other way. There is an attitude to a woman’s wearing a veil and walking with her face covered in Byron’s “Oriental Tales” as well,

(Woe to the head whose eye beheld
My child Zuleika's face unveil'd!)

Or

To meet the gaze of stranger's eyes
Our law, our creed, our God denies;
Nor shall one wandering thought of mine
At such, our Prophet's will, repine:
No! happier made by that decree,
He left me all in leaving thee.

The answer to the question is partially revealed in the first two lines: “The girl’s appearance before the stranger will taint the parent’s honour”. The following line states the law of the Shariah. “It is a sin to appear before a stranger”. What if she appears? The answer to this question raised in Byron’s “The Bride of Abydos” is revealed in Hugo’s “The Veil”. Appearing before the stranger’s eyes, taking off the veil results in the girl’s death.

The works belonging to the East should be analyzed through the Oriental vision. For instance, some researchers (B.N.Kolesnikov) analyze Byron’s poem “Gavour” as follows, “It turns out Gavour passionately loves Leila, and Leila is devoted to him. Gavour was all embraced in delight and happiness. However, Leila’s jealous and cunning husband Hassan spies his wife and kills her treacherously”.

How could it be otherwise?

By killing his treacherous, unfaithful, cunning, unprincipled, treasonous wife, Hassan lives. More precisely, he earns the right to live with dignity in life. The East can love and also kill and destroy if need be.

Along with being jealous, the Oriental man is both passionate and lustful. He is ready to sacrifice everything for this passion and lust.

Hugo’s poem “Sultan Ahmad” is typical from this point of view. He cites Hafiz’ words “Oh angel girl, let me tie your arms round my neck” as an epigraph.

The Turkish man Sultan Ahmad falls in love with the merry beauty of Grenade, who can sing well.

He offers the Spanish beauty his readiness to sacrifice Madina, where his power was most concentrated, for his love. And what place? Madina, which is one of the most sacred places in the Muslim realm.

One can perceive Hafiz’ creative impact on Hugo’s poem “Sultan Ahmad”. Especially, this poem reminds us of Hafiz’ ghazal [an Oriental form of poetry] beginning with the couplet “If that Turkish beauty yielded to us, I would cast away the cities of Samargand and Bukhara for her dark mole” narrating Teymour the Lame’s offer.

The “Christian” beauties, who are well aware of the Oriental men’s passion, try to realize all their wishes making use of these men’s “weak point”, and most of the time succeed in it. And the beauty of Grenade is also one of them. In answer to Sultan Ahmad’s offer, she says,

"Be a Christian, noble king!
For it were a grievous thing:
Love to seek and find too well
In the arms of infidel.
Spain with cry of shame would ring,
If from honor faithful fell."

Sultan Ahmad is ready to fulfill Jouane's any order on condition that she gives her consent. At this point Jouane resembles Khumar, and Sultan Ahmad, Sheikh Sanan. The cross leads Sheikh Sanan to shepherding.

However, Sultan Ahmad does not descend to Sheikh Sanan's level, is not belittled to that extent. He confines himself to telling Jouane, "If you want, I can use your necklace like hand-beads".

"By these pearls whose spotless chain,
Oh, my gentle sovereign,
Clasps thy neck of ivory,
Aught thou askest I will be,
If that necklace pure of stain
Thou wilt give for rosary."

Sultan Ahmad is not belittled like Sheikh Sanan. Most probably, his title as Sultan, his background do not allow this.

The poem "Lovely Sultana" resembles the poem "Sultan Ahmad" in content. While the former is in the form of a dialogue, in "Lovely Sultana" all the ideas are stated by the Sultan.

Sultan has fallen in love with a Jewish beauty and wants to make her a sultana or worth for the Shah.

What doesn't the Sultan promise the Jewish beauty just to join her? – the world, his life, crown and people who trembles in his presence.

It becomes clear from the work that the Sultan is ruling a major part of the East. He is ready to give to the Jewish beauty Istanbul, Bursa, Mousoul, Trabson, Gang if only she gave her consent.

Since, "the Sultan needs the Sultana like a sword needs a pearl".

The poet's verse "Lazara" is also of this range. The researcher E.Evnina, who speaks of this poem, writes that the appearance of the old pasha willing to give numerous jewelry items, his wealth to a young girl is very surprising.

This case is neither surprising nor shocking for the Eastern realm. Irrespective of their age, like Hafiz, it is natural and typical for an

Easterner to give all his wealth to beautiful girls. However, the poet describes the beauty's contours more vividly in this poem.

The Turkish-Greek war constitutes one more branch of Hugo's Oriental verses. The poet wrote in the Introduction of his book in this connection, "A little earlier, for the West, like for its literature, the East could possibly have played a part of an example for empires too".

The Greeks' unforgettable war targeted all the nations at this direction, already.

In this period, France itself was in a hard situation. The riot against the dynasty of the Bourbons (1814-1830) embraced the entire country, and this dynasty was enjoying the last years of its reign. Soon the ministers were to sit before the court. However, leaving aside the struggles, chaos, strife within France, Hugo was writing poems about the Turkish-Greek war, to be more precise, against the Turks.

Hugo is a great artist and had a huge creativity. He is one of the unique figures of world literature. Nevertheless, he was the son of Europe. Europe's crusade targeted at the Turks had an impact on the young poet too.

Certainly, invasion is invasion. We do not intend to justify the invasion. However, as noted by Voltaire, the Turks let the Christians to practice their customs and traditions in the countries they "invaded".

Most probably, the Western countries acted so much assiduously, because they were against invasion as a whole. How many colonies did European countries take in this period? There is no need to list them.

It is enough to mention just one. Why didn't they speak about India that was moaning in the hands of England? Why did they keep mum?

Everything is clear.

In his poem "Enthusiasm" Hugo calls his friends to free Greece, this land and its martyr people saying, "To Greece, to Greece".

When should we set off? The poet answers his own question, "Tonight, tomorrow is too late".

He calls the emigrant Fave to give them commands. He says, "Let the battle music wakening the French bayonets long asleep sound, let the swords, bullets and shells work, let the horses be saddled".

The poet wants to be in the first rows of the battle and see all the events with his own eyes.

What does Hugo want? He wants to see the air clear, the meadows, mountains, forests quiet, and the beaches merry. It is a nice dream. If only this dream were not limited to Greece only and embraced all the colonial countries. If only it were not limited to religious fanaticism.

The poem "The Infant" holds a special place among the works Hugo wrote on this theme. The epigraph "Oh, horror, horror" he cites from Shakespeare's work "Macbeth" foretells about the horror to be described in the poem.

– The Turks have passed through those places. Those places are in ruins and mourning now. That is the wine island Chios. This island, which amazes with its natural beauty, is empty. No, it seems not completely empty. A blue-eyed Greek child is sitting at the bottom of the wall with his head leaned down. He is ready to defend his Motherland with a weapon in his hand,

"Soft and sweet urchin, still red with the lash
Of rein and of scabbard of wild Kuzzilbash,
What lack you for changing your sob –
If not unto laughter beseeming a child –
To utterance milder, though they have defiled
The graves which they shrank not to rob?
"Would'st thou a trinket, a flower, or scarf,
Would'st thou have silver? I'm ready with half
These sequins a-shine in the sun!
Still more have I money – if you'll but speak!"
He spoke: and furious the cry of the Greek,
"Oh, give me your dagger and gun!"

It should be reminded that the lesson "the Turks taught to this island, which supported Greece had a strong resonance in Europe, even the famous French artist, Hugo's friend E. Delacroix created the portrait "The Massacre of Chios" in 1823-1824. The poet could not stay indifferent to the theme that had turned into an important event.

The verse "Darwish" is one of Hugo's poems dealing with the Turkish-Greek war. The work speaks of a darwish's open protest against the tyranny of Ali Tepeleni (1741-1822), the ruler of the Yanina kingdom, who was both capable and cruel.

It should be stated that this ruler established his power in the city of Tepelen, occupied a great part of Greece later. Back in his lifetime there were many stories of the cruelty of Ali Pasha, who once hosted Byron. No doubt, it was rather exaggerated. It seems the entire Europe was aware of his cruelty. Hugo's writing a poem on this theme proves this idea. The poet depicts this tyranny, this cruelty through an old darwish.

Once Ali was walking along the road; the proud heads bowed to him bending till their feet. The entire crowd said, "Allah". Suddenly a darwish addressed him coming out of the crowd and holding the horse by the bridle.

Ali Tepelini, light of all light,
Who hold'st the Divan's upper seat by right,
Then he starts to interpret the main idea with sharp, insulting words,
An unseen tomb-torch flickers on thy path,
Whilst, as from vial full, thy spare-naught wrath
Splashes this trembling race:
These are thy grass as thou their trenchant scythes
Cleaving their neck as 'twere a willow withe—
Their blood none can efface.

But ends thy tether! for Janina makes
A grave for thee where every turret quakes,
And thou shalt drop below
To where the spirits, to a tree enchained,
Will clutch thee, there to be 'mid them retained
For all to-come in woe!

"Then you, Ali Pasha, will change your name like a dirty Jew while dying to deceive the black angel in the afterlife". Even to show the severity of his crime he says, "Allah keeps an iron yoke under the tree in the seventh layer of Jehenna loaded with godless souls". Ali Pasha listened to the old man till the end and gave his gown to him taking it off".

Several points should be taken into account here.

First, the poem proves that Hugo was well aware of the Muslim world, Islam.

Second, the poet shows that Ali Pasha has not lost his humanism, no matter how cruel he is. He could have killed the darwish with his weapon, his sword. On the contrary, for telling the truth he a kind of rewards him. There is a delicate essence felt here. He may have understood now that the crimes in the country are committed by those around him.

An affinity is felt between this poem and the story “The Epic of the Cruel Padishah and Zahid” from Nizami’s “The Treasure of Mysteries”. In both the works, under the threat of their death the old darwish and Zahid tell the truth to the ruler as it is, that is, reveal their cruelty.

Hugo devoted a poem to Missolonghi notorious for Byron’s death in connection with the Turkish-Greek war. The poet calls all to defend this city “Missolonghi, let us drive them away, their strong ships, anchored fleet”. The poet deals with the Turkish-Greek war in the verses “The Turkish March”, “The Heads of Harem”, “Naverain”. These series of Hugo’s poems have only one goal: to free Greece.

A branch of Hugo’s “Les Orientales” is related to Spain. The poet writes that the East starts from China and stretches to Egypt. However, he did not confine himself to those geographic boundaries and included a country once known as Arabic Spain into his Oriental collection. Spain, which represented the Arabic culture wonderfully, was the only country among the places described in “Les Orientales” where the poet had been. In connection with Hugo’s father General Sigisbert’s military service in 1811, they lived there for a year.

The poet’s “Grenade”, “Nourmahal the Red”, “Moorish Romance”, “The Shadow” and other verses are related to the life in Spain.

In the poem “Grenade” the poet praises the beauties of the Spanish city Grenade, where the Eastern culture had rooted, and reminds the Alhamra Palace (Red Tower) – a historical, cultural keepsake of the Moors to the country.

Grenade is that place where, at the time when the power of the Arab caliphate in the East and of the Moors in the northern part of Spain ended, the emirate survived two hundred years more and developed their cultures. In Spain the long-term presence of the Moors with strong culture in power had naturally a strong impact on the indigenous people of the country as well. The Spanish romances appeared under the impact of the Moorish romances, and it is not a coincidence that for

centuries (even after the Moors had been ousted from Spain) the romances belonging to the two nations coexisted and were spread being used in parallel. The Spanish romances were first translated into French by the poet's brother Abel Hugo in 1921. Hugo must have been under the impact of these romances when creating his "Moorish Romance". The poet wrote his poem "The Lost Battle" under the impact of "The General Romainseraux" (the Spanish and Moorish romances) too.

The romance describes Rodrigue's army helpless before the enemy.

He leaves the camp unaccompanied, all alone and ascends a very high hill, watches the place where his army was devastated, a river is flowing through that place covered in blood. He cries and says, "Yesterday I was the king of Spain, today I don't have a single city. Yesterday I had cities, today I have nothing. Yesterday I had palaces, servicemen, today I am alone".

Hugo conveys almost the same idea through the Turk Rashid.

But yesterday, and I had towns, and castles strong and high,
And Greeks in thousands, for the base and merciless to buy.
But yesterday, and arsenals and harems were my own;
While now, defeated and proscribed, deserted and alone,
I flee away, a fugitive, and of my former power,
Allah! I have not now at least one battlemented tower.

In the evening of his defeat, Rashid supposedly narrated like that and recalling his quite recent past, cried feeling the bitterness. Certainly, it was a poet's imagination rather than the truth. Since, first of all, the Turkish-Greek war had not finished yet; secondly, long after this, the Ottoman Empire would keep its "hand shade" on a number of Asian and European countries.

Opinions about Hugo's "Les Orientales" appeared prior to its publication as a book which admired his contemporaries: "Victor read to us unheard, completely unheard "Les Orientales"... There is not a single weak verse there" (Victor Pavi). However, the writer Andre Maurois distinguished those poems according to his views and outlook, though as a hypothesis. He noted, "the best of these verses ("Les Orientales" – A.Z.) is Hugo's poem "Ecstasy" isolated from the East, West, time, as well as space. The poet cites the words "And I heard a great voice" from "The Apocalypse".

I was alone beside the sea, one starry night.
With not a single wave or sail in sight.
Past the world's limits, stretched my eye,
And the forests and the mountains, with nature all 'round
Seemed united in questioning, in a vast yet mumbled sound,
the billows of the ocean, and the splendour of the sky.

The realm without troubles, sorrow. The moment and space the romantics love most: the starry night and the sea, also the shore bounding it. What must be the lonely man on the shore thinking? Where did his imagination take him? Which idea are “the eyes focused on the endless distance” tuned to?

In the Introduction to “Les Orientales” Hugo wrote, “The poet is free, let him choose his own way. No one has the right to restrict his imagination”.

This idea was a kind of way the 27-year old young Hugo was showing to the future great Hugo. Neither his imagination, nor his creativity generated from this imagination was ever restricted by anything – poems, plays, novels, philosophical works. This unrestricted creativity led Hugo from French literary scene to the position in world literature.

As it is known, “Les Orientales” is related not only to the East.

Hugo’s poem “Mazeppa” is also of this kind. However, this work has actually no relations to the East.

Hugo’s “Les Orientales” enjoys a special place both among the works written on this theme in Europe and in the writer’s own creative activities as a whole. It should be noted that back in the poet’s lifetime this work was repeatedly published. “Les Orientales” was always highly appraised by the French literary scholars. In his academic speech, Leconte de Lille, who was elected to replace Hugo in his position in the French Academy after the poet’s death, called “Les Orientales” an exceptional poetic invention for all the coming generations”.

That volume was translated into many languages of the world. Back in 1876 Hugo wrote, “The Sultan of Turkey Sultan V (Abdulhamid) has “Les Orientales” translated in Turkish”.

The poet did not confine himself to “Les Orientales”, re-appealed the Oriental theme in different poems. The poet’s verses “The Persian Ruler”, “I Had Never Seen Firdowski” are typical in this regard.

In the former poem, Hugo sends the Persian rulers to Tiflis in summer and to Isfahan in winter – to the gardens of roses, to their shades scattering fragrance. Certainly, all this was the outcome of the poet’s romantic realm and illusion.

Alternatively, in the poem “I Had Never Seen Firdowsi” Hugo twice meets spiritually with the great Persian poet Firdowsi who lived eight centuries prior to him.

At the first meeting, the Persian artist was dressed in red. His head-gear was dazzling. At the second meeting, the poet was wearing a black vest. When asked about the reason, he answered, “You know I am fading away”. Different moments of life – the heated moments and the moments of asceticism. And the poet’s romantic vision of life.

We believe that Hugo’s “Les Orientales” will be translated into Azerbaijani, and this theme will be re-appealed.

* * *

After “Les Orientales” Hugo turned to that theme again and wrote a number of works: “The Nine Years of Hijri”, “Mohammad”, “The Cedar”, “The Gardens of Babylon”, “The Egyptian Pyramids”, “Zim-Zim”, “1453”, “Sultan Murad” and others. These works, no doubt, will turn into the target of research in future.

DID VICTOR HUGO ACCEPT ISLAM?

Different ages have seen the French translation of a number of masterpieces of Oriental literature, and these translations have not gone without their influence on Western literature. On the other hand, most interestingly, some Oriental literary pieces, which first appeared in their French translations, have been translated into European languages via French rather than directly from their original versions. Among these works one can mention Saadi Shirazi's *Gulistan* (the translator is unknown) published in French in 1634, the famous Indian writer Pilpay's fables translated by David of Isfahan in 1644, *L'Alcoran de Mahomet* translated by Andre du Ryer in 1747, *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* translated by Antoine Galland (1704-1715), *Avesta* translated by Abraham-Hyacinthe Anquetil du Perron in 1771, *the Holy Qur'an* translated by Albin de Biberstein-Kazimirski in 1840. It is suffice to note that P.Posnikov translated *the Holy Qur'an* into Russian at the initiative of Peter I in 1716 having made use of its du Ryer's French translation. Also, K.Nikolayev's Russian translation of *the Holy Qur'an* from its Biberstein-Kazimirski's French translation was repeatedly published in Moscow (in 1864, 1865, 1876, 1880, and 1901).

According to the available facts, the most outstanding representative of the XVIII century French literature François-Marie d'Arouet Voltaire is so far considered the first writer who wrote about Prophet Muhammad's life and activities, *the Holy Qur'an* in French literature. That is, in his work *Essay on the Customs and the Spirit of the Nations* (1756) written on historical principles Voltaire widely dealt with Prophet Muhammad's life and *the Holy Qur'an* and expressed a high opinion about them.

This tradition was followed in the XIX century as well, and in his profound Preface to Biberstein-Kazimirski's translation and other works the outstanding French Oriental scholar Pyer Giyyom repeatedly returned to the theme related to the Prophet.

It is well known that the theme of the Prophet has repeatedly been referred to in the world literature as well as Azerbaijani literature. Among those authors one can mention Goethe, Pushkin, Lermontov, Husein Javid, Nabi Khazri, Zalimkhan Yagub.

Among the writers, who created works on this theme in French literature, one should specially underline the great French writer Victor Hugo who devoted three poetic pieces to Prophet Muhammad: 1. *Hijri NINE YEARS* 2. *Muhammad* and 3. *The Cedar*. The first work consists of 156 lines, the second 4 lines and the third 76 lines. These works have been studied by a young researcher Aygun Aliyeva from different aspects. According to the data obtained from some sources, more precisely, the French sources, the works *Hijri NINE YEARS*, *Muhammad* and *The Cedar*, which appeared in Hugo's book *The Legend of the Ages* published in 1859, had not been re-published until a century later following the French writer's centenary celebrated in 1902 – i.e. until 2002. There rises a natural question: Why? What was the reason for the concealment of these works from literary and scientific communities?

Some data we have lately obtained in French, the texts *Hugo Was a Muslim*, *Hugo – A Muslim? A Case of One Persistent Rumour*, *Abu Bakr Hugo*, the work *Hugo* by Mr. Han Ibrahim, the staff member of the former ENSUT University, ensuite l'Institut Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) facilitates the elucidation of the answer to this question.

Now again back to the question: “Was Hugo a Muslim?”

Some facts indicate that to solve this great problem, men from different scientific and professional spheres have been turned to, different forums and conferences have been held, and articles have been written. And naturally, each specialist has tried to substantiate his/her view. However, one issue is clear: “Although the French and Russian researchers and authors, who wrote about Hugo, repeatedly emphasized his Oriental poems that had allegedly been devoted to the Turkish-Greek war, none of them has said a word about his three works dedicated to Prophet Muhammad. Despite the regular reference to his book *The Legend of the Ages* published in 1859, those works, which first appeared in this collection, have completely remained out of focus. The researches and findings principally prove its being not a coincidence.

And now in reference to some sources related to Hugo's acceptance of Islam. It would be appropriate to state in advance that the views expressed in different texts available closely reiterate one another.

For instance, we think one can elucidate the idea by presenting the article *Hugo Was a Muslim* and the decision of Bladi forum which read: “The brightest of the poets, Hugo was a Muslim. No-one knew that the famous Hugo was a Muslim... No doubt, it was impossible to state in the media his being a Muslim...” Hugo, the author of these unparalleled poems, stated by admitting the path of faith that there is no