The Influence of Oriental Literature on the Formation of Romantic Literature in Europe

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Abstract
This article examines how the Arabian tales A Thousand and One Nights, which was first translated from Arabic into French, made a major turn in European literature. The romantic movements that began in France spread throughout England. The melody of Arabian tales inspired French and English writers. Their interest in the Oriental world increased and it encouraged them to explore the geography, nature, customs, traditions, historical figures, and national values of the eastern countries through other literature. As a result, writers began to compose new works in a romantic spirit. In England, in the late 18th century, the poets of the Lake School, Southey, Coleridge and Wordsworth, laid the foundations of the Romantic period in English literature with their rich oriental works.

Keywords: A Thousand and One Nights, oriental tales, Lake School poets, Romantic period in English literature, orientalism, merchants, the Silk Road.

Gradually penetrating into the poetry of English Romanticism, Oriental literature took over the minds of poets and enriched their works with new ideas and colorful themes. The role of A Thousand and One Nights from the series of Arabic tales is invaluable. These Oriental fairy tales filled the genres of small comedy pieces, theater or circus performances based on fairy tale plots and comic opera with ideas of a special spirit, and oriental-style costumes and plots attracted public attention.

In the 16th century, European tourists and merchants set out for the peoples of Asia in order to exchange the products of their countries for Indian spices, Chinese silk, and some Japanese goods. Initially, the Spaniards and Portuguese took the lead in the Eastern market, but by the middle of the seventeenth century, the traders of the Iberian Peninsula in the Netherlands were ahead in this respect. Soon, however, under the strong influence of British and French merchants, the Dutch were withdrawn from trade.

When we consider how the concepts of Orient and Orientalism, which attracted the attention of the British in the XVIII century, appeared in their culture, we remember the following words of Chaucer: “Merchants are the fathers of tidings and tales\(^1\) and the wallets of shipmen and pilgrims are full of lies”\(^2\). He explains in this opinion that merchants are the fathers of stories and tales, and that the wallets of sailors and tourists are full of lies. In the 16th century, the British stepped east to establish trade relations with the Mongol Empire. This is why the correspondence of ancient merchants and tourists about the East is familiar to English readers. Of course, the English people had a worldview of the East through the discoveries of Marco Polo as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century. Polo used the method of exaggeration to describe things in exaggeration, especially by exaggerating numbers. Thus, the writers relied on a large number of approximate figures to describe the East. Polo wrote in his stories that the city

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had twelve thousand bridges and twelve thousand seven hundred islands. His successors also actively retained their master’s art of rhetoric. Perhaps these writers, who wrote down the details of their travels on paper, tried to write based on as much evidence as possible, but it seems that they were more immersed in the imagination. One such work is John Mandeville's famous book, The Voyages and Travels, published in England in 1499, which contains a variety of parables and legends. Although the book describes the author’s journey through the countries of the East, the work is made up of dry details.

In 1322, during a voyage, John Mandeville traveled to Turkey, Tartaria, in particular the Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand khanates, the Persian Empire, Syria, Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia and India, and wrote books about them. In her research entitled East and West, the professor Fozila Sulaymonova, emphasizing in her research the invaluable role of Eastern science in the formation of the Renaissance in Europe, commented on this: “The Silk Road was not only a means of trade and economic relations between East and West, but also a living path that awakened Europe spiritually. In other words, “foreign traders who lived for months and years in Central Asia, especially in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Fergana, Kesh, Termez, studied the way of life, customs and spirituality of our people and tried to propagate what they liked in their homeland”.

The merchants were fascinated during their travels by listening to the fairy tales, epics, and tales of the magical East. As a result, a special revolution took place in the minds and imaginations of English and French merchants, who returned to their homeland with a world of impressions. The UK gave up hope of Central Europe and began to look to the Mediterranean countries. In England, the rate of rise was accelerating. The British also gained prominence by masterfully acquiring oriental literature discovered by France, an ancient enemy.

The French literary critic Paul Hazard (Paul Hazard, 1878-1944) says about Jean-Antoine Gallan’s translations of Arabic tales A Thousand and One Nights, published in France in 1704-1711 under the title “Les Mille et une Nuits”, amazed European readers: "When Scheherazade began to recount her stories of the night, to unfold the infinite wealth of an imagination enriched with all the dreams of Araby, of Syria and the great Levant; when she began to tell of the manners and customs of the peoples of the East, their religious ceremonies, their domestic habits, the details of their dazzling and colourful existence; when she showed how mankind could be held and enthralled, not by abstruse intellectual ideas, nor by recondite reasoning, but by the charm of colours and the lure of fairy tales, all Europe was faint to stop and listen". It is clear from these thoughts that as Shahrizada begins to tell her night tales, the vast expanses of imagination are enriched by the wonders that took place in the Eastern countries. The stories tell about the character and customs of the peoples of the East, their religious ceremonies, daily activities, bright and colorful life. This book demonstrates how to fascinate humanity without any complex intellectual ideas or abstract foundations, and drove them into the world of fairy tales.

A Thousand and One Nights, translated from French into English in the 18th century, was misinterpreted as being introduced into European literature by the British. France not only brought to Britain the wonders of the Eastern world, but also found the boundary between the knowledge of the Eastern imagination known and unknown to mankind. This does not mean the same boundaries of the eastern nations and peoples, but also the literary exchanges that take place during the travels and the original content of the series A Thousand and One Nights. As the French orientalist Pierre Martino noted: “The “literary Orient” was not “Asia”, but a large amorphous country which excluded the Holy Lands. This is one indication that the "literary

Eventually, the “literary East” was not authentic. Although the Holy Lands were technically Oriental, the European reader could not accept the exoticism of the literary Orient in company with their religious feelings he associated with the Holy Lands. Furthermore, his ancestors had batted in this region the same “infidels” whose way of life he now found exciting. Eventually, the “literary East” penetrated the peoples of eastern Europe and some countries around the Mediterranean, even into the northern regions of Greece and Africa.

It is difficult to say that Gallan’s translation of A Thousand and One Nights was translated into French as if it were the original. Some literary critics point out that a work that has undergone many abbreviations and alterations during the translation process can also be regarded as the author’s work as a translator. Arabic fairy tales spread all over Europe very quickly and took a deep place in the hearts of many readers: It follows that at that time a version of Arabic tales appeared secretly published in the Netherlands. It was used by many Europeans. In his time, Gallan adapted oriental tales not only to the taste of the French, but also to a universal translation that could be read by book lovers of all nations and times. Some of his translations were again translated into Eastern languages and received positively. He cannot be called a faithful translator, for after his revisions on the work, a work was created that was closer to French literature than to Arabic literature.

Also, Gallan did not use only a single original in the translation process. Although he did not want to, he also looked at various piracy-published options and other sources. As a result, his work “Mille et Une Nuit” was very different from the original, and new tales were included in the list of short stories. These include the still-popular short stories “Aladdin and the Magic Lamp” and “Alibaba”.

Nine years after Gallan’s translation, in 1713, the English version of the tale was published four times. This option was almost never added or changed even in the eighteenth century. Only in 1799 did the reviewer of the new translation of the work observed the following: “The merit of these pleasing and innocent stories, which have so frequently amused our childhood, nor have yet lost their affect upon us, had induced the publisher to attempt a reformation of the wretched translation into which they have been done now near a century.”

The series of A Thousand and One Nights had a profound effect on British artists, who grew up in the melody of Eastern fairy tales, from childhood to adulthood. They wrote their works under the influence of those fantasies that pervaded their consciousness. We will briefly dwell on the views of creative people on this issue. Historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) says in his autobiographical work, which began in 1789: “Before I left Kingston school I was well acquainted with Pope’s Homer and the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments, two books which will always please by the moving picture of human manners and specious miracles...”.

William Beckford (1760-1844), best known for his oriental story Vathek (1786), also read A Thousand and One Nights in his youth. He recalled that he re-read the stories with great impatience. The work made such a strong impression on him that at last Lord Chatham

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5 Martino P. L’Orient dans la Litterature Francaise au XVIIe et au XVIIIe Siecle. – Paris, 1906. – P. 19.
10 Melville L. The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill: Letter to Lady Hamilton, 20
instructed Lettice that the book should be taken from him. It was too late to take precaution. Oriental tales had taken root in the mind of the sensitive reader, completely captivating him as he set fire to the young heart. The influence of the work did not diminish in the rest of the poet's life.

William Wordsworth (1770–1850), a contemporary of Beckford and one of the founders of the Romantic period in England, was as fascinated with Eastern fairy tales as his contemporaries. In his Preface (1799-1805), Wordsworth recalls how he carefully preserved one book of A Thousand and One Nights and how depressed he was to find the rest:

A precious treasure had I long possessed,
A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
And, from companions in a new abode,
When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine
Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry -
That there were four large volumes, laden all
With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
To make this book our own. Through several months,
In spite of all temptation, we preserved
Religiously that vow; but firmness failed,
Nor were we ever masters of our wish.11

Through these verses, Wordsworth expresses his keen interest in the world of the East, and equates the sources in this regard with unparalleled wealth. It tells of his struggles to find and read Arabic tales, and sometimes of his depression. According to sources, Wordsworth wrote his poem Prelude under the influence of the series A Thousand and One Nights. For Wordsworth, Arabic mythology was the most important source of inspiration in the world. The poet says that the legends of the East, which are full of romantic events, light up the dark nights like a candle:

The Tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, romances; legends penned
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps.

Coleridge, one of the founders of romantic movements in English literature, described his love of Arabic fairy tales as a child in his book The Friend, a collection of political and philosophical essays collected between 1801 and 1816: “As I had read one volume of these tales over and over again before my fifth birthday, it may be readily conjectured of what sort these fancies and feelings must have been. The book, I well remember, used to lie in a corner of the parlour-window at my dear father's vicarage-house: I can never forget with what a strange mixture of obscure dread and intense desire I used to look at the volume and watch it, till the morning sunshine had reached and nearly covered it, when, and not before, I felt the courage given me to seize the precious treasure and hurry off with it to some sunny corner in our playground”12. As a
result, Coleridge wrote many works under the influence of Arabic fairy tales. One of them was The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

The romantic orientalist poet Southey wrote his poem Thalaba – the Destroyer based on his impressions of the story A Thousand and One Nights, which he read with great interest and enthusiasm as a child. A characteristic feature of Southey’s poem on the East is that the idea of the work is based on a belief in the power of the God and an absolute fatalistic mood. According to William Heller, Southey was influenced by the way the authors of the collection “Continuation of the Thousand and One Nights”, which has a didactic basis. The English Romantics envisioned the East as a world rich in various mysteries. Western romantic poets created works based on their own emotions and fantasy world rather than on the source of materialism and other factors. As Southey diligently studied the Oriental way of life from various sources and literatures, the oriental themes in his works are convincingly described. It can be said that the series A Thousand and One Nights contributed to the creation of Southey's Thalaba – the Destroyer.

In general, the famous Arabic fairy tale A Thousand and One Nights attracted a huge audience in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular, it influenced the worldview of English writers and played an important role in the formation of a romantic atmosphere in a special spirit. Nasir, a researcher on the Victorian era, said it was difficult to find anyone who had not read Arabic fairy tales in his childhood, and there are still many readers of this work.

It should be noted that the role of Arabic mythology in the formation of the literature of the English Romantic period is incomparable. As a result of the translation of Arabic tales into Western languages, a new mood and spirit emerged in the literature, prompting the creators to explore many other sources related to the Eastern world. This, in turn, led to the writing of oriental works in a romantic spirit, paving the way for the beginning of a new era in English literature.

**Used Literature:**