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WEST-EASTERN DIWAN. GOETHE AS A SYNTHESIS OF TWO POETIC WORLDS

EL DIVÁN DE ORIENTE Y OCCIDENTE. GOETHE COMO SÍNTESIS DE DOS MUNDOS POÉTICOS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this work is to analyze some elements that have not been debated in the work "West-Eastern Diwan". "West-Eastern Diwan", together with the tragedy "Faust" is one of the most difficult philosophical works of Goethe's late work. Today there is great critical literature, dissertations and monographs have been written, there are dozens of commentaries, but the mystery of this amazing book is still far from its final resolution. First, European, Russian and Azerbaijani philologists have repeatedly asked themselves: what is all the work as a whole, or rather, within the framework of what artistic course is it held? A tribute to romanticism? Somehow already in the Prologue, the poet himself indicates the presence of a "patriarchal air" of the East. Or perhaps this is Goethe's temporary departure during his turbulent youth, in the famous "Storm and Rush" era in Germany, when a romantic play of "crystal clear water" or the novel "The Suffering of Young Werther" was created. Then the poet devoted himself to a sentimental and melancholic state of mind, actively working in the same direction as Friedrich Schiller. Given the closer connection to the oriental way of life, some critics tend to regard the prologue and epilogue to West-Eastern Diwan as a strange mixture of the so-called "romantic philological orientalism" in vogue in the 18th century.

Keywords:

West-Eastern diwan, literary links, poetics parallels.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo consiste en analizar algunos elementos que no han sido debatidos de la obra "El diván de Oriente y Occidente". "El diván de Oriente y Occidente", junto con la tragedia "Fausto" es una de las obras filosóficas más difíciles de la obra tardía de Goethe. Hoy hay una gran literatura crítica, se han escrito disertaciones y monografías, hay docenas de comentarios, pero el misterio de este libro asombroso todavía está lejos de su resolución final. En primer lugar, los filólogos europeos, rusos y azerbaiyanos se han preguntado repetidamente: ¿qué es todo el trabajo en su conjunto, o mejor dicho, en el marco de qué curso artístico se sostiene? ¿Un tributo al romanticismo? De alguna manera desde ya en el Prólogo, el propio poeta indica la presencia de un "aire patriarcal" de Oriente. O tal vez esta sea la partida temporal de Goethe durante su turbulenta juventud, en la famosa era de "Tormenta y embestida" en Alemania, cuando se creó una romántica obra de "agua cristalina" o la novela "El sufrimiento del joven Werther". Luego el poeta se dedicó a un estado de ánimo sentimental y melancólico, y trabajó activamente en la misma dirección que Friedrich Schiller. Dada la conexión más estrecha con el estilo de vida oriental, algunos críticos tienden a considerar el prólogo y epílogo de El diván de Oriente y Occidente como una mezcla extraña del llamado "orientalismo filológico romántico" de moda en el siglo XVIII.

Palabras clave:

Oeste- Este, sofá, relaciones literarias, paralelos poéticos.

INTRODUCTION

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was a German author, scientist, statesman, and theorist. In the words of Pizer (2019), he is widely considered to be the most canonic and influential writer in the history of German literature. His formulation of “world literature” (Weltliteratur) inaugurated subsequent discussions of the concept, and a great deal of scholarship has elucidated its cosmopolitan character. This is appropriate, for Goethe’s concept of world literature directly questions the viability of national literature and calls for authors the world over to work together to bring about a literature informed by the knowledge and insights of literary discourses around the world.

Goethe constructed his spiritual world with an unrivalled openness to the natural cycle of creation and destruction, the cultural accomplishments of different eras and places, the wisdom stretching beyond the whirlwinds of history. Being an ‘explosive liberator’ of all living forms of nature and culture, Goethe found the Enlightenment’s idea of history as a self-contained, linear advancement of the human mind to be a constricting notion, one that downplayed the role of humans in God’s work and presented an unacceptable erasure of interpersonal relationships and reality (Karić, 2019).

Although much has been debated about Goethe’s literary works unquestionably “West-Eastern Diwan” (Goethe, 1976) is still one of the most interesting, mysterious and important. In this work the poet’s allegory is full of deep meaning. What is the time to call your helpers? In what world will the soul of a suffering and inquiring person find harmony and peace -in the old or the new-? But the old one is full of disappointments, and the new one is not yet possible to build. Reconciliation between the highest moral requirements and the desire to work actively is the meaning of Goethe’s proposed poetic compromise. However, although at the end of his life the blind Faust (Goethe, 1981) also comes to the idea of working for the good of mankind in “West-Eastern Diwan” this dispute has to be postponed for the time being, because, despising the old world, the poet is unable to overthrow it.

About Goethe’s work “West-Eastern Diwan”, Kessel (1973), emphasized the mysterious, beautiful lines of the ‘Invitation’ called outwardly to accept the world as it is, but to fight for its transformation into poetry and turn the poet’s word, albeit encrypted with a metaphor, into an instrument of influence on the world around us. Deep conviction in the mutability of everything that exists, in the eternal striving of this living thing to higher forms, ‘trust in the future’ - this is the leading theme of ‘Diwan’. Outside of this trust,

a person is only a woeful alien in a gloomy universe. This leading idea is precisely stated in the Prologue.

The physical world of the poems is sensuous and luxurious. Against the background of the desert, traversed by merchants’ caravans from ‘Hindustan’ to the Red Sea, and from Bukhara to Arabia, we imagine cities with bazaars, baths, and taverns, and luxurious palaces where an avenue lined by cypresses leads to a fountain. The hoopoe (which according to the Koran bore a message from the Queen of Sheba to Solomon) may cross one’s path, the bulbul (Persian nightingale) sings in the garden, where roses and lilies grow. Jewels, spices, and perfumes—ambergris, musk, attar of roses—complete the atmosphere of luxury. Altogether the *Diwan* is a veiled protest against the Christian tradition of disparaging the physical, earthly world in favour of an unknown spiritual realm (Robertson, 2016).

On the other hand Vedda (2015), emphasizes that in the West-Eastern Diwan the conventional moral categories, including guilt, have a very limited validity and belong to the order of the superficial and apparent, contrary to petty-bourgeois moralism, the worldview they provide attributes decisive validity to natural forces. that precede and exceed particular socio-historical conjunctures. Then, because of its relevance the aim of this paper is to synthesize some elements which have not been debated in West-Eastern Diwan. The work is compared with references in Faust and in the end it is expressed how Goethe can be seen as a necessary meeting of two poetic worlds.

DEVELOPMENT

After the twelfth section, entitled “The Book of Paradise”, there follows an Epilogue entitled “Good Night.” In it we find a certain roll-over with the tragedy “Faust”, when the soul of a scientist is taken with them to paradise to the measured sounds of Mephistopheles who has fallen asleep and lost control. In the diwan, a colossal path in time (235 stanzas) has been traversed between the Prologue and the Epilogue and at the end of the path, the point of human life is set. The angel Gabriel, “the messenger of God to the prophets,” lifts the poet to paradise.

“Where is beauty and renewal

Grew widely,

Giving comfort to everyone”

(Goethe, 1976, p. 457)

But if in “Faust” all the accents were placed very clearly (the devil will take the scientist’s soul to hell in case of contentment and satiety with the last life, and the angels stole it from Mephistopheles), then Goethe posed a number

of rhetorical questions. What is paradise? Also, to whom in fact does the poet address in Good Night? For whom is the earthly path ended. Who must retire? Probably the poet himself. It was he who clearly sang the following lines about himself.

"In a light musky barrier

Let it be kept by Gabriel,

Who is kindly tired"

(Goethe, 1976, p. 457)

However, the one who is destined to pass into the other world wants in every possible way to delay the time of his departure. Probably for this reason, in the Epilogue, the author of Zuleik, Marianne von Willemer, is once again remembered for a moment. Let the tired traveler once again be able to enjoy with her in his refuge, as if the poet wants to convey his innermost feelings. This is followed by another allegory: a person is like seven sleeping youths hiding in a cave in order to wake up when his time has passed and the last hour of life has come. The angel Gabriel pierced a crack in the rock through which the rays of the sun supported the forces of those who were asleep. But at the same time, the poet himself also breaks a hole in the cave in order to come out into the light. He greets him in his declining years with these words

"So that the divine gave

All the heroes were given access,

To pass there without sorrow"

(Goethe, 1976, p. 457)

Thus, the temporary flight in the West-Eastern Diwan, which stands out especially clearly in the first and last sections of this book, on the one hand, marks a departure from romantic dreams (recall the original ideas of the novel *The Suffering of Young Werther*) to harsh realistic everyday life. On the other hand, this is the knowledge of everything on earth. After all, Goethe, as has already been thoroughly proved by many scientists, by the word "paradise" in the Epilogue did not mean something completely otherworldly, alien to human dreams. He did not mean a respite from the mortal world. No, rather, it is talking here about how a person, having traveled a long path of knowledge, won for himself posthumous glory.

It is also true that Goethe's attitude to fame sounds ambiguous however it is presented in the "Diwan" not in the sense of selfish vanity. Maybe because the desire to achieve fame was closely associated with the German poet's creative impulse, which prompted him from his youthful romantic impulses to carry the tragedy "Faust" through his

whole life, and in the end to accumulate all his knowledge in the "West-Eastern Diwan". Goethe here hopes for the grateful memory of posterity. He could say about himself that he "retired" after the accomplishment of his poetic feat, as the "seven sleeping" did in the allegorical form in the epilogue.

But when the philosophical run of time stops, the following question naturally arises: what is peace - complete bliss, oblivion of memory? "I am exhausted by work, I want to sleep," as Shakespeare once exclaimed in one of his sonnets about "a poet tired of life". Of course not. Peace, according to Goethe, according to one of the core ideas of the epilogue, is full of new expectations. However, these new changes, of course, can be both positive and negative. And what will replace the new generation decades later? Then the author poses the question point-blank: what will people take from his inheritance, what will help them to sweep off the face of the earth the wall with which the entrance to the cave is walled up?

It is significant that this was Goethe's conversation in correspondence, a letter to Eckerman of May 3, 1827, important for all mankind. Goethe says: "Which of my songs will remain alive? Maybe some pretty girl will play the piano and sing one or another of them, but the people, the real people, will remain silent. What sad feelings evoke in me the memories of the time when the Italian fishermen sang to me passages from Tasso! We Germans are the people of yesterday. True, we have developed significantly over the last century, however, a good couple of centuries may pass before our fellow countrymen, for the most part, absorb so much intelligence and higher culture in themselves to revere the beautiful, like the Greeks, to be inspired by an excellent song and so that one can say about them: that time has passed long ago"

The philosophical run of time by Goethe in "Diwan" understood in a similar way - from the distant past-, to which, as can be seen from the letter to Eckerman, he was in awe, through the present into the future. So in the notes to the "Diwan", he especially noted: *"Everything has its time. The meaning of this saying you comprehend all the better as you grow older"* (Goethe, 1976, p. 477). Goethe truly believes in the "eternal race", in the future, when beauty and reason will rule people. So the lines were born, penetrate lovely songs, in the hearts of my people. And in the epilogue, he talks about the time when the poet will rise from sleep, like those "seven", break the shackles of slavery, breathe the spirit of free thought into his poetry.

In the light of all of the above, we can state that "Prologue" and "Epilogue" of the "West-Eastern Diwan" are a thread connecting times, personifying the philosophical run of

time. On the one hand, it pointed to the main milestones in the creative path of the poet himself - from youth to old age. On the other hand, this is the time of making mistakes until they are fully realized and corrected. As the aforementioned Kessel (1973), "The Prologue of "Hedzhra" and the epilogue of "Good night"- serve as two poles, between them, as it were, a "cord" is stretched on which all 235 pearls of Goethe's "Diwan" are strung.

To sum up, according to Saul (2002) the Diwan is an intercultural dialogue of the living and the dead in the meta-historical dimension inhabited by Goethe's community of the blessed. As such, many of its confessional lyrics, echoing Storm and Stress genius, verge self-consciously on the hubristic. Goethe's lyric persona openly identifies with the master-poet Hafiz. Steeped in the spiritual tradition of his culture, he asserts his authority. Only those who have transcended their mono-cultural provenance and assimilated three thousand years of culture have right of admittance into this circle.

CONCLUSIONS

The historical and literary significance of Goethe's "West-Eastern Diwan" lies, first of all, in the fact that the author tried to display in it the living community of contemporary political conditions in Germany with the socio-ideological atmosphere in which the Eastern humanists of the past lived. At the same time, there is also a commonality of their poetic fate with the fate of Goethe himself. For modern orientalists "Diwan" is of enduring importance, as it helps to get a clearer idea of the "Hafiz type" of poetry, to understand its historical conditioning. Indeed, in the Prologue and Epilogue, there is not only the beginning and end of responses to the phenomena of European reality. New for Goethe was his interest in the East, its history, way of life, customs, traditions and culture in general. This also brought the German poet closer to romanticism.

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