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The Koran in the Poetry of Alexander Pushkin and Ivan Bunin: Inspiration, Citation and Intertextuality

Abstract

The Koran became an inspiration to the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), made obvious in many of his works, such as *Imitations of the Koran*, *The Prophet*, and *In a Secret Cave*. Pushkin studied the translation of the Koran carefully and used many verses of its Surahs in his texts. Many of his contemporary poets and followers were influenced by his poetry, like Ivan Bunin (1870–1953), who continued the traditions of Pushkin. Bunin repeated many thoughts from Koranic discourse and placed them in his poems that were full of faith and spirituality. He wrote many of them at the beginning of the 20th century¹, before his emigration to France in 1918, for example: *Mohammed in Exile*, *Guiding Signs* and *For Treason*. It has been noted that Bunin was quoting verses from the Koran to create an intertextual relationships between some Surahs and his poems, showing a great enthusiasm to mystical dimension of Islam. We find this aspect in many works, such as *The Night of al-Qadr*, *Tamjid*, *Black Stone of the Kaaba*, *Kawthar*, *The Day of Reckoning* and *Secret*. It can also be said that a spiritual inspiration and rhetoric of Koran were not only attractive to Pushkin and Bunin, but also to a large group of Russian poets and writers, including Gavrila Derzhavin, Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Tyutchev, Yakov Polonsky, Lukyan Yakubovich, Konstantin Balmont, and others.

Keywords

Koran, Russian literature, Russian poetry, Alexander Pushkin, Ivan Bunin.

The translation of the Holy Koran from French into Russian had a great impact in the works of Russian writers and poets of the nineteenth century. It was done by Postinkov (in 1716), and Veryovkin (in 1790) relying on the translation made by

¹ Makārim al-Ġamrī, *Mu'attirāt 'arabiyya wa-islāmiyya fī-l-adab ar-rūsī*, 'Ālam al-Ma'rifa, Al-Kuwayt 1978, p. 205.

the French diplomat Andre Sieur du Ryer². The Koran became an inspiration to the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), made obvious in many of his works, such as *Imitations of the Koran* (*Подражания Корану*), *The Prophet*, and *In a Secret Cave* (*В пещере тайной*). Pushkin studied the translation of the Koran carefully and used many verses of its Surahs³ in his texts. Many of his contemporary poets and followers were influenced by his poetry, like Ivan Bunin (1870–1953), who continued the traditions of Pushkin. Bunin repeated many thoughts from Koranic discourse and placed them in his poems that were full of faith and spirituality. He wrote many of them at the beginning of the 20th century⁴, before his emigration to France in 1918, for example: *Mohammed in Exile* (*Магомет в изгнании*), *Guiding Signs* (*Путеводные знаки*) and *For Treason* (*За измену*). It has been noted that Bunin was quoting verses from the Koran to create an intertextual relationship between some Surahs and his poems, showing a great enthusiasm to mystical dimension of Islam. We find this aspect in many works, such as *The Night of al-Qadr* (*Ночь Аль-Кадра*), *Tamjid* (*Тэмджид*), *Black Stone of the Kaaba* (*Черный камень Каабы*), *Kawthar* (*Ковсерь*), *The Day of Reckoning* (*Судный день*) and *Secret* (*Тайна*).

First, let us talk about Pushkin. In the poem *In a Secret Cave* (*В пещере тайной*), written in 1825 and published in 1885 after his death, Pushkin affirms his passion for the Koran. It seems clear that the poet lives in the atmosphere of *Surah al-Kahf* (*The Cave*), which says in one of its ayahs⁵: “Now that you have withdrawn from them, and from what they worship besides God, take shelter in the cave. And your Lord will unfold His mercy for you, and will set your affair towards ease”⁶. Pushkin in his ‘secret cave’ reads the Koran, which he describes as sweetly. It spreads in his heart calmness and tranquillity:

In a secret cave, on the day of the chase,
 I read the sweet Koran,
 Suddenly the angel of consolation
 Flying, brought me a talisman.
 His mysterious power
 > <
 An unknown hand drew
 Holy words on him.⁷

² Назим ад-Дейрави (Коллектив авторов), *Коран и пророк Мухаммед в русской классической поэзии*, Санкт-Петербург 2011, pp. 7–8.

³ A Surah (Arabic *sūra*) is the term for a chapter of the Koran. There are 114 Surahs in the Koran, each divided into verses.

⁴ Makārim al-Gamrī, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

⁵ Ayah (Arabic: *āya*) means “evidence” “sign” or “miracle”. In the context of Islam’s principal scripture, the Koran, ayah is used to mean “verse”, i.e. each statement or paragraph marked by a number.

⁶ The Quran [18:16], This and the following ayahs are quoted from: *The Quran*, (trans.) Talal Itani, ClearQuran, Dallas – Beirut 2012.

⁷ А.С. Пушкин, *Собрание сочинений: В 20 т.*, vol. 2, Художественная литература, Москва 1947, p. 475.

The influence of the Koran is present in Pushkin's imagination, which is what inspired him to write. For example, in the poem *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* (*Бахчисарайский фонтан*), in the fragment entitled *Tartar Song*, he recounts the story of the Tartar khan Gyari, who was preoccupied with his Polish captive princess, and neglected his Georgian wife, Zarima. Pushkin describes the case of this wife who went to this Polish woman begging to leave her husband. She required her to swear an oath, but the important thing here is that Zarima told her that because of the Koran she forgot her previous faith, in which she grew up. She says that the religion of her mother is the same religion of her Polish rival:

Then yield him up to me, I pray,
 Or by contempt, repulse, or grief,
 Turn from thy love th' ungenerous chief!
 Swear by thy faith, for what though mine
 Conform now to the Koran's laws,
 Acknowledged here within the harem,
 Princess, my mother's faith was thine,
 By that faith swear to give to Zarem
 Giray unaltered, as he was!⁸

The poem, entitled *The Prophet* (*Пророк*), is inspired by what Muḥammad attends to his followers, and it intertexts with some of the meanings of the Koran, which are mentioned in verses from several Surahs as *Fāṭir* (*Originator*), *al-Ḥiğr* (*The Rock*), *al-Anfāl* (*The Spoils*), and *al-Muddattir* (*The Enroped*). This intertextuality shows the passion of the poet to read the translation of the Koran and using its thoughts in his poetry. In the first verse of Surah *Fāṭir*, the image of the angels is shown with multiple wings: "Praise be to God, Originator of the heavens and the earth, Maker of the angels messengers with wings—double, triple, and quadruple. He adds to creation as He wills. God is Able to do all things."⁹ This picture was used by Pushkin as follows:

Longing for spiritual springs,
 I dragged myself through desert sands ...
 An angel with three pairs of wings
 Arrived to me at cross of lands;
 Longing for spiritual springs,
 I dragged myself through desert sands ...
 An angel with three pairs of wings
 Arrived to me at cross of lands;

⁸ Alexander Pushkin, *The Fountain of Bakhchisaray*, Delphi Classics, 2017.

⁹ The Quran [35:1].

With fingers so light and slim
 He touched my eyes as in a dream:
 And opened my prophetic eyes
 Like eyes of eagle in surprise.¹⁰

In the poem of Pushkin, the hero of the lyricist talks about the incision into his chest by a sword. This is inspired by the story that is mentioned in the *hadith*¹¹ of the Prophet that the angel slapped Muḥammad's chest in his youth, but did not mention in the Koran:

With his sharp sword he cleaved my breast,
 And plucked my quivering heart out,
 And coals flamed with God's behest,
 Into my gaping breast were ground.
 Like dead I lay on desert sands,
 And listened to the God's commands.¹²

Pushkin also quotes the first verses of Surah *al-Muddattir* (*The Enrobed*) which says: "O you Enrobed one. Arise and warn. And magnify your Lord. And purify your clothes. And abandon abominations. And show no favour seeking gain. And be constant for your Lord."¹³ He says:

"Arise, O prophet, hark and see,
 Be filled with utter My demands,
 And, going over Land and Sea,
 Burn with your Word the humane hearts."¹⁴

The greatest influence of the Koran in Pushkin's poetry is evident in his work, *Imitations of the Koran*, which includes nine poems written in exile in the Russian countryside in 1824. Pushkin was in a bad psychological state¹⁵ because of the oppression of the Tsar and the aristocratic society. These poems were dedicated to his neighbour in exile P.A. Osipova¹⁶. It seems that what prompted the poet to shape his text's meaning by ayahs of the Koran and quote words and phrases from

¹⁰ Alexander Pushkin, *The Prophet*, trans. Yevgeny Bonver, January 1996: <https://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/pushkin/prophet.html>.

¹¹ A hadith (Arabic: ḥadīṭ, plural: aḥādīṭ) is one of various reports describing the words, actions, or habits of the Prophet Muḥammad.

¹² Alexander Pushkin, *The Prophet*.

¹³ The Quran, [74:1–7].

¹⁴ Alexander Pushkin, *The Prophet*.

¹⁵ Ğumāna Ṭāha, Būškīn: šā'ir al-insāniyya al-ḥayyira, *Al-Mawqif al-Adabī*, 421/May, 2006, Dimašq, p. 182.

¹⁶ Ṭāriq Mardūd, *Aliksandir Būškīn: al-Qaṣā'id aš-šarqīyya*, Dār 'Alā' ad-Dīn, Dimašq 1999, p. 26.

it, is the admiration for the eloquence of the Holy Book of Islam and its unique style, despite the poor translation of it into French and Russian. Pushkin swears like Allah swears in his Koran, but the method of oath is different. The poet uses the verb “swear” while in the text of the Koran does not find such an act, but there is one letter “wa” which gives the meaning of “swear”. This kind of oath is used also in daily Arabic dialects. It is clear that the poet is very impressed by the style of swearing in the Holy Book of Islam and by things that Allah swears. These are things He has created himself, and He makes people reflect deeply on them to discover their significance and symbolism in human life. But perhaps the most striking thing for Pushkin is the aesthetics of rhythm, rhyme and harmony in words and meanings, which are written in an eloquent style. The *Imitations of the Koran* begin with Koranic rhythms and a luscious atmosphere imitating Surahs *al-Fağr* (*The Dawn*) and *ađ-Duħā* (*Morning Light*), that capture the attention of the listener. In *al-Fağr*, Allah says: “By the daybreak. And ten nights. And the even and the odd. And the night as it recedes.”¹⁷ In the other Surah we read: “By the morning light. And the night as it settles.”¹⁸ Pushkin quotes these verses in this way:

I swear this oath by near and far
 [literary trans.: I swear by the couple, and even]
 And by the sword that kills and quickens,
 [literary trans.: I swear by the sword and the right-hand battle]
 I swear it by the morning star,
 And by the prayer when darkness thickens¹⁹
 [literary trans.: I swear by the sunset prayer]

After these verses, Pushkin draws inspiration from the story of the Prophet Muħammad, which is mentioned in Surah *at-Tawba* (*Repentance*). God reminds him of how he protected Muħammad and his victory when he was forced to leave Mecca and migrate to the city by road through the desert. Pushkin, in his poetic way, describes verse 40 of Surah *at-Tawba*, which says: “If you do not help him [the Prophet], God has already helped him, when those who disbelieved expelled him, and he was the second of two in the cave. He said to his friend, ‘Do not worry, God is with us’. And God made His tranquillity descend upon him, and supported him with forces you did not see, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowest, while the Word of God is the Highest. God is Mighty and Wise.”²⁰ The meaning of this verse became the inspiration by the poem of the Russian poet as follows:

¹⁷ The Quran [89:1–4].

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, [93:1–2].

¹⁹ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations of the Koran*, trans. Ants Oras, *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 80/2, 1972, p. 276.

²⁰ The Quran [9:40].

I shall not leave thee: did I not
 Find for thy heart a quiet haven
 And guard thy head and save thy lot
 From watchful malice, sly and craven?
 And did I not in desert days
 Assuage thy thirst and, gentle-minded,
 Empower thy tongue to show the ways
 Of mighty justice to the blinded?
 So go and follow truth and teach,
 Despise the evil that dissembles,
 Be bold and, loving orphans, preach
 My Koran while Creation trembles.²¹

In the second poem of *Imitations of the Koran*, Pushkin talks about the wives of the Prophet Muḥammad, quoting verses from Surah *al-Aḥzāb* (*The Confederates*) such as in ayah 32, which says: “O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women, if you observe piety. So do not speak too softly, lest the sick at heart lusts after you, but speak in an appropriate manner.”²². Pushkin refers to the Prophet’s women, just as God turned to them in his Koran, emphasizing the general meaning contained in the verses of *al-Aḥzāb*, but in his own poetic language, which himself chooses from the Koranic ayahs:

Oh, you, the Prophet’s women, graced
 With purity above all others,
 Dread even the shade of vice: it smothers
 The bliss of quiet, clear and chaste.
 Live modestly: the guarding veil
 Of the unwedded tells the tale
 Of minds reserved for pure embraces
 And lawful joys, serene and shy;
 And never shall the cunning eye
 Of infidels behold your faces.²³

The poet talks about the guests of the Prophet and how to come to his house and deal with him and his women. All of this is summarized by verse 53 of surah *al-Aḥzāb*, which says: “O you who believe! Do not enter the homes of the Prophet, unless you are given permission to come for a meal; and do not wait for its preparation. And when you are invited, go in. And when you have eaten, disperse, without lingering for conversation. This irritates the Prophet,

²¹ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 276.

²² The Quran [33:32].

²³ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 277.

and he shies away from you, but God does not shy away from the truth. And when you ask his wives for something, ask them from behind a screen; that is purer for your hearts and their hearts. You must never offend the Messenger of God, nor must you ever marry his wives after him, for that would be an enormity with God.”²⁴. But Pushkin writes the meaning of this verse as follows:

And you, Mohammed’s guests, who find
 My Prophet quiet in devotion,
 Beware, beware, lest word or motion
 Of worldliness disturb his mind.
 Beware of empty talk and bridle
 Immodest tongues, profane and idle;
 Respect the peace of thought he craves
 And humbly share his feast, allowing
 Due deference and chastely bowing
 Before his graceful women slaves.²⁵

Pushkin ends this poem by saying that Muḥammad’s wives are young slaves. This description is not compatible with the biography of the Prophet and does not exist in the Koran. Some of his wives were much older than him, and all of them were not slaves. Perhaps Pushkin was influenced by a poor translation of the Koran, which might have interpreted some words inaccurately. For example ayah 50 of *al-Aḥzāb* shows that the Prophet had wives and women “granted to him by Allah”, but not slaves: “O Prophet! We have permitted to you your wives to whom you have given their dowries, and those you already have, as granted to you by God, (...) and a believing woman who has offered herself to the Prophet, if the Prophet desires to marry her, exclusively for you, and not for the believers. We know what We have ordained for them regarding their wives and those their right-hands possess. This is to spare you any difficulty...”²⁶. Another ayah of that Surah says that the women of Muḥammad should remain “obedient to God and His Messenger”: “O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you commits a proven indecency, the punishment for her will be doubled. And that would be easy for God. But whoever of you remains obedient to God and His Messenger, and acts righteously, We will give her a double reward; and We have prepared for her a generous provision.”²⁷. The word ‘obedient’ here is translated from the Arabic verb ‘*qanata*’, but perhaps it was translated into Russian in the sense of ‘slavery’ according to the French translation of the Koran. Because of that Pushkin used this word with the wrong meaning.

²⁴ The Quran [33:53].

²⁵ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 277.

²⁶ The Quran [33:50].

²⁷ *Ibidem*, [33:30–31].

The third poem is inspired by the first verses of Surah 'Abasa, which says that the Prophet did not pay attention to the poor blind old man when he came to ask to learn from him. But he listened to a rich man seeking to take him to believe in him and God. Allah in the Koran admonished the Messenger gently saying: "He frowned and turned away. When the blind man approached him. But how do you know? Perhaps he was seeking to purify himself. Or be reminded, and the message would benefit him. But as for him who was indifferent. You gave him your attention. Though you are not liable if he does not purify himself. But as for him who came to you seeking. In awe. To him you were inattentive."²⁸ Inspired by these verses the great poet of Russia describes some aspects of Muḥammad's character as understood by reading the translation of the Koran:

The Prophet, deeply frowning, heard
The blind man come. Disturbed and weary,
He fled, lest Vice that doubts the Word,
Assail his mind with idle query.
The heavenly copy of the Book
Is thine, but, Prophet, not for scoffers:
Declare the Koran's peace, but look
Past those who spurn the truth it offers.²⁹

Pushkin continues taking quotations and phrases from the Surah 'Abasa, which speaks about the nature of the human, and God who preferred to give him many blessings. But Man is arrogant and forgets the grace of the Creator as stated in the Koran: "Perish man! How thankless he is! From what did He create him? From a sperm drop He created him, and enabled him. Then He eased the way for him. Then He puts him to death, and buries him. Then, when He wills, He will resurrect him. But no, he did not fulfil what He has commanded him. Let man consider his food. We pour down water in abundance. Then crack the soil open. And grow in it grains. And grapes and herbs. And olives and dates. And luscious gardens. And fruits and vegetables."³⁰ The poet writes as follows:

What does man boast of? Is he proud
Of being born in naked meekness?
Of lying helpless in his shroud?
Of all his days and ways of weakness?
Of dying by the will of God?
Of resurrection at His leisure?
Of owing Him these years that plod

²⁸ *Ibidem*, [80:1–10].

²⁹ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 278.

³⁰ The Quran [80:17–31].

In fear and hope, in pain and pleasure?
 Of bread and dates and olives' oil
 And all the fruit his garden yielded
 Because God's blessing helped his toil
 In fields and vineyards that He shielded?
 Twice shall the Angel's trumpet call
 And lightning strike when horror smothers
 This crumbling world, till kin shall fall
 From kin and sons forsake their mothers.
 And all, the just and the unjust,
 Shall stream to God and shrink with terror,
 And showers and clouds of flame and dust
 Shall drown iniquity and error.³¹

In the fourth poem of *Imitations of the Koran*, Pushkin draws inspiration from the story of Abraham with Nimrod, which is mentioned briefly in verse 258 of Surah *al-Baqara* (The Heifer) as follows: "Have you not considered him who argued with Abraham about his Lord, because God had given him sovereignty? Abraham said, 'My Lord is He who gives life and causes death.' He said, 'I give life and cause death.' Abraham said, 'God brings the sun from the East, so bring it from the West,' so the blasphemer was confounded. God does not guide the wrongdoing people."³² Here we find Pushkin to be consistent with this verse, but it provides a text filled with philosophy and reflections on the Creator and his genius:

With Thee, Almighty, an ambitious
 And powerful lord of kingdoms vied,
 Consumed with madness, vain and vicious,
 But, God, Thy word subdued his pride.
 Thou saidst: "My will gives life and takes it,
 My bounty makes, my wrath unmakes it,
 I raise my hand to star and sphere."
 And he: "I, too, give life and take it,
 My will that grants it, can unmake it,
 I, godlike, stand Thine equal here."
 Thus spoke his pride. To crush and burn it,
 Thine answer struck. His boasting ceased:?
 "I make the sun go westwards. Turn it
 And force its glory to the east!"³³

³¹ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 278.

³² The Quran [2:258].

³³ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 279.

In the fifth text of *Imitations of the Koran* we find quotations of the Koran and inspiration for the meanings of the verse 10 of Surah *Luqmān*: “He created the heavens without pillars that you can see, and placed stabilizers on earth lest it shifts with you, and scattered throughout it all kinds of creatures. And from the sky We sent down water, and caused to grow therein of every noble pair.”³⁴ In his poem Pushkin says similar words:

Earth moves not; Heaven, the many-vaulted,
Soars, overarching sea and land.
It does not crush or quell us, halted
By Thy, the Maker’s, guarding hand?³⁵

The poet describes the great power of God and His light that shines on the universe, and speaks about His mercy. The words of Pushkin come from Surah *an-Nūr* (*The Light*) and exactly verse 35, which says: “God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The allegory of His light is that of a pillar on which is a lamp. The lamp is within a glass. The glass is like a brilliant planet, fuelled by a blessed tree, an olive tree, neither eastern nor western. Its oil would almost illuminate, even if no fire has touched it. Light upon Light. God guides to His light whomever He wills. God thus cites the parables for the people. God is cognizant of everything.”³⁶ Pushkin says:

The hand that lit the day-star, sending
Through Heaven and Earth its seas of light,
Like oil in crystal cressets lending
Day’s radiant boon to worlds of night.
Pray to the Mighty, the Creator:
He rules the winds, He guides the rains
To thirsty lands. No might is greater:
His trees give shade to burning plains.
His mind is merciful; we owe Him
Mohammed and His Koran’s gift.
Oh may we see the light to know Him
And may the mists that blind us, lift!³⁷

The sixth text of *Imitations of the Koran* takes the invasions and wars of the Muslims as a subject that includes a variety of information mentioned in many ayahs of the Koran. It speaks about victory in the battles and those who

³⁴ The Quran [31:10].

³⁵ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 279.

³⁶ The Quran [24:35].

³⁷ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 279.

did not go to fight and their greed. Perhaps in Pushkin's mind remained what he had read in Surah *al-Fath* (*Victory*), especially verse 15, which speaks about those who lag behind the call of the Prophet to fight: "Those who lagged behind will say when you depart to collect the gains, 'Let us follow you.' They want to change the Word of God. Say, 'You will not follow us; God has said so before.' Then they will say, 'But you are jealous of us.' In fact, they understand only a little."³⁸ Pushkin presents this issue as follows:

No, not in vain I dreamed of late:
 Heads shaved all over, weapons flushing
 With blood, you fought your battle, rushing
 At moat and turret, wall and gate.
 So, children of our flaming spaces,
 Hear now this voice of triumph: Slake
 Your thirst for warlike spoils, and take
 The captive maids and share their graces!
 For you have conquered: yours is fame.
 But those, too faint of heart, who, shirking
 The call, distrusted wonder-working,
 Prophetic dreams, shall writhe with shame.
 Now that they see the spoils before you
 They, craving to erase the blot,
 Beg: Take us with you! They implore you,
 But you shall answer: We will not.³⁹

The poet ends his speech by talking about the fate of the martyrs who were killed in the battles, stressing what the Koran repeats in many verses that Paradise and eternal bliss are waiting for these martyrs in the way of Allah. For example, Surah *Āl Imrān* (*Family of Imran*), which says in its verses: "Do not consider those killed in the cause of God as dead. In fact, they are alive, at their Lord, well provided for. Delighting in what God has given them out of His grace, and happy for those who have not yet joined them; that they have nothing to fear, nor will they grieve. They rejoice in grace from God, and bounty, and that God will not waste the reward of the faithful."⁴⁰ Another example of the Koran, of Surah *al-Fath* (*Victory*), from which Pushkin quotes about the fate of those who obey Allah and His Prophet, and those who fight for Islam that they will enter paradise and enjoy its grace: "There is no blame on the blind, nor any blame on the lame, nor any blame on the sick. Whoever obeys God

³⁸ The Quran [48:15].

³⁹ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 280.

⁴⁰ The Quran [3:169–171].

and His messenger – He will admit him into gardens beneath which rivers flow; but whoever turns away – He will punish him with a painful punishment.”⁴¹. Pushkin presents these ideas this way:

Blest he who fell in fight: forever
 Shall Eden’s heavenly bowers be his,
 And he shall drown in joys, and never
 Shall any pain disturb his bliss.⁴²

In the seventh poem, Pushkin takes many of the words and phrases of the first ten verses of Surah *al-Muzzammil* (*The Enwrapped*). Allah addresses His speech directly to His Prophet to guide him to the proper work that must be followed in this way: “O you Enwrapped one. Arise [to pray] the night, except a little. For half of it, or reduce it a little. Or add to it; and chant the Koran rhythmically. We are about to give you a heavy message. The vigil of night is more effective, and better suited for recitation. In the daytime, you have lengthy work to do. So remember the Name of your Lord, and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly. Lord of the East and the West. There is no god but He, so take Him as a Trustee. And endure patiently what they say, and withdraw from them politely.”⁴³. Pushkin sets these verses in his own poetic style as follows:

Rise, timid one, sleep not:
 See, here in thy cave
 The lamp spreads its sacred
 Delight until dawn.
 Unburden, O Prophet,
 With prayers from thy heart
 Thy mind of all sadness,
 All cunning of dreams.
 Pray humbly, till morning
 Brings day to the world,
 Read long, until morning,
 The office of Heaven!⁴⁴

In the eighth poem, Pushkin focuses his attention on the teachings of the Koran, including paying charity to the poor and spending money in favour of God and Islam. It seems that Pushkin is inspired here by the meanings of verses from Surah *al-Baqara*, especially the following ayahs: “Those who

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, [48:17].

⁴² Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 280.

⁴³ The Quran [73:1–10].

⁴⁴ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 281.

spend their wealth in the way of God – and then do not follow up what they spent with reminders of their generosity or with insults – they will have their reward with their Lord; they have nothing to fear, nor shall they grieve. Kind words and forgiveness are better than charity followed by insults. God is Rich and Clement. O you who believe! Do not nullify your charitable deeds with reminders and hurtful words, like him who spends his wealth to be seen by the people, and does not believe in God and the Last Day. His likeness is that of a smooth rock covered with soil: a downpour strikes it, and leaves it bare – they gain nothing from their efforts. God does not guide the disbelieving people. And the parable of those who spend their wealth seeking God’s approval, and to strengthen their souls, is that of a garden on a hillside. If heavy rain falls on it, its produce is doubled; and if no heavy rain falls, dew is enough. God is seeing of everything you do.”⁴⁵. Pushkin confirms some of the meanings of these verses saying:

No, never haggle with your conscience to deceive it:
 Faced with pale poverty, give freely to relieve it.
 Heaven wants your bounty full and all your gifts unscored.
 Then on the Day of Doom, your acres’ generous keeper,
 You, blessed sower, shall be reaper:
 The Lord will multiply His grace for your reward.
 But if, too mindful of your days of toil and drudging,
 You stint the beggar’s dole and if your alms are grudging,
 You, tightening your fist in jealousy and greed,
 Know: all you ever give will be like chaff that moulders!
 Like dust that cloudbursts wash from boulders,
 It all shall vanish? God will scorn your gift indeed.⁴⁶

In the last poem of *Imitations of the Koran* Pushkin talks about the story of a man – transient in the desert. The poet gives his text an atmosphere full of faith inspired by the Koran. He quoted words repeated in many Surahs, namely: “God the owner of the heavens and the earth”, as in this verse of Surah *al-Baqara*: “Do you not know that to God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, and that apart from God you have no guardian or helper?”⁴⁷. Also Allah says in Surah *Maryam* (Mary) that He is: “Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them. So worship Him, and persevere in His service. Do you know of anyone equal to Him?”⁴⁸. Pushkin uses that clause in this way: “Thus ordered the Lord of the heavens and the earth”.

⁴⁵ The Quran [2:262–265].

⁴⁶ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 282.

⁴⁷ The Quran [2:107].

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, [19:65].

There are meanings taken from the verse 259 of *al-Baqara* which speaks of the miracle of creation and the ability of the Lord to revive the dead or make him sleep long years like the man who passed with his donkey through the empty village: “Or like the one who passed by a town collapsed on its foundations. He said, ‘How can God revive this after its demise?’ Thereupon God caused him to die for a hundred years, and then resurrected him. He said, ‘For how long have you tarried?’ He said, ‘I have tarried for a day, or part of a day.’ He said, ‘No. You have tarried for a hundred years. Now look at your food and your drink – it has not spoiled – and look at your donkey. We will make you a wonder for mankind. And look at the bones, how We arrange them, and then clothe them with flesh.’ So when it became clear to him, he said, ‘I know that God has power over all things’.”⁴⁹ In his text, Pushkin narrates the story of that transient in the desert and his donkey, quoted by the Koran as follows:

And straight to that palm tree he hurried, and drenched
 His eyes in the quickening coolness, and quenched
 The fever and torment that numbed and encumbered
 His tongue, and lay down by his she-ass, and slumbered...
 And years without number passed over his sleep.
 Thus ordered the Lord of the height and the deep.
 [literary trans. Thus ordered the Lord of the heavens and the earth]
 At last, at the hour he was destined to wake,
 A voice from on high made the slumbered quake:
 «How long hast thou slept in these desolate places?»
 He answered: «The sun shone on yesterday’s spaces
 Of desert, some hours after daylight was born.
 My slumber has lasted from morn until morn.»
 He heard: «No, thou, friend, hast slept more than a day.
 Look: then thou wert youthful, and now thou art grey.
 The palm tree is gone with the well that it shaded,
 The sparkle of whispering water has faded;
 It died of the sand storms, the glare of the sky.
 The bones of thy she-ass are whitened and dry.»
 (...)
 Life thrilled through the bones of the she-ass, and made
 Them cover with flesh, and they shuddered and brayed.
 Exultant, the wanderer rose, and, bestowing
 New vigour of youth, a high rapture shot glowing
 And fresh through his bloodstream; and, deeply restored,
 Devoutly he went on his way with the Lord.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, [2:259].

⁵⁰ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 283.

The writings of Pushkin inspired by the meanings of the Koran attracted the attention of his contemporaries and Russian writers, poets, critics, travellers, artists and diplomats who came after. They used Pushkin's inspiration creatively in their masterpieces of poetry, and art over a century. Among them was the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature, Ivan Bunin (1870–1953) who was fascinated with the Koran and quoted many elements of stories from the Holy Book of Islam in his poetry. Before traveling to the Orient, Bunin studied the Koran based on the Russian translation. It is known that Bunin always carried the Koran in his suitcase emphasizing its great impact on him⁵¹. And influenced by Sufism, he showed great enthusiasm for the ideas of the Koran such as the concept of death and life, the fate of Man after death, and faith in the mysteries. These philosophies had a significant impact on many of Bunin's poems, from the title to the content. His texts inspired by the Koranic meanings can be seen as a continuation of Pushkin's work *Imitations of the Koran*.

It can be found in the poetry of Bunin a great interest in the language of the Koran and its mysteries or what Muslims call *i'jaz* (*i'ğāz*)⁵². This is evident in the poem *The Secret* (*Тайна*), which begins with three letters *Alif Lām Mīm* (A.L.M.) appearing at the beginning of some Surahs of the Koran such as of *al-Baqara*: “Alif, Lam, Mim. This is the Book in which there is no doubt, a guide for the righteous”⁵³. Interpreters give no explanation of these mysterious letters except this phrase: “God knows what he meant!”⁵⁴. The letters *Alif Lām Mīm*, are written by the poet with its Arabic pronunciation to make the reader think about them as something that has very important connotations. In his poem Bunin talks about these mysterious symbols considering them the secret of secrets, because of that he entitled this work by this word:

“In the name of God and the prophet.
 Read, oh, servant of heaven and fate!
 (...)
 And he said: “My motto is terrible.
 It is the secret of secrets: Alif. Lam. Mim.”.
 “Alif, Lam, Mim? But these signs
 Are dark as a path in the afterlife darkness:
 Muhammad hid their secret...”
 “Be silent, be silent! He said sternly.

⁵¹ Ibrāhīm Istanbūlī, *Sihr aš-šarq fī-l-adab ar-rūsī*, Al-dāb al-Ağnabiyya, 126, 2006, Dimašq, p. 124.

⁵² In Islam, *i'ğāz* or inimitability of the Koran is the doctrine which holds that the Koran has a miraculous quality, both in content and in form, that no human speech can match. Cf.: Muṣṭafā ar-Rāfi'ī, *I'ğāz al-Qur'ān wa-l-balāga an-nabawiyya*, Dār al-Kitāb al-'arabī, Bayrūt 1973.

⁵³ The Quran [2:1–2].

⁵⁴ Ğalāl ad-Dīn al-Maḥlī, Ğalāl ad-Dīn as-Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Ğalālayn*, Dār Ibn Kaṭīr, Dimašq 1987.

There is no god in the world, except God,
Stronger secrets – there is no strength.
No strength – stronger than the secret.⁵⁵

In the poem *For Treason (За измену)*, Bunin puts under the title a sentence from the Koran, «Remember those who abandoned their homeland for fear of the horror of death». He quoted the verse 243 of Surah *al-Baqara*: “Have you not considered those who fled their homes, by the thousands, fearful of death? God said to them, ‘Die’. Then He revived them. God is Gracious towards the people, but most people are not appreciative.”⁵⁶ In his poem, Bunin is inspired by some of the meanings of surahs *al-Qiyāma (The Resurrection)* and *al-Insān (Man)*. Harmony is clear between this poem of Bunin and verses 24–25 of *al-Qiyāma*: “And faces on that Day will be gloomy. Realizing that a back-breaker has befallen them.”⁵⁷ Bunin says:

Their Lord destroyed for treason unhappy country,
He dotted the fields by bones their bodies and skulls.
The prophet resurrected them: he asked them for the Lord’s life.
But the earth does not forgive the shame of the earth.
Two legends about them I read in the legends of the East.
The first is merciful: Resurrected fell in battle.
But the other is cruel: to the grave, according to the word of the prophet,
Resurrected lived in a deserted and wild land.
On the day of the rising from the dead, their clothing became black,
As a sign that on them – a gravestone decay trace,
And to the grave their faces, inclined to the bit in grief,
Preserved leaden, cold, lifeless colour.⁵⁸

Bunin dedicates one of his poems entirely to the personality of the Father of Prophets, Abraham, and he interprets what was written about him in Surah *al-An‘ām (Livestock)*, especially in verses 75–79. The poet presents the image of Abraham – the believer in the Lord with a clear mysticism that can be found in the Holy Book of Islam. He writes under the title of the poem, a quotation referring to the sixth surah of the Koran, i.e. *al-An‘ām* which says: “Thus We showed Abraham the empire of the heavens and the earth, that he might be one of those with certainty. When the night fell over him, he saw a planet. He said, ‘This is my lord.’ But when it set, he said, ‘I do not love those that set’.

⁵⁵ Иван Бунин, *Собрание сочинений в шести томах*, vol. 1. Стихотворения, Москва, Художественная литература, 1987, trans. Y. Sh'hadeh.

⁵⁶ The Quran [2:243].

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, [75:24–25].

⁵⁸ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

Then, when he saw the moon rising, he said, ‘This is my lord.’ But when it set, he said, ‘If my Lord does not guide me, I will be one of the erring people’. Then, when he saw the sun rising, he said, ‘This is my lord, this is bigger.’ But when it set, he said, ‘O my people, I am innocent of your idolatry. I have directed my attention towards Him Who created the heavens and the earth – a monotheist – and I am not of the idolaters’.⁵⁹ Let us compare these verses with the poem by Bunin entitled *Abraham (Авраам)*:

Abraham was in the desert on a dark night
 And I saw a star in heaven.
 “Here is my Lord!” He exclaimed. But at midnight
 The star has gone – and its light has faded.
 Abraham was in the desert before dawn
 And saw the ascending moon.
 “Here is my Lord!” He exclaimed. But the moon
 Faded and went down like a star.
 Abraham was in the desert in the early morning
 And hands to the sun joyfully spread out.
 “Here is my Lord!” He exclaimed. But the sun
 Ended the day and went down into the night.
 And God told Abraham the right way.⁶⁰

In the introduction to the poem *Guiding Signs (Путеводные знаки)*, Bunin wrote the following sentence “He makes guiding signs – Koran”, quoting from the meanings of the verses 15–16 of Surah *an-Nahl (The Bee)* where Allah says: “And he cast mountains on the earth, lest it shifts with you; and rivers, and roads, so that you may be guided. And landmarks. And by the stars they guide themselves.”⁶¹ These meanings can be also quoted from one of verses of Surah *az-Zuhruf (Decorations)*, where God says: “He who made the earth a habitat for you, and traced pathways for you on it, that you may be guided.”⁶² The poet talks about the story of Hagar and her son Ismail after they were left in the barren land by the Prophet Abraham. Although the Koran does not mention that story directly, it can be found in the Prophetic *hadith*⁶³ of Muḥammad. We find the reference that was adopted by Bunin in his poem is found in Surah *Ibrāhīm (Abraham)*, specifically verse 37, which says: “Our Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley of no vegetation, by Your Sacred House, our Lord, so

⁵⁹ The Quran [6:75–79].

⁶⁰ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ The Quran [16:15–16].

⁶² *Ibidem*, [43:10].

⁶³ Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī, Kitāb Aḡādīt al-anbiyā’*, Dār ar-Rayyān li-t-turāt, Mişr 1986, pp. 462–468.

that they may perform the prayers. So make the hearts of some people incline towards them, and provide them with fruits, that they may be thankful.”⁶⁴. In *Guiding Signs*, Bunin says:

God enlivened the way through the sands,
 from Gaza to Arima, with signs, like in old times.
 Greetings to you, the stones are the pilgrim rosary,
 (...)
 God led Hagar in the desert!
 And strewed all the roads by bones,
 As a trace of hyenas among the gorges of Ti.
 Greetings to you, resting in God,
 Paving the paths for us!⁶⁵

The poem *Kawthar* (Ковсерь) is inspired by Surah *al-Kawthar* (Plenty) beginning with the title to its end. Bunin used the title for his poem the Koranic word *al-Kawthar*, but at times can find this poem entitled *Mirage* in Russian works. The poet originally used that Arabic word written in Russian letters, and does not translate it into Russian, maybe because it is difficult to find a suitable meaning for it in other languages. Or because Bunin meant by this word the name of a river in Paradise⁶⁶ when he said in his poem: “The river of all rivers, azure Kawthar flows”. It is important to affirm here that Arabic commentators of the Koran explained the meanings of *al-Kawthar* in different ways and ambiguously. Under the title of the poem, Bunin translated into Russian the first verse of that Surah: “We have granted you, al-Kawthar”⁶⁷. This poem is full of Koranic atmosphere that is expressed by the Arabic vocabulary used by the poet such as the word *Saqr* which means (Hell), *Ġanna* (Paradise) and *Allāh* (God). Bunin ends his poem with the words “pray – and believe”. The word “pray” has a magnificent sense in Koranic text; it follows the word *al-Kawthar*, and comes at the beginning of the second verse of short Surah *al-Kawthar*, which consists of only three ayahs: “So pray to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him alone]”⁶⁸. The Russian poet in the poem *Kawthar* says:

And the skies here are incredibly blue,
 And the sun in them is like hell fire, Saqr.

⁶⁴ The Quran [14:37].

⁶⁵ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁶⁶ In one of his hadiths, the Prophet Muḥammad said about the *Kawthar*: “While I was walking in Paradise, I saw a river, on the two banks of which there were tents made of hollow pearls. I asked, ‘What is this, O Gabriel?’ He said, ‘That is the *Kawthar* which Your Lord has given to you...’. Cf.: Ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, vol. 8, Dār Ṭība, Ar-Riyāḍ 1999, p. 499.

⁶⁷ The Quran [108:1].

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, [108:2]

And in the hot hour, when the mirror mirage
 Merges the whole world in one great dream,
 In a boundless splendour, beyond the brink of a sad land,
 He takes his soul to the gardens of Jannat.
 And there, behind the fog,
 The river of all rivers, azure Kawthar flows,
 And portends tranquillity all the land, all tribes and countries
 Be patient, pray – and believe.⁶⁹

Bunin pays attention to the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, which is mentioned in certain verses of the Koran, in which one of them is verse 40 of Surah *at-Tawba*, which was quoted by Pushkin in *Imitations of the Koran*. Based on this ayah, in the poem *Muḥammad in Exile (Магомет в изгнании)* Bunin describes the Prophet's grief and suffering after he had to flee to escape the Quraysh⁷⁰. Bunin, however, portrays the prophet as follows:

Spirits flew over the desert
 At dusk, above the stony valley.
 His sorrowful words sounded,
 As a source, forgotten by God.
 In the sand, barefoot, with open breasts,
 He sat and spoke, yearning:
 "I am devoted to the wilderness and the desert,
 I am cut off from all those whom I love!"
 And the Spirits said: "It is unworthy
 To be a weak and tired prophet".
 And the prophet sadly and calmly
 Answered: "I complained to the rocks".⁷¹

The poem *Satan to God (Сатана Бозу)* is inspired by what is stated in some Surahs about the story of Satan and his argument with the Lord that he will not prostrate to Adam. He is from fire and Adam from clay. Under the title of the poem, Bunin puts the following quotation from the Koran: "And when we said to the angels: fall down prostrate before Adam, everyone fell, except Iblis, created from the fire". This quotation is taken from verse 34 of Surat *al-Baqara* and from verses 11–12 of Surah *al-A'rāf (The Elevations)*.

⁶⁹ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁷⁰ The Quraysh (Qurayš) were a tribe that historically inhabited and controlled Mecca and its Ka'ba. The Prophet Muḥammad was born into the Banū Hāšim clan of the Quraysh tribe. The polytheistic Quraysh opposed the monotheistic message preached by Muḥammad, and harassed members of the nascent Muslim community. To escape persecution, Muḥammad and his companions, immigrated to Medina.

⁷¹ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

Allah says in *al-Baqara*: “And We said to the angels, ‘Bow down [Prostrate] to Adam’. They bowed down [Prostrated], except for Satan [Iblis]. He refused, was arrogant, and was one of the disbelievers.”⁷² In *al-A‘rāf* Allah says more about Satan: “We created you, then We shaped you, then We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam’; so they bowed down, except for Satan [Iblīs]; he was not of those who bowed down. He said, ‘What prevented you from bowing down when I have commanded you?’ He said, ‘I am better than he; You created me from fire, and You created him from mud [clay].’”⁷³ Bunin begins his poem with the words of Satan:

I am from fire, Adam is from dead clay,
And you tell me to fall before Adam!
(...)
Look: your Adam is embraced by me!
I’ll burn this clay, and like a potter,
I will give it hardening and sound.⁷⁴

The poem *Tamjid* (Тэмджид – Ar. *Tamğīd*), which is entitled by in Arabic word and used also in the text, intended to glorify God and praise him. We find under the title the sentence: “He does not sleep, he does not feel sleepy”, taken from ayah 255 of Surah *al-Baqara*: “God! There is no god except He, the Living, the Everlasting. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. To Him belongs everything in the heavens and everything on earth..”⁷⁵ Bunin repeats the word *tamjid* in his text:

In the quiet old town Skutari,
Every time, as it should
Be in the middle of the night, – is distributed
A sad and pensive Tamjid.
In the middle between early morning
And the evening dusk
Dervishes rise and on the tower
Sing ancient hymn, holy Tamjid.⁷⁶

Bunin begins a poem entitled *Law* (Закон) with the Koranic phrase “In the name of God” as Muslims begin reading each surah of the Koran. Although Muslims usually use the full sentence “In the name of Allah, the Gracious,

⁷² The Quran [2:34].

⁷³ *Ibidem*, [7:11–12].

⁷⁴ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁷⁵ The Quran [2:255].

⁷⁶ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

the Merciful”, the poet here does not mention Allah by name, but uses the word ‘God’. He describes Him as the immortal and the all-good, which are the attributes of God in the Koran. Bunin refers in his text to Surah *al-Ġumu‘a* (*Friday*), specifically verse 5, which says: “The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah, but then failed to uphold it, is like the donkey carrying works of literature. Miserable is the example of the people who denounce God’s revelations. God does not guide the wrongdoing people.”⁷⁷ Bunin says:

In the name of God, eternally all-good!
 He, who gave a reed for writing,
 Said: guard the written word
 And do what the language promised.
 By adopting the law, accept its chains.
 Or alienate – or respect with all your soul:
 Do not be a donkey who is carrying books
 Only because they are told to carry.⁷⁸

In the poem *The Poor* (*Бедноты*), the poet draws a mystical atmosphere of faith inspired by the verses of Surah *aṭ-Ṭūr* (*The Mount*), which say: “So patiently await the decision of your Lord, for you are before Our Eyes; and proclaim the praises of your Lord when you arise. And glorify Him during the night, and at the receding of the stars.”⁷⁹ Bunin puts under the title a sentence quoted from these two verses as follows: “Praise with the receding of the stars”, then makes his poem saturated with meanings and expressions of those ayahs:

All the gardens are in the dew, but the nests are warm –
 Sweet birdy babble, half asleep.
 Praise – the stars go away,
 Hermon became red beyond the mountains.
 And then, happy, barefoot,
 With a cup sit under the willow wattle:
 The world is on the dusty road!
 Praise, brethren, the new god’s day!⁸⁰

Bunin shows his interest in the Night of al-Qadr (Decree), which is celebrated by Muslims. He composed a poem inspired by Surah *al-Qadr* (Decree), in which Allah says: “We sent it down on the Night of Decree. But what will convey to you what the Night of Decree is? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand

⁷⁷ The Quran [62:5].

⁷⁸ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁷⁹ The Quran [52:48–49].

⁸⁰ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

months. In it descend the angels and the Spirit, by the leave of their Lord, with every command. Peace it is; until the rise of dawn.”⁸¹. Bunin entitles his text as *Night al-Qadr*, leaving the word *al-Qadr* in its Arabic pronunciation instead of its meaning: ‘decree’ or ‘destiny’. Under the title Bunin puts a quotation from Surah *al-Qadr* containing the following sentence: “In this night angels come down from heaven”. The poet writes about this wondrous night and thus redefines some of the meanings of Surah *al-Qadr* in his own Sufi way:

Night of Al-Qadr. Converged, merged vertices,
 And higher up to the sky erected their turban.
 The mu’adhins⁸² sang. Ice floes still glowing,
 But from the gorges, the cold of darkness is already breathing from the valleys.
 Night of Al-Qadr. On the dark mountain slopes
 Still descend, the clouds puff up.
 The muezzin sang. Before the Great Throne
 The Diamond River is already flowing, smoking.
 And Gabriel – inaudible and invisible –
 Bypasses the sleeping world. Lord bless
 The invisible path of the holy pilgrim
 And give your earth a night of peace and love!⁸³

After pointing out and explaining the Koranic impact in the poetry of Pushkin and Bunin, it can be emphasized that Pushkin was influenced by the Koran and his great rhetoric, considering his verses as a poetry full of wonderful images and bold poetic expressions. As he noted in his remarks in the margin of *Imitations of the Koran* when he commented on one of the verses of the Koran as following: “Bad physics; but what bold poetry!”⁸⁴. But this does not diminish the influence of the ideas of the Holy Book of Islam and its moral judgments on Pushkin, he says in the margin of the beginning of his work mentioned above, explaining: “The ‘godless’, writes Mohammed (in the Surah ‘Reward’), ‘consider the Koran a medley of new lies and ancient fables’. This view held by the ‘godless’ is doubtless correct; even so, many moral truths are stated in the Koran with force and poetry. A few free imitations are herewith offered to the reader. In the original Allah everywhere speaks in his own name whereas Mohammed is referred to only in the second or third person.”⁸⁵. Unlike Pushkin, Bunin was more convinced of the ideas of the Koran and more influenced

⁸¹ The Quran [97:1–5].

⁸² A mu’adhin (Arabic: mu’addin) is the person appointed at a mosque to lead and recite the call to prayer for every event of prayer and worship in the mosque.

⁸³ Иван Бунин, *op. cit.*

⁸⁴ Alexander Pushkin, *Imitations...*, p. 279.

⁸⁵ А.С. Пушкин, *Полн. собр. соч.*, vol. 2, Л., Наука, 1977, p. 193.

by its spirituality. Undoubtedly, he was more familiar than Pushkin with the principles of the Holy Book of Islam. This is clear by his knowledge of the words of the Koran in Arabic, some of which were the titles of his poems or incorporated in the texts as noted in the verses presented above. It can also be said that a spiritual inspiration and rhetoric of the Koran were not only attractive to Pushkin and Bunin, but also to a large group of Russian poets and writers, including Gavrila Derzhavin, Mikhail Lermontov, Fyodor Tyutchev, Yakov Polonsky, Lukyan Yakubovich, Konstantin Balmont, and others.

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