

THE PICTURESQUE CAUCASUS. A GEOCRITICAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *The concepts of space and place are key elements in analyzing a literary text from the perspective of geocriticism. The contribution of Edward W. Said in the development of spatially oriented cultural criticism is important, as his writing is a great resource for the geocritical studies. The imaginary of Caucasus has always drawn attention of different artists, poets and writers, especially in the romantic period, when it was a symbol of freedom and love. For the Russian society, the picturesque Caucasus represented the Orient and the exotic Other. This study focuses on the representations of Caucasus in the writings of M. Yu. Lermontov and A.S. Pushkin, as well as in the art of some painters from the romantic period up to present. We are interested in the relation between this space and the authors that wrote about it and the artists that painted it.*

Key words: *geocriticism, picturesque, Caucasus, Orient, space*

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*When the mountains were young, they had legs – could walk from
the edges of the oceans to the desserts, flirting with the low hills,
shrouding them with soft clouds of love.*

(Nicholas Griffin, *Caucasus: mountain men and holy wars*)

Space and time are the two essential coordinates of human existence. They always appear together, they cannot be dissociated, because, paraphrasing Jorge Luis Borges, in order to measure space, we need to relate in time. Of course, over the centuries, discussions have been extensive on this subject, time, as Henri Bergson stated, being considered the essential problem of metaphysics, on the solution of which would depend all other solutions to possible problems. However, in order to refer to time, it is absolutely necessary to refer to space. The famous example of Heraclitus exposing the ephemerality needs a place of support, namely a river, because no one bathes twice in the waters of the same river. Of course, because the river flows continuously. Extrapolating, we ourselves are as changeable as time, and space is always changing too. Thus, the basic word of our existence is change, because we are something that changes and, at the same time, something permanent (Borges 2015: 424-433).

Geocriticism. Literary Geography. Picturesque

As Éric Prieto summarized in his study, for Bertrand Westfal, who introduced the concept of *geocriticism* as a geocentric mode of criticism, the primary object of study for the geocritic is not the literary text or any form of art, but places. A classic geocritical study will focus on one place (Rome, Paris, Venice, the Black Sea, The Caucasus) and look for more textual representations or more different kinds of texts of that place, pointing out the referential relationship between those texts and the place, which means that the texts will lead to a better understanding of that place (Prieto 2012).

This approach is called by Westphal *multifocalization*, and will lead to the „identitarian essence” of the place (Westphal 2007: 188). The cultural history of a place is more important than its natural history and the author emphasises on the importance of approaching a space in terms of borderlands or hybrid identities.

Westphal uses the notion *real-world places*. We may ask ourselves to what extent a fictional depiction of a place enriches our understanding of it. The answer is given by Westphal himself:

I will never get tired of repeating that fiction does not reproduce the real, but actualizes new virtualities that had remained unformulated, and that then go on to *interact* with the real according to the hypertextual logic of interfaces... fiction detects possibilities buried in the folds of the real, knowing that these folds have not been temporalized (Westphal 2007: 171).

Geopoetics and psychogeography applicability as general methods of textual analysis and interpretation are well-known, but limited, as they study extra-textual realities or very specific segments of human experience. Geocriticism is a method that implies literary theory and the study of geographic space. The three pillars of geocriticism, according to Westphal, are: spatiotemporality, transgressivity, and referentiality.

The paths we follow in this paper are the analysis of Caucasian landscape, and the places inside the texts and selected paintings, and the search for the link between the texts and graphic representations and the real spaces they refer to.

Franco Moretti points out the object of study of literary geography, namely the study of literature in space and space in literature (Moretti 2009: 3). In the same context, M. Collot mentions the representation of places in literary texts (Collot 2011). The distinction between *space* and *place* is a starting point in this type of analysis. We will approach the terms *time* and *space* as indispensable elements in the communication process, thresholds that allow us to know the Other, and necessary experiences materialized in nights, days, cities, places we go through during our lifetime, experiences that transform us.

As Prieto explains, Westphal emphasises the interface between fictional representations of real-world places and the places themselves. These relationships vary from „homotopic” depictions, when the fictional place is compatible to the real place (e.g. Paris of Balzac) to „heterotopic” depictions, when the fictional space diverges from the real world, and there are also purely fictional spaces, which are very important, as they led to the appearance of these places in the real world (e.g. Aman of Tolkien).

Talking about the artistic representations of the space, from the perspective of geocriticism, it is not considered distorting to the object, to the referent, but it is considered to be founder or co-founder of the referent.

It is important to trace the distinction that the notions of *space* and *place* imply, and we will say that the term *space* can be understood from several perspectives. There is a geographical approach when we can identify physical territories, and a philosophical approach, making the distinction between lived and perceived space. We may also read the space in an anthropological, historical or social key, which leads us to a very current concept, namely *the social space*. We also consider the fact that *space* designates something abstract, indefinite, while *place* is a part of this boundless space and involves a connection with people, being the territory of experiences.

Space is the one that shapes our identity and the relationship with the Other, builds or strengthens communication channels, we always talk about an *inside* and an *outside*, we take and give without our will from our world to the world outside and vice

versa. Briefly, *space* is not a void that needs to be filled, but a concrete reality, often something full of meanings and understandings that offers much to the world outside.

For a better understanding of the difference between *space* and *place*, it is interesting to mention the point of view expressed by the geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, who wrote several texts on this issue, the best known being *Space and Place – The Perspective of Experience*. Yi-Fu Tuan states that *space* is related to movement, and *place* to resting:

The ideas *space* and *place* require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for a location to be transformed into a place (POP 2017).

As an exercise of geocriticism, we shall use the concept of the *picturesque*. In this respect we mention that during the 18th century, the natural scenery started to be present in landscape painting, literature and poetry. In this context, *the picturesque* was the most direct approach to nature, and we mention W. Gilpin¹ as being the most prominent author. Therefore, we shall approach the narrative poem *A Prisoner of the Caucasus* of A.S. Pushkin and the text *A Hero of Our Time* of Lermontov from this perspective. We selected also some paintings from the same period, and the works of a contemporary Georgian painter to see the reverberations of this concept in visual arts.

W. Gilpin and Uvedale Price² argued for *the picturesque* as being the third category in addition to Edmund Burke's sublime and beautiful. The basic sense of *picturesque* is "looking like a picture" or "being suitable for painting", so the main object is to represent the landscape.

A. Răuceanu recalls the characteristics of the landscape, placing the meanings of the notion between the "image of the world" and the nostalgia of distances, and M. Collot emphasized the meaning of the landscape as an *image* of a specific geographical area, rendered in travel literary texts as *image of the world*, according to the traveler's style and perceptions. (Răuceanu 2013: 28-30). The basic difference resides in the real landscape and its representation, whether we are referring to literature, poetry or painting.

According to F. Lyotard, mountains, sky, plains have a privileged status in landscaping, they are considered *non-places*³ (Augé 1995: 79), because their contemplation presupposes an alienation, a different way of perception. We shall identify a series of symbols and classical images that are common for the relation between poetry, literature and painting. The prisoner of Pushkin, as well as the hero of Lermontov created a symbolic aura around the mountains that became representative for certain messages, emotions, activities, attitudes. Pushkin called Mount Beshtu his new Parnasus or a muse,

¹The concept of "picturesque" was introduced by the English clergyman, artist and writer W. Gilpin (1724-1804) in *Essay on Prints* (1768) where he defined the picturesque somehow tautologically as a "kind of beauty which is agreeable in a picture".

²Sir Uvedale Price (1747-1829) was a British landscape designer and one of the chief aestheticians of the Picturesque movement in landscaping.

³The difference between places and non-places derives from the opposition between place and space, as Augé M. 1995 stated in *Non-Places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, translated by John Howe, London: New York.

and the country was a realm of inspiration. Caucasus became the symbol of freedom, beauty and wilderness.

The picturesque Caucasus in romantic literature and painting

The texts we refer to, namely the narrative poem *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* (Pushkin 1820-1821) and the novel *A Hero of Our Time* (Lermontov 2019), illustrate the interaction between people belonging to different cultures. Both actions take place in a well-defined space in the Caucasus, and we will therefore look at how it is integrated into the Russian consciousness, taking into consideration that the main characters, although located in different contexts, are subject to the same process of accommodation and adaptation to the culture they interact with.

The search for the exotic is a general feature of Romantic literature, and in Russia it focused on those parts of the empire that maintained a strong local identity. Different types of oriental identity have been instrumentalized in the perception of the Caucasus in nineteenth-century Russian literature, which can also be found in the writings of Alexander Pushkin or Mikhail Yu. Lermontov. The Oriental feature is combined with the spectacular landscape in both texts we selected, and also in the landscape paintings relevant for that space in the period we refer to. The space shapes identity and reality influences the writings as well as the other forms of art. It is interesting to recall here Said's perspective regarding the reality of the Orient:

We must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities—to say nothing of historical entities—such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made. Therefore as much as the West itself, the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West. The two geographical entities thus support and to an extent reflect each other (Said 2003, 5).

From the beginning of history until the Middle Ages, the Caucasus Mountains were considered a landmark of the whole world. Becoming soon the realm of many miracles, Colchis is the place where Noah's ark stopped, but also the place where Prometheus gave fire to the people. The border between the Islamic and Christian worlds, the Caucasus area offers an invaluable cultural wealth, built and rebuilt throughout history.

The international political and social scene of the early 1930s, relevant for the action of both texts, is marked by a series of national liberation movements linked to the development of bourgeois society. There are revolutionary clashes in Spain, Portugal, Piemont, Greece or France. Russia has undergone a period of great change since the beginning of the 19th century, the war of 1812 against the Napoleonic invasion being of major importance, as it led not only to the increase of Russia's prestige and its position as a great power on the political stage of the world, but also to the awakening of the national consciousness and to the amplification of the patriotic feeling.

In 1817, Russia began the attack on the Caucasus region, which officially lasted until 1864. Pushkin's arrival in the Caucasus comes three years after the start of the aggressive campaign to conquer the territory under General Ermolov, which is later mentioned by the poet in his letter addressed to his brother:

I regret, my friend, that you did not accompany me to see this magnificent mountain range, its ice-capped peaks, which, from a distance, during a clear sunrise, look like strange, multicolored and motionless clouds. [...] The Caucasus, the hot border of Asia, attracts interest from all points of view. Ermolov's name and genius were impregnated there. The savage scouts have become fearful, their consecrated audacity disappears⁴. (Pushkin 1820: 17-18)

The Caucasus is a place of remembrance, a space with a beautiful landscape, that kind of space that contains time, which Gaston Bachelard also evokes:

Sometimes we think we know each other in time, but we only know a series of fixations in spaces of the being's stability, a being who does not want to melt and who, even when he returns to the past in search of lost time, wants to suspend the flight of time. In its thousands of alveoli, space contains compressed time. That's what space is for. (Bachelard 2005: 40).

The Prisoner of the Caucasus is marked by longing, time, and the oppositions illustrated by the simultaneous representations of the mountain and the cave, of freedom and captivity, but also of the characters - the prisoner and the young Circassian woman - and is both a space of life and a space of death. With a strong symbolism, the two mountains, Beshtau and Parnassus, reveal the stereotype of the romantic, who prefers the exotic, the oriental aroma, to the detriment of civilization, and whose strange pain is relieved in captivity. The romantic longs for this time, he is nostalgic and reconfigures in memory this space as a paradise realm. It is nature that can help him return to the essences; both the prisoner and Lermontov's hero find their balance and freedom in the middle of nature. The height of the mountain is the symbol of power:

I was sad when we parted;
and as my thoughts tuned to poetry
I recalled the Caucasus,
where grim Mount Beshtau, like an awesome hermit,
dominates with its five peaks
the villages and fields of the Circassians.
It became for me a new Parnassus, mount of inspiration.
I'll never forget its flinty summits. (Pushkin 1820-1821)

Lermontov mentions also the summits and the height of the mountain. We notice that the main character, Pechorin, enjoys solitude in contact with the sublime nature. He uses adjectives that emphasise the height of the mountain or the size of the Caucasian landscape:

Behind it and in front of us rose the dark-blue summits of the mountains, all trenched with furrows and covered with layers of snow, and standing out against the pale horizon, which still retained the last reflections of the evening glow. The stars twinkled out in the dark sky, and in some strange way it seemed to me that they were much higher than in our own north country. (Lermontov 2019: 4)

⁴Pushkin, letter to L. S. Pushkin, 24 September 1820, Polnoesobranie sochinenii, 13: 17–18.

In the *Epilogue* of Pushkin's poem the Mount Parnasus is the muse, and Pushkin was travelling to the Asian borders to gather wild Caucasian flowers. The mountainous landscape is an image that belongs to the Romantic canon promoted by Byron: „So Muse, easy one Dreams, For Asia the limits of flying/ And plucked the wreath itself/ Caucasian wild flowers./ Her outfit captivated harsh tribes, increased during the war, /And often in this new clothes Sorceress was me” (Pushkin 1820-1821).

Following the model of Byron's narrative poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the poetic message conveyed includes the impressions Pushkin had during the journey, when he was marked by the beauty of Caucasian peaks, arousing his interest in the poetry of majestic, wild nature and for the traditions of a different people. But to travel means much more than to cross a border, it means to discover, every time, that we belong to another world too.

We have to consider the polysensorial dimension of geocriticism, as geocritics are open to olfactory or tactile dimensions of a place, which are stronger sometimes than the visual.

The sun was already slipping behind a snow-capped ridge when I drove into Koishaur Valley. The Ossetian coachman, singing at the top of his voice, tirelessly urged his horses on in order to reach the summit of Koishaur Mountain before nightfall. What a glorious spot this valley is! All around it tower awesome mountains, reddish crags draped with hanging ivy and crowned with clusters of plane trees, yellow cliffs grooved by torrents, with a gilded fringe of snow high above, while down below the Aragva River embraces a nameless stream that noisily bursts forth from a black, gloom-filled gorge and then stretches in a silvery ribbon into the distance, its surface shimmering like the scaly back of a snake. (Lermontov 2019: 4)

One of the travelers, Maxim Maksimych, is the one who traces the inferiority of Caucasian people. He considers it to be just in judging the behavior of the Caucasian people, whom he despises because they are not at all polite and are completely incompetent, unlike the Russian character, which he describes as forgiving, and full of common sense: "Just so, sir," he answered. "They're terrible beasts, these Asiatics! You think that all that shouting means that they are helping the oxen? Why, the devil alone can make out what they shout. The oxen understand, though". Or, in the same manner, "They love extorting money from people who happen to be travelling through here. The rogues have been spoiled! You wait and see: they will get a tip out of you as well as their hire. I know them of old, they can't get roundme!" (Lermontov 2019: 3).

In comparison to Russia, Pushkin found the Caucasus a place of freedom, as it lacked the political oppression and the noble life that was regimented in the Russian Empire at that moment. In this context, the Caucasus became the poet's refuge and gave him the sense of gained freedom. Pushkin idealizes the Caucasus because he wants an alternative to the conformism in the capital of the Empire. Thus, the Caucasus becomes the "paradise" that he himself builds as a space for escape. This is a paradox: the Caucasus is both a place of refuge and captivity. This difference between societies is illustrated in Lermontov's text also.

The cloud plays an important role in Lermontov's poetry and art. Even since childhood this image affected him, and it influenced his works. There are clouds, smoke, fog everywhere, but they are not dark, the sky is always bright in his texts and paintings:

”True enough, smoke was rising from MountGut. Over its sides gentle cloud-currents werecreeping, and on the summit rested one cloud ofsuch dense blackness that it appeared like a blotupon the dark sky” (Lermontov 2019: 4). Sometimes, when the colors change, they reflect the personality of Pechorin (sometimes dark, sometimes dual). All his descriptions are very picturesque.

Similarly in: „Upon the mountain a grey cloud was hanging,and its cold breath threatened the approach ofa storm; but in the east everything was so clear and golden that we - that is, the staff-captain and I - forgot all about the cloud...” (Lermontov 2019: 19). The beauty of the landscape could make him forget about the dark side of his life.

On the summit of the mountain we found snow. The sun set, and - as usually is the case in the south - night followed upon the day without any interval of twilight. Thanks, however, to the sheen of the snow, we were able easily to distinguish the road, which still went up the mountain-side, though not so steeply as before. I ordered the Ossetes to put my portmanteau into the cart, and to replace the oxen by horses. (Lermontov 2019: 3)

In addition to the two present powers, Russia and Chechnya, we can appreciate the power of a sublime beauty of the landscape, which functions here as *involuntary memory*, as well as oblivion. Thus, in trying to conquer the Caucasus, Russia becomes more of a prisoner, captive to a life that rivals and ultimately eclipses the imperial image of Russia:

And, indeed, such a panorama I can hardly hope to see elsewhere. Beneath us lay the Koishaur Valley, intersected by the Aragva and another stream as if by two silver threads; a bluish mist was gliding along the valley, fleeing into the neighbouring defiles from the warm rays of the morning. To right and left the mountain crests, towering higher and higher, intersected each other and stretched out, covered with snows and thickets; in the distance were the same mountains, which now, however, had the appearance of two cliffs, one like to the other. And all these snows were burning in the crimson glow so merrily and so brightly that it seemed as though one could live in such a place for ever. The sun was scarcely visible behind the dark-blue mountain, which only a practised eye could distinguish from a thunder-cloud; but above the sun was a blood-red streak to which my companion directed particular. (Lermontov 2019: 19)

M.Yu. Lermontov was not only a very good poet and prose writer, but he was also serious about painting. One of his favourites themes is the Caucasus, and more than once he confessed his love for this mountain.

In 1838, he paints *Memoirs on the Caucasus* (Fig. 1). We can see an evening landscape. The setting sun illuminates the mountain in a very special way, while the sky becomes darker. Clouds float in the sky above two figures of warriors that are talking while riding their horses. We can distinguish their specific coats, the Circassian white hat and the long hood. But the main character of this painting, as well as of others that we discuss are not people, but the nature with its romantic air. This painting reflects the Romantic perception of the Caucasian nature he considered exotic. We find Oriental traces in his paintings, as camels (Fig. 2), deserts, cliffs and peaks. The image is very suitable for the landscape description within *A Hero of Our Time*:

The dancing choirs of the stars were interwoven in wondrous patterns on the distant horizon, and, one after another, they flickered out as the wan resplendence of the east suffused the dark, lilac vault of heaven, gradually illuminating the steep mountain slopes, covered with the virgin snows. To right and left loomed grim and mysterious chasms, and masses of mist, eddying and coiling like snakes, were creeping thither along the furrows of the neighbouring cliffs, as though sentient and fearful of the approach of day. (Lermontov 2019: 20)



Fig. 1. M. Yu. Lermontov, *Memories of the Caucasus*, 1838
Image downloaded from :<https://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com>



Fig. 2. M. Iu. Lermontov, 1838 - *Caucasian View with Camels*
Downloaded at:

https://arthive.com/artists/37912~Mikhail_Yurjevich_Lermontov/works/373529~Caucasian_view_with_camels#show

Another painting we selected in order to emphasize the picturesque landscape of Caucasus is from 1841 (Fig. 3), *A View of the Caucasus with Mountain People (A Man and Two Women)*. There are three figures, the main character being the highlander dressed in a specific Caucasian coat, namely *chokha*, a Caucasian woolen coat. In the background we can notice the mountain covered with dark vegetation and a part of a very specific building, *saklia*, a Caucasian stone dwelling. Other three structures can be identified at the horizon. Similar buildings could be found in the North Caucasus, like Tatar mausoleums⁵

⁵Tatar mausoleums, or *turbe* (from the Turkish for “tomb”), can occasionally be found in the Caucasus: a funerary edifice of similar appearance - an ossuary - is also located on a slope of

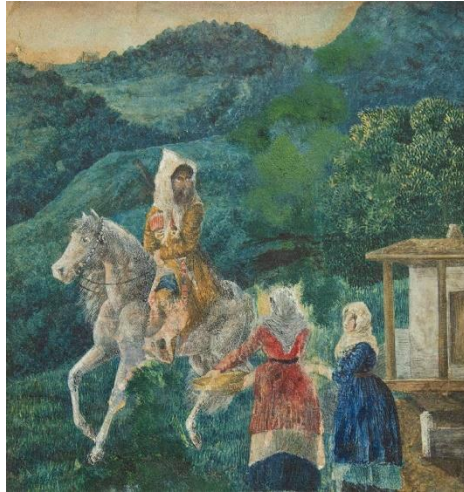


Fig. 3. *A View of the Caucasus with Mountain People (A Man and Two Women)*, 1841. M. Yu. Lermontov
Image downloaded at: <https://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com/>

Regarding the Caucasus region, we can see some differences in Lermontov's painting and the photographic image of the 19th century (Fig. 5). The main difference consists in the size of the mountain in the background (Fig. 4), which is more impressive in Lermontov's painting. The same with the river, we can distinguish a more imposing view with an intense flow. Also the vegetation in the painting seems arid, inspiring an Oriental Romantic landscape. We can't skip though the presence of the church, indicating the imperial domination.



Fig. 4. Lermontov's painting of Tbilisi, 1837
Image downloaded at: <https://tcd19thcenturyrussian.wordpress.com>

Sentinskaya (Senty) Mountain in the North Caucasus (close to an early Christian church). Sosnina 2019, Sosnina Y. „Lermontov in Landscape. An issue of attribution relating to two watercolour landscapes among Mikhail Lermontov's memorabilia from the poet's Pyatigorsk museum. Information at <https://www.tretyakovgallerymagazine.com/articles/4-2019-65/lermontov-landscape-issue-attribution-relating-two-watercolour-landscapes>.

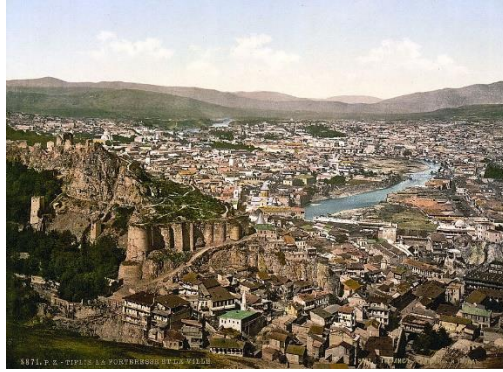


Fig. 5. Postcard of Tbilisi, ca. 1890s

Image downloaded at: <https://tcd19thcenturyrussian.wordpress.com>

We shall jump in time to the 20th century Georgian painter, namely to Elene Akhvlediani (1898–1975), particularly known for her beautiful depictions of Georgian towns. It is interesting to see that she resembles the capital of Georgia to Paris (Fig. 6, Fig. 7). As she stated: *Paris is beautiful, but Tbilisi is a real miracle!*⁶

Elene Akhvlediani's art is always based on the real world and this reality, passing through the artist's emotions. Elene Akhvlediani's landscapes are real, but they never reproduce exactly the painted places, because of the poetics that creates the poetic truth.

The picturesque, colorful houses on the Narikala rock are a unique appearance in her paintings. She kept painting Tbilisi even when she was in Paris. Parisian remembrance of Tbilisi (Fig. 7) is very strong and inspiring. Even the French famous painter, Paul Signac, bought this picture (Fig. 6) for his private collection.

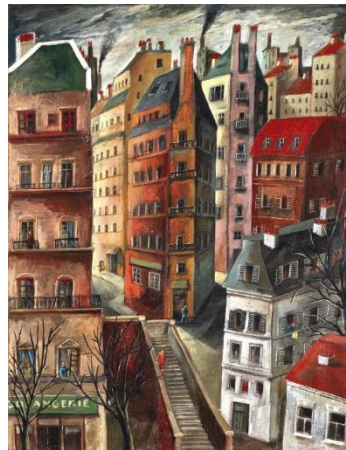


Fig. 6. Elene Akhvlediani (1901-1975), *Streets of Paris*

Downloaded at: <https://thunderstruck9.tumblr.com/image/665792279299162112>

⁶Janberidze 2016, Janberidze G. *Grandmasters of Georgian Art* https://www.baiagallery.ge/en/wp-content/uploads/ELENE-AKHVLEDIANI_Grandmasters_of_Georgian_Art_Tbiliei_2016.pdf (status 29.05.2022).

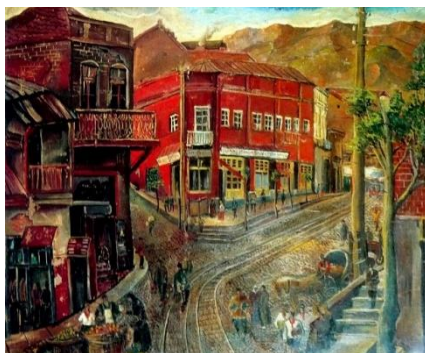


Fig. 7. Elene Akhvlediani (1901-1975), *Old Tbilisi. Maidan*, 1927
Downloaded at: <https://thunderstruck9.tumblr.com/image/665792279299162112>

Conclusions

Canonical writers such as A. S. Pushkin, A. A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky, M. Yu. Lermontov, and later L. N. Tolstoy attained great popularity in part because of their works (literature, poetry, paintings) set in the Caucasus. They romanticized Caucasian geography and the free lifestyle of Caucasian peoples as they saw it. They emphasized the simplicity of life in the Caucasus as being very different from the society they came from.

These regions (Caucasus and the Black Sea) were in the center of attention long before the tourism began. Caucasus was not only a geographical border, but also a frontier that separated different peoples, empires and cultures that finally met there and interacted. The significance of borders in shaping the national identity of the selected spaces can't be ignored. In a study on borders, M. Spiridon points out that modern sociologists insist that borders are not spatial entities with social implications, but social issues that manifest themselves in spatial forms (Spiridon 2006: 81-95). Regarding this idea, Georg Simmel mentioned that the physical process of delimitation produces different regions, countries, cultural spaces, which leads to the identification of three dimensions in which they can be seen: real, symbolic and imaginary. At the symbolic level, we consider the identity a contributor to the formation of collective identities. Thus, the idea of a geographical identity based on the so-called *genius loci* appears. At the symbolic level, borders are linked to the identity of certain communities in certain territories. We can thus outline a Romanian identity, a European or a Caucasian identity, etc. At this level, identity becomes a cultural construct. Borders are therefore an important element in shaping the cultural identity of a nation, as they can highlight places of memory, having an essential role in building the social imaginary. Exoticized and savage mountain peoples themes, and the poem's mountain setting are present in both selected texts. The wild and free frontier was depicted as a seductive place devoid of the restrictive elements of the Russian state and society that were constraining the Russian national community.

As Susan Layton pointed out, Pushkin and the other writers of his time produced the Caucasus in the Russian imagination rather than discovered it, as they were describing an imagined exoticized Caucasus. Tourism was not yet possible in Pushkin's era, but that literature about the Caucasus acted as the first tourist guidebooks.

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