

## M.Y. Lermontov's Georgian Impressions to Write the Epic Poem the Demon

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### Abstract

M. Lermontov's epic poem took its final form after he visited Georgia at the end of 1837. The influence of Georgian impressions is indisputable: the action is entirely unfolded in Georgia, the nature of which is charmingly described; The prototype of Tamar is Nina Chavchavadze, the widow of A.S. Griboyedov; the prototype of Tamar's fiancé is of course, Griboyedov who died in Tehran. Nina remained a widow, despite numerous offers. Let's recall Tamar's words to her father in the poem: Young men in vain come here together / From different regions, other sides / There are in Georgia many brides / But I will not get married ever! Lermontov received Griboyedov's dagger as a gift from her, and reflected that in his poem the Dagger: Thou were presented, given to me by the lily hand / As a token of memory, at the moment of parting / And along thee, for the first time, not blood flowed then / But a transparent tear, the pearl of grief and suffering. In the poem, Tamar's fiancé is called the owner of the "Synodal" - this is "Tsinandali", the estate of Prince Alexander Chavchavadze, Griboyedov's father-in-law. Some discrepancies between historical facts and the poem are unimportant details. The description of the groom's death from an Ossetian bullet proves that Lermontov got acquainted with historical facts - constant robber attacks on Georgian lands from the North; Tamar's father is named Gudal, the poet probably borrowed this name from the legend about the mountain spirit named Gudu, who was in love with the mountain girl Nina. Most likely, the name of the heroine of the poem is taken from the same legend. Tamar, Gudal, Griboyedov, Synodal-Tsinandali, Nina, Demon.

**Keywords:** Lermantov, Georgian Impressions, Epic Poem, Demon

M. Lermontov's epic poem *the Demon* is the outstanding, fabulously charming work, like all the literary heritage of the great Russian poet (Lermontov, 2011: 32 – 93).

This masterpiece tells of the angel banished from paradise, and racing through the vastness of the universe, spreading evil and crime around. Having met the Georgian princess Tamar, he seems to fall in love with her, has a hand in the death of her fiancé and seeks her reciprocity. In the end, he destroys her - his first kiss fills Tamar with poison and she dies.

The pure angel takes her soul to Heaven, and the demon remains in the universe still alone and unhappy.

My article is full of poetic inclusions from Lermontov's poems in my translations, in a newly edited form.

It is known that Lermontov began to think about this work already at the age of 15-16, trying to tie it to Spain or to Scotland (the legendary Thomas Lermont, known as Thomas the Rhymer, is considered by some to be a distant ancestor of the poet). Thomas the Rhymer had also another nickname - True Thomas, because he always spoke the truth, and spoke it beautifully. This quality was fully transferred to Lermontov. Such true Chrysostoms are listened to with bated breath, but their private life is not strewn with roses.

Then Lermontov's mentioned attempts disappeared and the work received its final form after his visit to Georgia at the end of 1837. Judging by Lermontov's letters, he kept the warmest memories of Georgia.

I presented the topic of my report to the conference, as Lermontov's Georgian impressions to create his epic poem. My analysis implies the impressions, which apparently motivated Lermontov's creativity.

At the same time, the work itself inspires the reader with various impulses, makes him think about many things that go beyond the relationship between Tamar and the Demon, the two opposed heroes of the epic.

The validity of our judgment is confirmed by the censorship obstacles that were imposed on the work. To a large extent, it was saved by the Russian empress, the wife of Nicholas I. She loved the creation of Lermontov very much.

The epic was not published in its entirety until 1856, though in Germany.

The Caucasus occupies a special place in the creativity of Lermontov, without the Caucasus, it's even impossible to imagine it. He, the Russian officer, was exiled to the Caucasus and participated in the colonial War. But in his works, he shows great sympathy for the local peoples, sympathizes with them. It is also impressive that he seemed to foresee his own death in the Caucasus. He said in his poem *The Dream*:

In the noon's heat, in the Dagestan desert,  
With lead in my breast, motionless, I lay;  
A smoking of the deep wound was incessant,  
And my blood, drop by drop, kept oozing away (Lermontov, 1953: 323).

And he really died in his incomplete 27 years in Caucasus, on the slope of the mountain Mashuk. He was killed not by a Caucasian sabre or bullet, but in a duel by the bullet of his Russian friend. The curtain on the temple gate did not get torn and the wall did not split apart, but the black cloud that hung over the duelists echoed with deafening thunder and terrible thunderstorm to that fatal shot.

Not only the genetic - Russian and Scottish roots, but the Georgian impressions as well, give Lermontov's creativity the specific charm. In *the Demon*, Caucasian, namely Georgian experiences are fully manifested. I dare say that this epic poem has no less effect on the Georgian reader than on the Russian. The demon, then the Cherub, was banished from paradise and raced aimlessly through the universe:

The banished demon, the sad spirit,  
Was flying over the sinful earth,  
And his best memories, still too vivid,  
Before him crowded, gained their strength;  
Of days in Heaven where brightly shining  
He stood, the Cherub, free from sin,  
And when across the wide sky scudding,  
A comet, amicably smiling,  
Loved to exchange that smile with him (Lermontov, 2011: 32).

Then he finds himself within the boundaries of Georgia:

And he flew over the Caucasus summits,  
The lone exile from paradise,  
Kazbeck below, like a diamond's facet,  
Shone with eternal snow and ice (Lermontov, 2011: 32).

The flight continues over the plains of Georgia:

Then other pictures, bright and splendid

Scenes blossomed out in front of him -  
The vales of Georgia, their vast carpet,  
Stretched in the distance, rolled in green.  
The land of such a sumptuous dream!  
The views with poplars decorated,  
And merrily running ice-cold streams  
Along the motley pebbly bottoms,  
Rose shrubs where nightingales' sweet trills  
Praise ardently with charming fond calls  
Mute beauties, listening to them sing.

...

And the voluptuous heat at noon,  
And nights, by an aromatic dew  
Invariably profusely moistened,  
And stars, as shining as the eyes, as  
A youthful Georgian woman's look! (Lermontov, 2011: 33).

These last lines are yet another of those impressions that contributed to the creation of *the Demon*.

Then the demon sees Tamar, dancing on the roof of her house, waiting for her groom. He gets imbued with the hitherto unknown feelings:

The demon saw, and for a moment  
He felt the inexplicable torment,  
All of a sudden it pierced his breast,  
And beneficial sound and feelings  
Filled his tired soul, all lifeless, wasted (Lermontov, 2011: 41).

Reading this lines, one might suspect that Lermontov, being angry at everyone and everything, mentally relaxed in Georgia.

Who served as the prototype for Tamar? It was Nina Chavchavadze, a daughter of the prince, general Alexander Chavchavadze and the widow of the Russian poet and ambassador to Persia, Alexander Griboyedov. While in Georgia, Lermontov visited that family and even got from Nina Griboyedov's dagger. Later he sang it in his poem *The Dagger*:

My Damask dagger, I love thine mute steel,  
Thou, my light and my cold companion,  
By the broody Georgian for revenge were hammered thee,  
Were honed for a cruel battle by the free Circassian.

...

Thou were presented, given to me by the lily hand  
As a token of memory, at the moment of parting,  
And along thee, for the first time, not blood flowed then,  
But the transparent tear, the pearl of grief and suffering (Lermontov, 1953: 267).

Lermontov, of course, visited Griboyedov's grave on the slope of the "Holly Mountain" above Tbilisi and saw Nina's words on the tombstone:

"Your mind and deeds are everlasting in the Russian memory, but what for you have been outlived by my love?"

Nina survived her husband for a long time but remained a widow. That was, of course, the source of Tamar's response to her father:

Young men in vain come here together  
From different regions, other sides,  
There are in Georgia many brides,  
But I will not get married ever! (Lermontov, 2011: 55).

The prototype of Gudal, Tamar's father in the epic poem, is the aforementioned Alexander Chavchavadze. Lermontov used that name, probably having heard the local legend about the mountain spirit Gudu who loved the beautiful girl Nina.

The prototype of Tamar's groom was of course, Griboedov, who is called "The master of Synodal", which is nothing but "Tsinandali", the estate of A. Chavchavadze. Consequently, Griboedov was the son-in-love in Tsinandali and became transformed in its owner. Griboedov was murdered in Tehran, and Tamar's fiancé was killed in the battle with robbers, but these are the secondary details.

The death of the groom is described impressively; in the appeal to the horse who brought the dead horseman to the bride's house and fell down breathlessly on the stones at the gate, it is said:

Dashing steed, thou took out the master  
Of the battle like an arrow - you were fast,  
But the Osset's wicked slug was faster,  
And it caught up him in the dark (Lermontov, 2011: 47).

These lines demonstrate that Lermontov got acquainted in Georgia not only with many details of the local life, but as well with the trouble the country had to experience on its northern borders from the predatory raids.

By the way, this fact was one of the reasons for the concluding the so-called "Georgievsk Treaty", the treaty of friendship and mutual assistance between Russia and Georgia, according to the modern terminology. It was signed in 1783 by the Russian Empress Catherine II and Georgian King Heraclius (Avalov, 1901: 277). Interestingly, the Georgian delegation included the prince Chavchavadze's father. The further non-fulfillment of that treaty's conditions from Russia and the tragic consequences gives rise in the Georgian mind to the analogy with the relationship of Tamar and Demon. It is hard to imagine that Lermontov, who was visiting Georgia, having become closely acquainted with A. Chavchavadze

and his family, did not learn all the details of this historical fact. It does not follow from this that he gave the appropriate ambiguity to the relationship between Tamara and the Demon, though he led me, a Georgian, to such an idea.

From the beginning to the end, the action of *the Demon* unfolds in Georgia and the Georgian reader involuntarily has to think not only about Tamar, but as well about the tragic fate of her motherland. The description of deceased Tamar is deeply impressive:

And nothing there in her face said  
About her unexpected death  
In heat of ecstasy and passion;  
And all her captivating traits  
Showed such a beauty's striking trace,  
That as the marble, has no expression,  
And is devoid of mind and sense,  
Just as mysterious death itself.  
They kept a smile, so strange and fleeting,  
That frozen was on her beautiful lips,  
It stirred a lot of sorrowful feelings  
In those who cast at her their glimpse;  
The cold contempt there was seen clearly  
Of her so early faded soul,  
Expression of her final thinking,  
The mute farewell to all around.  
The vain reflection of her old days,  
It was more death like, that strange smile,  
For loving hearts, it was more hopeless  
Than her forever went out eyes.  
So, at the solemn hour of sunset,  
When, in the gold sea having melted,  
Is hidden the chariot of the day,  
Snows of the Caucasus, for an instant  
Retaining rosy colors' play,  
Shine faintly in the dusky distance.  
But that weak beam, so dim, half-dead,  
Won't meet reflection in the desert,  
And no one's way'll be 'lluminated  
From its majestic icy head! (Lermontov, 2011: 85).

The demon's poison-filled kiss destroyed Tamar, but he could not possess her even after her death, and once again remained alone in the universe without hope and love.

And the defeated demon cursed his  
All crazy fancies and mad thoughts,  
And still remained, filled with his haughtiness,  
Alone as earlier in the universe,  
Deprived of love, deprived of hopes! (Lermontov, 2011: 89).

The reader is as well filled with sad impressions by the pictures of the places where Tamar had lived, where the carefree days of her youth had passed:

But having served its time, now sadly  
The wistful castle stands there and stares,  
Like an old man, like a poor elder,  
Who has outlived his kin and friends.  
...  
All's wild around, not any trace  
Of by gone years, the hand of ages  
Cleansed them away, it's strict and zealous,  
And nothing will remind again  
Of Gudal's name, once loud and famous,  
And of his lovely daughter's name! (Lermontov, 2011: 91).

The epic poem ends with the truly epic description of the temple on the slopes of Kazbek, which has always attracted visitor's eyes:

But there the church on the steep summit,  
Where bones of theirs were taken by earth,  
Still has been stored by the holly strength,  
And there amidst the clouds you see it.  
...  
News having heard in distant countries  
About this temple amidst the rocks,  
All clouds from far away in flocks  
For worship to these places hurry.  
But over those ancient family stones

Now no one neither cries nor mourns;  
The rock of Kazbek, looking gloomily,  
Contains its pray and eagerly guards,  
And by continuous human murmuring  
Their perfect peace won't be disturbed (Lermontov, 2011: 93).

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