

FROM PROPHECY TO PARODY: SHAMAKHA IN THE RUSSIAN ROMANTIC
IMAGINATION

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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This thesis seeks to explore the role of the Azerbaijani city of Shamakha and the image of its ruler, the Shamakhan Queen in Pavel Katenin's *Kniazna Milusha* and Alexander Pushkin's *Skazka o Zolotom Petushke*. In order to interpret these works, it is important to look at the prophetic topos as outlined in Harsha Ram's book in the *Imperial Sublime* and see how it was applied to Pushkin's previous work *Kavkazkii Plennik*, which I argue, is being parodied in Katenin's *Kniazhna Milusha* and takes place in Shamakha, which is currently located in Azerbaijan. Pushkin, on the other hand, considers *Kniazhna Milusha* as a literary challenge and writes *Skazka o Zolotom Petushke* as a response, where the character of the Shamakhan Queen reappears and is much more sinister than in *Kniazhna Milusha*. Pushkin is successful in inverting the prophetic topos and making it somewhat "demonic" as a result.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Soviet critic D. I. Belkin, and Russian Poetess Anna Akhmantova have researched the origins of Alexander Pushkin's imagery in *Skazka o zolotom petushke*.¹ However, due to methodological limitations, they were unable to fully interpret its imagery. Most importantly, Soviet critics did not pay close attention to the fact that the tale takes place in the Caucasus, dismissing that region's specific cultural and ethnic features. The other crucial element that has been ignored is the role Pavel Katenin's fairytale *Kniazhna Milusha* played as Pushkin's inspiration. This thesis will primarily address how Pushkin and Katenin's images of Shamakha and the Shamakhan Queen relate to what Harsha Ram calls Russian literature's "prophetic topos" within the context of the Russian Imperial expansion into the Caucasus. While the image of the Caucasus in Russian literature has attracted much critical attention, these texts of Pushkin and Katenin have not been analyzed from this point of view. Applying Ram's analysis to Pushkin and Katenin's texts demonstrates that these images are better understood in light of the symbolic patterns found in the works of other Russian imperial poets representing the Caucasus.² In essence, I will attempt to show that *Kniazhna Milusha* parodies the symbolic patterns of the prophetic topos, while *Skazka o zolotom petushke* inverts them. In order to demonstrate this, however, it is first necessary to define the "prophetic topos" as Ram describes it, appropriately enough, in relation to Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*:

¹ Pushkin, Alexander Sergeevich. *Skazka o zolotom petushke*. Russkaia Virtualnaia Biblioteka. <https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/03fables/01fables/0801.htm>.

² Ram, Harsha. *The Imperial Sublime a Russian Poetics of Empire*. Publications of the Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies. 173 Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003

(1) the Russian body lies prostrate in a desolate mountain valley or desert remote from his place of birth, somewhere in the orient and, for the majority of poets, explicitly in the Caucasus; (2) the Russian being asleep, his captivity or paralysis appears to him and to the reader in and as a dream suspended between life and death (in “Prorok” sleep is only metaphorically present in the phrase “light as a dream,” but the prophet is likened to a corpse at the end of the poem); (3) the Russian’s disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy (in Derzhavin, Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik*, and Lermontov) or God himself (in the case of Küchelbecker and Pushkin’s “Prorok”); (4) just as prolonged sleep is followed by an awakening, so, too, the hero’s captivity or stasis is shown to precipitate some kind of historical or ontological change: in Derzhavin’s ode, Küchelbecker’s “Prorochestvo,” and in the epilogue to Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik* this change is understood militarily and is brought about by Russian imperial aggression, whereas in the remaining poems violence is inflicted primarily on the body of the prophet, who thereby becomes the passive receptacle of prophetic utterance.³

These four stages of the prophetic topos provided by Ram appear in most of the “southern” romantic works. They draw a picture of a Russian body which lies somewhere in the Caucasus and is being ravaged by a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy. This image is followed by the “awakening” of the body, which brings a “historical or ontological” change, understood as the Russian imperial aggression in the Caucasus in the context of *Kavkazskii Plennik*. Due to the appearance in many other romantic works, the inversion of the pattern, especially the final stage of the prophetic topos, has significant implications for the development of Russian literature. It might hold the key to understanding Pushkin’s last fairytale.

In my thesis I offer my own interpretation of the stages of the prophetic topos in relation to Pushkin and Katenin’s representations of Shamakha and the Shamakhan

³ Ram 173

Queen;⁴ second, I look at the inversion of the concept of the Russian “conquering” the native Caucasus female character provided by Katya Hokanson:

Certainly, the possibility of Circassian superiority to Russians is held out of character of the Circassian Girl, especially as the Russian cannot respond to her heartfelt love. However, it seems more likely that the Circassian girl is proof of the Russian’s superiority: she learns his language, cares for him, falls utterly under his spell. Like the heroine of *Poor Liza*, she will suffer for her love, not the hero.⁵

It is interesting that this concept of the “Russian conquering the Circassian” ties closely to the “awakening” of the Russian body in Ram’s prophetic topos, due to the Circassian girl being the main reason for the “awakening” of the prisoner and the historical and ontological change. This concept of conquest of the Caucasus native female is parodied and inverted, however, by Katenin and Pushkin.

Brief History of Shamakha and its role in Russian Literature

The city of Shamakhi (Russified as Shemakha (Shamakha)) has a long and rich history. Although prone to frequent earthquakes that sometimes destroyed the city, its influence in the South Caucasus only waned during the Russian Empire, after a devastating earthquake in 1859, forcing the imperial government to move the capital of the Shamakhi Governorate to Baku, years after Pushkin’s death.⁶ Conquered in 1805, fully incorporated in 1820, the city was annexed by Aleksei Yermolov, whom Pushkin

⁴ Pushkin, Alexander Sergeevich. *Kavkazskii plennik*. *Russkaia Virtualnaia Biblioteka* <https://rvb.ru/pushkin/01text/03fables/01fables/0801.htm>.

⁵ Hokanson, Katya. *Writing at Russia's Border*. Canadian Electronic Library. 64 Canadian Publishers Collection. Toronto, [Ontario] ; Buffalo, [New York] ; London, [England]: University of Toronto Press, 2008

⁶ Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedic Dictionary. *Shemakha*. <http://www.vehi.net/brokgauz/all/115/115487.shtml>

revered in the epilogue of his poem *Kavkazskii plennik*.⁷ Even before its annexation by the Russian Empire, Shamakhi was known in Russia for its silk. The Russians traded with the Shirvanshahs beginning in the days of Ivan Grozny.⁸ The murder of Russian merchants in Shamakha was the official *casus belli* for the famous Persian Campaign of Peter the Great in 1721.⁹ Pushkin's understanding of Russian history informed him of the importance of Shamakha, despite the fact that he never visited. Most of the population were the "Zakavkazkie Tatars," a name which was given to modern Azerbaijanis during the times of Imperial Russia.

Shamakha as a place of Parody and Inversion of the prophetic topos:

Significant work regarding the image of the Shamakhan Queen was done by Soviet literary critic D. I. Belkin in 1979.¹⁰ He argues that Pushkin portrays the Shamakhan Queen as mysterious, cruel and egotistical, though much more accurately than his counterpart Katenin,¹¹ who used this character in his own fairytale *Kniazhna Milusha* before Pushkin. Belkin suggests that Pushkin was mostly inspired by

⁷ Schmitt, Rüdiger. *ŠERVĀN*. ENCYCLOPÆDIA IRANICA. 2012. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/servan>.

⁸ Belkin, D. I. *K Istolkovaniiu Obraza Shamakhanskoi Tsaritsi*. 120. The Fundamental Digital Library of Russian Literature and Folklore. [http://feb-web.ru/feb/pushkin/serial/v79/v79-120-.htm?cmd=p#\\$f121_8](http://feb-web.ru/feb/pushkin/serial/v79/v79-120-.htm?cmd=p#$f121_8).

⁹ Schmitt, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/servan>

¹⁰ Belkin's work focuses more on the relationship between Pushkin and the Orient, and the use of Oriental tropes within his works.

¹¹ Belkin, 123 "Отталкиваясь от образа, нарисованного Катениным, а точнее, сохраняя лишь имя, Пушкин предложил читателю свой образ Шамаханской царицы, более загадочный, не по-женски жестокий, эгоистичный, но более правдоподобный, хотя во многом и театральный."

Washington Irving's story *Legend of the Arabian Astrologer* and partially by Katenin. He argues that his interpretation of the Shamakhan Queen is a result of the literary rivalry between two writers, and that Pushkin set out to teach Katenin a lesson.¹²

While I do share the popular view that there are elements of Irving's story within the *Skazka o Zolotom Petushke*, I believe that the influence of *Kniazhna Milusha* was more significant on Pushkin's tale. What is most likely is that Pushkin took the imagery from Katenin's work and reworked it in his own style. As a result, the parody of Harsha Ram's prophetic topos contained in *Kniazhna Milusha* has a different meaning with Pushkin. His fairytale still retains some of the parodic features of Katenin's, but it also takes a step further and causes the fictional Shamakha (the Orient) to conquer the fictional Russian Kingdom. An inversion of the prophetic topos occurs, on account of the fact that the Russian state becomes conquered by Shamakha (the Orient, the Caucasus), which is the historical and ontological change Ram mentioned. The obvious difference between *Skazka o zolotom petushke* and *Kniazhna Milusha* is that Katenin retains the status quo: there is no ontological or historical change.

¹² Belkin, 124

«Намек» и «урок» содержат в себе также эстетический заряд, обращенный к другу-сопернику. Желая, чтобы «урок» «доброму молодцу» не выглядел сурово, Пушкин, как нам представляется, специально включил в сюжет своей сказки образ Шамаханской девицы, нарисованный Катениным, но придал ему иные, во многом противоположные черты. Катенин в своей оценке пушкинских сказок этого, к сожалению, не заметил,¹⁹ хотя «Золотым петушком» Пушкин показал современникам, в том числе и Катенину, как должно в середине 30-х годов писать сказки, включающие ориентальные образы.

CHAPTER II: THE PARODY OF THE PROPHETIC TOPOS IN PAVEL KATENIN'S *KNIAZHNA MILUSHA*

The image of the “Shamakhan Queen” could be traced to Pavel Katenin’s fairytale *Kniazhna Milusha*, the second song of which was largely inspired by “southern” romantic works, such as Alexander Pushkin’s *Kavkazkii plennik*. Unlike *Plennik*, however, Katenin’s fairytale was not meant to be taken seriously and was a parody on romanticism.¹³ John Mercereau describes the style of this tale as having been marked with archaic diction and syntax, but also containing a multitude of Russian proverbs and sayings.¹⁴

What is fascinating about this tale is that the inversion of Harsha Ram’s prophetic topos can be traced back to it, making the process of how Pushkin has gotten to the point of writing *Skazka o zolotom petushke* much clearer.

Following Harsha Ram’s analysis of the prophetic topos, in this chapter I am going to discuss the parody of the prophetic topoi in Katenin’s tale that inspired *Kniazhna Milusha*. In addition to this I will also discuss what role Shamakha and the image of the Shamakhan Queen played in Katenin’s imagination and how it relates to this parody. Needless to say, this parody contains many traces of orientalism and Russian chauvinism. Paradoxically enough, however, Katenin’s chauvinistic disenchantment with the Caucasus leads him in a stylistic direction that predates Tolstoy’s anti-romantic realism by several decades. He does romanticize and orientalize the region to a certain degree,

¹³ Mercereau, John. “The Nineteenth Century: Romanticism, 1820–40.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, edited by Charles Moser, 152. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521415545.005.

¹⁴ Mercereau, John. 152

especially when it comes to the Shamakhan Queen. Nevertheless, the strongest feature of his work is parody.

Pavel Katenin as a Writer

Pavel Katenin was born on 11th of December 1792 to an old noble family. He started serving in the Ministry of National Education in 1806 and joined the military in 1810. He was a participant of the Napoleonic Wars, including the battle of Borodino. There is evidence to suggest that after the war he was involved in “The Union of Good and Truth,” a secret society which advocated for the liberation of the peasants and the establishment of constitutional rights.¹⁵ But this society did not last long. In 1820 Katenin was sent to retirement for his “freethinking.” He was exiled to his estates around Kostroma. He returned to Petersburg from exile later on. In 1832 he was forced to go back to the military, and in 1833 he was enlisted in the Erivan Carabinne Regiment. In 1834 he went to war in the Caucasus. Shortly after becoming a military officer he also started his literary career writing poetry and visiting literary salons. One of the more significant influences on his work happened during meeting with writers who were members of the Preobrazhenskii guards in Gavriila Derzhavin’s house¹⁶. His other significant works include his 1835 *Invalid Gorev*.¹⁷

¹⁵ Ermakova-Bitner, G, V. *P.A. Katenin* in Katenin, P. A. *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia*. Biblioteka Poeta. Bol’shaia Serii. 339. Leningrad; Sovetskiĭ Pisatel’ . Leningradskoe Otd-nie;1965.

¹⁶ Ermakova-Bitner 7.

¹⁷ *Invalid Gorev* in Katenin, P. A. *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia*. Biblioteka Poeta. Bol’shaia Serii. Leningrad; Sovetskiĭ Pisatel’ 1965

In order to understand the context of *Kniazhna Milusha*, one must understand Pavel Katenin as being someone who has been associated with the “young archaists.” This group opposed the romantic trend in Russian Literature, writing parodies and sometimes outright anti-romantic works. Other than Katenin, the young Archaists also included Griboyedov and Kuchelbecker. The Archaists in general are considered to be the precursors to Slavophiles, opposed to the foreign words and expressions introduced by Karamzin in to the Russian language. They disavowed sentimentalism and romanticism and wanted to revert back to the period (mainly the classical period of the 1700s) before these literary movements took Russian literature by storm. Many of the archaists were in favor of the return of Old Church Slavonic to the literary language in order to return the “high style” of Literature.

Таким образом, борьба архаистов была направлена против эстетизма, сглаженности, маньеризма и камерного стиля карамзинистов за своеобразие литературных диалектов (причем лексика высокого должна была преимущественно черпаться из церковно-славянского языка, а среднего— из народных песен, гевр. «просторечия»), а эта борьба была естественно связана с борьбой за большие формы и декламационный ораторский стиль.¹⁸

Many of the archaists, including Katenin himself, considered the Russian poet Gavrila Derzhavin as the example of someone that produced works that should be celebrated over the contributions of Karamzin to Russian literature. Derzhavin in a sense served as a partial inspiration for Katenin. Katenin was unique in the sense that despite belonging to the young archaists, he refused to use Old Church Slavonic to enrich the Russian Language, but also at the same time stayed true to the archaist ideology. “Катенин, принимая “отделение русского языка от славянского, не сдает позиций по

¹⁸ Tynianov, Iu. N. *Arkhaisty I Novatory*. 103 Ann Arbor, Mich.: Ardis, 1929.

отношению к литературному языку.¹⁹ Inspired by Derzhavin, Radishchev, the old archaists and his fellow young archaists, Katenin holds a unique position in Russian literature. His contemporaries described him as having a distinct voice among in the Russian literary field and credited him for having a large degree of influence on their work.²⁰

Katenin, Pushkin and *Kniazhna Milusha*

The relations between Katenin and Pushkin were close, with both authors meeting and corresponding with each of other, sometimes finding themselves in the situation of friendly rivalry. Katenin and Pushkin first met in person in 1818, and later in 1826 Pushkin credits Katenin as the person who taught him to avoid “one-sidedness in literary opinion,” respecting Katenin as a critic.²¹ The tightest years of collaboration between Katenin and Pushkin were in 1832 and 1833 when Katenin wrote *Kniazhna Milusha*.²² This is around the time that Pushkin was working on the part of *Eugene Onegin* that depicted Onegin’s travels in the Caucasus. Pushkin praised the tale and wrote his 1834 fairy tale *Skazka o zolotom petushke* in response to the second song of *Kniazhna Milusha*.

¹⁹ Тунянов 93

²⁰ Ермакова-Битнер 6: “Признания Грибоедова и Пушкина в том, какую важную роль в их литературной биографии сыграл Катенин, свидетельствует о значительности его как творческой личности.”

²¹ Ермакова-Битнер 7

²² Ермакова-Битнер. It is also crucial to discuss the relationship between Katenin and folklore. Just as his contemporaries, he integrated Russian Folklore in to his work. For example, one of his works “Mstislav Mstislavich” contains references to *Slovo o Polku Igoreve*. Katenin uses techniques and motifs in order to replicate the folk style within the work. *Kniazhna Milusha* is no exception to this, as it also employs the same style.

Kniazhna Milusha tells the tale of the warrior Vseslav Golitsa who is married to the daughter of the Tsar of the Kievan Rus', Milusha, but her aunt, the wizard Proveda, takes the girl with her, making a deal with Vseslav to stay chaste for a year. The narrative follows the adventures of Golitsa trying to stay chaste to Milusha. One of these adventures leads him to the Caucasus, namely to Shamakha.²³

As mentioned in the introduction, *Kniazhna Milusha* was inspired by multiple sources that can be traced back to the 18th century. The satirical features of the folkloric tropes, especially with the Russian folk warrior (Bogatyr') going on adventures with no heroic and specific purpose goes back to Radishchev. He wrote in his seemingly unfinished poem "Bova" about a warrior who goes on an aimless adventure. It is worth noting that this poem inspired both Pushkin and Katenin.²⁴ Its elements can be found both in Katenin's *Kniazhna Milusha* and Pushkin's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*.²⁵ It was also one of the works in Russian literature that mentioned Shamakha before the romantic era. Radishchev's mention of the Shamakhan Silk is important because it is the key point of orientalizing the region and is found both in Pushkin's and Katenin's work :

Но предательны помосты,
Покровенные коврами
Шелку мягка шамаханска,²⁶
Ее гневу лишь смеются.

²³ *Kniazhna Milusha. Pesn Vtoraia.* in Katenin, P. A. *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia.* 277-297. Biblioteka Poeta. Bol'shaia Seriia. Leningrad; Sovetskiĭ Pisatel', Leningradskoe Otd-nie

²⁴ Ermakova-Bitner 50

²⁵ Which in itself inspired *Kniazna Milusha*.

²⁶ Radishev, A.N. *Polnoie Sobranie Sochnienii.* Vol. 1. *Bova.* 51 lines 856-859 *Russkaia Virtualnaia Biblioteka* , https://rvb.ru/18vek/radishchev/01text/vol_1/01poems/003.htm Like in *Kniazhna Milusha*'s second song Shamakha and Silk are emphasized in Radishchev's *Bova*

The Parody of the Prophetic Topos as a whole

Katenin's relationship to the Caucasus is illustrated by a poem he wrote during his service during the Murid War in 1834, to which he makes a reference in *Kniazhna Milusha*. In this poem he repeats the claim that he makes in *Kniazhna Milusha*, where he frames the people living in the Caucasus as thieves. While the relationship between the author and the native populations is more complex when it comes to the works of Pushkin, Katenin expresses his resentment towards the people of the region.²⁷ As one critic notes, there are elements of "southern" romantic works of Pushkin and also some of the Pushkin's tales, namely "Ruslan and Lyudmila" within *Kniazhna Milusha*. This work is more of a parody on the romantic tropes that had been found within the works of Pushkin and other writers of the time. Specifically, the second song is focused on the aimless adventures of Vseslav in the Shamakha Khanate, on which he embarks on after almost getting seduced by mermaids in the Don River.

The beginning of the second song of *Kniazhna Milusha* is the parody of "prophecy" as a whole. Instead of this region being a subject of imperial destiny, it is a subject of Vseslav's (the Russian) adventure that really has no reasonable purpose. As mentioned in the introduction, the murder of Russian merchants in Shamakha served as a pretense for Peter the Great's intervention in to the region and expanding the empire. It is possible that Katenin might be poking fun at the senselessness of the Russian expansion in to the region. This is found not only in *Kniazhna Milusha*, but also in the poem *Kavkazskie gori*, where Katenin asks the purpose of the existence of the Caucasus.

²⁷ Katenin, *Kavazskie gori*, 228 discussed below.

Katenin's disdain for the Caucasus and its role in Russian literature appears in the 30th stanza of the second song. His opinions of the peoples of the Caucasus (before his 1834 poem *Kavkazskie gori*) are illustrated within these lines. In *Kavkazskie gori* Katenin reiterates his claim that he makes in *Kniazhna Milusha* that the people living here are "thieves." He also questions the purpose of the existence of the Caucasus, calling it a blight on Russian poetry:

Цепь пресловутая всепетого Кавказа,
Непроходимая, безлюдная страна,
Притон разбойников, поэзии зараза!²⁸

Без пользы, без красы, с каких ты пор славна?
Творенье божье ты иль чертова проказа?
Скажи, проклятая, зачем ты создана?²⁹

Vseslav, the bogatyr in the Orient, is a personification of the imperial expansion into these regions and the futility of holding on to them, since this song of *Kniazhna Milusha* was written in 1832, right when the war against the Caucasian Imamate began (Murid war). Katenin begins to tell about the news coming from Shamakha, about the dispute of the Shamakhan Queen Zulfira with her uncle, the evil Morgud:

Вот свежая: спор о державе ханской
Идет в земле той славной Шамаханской,
Которая, я чай, известна вам,
Красавицы, по дорогим шелкам.³⁰

27

У дяди спор с племянницей: покойный

²⁸ Katenin calls the Caucasus the "disease of poetry"

²⁹ Katenin Questions the purpose of the creation of the Caucasus (presumably by God)

³⁰ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraia* 283-284. Stanza 26. There is news coming from Shamakha about a dispute. Here Katenin reminds "beauties" about Shamakha being famous for its silk

Хан завещал, затем что нет сынов,
Быть дочери Царицей; недостойный
Брат между тем, Моргуд-царевич, ков
Припас тайком и, Хан чуть взят могилой,
Престол себе тотчас присвоил силой;
Царевна тож вступилась за свое,
И меч решит меж дяди и ее.

It is important to note that, in the same fashion as Radishchev, Katenin associates Shamakha with its silk, which is how this region of the Empire was recognized by the wider public. This argument between uncle and niece prompts Vseslav to venture in to the Khanate. Vseslav immediately decides to side with the uncle. Even though the uncle is a “predator in a beard/хищник в бороде,” because after being seduced by the mermaids, Vseslav has vowed to go after everyone who embodied “beauty,” which is what he considered the Shamakhan Queen to be. Katenin lets the readers know that the uncle is not the right person to fight for. The parody of Harsha Ram’s prophetic topos in this context does not lie in how the Russian is captured by Caucasian people, but that he willingly goes to join a villain to fight the Shamakhan Queen, who, as we established in the introduction, can be seen as the embodiment of the Circassian girl. This is a parody because the Russian bogatyr is working with the villain in this instance in a “hyper-awakened” state against the Shamakhan Queen, the character inspired by the Circassian girl. This passage also contains information that adds to the parody of the prophetic topos:

Похоже ли на дело, чтоб Голица
Был в том числе? тут ,
Здесь юная законная царица;
Где ж ум его? утоп в донской воде.
Без шуток так: в Русалках вся причина;
Но как на всё дурное есть личина,
За верность он считал перед княжной

Идти на всех подобных ей войной.³¹

Vseslav was put into stasis by the mermaids and was then “awakened.” There is the issue of the Russian being asleep, which needs to be addressed due to its prevalence in the prophetic topos. Katenin mentions that Vseslav’s encounter with the mermaids has made him “lose his mind,” causing him to enter into a strange state of mind where he is awake, but has also lost his senses. In this state of being “hyper-awake” Vseslav enters the Caucasus, while usually in standard prophetic topos the Russian is in “stasis or dreamlike state.” The reasons that he is there are arbitrary, there is a feeling of senselessness to his presence in Shamakha.

Katenin’s Parody of the Caucasus Natives

There is a feeling of disdain and dismissal towards the romantic conventions that were prominent in “Plennik.” Before *Kavkazskie gori* was written, Katenin had similar things to say about the Caucasus in *Kniazhna Milusha*:

30
Кавказские заоблачные горы
Проехал он в опасных хлопотах,
Затем что там издревле жили воры,
Теперь у нас их славят сплошь в стихах;
Но романтизм неведом был Всеславу;
Ворам давал расправу он на славу,
И притупил булатный вполы меч,
Тьмы без числа голов срубая с плеч.³²

³¹ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraia* 284. Stanza 27. Katenin reprimands Vseslav for his plan to go to Shamakha and cites the mermaids, who tried to drown him earlier, as a cause for his decision to go to “war” against the Shamakhan Queen.

³² Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraia* 284 stanza 30. As noted above, his stanza is about Vseslav’s entrance in to the Caucasus. It expresses the lack of Vseslav’s interest for romanticism. It also expresses criticism of the Caucasus and its inhabitants

Katenin refers to the local populace as “Т’ма” or “Darkness,”³³ but also adding that they are “thieves” that lived on the Caucasus from “ancient times.” In the “ТЪМЫ без числа голов срубая с плеч” line, Katenin portrays this darkness having many heads that Vseslav plows through. Edward Said’s analysis in *Orientalism* comes in to play here, but instead of glorifying the past of the Orient and framing it as once a mighty place, such as in the quote below:

Their great moments were in the past; they are useful in the modern world only because the powerful and up-to-date empires have effectively brought them out of the wretchedness of their decline and turned them into rehabilitated residents of productive colonies.³⁴

Katenin instead opts to break this tradition of Russian Orientalism to a degree. Instead he claims that the Caucasus has always been a thieves’ den and has never been great. As mentioned before, he repeats this sentiment in *Kavkazskie gori* later on. The main point of Katenin’s chauvinism is that there are no “rehabilitated residents” in the Caucasus. He deliberately makes Vseslav ignore the romantic traditions and makes traversing the Caucasus seem nothing more than a mere hassle. This is also a parody of the first trait of Harsha Ram’s definition of the prophetic topos.³⁵ Instead of the Russian

³³ Just as Pushkin refers to the Crimean Tatars in *Bakhisarayskiy fontan*,

³⁴ Said, Edward W. 1979. *Orientalism*. 35 New York: Vintage Books.

³⁵ Ram 173 “(1) the Russian body lies prostrate in a desolate mountain valley or desert remote from his place of birth, somewhere in the orient and, for the majority of poets, explicitly in the Caucasus; (2) the Russian being asleep, his captivity or paralysis appears to him and to the reader in and as a dream suspended between life and death (in “Prorok” sleep is only metaphorically present in the phrase “light as a dream,” but the prophet is likened to a corpse at the end of the poem); (3) the Russian’s disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy (in Derzhavin, Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik*, and Lermontov) or God himself (in the case of Küchelbecker and Pushkin’s “Prorok”); (4) just as

body lying desolate in the mountain valley, the Russian is actually able to traverse the Orient (Caucasus) with ease and without any regard towards the literary traditions that so many other writers adhered to.

There at the conflict between Zulfira and Morgud was also referencing the Murid War,³⁶ due to the “bearded” men fighting, Morgud praying to “Chernobog,” a pagan Slavic God representing darkness and evil, who Katenin most likely makes an equivalent to Allah. Morgud even promises to build him a temple, which might refer to a mosque. It seems like Katenin continues his anti-Oriental tirade towards the natives of the Caucasus. This seems to be a parody of the Islamic faith that defines not only the Caucasus, but the whole European Orient. Overall it seems like Katenin parodies the whole cultural and religious heritage of the Caucasus through the Shamakhans. Unlike in *Kavkazskii plennik*, where the Circassians are these freedom-loving people that are fighting against the Russians and are fearless warriors loyal to their cause and faith, the Shamakhans appear to be loyal to the Russian and more concerned with the conflicts among themselves.³⁷

Both Morgud and Zulfira appear to be servile towards Vseslav (the Russian) and

prolonged sleep is followed by an awakening, so, too, the hero's captivity or stasis is shown to precipitate some kind of historical or ontological change: in Derzhavin's ode, Küchelbecker's "Prorochestvo," and in the epilogue to Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik* this change is understood militarily and is brought about by Russian imperial aggression, whereas in the remaining poems violence is inflicted primarily on the body of the prophet, who thereby becomes the passive receptacle of prophetic utterance"³⁵

³⁶ Ermakova-Bitner 701, "Primechaniia. Kniazhna Milusha. Pesn Vtoraia" in Katenin, P. A. *Izbrannye Proizvedeniia*. Biblioteka Poeta. Bol'shaia Seriia. Leningrad; Sovetskiĭ Pisatel' Leningradskoe Otd-nie;

³⁷ What makes Shamakha a perfect location for this type of loyalty is the fact that the Khanates of this region did not put up much resistance against the Russian invasion due to concentrating on the wars amongst each other. A lot of the "tatars" that lived in that region were not involved in the Murid War due to religious differences.

prioritize conflicts amongst themselves over fighting a much more powerful enemy. In fact, Morgud is trying to use the Russian to solidify his position as the Khan of Shamakha. This leads to the amusing scenes between Morgud and Vseslav, Morgud making a fool of himself trying to sway the bogatyr' to his cause:

31

...А своему в то ж время чернобогу
Моргуд Мирза молитвы воссылал
И пышный храм создать сулил кумиру,
Коли убьет царевну он Зюльфиру
И в Шамахе упрочит сан царя
Приезжего рукой богатыря.

32

Отправился, едва узнал, что близко,
Встречать его; и тут с коня долой,
И всаднику поклоны клал так низко,
Что пыль сапог смешалась бородой;
А тот, хоть сам всегда гнушался лестью,
Чужой себе не применял к бесчестию
И думал так, что низости льстеца
Не лишние при встрече молодца.

33

С улыбкою он слушал благосклонной
Весь пошлый вздор, чем рыжий лицемер
Ему кадил, Мирза низкопоклонный:
Как русских всех он любит паче мер,
Как ставит всю надежду в нем едином,
Как чтит его отцом и господином,
Как рад ему низайшим быть слугой
И прочее, а всё спина дугой.³⁸

Morgud is trying to prove his loyalty towards the Russian bogatyr to a degree when he bows down so low that the dust of his boots is mixed with his beard, which is supposed to be a signifier of Muslim faith. This could be a symbol of Morgud forsaking his faith for appeasing the Russian. Katenin calls Morgud's actions a "низость," and his

³⁸ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, Stanza 31-33. In these three stanzas the reader is introduced to the uncle of the Shamkhan Queen, Morgud Mirza, uncle of the Shamakhan Queen. He is revealed to be a worshiper of Chernobog and also as a sleazy Caucasus native kowtowing to Vseslav to defeat his niece.

words as “пошлый вздор” due to the shaky loyalty that Morgud may have towards Vseslav. Nevertheless, the words that Morgud uses to show his loyalty to the Russian are also indicative to what degree that these Caucasus natives are polar opposites of the Circassians. Morgud tells Vseslav that he “likes Russians more than anything,” he considers the bogatyr his “only hope,” and most curiously that Morgud considers Vseslav “a father and the master” and tells him that he is happy to be his “lowest servant.” This goes completely against the idea of the freedom-loving peoples of the Caucasus found in *Kavazskii plennik*, portraying them in an opposite light. They are seen as traitorous liars, forsaking their beliefs and swearing fealty to a bigger power (Russia) in order to achieve their personal ends. All of this is the continuation of the parody of the prophetic topos: “(3) the Russian’s disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy (in Derzhavin, Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik*, and Lermontov) or God himself (in the case of Küchelbecker and Pushkin’s “Prorok”).”

Instead of Russian disempowerment, in this scene the Russian is empowered and the Turkic or Asiatic “enemy” is an inferior force. Instead of disempowering the Russian physically, the “enemy” (in this case Morgud) is violating his own body and traditions by bending down to the Russian, while at the same time pledging himself to the Russian, which gives him more power.

The Depiction of the Shamakhan Queen

Interestingly enough, Katenin, before Pushkin in his *Skazka o zolotom petushke*, mentions that the Shamakhans have silk tents (“шатер”) (not plural?) where they feast

before the battle. In Katenin's tale these tents serve as a place to feast and celebrate, and later on in the story this trend continues:

35
Как встретило их войско, как кричали
Вдоль по рядам им громкое «ура!»
И как в шатрах шелковых пировали³⁹

Of course, other than Morgud, one of the most important, if not the most important character in the second song is the Shamakhan Queen, who Katenin paints in a much more positive light than Morgud. For the purposes of parody and to once again subvert Pushkinian romanticism, he masculinizes Zulfira in different ways. First of all, she is described as a fearsome warrior. Not having a son, her father raised her to resemble a warrior (referred to in this instance as “молодец”). She knows how to use the sword and the bow well. She commands a regiment that consists of a hundred young men and ten young women all dressed in crimson silk dresses. Later on Katenin even comments on the Shamakhan Queen resembling a “young man” rather than a “beauty” against whom Vseslav decided to fight. There is speculation that Katenin drew her image from Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* and she is reminiscent of his character Clorinda.⁴⁰

He claims that “crimson” is the color of the most noble families of the region. This is a very colorful, oriental image that differs from the characters and scenery of the rest of the song. Katenin even highlights how different and elite her regiment is compared to the rest of the warriors. Zulfira herself is differentiated from the warriors by her hat made out of rubies. This is the first time that the Shamakhan Queen makes an appearance in person in

³⁹ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraia* stanza 35.p 286 Vseslav celebrates before battle again in a silk tent

⁴⁰ Ermakova-Bitner, *Primechania Kniazhna Milusha. Pesn Vtoraia*. 701

Kniazhna Milusha, and the way it is portrayed is almost enchantingly magical. At the same time, this is one of the instances where Katenin turns to Orientalism. Before the appearance of the Shamakhan Queen, the Caucasus natives for him were mere “thieves” that lived in the region since ancient times. Even the depiction of Morgud was akin to this image of this “sleazy” Caucasus native. For the first time in the narrative poem Katenin creates a formidable “Turkic” and “Asiatic” enemy for the Russian to face. This is when Vseslav, the Russian bogatyr slowly becomes impressed by the warrior-princess. She is similar to the Circassian girl: “Armed with her weapons, prepared to do battle, the Circassian girl becomes both an equal of the duel-scarred captive and a full fledged member of her Circassian warrior “tribe”...”⁴¹ Only it is important to note once again that the Shamakhans are merely used as caricatures of Circassians.

38

То ль дело здесь! во всем пространстве мира
 Подобных нет наездников полка.
 Забыл сказать вам: ратница Зюльфира,
 Ее, на взгляд пуховая, рука
 Стибают лук и саблей искривленной
 Кружит легко; сам Хан к грозе военной
 Привадил дочь; обман любви отца:
 Нет сына, будь девица в молодца.

39

На воронках, в шелковых платьях алых,
 Всей области семейств знатнейших цвет,
 Сто юношей и десять дев удалых
 Всегда при ней, и все ей равных лет;
 Ее наряд отличен пред собором
 Лишь головным из яхонтов убором:
 Румяней роз, рассыпным искр огнем
 Горят они как звезды, только днем. ⁴²

⁴¹ Hokanson, 68

⁴² Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraya*, 288 Stanza 38-39. Here the Shamakhan Queen is first introduced in person. She is wearing

As a rebuttal to Pushkin’s portrayal of Circassians as fierce warriors, Katenin as a military man, also criticizes the way that the “Eastern people” handle their military tactics. He contrasts this to how for the Russian these military tactics seemed “foreign” and “mysterious” and “unbearable,” so he with his “bogatyр” strength single handedly defeats the Turkic enemy. Some of the lines heard describing the battle against the Shamakhans are similar to the ones found in Pushkin’s *Poltava*: “Пошел по всем махать, колоть и сечь.”⁴³ This superhuman strength given to the Russian, whose ability to cut through the enemy completely subverts the trope of a helpless captive being held by the natives. Despite being a parody, this is one of the moments in which the Russian awakens with full force. Vseslav indeed is not a captive, but an active free Russian fighting in this battle for no reasonable purpose, with no particular imperial ambition. To a degree, he is similar to Pushkin’s captive for traveling to the Caucasus from ennui that he experienced while in Russia, while Vseslav left for the Caucasus because he experienced “des langueurs voluptueuses” from being separated from Milusha.⁴⁴ This, combined with him being tricked by mermaids, causes him to wreak havoc on the Shamakhans. Though instead of being a Byronic hero, Katenin makes him a overpowered Russian folk hero.

43

Зюльфирин полк, как весь народ восточный,
Давно горазд давать в сраженьях тыл;
Но русскому обычай сей порочный
Неведом, чужд, совсем несносен был.

⁴³ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraya*, 288 Stanza 43

⁴⁴ Mersereau, John. “The Nineteenth Century: Romanticism, 1820–40.” Chapter. In *The Cambridge History of Russian Literature*, edited by Charles Moser, 152. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. doi:10.1017/CHOL9780521415545.005.

Чуть опрометь коня сдалась удилам,
Всеслав вернул, один всем вражьим силам
Противустал — и в обе руки с плеч
Пошел по всем махать, колоть и сечь.⁴⁵

“Конец пришел от русского им гнева.” The enemies met their end from “Russian rage,” which is very similar to the epilogue of *Kavkazskii plennik* where Pushkin asserts the power of the Russians over the Caucasus and praises the Russian aggression. The sentiment seems to be similar to Pushkin’s praise of the imperial expansion in the Caucasus.⁴⁶

As mentioned before, however, the epilogue of *Kavkazskii plennik* makes the Caucasus a subject of imperial destiny, while it is important to keep in mind when reading *Kniazhna Milusha* that Vseslav does not have a concrete target or a concrete aim, giving the violence an atmosphere of senselessness. The Shamakhan Queen, after surrendering to Vseslav, even offers him her country (the same way as Morgud did earlier), asking him if he wants to expand the “*derzhava*,” which can be assumed is

⁴⁵ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, 288 Stanza 43,

⁴⁶ И воспою тот славный час,
Когда, почуя бой кровавый,
На негодующий Кавказ
Подъялся наш орел двуглавый;
Когда на Тереке седом
Впервые грянул битвы гром
И грохот русских барабанов,
И в сече, с дерзостным челом,
Явился пылкий Цицианов;
Тебя я воспою, герой,
О Котляревский, бич Кавказа!
Куда ни мчался ты грозой —
Твой ход, как черная зараза,
Губил, ничтожил племена...

Kievan Rus'. As does her uncle, she is willing to give her country up to the Russian rather than be defeated by her uncle:

49
Скажи: коли манит тебя держава,
Мы все твои; но дяде злому ввек
Не уступлю наследственного права,
Доколе враг мне голову не ссек;⁴⁷

Soon though, there is no need for violence between the two factions, as Morgud dies after accidentally killing his horse and getting crushed underneath it, while trying to kill Zulfira. Now without a leader, it is up to Vseslav to subdue the remnants of Morgud's army. The Russian is so terrifying to the natives that they lay down their arms:

«Стой! иль, клянусь косою моею Милуши,
Всем беглецам отрежу нос и уши.
Стой, Шамаха!» — все пнями стали вдруг:
Так страх ошиб, так пронял их испуг.⁴⁸

This is similar to the epilogue of *Kavkazskii plennik*, where Pushkin references Ermolov:

Смирись, Кавказ: идет Ермолов!
И смолкнул ярый крик войны:
Все русскому мечу подвластно.
Кавказа гордые сыны,
Сражались, гибли вы ужасно;

Unlike the “freedom loving” sons of Caucasus, the Shamakhans decided to give up without a fight. This “enemy” is not a formidable force, rather a bunch of weak and cowardly soldiers that care more about their survival than their freedom or cause. Once

⁴⁷ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, Pesn Vtoraya, 290 Stanza 49,. In this stanza the Shamakhan Queen reveals that she is willing to voluntarily give her country to the Russian rather than give Shamakha to her uncle

⁴⁸ Katenin *Kniazhna Milusha*, Pesn Vtoraya, 291 Stanza 55 . Vseslav manages to scare Morgud's army by threatening it. Him “Halt Shamakha!” makes the remnants of Morgud's army stop.

fighting for Morgud, they had no qualms accepting the rule of Zulfira, propped up by a Russian bogatyr.

In the final part of the chapter Vseslav grows closer to Zulfira. Katenin continues to masculinize her, which makes Vseslav more comfortable around her, as she is not of the same beauty as the mermaids which he vowed to fight against:

58
...царевна по всему
На юношу-красавца походила;
Уловки все не женские в ней: сила,
Прыть на коне, воинственный наряд,⁴⁹

This is the beginning of Vseslav breaking his promise to his Russian beloved Milusha for whom he has to stay chaste for a year. This moment is the parody of the Russian destiny in the Caucasus: rather than conquering the native Caucasus woman in the same way that the captive did in *Kavkazskii plennik*, Vseslav is the one being conquered by the Shamakhan Queen. The bogatyr even contemplates staying in Shamakha and forsaking his homeland, becoming a “captive” in a sense. He starts thinking about his “fate/destiny.”. What is parodic about his captivity is that he starts developing strong feelings for the Shamakhan Queen, unlike the Pushkinian captive, who does not reciprocate the feelings of the Circassian girl. The overt sexual nature of Vseslav’s captivity, which makes him unfaithful towards Milusha, is the basis of this parody⁵⁰ :

59
Речь как-то их зашла, что быть на ханстве
Одной невмочь, и надобен ей муж.

⁴⁹ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, 292. Stanza 58,. The Shamakhan Queen resembles a “Handsome Young Man”, which makes Vseslav comfortable around her.

⁵⁰ This is the recurring theme not only in this song, but the premise of the fairytale, as Vseslav tries to stay chaste

Большой народ держать в своем подданстве,
Подумал он, не худо; почему ж,
Коли судьба? . жаль огорчить Милушу;
Но верность я для важных благ нарушу;
Долг обществу на жертву страсть принести,
Да и Руси тут выгода и честь.⁵¹

On their way, the Shamakhan Queen discusses the Khanate and how she needs a husband to keep her people under control. Vseslav thinks that this might be his destiny to marry Zulfira and even though he will break his chastity. He will sacrifice his passion for the greater good and pay his debt to society. Most importantly for “Rus” there would be “profit” and “honor,” which seem to be aligned with the imperial ambitions of the contemporary Russian Empire trying to conquer the Caucasus. This again is mixed with the overtly sexual nature of the fairytale.

This is the moment when the Russian begins to dream (sleep).⁵² The Turkic enemy instead of inflicting pain upon the sleeping Russian body, inflicts pleasure instead:

60
Музыка, пир, ширасское вино,
Всё весело, и сытно, и красно.⁵³

⁵¹ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, Stanza 59, 292-293. Here the idea of the Shamakhan Queen being single and needing aid in ruling the Kingdom. Vseslav considers marrying her.

⁵² Ram 173 (2) the Russian being asleep, his captivity or paralysis appears to him and to the reader in and as a dream suspended between life and death (in “Prorok” sleep is only metaphorically present in the phrase “light as a dream,” but the prophet is likened to a corpse at the end of the poem); (3) the Russian’s disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy (in Derzhavin, Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik*, and Lermontov) or God himself (in the case of Küchelbecker and Pushkin’s “Prorok”);

⁵³ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, Stanza 60, 293. Once again Vseslav begins to celebrate. He has some Shiraz Wine.

As it was with the feast with “Shiraz wine,” Vseslav started having Oriental dreams and one dream of Kiev and Milusha:

Лег — и заснул на шелковых коврах.
Сон смутен был, мелькали грезы тьмами:
То ханские знамена с бунчуками,
То черная, вся в яхонтах коса,
То Киев и Милушина краса⁵⁴

There is an internal struggle happening within Vseslav’s somewhat prophetic dream. He is challenged by the thoughts of the Orient and the Shamakhan Queen, but also with the thoughts of Milusha and Kiev. This internal struggle does not seem to be fully parodic in nature, and Vseslav is genuinely challenged by the Orient, but this leads to the next sequence where the parody of the prophetic topos is prevalent: Milusha’s aunt, the Witch Proveda, uses this opportunity to trick Vseslav by disguising herself as Zulfira and trying to remove the engagement ring from the bogatyr’s finger:

62
Кольцо слегка тянула, наконец
Ей сам помочь решился молодец.⁵⁵

At this moment Proveda reveals herself, and Vseslav is up for a rude awakening (“an awakening that brings ontological change.”)⁵⁶ In Katenin’s work this ontological change is understood by the realization that Vseslav’s flirting with Orientalism has come to an end and has been fruitless and aimless. Proveda calls out Vseslav for his Shamakhan adventure and for being far from Kiev:

69
Я помыслы в груди твоей читала;

⁵⁴ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, 293 Stanza 60, Vseslav is put to sleep after the celebration and starts having oriental dreams.

⁵⁵ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha*, *Pesn Vtoraya*, 293 Stanza 62.

⁵⁶ Ram 173

Я весь твой путь беспутный наблюдала
От Киева, от княжеских палат
До здешних мест: что? прав ты?» — «Виноват».⁵⁷

Later on, in the chapter Proveda forgives Vseslav and orders him to leave by sea. He leaves without saying goodbye to the real Zulfira, therefore leaving Shamakha almost largely unchanged and unconquered. Shamakha is never mentioned again, except for when Vseslav briefly recalls his encounter there with Proveda.

Conclusion

Proveda criticizes him for making this long journey and does highlight the waywardness of his journey to Shamakha. This adventure did not serve any purpose and created a challenge in Vseslav's quest to stay faithful to Milusha. The parodying of the prophetic topos in all of its stages is apparent throughout the text. Vseslav's random adventure in Shamakha, cooperating first with one faction (Morgud) and later the other (Zulfira) shows the indifference of the Russians of which side to support. The enemies, that appear to be powerful (or at least they used to be) in *Kavkazskii plennik* are portrayed as cowards, and do not inflict any violence and pain on Vseslav. It is Vseslav who is single handedly inflicting violence on the natives. Of course, there are also moments where the prophetic topos stops being parodic and seems to take a much more serious tone. Mainly, when Vseslav during the battle defeats Zulfira's army and they meet their end from "Russian rage."

The awakening of the Russian from the "prophetic" dream is the realization of the meaningless of the expansion into the Caucasus both in the literary and military sense.

⁵⁷ Katenin, *Kniazhna Milusha, Pesn Vtoraya*, 295 Stanza 69. Proveda calls out Vseslav on not staying chaste, and Vseslav agrees with her that he is guilty.

Proveda, the Russian witch, wakes Vseslav from the dream of marrying the Shamakhan Queen and bringing “profit and glory” to “Rus” through this marriage and being unfaithful to Milusha as a result. Unfaithfulness to Milusha can be interpreted as being unfaithful towards the genuine Russian tradition. The purpose of this parody is understanding there is no prophecy and there is no destiny to be found in the Caucasus, and it is better to focus on the Russian aspects of culture and empire.

This might be a reflection of Katenin’s interpretation of romanticism in Russian literature, especially the “southern” romantic novels written by Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinskii, Nikolai Muraviev and others. This is also tied to the imperial expansion of Russia into the Caucasus. The start of the Murid War in 1830-1832, after a period of relative peace, increased his cynicism towards the region. He considered the war to be futile and went on to reiterate these claims in his poem *Kavkazskie gori* and in his writings about the service with the ruthless Georgian count Dadiani.⁵⁸

Katenin’s disenchantment with the Caucasus predates Leo Tolstoy’s Hadzhi Murat. Overall, this parody of the prophetic topos serves to show the futility of Russian imperial expansion in the Caucasus. Pushkin takes this concept to a different territory and uses *Kniazhna Milusha* as a framework for his *Skazka o zolotom petushke*, where a lot of the elements from *Kniazhna Milusha* appear in a different form. In Katenin’s work no historical or ontological change comes to Shamakha or Russia, other than the defeat of Morgud and the instalment of Zulfira to the throne of Shamakha.

⁵⁸ Ermakova-Bitner 17

CHAPTER III: PUSHKIN'S INVERSION OF THE PROPHETIC TOPOS IN *SKAZKA O ZOLOTOM PETUSHKE*

There are many claims made about how Pushkin's *Skazka o zolotom petushke* came to be. Most scholars claim that it was inspired by Washington Irving's *The Legend of the Arabian Astrologer*, which is not disputed, but as Belkin mentions, there were elements from Katenin's *Kniazhna Milusha* which are prevalent within Pushkin's fairytale. Unlike Katenin, Pushkin does bring his Shamakhan story to a conclusion: after the supposedly Russian character falls "asleep" a "historical or ontological" change is brought upon the Russian state.

Belkin also argues that initially Pushkin wanted to describe the Shamakhan queen physically, giving her the typical Oriental traits of "dark eyebrows and a round face," but instead he chose to concentrate on the mysteriousness and incompleteness of her appearance.⁵⁹ Unlike Katenin, he was not interested in her biographical information, the description of her court or even her oriental outfit. Belkin also mentions that it is possible that the Shamakhan Queen is an evil sorceress.⁶⁰

The Four Prophetic Tropes of Harsha Ram within *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

⁵⁹ Belkin 123, «Как показывают черновики, Пушкин поначалу намеревался подробно описать внешность «девицы» («черноброва, круглолица» — III, 1121), но потом оставил подобный замысел, зато усилил в структуре задуманного образа элементы недосказанности, таинственности. Читатель остается в неведении, откуда появилась Шамаханская девица и куда исчезла.»

⁶⁰ Belkin 124, "Возможно, Шамаханская царица — тоже колдунья, но только не добрая, как Проведа в сказке Катенина, а злая и коварная: не зря же ополчились против нее и золотой петушок, и скопец «в сарачинской шапке белой», потребовавший от царя именно «девицу» в подарок. Может, мудрец хотел забрать ее у Дадона, чтобы сохранить его для государства, о судьбе которого царь забыл. В. Непомнящий, анализируя структуру пушкинских сказок, справедливо заметил: «Там же, где присутствует чудо, назидание исключается, „мораль“ не нужна»

Belkin's article provides brief information on the origins and the image of the Shamakhan Queen without going into much detail about the relationship of Pushkin and the Caucasus, though mentioning Pushkin's treatment of other oriental themes.⁶¹ In order to fully understand the image of the Shamkhan Queen, it is important to view her in the context of the traditional representation of the Caucasus in Russian poetry of the 19th century. One of the most important of these tropes is the "prophetic" experiences of the poet or the character somewhere in the Caucasus. Harsha Ram points out the role of the poet as a prophet within the context of the imperial sublime, pointing out the consistency within the "prophetic" poems of Lomonosov, Derzhavin, Pushkin, Lermontov and Küchelbecker.⁶² Ram also mentions that the *Kavkazskii plennik* falls in to this category. I

⁶¹ Boyko, K.A. *Ob Arabskom Istochnike Motiva o Zolotom Petushke v Skazke Pushkina*. The Fundamental Digital Library of Russian Literature and Folklore. <http://feb-web.ru/feb/pushkin/serial/v79/v79-113-.htm?cmd=p> 113: "Тема Востока и его отображения в творчестве Пушкина не перестает привлекать внимание исследователей. Выяснение восточных корней и мотивов в сюжетных линиях и образах стихотворных произведений поэта в последние годы вновь легло в основу ряда работ. К числу произведений с восточными заимствованиями относятся и некоторые сказки поэта. Пожалуй, наибольший интерес в этом плане вызывала и вызывает «Сказка о царе Салтане». И в наше время продолжают выявляться восточные параллели или варианты данного сюжета, как показано на примерах из фольклора народов Востока, в частности Средней Азии."

⁶² Ram, Harsha. *The Imperial Sublime a Russian Poetics of Empire*. Publications of the Wisconsin Center for Pushkin Studies. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003. 173:

"(1) the Russian body lies prostrate in a desolate mountain valley or desert remote from his place of birth, somewhere in the orient and, for the majority of poets, explicitly in the Caucasus; (2) the Russian being asleep, his captivity or paralysis appears to him and to the reader in and as a dream suspended between life and death (in "Prorok" sleep is only metaphorically present in the phrase "light as a dream," but the prophet is likened to a corpse at the end of the poem); (3) the Russian's disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy (in Derzhavin, Pushkin's *Kavkazskii plennik*, and Lermontov) or God himself (in the case of Küchelbecker and Pushkin's "Prorok"); (4) just as prolonged sleep

believe it can also be applied to *Skazka o zolotom petushke* due to the presence of the prophetic through the Golden Cockerel, the Astrologer and even the Shamakhan Queen herself (as the “Turkic Enemy”). There are aspects within Pushkin’s complicated relationship with the Caucasus overall that transfer over to *Skazka o zolotom petushke* due to Shamakha’s location in the Caucasus. According to Susan Layton Pushkin did not have a designation of genre for *Kavkazskii plennik* for some time, even flirting with the idea of calling it a fairy tale (сказка): “Along with *poema*, Pushkin suggested “fairy tale” (*skazka*), an option which called the attention to the pure invention in “The Prisoner of the Caucasus.””⁶³ Needless to say that the “element of pure invention” is present and is stronger in *Skazka o zolotom petushke*, which is why it is clear that this is a fairy tale. Though, as it is the case with *Kavkazskii plennik*, some of it is grounded, especially when it comes to Shamakha. It is one of only two specific geographical names that appear in the tale (the other one being “в сорочинской шапке”), further solidifying its importance to the text. “Shamakha” in “Shamakhanskaia tsaritsa” holds almost the same amount of weight as “Kavkaz” in *Kavkazskii plennik*, which gives the reader an idea where the particular story takes place. Of course, by title the captive and the Queen are antithetical characters, the former being a foreigner and having no power over a society in the Caucasus while the latter being a Caucasus native and possessing an infinite amount of it.

is followed by an awakening, so, too, the hero’s captivity or stasis is shown to precipitate some kind of historical or ontological change: in Derzhavin’s ode, Küchelbecker’s “Prorochestvo,” and in the epilogue to Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik* this change is understood militarily and is brought about by Russian imperial aggression, whereas in the remaining poems violence is inflicted primarily on the body of the prophet, who thereby becomes the passive receptacle of prophetic utterance”

⁶³ Layton, Susan. *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. 17. Cambridge Studies in Russian Literature. Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

This inversion of two types of characters affect the prophetic topos that can be seen in the *Skazka o zolotom petushke*.

It is important to state that this tale does not contain the regular tropes of the prophetic topos; rather, the tale contains the inversion of the prophetic topos. Ram sees the prophetic topos as more of a religious experience, while the *Skazka o zolotom petushke* seems like an opposite to a religious experience, instead being an occult or a demonic one. Jakobson notices this demonic element when referring to the statue as an *ongon*: “that is, the statue, understood as a pure ‘external representation’ becomes an *ongon*, incarnation of some spirit or demon.”⁶⁴ That “spirit or demon” most likely being the Shamakhan Queen due to her mysterious nature (even evil nature) and her phantom-like disappearance at the end of the story. It seems like Pushkin is playing with the tropes of his previous works within the context of this tale, twisting their meanings, including the prophetic topos itself. Ram identifies the prophetic topos in Russian verse as follows: “the prophetic topos in Russian verse is tied as much to a poetic reconceptualization of imperial history as to religious or aesthetic experience.”⁶⁵ In this tale the “religious or aesthetic” experience is juxtaposed with the “demonic or grotesque” experience. The tale also inverts imperial history, reconceptualizing the relationship between the Empire (Tsar Dadon’s Kingdom) and the periphery (Shamakha/The Caucasus) resulting in the conquest of the Empire by the periphery through use of magic (the demonic).

⁶⁴*The Statue in Pushkin’s Poetic Mythology* in Jakobson, Roman, and Burbank, John. *Puškin and His Sculptural Myth*. De Proprietatibus Litterarum. Series Practica ; 116. The Hague: Mouton, 1975.

⁶⁵ Ram 172

The Golden Cockerel, which plays a prophetic role within the story, is given to Tsar Dadon as a gift by an astrologer-eunuch (also a prophetic and grotesque figure).⁶⁶ The Cockerel alerts the Tsar to the impending danger coming from the East (the Orient): “Видит, бьется петушок,/Обратившись на восток.” The Tsar sends his sons and army to the Orient, but after not receiving news, decides to journey there himself. The journey takes him eight days, and he finally arrives to a place, which is presumably somewhere in the Orient, that is described as “mountainous”:

Войско в горы царь приводит
И промеж высоких гор
Видит шелковый шатёр.⁶⁷

There is also a silk tent in between these mountains. Shamakha in Russian folklore was often referenced for its silk, known as “шамаханский шелк.”⁶⁸ Although Pushkin does not call these mountains “The Caucasus” outright, due to their placement in the Orient and the presence of the ominous “silk tent,” with its inhabitant being, as the reader later finds out, the Shamakhan Queen and considering the fact that the “silk” is in reference to “Shamakhan silk,” it could be assumed this tent is somewhere in the Southern Caucasus.

⁶⁶ *Skazka o zolotom petushke*. “Вот мудрец перед Дадоном/Стал и вынул из мешка/Золотого петушка./«Посади ты эту птицу, — Молвил он царю, — на спицу;/Петушок мой золотой/Будет верный сторож твой:/Коль кругом всё будет мирно,/Так сидеть он будет смирно;/Но лишь чуть со стороны/Ожидать тебе войны,/Иль набега силы бранной,/Иль другой беды незваной,/Вмиг тогда мой петушок/Приподымет гребешок,/Закричит и встрепенется/И в то место обернется”

⁶⁷ *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

⁶⁸ Akhmatova, Anna. *Posledniaia skazka Pushkina*. 15 Zvezda. 1933. “Жанром простонародной сказки мотивирован ввод элементов фольклора: «побитая рать, побоище», «сорочинская шапка» ***, шемаханский «белый шатер», эпитет «шамаханский» (в народных сказках обычно — «шамаханский шелк»)”

Around this silk tent in the mountain valley lie the defeated armies of the kingdom, in front of the tent the deceased sons of Dadon, who appear to have killed each other over the Shamakhan Queen:

Всё в безмолвии чудесном
Вкруг шатра; в ущелье тесном
Рать побитая лежит.
Царь Дадон к шатру спешит...
Что за страшная картина!
Перед ним его два сына
Без шоломов и без лат
Оба мертвые лежат,
Меч вонзивши друг во друга.⁶⁹

The imagery provided here fits with two of the bullet points provided by Ram, but in a very different light than the *Kavkazskii plennik*. “(1) the Russian body lies prostrate in a desolate mountain valley or desert remote from his place of birth, somewhere in the Orient and, for the majority of poets, explicitly in the Caucasus.” Here specifically, implied Russian bodies (the army and the Tsar’s sons) lie in a mountain valley in the implied Caucasus. What makes this moment different from the rest of Pushkin’s works that fit within this trope (especially *Kavkazskii plennik*), is the amount of “Russians” lying in the mountains, while there is only one silk tent, with only one native Caucasus figure, the Shamakhan Queen. It is a somewhat of a reversal of the trope in which the lone Russian prisoner is surrounded by the Caucasus natives. Here we see many Russians (including the Tsar himself) falling under the unnatural (demonic) charm of one Caucasus native.

Ram states, “(3) the Russian’s disempowerment is enacted physically: his sleeping body is violated or at least challenged by a superior force, either a Turkic or an Asiatic enemy...” The Tsar’s army, although this is not explicitly stated, is most likely

⁶⁹ *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

deceased. The wording in describing this scene is “Всё в безмолвии чудесном/Вкруг шатра; в ущелье тесном/Рать побитая лежит..,” where there is a possibility that “побитая лежит” can mean that the troops are beaten and sustained heavy casualties, most likely by some magical force, because they are in “wonderful muteness” “безмолвии чудесном.” The adjective чудесный is frequently associated with magical, religious and mystical events. The army has been challenged and defeated by the Turkic/Asiatic enemy that is the Shamakhan Queen⁷⁰, who most likely pitted them against each other, though that is not exactly clear. Dadon’s sons on the other hand without a doubt have slain each other under the Queen’s charms.⁷¹

As the story progresses, Dadon sees his dead sons and begins weeping. With him nature weeps as well. The reader gets brief and familiar elegiac imagery, typical of Pushkin when describing the landscape of the Caucasus: “Застонала тяжким стоном/Глубь долин, и сердце гор/Потряслось” which is cut short by the emergence of the Queen from the tent. She charms Dadon to the point where he forgets the death of his sons. This is a significant moment, because the sudden interruption by the Queen completely changes the direction of the tale, shifting the focus from the dead sons and the impending danger to Dadon’s kingdom from the Shamakhan Queen:

⁷⁰ Belkin 124. Belkin compares the Shamakhan Queen to a witch, similar to Proveda, who rescued Vseslav in *Kniazhna Milusha* from being unfaithful to Milusha. Pushkin makes the Shamakhan Queen evil as opposed to Katenin.: Возможно, Шамаханская царица — тоже колдунья, но только не добрая, как Проведа в сказке Катенина, а злая и коварная: не зря же ополчились против нее и золотой петушок, и скопец «в сарачинской шапке белой», потребовавший от царя именно «девицу» в подарок.

⁷¹ *Skazka o zolotom petushke* “Оба мертвые лежат” which does not leave any doubts of the Russian bodies are lying prostrate in what seems to be the Caucasus (the Orient) and violence was inflicted upon them by the Turkic enemy, albeit indirectly.

Вдруг шатёр
Распахнулся... и девица,
Шамаханская царица,
Вся сияя как заря,
Тихо встретила царя.
Как пред солнцем птица ночи,
Царь умолк, ей глядя в очи,
И забыл он перед ней
Смерть обоих сыновей.
И она перед Дадонем
Улыбнулась — и с поклоном

Его за руку взяла
И в шатер свой увела.
Там за стол его сажала,
Всяким яством угощала;
Уложила отдыхать
На парчовую кровать.
И потом, неделю ровно,
Покорясь ей безусловно,
Околдован, восхищён,
Пировал у ней Дадон.⁷²

This is the moment in the tale when Tsar Dadon becomes a so-called “rigified person”⁷³ himself under the Queen’s charms, in addition to his army and his sons. He completely forgets the death of his sons and goes on to spend his time in the tent, eventually becoming servile towards the queen. I believe that this concept is closely tied with the second point that Ram outlined: “(2) the Russian being asleep, his captivity or paralysis appears to him and to the reader in and as a dream suspended between life and death”.⁷⁴ The “paralysis” mentioned by Ram seems to go hand in hand with the

⁷² *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

⁷³ Jakobson, 116: “In the drama, in the epic poem, and in the fairytale the image of the animated statue evokes the opposite image of rigidified people, whether it involves a mere comparison of them to a statue, an accidental situation, or actual dying and death.”

⁷⁴ Ram 173

“rigidification” of the person. Tsar Dadon becoming servile to the Shamakhan queen, while forgetting the death of his sons, indicates that he was put under some charm, into a “dreamlike” state. He becomes a “mollified Russian body” just like his army and his sons, which indicates the control of a Turkic/Asiatic enemy. He becomes her “captive” trapped in her tent, listening to her every word. As mentioned in the introduction, Katya Hokanson notes about the Circassian girl in *Kavkazskii plennik*:

Certainly, the possibility of Circassian superiority to Russians is held out of character of the Circassian girl, especially as the Russian cannot respond to her heartfelt love. However, it seems more likely that the Circassian girl is proof of the Russian’s superiority: she learns his language, cares for him, falls utterly under his spell. Like the heroine of *Poor Liza*, she will suffer for her love, not the hero.⁷⁵

The complete opposite of this notion occurs here. The Russian (Tsar Dadon) is utterly in love with the Shamakhan Queen, and has literally fallen under her spell, so much so that he has forgotten about the deaths of his two sons. The Russian superiority is diminished, and instead now it is obviously the superiority of the Caucasus native that is in evidence. Here the the Oriental/Caucasus woman becomes the captor, rather than the liberator and instead of playing the role of the figure that “awakens” the captive like in *Kavkazskii plennik*, the Shamakhan Queen puts him to sleep or in the case of his sons, kills them. While the Circassian girl in *Kavkazskii plennik* represents life, the divine and liberation from captivity, the Shamakhan Queen represents death, the demonic and captivity. The scene of how the Circassian girl brings the Russian captive to life in *Kavkazskii plennik* has a moment that is similar to the actions of the Shamakhan Queen, but it happens when the Russian is already captive in dire living conditions in the Orient,

⁷⁵ Hokanson, 64

rather than in the comfort of a “silk tent”. Among other things the girl brings the captive food, which eventually contributes to him gaining strength and escaping:

Черкешенка, тропой тенистой,
Приносит пленнику вино,
Кумыс, и ульев сот душистый,
И белоснежное пшено;
С ним тайный ужин разделяет⁷⁶

The Shamakhan Queen in the tent also feeds Dadon, as a part of her ploy to charm him, making him her captive. In *Kavkazskii plennik* the food is described in detail, while in the tale it is made ambiguous. “Всяким яством угощала.” Either way, “food” is used to achieve two opposite results: to “awaken” or to “subdue” the Russian. We see this happen in Katenin’s *Kniazhna Milusha* as well, when the Russian bogatyr Vseslav is charmed by the Shamakhan Queen and is willing to forsake his beloved Milusha for her. But both for the captive and for Vseslav there is a moment of awakening and escaping the Caucasus. For Tsar Dadon it is impossible, since he brings the Shamakhan Queen with him to his Kingdom. While the Circassian girl kills herself as she cannot leave with the Russian, the Shamakhan Queen does leave with the Russian and is responsible for his death.

It only makes sense that the fourth trope pointed out by Ram can be applied in the progression of this tale. It is a complete reversal of the imperial aggression displayed in *Kavkazskii plennik*, and instead of the Tsar conquering the Orient, it is the Orient that conquers the Tsar.

(4) just as prolonged sleep is followed by an awakening, so, too, the hero’s captivity or stasis is shown to precipitate some kind of historical or ontological change: in Derzhavin’s ode, Küchelbecker’s “Prorochestvo,” and in the epilogue to Pushkin’s *Kavkazskii plennik* this change is understood militarily and is

⁷⁶ *Kavkazskii plennik*

brought about by Russian imperial aggression, whereas in the remaining poems violence is inflicted primarily on the body of the prophet, who thereby becomes the passive receptacle of prophetic utterance.⁷⁷

After the Tsar returns to his kingdom, the eunuch astrologer makes an absurd request, demanding the Shamakhan Queen. The tsar responds by killing the astrologer by hitting him (inflicting violence on the body of the prophet). After executing the astrologer, the Shamakhan Queen begins to laugh, not afraid of “sin”, indicating her evil intentions, potentially hinting at premeditation: “Хи-хи-хи! да ха-ха-ха! /Не боится, знать, греха” while the capital is shocked: “Вся столица/Содрогнулась” which makes Dadon very nervous: “Царь, хоть был встревожен сильно,/Усмехнулся ей умильно.”⁷⁸ Indeed, this laughter was the indicator of “trouble” the cockerel “warned” pointing to the Orient. Not long after the Queen laughed, the Cockerel pecks Dadon, killing him. There is a reason to believe that the Queen’s arrival to the capital of the Kingdom was premeditated by her. The moment they get to the capital, the Cockerel immediately killed the Tsar (bringing upon the “historical” or “ontological” change mentioned by Ram). This is not a coincidence. It had been prophesied by the Cockerel. If the astrologer is indeed implicitly (in Pushkin’s drafts explicitly⁷⁹) from Shamakha, due to its demonic and prophetic properties the Golden Cockerel most likely originates from there as well. It seems the magical and demonic characters have originated in the city; therefore, the Cockerel has originated from there as well. It is also not a coincidence that

⁷⁷ Ram 173

⁷⁸ *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

⁷⁹ Akhmatova. 25: “В черновиках звездочет все время называется шемаханским скопцом и шамаханским мудрецом ** и один раз даже астраханским.”

it sent the Tsar “to The Orient,” to the place of origin of the “trouble,” which manifests itself in the form of the Shamakhan Queen.

Вот — въезжает в город он...
Вдруг раздался легкой звон,
И в глазах у всей столицы
Петушок спорхнул со спицы,
К колеснице полетел
И царю на темя сел,
Встрепенулся, клюнул в темя
И взвился... и в то же время
С колесницы пал Дадон —
Охнул раз, — и умер он.⁸⁰

The moment when the Shamakhan Queen entered the capital, the Golden Cockerel functioned as an automated mechanism, killing the Tsar. Once the “historical change” is brought upon the kingdom, the Queen disappears as though she was not there: “А царица вдруг пропала,/Будто вовсе не бывало.” It is almost as though her mission there had been completed. She achieved her goal to kill Dadon, bringing change to his kingdom. The “Oriental Aggression” concludes. The disappearance of the “ongon” (the Cockerel) after the death of Dadon is related to the sudden disappearance of “the spirit or demon” (the Shamakhan Queen) that it represents.

Conclusion

The Shamakhan Queen with her mysterious, demonic nature is the representation of death in this tale. The orientalization of her image is not as strong as it was supposed to be in the initial drafts, but the retention of some of these traits, combined with the demonic creates an image of a “demonic Orient,” therefore changing the prophetic topos mentioned by Ram, leading to the inversion of its elements. Yet it fits into the inverted

⁸⁰ *Skazka o zolotom petushke*

topos almost perfectly. Instead of having a divine and therefore a prophetic experience, Dadon ends up having a “demonic” and short-sighted experience, ignoring and forgetting even the deaths of his own sons, not to mention his dead armies, unable to foresee the danger that was so obviously in front of him after being charmed by the Shamakhan Queen. The shortsightedness of Dadon eventually leads to his demise at the hands of an Oriental enemy. Unlike the “awakening” experienced by the Russian captive in *Kavkazskii plennik*, Dadon is subdued by the Shamakhan Queen. Therefore, unlike the ending of *Kavkazskii plennik* where the captive escapes (lives) with the aid of the Circassian girl, Tsar Dadon dies with the “aid” of the Shamakhan Queen.

The inversion of the tropes found in other works containing the prophetic topos, particularly in *Kavkazskii plennik* as outlined above creates a new, “demonic” aspect of this topos. The divine nature of it is replaced by “evil” sorcery originating from the Orient. The Shamakhan Queen, the astrologer-eunuch and the Golden Cockerel are all a part of this “demonic” aspect. It could be that the Shamakhan Queen is the demon (*ongon*) that drives the Golden Cockerel to kill Tsar Dadon to bring upon the historic change upon his Kingdom. This adds more significance to the image of the Queen outlined by Belkin, placing it in the context of the Empire.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION

First of all, this provides clarity on how the Pushkin tale originated. Although Washington Irving had an impact on the writings of Pushkin, it seems like the idea for the Shamakhan Queen and the location of Shamakha specifically was borrowed from Katenin, even though the Caucasus was not mentioned explicitly. It is easy to track several stages of development that lead to the complex narrative of Puskin's fairytale. There are several continuous steps that were undertaken.

The "southern" romantic works, influenced Katenin, follow the traditional prophetic topos that Harsha Ram outlined. This includes Pushkin's own *Kavkazskii plennik*. This is the standard, unchanged topos that appears in the works of many Russian poets of the romantic period.

Katenin in the second chapter of *Kniazhna Milusha* takes this topos and parodies its elements, removing the "prophecy" from its essence, making Vseslav's meddling in the Shamkhan affairs a senseless ordeal. Vseslav's Shamakhan affairs turn out to be fruitless in the grand scheme of things, no matter how he felt during his "hyper-awake" crusade against "beauty."

Pushkin borrows many elements of Shamakha and the Shamakhan Queen from Katenin, including the parody of the plot. Unlike Katenin though, Pushkin makes the "prophetic topos" into an inverted, almost a "demonic topos," causing the fictional Orient to overtake the fictional Russian state (Dadon's Kingdom) in an act of reverse Orientalism. To a degree, Pushkin's approach to this seems almost in the realm of absurd. For Pushkin and many of his contemporaries the topos has always been prophetic. In *Kavkazskii plennik's* epilogue Russia asserts its dominance over the peoples of the

Caucasus. Instead of being prophetic, the topos is at first senseless and futile, for Katenin there is no imperial destiny in the Caucasus. The newly started Murid War against Sheikh Shamil and the prevalence of the Caucasus in Russian literature might be the reason why Katenin is so dismissive, critical and chauvinistic towards the peoples of the Caucasus and region as a whole.

Pushkin on the other hand might not be even commenting on the Murid War as much but was trying to take Katenin's concept even further as a part of the literary rivalry, "to teach a lesson."⁸¹ What might explain the connections to the Murid War is the inadvertent attempt to respond to Katenin. Had Pushkin actually responded to the Murid War via his fairytale, this would potentially make it a piece of satire on the Russian Empire. Considering the fact that *Kniazhna Milusha* and *Skazka o zolotom petushke* were potentially inspired by Radishchev's *Bova*, there is a possibility of this being true.

As Belkin mentions, the intention might have been Pushkin trying to display his abilities by removing all the fancy descriptors of the Shamakhan Queen, and instead giving her a mysterious atmosphere. Belkin claims that Pushkin wanted to show Katenin that he could do what he did in the second chapter of *Kniazhna Milusha* even better. This could be true in the case of the inverted "demonic topos" as well. The complete inversion of the "prophetic" topos makes *Skazka o zolotom petushke* border on the absurd. This absurdity is a result of Pushkin's implementation of the prophetic topos much more fully than Katenin: as I mentioned several times, in Katenin's story there is

⁸¹ Belkin, 124 Сказка ложь, но в ней намек, Добрым молодцам урок. Belkin claims that the reference made to "dobrim molodtsam" is directed towards Katenin's main character Vseslav.

virtually no big historical or ontological change, since Shamakha is almost never mentioned after the end of the second song of *Kniazhna Milusha* and does not have that big of an effect on the rest of the story. While Pushkin commits to developing this concept even further and bring this change to Dadon's Kingdom.

Of course, it goes to show both Katenin and Pushkin used the character of the Shamakhan Queen as the antithesis to the Circassian girl. Instead of being "conquered" by the Russian, the Shamakhan Queen "conquers the Russian." While in Katenin's tale Vseslav wants to stay in Shamakha with the Queen, in Pushkin's tale Tsar Dadon brings her to Russia. Also, in the Pushkin tale, the Shamakhan Queen kills the Tsar who was madly in love with her, while the Circassian girl kills herself because the Captive would not love her back.

Pushkin mentioned that Katenin has taught him to stay away from one sidedness in literary opinions⁸². It is obvious from the context of *Skazka o zolotom petushke*, that Pushkin is experimenting exactly with subverting the romantic tropes of his earlier years, including the prophetic topos. It is entirely possible that both Katenin's tale and the newly raging Murid war pushed him to create this work.

⁸² Ermakova-Bitner 7

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