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Urban Myth in Georgian Modernist Literature

Urban problems turned out to be particularly significant for the modernist literary discourse and based on its ideological-esthetic principles created original model of the urban paradigm and vice versa, some researchers associate the process of formation of the esthetic principles of modernism with development of the urban culture.

Generally, Georgian critics attributed appearing of the urban discourse in Georgian cultural space with transformation of Tbilisi into the multicultural epicenter, foreground of intercultural dialogue of the South-Eastern Europe and Caucasus region. In Georgian literature one of the first modernist authors in whose art the urban narrative appeared were Vasil Barnov, Writer at the turn of the centuries, and Georgian immigrant writer Grigol Robakidze. Like the European thinkers Georgian modernist writers see the city as a desacralized, dehumanized topos, though the central problem of urban paradigm appeared in Georgian modernist literature following the European modernist literature – subject's spiritual crisis in the urban dehumanized space – was dealt with differently from the western philosophical and esthetic discourse, in absolutely original manner.

Key words: Urban Myth, Modernizm.

Urban problems turned out to be particularly significant for the modernist literary discourse and based on its ideological-esthetic principles created original model of the urban paradigm and vice versa, some researchers associate the process of formation of the esthetic principles of modernism with development of the urban culture.

In the works of the European thinkers interested in research of urban culture the city, as a rule, is presented as space relevant to artificial,

modernist, desacralized epoch. German philosopher and social scientist Georg Simmel, in his work "The Metropolis and Mental Life" regards metropolis as a neurotic, dehumanized space, where the "objective culture" dominates, relationships of the metropolis residents with one another is characterized with unemotional indifference, formal aloofness and isolation. Individual has paradoxical attitude to the urban culture: on one hand he/she is the creator of mental power and on the other – "cultural elements of faceless contents" become the cause that has conditioned loneliness, mental crisis. "Subjective soul" is replaced by the "objective soul" and as a result, subjectivity of the individual transforms into his objective existence: individual is reduced to the insignificant unit, he turns into the dust particle facing the huge system of subjects and forces that perpetually takes everything related to the mental values" (Simmel 2014:20).

French philosopher and researcher Michel de Certeau, in his research "The Practice of Everyday Life" – "Walking in the City" regards the city as the topos of dominating technological progress, unclear identity, full of horrifying ghosts. As a result of tragic sense of disassociation, estrangement or impossibility of relationships with the external world, the city, according to the researcher's observations, transforms into the desert in the consciousness of a subject (Certeau 1984:104).

Trend of interpretation of a city as desert can be seen in urban critics of French cultural theorist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007). In his brilliant essay "The City and Hatred" the researcher states that development of the "useless mechanisms" of modernist culture, spatial closeness and information availability makes the city a desert zone and creates indifference and confusion in people. Narrowing of the symbolic space limits the individual's ability to differentiate moral values. According to Jean Baudrillard's observation, gathering of millions of people in the city territory lead to the extreme revelation of sociality, where the individuals as though "mutually annihilate". "This is a one-sided coexistence. Beyond its facade there is concealed increasing indifference and rejection of any social links (Baudrillard 2014). Jean Baudrillard regards that the only form of human existence in this indifferent atmosphere is fatal hatred. People perceive their being in rejection. "Our world is a desperate protest against indifference. And with this quality, certainly, makes people closer than consensus or close relationships" (Baudrillard 2014).

It should be noted that fifteen-century Georgian literature, irrespective of significant sociopolitical challenges, was involved in the processes ongoing in the European literary space. In 20s of the 20th century, Georgian modernism has shared all conceptual and esthetic innovations of the European modernism; among them it showed interest to the urban issues.

In early 20th century, for the purpose of expansion of literary thinking, cultural consciousness and world-vision and esthetic renovation the process of introduction of the modernist trends commenced in Georgian literature. Georgian modernism was regarded as integral part of the European modernism and shared all its innovations, whether conceptual or esthetic. Among them was interested in urban issues. Introduction of the moral-cultural values and conceptual paradigms of the European modernism into Georgian literary space are associated with the names of Grigol Robakidze¹ and Vasil Barnov².

1 Georgian thinker, with his course of lectures, creative art, culturological, cultural-philosophical, literary-critical letters (Gr. Robakidze "Georgian Modernism"), unusual philosophical-esthetic ideas became the first prophet of "modernism gospel" (T. Tabidze) in Georgia. Outstanding representatives of Georgian intellectuals listened to his lectures and commented them. Grigol Robakidze's art and activities have significantly influenced the creative method of the young wing of Georgian modernists – "Blue Horns". New generation has recognized Grigol Robakidze as the reformer of Georgian literature and the first ideologist of Georgian modernism. It should be noted that after occupation and actual annexing of Democratic Republic of Georgia by Bolshevik Russia (February-March 1921) Grigol Robakidze actively participated in the national-liberation movement and for this he was permanently chased by the representatives of Bolshevik-Communist ideology and in 1930, by the reason of ideological contradiction with the ideological principles of the soviet totalitarian government, Georgian thinker had to leave the country for Berlin, Germany, as a political exile. Up to 1946, the writer lived and worked in Germany and from 1946 – in Switzerland. At various times his art was commented and greatly praised by Stefan Zweig, Romain Rolland, Nikos Kazantzakis and other outstanding representatives of world literature. Grigol Robakidze's novels "The Snake's Skin", "Demon and Mythos", "Die gemordete Seele", "Die Huter des Grals", "Megi-Georgian Girl", "Caucasian Stories" were internationally recognized. It should be noted that in early 1960s, there was planned to nominate Georgian thinker for Nobel Prize, but this was not done because of the writer's decease.

2 Barnov is headed by Georgian researcher Soso Sigua: „The knowledge and vision of Vasil Barnov was more acceptable for modernism“ (Sigua 2002: 35-36).

Generally, Georgian critics (Gaga Lomidze, Konstantine Bregadze, Lali Avaliani, Bela Tsipuria) attributed appearing of the urban discourse in Georgian cultural space with transformation of Tbilisi into the multicultural epicenter, foreground of intercultural dialogue of the South-Eastern Europe and Caucasus region. In that period there appeared different art groups, there were created the artistic works loaded with urban semantics (Pirosmani, Gigo Gabashvili, Mose Toidze, Shalva Kikodze), the artistic cafes were opened (“Brotherly Soothing”, “Peacock Tail”, “Fantastic Tavern”, “Boat of Argonauts”, “Chimerioni”), as the main symbol of modernist life, there were written the manifestos and theoretical letters.¹ In the beginning of the century, the art processes in Tbilisi was assessed as “renaissance of Georgian culture”² by Robakidze and in the novel the writer has included a very interesting passage: Tiflis/Tbilisi is represented as a real city, on one hand and as the space determined by the artistic conventionality, just like the writer himself, being simultaneously the historical figure and character of the novel: “Tiflis is a strange city and in 1919-1920 it became even stranger... Who was not then in Tbilisi? The futurists have made their first step to Dadaism there. They established the body “41 degrees” – (perhaps the sign of temperature where delirium commences), Tiflis became the city of poets. Paolo Iashvili swept Tiflis just like Arthur Rimbaud did with Paris... At that moment only two things concerned Grigol Robakidze: Apocalypses and Dionysius (Robakidze 2018: 764-765).

Georgian researcher, Irakli Kenchoshvili has offered interesting opinion related to the processes in the art of 10-20s of 20th century: “one of the most significant characteristics of Georgian modernism is focus not on the existence but rather on the culture, ore, more exactly – vision of the truth and its description with the cultural codes, by means of the particularly marked quotations” (Kenchoshvili 2016: 31).

1 Inevitable relationship between modernist culture and urbanistic narrative was theoretically evidenced by the manifestos and letters: “Modernist art is a child of the city. The nature has not fed it, it was fed by the black city mist and gas. On the electric lanterns of the city desired past cannot be imagined” (T. Tabidze “With Blue Horns”). “New culture is impossible with the countryside colors, new culture is always stamped by the big city” (K. Gamsakhurdia „Declaratia Pro Mea“. Gamsakhurdia 1983: 400).

2 See Grigol Robakidze’s article “Georgian Modernism”. War and Culture, Tbilisi, publisher: “Artanuji”, 2014.

This targeted movement of Georgian modernists (from artistic mannerism – creation of bohemian, avant-garde space – to theoretical proving of the principal ideas) should be regarded as desperate effort of Europeanisation of Georgian culture, its involvement into the world art processes. In this form Georgian modernists attempted to introduce worldview and esthetic principles of European modernism and set the country's pro-western political and cultural orientation.

In Georgian literature one of the first modernist authors in whose art the urban narrative appeared was Vasil Barnov. Writer at the turn of the centuries offers in his stories interesting interpretation of dealing with the mental crisis of the individual against the background of urban culture development – the problem significant for the world modernist space. In his art Vasil Barnov described Tbilisi of 20s of the 20th century, period of significant social and economic changes when bourgeois society (merchants, tavern-keepers) replaced the feudal one and took over the governance: “life gradually became harder, prices significantly increased and in the urban areas only merchants and robbers were able to deal with the hardships or, perhaps, those who were very smart” (Barnov 1962: 57-58). Tbilisi is transformed into the artificial topos, desacralized, dehumanized space where the emotional ties between people are broken.

Large buildings with “stone hearts”, estranged relationships between people causes in the writer, similar to the European thinkers, the association of “silent desert” (“knotted string”): those who built these arrogant buildings were as stonehearted, as cold as the marble composing their buildings; their eyes were dry and mercilessly frozen as the palaces decorated by them; they were as empty and as cruel” (Barnov 1961: 9).

Against background of urban culture establishment process, opposition of the individuals estranged to the new urban order to the bourgeois society is indeed dramatic. The merchants are seen as selfish, cold cruel people, unable to enjoy what they already had due to the demonic striving to gain material wealth: “the coldhearted was not satisfied with untold wealth... he desired to procure entire world, even at a price of his soul” (Barnov 1961: 10) and this made them merciless, cunning, deceitful people (Gultsvadze from the story “Brocade Tunic”, Kviteli Petre from the

story “Snake’s Feast”. In the epoch of general cold-heartedness and nihilism the people with moral values and spiritual wealth were marginalized, and with their small houses, were doomed to disappearing, sinking into oblivion (Babale and orphan Pepiko from “Snake’s Fiest”, Giorgi, Dariko, Tedua and Salome from the story “Brocade Tunic”, Svimon from the story “Knotted string” etc.). In the deep layers of the texts by Georgian modernist writer the social problems are substituted by opposition of religious-philosophical categories – good and evil. Vasil Barnov regarded that the only correct way of dealing with the spiritual crisis of the epoch was making choice in favor of good. Researcher Ada Nemsadze reasonably noted: “Vasil Barnov’s philosophical view is quite clear: in this world the main thing is opposition of good and evil and fight between them. Good is the light and evil is dark and therefore, they cannot ever transform into one another... [the writer] showed the class struggle and revolutionary ideas in the context of opposition between good and evil.” (Nemsadze 2016: 65-66)

From a different perspective, considering the urban problem of Georgian immigrant writer Grigol Robakidze In his unfinished novel “Falestra”.¹ The writer by contrast opposing Berlin and Tbilisi, underlines worldview and conceptual differences between the western (desacralized) and eastern (sacral) cultural models. Like the European thinkers, the writer sees Berlin as a desacralized, dehumanized topos of western urban civilization, the reinforced concrete kingdom”. Metropolis with uninterrupted flows of people, noise, high-rise buildings, endless streets, theatres, cinemas, artists, Bohemian society, intellectuals with nihilist attitude, is the space determined by urban semantics where the harmonic relationships between people are broken, sympathy is replaced by total indifference. Life rhythm is different as well. “No one sleeps in the city with the deep sleep of the soil. There almost all are sleepy there” (Robakidze 2018: 773). “Metallic beasts”, “mechanical malaria” is about to absorb the human soul, expectation of loss of identity makes individual helpless, desperate creature: “his “ego” plunges somewhere deeper and deeper” (Robakidze 2018: 760). Unlike Berlin, Tiflis/Tbilisi is interpreted as a sacral, mythos space, center of Caucasus. In the novel the author describes cultural at-

¹ Grigol Robakidze’s novel “Falestra” has an endorsement “External eye in Europe, as a letter to the European writers.” He noted there: the novel is dedicated to Stefan Zweig, poet and person.

mosphere of Tbilisi in 10s – 20s of 20th century, that shares significant worldview and esthetic innovations of the western civilization provided that the national identity is maintained. It is significant that the trend of interpretation of the city as a sacral space, mythos archetype can be seen in the book by Romanian scientist and writer Mircea Eliade's book "Myth of the Eternal Return". In discussing the symbolic meaning of the "center" the researcher regards the city, together with the temple and royal palace as the "holy mount" that transforms into the center: "as far as the world is regarded as an axis, the city or temple is a place where heaven, land and hell meet with one another" (Eliade 2017: 31). Mircea Eliade associates the way to center with the hard mission of self-cognition and mentions: "this way is extremely dangerous, there are threats at each step as in reality this is the way from profanity to sacral, from ephemeral and illusive to reality and permanence, from death to life, from human to god. Approaching the "center" is equal to blessing, initiation; passing from yesterday's profanity and seeming to real existence and this is now a new, actual, firm and fruitful existence" (Eliade 2018: 38).

In Grigol Robakidze's novel "Falestra" the action takes place in the center of European civilization – Berlin. The characters comprise the bohemian society inspired by the rational ideas. Fild director Adolf Ungar, Peter, fond of intellectual polemics, Pelletier and Jeanette, chevalier of Mademoiselle Kavalla, owner of great capital, "cold and dry American" Mister McCollough. Mademoiselle Kavalla in reality is Caucasian Elena, with Kazak father and Georgian mother, escaped after tragedy in the vilage initially from North Caucasus to Tiflis, from Tiflis to Batumi, from Batumi to Istanbul and from Istanbul, with the help of McCollough to Berlin. Woman accompanies the man with the provision that her internal dignity will remain intact. Change of the people and space cannot make Elena forget her "roots", cannot change her cultural identity. In the text the woman is the symbol of the covered sense, eternal purity, "internal virginity" ("a man cannot reach you: he will have no power to surpass you with love..."¹) and her sudden appearing in the metropolis becomes

¹ Compare: words in the epigraph: "I am the things that are, that will be, and that have been. No one has ever laid open the garment by which I am concealed" inscription on the step of the Neith Temple in Sais (Robakidze 2018: 731).

the cause of ruining of the urban “order”. By demonstrating tragic opposition of Caucasian woman (“queen of the Amazons”) to urban culture and society, Grigol Robakidze underlines the contrast between western and eastern civilizations.

We can see contrasting urban models in the article by Yuri Lotman, famous Estonian literary scientist, cultural scientist and semiotician in the article “Semiotics of St. Petersburg and Problem of City Semiotics”. The scientist distinguishes two models of the city: one – concentered city in antithetic relationship with the state, usually located on the mount and can be seen as the sacral medium connecting the heaven and earth, mythic divine space and the other – eccentric, normally built on the sea or river side, city – state with open borders. The eccentric city loses its significance as a sacral medium and can be seen as a desacralized space, symbol of domination of rationalism over the natural powers (Lotman 1984: http://www.historicus.ru/simvolika_Peterburga_i_problemi_semiotiki_goroda).

In Grigol Robakidze’s art, the opposite pair of concentered/eccentric city is replaced by the cultural models of the east and west, where the east is regarded as a sacral, symbolic space while the west – a materialized, desacralized topos: “eastern man sees the Lord with his eyes closed... western man looks at Lord with his eyes wide open and almost attempts to touch him. Internal vision of the European mystics is thought over understanding, rather than experienced condition... In the east people ask “where from?” and freeze in the unhurried expectation. In the west people ask: “where to?” and remain impatient and restless” (Robakidze 2012: 50-51).

Karl Gustav Jung, Swiss thinker, founder of analytical psychology specially discusses the eastern and western cultural models in his book: “Difference between Eastern and Western Thinking”. The researcher notes: “in the East the internal individual, with uninterrupted link with the world, dominates over the external individual while in the west, the

Elena contains also Robakidze’s idea about “Georgian woman”: “Georgian woman, as a woman, is undoubtedly a problem. In think, there are many pieces of ancient Amazons in her nature, the Amazons who rushed to men fiercely in love... she knows neither how to say about her love (she is proudly closed) and nor sexual blooming (she is asexual, due to the remains of Amazons’ fury): Georgian woman knows nothing about real “romance” (Robakidze 2014: 398).

external individual has refused to cognize his secret substance and understand the depth of being. Individual became insignificant, superficial and actually, he is in error". (Jung 2005: 58-59).

It should be noted that Grigol Robakidze deals with the main challenge facing modern western civilization – liberation of the “history from terror” in original manner: he sees the way of dealing with the subject’s mental crisis not rebellion, like western philosophical thinking but returning of a son to father, “paradise of archetypes” (Mircea Eliade) (eastern wisdom).

Thus, the central problem of urban paradigm appeared in Georgian modernist literature following the European modernist literature – subject’s spiritual crisis in the urban dehumanized space – was dealt with differently from the western philosophical and esthetic discourse, in absolutely original manner. It is significant to note that esthetic positions of both, Vasil Barnov and Grigol Robakidze have significantly influenced further reception of city concept in Georgian modernist thinking space.

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For the Interrelationship of Folk and Literary Fairy Tales

In the modern era, fairy tales are rarely found in the sacred form or in the form of traditional fairy tale-type narrative, because the literary tale borrows the experience of other genres - novel, drama and poetry and thus enriches its ideological and poetic arsenal. Here we meet the works of the adventure and detective genres, elements of science fiction and parody literature, which made this genre a multi-layered artistic event.

Modern literary fairy tale as a genre is a mixture of storytelling styles, types and fantastic literature, which gives rise to a complex semantic