

STUDIES: MODERN GEORGIAN LITERATURE
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Modernism in Georgia – System Approach

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Integration and Perception of Modernist Models in Georgian Creative Space periodically came on the agenda of our literature science but at different stages certain balanced attitude appeared which was characterized by duality of the position (double standard): positive-negative perception of the problem.

1. Positive tendency was the fact that they recognized that in the literature of XX Century avant-gardism already existed and it was apprehended as a ready model “put in” Georgian creative field. Right from this prospective is analysed the history of modernist schools in the XX Century Georgian literature critics, scientific discourses. For example: Publications of Sergi Chilaya[7, p. 6], Teimuraz Maglapheridze[5, p. 347], Soso Sigu[4, p. 19], Avtandil Nikoleishvili[3, p. 10].

2. Negative perspective of the perception of the problem was harsher and more radical. According to it, avant-gardism was apprehended in Georgian culture as an artificial turn for demonstrating style and pseudooriginality. In the given prospective often were used terms like: “obscurity... imitation,” and with those terms they attempted to “decrypt” the unattainable and unacceptable trends of avantgard ideology influence and results of the given position partially were reflected in educational and cognitive methodology[10, p. 6-7], [8, p. 12], [2, p. 5]. For example it was not very much later when for demonstrating the given whole process, for performing the obligation and for fastly going through the process in the professional academic program were included three Georgian symbolists – Paolo Iashvili, Titsian Tabidze and Valerian Gaprindashvili as “the oneselves” of each other and continuation of each other...

Analytics of the “settlement” of modernist-avantgardist schools in Georgian literature reality is in the first place connected with the correct understanding of the terminology itself. It is a known fact that modernism had negative definition load in Soviet ideology. Many such definitions can be found in the respected bibliographical materials and such positional definition was naturally considered in evaluational or historic analysis. (For example: Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, [6, p. 549] or Modernizm[10, p. 74] The history of French literature[9, p. 4] and other similarly worded definitions).

Thus, modernism in Georgia (just as in other countries) was considered as artificial, stylish, baseless, pseudo-positional and unnecessary event in literature. It would also be fair to say that there have been cases when “modernism” as culturological term was not used in European analytical

discourses until 60-70's of last century; Term "Modern" described certain specific appearances in arts as "strange, original" and not as method, or directions and ideological-direction understanding was related to either specific (e.i. Symbolism, Futurism, Dadaism, and etc.) forms, or the then general name of those processes at that time – avant-gardism.

Certain issues related to the problematics of classification and systematization of Georgian modernist schools are also connected to such attitude along with culturological and methodological uncertainties. It has to be stressed that the visit-card of modernist trends in Georgia is in the first place literature, although it is also the fact that modernist-avantgardist challenges can also be found in Georgian fine arts and theatre history. The only issue that literature critics agree on is the fruitful Georgian creative basis which played an important role in the formation of one of the latest appearances of modernism – Georgian analogue. This means the traditions, historic chronology, signs of national identity – Georgian character and it's artistic (creative) nature of Georgian literature and based on all this the tradition of artistic thinking and taste. The given theory of "fertile ground" is of course an argument for analysing the nature and essence of Georgian modernism.

In addition to that scarce, but still existing European analytical researches about Georgian modernism confirm the individual and non-eclectic nature of Georgian modernist schools, although they also understand its allusive and schematic character. As an example we can discuss the earliest description of Georgian modernist schools – Luigi Maggaroto's "Avantgard in Tbilisi"[11, p. 394-396], written in 1970's: such a definition is the best perception of Georgian modernism: the author does not consider it as an analogue of any specific modernist trend; it is presented as a collective form, to some extent cross-transitional, acting on the edge of internal trends, somewhat formal, interpreted and synthetic. That is why it is named as avantgard – trend or attempt to introduce innovation with the creative center in Tbilisi, the place of formation and meeting of these choices.

It also should be noted that modernism in general, or avant-gardism in Georgian culture is associated mainly with symbolism, meaning avant-gardism, groups of the 20's, methodological innovations – the representative image of all this is Georgian symbolist school. We believe such "representative attitude" is the result of incomplete information about the history of Georgian modernism.

As it was stressed the Georgian symbolist school itself was informationally presented as a variation of European school and absolutely identical to it by means of essence. This must also be considered as the cause of accusations by totalitarian ideology to modernists: that they were absolutely identical and imitated each other. Even general overview shows that despite their identical ideological-methodological choice the Georgian symbolist group members still were different from each other by creative status (considering Orthodoxalism and traditionalism.)

In this respect, reviewed some of the modernist writer's literary heritage: we will just mention some of the Georgian avant-gardist writers: it is a paradox, but a fact that leader of Georgian symbolists, poet Paolo Iashvili is the furthest from symbolism Orthodoxality and the closest to Georgian literature traditions: he was a symbolist more by image (form). Symbolist Titsian Tabidze is a different creative nature with his avant-gardist searches, theoretical position, creative interpretations and maximalistic method of expression. Valerian Gaprindashvili is also an important figure – creator of the "model" with Orthodox position, sometimes even eclectic; We also have Grigol Robakidze's fiction-avantgardist texts; he is the follower of scheme and theory. Galaktion Tabidze's "anconscious and unrecognized symbolism" adjoins the given line (despite the fact that he tried to

distance from it) – the most original and refined. Individualism and variety can also be noticed among other members of Georgian symbolism school.

It is a fact that we must search for the origins of the extraordinary features in Georgian classic literature; naturally the question if Georgian modernists had an ancestor in Georgian national artistic environment takes us to romanticism... The Georgian symbolists answer was ambiguous at that time and is the same today from literature critics. As it is known in culturological researches symbolism is also called “neoromantism”. Here we meet its historic and attitude relation with European romanticism schools’ traditions, although in Georgia the given attitude is different: as long as symbolism was not Georgian phenomenon and had a century distance from Georgian romantic school their connection existed more on the level of historic memory. Georgian symbolists were also less aware of the base in creative ideology of Georgian romanticists. This explains their various attitudes to romantic poetry: they accepted only some of his poems and recognized only Baratashvili as representative of Georgian romanticism in general. Still, intercultural influences are apparent; world romanticism schools’ artists and their creative image-symbols became closer to Georgian symbolists, which even in dualist philosophy interpretation was recognized in Georgian theories of transcendentalism and spiritual unrest cultivation and in one of the main creative image of symbolic thinking – ideological perception of woman’s beauty and love (for example Shakespeare’s Ophelia, Byron’s Mary, Roden’s Ophelia.) If we speak about literature preamble of modernism ideology in Georgia we have to go through shorter chronology – only two decades in order to discuss Vazha Pshavela’s and Vasil Barnov’s creative biographies, as silhouettes of modernistic thinking are clearly seen in their artistic discourses.

Still, we must look for associations and parallel images „radically to the left” from Georgian modernist ideology, in European direction. In Georgian literature Verlaine, Werharn, Mallarmé, Viviane de Lil Allan, Arthur Rimbaud, Guillaume Apollinaire, Edgar Poe, Oscar Wilde became certain paradigmatic starts of poetic thinking and modernistic visions.

In the history of search for literature-aesthetic principles Georgian literature found common language with Russian avant-gardist schools and in some way accepted the artistic aesthetics of Vladimir Mayakovsky, Sergey Gorodetsky, Andrey Bely, Nikolay Zabolotsky, Mikola Bazhan, Sergey Esenin, Alexander Blok, Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetaeva, Boris Pasternak... Still, these ties were non-systematic, schematic and were mainly result of personal relations. It is more a history of literature relations than the process of identity of views, or sharing of theoretical positions.

Analysis of these artistic discourses logically takes us to the issue of installation and systematization of avant-gardist trends in Georgian artistic context.

Based on literature-science, or culturological researches 10’s of the XX century can be recognized as chronological start of introduction of modernist art in Georgia; It is believed that “modernist nirvana” lasted in Georgia until the latest – beginning of 30’s and in some way was revealed in a certain component profile, as far as different avant-gardist trends appeared in Georgian arts with the following magistral change: symbolism, expressionism, impressionism, Dadaism, futurism (sequence is preserved) and while the given trends lasted in Europe for more than century-and-a-half they “finished” it in Georgia in twenty years.

They “finished” it as in the history of literature (arts) the given unprecedented adventure of modernism had even more extraordinary end – it was deliberately pushed to the end and was forced to close down and them main player in the given process was the State and ideology.

The given fact is by the “elim revealed ination works” of symbolist views in literature which, as it is known, started earlier than the well known Stalin’s repressions of the 1930’s – at the end of

1920's. "The individual style of work for identifying own creative path" pointed out by ideologists in reality meant being alone. To involve, or to give up to it?! – at that time modernists tried both positions: they even tried to reanimate, but the leaders (for example Paolo Iashvili) showed indifference to all this; they looked at any attempt to restore symbolism indifferently and stated: "we already made a breakthrough in poetry once; we already made a revolution and it would be naïve from us to take another attempt for revolution; there are others who can do it"[1, p. 52]. The internal crisis was apparent when in 1931 symbolists even announced self-elimination explaining it with the necessity to consider "requirements of reconstruction period"; they waged war against their satellite position, recognized their mistakes, promised the society to come back with a new image, even thought of changing name, but then denied all this also and described modernist literature works as the mistake of youth; they denied "out-of-date paths" and called on each other to initiate "psychological transformation" and to learn "other creative methods." It seemed like everything was in order after. As long as they found the new creative status modernists showed indifference to the passion of the youth also and spoke out about the support to Soviet government. The Soviet government also accepted them as "changed and awakened"; it is a fact that none of them was honest at that point.

Factor of the celebrated poet Galaktion Tabidze is a special topic in the modernism crisis period in Georgian literature in general. Creative vision of Galaktion Tabidze at that time developed in two radically different directions: on one hand it was patriotic and civil ideas containing poetry the lyrical hero of which spoke in demonstrative, majeur tone and the world is characterized in realistic landscapes. There is no sign of Galaktion's installations of recognition of transcendentalism, or of the diverse symbolist directions of speech and exquisite poetic forms; all we see is Galaktion's master artistic style and already professional possibilities of poetic writing.

During the given period we must still search for the creative perfection in the second direction: creative discussions by symbolist methods still continued. Creative form of the "bifacial Janus" became determinant of Galaktion Tabidze's poetic status and individualism. If for "Tsisperkantselis" the change of aesthetic-ideological direction was a painful process, in the creative life of Galaktion the internal artistic and intuitive readiness for ideological changes was recognized from 1920's. The transition in Galaktioni from modernism to right was immediate; here we mean 1927 when the important symbolist stage in Galaktion's poetic biography was completing – to some extent the determinant for further history and image of Georgian literature.

It would be illogical to claim that it is necessary to expose Galaktion Tabidze's poetic heritage to the principle of periodization methodolized in the literature criticism years ago. By ideological viewpoint critic-censors divided Georgian writers' works into two parts and often they not only claimed ideological difference between the two parts, but also denied any connection and clearly delimited them. In Galaktion's works they also separated pre-Revolution and post-Revolution stages; first was obscure, non-systematic, without position, pessimistic and the second was of course healthy, highly creative, important and transformed. Despite the clear tendentiousness, baselessness and unfairness of such approach in literature science the opinions on the graduality principles of Galaktion's works are still diverse; although they are based not on the historic time, but principles of creative quality. Naturally the creative life of a writer can be divided by considering literature-ideological changes. Galaktion's creative path is determined by its reformist changes: two-time reform – first modernist and than poetic materialization directions – determined two stages of his creative path. Although, there are literature critics who believe that the end of modernist movement

in Georgia coincided right with the new methodological choice of Galaktion. “Janus’s era ended. Galaktion ended his poetry here. Although he wrote five times more after this he did not have the poetic inspiration... He was defeated as an artist the moment he reflected the era” [4, p. 167].

Thus, the existing public-political formation made the final verdict for the creative life policy in Georgia.

Still we cannot call only this the special precedent in Georgian avant-gardist [movement history](#); we must also understand certain and special trend in its establishment, chronology, and systematization. As far as it is a fact that in Georgian analogues of avant-gardism there were signs of originality and generalization, considering the given reality, history of existence of creative method and its innovations, with expression of individualism, creative experience in scientific analytic, is determined with freedom from compilation and also determines its specificity.

Even the general geographic excursus into avant-gardist movement shows that it had different priorities in different countries. In Germany modernist-avantgardist thinking outbroke twice: first time in the 1910’s it was Dadaism schools scared the respectable creative intelligentsia and then Expressionism theories neutralized the Dadaist extremism. In Switzerland it was also appeared in the avant-gardist epicentre when Dadaism. “Cabaret Voltaire” worked in Zurich in 1916... Italy turned into the Mecca of Futurism starting 1907 and made the world culture to face the new reality and starting the 1920’s instead of “Futurist nostalgia” is found shelter in surrealist and Cubist installations. On the verge of XIX-XX Centuries the so called literature Impressionism successfully moved from France to Austria. Literature Russia also paid the tribute to Modernism several times; first from the mid-XIX century by having the symbolist “Silver Era” and later with Futurist mass-culture and Dadaist directions.

American factor must be specially noted in the history of avant-gardism installation. In America on the verge of XIX-XX Centuries it formed as a host of almost all the avant-gardist expressions. In certain way there existed unconscious readiness, information and striving towards popular European trends. In 1915-1920 the Dada (“Ready-Made”) opened its wings and then consistently Futurism, Surrealism, Impressionism and Expressionism appeared. American avant-gardist trends mainly developed in isolation from European ones and their creators saw more avant-gardist radicalism in European analogues. From this point of view old, classical and at the same time modernist Europe appeared to be fragile and scandalous for avant-gardist maximalism, while the America of contrasts, illusions and dreams came as aware and exalted.

Thus, in different countries modernism had different creative image, form and what is the most important different choices. Nevertheless, methodological scheme of sequence of Avant-gardism trends is as follows as in all culturological publications: Symbolism, Impressionism, Expressionism, Futurism, Dadaism, Cubism, Surrealism (main trends are presented here). Each of these embodiments of Modernist mentality played important role in the cultural life and art theory of the country. Their “empass” had continued for several decades.

This strategy turned out to be different for Georgia. The mentioned methodological scheme is deranged in Georgian creative reality and it looks more or less like this:

1. Symbolism; 1913-1928 – Georgian Symbolist Order;
2. Dadaist Trends in 1920s in Georgian literature, which can be described as born in the bosom of Symbolism. (From this viewpoint Titsian Tabidze’s factor is important as in the period of having passion for symbolist poetic ideology he changed the Symbolistic Orthodoxalism acuteness into special radical creative aesthetics.)

3. Futurism – the kind of formal and short-living group in the Georgian literature of the 1920's.

4. Impressionism and Expressionism which also appeared in 1920's in parallel with the existing avant-gardist trends and almost at the same time; additionally they were thought as "one writer phenomenon" in our literature science.

As it was stressed the above listed literature groups, or trends lived during 1915-27; they coexisted, but not very peacefully...

The answer to the absence of methodological system must be explained by the specificity of Georgian literature history and the factors determining it.

It has to be agreed to that the literature science opinion that even the most consistent symbolist literature ideology existing in Georgian modernist thinking was not classical and we may describe symbolism in Georgia only as a working term in its relation to national literature traditions and extensive creative searches. Here we also mean the aforementioned internal experiments, although it was not an overall action.

We must also search for the reasons in the lack of information and of involvement of Georgian symbolists in European origins which was not only the result of "Iron Curtain" policy organized by Soviet ideology, but also of the isolated province environment existing in Georgia in the late 1900's and 1910's.

One of the reasons is also the so called center factor; it implied that the intellectual center which Kutaisi used to be in 1900's and 1910's due to the simple reason that majority of creative elite lived in that city at that time. It was a synthetic and impulsive city, with contradictory emotions to literature innovations; although the given geography was again changed thanks to the unified migration of writers to the then quite enchanting and non-creative Tbilisi.

Declaration of independence of Georgia on 26 May 1918 provided for the identification of Tbilisi as of an administrative center of the country. If before that Tbilisi was considered as the city of craftsmen, Kintos, traders and marketplaces in which Georgians were only the one-third of the city population after 26 May 1918 Tbilisi again became the cultural center; Tbilisi University was opened and Armenian and Russian merchants were leaving the capital of independent Georgia. In return Tbilisi also received writers and painters running away from Russian Red Revolution. Georgian literature *beaumonde* also started moving to Tbilisi at that time...

In 1918 in Tbilisi settled futurists who ran away from Bolshevik Revolution in Russia – Alexey Kruchinikh, Igor Terentyev, brothers Ilia and Kirill Zdanevich, Vasil Kamensky, Sergey Sudeikin and Zigmund Valishevsky. They organized receptions in Tbilisi cafes. Tbilisi residents also liked the unordinary, free style thinking artists. Kuchinikh and Kamensky also published magazines in Tbilisi – "Company of Zaumniks" "41c," "Syndicate of Futurists" and „Futurvseubejhishche“.

We believe that the Tbilisi "tour" of the artists of the given movement became the determining factor for the establishment of maximalist avant-gardism in Georgia. Despite the certain agitation of Dadaist-Futurist ideas and forms the "Futurist (furthermore Dadaist) passions" were not reflected in the then Georgia literature and Georgian Futurists did not have special creative brotherhood with Russian Futurists in future either. Georgian Symbolists were always considered to be their hosts and friends (creative colleagues) always.

Classical scheme Futurism → Dadaism appeared in Georgia vice versa: Georgian Modernists first "tasted" the Dadaist radicalism and then it developed into Futuristic movement. Futuristic passions stayed in Georgia for only three-four years although in the "formal elevation" period it was noticeably maximalistic. With its radical expression forms it initially even overweighed Russian

Futurism. It can be thought that Dadaists also participated in the process and maybe we should give a thought to the correction of one blunder in the history of Georgian literature groups. Maybe Georgian Futurism was not the classical form of Russian-Italian analogue; by theoretical-formal expression it looked more like the synthesis of constructivism, Dadaism and Futurism and the most radical part of Georgian Futurist thinking was exactly the reflection of Dadaist direction.

This means that in Georgian modernist literature together with Symbolist ideology also existed for a short period of time Expressionist and Impressionist trends; along with that existed the tendency of integration of radical avant-gardist groups into Georgian creative space: there was Dadafuturism the recognized creative method in culturology in analogue with Russian cubofuturism as the direction of the so called synthesized avant-gardism.

Among the determining factors of the given processes also is the public opinion. Here we mainly mean the negative resonance which was present among literature critics and reads in relation to avant-gardism in general, although the Symbolists were the main target at that time. Unlike other factors the given factor was not based on political factor; at least at the earlier stage. The demarches and literature trials that were announced against Modernist movement in Georgia at first were the reflection of ideological incompatibility and later during the Bolshevik government era it also gained ideological basis, which even further activated the fight against avant-gardist thinking in Georgia: when the majority of Georgian Modernists were announced the so called "public enemies" the majority the society supported their "death sentence" by turning its back on them and being indifferent.

Naturally in this case the decisive role came on political-public formation as far as the ideology (State) set the rules, forms and principles of living for arts and literature. All this was with special precision reflected in literature criticism in which the Bolshevik repression policy was reflected in verbal form.

Considering the given factors it may be said that the system of evaluation of Modernist ideology in Georgian literature in general needs to be precised.

Theoretical analytics of Modernism in Georgia had explicitly brought to light the fact that it could be perceived as an artistic creative method, i.e. literature of the method, which, unlike the European examples, had never acquired political loading and never claimed to replace the public-life style values. Moreover, similar to other artistic trends, it was met by years-old foundation of Georgian art, cultural traditions, mentality and artistic "thinking". Any maximalist tendency, radicalism, categoricalism and orthodoxism went through certain transformation and turned into national-liberal trend, not only as the Weltanschauung, but as the artistic method. Therefore, modern studies more and more accept the viewpoint that Symbolism, Futurism, Dadaism, Expressionism and Impressionism are the determining trends for new artistic directions in Georgian creative space and further development of a new stage of these schools.

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