THE IMAGE OF THE EAST IN THE PLAY "TAMERLANE THE GREAT" BY K. MARLOWE

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Annatation. The goal of this article is to examine the image of the Orient in Marlowe's "Tamburlaine the Great". The author analyzes how this image corresponds to the historical Tamburlaine and the East of his time; how Marlowe represents relations between the Oriental and European worlds as well as how appropriate it is to put this Marlowe's play (and, generally, works by his contemporaries) into the Post-colonial discourse that is popular nowadays.

Keywords: C. Marlowe; Tamburlaine; Orientalism; postcolonial studies; English literature; Renaissance English drama

Today, "Tamerlane the Great" is one of the three most popular plays by Christopher Marlowe, along with "The Tragic History of Dr. Faust" and "The Maltese Jew." Today, a work dedicated to the famous Asian conqueror is usually staged as a single ten-act play. However, initially the idea of the second part, apparently, did not exist. The success of the first play among the audience led to its creation. And in the 16th century, the laws of show business demanded a sequel to a successful project. It cannot be said that the second part (as it often happens) is inferior to the first. But they turned out different.

The protagonist of the play is Tamerlane, also known as Timur, nicknamed the Iron Lame. As any encyclopedia will inform the curious, Tamerlane is a Central Asian commander of the 14th - early 15th centuries, who created the Timurid empire. True, there are few traits of the historical Tamerlane in the hero of Marlowe's play.

In the preface to "The English Renaissance, Orientalism, and the Idea of Asia," W. Lim noted: "Recently, there has been a growing interest in literary representations of foreign countries in studies of the English Renaissance, an interest that springs from post-colonial nial criticism" (The English Renaissance, 2010: 1; hereinafter our translation is ours. — E.K.). Marlowe's Tamerlane, in which the protagonist is an Eastern conqueror and the play takes place in Asia, was doomed to be included in post-colonial1 discourse. Thus, in a 1991 work, R. Sales stated: "Both plays dedicated to Tamerlane are often associated with the colonial expansion of the Elizabethan time" (Sales, 1991: 59). E. Bartels in his work dedicated to Marlowe argues that the abundance of "Other" characters (including Tamerlane) on the English stage at the turn of the 16th–17th centuries. there is evidence of "a turning point in the history of the early modern state - the emergence of imperialist ideology and propaganda" (Bartels, 1993: XIII).

There is no consensus among researchers about the influence of the emerging imperialist ideology on the author's interpretation of oriental heroes in the play "Tamerlane". There are those who associate Tamerlane Marlowe in his desire to conquer the world with English merchants and sailors, the pioneers of British colonial expansion (see, for example: Greenblatt, 2005: 194). Others see Marlowe as an author who debunked cultural stereotypes and opposed the demonization of the "Others" (Bartels, 1993). There are also opposite

opinions. For example, on the part of Muslims there are accusations of the English playwright's play of "demonization" of the Islamic world (Al-Abboud, 2016: 2), attempts to belittle the East, because in that era it "much surpassed Christian rivals in terms of cultural, economic and political development" Although here, too, one should not be tempted to fit complex phenomena into a relatively simple scheme. With even greater care, it is worth approaching the application of this concept to a completely different era, in relation to the era considered by Said in his famous book, no matter how popular his theory is today in academic circles. But it is impossible not to mention it. After all, the influence of post-colonial discourse on the interpretation of "Tamerlane" has long gone beyond the limits of scientific studies. It affects both stage readings of Marlowe's play and its perception by the public and critics.

Thus, the production of Tamerlane at the Barbican Theater in 2005 was criticized because of suspicions of self-censorship. In the play, the episode of the burning of the Koran was edited, as was suggested, for reasons of political correctness. And although the director claimed that he did it for creative reasons, there were grounds for such a conclusion. After all, critics of colonialism and a number of representatives of the Islamic world interpret the scene of the burning of the holy book of Muslims by Tamerlane as an act demonstrating the superiority of the West. Naturally, one often hears that "it would be truly terrible to show the scene of the burning of the Koran again in London" (Al-Olaqi, 2012: 197).

Indeed, in the years when Marlowe created "Tamerlane the Great", the Turks were a formidable force that Western peoples had every reason to fear. It was an interesting era. Europeans began to colonize the East. And the Ottoman Turks expanded their empire not only by conquering their eastern neighbors, but also sought to colonize the lands of Europeans. Although it should be noted that this did not prevent the Christian rulers from concluding agreements with the Ottoman Empire if their interests coincided. So, for example, in the first half of the 16th century, France concluded an alliance with the Turks against the Habsburgs. England during the time of Elizabeth Tudor also considered the possibility of entering into an alliance with the Ottoman Empire against the Spaniards and conducted active trade with the Turks (see, for example: Burton, 2005; Brotton, 2017).

Tamerlane, on the other hand, earned the favor of some Christian authors by inadvertently delaying the transformation of Constantinople into Istanbul. However, the historical Timur, before his interests came into conflict with the interests of the ruler of the Ottoman Empire, Bayezid I, was quite disposed towards him and wrote to the Sultan:

He (Bayazid) also shows excellent diligence and excessive zeal, fighting on the western side with the misguided currents and opponents of the ancient religion, denying the true, eternal religion, in accordance with the requirement of the verse "Verily, Allah loves those who fight in His path in ranks as if they were a dense building!" (Quran, 61/4). (Bayazid) spends all his efforts to revive the Sharia and the progress of Islam and creates favorable conditions for the establishment of monotheism. Thanks to this, all believers are in safety and tranquility, live happily and prosperously.

It is precisely the conflict between Tamerlane and Bayazid that is given one of the central places in the first part of Marlo's play. It should be noted that in the first play, the confession of the Scythian Tamerlane remains indeterminate. He is not a Muslim (unlike the historical Turk Timur) and not a Christian. Of the gods, he most often recalls the Greco-Roman pantheon and "Pylades and Orestes, whose statues we honor in Scythia" (parts I, I, 2; Marlo, 1961a: 60). Tamerlane's rival, Sultan Bayazid - "before whom all Europe is in fear" (parts I, III, 3; ibid.: 89)

- without any doubt, was bred by the author as a Muslim. In part, this could serve as confirmation of the thesis about the "demonization" of Islam in the play. However, the defeated Bayezid, imprisoned in an iron cage and served reaping entertainment for Tamerlane and his courtiers, with a certain probability, should have aroused sympathy even among the public of that time, when public executions were sold out and in general were an extremely popular event. Here it can be noted that the very story of Bayazid, imprisoned by cruel Timur, in the opinion of scientists, is just an example of how stereotypes about Eastern barbarians and, apparently, insufficient knowledge of the language contributed to the birth of a myth replicated by many European historians (see, for example: Wann, 1915: 436–437).

Yes, and the attitude of Tamerlane to Christians is ambiguous.

So, he reports:

I, nicknamed the scourge and the wrath of God,
I, who bring everyone into fear and trembling,
First I will subdue the Sultan,
and then I will set free those Christians
Whom you have chained to the sides of the galleys
flying across the sea.
(Ch. I, III, 3; Marlowe, 1961a: 86)

But this does not at all prevent him from saying a little later in a conversation with the same Sultan:

Until our fleet, which plows the seas
From India to distant Mexico,
Does not come out to the Strait of Gibraltar,
Fearing the Portuguese
And keeping the British in subjection.
This is how Tamerlane will take over the world.
(Ch. I, III, 3; p.: 93)

In the second part of the play, when Tamerlane's associate Techhell, the king of Fez, informs that he "forced to swear allegiance" (Ch. II, I, 3; Marlowe, 1961b: 143) of the legendary presbyter John, he meets the full approval of his overlord.

No less ambiguous is the relationship between Christians and the oriental heroes of the play. If in the first part there is not a single Christian character, then in the second part Marlowe briefly brings into action vividly described Western rulers, led by King Sigismund of the Magyars. With him, the Turks want to create an alliance against Tamerlane.

When agreements are reached and confirmed by sacred oaths, it is the Christians who violate the newly concluded agreement. After all, oaths to non-Christians are just words, which, according to the church, it is not necessary for a Christian to fulfill, as the ruler of Bohemia claims, persuading (and successfully) King Sigismund to change the contract.

Learning about the treachery of Christians, the king of Anatolian Orkan exclaims:

Have the Christians deceived us?
Is betrayal possible in the hearts of those who are created in the image of the Lord?
(Ch. II, II, 2; p.: 148)

As a result, the Christian army, which raised its arms for a moment ago, was defeated by allies, and the seriously wounded king of Hungary exclaims before his death:

The entire army of Christians has been defeated!

The Lord punished us with defeat
For my vile betrayal!
(Ch. II, II, 3; p.: 149)
The king of Anatolia, after the victory over Sigismund, says the following:
And I think: we must honor Christ,
Without offending Mahomet,
Who also helped us in battle.
Since the wicked betrayed the faith
(Ch. II, II, 3; p.: 150)
The excerpts from the play cited above demonstrate that the conquering Tamerlane's ambitions that know no limits also extend to the lands of the Christians. And the relationship between East and West in the play is more complicated than they often try to imagine. Here the Turks sometimes show more nobility than the Christian rulers.
In the second part of "Tamerlane" there is also the scene of the burning of the Koran, which causes much controversy. It should be noted that in the second part of the play the figure of Tamerlane undergoes important changes. In the first part, the protagonist does not have a religion clearly defined by the author. In the second, Marlo nevertheless made his hero a Muslim. So, for example, addressing his comrades-in-arms, Tamerlane says:
We will all go to Turkey on a campaign,
Because I swore by Mohammed
To subdue her to my state.
(Ch. II, I, 3; p.: 140)
And this is just one of the numerous references to the name of the Prophet in the speeches of Tamerlane.
In the first part, Tamerlane is described as a cruel conqueror, but in the second part he turns into an archetypal oriental despot. If in the first play the appearance of Tamerlane and partly his speeches sometimes evoke the memory of the heroes of Homer or Alexander the Great, then in the second play Tamerlane, according to the effective definition of S. Greenblatt, is “a machine, an insatiable machine that produces only violence and death” (Greenblatt, 2005: 195), whose cruelty of horror terrifies his co-religionists, whom he, by the way, exterminates without counting on the pages of the play.
A story about a man who challenged higher powers runs like a red thread through both parts of the play. "He calls the gods and the sky to battle!" (Ch. I, I, 2; Marlo, 1961a: 57) - this is what one of the characters says about Tamerlane, which makes one recall Marlo's play about Faust. After all, about Tamerlane, one can repeat the words said about the German scientist:
His pride wings are wax,
They outgrew him too.
(I, Chorus; Marlowe, 1978: 189)
Like Faust, having tasted the sweetness of success, Tamerlane at the end of the second play is forced to realize the limitations of human power.
Higher powers are challenged by Tamerlane in the famous scene of burning sacred books. The controversy surrounding it is caused not only by the extent to which it is permissible in our time to demonstrate the destruction of the holy book of Muslims in the theater, but also by the meaning Marlo put into it. Thus, the well-known Shakespeare scholar S. Greenblatt, referring to the episode with the burning of the Koran, noted that “this is an action that the clergymen

of the Elizabethan era could applaud" (Greenblatt, 2005: 202). However, Marlowe's contemporary and colleague Robert Green, speaking of the main character of the play, wrote about "the atheist Tamerlane" (cited in: Ribner, 1955: 162). Therefore, given the reputation of Marlowe, it is possible to assume that this scene may not broadcast the theological views of the author himself, which were not the most standard and not welcomed in that era. It is possible that the opinion that Marlowe was exactly the person, who, if possible, would have sent all the sacred books of the world to the fire, is an exaggeration, but it did not arise from scratch. Moreover, for the European literature of that time, and subsequent centuries, it was quite typical to transfer the action to distant (or fictional) countries and times, which allowed the authors a certain freedom of expression.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the problem of the relationship between East and West in Tamerlan, we can say that they are closely connected here. They collide, compete, fight and occasionally enter into alliances, but the main thing is that they are constantly present next to each other. This is a single world filled with many peoples worshiping many gods. A world where Eastern characters are not so different from the inhabitants of the Western world and, moreover, demonstrate deep knowledge of Greco-Roman mythology and the Homeric epic. As a result, K. Marlowe's East clearly has common cultural roots with the West. Interest in other civilizations, evident in Tamerlane, was in principle characteristic of the Elizabethan era. At that time, the world was expanding rapidly, filling with new countries and peoples. And this interest, attraction to the new should not be fully associated with the craving for exoticism of the 18th-19th centuries, which a number of researchers single out as a characteristic feature of Orientalism. Moreover, it must be remembered that initially "Tamerlane" was played in modern Elizabethan costumes for the author.

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