

**Re-Imagining Literatures of The World:  
Global and Local, Mainstreams and Margins**

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**Ré-imaginer les littératures du monde:  
mondial et local, grands courants et marges**

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**მსოფლიო ლიტერატურის გადააზრება:  
გლობალური და ლოკალური,  
წამყვანი და მარგინალური**

Collected Papers of the XXIII Congress of the ICLA

**Volume 2**

**Edited by Irma Ratiani**

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## Translation and Reparation

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### **Anonymity, Impersonation and Exile: Silenced Women Writers at the Dawn of Modernity in Spain**

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#### **Abstract:**

With the purpose of showing the cultural contributions to the contemporaneity of female writers and artists, so often silenced, and forgotten, we've seen recently a true (re)discovery of these protagonists of the Spanish Silver Age (1900-1936) from the Gender Studies, as well as from the Spanish Contemporary Literary Historiography. The recovery of female writers and artists of that period constitutes not only a way out of "anonymity" for these women, in a process that is, without any doubt, of absolute justice. It also involves necessarily a revision of the canon of the Spanish Silver Age, questioning the assumptions and interpretations consolidated in our critical tradition, incorporating a large amount of literary/artistic production that remained silenced and/or unpublished, as well as identifying the patriarchal nature of our cultural and artistic élites, at the dawn of modernity. One of the most striking cases of this group of "silenced" women of our Silver Age is María Lejárraga, an essential and very active literary figure of the Hispanic Modernism, who devoted himself prolifically to literary translation. Several circumstances led her to become a true ghost, despite her great relevance for the Hispanic literature of the first half of the XXth century. This "ghostly" nature starts with her own decisions, since she assumed as pseudonym the name of her husband, "Gregorio Martínez Sierra" from the beginning. This fact was aggravated many decades later, during the Franco regime and the exile, when she even lost the rights on her works.

**Keywords:** Literary Translation; María Lejárraga; Gregorio Martínez Sierra; Silver Age; Spanish Literature; Literary Canon; Gender Studies

## **1. Silenced women writers at the dawn of modernity in Spain**

Questioning the canon is a central aspect of Gender Studies. The (re)discovery of writers, artists, and translators of the so-called Spanish Silver Age also uses this approach to analyse the absence of representation, the “ghostly” (“hauntological”) nature of the authorship of many women in those times. This is a fundamental topic of the Spanish cultural history of this period (1900-1936), since it constitutes a way out of the, often forced, “anonymity” of these women, but also entails an essential revision of the canon of the Spanish Silver Age currently in studying manuals, literary histories, and anthologies, that we have inherited, and which need to be reviewed in depth, since the canon refers us to a tradition of authority in the literary sphere (Mainer, 2000, p. 234).

The recovery of these “silenced” writers completely disrupts the symbolic schemes that are used and demonstrates the absolute relevance of gender at the dawn of modernity, in our country and beyond our borders. In fact, the participation of women in modernity has had a profound effect not only on the category of femininity, but also on the notion of modernity (Felski, 1994, p. 204). This issue is often intertwined with the deep concern aroused by the emergence of the “modern woman” at the time: a matter of a clearly political nature, in which patriarchal discourses of (often enraged) condemnation of the alleged “deviations from the feminine norm” that modernity entailed, were tinged with open misogyny and alleged scientism to consolidate a sexist discourse addressed to condemn agitators, thinkers, artists, writers, inventors, etc., as “deviations” from the feminine norm.

## 2. Anonymity as a strategy of concealment

Among these “silenced” women of the Spanish Silver Age, one of the most striking cases is María Lejárraga. She is a clear example of women’s need at that time to show their talent only through male delegation, in a social context that stigmatized their public visibility when they were engaged in literature, or art in general. Her submission to her husband (Gregorio Martínez Sierra) in the name of the myth of a supposed spiritual “collaboration” that lasted and resisted years and infidelities is also clear. Another very significant feature, is the biological metaphor she used for her literary production, considering her works as the “children” she never had.

The relevance of Lejárraga's cultural contribution is now beyond doubt, especially since the documented studies by Patricia W. O’Connor, who evidenced the authorship of a very abundant production that was published not under her own name, but rather under the name of “Gregorio Martínez Sierra”, the actual name of her husband. To these contributions we can add several later works, published in the press since 2000 (by X. Ayén, M. J. Obiol, F. Umbral...), and other studies such as those of M<sup>a</sup> I. López Martínez, and Juan Aguilera Sastre, who concludes, “if by authorship we mean exclusively the writing of the works, then we must agree that María was the author of most [my translation]” of them (Aguilera Sastre, 2002, p. 46).

Lejárraga was a fundamental and very active figure of Spanish Modernism. She wrote manifestos, founded important literary journals, such as *Helios* (1903) and the *Renacimiento* (1907) editorial and journal (1907). She cultivated a poetic prose that many admired in her time, and incorporated innovations into early twentieth century Spanish theatre. She also introduced key foreign authors for the modernization of Spanish literature through her translations. However, despite this prolific production and influence, her authorship does not appear anywhere, and her name is not mentioned by historians of Spanish Modernism. This is because she and her husband decided to sign their works, which were supposedly “collective” but written by her, actually, as works by “Gregorio Martínez Sierra” (Martínez Sierra, 2000, p. 75-76). Therefore, as Susan Kirkpatrick rightly points out, *The most important female member of the modernist group created a complex artistic identity for herself, based partly on self-concealment and partly on the textual affirmation of the aesthetic value and modernity of the feminine* (Kirkpatrick, 2003, p. 130, my translation).

This is undoubtedly an extraordinary case of imposture, whose magnitude and exceptionality transcend the strictly Hispanic panorama. It consists essentially of hiding herself by adopting a pseudonym that matches the real name of her husband. In practice, Lejárraga's decision to do this constituted a kind of public death. This is the true origin of a set of unfortunate circumstances (to which was added her exile after the Spanish Civil War, and the silence on her work imposed by Francoism) that turned this writer into a real ghost, despite her great relevance to the Spanish literature of the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, this personal decision had dire consequences because she lost all rights to her work upon her husband's death in 1947.

There are many hypotheses that have been considered to explain this personal decision; however, above all it demonstrates the great difficulties faced by any woman writer in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century, in an atmosphere of deep hostility and misogyny (Lozano, 2017). However, Lejárraga is undoubtedly a character with a complex identity that has numerous contradictions. Perhaps the most flagrant of all concerns her agency, rejecting to access the public sphere as an author but rather as a politician, since Lejárraga was very active in the feminist struggle from the second decade of the twentieth century, and increasingly in the 20s and 30s (Blanco, 2003). For Lejárraga, hiding under the signature of GMS opened her the doors of the theatres of the time where she successfully premiered without having to suffer the prejudices and criticisms for being a woman. It also allowed her to publish in literary journals; and even conferred "authority" and "symbolic capital" (Blanco 2006), to her feminist writings and conferences (Salinas Díaz 2014). On the other hand, Lejárraga used often unconvincing arguments to avoid the social stigma that her literary activity could entail (Martínez Sierra, 2000, p. 26; Martínez Sierra 1989). Using a masculine pseudonym was certainly a strategy of self-concealment to evade the prejudices that a woman writer would encounter in Spain at the time (Blanco, 1999, p. 15).

With the death of Gregorio in 1947, silenced, exiled, and forgotten, faced with losing the rights over her work, Lejárraga saw the necessity to unmask the imposture (Blanco 1987), rebuild her author identity and vindicate herself as a writer for the first time. With a narrative about her life and the true nature of the "collaboration" with her husband she claimed,

from her exile and in full Francoism, her true place in Spanish literature (O'Connor, 2002 and 2003).

Ahora, anciana y viuda, véome obligada a proclamar mi maternidad para poder cobrar mis derechos de autora (Martínez Sierra, 2000, p. 76)

[Now, old and widowed, I am forced to proclaim my motherhood to collect my copyright.] (my translation).

This is the origin of the memorialist writing signed by “María Martínez Sierra”, *Gregorio and I: half a century of collaboration*, published in Mexico in 1953. The debate on her authorship was long and complex. In fact, it was not settled until 1987, thanks to the research of Patricia W. O'Connor (O'Connor, 1987, completed with O'Connor, 2003), who provided a lot of information in this regard, partly drawing on the author's correspondence between 1915 and 1947, which shows Gregorio's absolute dependence on her wife.

When, amid Francoism, Lejárraga tried to vindicate herself as a writer, she faced strong resistance against her from the cultural elites in power (O'Connor, 2003, p. 58; Aguilera Sastre, 2002). It can therefore be affirmed that her exile and the work of Francoism sentenced her to death in life as a writer, in a double process of invisibility, which was partly facilitated by her own earlier decisions.

### **3. The *triple* invisibility of María Lejárraga as a translator**

The theory of feminist translation researches the legacy, which is persistent in history, of a double “subordination”: that of women and that of translation. The way in which translation has been “feminized” over time is clearly due to gender constructions, as Lori Chamberlain already showed in 1988 in her famous essay “Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation”, in which she invites us to overturn these constructs. Both feminist thought and that of translation are aimed at analysing the way in which this condition of being secondary (“secondariness”) of both women and translation has been (re)presented over time, how it is defined, and how it is canonized.

This persistent subordination in time highlights a recurring double invisibility of the female translator in literary history: for being a woman and for being a translator. This is compared to the male author and his work, doubly legitimized as such. In the case of María Lejárraga, for the reasons that we have analysed above, a new twist is added to this condition, since



her translations, which were very abundant, are not signed at all (a common characteristic in many literary journals of the early twentieth century in Spain) or are not signed by her but rather by GMS (Gregorio Martínez Sierra). We can therefore speak in her case of a *triple* invisibility, which converts researching her work, and the process of recovering this important figure of Spanish Modernism, into a much more arduous task, if possible. It becomes a true case of exhumation that has only begun very recently, by analysing various testimonies, such as letters, criticisms of the works that appeared in the press, reviews, etc. In most of the studies on María Lejárraga, her work as a translator is not even mentioned, despite its great relevance (for example, in the studies by Blanco).

Translation played a very important role in the Hispanic world of this time as it introduced new foreign authors, literary themes, and models, and, ultimately, a new image of modernity. This translation work played a decisive role in the emergence of Spanish Modernism, spreading and publicizing foreign authors. However, this undeniable task has not yet been properly valued (Sánchez-Nieto, 2017, p. 406). In this chapter we must locate María Lejárraga clearly, because for many recent critics the translations she made were key to the consolidation of the aesthetic ideology of young modernists in the first and second decades of the twentieth century. Her translations were published under the signature GMS, or even anonymously, in fundamental journals such as *Vida Moderna* (1901), and especially *Helios* (1903) and *Renacimiento* (1907), as well as in the *Renacimiento* publishing house linked to the journal (“Selected Library of Foreign Authors” series, and in “Masterpieces of Universal Literature”). In addition, in 1917 she founded the Estrella Editorial, and in 1925 the Esfinge Editorial, which both published numerous translations of foreign literature. *Helios*, the main journal of Spanish Modernism, and later *Renacimiento*, were born from the association between Maria and Gregorio Martínez Sierra and J. R. Jiménez (among others). Their fruitful friendship has been widely documented (Gullón, 1961). These two journals, inspired by the *Mercure de France* and *Vers et Prose*, were decidedly international from the outset. To this we can add the relationship with the Parisian editor Garnier (who also became editor of GMS), as well as the friendship with Falla, Albéniz, Eugeni D’Ors and Rusiñol, among others. The couple's travels, until 1906, also played an important role in this quest to expand their borders and learn about new literary trends abroad.

One of the most outstanding aspects in both journals, *Helios* and *Renacimiento*, was the interest in translating foreign literature (Celma, 1991; P. O’Riordan, 1970, p. 127-134). The presence of Symbolists, Decadents and Parnassians (i.e. Verlaine, Mallarmé, D’Annunzio, Rémy de Gourmont, Henri de Régnier, Charles Guérin, Maeterlinck, Omar Khayyam, Longfellow, Thoreau, Poe, Georges Rodenbach, and Maurice Rallinat, etc.) did not appear in the literary journals of Madrid until the first half of the twentieth century:

The definitive change in the aesthetic tastes of Spanish writers –in accordance with the consolidation of modernist poetics– is evidenced by the publication of translations of Maeterlinck, Mallarmé, Verlaine or D’Annunzio, among others, and with the recovery of writers of romantic affiliation such as Edgar Allan Poe, Longfellow or Leopardi, who burst into some Madrid journals that appeared between 1903 and 1907 (*Helios*, *Alma Española*, *La República de las Letras*, *Renacimiento*), thus showing the wide range of foreign influences converging on the Hispanic Modernism (Rodríguez-Moranta, 2011, p. 52, my translation).

In this context María Lejárraga played a very important role in spreading foreign literature in these early years of the twentieth century thanks to her thorough knowledge of languages, either promoting her knowledge or directly translating the proposed works herself. As a great reader and a good *connoisseur* of Anglo-American poetry, critics have recognized her large influence on J. R. Jiménez (Coletes, 2001, p. 123), who was initially very focused on French literature (Rodríguez-Morata, 2011, p. 53). Therefore, the *Renacimiento* journal shows a greater presence of North American literature, which was still very little known in Spain at that time, and which was translated by Lejárraga. There has been little research yet into the great relevance of these translations for Spanish Modernism. Therefore, the necessary overview does not yet exist, as for French literature, which has been much more analyzed by Spanish historiography.

Most of the translations that appeared in *Helios*, and later in *Renacimiento* (among other important journals of the time), were the work of María Lejárraga, “although she never signed them [...] neither she nor her husband” (Coletes 2001: 50). However, this was not strange in those times. The collaboration between the two Martínez Sierra also included the trans-

lation-adaptation of plays by classical and modern English playwrights, for staging at Teatro Eslava (Madrid) between 1917 and 1923 (*ibid.*: 126). This fact further favoured the anonymity of these translations, which was common in the theatrical translation of the time. All these translations/adaptations were almost exclusively made by María Lejárraga.

The correspondence between Gregorio Martínez Sierra and J. R. Jiménez, documented by Ricardo Gullón as early as 1961, also gives a good account of Lejárraga's work in this field. Gregorio reportedly wrote the following to J.R.J.: "You can be in charge of translating several works of 'Vers et Prose'. María will take care of the English translations, and I will do the Catalan translations" (Gullón, 1961, p. 48). Therefore, it is considered that Lejárraga was the author of the translations that were published in *Renacimiento* of the following texts: *The Rubaiyat* by Omar Khayyam (based on the English version by Fitzgerald), *Walden, or Life in the Woods* by Thoreau, some poems by H. W. Longfellow ("The Rainy Day", "The Day is Done" and "Hymn to the Night"), Mallarmé's prose poems ("The Future Phenomenon", "The Pipe", "Autumn Lament", and "Winter Shivers"), as well as Verlaine's poetry ("Serenade", "Forgotten Songs", "Gaspard Hauser Sings", "The Song of the Naïve", and the famous "Spleen"), and the essay *Philosophy of Composition* by E. A. Poe. This last work ("a jewel of inestimable value, not so much for its intrinsic quality as for its historical and archaeological interest", Montes 1994: 46) was complementary to the Spanish translation of "The Raven", published in *Helios* in 1904 by Viriato Díaz Pérez. All these works were very important and influential for the formation of the new modernist taste and were translated for the first time into Spanish by Lejárraga in accordance with a fully conscious and anticipatory project of openness to foreign influence, and a fine critical sense and orientation towards the consolidation of the new modernist aesthetic in Spain. Lejárraga was able to carry out this fundamental project, despite being hidden by anonymity and veiled by what was clearly a great imposture in the Spanish literature of the time.

To conclude, we are therefore faced with an unusual case of what we call "author translation", carried out by a writer in parallel to her own literary production, linked to her own works, and clearly essential to the evolution of the target literature. "Unusual" because of the way the translator hid herself. These translations deserve much more attention. Research into these translations is very relevant for understanding many literary figures of the Spanish Silver Age, and reviewing the Spanish literary canon.

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# Translation and Transmission of John Keats in China (1949-1979)

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## **Abstract:**

The year of 2021 witnesses both the bi-centennial anniversary of John Keats's death, and the centennial anniversary of the Chinese translation and transmission of his poems. The latter one-hundred-years history can be divided into three stages: the beginning in the first half of the twentieth century (mainly during the period of Republic of China), the development from 1949 (when People's Republic of China was founded) to 1979 (when the Great Cultural Revolution ended), and the flourishing new stage since China's Reform and Opening up. It is generally assumed that Keats's works are underappreciated during the first thirty years after the founding of People's Republic of China, and thus the translation and transmission of Keats in this period in China has been less discussed than necessary. This paper sorts out the data concerning Keats being translated, introduced, and transmitted in the years of 1949-1979, and makes comments on the achievements obtained by Chinese translators and scholars. It attempts to argue that Chinese translators and scholars have made continuous efforts, and contributed considerably in the following fields: the translation of Keats's poems and letters, the composition and translation of literary history textbooks and literary theory textbooks concerning Keats, the studies and transmissions of Keats's poems and letters, etc. The translation and transmission of Keats in China (1949-1979) have inherited the tradition created by Chinese Keatsian scholars in the first half of the twentieth century (Stage I), and laid solid foundations for the translation and transmission of Keats in China's New Era of Reform and Opening-up (Stage III).

**Keywords:** Keats; Translation, Transmission, The First Thirty Years After The Founding of People's Republic of China (1949-1979)

## **Introduction**

The English Romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821) was introduced into China at the beginning of the twentieth century. The year of 2021 witnessed both the bi-centennial anniversary of Keats's death, and the centennial anniversary of the Chinese translation and transmission of Keats's works. The latter one-hundred-year history can be divided into three stages: Stage I. The beginning in the first half of the twentieth century (mainly during the period of Republic of China); Stage II. The development from 1949 (when the People's Republic of China was founded) to 1979 (when the Great Cultural Revolution ended); Stage III. The flourishing new stage since China's Reform and Opening up in the 1980s. It is generally assumed that Keats's works are underappreciated during Stage II (Zhang, 2015, pp. 251-252; Shen & Wang, 2015, p. 65), and thus the translation and transmission of Keats in China in this period have been less discussed than necessary.

This paper sorts out the data concerning Keats being translated, introduced, and transmitted in the years of 1949-1979, and makes comments on the achievements obtained by Chinese translators and scholars. It attempts to argue that Chinese translators and scholars have made continuous efforts, and contributed considerably in the following fields: the translation of Keats's poems and letters, the composition and translation of literary history textbooks and literary theory textbooks concerning Keats, the studies and transmissions of Keats's poems and letters, etc. The translation and transmission of Keats in China (1949-1979) have inherited the tradition created by Chinese Keatsian scholars in the first half of the twentieth century (Stage I), and laid solid foundations for the translation and transmission of Keats in China's New Era of Reform and Opening-up (Stage III).

### **Translation & Transmission of Keats's Poems and Letters in China (1949-1979)**

Till now, 120 of Keats's 150 poems and 170 of Keats's 250 letters have been translated into Chinese. In Stage I, 46 translators published the translation of 89 Keats's poems. Among them 41 were repeatedly translated, so together 48 poems of Keats were in Chinese. There was no monograph of Keats's poems in Chinese. The translation of either his poems or letters were published in journals or compilations of poems.



In Stage II, The most important achievement is a monograph of Keats's poems in China (Keats, 1958). It is significant for the following reasons. Firstly, it includes 65 poems of Keats, among which 22 were translated into Chinese for the first time. Hence, the number of translation of Keats's poems rose up to 70. Secondly, it is presently the most active translation: (1) It is the most highly quoted translation. Such famous scholars as Zuoliang Wang and Xiuyan Fu cite Zha's translation in their works. (2) It is again and again published in China. Thirdly, it classifies Keats's poems into three kinds: 47 sonnets, 16 lyrics (four odes included), two narrative poems, which is easy for Chinese reader to understand, and also sets an example for later generation of translators to arrange Keats's poems. Fourthly, Zha sings highly of Keats's poetic talent and art in the preface, claiming that Keats has "strong passion for the society" and his poems have serious social themes. Those comments give support for Keats's poems to be accepted in China.

There are other translators of Keats's poems in Stage II.

Guangzhong Yu translated "On the Grasshopper and Cricket," and included it in his *Collection of English Poems* (Yu, 1960). Yu also wrote notes to the poem and summarized Keats's artistic style. Yu published *Translation and Review of Keats's Famous Works* in 2012, including 361 of Keats's poems and five of Keats's letters.

Ting Lou (1967) edited and translated *Selection of English and American Poems*, which included three of Keats's poems: "Ode to a Nightingale," "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," "La Belle Dame sans Mercy: A Ballad." Only one of Byron's poems and two of Shelley's poems were included, indicating the preference of Keats. Lou also composed a sketch of Keats, claiming his poetic achievements among the most glorious in England.

Ruihong Zhao translated four sonnets ("On the Grasshopper and Cricket," "Written in Disgust of Vulgar Superstition," "How many bards gild the lapses of time," "If by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd") and two odes ("Ode to a Nightingale," "To Autumn") in 1979; he wrote two papers on them. These translations and papers were included in his work *Poetry and Romanticism* (Zhao, 1993). According to Zhao, Keats is as important as French poet Rimbaud (1854-1891) and Chinese Tang Dynasty poet He Li (790-816). The three are all talented elites in their own motherland (Zhao, 1993, p. 396). Keats's letters are stressed by quoting T. S. Eliot's words (Zhao, 1993, p. 253). Zhao read aloud Keats's poems together with students in the classroom to promote the transmission of Keats's works.

In Stage I, six translators translated 51 letters of Keats's. Among them seven were repeatedly translated, so together 44 letters of Keats were in Chinese. Among them 37 are the letters to Fanny Brawne, girlfriend of Keats. The purpose of the translation was to encourage the Chinese young men to pursue true love and happy marriage. In Stage II, five translators translated 39 letters of Keats's. Among them four had been translated in Stage I; 12 were repeatedly translated in Stage II, so together 23 letters of Keats were put into Chinese for the first time. Hence, the number of translation of Keats's letters rose up to 67. Not only is the number increasing but also the selection points to a new direction.

Firstly, Yumei Mao translated 10 Letters of Keats, representing Keats's view of imagination, sensation, his view of poetry as natural as leaves of a tree (Keats, 1961, pp. 132-140). Mao remarked in the postscript that Keats tends to compose pure poetry, using poetry as a tool to create an imaginary world. Keats's pure poetry is different from and inferior to Byron's and Shelly's political poetry.

Secondly, Kejia Yuan, the second translator in Stage II, translated 18 Letters of Keats that focus on Keats's passion for and understanding of Shakespeare, as well as Keats's view of negative capability (Keats, 1964, pp. 149-165). Yuan analyzed Keats's view of imagination in the postscript.

Thirdly, Qianyu Huang translated "Letter to Fanny Brawne" (May, 1820), and included in *Love Letters* (Keats, 1975, pp. 182-183).

The fourth translation was included in *Selected Western Literary Theory* (Keats, 1979a, pp. 60-66). Ten letters of Keats are selected in the book, but four of them were from Yumei Mao's translations; the other six were formerly translated by Yumei Mao and Kejia Yuan, and Tongji Lin's translations were based on the former works. Since Lin worked as Professor of Fudan University, and famous scholar Lifu Wu was the editor of *Selected Western Literary Theory*, this book is so influential that two of the letters are quoted by *References for Thinking in Images* edited by Fudan University (Keats, 1979b, pp. 67-68).

The translation of Keats's letters concerning his view of poetry means that Stage-II scholars pay more attention to Keats's literary theory, and that Chinese university students can gain access to more about Keats's view of poetry. That helps transmit Keats's image as a great Romantic poet.

## Introduction & Transmission of Keats by Monographs in China (1949-1979)

In Stage II, Chinese scholars of English literature were much influenced by Soviet scholars, paying more attention to Byron and Shelley than to Keats. Nevertheless, Keats still was part of the teaching contents of China's higher education in the 1950s. He was introduced in detail in at least the following three university textbooks.

Firstly, *The History of English Literature: A Brief Outline* introduced Keats's life story, *Endymion*, *Hyperion*, sonnets and odes (Fan, 1983, pp. 384-388). Although it was published in 1983, its contents were teaching materials to English major students in Nanjing University in 1954-1955. And it has been an important textbook for decades since its publication. Fan remarked that Keats is an ambitious liberalist who fights against the capitalist political and religious system, that *The Eve of St. Agnes* is as important as *Romeo and Juliet*, and that *The Fall of Hyperion* indicates that life is a forever going/progressive movement. Above all, Keats's odes are his most successful poems, representing his strongest passion for life.

Secondly, Fudan University was funded by the National Educational Bureau to compose *A Teaching Syllabus of English Literary History* in February, 1956. It makes a list of teaching points on Keats: Byron's and Shelley's support and approval of Keats, Keats's humanistic and materialistic adoration of beauty, comparison between *Hyperion* and *Paradise Lost*, comparison between Keats and Burns, etc. (p. 22).

Thirdly, Zhouhan Yang and other scholars edited *European Literary History* (vol. 2) that is an important university textbook during Stage II. It argues that Keats's *Poems* (1817) displays his taste for classical poetry and his talent for depicting natural scenery, that *Endymion* (1818) symbolizes Keats's pursuit of beauty and ideal, and that the third collection of poems includes more famous works than ever (Yang, et al., 1979, pp. 58-59). 多人

In Brief, scholars in Stage II stressed the importance of Keats's earlier letters and later poems, especially the narrative and epic poems that show Keats's revolutionary ideas.

Works translated from Russian into Chinese decided Keats's position in the history of literature in China. Zhouhan Yang translated *The Nineteenth-Century Foreign Literary History* (1958, pp. 660-671), in which Keats's literary position was remarked: Keats neither belongs to revolutionary Roman-

ticist nor reactionary Romanticist (p. 478); Keats is a talented young poet, one of the most outstanding English poet (p. 660); Keats calls on people to transcend the dark world and enjoy lifetime. Liuling Dai translated *A Survey of English Literary History*, in which Keats is claimed as one of the three progressive English Romantic poets, who is inspired by his ambition (1959, p. 340); all Keats's poems are liberal-oriented; *Hyperion* has revolutionary theme without doubt, and *The Fall of Hyperion* represents Keats's mourning of French revolution in the 1790s (p. 343).

There are English works including Keats. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* was translated into Chinese in 1979, published by Taipei's Zhiwen Press, which mentions Keats in several places: when arguing against the biographical analysis of poetry, the author cites Keats's letter to Woodhouse that a poet has no identity (p. 119); when analyzing the relations between literature and other arts, the author quotes Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (p. 203). Will Durant's *The Story of Civilization* was translated into Chinese in the 1960s, published by Taipei's Youshi Wenhuaishiye Press, which mentions Keats many times: Keats is parallel to Shelley (1966b, p. 366); Englishmen took Pope's translation of Homer as the best until Keats recognized Chapman's Homer "loud and bold" (1966a, p. 242).

Japanese work also included Keats. *Film Theory* by Yanqi Xu was translated from Japanese into Chinese in 1963. It quotes Keats's lines "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / are sweeter" to show the visibility of films (p. 58).

### **Studies on Keats's Works in China (1949-1979)**

In Stage II, there was no monograph focusing on the studies of Keats, but there were some papers and items from dictionaries or reference books concentrating on Keats studies. Though the number of papers was not considerable, the authors were first-class scholars, whose wonderful prosaic writings show the way to Stage-III Keatsian studies.

For example, Deyu Yang (1979) analyzed the translation methods of Keats's epitaph, evoking much discussion about it; Jueliang Zhou (1963, pp. 75-83) composed notes to "To Autumn", and compared it to Chinese writing; Jiaying Wang wrote a sketch of Keats in his *Short Life Stories of Great Writers* (1976, pp. 99-103), assuming that Keats's works would shine in the

sky eternally; Yuanshu Yan (1977, pp. 26-36) compared *Lamia* to Chinese folk tale *White Snake Story*.

Some papers did not mainly talk about Keats, but simply mentioned Keats, which help us know the image of Keats in China. Kejiang Yuan (1959) believed that Chinese readers should read more about Milton, Blake and Keats; Funing Li (1962) hoped young students would read “Ode to a Nightingale” to learn about its structure and syntax. Weizhi Zhu (1978, p. 90) compared Keats to He Li, the Tang Dynasty poet who died young, lamenting on both their fates.

Pengzheng Wang completed a brief life story of Keats, which was included in *Biographies of Famous Foreign Writers* (1979, pp. 498-500). It is three pages long, and has a black-and-white Keats’s portrait. The portrait *Keats* attached to the article is probably copied from Severn’s portrait. The black and white shows the strength of the face.

Scholars in Stage II also collected Keatsian materials. Liantian Luo edited *Bibliography of Tang Dynasty Literature Studies*, which includes three papers on the comparative studies between Keats and He Li (1979, pp. 62-63). Kaifeng Normal College in Henan Province edited *Bibliography of Foreign Literary Studies*, which includes 10 papers on Keats in the twentieth century in China (1964, p. 166).

## Conclusion

In Stage II, translation and transmission of John Keats in China has made considerable achievements. Although there was no monograph focusing on the studies of Keats, there was *Selected Poems of John Keats* in Chinese, major letters concerning Keats’s view of poetry have been put into Chinese, and mainstream literary history textbooks have made comments on Keats’s works. These books were circling among university students, and from them arise the new generation Keatsian scholars since the 1980s. Without their efforts, there would not be the nine monographs in the field of Keatsian studies, 15 monographs entitled *Selected Poems of John Keats*, two monographs entitled *Selected Letters of John Keats*, one monograph entitled *Critical Biography of John Keats* in Stage III.

In spite of the poor materialistic conditions and the unfavorable cultural atmosphere, translators in 1949-1979 continued to shoulder their responsibility to transmit and spread foreign literature to enrich Chinese

culture. By that means they have also adjusted their own identity as an intellectual. Since Keats's narrative poems were stressed more in Stage II, the tendency helped to counterbalance the image of Keats in the first half of the twentieth century as an aesthetic poet. He has become a revolutionary poet close to Byron and Shelley, superior to Wordsworth and Coleridge.

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# Translation and Bibliotherapy as Healing: A Comparative Approach to Reparation

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## **Abstract:**

Translation and bibliotherapy, though they are cost-effective and versatile, can be deemed as a supplementary treatment to support the good mental health. This paper examines translation and bibliotherapy as healing with a comparison of uses in terms of their approach and effect to reparation for ensuring a good mental health. Their differences lie in that translation is vertical and output-based, whereas bibliotherapy is horizontal and input-based with the similarity of the use of mental and cognitive activities, such as translation and reading. The choice of the genres in literature also exerts differences on the effect of translation and bibliotherapy as a means of healing and reparation. Through qualitative research and a case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is found that translation and bibliotherapy can be considered as a cost-effective and efficient supplement for supporting the good mental health.

**Key words:** Translation, Bibliotherapy, Healing, Reparation



## **1. Introduction**

The translation functions are so various that translation can be considered as a means of treatment in the recovery stage of a mental patient, just like music, painting, and writing. Translation is a complicated process of encoding and decoding activities, in which involves the linguistic transfer between two or more languages. Therefore, translation is also a mental process that involves the working of a neuro-linguistic part of the brain and can activate the brain cells for encoding and decoding the linguistic messages in the translational process.

Bibliotherapy is “a therapeutic approach employing books and other forms of literature, typically alongside more traditional therapy modalities, to support a patient's mental health”.<sup>[1]</sup> Bibliotherapy is also considered as a means of mental therapy for the mental patients even in the mental hospital while there is other kind of therapies, such as music, painting, etc, which is deemed as complementary therapy for them.

The use of translation and bibliotherapy as a therapy has been tried in mental hospitals across the world. Their utilization has been considered as a means to support a patient's mental health apart from medication and other therapies. Modern technologies and therapies have been introduced to the treatment of mental patients, but the traditional therapies, such as music, painting, translation, or bibliotherapy, remain active in the treatment and recovery of the mental patients. In the mental hospital, the psychiatrist has different therapies for treating the mental patients, including medication, and other complementally used therapies, such as music, painting, or translation and bibliotherapy, etc.

## **2. Research Methods**

The research methods of qualitative research and case study are utilized in this paper to broaden and deepen the probe into translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation in a comparative manner. As a comparative literary approach to translation and bibliotherapy, a combination of qualitative research and case study will facilitate the research in a compelling way.

### **3. Translation and Bibliotherapy**

The use of translation and bibliotherapy for mental patients has a prerequisite condition that the recipients of these therapies must be able to read one or more languages, so that they can use translation and reading as a therapy. The translation and bibliotherapy also require that the recipients of these therapies must have the ability to read and write, so that the therapies can be undertaken as a supplementary treatment to the mental patients.

#### **3.1. Translation and Bibliotherapy as a Supplementary Treatment to Mental Patients**

When a mental patient has taken relevant medication, and the mental condition of the patient has been stabilized, he/she can also take up a supplementary therapy to refresh their mental capacity and neuropsychological recovery by translation and bibliotherapy if the patient likes reading and translation. Translation and bibliotherapy are cost-effective and versatile, hence they can be considered as a supplement to support the good mental health.

It is reported that “storytelling, creative writing, and reading have long been recognized for their therapeutic potential. The use of literature as a healing method dates back to ancient Greece, when Grecian libraries were seen as sacred places with curative powers. In the early nineteenth century, physicians like Benjamin Rush and Minson Galt II began to use bibliotherapy as an intervention technique in rehabilitation and the treatment of mental health issues. During World Wars I and II, bibliotherapy was used to help returning soldiers deal with both physical and emotional concerns”. Therefore, translation and bibliotherapy (or the reading of literatures) can be an effective way for the mental patients to experience their therapeutic effect.

#### **3.2. Translation and Bibliotherapy as Healing and Reparation**

It is observed by GC. Spivak, the Indian American translator and theorist, that “translation was the most intimate act of reading”. Therefore, the notion of reading for translation or translation for reading as well as translation for healing and reparation is interconnected and interacted. In translation, the intimate act of linguistic transfer can trigger a more profoundly mental and psychological change that can be resulted in healing and reparation. As said by GC Spivak, the Indian American translator and theorist,

that “translation in the narrow sense is thus a reparation. I translate from my mother tongue. This...as one language among many – give rise to a certain obligation for reparation”. Hence translation can be deemed as healing and reparation.

Bibliotherapy, “ the use of reading as a therapeutic tool, is an age-old practice with marginal risk and potential real benefits”. Mental patients can take bibliotherapy as a supplementary or complementary therapeutic tool apart from medication and other means of treatment and therapies. Bibliotherapy is also cost-effective in that it is available through the establishment of a well facilitated library with resourceful book collections. Mental patients can make better use of bibliotherapy in the library with the instruction from the psychiatrist with a list of books and other therapeutic means of treatment.

According to Kleinian psychology, “reparation is never complete; rather, it is an active process of striving toward completeness, whether of the head or heart or entire being”. Reparation is an important process in which the heart and the mind, or even the soul, are inwards to healing as oneness and completeness. Therefore, the paths to reparation are varied in terms of the means and ways, but their goal is identical in that reparation is the complete healing.

### **3.3. The Literature Genres: Effect as a Means of Healing and Reparation**

There are different literature genres, whose therapeutic effect varies in terms of the use of a single or a combination of different literary genres for reading materials. The following section illustrates the use and therapeutic effect of different literary genres according to the nature of the said genres.

Lyric poetry has the elements of being lyrical, emotion-packed, speaking the mind, etc. Therefore, lyric poetry can be utilized as a literary genre to work out the healing and reparation for mental patients. The chosen lyric poetry can be sourced from such poets as Wordsworth, Lord Byron, Heinrich Heine, Tagore, Li Po, etc. The lyric poetry can be recited, read aloud, role played for reciting, copied and/or reproduced in calligraphy, just to mention a few ways for appreciation and understanding.

Romantic Poetry has the elements of being romantic, love-themed, passionate in love, etc. Romantic poetry can be utilized to heal and repair the wound caused by love or love relationship by means of recitation, reading aloud, or role playing for recitation, etc. The recommended poetry is

written by such poets as Robert Browning, John Keats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Percy Bysshe Shelley, etc. Likewise with lyric poetry, romantic poetry can be appreciated and shared by mental patients.

Classic novels provide mental patients with a yearning for knowing the past experience that could date back from decades ago to centuries ago. Therefore, classic novels can bring the reading experience as profoundly felt as being immersed in history and historic events. The past and the present can be linked together by reading the classic novels for appreciation and understanding.

Bestselling novels or bestsellers, which are published today or in the past years, can be deemed as a mirror to the present situation. The reading pleasure and therapeutic effect can be felt by reading them and bestsellers of different genres, such as self-help books.

Moreover, reading books on philosophy, psychology, or history can also be an effective tool to be used as the bibliotherapy for mental patients or anyone who are interested in human thoughts and understanding the inner self of humans. It is an ideal case that a good selection of book lists inclusive of fiction and non-fiction will be provided for bibliotherapy and translation as a means to achieve healing and reparation.

The different literature genres have different therapeutic effect as healing and reparation varies, but what should be avoided a book which is erotic or obscene, or politically frenzied, or too religious. The selection of literature genres and the book lists can be consulted by the psychiatrist with literary professionals or by consulting with relevant books or reviews.

#### **4. Translation and Bibliotherapy: Differences**

Translation is vertical and output-based in that the linguistic transfer or the encoding and decoding process of translation is a process by the head and the mind, and then to be written or typed out by the hands, which can be deemed as vertical. Translation is also a neuro-mental-physical activity that requires the head and the mind, as well as the physical labor of the hands. The result of translation is the linguistic transfer into another language or the output-based writing rendered from the source text into the target text, therefore translation is output-based.

Translation can be done by amateurs or professionals alike, in which the ultimate target text is different though the source text is identical. The-

refore, there is a saying that 100 translators can produce translations with 100 figures of Hamlet as the Hamlet in the source text. Though translation is not creative writing, translation is considered as both science and art as argued by theorists for centuries. To sum up, translation can be used as a tool for maintaining good mental health.

Bibliotherapy is horizontal and input-based in that reading is like a horizontal activity immersing in books while it is input-based through reading. Bibliotherapy is an old practice that has been used to be taken as a supplementary, therapeutic tool for treating psychological and mental illness. When one is fully concentrated in reading books with positive content, one will immerse in the positive sense, feeling, and mindset. Therefore, the choice of books with positive mental attitude, such as the inspirational classic entitled *The Positive Mental Attitude* by Dr Norman Vincent Peale, can help to facilitate and maintain the good mental health.

#### **4.1. Translation and Bibliotherapy: Similarities**

Similarities between translation and bibliotherapy are the use of mental and cognitive activities, such as translation and reading as healing (or bibliotherapy). Both translation and bibliotherapy have a prerequisite requirement that one should be able to read, which means that one should at least receive relevant education, not to mention the higher education, as capable of reading. If one could read and understand the source text, one would be able to write out the translation in the target text. That is the basic translational process.

Translation and bibliotherapy will also require that one undertakes the use of creative, physical activities of the mind, hands, and eyes. This also means that the mind, hands and eyes of a person must be dexterous as to be able to read and translate effectively.

The choice of the genres in literature also exerts differences on the effect of translation and bibliotherapy as a means of healing and reparation. As above-mentioned, the materials or books of positivity should be used for translation and bibliotherapy for maintaining a good mental health. That does not mean that we should not read or translate books that reveal the dark side of life or society, but we should take a very positive attitude towards reading those books of negativism.

## **5. A Case Study: Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, a Chinese freelance translator with bipolar disorder**

In January 2022, a freelance translator named Xiaoyu Jin with bipolar disorder went viral in the Chinese mainland as a “prodigy translator” after the death of his mother, and his father wrote about and published his son’s story as an autodidactic, freelance translator suffering from a serious mental illness. Mr. Jin, a patient of bipolar disorder, taught himself English, Japanese, and German and translated and published 22 Chinese translated books from these languages amounting to five millions Chinese characters. Mr. Jin is still under medication and suffering from the mental illness, but he is grateful that “translation is done as the consolation and a career for me”, which was simply put in his own words in a State television interview (China Central Television, the CCTV).

From the news reports and the CCTV interview about Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is found that reading (the conscious or unconscious use of bibliotherapy by him and his family) and translation by Mr. Jin has assisted him so much in overcoming the sufferance of a serious mental illness-bipolar disorder-that he considered translation and bibliotherapy as consolation (in his own word) with the connotation of healing and reparation. From the case of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin, it is observed that translation and bibliotherapy can be deemed as a means of healing and reparation or consolation, even for a past and present patient of bipolar disorder like Mr. Xiaoyu Jin.

The case of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin illustrates that translation and bibliotherapy can be helpful to and facilitate the process of healing and reparation, even for a sufferer of bipolar disorder like Mr. Jin. It is only in the process that takes time and procedures as well as techniques that healing and reparation can be achieved by practicing translation and bibliotherapy as Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has done so consciously or unconsciously.

## **6. Findings and Discussions**

Through above-mentioned qualitative illustration and case study regarding translation and bibliotherapy, it is found that translation and bibliotherapy can be considered as a cost-effective and efficient supplement for supporting the good mental health and the therapeutic effect of healing and reparation for a case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has been exemplified in a comparative manner. The supporting illustrative, qualitative research and the case study also indicates that there is a lack of clinical evidence or quanti-

tative data from the mental institutions, which this paper will pave a way for further research and clinical study. This can be considered as the limitation for this research and will provide a new perspective for the future research projects with both of the qualitative and quantitative research data to further illustrate the therapeutic healing and reparation by the use of translation and bibliotherapy in real-life, mental institution settings.

The current research tries to elaborate the comparative approach to understand translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation while the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin is exemplified for this understanding that it is worthy of doing the initial, present study. Differences and similarities regarding translation and bibliotherapy are also presented with illustration of different literature genres, which have various, therapeutic effect as a means of healing and reparation. More clinical and quantitative research needs to be undertaken in that regard in order to have a complete illustration.

Given the qualitative nature of this research, it is elaborated to approach translation and bibliotherapy as the therapeutic healing and reparation while it is found that the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin has fully exemplified this research idea. For the future research, if there will be added with the collaboration and clinical support from psychiatrists, psychologists, translators, mental patients, and translation researchers, this research idea will bloom into a big research project with a series of papers or even can be resulted in an academic monograph.

There is no lack of evidence in the literary world that renowned writers with mental illness overcame their deadlock disease to achieve the literary prominence and monumental works ever written or produced, such as Ernest Hemingway, Sylvia Plath, etc. Literary translation and/or writing requires the intensive capacity for mental and neuro-physiological work for literary production. This area will open up a new route for interdisciplinary research on translation, literature, psychology, and psychiatrics.

## **7. Conclusion**

This paper examines translation and bibliotherapy as healing and reparation in a comparative approach and manner so that it is found through qualitative research and a case study that translation and bibliotherapy have the therapeutic effect for healing and reparation. Though the healing and reparation resulted from translation and bibliotherapy varies, it is also found that different genres of literature regarding fiction and non-fiction have

different therapeutic effect for healing and reparation as observed from the case study of Mr. Xiaoyu Jin. The research in this paper also has its limitation in that it lacks the quantitative and clinical data to support its further argument, but it has opened up a new route in the way that more research, both in qualitative or quantitative, or both, will be able to pave the way for a new, interdisciplinary research idea in that regard. The author hopes that the presentation and argument in this paper will give him and other researchers a new research route to do further studies in the area that more contribution will be given to the interdisciplinary field of translation studies, psychology, and psychiatrics.

The research in this paper still needs to be elaborate further with quantitative and clinical data in order to make a more fully fledged conclusion regarding the therapeutic effect of translation and bibliotherapy to maintain the good mental health. The good mental health as well as a healthy body is the dream goal of every human on this earth and worthy of doing further research in that regard.

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# The Place of Asia in Comparative Literature: A Panel on Method

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## Two Poets, One Moon: A Comparison of Su Shi and Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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### **Abstract:**

Only a few decades ago, Western scholars of comparative literature tended to argue that any English-Chinese comparison was “futile or meaningless” (Yu, 162). As this discipline evolves, however, this previous notion is being replaced by the perspective that “a glimpse of the otherness of the other can produce new perspectives on our own faces in the great mirror of culture” (Hayot, 90). My thesis contributes to this stream of innovation by bringing into comparison the function of the moon in Su Shi’s “Water Melody” and in Samuel Coleridge’s “Dejection: An Ode”, finding that in both poems, the moon functions to foreground the poets’ psychological experiences and acts as an agent in the resolution of emotional conflict in the poems and lives of the poets. The purpose of this work is to broaden the field in which both English and Chinese poetry are understood to exist by examining each through the lens of the other. Both “Water Melody” and “Dejection” have been examined to the point of exhaustion in each of their relative traditions, but bringing them into new light may reveal previously unseen angles. For example, this research finds that Susan Stewart’s theory of eighteenth – century English nocturnes is highly compatible with twelfth-century Chinese nocturnes, and this foreign theory can breathe new life into an ossified conversation. In a dissonant example, the familiar Western associations of the moon as an evil omen, recalling vampires and werewolves, can feel bizarre when imagined from the perspective of Chinese associations of the moon with family reunion. This comparison, in addition to exploring these two poems and poets, ultimately creates a destabilizing

effect by which a reader may be induced to move beyond the traditions, to a point where Weltliteratur is no longer the goal, as it was for Goethe, but instead a starting point.

**Keywords:** Water Melody, Dejection: An Ode, Moon

## Introduction

In the poem “To the Tune of Mu Lan Hua Man”, the 12th-century Chinese poet Xin Qiji muses, “Ah, the moon tonight / Is veering away, / Where to, in the vast sky? / Is there another human world, / Where people can see its glow / On the east side?” (木兰花慢·可怜今夕月, lines 1-6). And of course, the moon has captivated poets in many other human worlds. The moon features centrally in Chinese poet Su Shi’s “Water Melody” (水调歌头) written in 1076, and in English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s “Dejection: An Ode” written in 1802. While the moon that each of these poets gazed upon is the same, their portrayals of the moon are different, reflecting not only the individual poets but also the literary traditions in which they existed. In this paper, I would like to use the moon as a point of contact between these two distant traditions, as a window through which each may more

deeply understand the other. The moon in each poem is linked with the poet’s emotions and desires but it also facilitates a transcendence of time and space, allowing the poets to integrate historical moments from legends of centuries past seamlessly with the present moment. The moon is a perfect metaphor for taking an external vantage point on both Su and Coleridge, bringing “Water Melody” and “Dejection” within the same frame under that eternal orb which has calmly observed sleepless poets since time immemorial.

Before looking at these two poems, I would briefly like to address the question “why compare?” Only a few decades ago Western scholars of comparative literature tended to argue that any English-Chinese comparison was “futile or meaningless”, as the two cultures were incommensurable (Yu, 2019, p. 162). This previous notion is now being replaced by the perspective that “a glimpse of the otherness of the other can produce new perspectives

on our own faces in the great mirror of culture” (Hayot, 2011, p. 90). This “glimpse of the otherness” is also what I experienced while teaching Chinese at John Carroll University in the United States, where I found that a deep exploration of how the moon is portrayed in Chinese poetry allowed my American students who had no experience with Chinese culture to grasp intimate and subtle details of Chinese culture. Likewise, exploring the poetry of Coleridge and Su can give English readers a window into understanding of Chinese poetry, and also broaden the field in which both English and Chinese poetry are understood by examining each through the lens of the other.

Indeed, Hayot argues that if Western literature wishes to reap the rewards of cross-cultural engagement, Chinese is the “purest possible comparative partner” (2011, p. 91) for English literature because Chinese literature evolved with virtually no interaction with English literature, yet “is nonetheless entirely coeval with the Western tradition in terms of its historical depth, philosophical complexity, literary output, and geographic range (and is often deeper, longer-lasting, more complex, and more continuous)” (p. 90). It is in this spirit that this paper not only brings the English reader across a bridge into a foreign world, but then takes a look back from the other side, making the familiar strange.

First, I will briefly introduce these two poets and poems, as while Chinese scholars are familiar with Su Shi, and English-speaking scholars are familiar with Coleridge, each may be unfamiliar with the poet from the foreign tradition. Then, I will examine how the moon is typically represented in the literary worlds of each poet, allowing for an initial comparison of the two traditions, as well as providing a basis for understanding how the moons of Coleridge and Su both accord with and depart from their respective traditions. This sets the stage for a closer examination of the two pieces in question: Su’s “Water Melody” and Coleridge’s “Dejection”.

### **Chinese and English Lunar Traditions**

Su Shi lived in 11th century China, and his poem “Water Melody” was written during Mid – Autumn festival, which takes place during a full moon and is a time for family reunions. Su Shi, however, is far from home, so when he looks upon the moon he feels longing for home and muses about the difficulties of life. On the other side we have Coleridge. Coleridge lived

in early nineteenth-century England. “Dejection: An Ode” was written at a time when he was suffering from drug addiction and heartbreak, and he looks upon the moon hoping that it will summon a storm which will shake him from his dejection and revitalize his ability to enjoy the beauty of the world. Each of these poets express their individual feelings through their poem’s moon-gazing, but they are guided nonetheless by the traditions in which they write.

In Chinese culture, one’s hometown is a spiritual world that exists in opposition to a bitter and lonely reality. This spiritual world is closely related to the image of the moon in poetry. In his classic poem, Li Bai writes: “I gaze at the moonlight with head uplifted; / Now my head droops, and my thoughts turn homeward” (静夜思, lines 3-4). Du Fu writes similarly: “Dew turns into frost since tonight; / The moon viewed at home is more bright” (月夜忆舍弟, lines 3-4). For wandering souls, the moon provides sustenance especially when homesickness is amplified during the Mid-Autumn Festival when families gather ‘round (团圆) like the roundness (圆月) of the full moon. This holiday of reunion becomes one of longing for those who cannot be reunited with family and gaze at the full moon from their solitary state.

In Chinese mythology, the moon, located in the celestial realm, is often associated with purity. For example, Hanshan writes of the moon: “Shining full like an unpolished mirror, / My heart leans upon the ethereal sky” (lines 3-4) and Su says, “My heart is clear as the lonely moon” (line 12). The moon is also a cold and desolate realm, home of the goddess Chang’e, who is lonely, helpless, and compassionate. Because of her isolation on the moon she is often described as sympathetically guarding family reunions on earth. Chinese poets often include this goddess of the moon, using her loneliness to represent their own loneliness, her sorrow to represent their own sorrow. For example, Li Shangyin sighs, “Chang'e must regret stealing the pill of longevity, / Now she mopes alone night after night in the sky blue” (嫦娥, lines 3-4). In “Water Melody”, Su Shi contrasts the beauty of the lunar realm with its coldness and desolation, an apt metaphor for Su’s own conflict between his lofty ideals and the suffering he must endure to attain them. In addition to this purity and desolation, the Chinese moon is also understood as existing beyond the human scale of time. In Zhang Ruoxu’s “Moonlit Night on the Spring River,” he writes, “Who by the river-side first saw the moon arise? / When did the moon first see a man by riverside? / Ah, generations have come and passed away; / From year to year

the moons look alike, old and new” (春江花月夜, lines 11-14). The moon is the eternal observer, having witnessed all human history. Perhaps because of the moon’s place outside human space and time, both Su and Coleridge treat the moon as the sole witness to their poetic outpourings. Indeed the English tradition like the Chinese has a history of figuring the moon as a witness.

In British literature of the pre-Romantic and Romantic era,, the moon also figures as a witness, such as in Mary Wortley Montagu’s “A Hymn to the Moon,” where she confides her grief to the moon. Shelley converses with the moon as a fellow drifter in the universe, asking sincerely, “Tell me, moon, thou pale and grey / Pilgrim of heaven’s homeless way / In what depth of night or day / Seekest thou repose now” (lines 5-8). Another common function of the moon is as an object of poetic inspiration. For example, in Luke Booker’s “Hymn to the moon,” when the poet sees the moon, his inspiration is stirred to make his “feeble pencil move” (line 4). The moon’s beauty leads the poet’s soul divine, as “contemplation spreads / Her heav’n-ascending wings / and sheds her magic influence o’er the mind” (lines 43-45). The nocturne tradition of English poetry starting in the eighteenth century frequently alludes to the moon as an inspiring goddess, an object of beauty, similar to the Chinese tradition, but very often the English moon is instead dark or ominous. The moon often appears in scenes that are terrifying or violent, and it is understood that the moon is often linked with dark magical forces. The very word ‘lunatic’ literally means ‘moonstruck,’ according to a belief that the moon can cause insanity. As Shakespeare’s Othello declares, “It is the very error of the moon; She comes more nearer earth than she was wont, and makes men mad” (5.2.135). In her discussion of nocturnes in eighteenth-century poetry, Susan Stewart identifies two categories: sweet, tame, enchanted nights, and dark, treasonous, hellish nights (2002, p. 262). In silent darkness, alone with thought, despair, fear, and worry may easily come.

Taking this brief look at how the moon is represented in both Chinese and European literature, significant differences can already be noted, representing the differences in each cultural consciousness. For example, the Chinese moon often evokes nostalgic thoughts of home, while the English moon is often a source of evil magic. Although being bound by their traditions, however, each poet displays their own individual art through their moon. Su’s “Water Melody” recalls both Li Bai and Du Fu, but is also clearly his own. Su’s moon evokes nostalgia for home, is a refuge for idealists, and

symbolizes the vicissitudes of life, bearing witness and offering comfort in a capricious world. Although, as we will see below, Coleridge's moon in "Dejection" ultimately is optimistic, the process of rebirth is a violent one, and the moonlit scene of "Dejection" is reminiscent of the lurking darkness or many lunar scenes in English literature, a tradition where the moon is often linked with dark magical forces. Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode" begins with darkness instead of light, anticipating the coming light which will rekindle his muse. The moon in "Dejection" is slightly different from this tradition, as it does not immediately grant inspiration, but instead heralds a storm, which jars the poet past his inability to see beauty.

### **"Water Melody" and "Dejection"**

With these literary contexts in mind, the rest of this paper will be reading these poems together, understanding them within their own contexts as well as across contexts. In each of these poems, the moon serves a similar function in resolving the troubles of each poet. In "Water Melody", Su wishes that "we may have long life / That a thousand miles apart we may share her beauty" (但愿人长久，千里共婵娟; lines 18-19). Su accepts his difficulties and sends condolences to the many other people who are separated from loved ones. Failing to reunite with his brother during the Mid-Autumn Festival, he has moved through the realization of loneliness into a pragmatic decision to accept reality as gracefully as possible with as refined a philosophy as possible "since ever there has been no perfection" (此事古难全; line 17). He experiences the sorrows of not being able to reunite with family, and with the difficulties of being isolated at a remote post after being demoted, but instead of becoming mired in dejection like Coleridge, the moon that reminds him of his isolation also reminds him of the inconsequentiality of his brief human existence, and this perspective, which transcends human time and space, offers solace. Step by step, Su moves from the real predicament – failure to reunite with his brother – to the spiritual struggle, that is, his desire to serve and his inclination toward detachment. He finally obtains spiritual compromise and peace as even the moon has "foul weather and fair, waxing and waning" there is no perfection in life.

Coleridge also reaches a similar acceptance in his poem. While the moon is present throughout the poem, in the final lines, the moon is conspicuously absent, and the storm which the moon invited has dissipated.

The poem is no longer focused on Coleridge's internal struggles with his dejection. This simultaneous disappearance of the moon and of the poet's inner reflection implies a connection between the two. As the moon disappears, so does his inward reflection and his hope, and his thoughts turn from expectations of rebirth to a resigned prayer for the joy of Sara Hutchinson, the object of his unrequited love.

May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling.  
Silent, as they watched the sleeping earth!  
With light heart may she rise,  
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,  
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice:  
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,  
Their life the eddying of her living soul!  
(2013, lines 130-136)

The poet becomes a detached audience, paying no attention to his own problem, in order to accept the darkness of depression and wish joy and peacefulness to the lady whom he loves. To her, he wishes "may all things live, from pole to pole, / Their life the eddying of her living soul!" (2012, p.135-136). He hopes that she, who herself intuitively possesses the joy, will never lose it and will let her living soul lead and influence all her experiences. Unable to overcome his dejection, the poet fails to regain his vital imagination, but instead embraces another kind of hope; a hope that he may be able to love someone and that he may "escape the prison of self and participate in other lives and modes of being" (Fogle, 1950, p. 77), traveling outward beyond the confines of self and "bring[ing] forward the potentials for seeing beyond single-point perspective's present-centered conditions" (Stewart, 2002, p. 257). The conceptual space in which the poem operates is here transcended. He departs from the previous space, completely separating from considerations of his own dejection, standing higher than himself to observe and reflect with love for another. Similar to Su in "Water Melody," he reconciles his struggle by seeing that there has been no perfection, wishing people can share the moon's beauty under the same sky, Coleridge finally discovers a way forward, releases himself from the prison of self-pity, and connects his private concerns with wider ones.

In both poems, the moon serves the purpose of allowing the poets to transcend their human circumstances. Su's transcendence is more thorough

and certain, but Coleridge also finds relief at the end. In both cases, the moon shifts the focus away from human activity, which is totally absent in the poems, allowing for a focus on the abstract and untouchable object within the poet's mind. Both poets transcend time by combining the present moments with the past and integrating feelings with myths and legends. Usually, time is considered a linear flow which can only move forward but not backward, as Confucius observing a stream remarked, "What passes away is, perhaps, like this. Day and night it never let up" (2007, 9.17). Instead of the typical narrator who watches the stream pass, the moon is beyond time. Thus, in the poet's contact with the moon, time no longer flows in one direction, but exists in all times simultaneously, with each moment intertwined. For the reader of these disparate lyrics, the images of Su under the moonlight in China and Coleridge under the moon in Britain are intertwined in their diminishment of human measure.

Not only is time transcended, but both poems also alter the spatial norms. Su's moon shines down upon his brother and upon all those who are able or unable to reunite on this Mid-Autumn Festival, bringing them together into a common consciousness across space. Coleridge's moon also shines down upon the house of the woman who he desires, connecting them across space as he sends her wishes through the sky. In "Water Melody" there is also free movement between the earth and the palaces of the moon, as Su travels from one to the other and back in only a few brief lines. In "Dejection" there is not so much movement, but in the darkness and storm, physical location becomes unclear and even meaningless. This spatial conceptualization recalls Henri Lefevre's distinctions between 'First space' and 'Second space', where First space is "fixed mainly on the concrete materiality of spatial forms" while Second space is "conceived in ideas about space, in thoughtful re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms" (1996, p. 10).

The Second space which exists in the form of ideas expressed through language can be applied to the moon palace created by Su and the "luminous cloud" space created by Coleridge. The moon palace is beyond time and beyond the human physical realm, yet Su fully identifies with this ideated location. Similarly, when the storm comes, Coleridge's speaker is immersed in the wind, losing his physical coordinates. We do not know how long the storm lasted, as we do not know how long Su meditated under the moon. Through this suspension of time and ambiguity of space, traditional spatial



boundaries are forgotten in order to examine the poets' psychological space of solitude. From heaven to earth, from past to present, Su and Coleridge use the method of dislocation to deliberately disorganize the specific spatial order and time in reality, and organize the heaven and the human world, the past and present into the same space.

### **Conclusion**

The two poems, "Water Melody" and "Dejection", are from completely separate worlds, yet there is value in building a bridge between them. As Haun Saussy argues, shared lineage is not necessary, as "the job of the comparatist is to invent new relations among literary works", not to find existing ones (2006, p. 60). Despite any previous connection between Su and Coleridge, this examination of "Water Melody" and "Dejection", the moon in both works leads to consolation because of the alteration of space and time. More broadly, it is striking that Susan Stewart's reading of eighteenth-century English nocturnes can apply to a twelfth-century Chinese nocturne, which begs the question of whether any literary theory can be extended beyond the bounds of one literary universe. Examining general portrayals of the moon in each culture functions to make the familiar feel strange, as the Western notion of the moon as an evil omen, recalling vampires and werewolves, can feel bizarre when imagined from the perspective of Chinese associations of the moon with family reunions, as so many holiday gatherings take place under the full moon. Ultimately this comparison, in addition to exploring these two poems and poets, creates a destabilizing effect by which a reader may be induced to move beyond the traditions, to a point where Weltliteratur is no longer the goal, as it was for Goethe, but instead a starting point.

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**Translation of Differences:  
Lost in Translation, Found in Translation**

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**Translating the Dalit Experience: Agency,  
Editorial Mediation, and Epistemic Violence in Kallen  
Pokkudan's Autobiographical Narratives**

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**Abstract**

Translation is not merely a simple neutral linguistic act; rather it is conceived as a cultural act with its own equations of power and dominance, centre and margin. Writing happens in a specific linguistic, cultural and political context and the process of translating texts from one cultural system into another is not at all a neutral, innocent, transparent activity. It is rather a political activity. The very act of translation and the politics behind it deserves more attention.

Spivak in “The Politics of Translation” speaks about how Englishing the third world eliminates the identity of the politically less powerful individuals and cultures. She also refers to how translation becomes a means of creating and articulating cultural, ethnographic or sexual Otherness. In her eminent work “Can the Subaltern Speak”, she asks, How can we touch the consciousness of the people even as we investigate their politics? With what voice consciousness can the subaltern speak? (Spivak, 1988, p. 285).

According to her any attempt from the outside to ameliorate the subaltern condition by granting them collective speech invariably will encounter more serious problems: a logocentric assumption of cultural solidarity among a heterogeneous people, and a dependence on (western) intellectuals to “speak for” the subaltern condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves (spivak,1988, p. 308).

The translation of subaltern narratives from regional languages to English and other languages is an area of considerable academic interest. While

the international audience achieved through translation provides broader exposure for subaltern narratives, the process of translation presents numerous challenges related to language, culture, and politics. The representation of the complex social structures of caste, gender, culture, and dialects within the context of local subaltern discourses in English is a subject of growing scholarly inquiry. The translation of subaltern narratives into English is often motivated by the commodification of subaltern subjectivity, experience, and culture to cater to literary and academic interests. Consequently, the transformation of translation as a literary event into a market-driven event dominated by the politics of publication and market is evident in the translation of these narratives. These political interventions happen at different points, possibly even before the conceptualization of the text itself. One of the major interventions is that of agents of translation, including transcribers, editors and publishers. This paper aims to explore the epistemic violence that rise as a result of these interventions in translating dalit experiences into written form, by examining dictated dalit life narratives published in Malayalam.

**Key words:** Translation, Dalit, Editorial Arbitration, Life Narratives

“Does a Pulayan have a life-history? what life-history! Some might ask what there is to say about lives which only ‘die’ when everyone else ‘decease’”.

Kallen Pokkudan

Throughout history, literature has predominantly been a domain of the privileged, resulting in limited or biased representation of subaltern individuals and their experiences. However, a global literary emergence has been observed, which presents a strong challenge to dominant hegemonic structures, projecting subaltern perspectives and aesthetics. The mapping of such literature(s) with movements that celebrate diverse identities and politics is of utmost importance. Various literary and non-literary efforts from subaltern groups have arisen to contest the hegemonic voices of the

'normal'. These initiatives have led to the questioning and dismantling of conventional standards of literature, allowing alternative perspectives from marginalized sections to emerge. The subaltern writings that have emerged from the margins have probed, contested, and breached the mainstream norms of the literary world, marking a significant shift towards a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape.

Indian literature has not been immune to the global shifts that have occurred. As a nation defined by a complex caste system, India has experienced various Dalit movements in different parts of the country throughout its history, under the leadership of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Periyar, and other leaders. Although the roots of the Dalit movement can be traced back to the medieval Bhakti movement, it gained momentum during the Indian independence struggle when the nation's large Bahujan population was marginalized under Hindu majoritarianism. Colonialism played a significant role in realizing the human rights of Dalits in India by introducing English education and Christianity to the nation. Inspired by the Black Panther movement, Dalits began to assert their identity and resistance. Subsequently, Dalit women and queer minority groups highlighted issues of gender within the movement and redefined its goals. These writings, which chronicle the Dalit experience, also document the resistance and protests of individuals and larger Dalit movements. Despite harsh criticisms from both sides, the coexistence of these writings and movements strengthened and led to a better understanding of the complexities of caste.

The political and social landscape of Kerala, with regard to Dalit movements, differed from that of the rest of India. Although lower-caste lives were a recurring theme in Malayalam literature, there was a dearth of writings by Dalits themselves. Instead, sympathetic narratives about lower-caste lives were more prevalent. Within the left-led political movements in Kerala, class conflicts took precedence over caste conflict.

### **Translating the Dalit Experience: Reading Kallen Pokkudan's Life Narratives**

The genre of life writing has emerged as a significant mode for Dalits to express their experiences and political views, enabling them to represent themselves in a literary form that was previously inaccessible to them. Works such as Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan*, Sarankumar Limbaley's

*Akkarmashi*, Daya Pawar's *Baluta*, and Bama's *Karukku*, among many others, have not only brought the lived experiences of Dalits to the forefront but have also transformed the dominant genre of autobiography. Dalit life narrators, with their unique perspectives and literary styles expanded the boundaries of literary expression, making significant contributions to a more inclusive and diverse literary landscape. The process of writing about their lives has served as a means of resistance and empowerment for Dalits, who have been historically marginalized from mainstream literary culture. The genre of life writing has also emerged as a site of contestation, as the narratives of Dalit life narrators have challenged the dominant discourses of caste and power in Indian society. These works have exposed the ways in which Dalits have been systematically excluded from cultural and political institutions, and have contested the dominant narratives of Indian history and culture. In doing so, Dalit life narrators have not only brought their own experiences to the forefront but have also contributed to a broader project of social and cultural transformation. The dalit life narratives can be placed at the intersection of autobiography and history. It can be considered as a counter historical narrative that challenges the canonical history of the region with their own 'slice of history' (Udayakumar, 2008, p. 421). At the same time the dalit self-narratives make visible the life and politics of dalits, problematize the existing canonical knowledge of society and render possible dalit perspectives to understand society (Thankapan, 2016, p. 195).

The mainstream written models that fit into the rigid rules of the 'literary' were breached through new experiments. Rather than negating the written, the dalit literature quarrels with it, tries to break its standards, brings the cosmology of orality and the carnivalesque into the written. While many Dalit life narratives have been published in languages such as Marathi, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu, the literary landscape in Malayalam presents a different scenario. Despite the prominence of autobiography as a genre in Malayalam literature, it has traditionally been inaccessible to lower caste individuals. The bourgeoisie genre of autobiography was largely male centred and that too of men belonging to the visible classes, like Swadesa-bhimani Ramakrishna Pillai's *Ente Nadukadathal* (1911), poet P. Kunhiraman Nair's *Kaviyude Kalpadukal* (1975), Kannerum Kinavum (1970) by social reformist V T Battathirippadu, *Athmakatha* (1969) by EMS Namboodiripad which were celebrated in Malayalam literature. It clearly neglected the experiences of women and marginal communities. The earlier male

autobiographies gave prime focus to the personal achievements and dogmas of individual self.

The subaltern life narratives, particularly dalit life narratives, challenge the conventional understanding of autobiographical self. They disrupt the unitary, linear, and comprehensible notion of the self that underpins conventional autobiography. Instead, the subaltern subjects represent themselves in opposition to power and document the effects of power on them and their resistance against it. Therefore, these life narratives are not just literary works, but also political narratives. The publication of autobiographies by Kallen Pokkudan, Janu, Mayilamma, and Seleena Prakkanam, Malayalam autobiography took a subaltern turn. However, despite them being dalit life narratives, they were not celebrated as such, but instead, the narrator's identities as environmental activists and public figures were foregrounded than their dalit identity.

The publication of Kallen Pokkudan's life narrative *Kandal kaadukalkkidayil Ente Jeevitham* (My Life among the Mangrove Forests, 2002) marked dalit voice in the genre of Malayalam autobiography. Commonly known as Kandal Pokkudan, the dalit ecological activist Kallen Pokkudan has another life narratives in his account titled *Ente Jeevitham* (My Life 2010). Pokkudan's account of his life in *Kandalkadukalkkidayil Ente Jeevitham* presents a direct challenge to dominant social, cultural, and literary imaginaries by depicting the individual and collective experiences of Pulayas in northern Kerala over the past century. Its structure, which does not conform to mainstream literary conventions, further challenges the Savarna past and structures of main stream literature. E.V. Ramakrishnan characterizes the work as a testimonial narrative, drawing parallels with autobiographies by other marginalized individuals such as C.K. Janu, Vinaya, Domitila, and Rigoberta Menchu. Through its subversion of dominant cultural norms, the work constitutes a powerful critique of Kerala's self-image as a progressive society.

“Does a Pulayan have a life-history? what life-history! Some might ask what there is to say about lives which only ‘die’ when everyone else ‘decease’” (Pokkudan, 2002, p.32).

This critique is two-fold, as it not only challenges the idea that the genre of life narrative is accessible to individuals whose lives are deemed valuable, but also exposes the societal belief that the lives of Dalits are worthless. It highlights the reality that Dalits were historically denied access to

education and, as a result, kept away from literature for a considerable period of time. Even though the constitution guarantees the right to education for everyone, many Dalits still refrain from literary expression, as their mindset has been shaped by the dominant hegemonic thought to consider their lives as unworthy. According to Thankappan,

What autobiographical writing means for a Dalit is well illustrated in the way Kallen Pokkudan describes it in his first autobiography. Pokkudan's question: 'Can a Pulayan write autobiography?' is posed as a strong Dalit critique of the dominant public imagination about Dalits. It offers a critique of the institution of publishing, which functions as a cultural site that reinforces the exclusion of Dalits in the mainstream history and print culture. In other words, Pokkudan suggests the indispensability of autobiographical writing in registering the political articulations of Dalits not only as a personal memoir but also for the construction of an alternative history. A figure like Pokkudan and the writing about his ordinary life become significant in this renewed historical context of the cultural turn of Dalit assertions (Thankappan, 2018, p. 205).

The production of dalit life narratives in Kerala is often marked by the presence of a mediating figure who serves as a transcriber or editor, and is often someone who does not belong to the dalit community. Given that many of the dalit life narrators are illiterate, this mediation becomes essential for the textualization of their narratives. However, the presence of a mediator creates a problematic dynamic, wherein the life narrator risks becoming alienated from their own experiences, and the transcriber's or editor's subjectivities gets entangled with the narrative. This authorial mediation further complicates the already complex negotiation of subjectivity in the dalit life narrative, as it implicates the power dynamics of representation and the influence of social hierarchy in the textualization process. An in-depth examination of the mediations involved in the transcription of Dalit life narratives reveals the intricacies of power and language at play. The act of transcription itself embodies a power dynamic, where the transcriber, possessing authority over the subject or informant, wields more power than the transcribed. Consequently, the transcriber or editor may impose their own interpretations and biases on the subject, resulting in a potential distortion or misrepresentation of the dalit experience. This power asymmetry



can lead to a suppression of the dalit agency, as the transcriber enforces their own language and cultural norms upon the dalit, thereby further marginalizing their voice.

An analysis of Kallen Pokkudan's life narratives reveal how he is relegated to the margins of his own narrative. The publication of his first life narrative is accompanied by an introduction by N Prabhakaran, which situates the autobiographical narrative within a leftist framework, followed by a scientific study on mangroves by Jafer Pallot and the script of Babu Kambrath's documentary on Pokkudan, among others. The structure of the book is such that only 45 out of 115 pages are allotted to Pokkudan to recount his life story, while the remaining pages are dominated by the perspectives of other 'intellectuals'. Silencing Pokkudan's political self with these additional narratives is indicative of the politics of imagining a Dalit in modern Kerala. The introduction itself characterizes Pokkudan as a "*pacha manushyan*" or "raw human being", further reinforcing his marginalization within the dominant cultural and literary imagination. Thankappan writes,

In this case, the politics of publishing Dalit autobiography structures it in such a way that it dehumanizes the Dalit subjectivity, and frames it in the mode of being a 'subject-to-be-humanized' through modern civilizing projects or radical politics (Thankappan, 2018, p. 208).

Through the narrative of his life, it becomes clear that this individual, who is commonly identified as an illiterate Pulaya, actually embodies the subaltern self of knowledge and wisdom. His life story thus serves to exemplify the subaltern self of knowledge, as well as the politics of the Dalit community and alternative ecological perspectives from the perspective of the Dalit community, both in the context of history in general and literature in particular.

It was his dissatisfaction with the editorial arbitration and exclusion of certain thematic concerns that made him 'write' another life narrative. In the second life narrative he declares that "In short, my life is the *transition* through which Kallen Pokkudan *became* Kandal Pokkudan" (Pokkudan, 2010, p. 9). Unlike the first life narrative which focuses on the *Pachamanushyan* image of Pokkudan, the latter one emphasizes on how he became Kandal Pokkudan. In the preface to his second life narrative, Pokkudan writes,

Some people feel and opine that Pokkudan does not deserve to write a book as he is born to a lower caste mother. They like the subservient Pokkudan... I think writing a book is important. It is not for fame or wealth. This is to mark that someone like me lived here. I can see many who think that it is problematic. Many of my own village and community people also share the same feeling. Somehow, they cannot think that it is the life and book of someone among them (Pokkudan, 2010, p. 7).

It narrates his lived experiences as a dalit, communist and an environmental activist. Breaking the exotic, apolitical environment activist image that was attributed to him in the first autobiography, Pokkudan identifies himself as a political subject and asserts his agency. At the same time, it also tries to follow the conventionalities of the autobiographical genre by fitting into a conventional narrative format following a chronological order.

The production of Dalit life narratives involves multiple levels of editorial intervention. In this process, the Dalit narrator may not have any influence over what is included or excluded from the text, how the narrative is structured, or how caste-based dialects and idioms are translated into mainstream written language. The power dynamics and cultural context of the narrative must be understood, as editorial decisions can silence the narrator's voice. These decisions are often influenced by the expectations and assumptions of dominant (caste) readers, resulting in homogenization of the narrative. It is crucial to recognize and analyse these negotiations and the shaping processes in order to better comprehend the impact of editorial interventions on Dalit life narratives.

The imperative to safeguard the narratorial voice and the linguistic and cultural particularities in Dalit life narratives is a matter of importance. The accurate portrayal of Dalit lived experiences depends on the fidelity of these narratives to the Dalit narrator's perspective. The editorial interventions at different stages of literary production must be scrutinized to ensure that they do not silence or distort the Dalit narrator's voice. This entails a deep understanding of the power dynamics and cultural context of the narrative, as well as an awareness of the ways in which editorial decisions can subjugate or marginalize the narrator. Moreover, transcribers, editors, and publishers involved in the translation of Dalit experiences into written form must exercise ethical discretion. As these narratives serve as vital historical docu-

ments of the lives of the Dalit community, the transcribers, editors, and publishers bear the responsibility of guarding against any biases that may compromise the integrity of the narrative. Mediators involved in the process of translating Dalit experiences into written form must be informed by a deep reverence for the Dalit narrator's autonomy and dignity by/through recognizing and respecting the agency of the Dalit narrator over their experiences. The Dalit narrator's perspective must be upheld as the definitive account of their lived experiences than any editorial intervention.

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## Perspectives and Problems of Regional Literary Histories

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### **Abstract:**

The article discusses the demand for renewal of the methodological approaches and narrative forms of national literary history in historical scholarship. With the recent growth of globalization and migration, the expansion of the European Union and with strong criticism of the meta-narratives of national literature, the regional trend of modelling and researching literary histories has become increasingly relevant, especially for small literatures. We can see the attempts of many literary scholars to change the customary progressive ethnocentric model of historical narrative and to search for more contemporary forms of cultural identity, based on heterogeneous multicultural grounds. The intensive democratization processes in post-communist societies inevitably encourage their literary historians to move from closed national literary models to open pluralistic comparative cultural models. Several examples of this regional trend are discussed in the article. How important and promising are regional memory-building efforts for individual historians of small literatures? And what problems do historians of such research face? The report seeks concrete answers to these questions. But the questions don't stop there.

**Keywords:** Literary History, National Literary History, East-Central Region, Baltic Cultural Identity

## The need to reconstruct national literary histories

An intense full-scale revival of historic memory that commenced together with the 1990 restoration of the independent state of Lithuania and the end of Soviet censorship still remains strong there. This revival of historic memory is characteristic of the wider post-Soviet region. The Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore (ILLF), where I work with its programme activities, focuses on the history of national literature research, although we hear increasingly more criticism expressed towards it. A good example of this criticism is found in *Rethinking Literary History* – the selection of articles by famous scholars issued by the Oxford University Press in 2002. In this book, the authors interpret the writing of national literary histories as a rudimentary phenomenon stemming from Romanticist culture that is present in the currently uniting Europe and in the entire world of globalization: “In globalized culture like that of the start of the twenty-first century, one clear alternative would be to move from a single national to a comparative transnational focus” (Hutcheon, 2002, p. 26).

After a lot of criticism to the positivist historicism and meta-narrative of national literature (Roland Barthes “Histoire ou littérature?” (1963), Rene Wellek “The Fall of Literary History” (1973), David Perkins *Is Literary History Possible?* (1992)) the second problem with writing literary history is to update the methodology in general connecting it with a critique of progressivist history and with postmodernist history theoretics (Fredric Jameson, H. R. Jauss, Paul Ricoeur, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man). As Paul de Man paradoxically claimed in his article “Reading and History” (1986, 54-73), the present of literature denies its past although cannot be imagined without it. As was shown in the book *Writing Literary History: Selected Perspectives from Central Europe* (Dolimar, Juvan, 2006) especially in post-communist society, it is necessary to overcome the old habits of writing the history of literature in order to prove one “objective” truth, whether it is sought from a Marxist or a patriotic position, and to undertake the analysis of a complicated (“heteroglossia”) history. Productive and conceptual discussions on this issue were held at conferences organized by the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute and those of the World Lithuanian Philology Community.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Priklausomybės metų (1940-1990) lietuvių visuomenė: pasipriešinimas ir/ar prisitaikymas* (Lithuanian society during the years of dependence (1940-1990): Resistance and/or Con-

## European literature and East-Central regional

During the Cold War the ICLA-initiated general project of European literature strengthening the European identity as a set of national differences.<sup>1</sup> In a collection of essays *Cosmopolitanism and the Postnational: Literature and the New Europe* (Domínguez, D'haen, 2015) was given the analysis of contemporary European integration and migration and suggested a new connection between post-nationalism and cosmopolitanism notions.

But with the geopolitical conflict between West and East, that the Russian revanchist war in Ukraine 2022 (started from 2014) renewed again, regional literary studies and particularly the post-communist and post-Soviet regional trend of modelling and researching literary histories has become increasingly relevant.

It is no wonder that after the collapse of the USSR the largest work of contemporary regional comparative literature, *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* (Cornis-Pope, Neubauer 2004-2010) was based on Fernand Braudel's three-volume *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle* (1967), and on other books written by the Annales school of French historians (Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Jacques le Goff), who updated the methodology and devoted a lot of research to the Mediterranean region. Braudel called his Mediterranean research "comparative," transforming its meaning in two main respects: *in its reception* as it is a dialectic hermeneutic movement between past and present and *in its interdisciplinarity* (by which traditional comparative literature could be transformed into cultural

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formity), Vol. 2, 1996; *Lituanistika XXI amžiaus išvakarėse* (Lithuanian linguistics on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century) Vol. 2, 1997; *Lituanistika pasaulyje šiandien: darbai ir problemos* (Lithuanian studies in the world today: Works and problems), Vol. 3, 1998. A. Jurgutienė Globalization Challenges the National Literary History, *Senoji Lietuvos literatūra: istorijos rašymo horizontai*, kn. 18, Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2005, p. 30-43.

<sup>1</sup> *Expressionism as an International Literary Phenomenon*, Ulrich Weisstein, Ed., 1973; *The Symbolist Movement in the Literature of European Languages*, Anna Balakian, Ed., 1982; *Le tournant du siècle des humanités 1760-1820: Les Genres en vers des humanités au romantisme*. Ed György M Vajda, 1982; *Les avant-gardes littéraires au XXe siècle: Histoire*, Jean Weisgerber, Ed., 1984; *Les avant-gardes littéraires au XXe siècle: Théorie*. Jean Weisgerber, Ed. 1984; *European-Language Writing in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Albert Gerard, t.2, Ed. 1986; *L'époque de la renaissance (1400-1600). L'aveugement de l'esprit nouveau (1400-1480)*. Tibor Klaniczay, Eva Kushner, Andre Stegmann, Eds. 1987; *Romantic Irony*. Frederick Garber, Ed., 1988, etc.

study, fastening the close relations of literary texts to the cultural, social, economic and geopolitical context). In such influence of history which “move from this life as *it is lived* to how *it is told*” a “comparative” literary history had to die or to change, consolidating the most important two concepts – dialogue of literature and its diversity (“heteroglossia”) as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explained in her book *Death of a Discipline* (2003).

*History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries* (4 volumes have been written by 120 authors of various nationalities) provide us with a postmodern deconstruction of separate national literatures and its remodelling into the wider regional cultural model of East-Central Europe. Editors and publishers of these books invoked Benedict Anderson’s term “imagined communities” and did not believe that the *imagined* East-Central European cultural model they offered would be somewhat better and more objective than the former *imagined* ethnocentric cultural models, but hoped that their intention – to pursue encouraging the openness of national culture as the most important at the moment when the Cold War ended. In these books of post-communist regional literary history, the history of national conflicts in the East-Central European region is transformed into a new communicative structure of cultures that cannot be separated from each other and in such a way a new regional cultural identity is being developed. The Lithuanian cultural paradigm in them is represented in articles by Violeta Kelertas, Tomas Venclova, Arturas Tereškinas, Audronė Girdzijauskaitė.

How regional cultural identity is able to extinguish conflicts between neighbouring countries is demonstrated well by the impact of Czesław Miłosz’s books on readers. The famous Polish writer Czesław Miłosz could not imagine his cultural identity without either Poland or Lithuania and created the multicultural profile of a “Native Europe” (or *Rodzinna Europa*). It was exactly Miłosz’s charismatic personality and his books – which were abundantly translated in Lithuania that contributed to the country regaining its independence in 1990 and educated Lithuanians as well as Poles in a new national awareness – to forget the military conflict, when the Polish military had occupied the old Lithuanian capital of Vilnius in 1919 and instead together create a common future in the European Union. Miłosz believed that it is very important to discover a new identity model for your own culture that would transcend the border of classical nationalism and would refuse the extremeness of “pure nationality”: “If the examples of nineteenth-

century patriotism are suffering a crisis, a new identity is sought. Thus, my family myths and my constant focus on Polish-Lithuanian duality probably means the same – I am looking for an identity beyond the classical borders of nationalism as it is described in the handbook of professor Chrzanowski” (Miłosz, 1995, p. 353). Miłosz’s books about common cultural memory and regional multicultural identity encouraged Polish and Lithuanian literary historians to move from closed national literary models to open pluralistic comparative cultural models and to regional literary history, and to intensive democratization processes in their post-communist societies.

Moving in this direction new interpretations of the multiculturalism of old Lithuanian literature of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries) were published. No wonder that Lithuanian literature from the 19<sup>th</sup> century was steadily generating national values and marginalizing everything non-Lithuanian, sometimes calling it a culture of strangers, others, or just enemies. For example, all former disputes regarding the national identity of Polish Lithuanian poet Adam Mickiewicz, the leader of the Vilnius school of Romanticism should lose their meaning as now the only obvious and specific fact of his work is becoming clear; i.e. its multiculturalism that does not privilege even one national principle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The multicultural aspect of research should help reveal moments of encounter and communication of national cultures rather better than just their moments of hostility.

Regional comparative literary studies were successfully extended in Association of Lithuanian Comparative Literature (ALCL) conferences and publications<sup>1</sup> and in the book *Grotesque Revisited: Grotesque and Satire in the Post/Modern Literature of Central and Eastern Europe* (Katkus, 2013). ALCL is a member of the European Society of Comparative Literature (ESCL/SELC) and participates in its conferences, and other activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association published a series of books in their *Acta litteraria comparativa: The Barbarian in European Literature and Culture* (2008), *Cultural and Literary Reflection* (2009), *European Landscape Transformations: Own and Other Meetings* (2010-2011), *Identity Search in Baltic literatures* (2012–2013).



## Baltic region

It is important to note, that after the end of the Cold War scholars of the Lithuanian Literature and Folklore Institute, the Under Tuglas Literature Centre of the Estonian Academy of Science, Tartu University, and the Institute of Literature, Folklore and Art of the University of Latvia have been presenting joint memory research of the Balts and organizing biannual conferences as well as launching collective works.<sup>1</sup> Baltic memory is an ambiguous regional concept that encompasses different meanings which initiate different directions of research: ethnographic, geographic cultural and historic political. If we perceive the Balts as the image of “three sisters’ (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia) living under USSR occupation or after it, the research should be directed *towards historic political memory*. Baltic regional identity has been clearly manifested at the end of the ninth decade during so-called Singing Revolution and with its most important action – the Baltic Way (during “perestroika” in 1989), when people were holding hands all the way from Vilnius to Tallinn to express their joint will to be released from the Soviet Union. It is exactly this direction that has a very rich tradition in Soviet Baltic literary criticism as well and becomes very important in post-Soviet literary studies: Silvestras Gaižiūnas’ *Baltic Faust and European literature* (Baltų Faustas ir Europos literatūra, 2002), *Scandinavian Literatures and Baltic Contexts* (Skandinavų literatūros ir baltiškieji kontekstai, 2009), Laura Laurušaitė’s *Between nostalgia and mimicry: Lithuanian and Latvian emigrants’ postwar novels* (Tarp nostalgijos ir mimikrijos: lietuvių ir latvių pokario išėivijos romanai, 2015); Benedikt Kalnačs’ *20th Century Baltic Drama: Postcolonial Narratives, Decolonial Options* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2016), Vigmantas Butkus’ *Literary Baltic Studies: Concept, Development, Perspectives* (Literatūrinė baltistika: Samprata, raida, perspektyvos, 2018), etc<sup>2</sup>. The prospect of comparative research of Baltic cultures can no longer

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<sup>1</sup> *We Have Something in Common: The Baltic Memory* (2007), *Back to Baltic Memory: Lost and Found in Literature 1940-1968* (2008), *Baltic Memory: Process of Modernization in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Literature of the Soviet Period* (2011), *Interlitteraria: The Changing Baltics* (2015), *300 Baltic writers: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania: a reference guide to authors and their works* (2009).

<sup>2</sup> The Lithuanian Comparative Literature Association published a series of books in their *Acta litteraria comparativa*: *The Barbarian in European Literature and Culture* (2008), *Vilnius: Cultural and Literary Reflection* (2009), *European Landscape Transformations: Our Own and Other Meetings* (2010-2011), *Identity Search in Baltic Literatures* (2012-2013).

be imagined without the innovations of postcolonial, ideological criticism, and new historicism that are more widely introduced in the collective monograph *Baltic Postcolonialism* (Kelertas, 2006).

Baltic regional identity has been discussed in the emigré academic Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS, founded in 1967, in the United States) that organized international conferences on Baltic Studies and has supported the publication of *The Journal of Baltic Studies* and several books (Ziedonis, Puhvel, Silbajoris, Valgemaie 1973). It brought together emigrée scholars from the Baltic countries occupied by Soviet Russia, and they were from all disciplines and stages in their careers worldwide sharing an interest in exploring the Baltic region from multiple perspectives and fields of research.

Today conferences on Baltic Studies in Europe (CBSE) in cooperation with AABS at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) have been going on for over fifteen years. For the Baltic region to be situated on the edge of Europe meant to experience tragic historical consequences. The Baltic region's historical experiences and authentic voice are crucial in creating a common European moral and cultural map and they should be heard and known.

Regional literary histories also have one important practical motivation. Miłosz explained the desire for this new regional identification ("Native Realm", East-Central Europe) from his pragmatic "American point of view" that he gained after emigrating from Soviet Poland to the United States where he taught literature at the University of California, Berkeley. He proposed that the myth of the "Native Realm" (East-Central Europe) is very important for daily life purposes and practical cultural education of others and for studies in various Western universities. It might help the West to learn more about something that recently seemed so totally alien to them; because East-central Europe was thought to be mostly "barbaric", "unknown", and "new". Today, Baltic cultural centers have been established in many Western universities (Krakow, Prague, Tbilisi, Seattle, etc.), have joint activity programs and hold regular international conferences. In addition to academic and educational activities, they help the diaspora to preserve its national identity. According to Miłosz, creation of this regional concept helps resist cultural globalization and levelling down, not only national isolation: "I was always resisting the fact that I was remade into a Western European or American writer" (1997, 345).

## The problems

We have indicated how important and promising regional memory-building efforts are for post-communist and post-Soviet societies. Now we have to briefly discuss what problems historians of such research face. Regional literature research is severely criticised in three cases. Most of them were described in Endre Bojtár's article, "Pitfalls in Writing a Regional Literary History of East-Central Europe" (2007, 419-427).

The first problem, which we have mentioned before, is how "objective" can the study of regional literary history as well as national literary histories be?

The second doubt concerning regional literary histories relates to the impossibility of unequivocally defining a region. As many scholarly discussions have shown, it is impossible to find a single principle that would objectively divide regional literature. Most reliance is placed on traditional regional names, but they are also historically variable. A good example of it is the East-Central European Region. After the First World War, this region was conceptualized by Friedrich Naumann as *Mitteleuropa*, including Germany with its rich Yiddish cultures. During the Cold War and after the collapse of the USSR the East-Central Region took on another meaning. To my mind, Czesław Miłosz gave the most conceptual description of it.<sup>1</sup> But the context of its interpretations is much broader created by the writers H.C. Artmann, Péter Esterházy, Danilo Kiš, György Konrád, Claudio Magris, Adam Michnik, Milan Kundera, Václav Havel, Tomas Venclova, and Joseph Brodsky in the discussion in Budapest in 1989 and in the publications.<sup>2</sup> It is obvious that the writers during the Cold war were encouraged to do so by a

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<sup>1</sup> The identity of the "Native Realm" as described by Miłosz contained a number of features: 1) it is a region of nations that historically was under constant threat by German and Russian military forces and national oppression, and acted as an "object of sale" in politics, 2) a writer had an especially high social status in them, 3) their literature focused on politics, moral metaphysical, and philosophical problems, 4) its works were influenced by Western borrowings by originally reworking them beyond recognition, 5) the form of creating was the "lack of form", 6) it is a region that experienced the evanescence of the Jews who use to reside there in great numbers, 7) and finally, these are the mostly inter-mixed languages and cultures that can understand each other the best (Miłosz, Fiut 2003, 369-382).

<sup>2</sup> Milan Kundera, *The Tragedy of Central Europe* (1984), Joseph Brodsky (1985), Czesław Miłosz (1964).

very important internal cultural and psychological intention to search for a European difference of their own “Native Europe” (East-Central Europe) that would coincide neither with Western Europe, nor with Russia. Many of them agreed that the most important and unique feature of the culture of this region is the struggle of peoples against German and Russian hegemonic threats, extending from the Baltic countries in the north to Ukraine and Macedonia in the south. But of course, no common concept should cover the internal contradictions of region identity and all cultural differences. For example, many East-Central Europe nations’ “elite” literature is mostly Western, while the other part of it and sociocultural life is Eastern.

We can see how in modern region research the opposition “our own vs. outlandish” could not be legitimate. By abandoning the strict opposition of our own versus foreign in regional literary historical studies, we will be able to reduce the inherited military tensions between the peoples. However, they must be separated as strictly as possible from any ideological imperialist indoctrination and propaganda that flourished during the Cold War in Soviet comparative literature on the friendship of the peoples of the USSR and was revived as a key argument during Russia's armed attack on Ukraine.

So regional literature research complicated the traditional ethnocentric research of national literature, but the significance of it is not abandoned. Regional multicultural literary studies are “destroying” insularity and purity rather than a nationality treatment of literature by focusing on the *local/global* or *glocal*. This conception was spread by Jüri Talvet at the international comparativist conferences at the University of Tartu and in the journal *Interlitteraria*. Therefore, *the glocal* conception is not accidentally in the title of ICLA congress “Re-Imagining Literatures of the World: Global and Local, Main Streams and Margins” (Tbilisi, 24-29 July 2022) and in other contemporary comparative literature books.

And the third biggest problem is with the experts of this regional literature. In practice regional comparative studies has a serious lack of experts, who know all the languages and literatures of the region well enough. Therefore, it is not surprising that regional literature research is most often carried out by large groups of scholars and most often written in English. But I hope if regional research will be in demand, the qualifications of the experts will also have to grow. There are quite a few of them even now: Czesław Miłosz, Endre Bojtár, Violeta Kelertas, Marco Juvan, Jüri Talvet, Benedikt Kalnačs, John Neubauer, Epp Annus, Guntis Šmidchens, etc.

## Conclusion

Such an awakening of variously profiled regional literary studies may be motivated only by the peculiarities of self-awareness of modern literature historians and critics. Therefore, I want to present the conclusion of this article in the form of questions. Would separate nations like to apply themselves to the general regional model of culture as well as the ethnocentric one? Could regional recollection development efforts be interesting and important to individuals of separate nations and their societies? Can they have political implications and can they be important subjects of study for students in Western universities? Only positive answers to these questions will open a further perspective for regional comparative literature research.

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## Georgian Symbolism: Reorientation of Cultural Centre and Redefinition of National Identity

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### **Abstract:**

After being part of the Russian Empire for more than a century, In the 1910s (1918-1921), Georgia obtained independence for a few years, but from 1921 was forced to become one of the members of the Soviet Socialist Republic. As for a cultural context, the beginning of the 20th c. is considered a period of stagnation. Subsequently, the significance of emerging the first symbolist group, “Blue Horns”, with clearly stated purposes and esthetic position was a significant event. As a result of the drastic transformation of the social formation, in parallel with the revolutions and World War I, Georgia faced the necessity of re-conceptualizing its national identity.

The main goal of the symbolist poets was a renewal of Georgian literature and its inclusion into the Western context. In the writings of Georgian symbolists, universal archetypes of mother and father were closely linked with the motive of the search and redefinition of National identity.

**Keywords:** Symbolism; National Identity; Archetypes; Blue Horns

The first symbolist literary group, known as the "Blue Horns" (Tsisperi Qantslebi), was established in Georgia in 1916 against the backdrop of a political, cultural, and ideological crisis, several decades after the French symbolism ended. According to K. Bregadze, a researcher of Georgian modernism, the representatives of the "Blue Horns" are aware of the political, cultural and aesthetic backwardness of modern Georgia, on the one hand, and of their mission and responsibility to Georgian culture and literature, on the other hand, which implies an orientation towards European/Western cultural and aesthetic paradigms (Bregadze, 2014, p. 96-97).

In the Georgian literary context, the late appearance of the Georgian literary movement and its peculiarities can be easily explained by the existing context. The main goal of the symbolist poets became a redefinition of national identity and restoration of the link with the Western space of Georgian literature. They started renewing Georgian literature by introducing symbolism which birthplace they believed to be France. In his letter titled "Perspectives of Georgian Poetry", one of the "Blue Horns" members, Shalva Apkhaidze, writes: "Georgia must establish herself culturally. It is no accident that a new school – symbolism, took the reins of the revival of art in liberated Georgia. It would have been impossible to choose another path" (Apkhaidze, 1919, J. "Meotsnebe Niamorebi", №1).

Unlike their Western like-minded fellows, Georgian symbolists faced much more difficult challenges. They had to adopt new artistic trends and bring them closer to Western culture, which required fundamental reforms at the formal, contextual and aesthetic levels. Members of the "Blue Horns" declared Georgian literature an integral part of European modernism, consciously rejecting its "marginal status" (Bela Tsipuria), and referred to Tbilisi as the second-most important art center after Paris – "The Hellas of Modernism" (Grigol Robakidze). It should be emphasized as well that poets contributed significantly to the process of Europeanizing Georgian literature through social activities (Oboladze, 2018).

The emergence of the "Blue Horns" was a significant event for Georgian literature because it was a precedent of a literary movement with a clearly defined aesthetic position and a program. The members of this group truly accepted the symbolism but adapted it to their aesthetics and goals. The manifestation of national sentiments is one of the primary characteristics that differentiate Georgian symbolism from Western symbolism and allows us to regard Georgian symbolism as the original invariant of the



symbolist school. As Titsian Tabidze claims, the symbolist school "Blue Horns" identifies itself as national" (Tabidze, "Blue Horns" N2, 2015, p.151). While national themes were alien to the French Symbolist school, the search for national identity is strongly evident in the works of the Blue Horns. This seems quite natural, given Georgia's political, social, and ideological context in the last century.

In the writings of Georgian symbolists, universal archetypes of mother and father were closely linked with the motive of the search for identity. In C. Jung's theory, the parental archetype plays a special role in the process of individuation. In the writings of Georgian symbolists, the universal archetype of father and mother is loaded with significant conceptual sense, and the connotative area of the image of the parent is expanding. The archetypes of mother and father are inevitably associated with a religious tradition, as well as cultural and national identity. In their texts, the father archetype includes the private, personal and general, collective (loss of the father – God, "death of God", loss of identity) unconscious (C. Jung). In Georgian symbolist texts, it is associated with childhood nostalgia, alienation from one's father's home and God, and oblivion of the old system of values.

Leaving one's own space causes a profound spiritual and worldview crisis in the individual, and gives rise to a sense of disconnection. The poet's existence is centred on the mythologized image of the father as the main orientation of the individual's life.

*“Qoveli tvali momagonebs brma mamis tvalebs  
Chemze stirian es tvalebi tavis ghameshi”*

[In the eyes of others, I see the eyes of my blind father,  
These eyes cry for me at night]

("Saturn and Malaria", Titsian Tabidze, 2015).

or

*“Dzvirpaso mama, ise rogorts yoveltvis mshvidi,  
Gaxsovdes qveynad, rom datove shvili poeti.  
Meatasjer gadixade ik panashvidi,  
Rom damitsynardes me tsxovreba miet-moeti”*

[Dear father, calm as always  
Remember that you left your poet son.  
For the thousandth time served a panikhida there  
To calm my senseless life]

("Priest and Malaria in the Coffin",  
Titsian Tabidze, 2015).

In the works of Titsian Tabidze there is a lack of what is associated with the paternal house (to all pantheons, even Didube / I prefer the rotten body of the Orpiri (“Orpiri Season”, 2015). However, the connection with the paternal house, the faith is broken, “There are threads of a cobweb on the father's stole” (“Priest and Malaria”, 2015, p. 71).

The archetype of mother and father also appears in the works of other members of the “Blue Horns” and it is associated with faith and a traditional system of values, sadness caused by estrangement, nostalgia for childhood (when the father arrives, / brings precious perfume to the "pharmacy"). Paolo Iashvili seeks salvation in his mother and begs her to pray for her son lost in a new consciousness –in the city. If in the works of Titsian the father is the main guide and saviour, in Paulo’s works Titsian's "father" is substituted by the image of his mother.

*“Deda! Inakhule  
Shen tsminda Khakhuli!  
Tsadi pekhshishveli,  
Kalakshi dakargul shvilistvis ghame gaatia,  
Ghmerto! Apatie –  
Dedas, rom daggintos chem sigrdze santeli,  
Mistvis, rom chens gulshi  
Dayuchdes grigali da korianteli..”*  
[Mother! Go and see  
Saint Khakhuli!  
go barefoot  
spend the night for the lost son in the city,  
God! have mercy on him  
If you can't help me  
Mother, to light a large candle so that  
the hurricane and storm come down in my heart]  
(“The Letter to Mother”, 2004)

The search for a national motif in the above-mentioned texts of the “Blue Horns” is expressed by the archetype of the parent.

One of the universal archetypal motifs in literature is the quest for the father/parent associated with a new birth. In his book "Symbols of Metamorphosis", Carl Jung pays special attention to the phenomenon of the second parent. "The motive of the second parent (stepmother – stepfather)

can also be substituted by the motif of rebirth (e.g. baptism in Christianity). By being born again, an individual becomes a participant of the divine mystery” (Jung, 2017, p. 452). According to Mircea Eliade abandoning his father and going in search of himself is a form of general rebellion, nostalgia for a return to the mythical “great times” (Eliade, 2017). Georgian symbolist poet Titsian Tabidze, who lost both his biological and heavenly fathers (God), starts searching for a new dwelling, new values and a "new father". He replaced the paternal house with Chaldean city inhabited by mythical ancestors. As T. Tabidze writes in the letter "With blue Horns" (1916), “Today, a fundamental change in Georgian thought begins; the past has lain dormant for centuries, comes to life; the state traditions of Georgia rise, the enslaved soul returns to its former nest. As much national self-consciousness has grown, so we are approaching the past and the Georgian idea is being shaped... The Renaissance, first of all, involves the restoration of the past” (Tabidze, 2015, pp. 150-152). The desire to define national self-consciousness led the poet to the idea of searching for national/Kartli roots – the Chaldeans, the origins of civilization. The myth of Chaldea, created by Titsian Tabidze (the cycle "Cities of Chaldea"), appears as a link connecting the past and the future, tradition and innovation. Chaldea is the mythical "proto" Georgia. The Georgian symbolist poet Titsian Tabidze tries to restore the broken connection with the past/forefather by referring to the myth.

The city is a universal image symbol and, in the theory of Carl Jung, it is associated with the mother archetype. The mother archetype includes real (mother, grandmother, aunt) and abstract (goddesses, Mother of God, church, city) images of the mother. The archetypal duty of the city as a mother is the motherly care of its inhabitants (Jung, 2004, p.15). In the modern world – in a metropolis – the archetypal connection between mother and child, or a city-citizen, is broken, without connection with the mother (city), a person is deprived of ideological support; a citizen deprived of parental care remains vulnerable and lonely. In an alternative space, in this case in the mythical city of Chaldea, the parent (mother)-child, i.e. an archetypal model of the city-citizen is restored.

It should be noted that among the authors under consideration, the crisis caused by the loss of identity was overcome in the works of Titsian Tabidze, who, having rejected the path of his father, managed to find new support, unlike other representatives of the “Blue Horns”, replacing their paternal roots with the city of Chaldea, inhabited by mythical ancestors. Actu-

alizing the mythological flow, and creating the myth of Chaldea, he was able to determine the national and cultural identity along with the modernization of Georgian literature.

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# Politics and Poetics: Scientific Literature on Russian-Georgian Literary Relations in the Post-Soviet Period

პოლიტიკა და პოეტიკა: სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურა  
პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის რუსულ-ქართული  
ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების შესახებ

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## Abstract:

In the post-Soviet period, literary relations did not remain beyond political influence. The place of reflection on the socio-political context of the collapse of the Soviet Empire proved to be the literary processes of the mentioned epoch. Relicts of political discourse can be found not only in fiction but also in scientific literature. Analyzing Soviet problems in this way has led to an expansion of the post-imperial / postcolonial study area.

In this paper, I will discuss the works created as a result of the fundamental research conducted by German Slavists, Mirja Lecke and Elena Chkhaidze “The Development of Russian-Georgian Literary Relations after the Perestroika”. This study was widely recognized in the Slavic world. The materials discussed are E. Chkhaidze's monograph “Politics and Literary Tradition: Russian-Georgian Literary Relations after the Perestroika” (2018) as well as several important publications by Mirja Lecke dedicated to these issues.

In her monograph, Elene Chkhaidze introduces the concept of “Imperial Literary Tradition”. Therefore, by analyzing artistic and scientific material, she maintains that this tradition is formed, developed and broken in parallel with the formation, development and disintegration of the empire. The literary process, as a full-fledged event, also depends on political factors. The scholar's work is based on the rich history of Georgian-Slavic studies.

To analyze the current problem, she uses modern, interdisciplinary approaches of Western European and American scientific schools.

E. Chkhaidze's work contains many complex theoretical concepts – trauma, nostalgia, nations and nationalism, semiotics of the city (Tbilisi), the city as a place of struggle and life, a meeting place for people of different nationalities, hybridism, in the research special attention is paid to post-Soviet Russian conflicts.

Post-Soviet / postcolonial events in Georgia and Russia are viewed not in the “East-West” but in the “North / South” prism. The study covered works of art, critical literature and research by Georgian and Russian-speaking authors living in Georgia, Russia and abroad until 2014. A complete overview of the trends and scientific papers of the scientists of the Soviet and post-Soviet periods is given, on which the researcher relies. This is the first and only such study of the post-Soviet period.

It should be noted that this vector of German comparative literature, with its methodological concepts, will be of great help not only in the process of studying the inter-literary relations of not only Georgian-Russian but also of the former USSR republics.

**Keywords:** Russian-Georgian Literary Relations, Postcolonialism

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობები, პოსტკოლონიალიზმი

პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობები გამჭოლად ირეკლავს პოლიტიკური გავლენების კვალს. აღნიშნული ეპოქის ლიტერატურულ პროცესებს საბჭოთა იმპერიის დაშლის სოციალურ-პოლიტიკური კონტექსტის რეფლექსიის ადგილიც შეიძლება ეწოდოს, სადაც მკაფიოდ გამოიკვეთა „გარდამავალი საზოგადოების კულტურული და სოციოკულტურული კონფლიქტი“ (ბ. წიფურია). პოლიტიკური დისკურსის რელიქტები გვხვდება არა მხოლოდ მხატვრულ ტექსტებში, არამედ მათ შესახებ შექმნილ სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურაშიც. სოვიეტოლოგიური პრობლემების ამგვარად გაანალიზება განაპირობებს საბჭოთა/რუსული იმპერიული გამოცდილების მისა-

დაგებას ტრანსნაციონალურ პოსტკოლონიურ კვლევებთან. საკითხის აქტუალობიდან გამომდინარე არსებობს მის შესახებ შექმნილი ათეულობით სამეცნიერო ნაშრომი როგორც ქართულ, ისე დასავლურ (ევროპულსა და ამერიკულ) ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობაში. ცხადია, ეს ნაშრომები ერთმანეთისგან განსხვავდება კვლევის ვექტორების, მეთოდოლოგიისა და ემპირიული მასალების თვალსაზრისით.

სტატიაში განხილულია რურის უნივერსიტეტის (ქ. ბოხუმი, გერმანია) სლავისტიკის ცენტრის მკვლევრების, პროფ. მირია ლეკესა და ელენა ჩხაიძის, მიერ განხორციელებული ფუნდამენტური კვლევის „*რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების განვითარება „პერესტროიკის“ შემდეგ*“ შედეგად შექმნილ ნაშრომები. აღნიშნული კვლევის აქტუალობაზე მეტყველებს მის შესახებ დაწერილი რეცენზიები და გამოხმაურებები არაერთ ქვეყანაში (*იტალია, გერმანია, პოლონეთი, უკრაინა, ყაზახეთი*). საანალიზო მასალებს წარმოადგენს ე. ჩხაიძის მონოგრაფია „*პოლიტიკა და ლიტერატურული ტრადიცია: რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობები პერესტროიკის შემდეგ*“ (2018) ასევე ამ საკითხისადმი მიძღვნილი მირია ლეკეს რამდენიმე მნიშვნელოვანი პუბლიკაცია.

კანონიკურ საბჭოთა ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობაში და, შესაბამისად, მის ქართულ ინვარიანტშიც, რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევამ და სწავლებამ სამეცნიერო-აკადემიურთან ერთად განსაკუთრებული იდეოლოგიური მნიშვნელობა შეიძინა. მეოცე საუკუნის 60-იანი წლების დასასრულსა და სამოცდაათიანი წლების დასაწყისის ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის პერსპექტიული სასწავლო და სამეცნიერო მიმართულება გახდა შედარებითი კვლევების ალტერნატივა – *ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობები*. ამ მიმართულებაში გასაგები მიზეზების გამო რუსულ-ქართული წყვილი დომინანტური და ათწლეულების განმავლობაში კვლევის ვექტორების განმსაზღვრელი იყო. აქ შემუშავებული მეთოდოლოგიით, სქემითა და ტენდენციებით ვითარდებოდა სსრკ-ში შემავალი სხვა რესპუბლიკების ლიტერატურების ისტორიისა და ლიტერატურულ ურთიერთობათა კვლევის პროცესიც.

ეს მიმართულება არაერთი თანამედროვე მკვლევრის ნაშრომში განიხილება შედარებით-ისტორიული ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის საბჭოთა ინვარიანტად, იგი თეორიულ ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობას საკმაოდ დაშორებული იყო და ლიტერატურის ისტორიის შემადგენელ ნაწილს წარმოადგენდა. თუმცა როგორც თანამედროვე სამეცნი-

ერო ლიტერატურაშია აღნიშნული, ისტორიასა და თეორიას შორის ამგვარი მერყეობა შედარებით ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის ზოგადი მახასიათებელიცაა (Наливайко, 2009, გვ. 10-11).

პოსტსაბჭოთა/პოსტკოლონიურ პერიოდში მეცნიერების დეიდეოლოგიზაციასა და სამეცნიერო-კრიტიკული აზრის დეკონსტრუქციასთან ერთად დაიწყო ამ მიმართულების ერთგვარი კრიზისი. ერთი მხრივ, ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევის ტრადიციის საბჭოთა ინვარიანტი სათანადოდ ვეღარ აკმაყოფილებდა საერთაშორისო ლიტერატურული კვლევების ტენდენციებს, მეორე მხრივ კი არსებული სამეცნიერო ტრადიციის უგულვებელყოფა შეუძლებელი იყო. შესაბამისად, საჭირო და აუცილებელი გახდა მისი გარდაქმნა, ტრადიციისა და ინოვაციის სინთეზი თანამედროვე მეთოდოლოგიების დაწერგვით, რაც დამოუკიდებლობის პერიოდში წარმატებით განხორციელდა და მას ახლა კუთვნილი ადგილი უკავია ინტერდისციპლინურ ქართულ ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობაში.

საქართველოში რუსისტიკის, *(რომლის ძირითად მიმართულება-საც წარმოადგენდა ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევა)* ჩამოყალიბებისა და განვითარების შესახებ ამომწურავი ინფორმაცია არსებობს და ლიტერატურათმცოდნეთა წრეებში კარგადაა ცნობილი. ამის მიუხედავად პროცესის სრულიად ახალეზური შეფასებაა გერმანელი მეცნიერის, მირია ლეკეს (Lekke, 2018, გვ. 31-55) პუბლიკაციაში. პროცესის გასაანალიზებლად მეცნიერი ეყრდნობა მიშელ ფუკოს თეორიას, რომლის მიხედვითაც „ლიტერატურული პროცესი კოგნიტიური მოვლენაა და ლიტერატურაში „ძალაუფლება“ და „ცოდნა“ განუყოფლად უკავშირდება პრაქტიკისა და დისკურსის საშუალებებს (Lekke, 2018, გვ. 31). შესაბამისად, მეცნიერის ინტერესია გამოავლინოს ცოდნისა და ძალაუფლების კავშირი, იმპერიულ/კოლონიურ პარადიგმაში – ცენტრი-პერიფერია. ამ საკითხის გამოსაკვლევად ანალიზებს იმ სოციალური, იდეოლოგიური და ინსტიტუციური ფაქტორების ცვლილებას, რაც რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების ხანგრძლივ პროცესს განაპირობებდა.

ამ სტატიაში იგი აღწერს სამეცნიერო პროცესის განვითარების მნიშვნელოვან ასპექტებს, ესენია – კადრები (ანუ დარგის მკვლევრები, ქართველი მეცნიერები), ორივე მეცნიერი თავიანთ პუბლიკაციებში ყურადღებას აქცევს კადრების, საკვლევო თემებისა და მეთოდების ცვლილებებს მთელი ამ სამეცნიერო პროცესის განვითარების სხვადასხვა ეტაპზე. ამ ასპექტში უფრო დეტალური მიმოხილვა წარმოდგე-



ნილია ე. ჩხაიძის მონოგრაფიაში (თავი მესამე, 3.4, 3.5 3.6 ნაწილები). ეს სრულიად ლოგიკურიცაა, რადგან რურის უნივერსიტეტის მკვლევარს განათლება სწორედ თბილისის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტში აქვს მიღებული. აქედან გამომდინარე, მისთვის ფაქტობრივი გარემოებები, პიროვნებები, გაცილებით უკეთაა ცნობილი და, შეიძლება ითქვას, რომ გარკვეულ ეტაპზე თავადაც ამ პროცესის მონაწილე იყო.

ნახსენებ სტატიაში საბჭოთა პერიოდის ანალიზისას მ. ლეკე იყენებს პოსტკოლონიური თეორიის ისეთ მნიშვნელოვან კონცეპტებს, როგორებიცაა – ბინაურული ოპოზიცია **ცენტრი-პერიფერია**. მკვლევარი იზიარებს სხვა ცნობილი სლავისტების (*ტ. მარტინი, ე. გაპოვა და სხვ.*) მოსაზრებებს და თავადაც ავითარებს აზრს – საბჭოთა ლიტერატურა ხასიათდებოდა *ლიტერატურაცენტრისტულობით*, რომ ცენტრი (ანუ მოსკოვი), იყო სახელმწიფოს ცოდნის ცენტრი, სადაც ხდებოდა საბჭოთა ლიტერატურისა და მის შესახებ მეცნიერების, ნორმებისა და წესების წარმოება. მკვლევრის მართებული მსჯელობით (2018, გვ. 35-37) *„ლიტერატურაცენტრისტულობა იდგა სსრკ-ში ცოდნის გავრცელების სათავეებთან, მას ჰქონდა ღრმა გავლენა და შორს მიმავალი შედეგები... ლიტერატურა ფასდებოდა არა მხოლოდ როგორც საზოგადოებრივი ცნობიერების საშუალება, არამედ იგი მრავალეროვნული სახელმწიფოს ფუნქციონირებისთვის მეტად მნიშვნელოვანი ბერკეტი იყო“*.

რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევის შესახებ ამ თეორიული მსჯელობისას იგი გამოყოფს რამდენიმე მნიშვნელოვან ბლოკს. პირველი ესაა *„კლასიკოსების კულტი“*, იგი ეყრდნობა გუდკოვისა და დუბინის შეხედულებებს, რომლის მიხედვითაც საბჭოთა ლიტერატურა და ასევე მეცნიერებაც განსაკუთრებულად კანონიკური და კლასიკოსების შემოქმედებაზე იყო ორიენტირებული; და რომ ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობისათვის მნიშვნელოვანი იყო რუსული ლიტერატურის კლასიკოსები, მაგ.: გრობოედოვის, პუშკინის, ლერმონტოვის, ტოლსტოის შემოქმედება და მათი კავშირები კავკასიასთან და სხვა. თუმცა, აქვე უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ კლასიკოსების კულტი მხოლოდ რუსული ლიტერატურის პოზიციებიდან არ განიხილებოდა, ეს ასევე ეხებოდა ქართველი ავტორების მიმართებას რუსულ კულტურასთან. ეს იყო როგორც პირადი კავშირების, ისე მსგავსი ისტორიულ-ლიტერატურულ თავისებურებათა მიმართების გამოვლენა რუსულ მწერლობასა და კულტურასთან. აქ მეცნიერულთან ერთად პოლიტიკური ინტერესიც იკვეთებოდა, რასაც ობიექ-

ტურად აფასებს მ. ლეკე. სხვა მნიშვნელოვან მოსაზრებებთან ერთად, ამ ნაშრომში მე გამოვყოფდი მის კიდევ ერთ მეტად საინტერესო დაკვირვებას შედარებითი კვლევების შესახებ მსჯელობისას. „შეპირისპირებითი კვლევის პრინციპი არ იყო შემთხვევითი მოვლენა, მან აირეკლა საბჭოთა ლიტერატურული დისკურსის იმპერიული ბუნება: პერიფერიის კულტურა აღქმულიყო მხოლოდ ცენტრის პრიზმაში“ (Лекке, 2018, გვ. 39). უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ მისი ეს მახასიათებელი ვრცელდებოდა სსრკ რესპუბლიკების ლიტერატურების ისტორიისა და მათ შორის არსებულ შედარებით კვლევებზეც. მართლაც, რუსული ლიტერატურა წარმოადგენდა ერთგვარ *tertium comparationis*, რომლის საფუძველზეც უნდა განხორციელებულიყო ლიტერატურული წყვილების შედარებითი კვლევის ტენდენციები. ამავე ნაშრომში აღწერს დამოუკიდებლობის მოპოვების შემდგომ პერიოდს, იმ ძირითად ტენდენციებს, რომელიც გავლენას ახდენდა რუსულ-ქართული ურთიერთობების შესწავლაზე და ცალსახად მიუთითებს არსებული სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურის ხელახალა გააზრების აუცილებლობაზე (Лекке, 2018, გვ. 48-52).

2020 წლის ჟურნალის „Новое Литературное Обозрение“ №166 (6/2020) მიეძღვნა პოსტსოციალისტურ/პოსტკოლონიურ კვლევებს, ამ ნომერში დაიბეჭდა მირია ლეკეს ერთი პუბლიკაცია „*მზიური საქართველოს დასასრული: კოლონიურობა საქართველოს შესახებ 1991 წლის შემდეგ დაწერილ რომანებში*“. სტატიაში იგი აანალიზებს აკა მორჩილაძის „გასეირნება ყარაბაღში“, დენის გუცკოს „რუსულად მოსაუბრეს“ და ნინო ხარატიშვილის „მერვე სიცოცხლე. ბრილკას“. თეორიულ დისკურსად იყენებს რობერტ მინოლოს კონცეფციას – კოლონიურობა, უსადაგებს ასევე დასავლურ ცნობიერებაში ჩამოყალიბებულ დისკურსულ კონსტრუქციას **ჩრდილოეთი-სამხრეთი**. აღსანიშნავია, რომ ცენტრისა და პერიფერიის, ანუ მეტროპოლიისა და კოლონიის, ურთიერთობათა ამგვარი წაკითხვა რუსულ-ქართული „კულტურული იმპერიალიზმის“ (ე. საიდის კონცეფცია) მაგალითზე სრულიად ახალია და ჯერჯერობით მხოლოდ აღნიშნულ მკვლევართა ნაშრომებში გვხვდება. კავკასია, როგორც რუსეთის აღმოსავლეთი, ევროპელ და ამერიკელ მკვლევართა ნაშრომებში არც თუ ისე ახალია, თუმცა კოლონიურობის იმგვარი გაგება, როგორსაც ელენა ჩხაიძე და მირია ლეკე გვთავაზობენ, ახალია.

მირია ლეკე (Лекке, 2020) სტატიაში საუბრობს ევროპის კონტინენტის კულტურული აღქმის პარადიგმებზე, რომლის მიხედვითაც ევ-

როპა იყოფა დინამიკურ, პოლიტიკურად ძლიერ ჩრდილოეთად და ჩამორჩენილ, პატრიარქალურ, მაფიოზურ, თუმცა ამავდროულად თვალწარმტაც და ეგზოტიკურ სამხრეთად. ამის მაგალითად მკვლევარი იშველიებს იტალიით აღფრთოვანებას რენესანსიდან განმანათლებლობის პერიოდისა და მეცხრამეტე საუკუნის ჩათვლით. მკვლევარს მიაჩნია, რომ იმპერიულმა რუსეთმა აითვისა ეს პარადიგმა საქართველოსთან მიმართებაში და „საქართველო, თავისი ქრისტიანული ტრადიციის გამო, აღმოსავლეთის სამხრეთი („იტალია“) გახდა“. გერმანელი მეცნიერი ამის არგუმენტად იშველიებს იმას, რომ საქართველოთი ჩრდილოეთიდან ჩამოსული სამხედროები, ეთნოგრაფები, მოგზაურები აღფრთოვანებული იყვნენ. აღფრთოვანების მიზეზებად ასახელებს – საქართველოს უძველეს კულტურას, სამზარეულოთი გამოხატულ სტუმარ-მასპინძლობის წესსა და სხვ. მიუხედავად იმპერიული დისკურსის ზოგადი მახასიათებლისა, რაც გულისხმობს ცენტრის მიერ პერიფერიის მარგინალიზაციას, დისკრიმინაციას, მირია ლეკე წერს, რომ საქართველოსთან მიმართებით პოზიტიური მახასიათებლებიც სჭარბობდა. ამის ნათელ გამოხატულებად მიაჩნია საბჭოთა იმპერიაში საყოველთაოდ ცნობილი ტროპი **„მზიური საქართველო“**. ცნობილ მკვლევართა (გ. მაისაურაძე, მ. ტლოსტანოვა) და სხვ. მსჯელობის ანალიზის კვალდაკვალ, მ. ლეკე იზიარებს ტლოსტანოვას შეხედულებას, რომლის მიხედვითაც, საქართველო მეორე რიგის პოსტკოლონიიაა. ამ თეორიულ ფონზე განხილული ქართული და რუსული რომანების ტიპოლოგიური შედარების ფონზე გამოტანილი დასკვნები შეიძლება ცალკე დისკუსიის საგანიც გახდეს.

ლიტერატურულ-კულტურულ პროცესებში რეპრეზენტირებული საქართველოსა და რუსეთის ურთიერთობათა მრავალწახნა-გოვანი, რთული და წინააღმდეგობებით აღსავსე პროცესი ასახულია ელენა ჩხაიძის მონოგრაფიაში, რომელიც ამ დიდი საკვლევი პროექტის შედეგია. არ იქნება გადაჭარბებულად ნათქვამი, რომ ამ ტიპისა და მასშტაბის კვლევა არასდროს ჩატარებულა პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის ურთიერთობათა შესახებ. მონოგრაფიის სათაური „პოლიტიკა და ლიტერატურული ტრადიცია“... ცალსახად მიუთითებს პოლიტიკური პროცესების გავლენის კვლევას ლიტერატურულ დისკურსზე.

საქართველოს კულტურული კოლონიზაცია ე. ჩხაიძეს რუსული კოლონიალიზმის მნიშვნელოვან ასპექტად მიაჩნია, რომელმაც წარმოშვა *რუსულ-ქართული მითი*. ნაშრომში (Чхaidze, 2018) განიხილავს სწორედ ამ მითის კონსტრუირებისა და დეკონსტრუქციის ხანგრძლივ

პროცესსა და მათ განმაპირობებელ ფაქტორებს. მონოგრაფია იმითა-  
ცაა მნიშვნელოვანი და მასშტაბური, რომ მასში საკითხს მეცნიერუ-  
ლად ანალიზებს ორივე – რუსული და ქართული ლიტერატურის  
პერსპექტივიდან. უცხოელი სლავისტები უმეტესად რუსულ მწერლო-  
ბასა და სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურაზე დაყრდნობით ანალიზებენ  
საქართველოსთან მიმართების საკითხს და ეს სრულიად გასაგებიცაა.  
ე. ჩხაიძე ფართომასშტაბიანი კომპარატივისტული კვლევის საწარმო-  
ებლად იყენებს რუსულსა და ქართულ მხატვრულსა და სამეცნიერო  
ლიტერატურას. ამ მასალების გაანალიზებით, მკვლევრის მოტივაციაა  
გამოავლინოს ლიტერატურაში ჩამოყალიბებული რუსულ-ქართულ  
ტრადიციული დისკურსული კონსტრუქცია. როგორია დიქტომი-  
ური ცნებების – მეგობრობა/მტრობა, დაახლოება/დაშორება ტრანს-  
ფორმაციათა დინამიკა; რა შედეგები აქვს საბჭოთა კლიშეების რესემი-  
ოტიზაციასა და დემითოლოგიზაციას; როგორ სახეს იღებს იმპერი-  
ული ტრადიცია იმპერიის დაშლის შემდგომ პერიოდში და ა.შ.

თავის მონოგრაფიაში ელენე ჩხაიძეს შემოაქვს მეტად მნიშვნე-  
ლოვანი კონცეფცია „იმპერიული ლიტერატურული ტრადიცია“. აქე-  
დან გამომდინარე, მხატვრული და სამეცნიერო მასალის გაანალიზე-  
ბით, ის ამტკიცებს, რომ აღნიშნული ტრადიცია ყალიბდება, ვითარ-  
დება და ირღვევა იმპერიის ჩამოყალიბების, განვითარებისა და დაშ-  
ლის პარალელურად. ლიტერატურული პროცესი, როგორც სრულმას-  
შტაბიანი მოვლენა, პოლიტიკურ ფაქტორებზეცაა დამოკიდებული. ამ  
საკითხზე მსჯელობისას მეცნიერი აზუსტებს ტერმინს *იმპერიული*.  
ეს, მისი აზრით, გულისხმობს დროის გარკვეულ ჩარჩოს, რომელიც  
მოიცავს ურთიერთობათა პროცესს იმპერიულ და საბჭოთა პერიოდ-  
ში. რუსულ იმპერიულ პოლიტიკაზე საქართველოს დამოკიდებულე-  
ბის პერიოდში – წერს ე. ჩხაიძე (2018, გვ. 11-14) – ჩამოყალიბდა რუ-  
სულ-ქართული კულტურული იმპერია, რომლის გაძლიერების მნიშ-  
ვნელოვან ფაქტორად პოლიტიკასთან ერთად რუსული კულტურის  
ლიტერატუროცენტრისტულობაც მიაჩნია.

მეცნიერის ნაშრომს საფუძვლად უდევს ქართული სლავისტი-  
კის მდიდარი ისტორია. აქტუალური პრობლემის გასაანალიზებლად  
იგი იყენებს დასავლეთ ევროპული და ამერიკული სამეცნიერო სკო-  
ლების თანამედროვე, ინტერდისციპლინურ მიდგომებს.

იმპერიის ცენტრისა და პერიფერიის რთული ურთიერთგავლე-  
ნის კომპლექსურად შესწავლად ე. ჩხაიძის ნაშრომში თავი მოიყარა  
მრავალმა თეორიულიმა კონცეფციამ – ტრავმა, ნოსტალგია, ერები და

ნაციონალიზმი, ქალაქის სემიოტიკა (თბილისი), ქალაქი, როგორც ბრძოლებისა და ცხოვრების სივრცე, სხვადასხვა ეროვნების ადამიანთა თავშეყრის ადგილი, ჰიბრიდულობა, კვლევაში განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება ეთმობა პოსტსაბჭოთა კონფლიქტების რეპრეზენტაციას ქართულსა და რუსულ ლიტერატურაში.

მეთოდოლოგიური პლურალიზმით გამორჩეულ ამ ნაშრომში ყურადღებას იპყრობს – იმაგოლოგიური მიდგომა პოსტკოლონიური კრიტიკის კონტექსტში. საქართველოს მხატვრული სახის რეპრეზენტაციაზე რუსულ ლიტერატურაში მკვლევარი ასეთ მოსაზრებას გამოთქვამს: *„რუსულ ლიტერატურაში საქართველოს თემის პუკულარულობას განაპირობებდა კოლონიზატორის მესიანური როლი და ამავდროულად იღწვოდა უცნობი მხარის შესასწავლადაც. მეორე მხრივ, კი პროვინციას აახლოვებდა ცენტრთან“* (Чхаидзе, 2018, გვ. 11-14). ე. ჩხაიძე თავის მონოგრაფიაში კულტურული ტრავმის საფუძველზე ანალიზებს ცენტრისა და პერიფერიის მიმართებებს, პოსტსაბჭოთა კონფლიქტების რეპრეზენტაციას ქართულსა და რუსულ ლიტერატურებში, სუბალტერნის/დაქვემდებარებულის ფენომენის მისადაგებას ოთარ ჩხეიძის რომანების მაგალითზე, საქართველოსა და თბილისის მხატვრული სახის რეპრეზენტაციისას თანამედროვე რუსულ ლიტერატურულ დისკურსში, მსჯელობს ასევე პოსტკოლონიური ნოსტალგიის ცნებაზეც.

პოსტსაბჭოთა/პოსტკოლონიური პერიოდის საქართველოსა და რუსეთთან დაკავშირებული მოვლენები განიხილება არა „აღმოსავლეთ-დასავლეთის“, არამედ „ჩრდილოეთი/სამხრეთის“ პრიზმაში. კვლევამ მოიცვა საქართველოში, რუსეთში და უცხოეთში მცხოვრები ქართველი და რუსულენოვანი ავტორების მხატვრული ნაწარმოებები, კრიტიკული ლიტერატურა და კვლევები 2014 წლამდე. მოცემულია საბჭოთა და პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის მეცნიერთა ტენდენციებისა და სამეცნიერო ნაშრომების სრული მიმოხილვა.

ელენა ჩხაიძის კვლევა კიდევ ერთი და მეტად მნიშვნელოვანი ასპექტითაცაა გამორჩეული. მონოგრაფიის მესამე, ბოლო თავში, მკვლევარი სკურპულოზურად განიხილავს რუსულ-ქართული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევის ისტორიას საბჭოთა პერიოდიდან პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდის ჩათვლით. ამ ნაწილში მეცნიერი ანალიზებს კვლევის პროცესს მისი სისტემატიზაციისა და პერიოდიზაციის შემუშავების საფუძველზე. იგი აღწერს პროცესის განვითარების თავისებურებებს – რა ფაქტორებმა განაპირობა კვლევის პრო-

ცესის ჩამოყალიბება და განვითარება. ყურადღებას აქცევს პერსონებს, ქართველ რუსისტებს, რომელთაც საქართველოში შექმნეს სკოლა და ამ სკოლის საფუძველზე პროცესის განვითარების ძირითადი ასპექტები. მკვლევრისთვის მნიშვნელოვანია გამოკვეთოს გარემოებები, რის გამოც მეცნიერთა ინტერესში ექცეოდა პრობლემები, ავტორები და ასევე – რა ფაქტები იჩქმალებოდა საბჭოთა იდეოლოგიზირებულ მეცნიერებაში.

მდიდარი ფაქტოლოგიური მასალის გაანალიზების შედეგად ე. ჩხაიძე ასევე განიხილავს მთარგმნელობითი პროცესის ისტორიას, რომელიც ქართული და რუსული კულტურების ისტორიაში მნიშვნელოვანი სეგმენტია. პარაგრაფში „თარგმანებისა და მეგობრობის ისტორია“ ე. ჩხაიძე ობიექტურად აფასებს ქართულ-რუსული მთარგმნელობითი ურთიერთობების უზარმაზარ ისტორიას, მის შედეგებს, ათწლეულების განმავლობაში განვითარების ხელშემწყობ ფაქტორებს, გამოცემებს, ორგანიზაციებსა და დაწესებულებათა ისტორიას, რომელმაც განავითარა თარგმანის კულტურა და ისტორია საქართველოში. ნაშრომის ეს ნაწილი მხოლოდ ქართულ-რუსული წყვილისთვის არაა მნიშვნელოვანი. სრულიად გადაუჭარბებლად შეიძლება ითქვას, რომ ასე დეტალურად და ფუნდამენტურად ქართული თარგმანის ისტორიის სუპრალიტერატურული ფაქტორები, ინსტიტუციონალური ისტორია, ჯერ არ გამოკვლეულა. ეს არის ის საკითხი, რომელმაც მნიშვნელოვნად განაპირობა მეოცე და ოცდამეერთე საუკუნის ქართული კულტურის ჩამოყალიბება. ამ პერიოდის ქართულ კულტურაში თარგმანს სრულიად გამორჩეული ადგილი უკავია. ვფიქრობ, ნაშრომში განხილული მასალები და ისტორია თავისუფლად შეუწყობს ხელს მეოცე და ოცდამეერთე საუკუნეების ქართულ-საზღვარგარეთული ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევის ზოგად პროცესსაც. საბოლოო ჯამში, „*იმპერიული ლიტერატურული ტრადიციის*“ ამ სეგმენტის გაანალიზების შედეგად მკაფიოდ იკვეთება მითებისა თუ ტრადიციის გამოგონების (ე. ჰობსბაუმი) ხანგრძლივი და მრავალფეროვანი პროცესი. ამ დიდი და პოლიტიკურად მოტივირებული პროცესის მრავალწახნაგოვანი მეცნიერული ანალიზის შედეგად ელენა ჩხაიძემ აჩვენა დისკურსების ცვლილებების ლიტერატურული რეფლექსიები – რომანტიკული დისკურსის ტრანსფორმაცია პოსტკოლონიურ პერიოდში, როდესაც რომანტიკული და მეგობრობის ნარატივი ჩანაცვლდა წყენისა და აგრესიის დისკურსით.

სრულიად ლოგიკურად მეცნიერს ეს მიაჩნია რესემანტიზაციისა და დეკონსტრუქციის შედეგებად.

პოსტკოლონიურ პერიოდში ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობასა და ზოგადად მეცნიერებაში, საერთაშორისო გამოცდილების დანერგვის აუცილებლობამ გარკვეულწილად ჩრდილში მოაქცია საბჭოთა კავშირის ხალხთა ლიტერატურული ურთიერთობების კვლევის აქტუალურობა. ამ პროცესს ცნობილმა მკვლევარმა, ნაფტოლი ბასელმა, მეტაფორულად თავიანთ „ნაციონალურ ბინებში“ მიფანტვ-მოფანტვა უწოდა. თავისთავად შეიცვალა როგორც ქვეყნებს შორის ურთიერთობების პრინციპები, ისე კულტურათა კომუნიკაციის ფორმატი და მთელი ამ პროცესის მეცნიერული ანალიზიც. დასავლურ/ ევროპულ მეცნიერებასთან შედარებით პოსტსაბჭოთა სივრცეში დაგვიანებით, მაგრამ ნაბიჯ-ნაბიჯ დაიწყო ამ პროცესის შესწავლა ყველაზე მართებული თეორიისა და მეთოდოლოგიის – პოსტკოლონიალიზმის კონტექსტში. შესაბამისად, სტატიაში განხილული ნაშრომები სწორედ პოსტკოლონიური კვლევების ვექტორს მიჰყვება. აღსანიშნავია, რომ ამ კვლევებმა (უწინარესად, ე. ჩხაიძის) მართლზომიერად მოარგო ერთმანეთს როგორც ევროპული, ისე ნაციონალური ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობითი ტრადიციები. როგორც სტატიაში აღინიშნა, რუსულ-ქართული წყვილის კვლევა განმსაზღვრელი იყო ზოგადად სხვა ლიტერატურების ანალიზისთვისაც, შესაბამისად, პოსტსაბჭოთა პერიოდშიც შესაძლებელია ამ პროცესის განზოგადება იდეოლოგიური კონტექსტის გარეშე.

დამოუკიდებელ სახელმწიფოთა შორის ურთიერთობების სისტემის შემუშავებასთან ერთად, საჭირო გახდა ასევე საერთო საბჭოთა ისტორიასთან დამოკიდებულების სტრატეგიების დასახვაც. თანამედროვე ქართულ მეცნიერებაში აქტუალურია ყოფილი სსრკ რესპუბლიკების გამოცდილების ანალიზი, მათი შედარება და ქართულ რეალობასთან მიმართება. ამ თვალსაზრისით საკვანძო საკითხია ყოფილი მეტროპოლიისა და პერიფერიების ურთიერთობა. აქედან გამომდინარე, გერმანული ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობის ეს ვექტორი, თავისი მეთოდოლოგიური კონცეფციებით მნიშვნელოვნად წაადგება არა მხოლოდ ქართულ-რუსულ, არამედ ყოფილი სსრკ რესპუბლიკების ლიტერატურათაშორისი ურთიერთობების კვლევის თანამედროვე პროცესსაც.

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# Patriotism for Cosmopolitanism: Postcolonial Reading of Vazha-Pshavela's Essay "Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism"

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## **Abstract:**

Vazha-Pshavela is known as one of the most important poets in the history of modern Georgian literature. His epic poems, "Aluda Keterauli," "Guest and Host" are regarded as masterpieces until today and are adopted into a film, "Vedreba" ("The Plea"), by Tengiz Abuladze, which consist of his trilogy (the others are "Natvris Khe" ("The Wishing Tree") and "Monanieba" ("Repentance"). Beside poems, he wrote short tales as well as ethnographic or philosophical essays. Today I would like to make my presentation based on his one of the most important essays, "Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism" (1905).

This essay tends to be understood that the poet supports for patriotism *against* cosmopolitanism especially when considering the context of that time. Before starting our discussion, I would like to introduce this historical context. In the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georgian students started studying in university in Russia and they formed a new group with nationalistic ideology to find the way to save the country from Russian colonial rule. The leaders of the group were Ilia Ch'avch'avadze and Akaki Tsereteli (we can see their statue on Rustaveli Ave.). Later they are called as "Pirveli Dasi" (The first group) and are considered as canonical writers. If the first group consists of nationalists, the second, "Meore Dasi" is utopian socialists, and the third "Mesame Dasi" is Marxists. The last one got active since 1898 and harshly criticized the first group and its leader, Ilia Ch'avch'avadze, blaming their nationalistic thought and aristocracy while insisting international and cosmopolitan movement. Finally, this opposition ended up with Ch'avch'avadze's murder in 1907 while the essay we are now going to discuss is written in 1905–2 years before the murder. Therefore, from this context, it looks natural to understand that with the essay Vazha-Pshavela was supporting the nationalist movement, with which Ch'avch'avadze intended

to decolonize Georgia, and it is also natural to consider Vazha-Pshavela as a member of “The First Group.”

Nationalism, of course, is a strong ideology and narrative to fight and struggle against imperialism and colonialism. However, when once decolonization is successfully accomplished, nationalism itself sometimes turns into nothing but a mean to oppress other ethnic minorities, or to cause conflicts with other nations. From this postcolonial point of view, we should be careful when treating nationalism as the ideology for fighting against empires; we should recognize that nationalism has both sides. We can observe such political situations in African as well as Asian post-colonial countries, and, to some extent, the similar scene can be observed in the post-soviet nations including Georgia, which holds the nationalist ideology of “the First Group” as a core of national narrative as well as the Georgian literary canon until today.

Therefore, when reading the canonical works of Georgian nationalist literature, in our case Vazha-Pshavela, we should pay more attention to this postcolonial admonish in order that we should not be trapped in the nationalist dilemma (or, in other words, chauvinism). The aim of this paper is to inquire how we can read Vazha-Pshavela’s works without a simple and direct understanding as a part of “nationalist” discourse.

**Keywords:** Vazha-Pshavela, Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism, Sense of Place

### **Patriotism and “Sense of Place”**

In “Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism,” Vazha-Pshavela, proposing an argument that supports patriotism, insists:

“I can not imagine a person with full reason and healthy feeling who does not love any single nation or a region more than other [nations or regions]. Why? –Because the same person is not born in thousands of places [at once], but must be born in a single place, in a single family, and must have a single mother!” (Vazha-Pshavela, 1964, 9, p. 254).

He declares that when a person is born in the world, he/she starts to have contact and communication with his/her mother as well as circumstances and therefore it is natural to love them and to acquire patriotic feeling.

Interestingly, Vazha's this thought is to some extent correspond to a main topic of ecocriticism, "Sense of Place". In its definition, the sense of place is formed by a human-environment relationship, which local inhabitants have created through local history, culture, memory, knowledge and so on. As Ryden (1991, p. 38) defines, "[a] sense of place results gradually and unconsciously from inhabiting a landscape over time, becoming familiar with its physical properties, accruing a history within its confines". If so, we can confidently say that what Vazha insists in the essay is truly Georgian version of the sense of place.

Grigol K'ik'nadze (1957), a Georgian scholar on Vazha-Pshavela studies, points out:

"If any feeling of love toward any single region of their homeland does not rush in Ilia's [Ch'avch'avadze] and Ak'ak'i's [Ts'ereteli] works; if the feeling of love toward any region is subordinated directly under the idea of homeland as such in these poets' writing, then, in Vazha-Pshavela's works, the homeland is represented not as a general idea, but as his own region with rivers, mountains, flowers, birds and animals..." (p. 44).

This point of view exactly shows the essence of Vazha-Pshavela's sense of place. After returning from St. Petersburg, where he studied in university, he had basically lived in his home village, Chargali, and collected folklores and ethnographies by walking from village to village. Then, he used these ethnographic or geographic details in his poems, as Vazha-Pshavela (1964, 9, p. 363) writes: "Almost all my poems are based on folklore or old tales [...]".

For instance, when creating the poem "The Snake Eater," he used a folklore "Mindi of Khogai," in which the main character eats snake meat and obtains an ability to hear voices of plants. While this plot itself is certain reflection of relationship between the local people and nature, he added some more local ethnographic details in the poem; in "The Snake Eater" as well as in his other poems, he often mentions about a local traditional religious festival ("Lashaloba").

Or, more simply, he puts concrete names of places in the poems so that readers can recognize where the events are happening in their plots. As an example for this point, I could propose his epic poem, “Bakhtrion.” This poem depicts the battle of Bakhtrion (1659) and show us how legendary the mountainous people fought against enemies, which occupied the lower Georgia. We can notice that many concrete places are mentioned in the poem: *Khoshara, Apkusho, Roshka, Agma, Gudani, Ch’ormeshali, Ch’ie, Ghuli, Khakhmati, Bachali, Akhadi, Gogolaurta, Maturi, and the headstream of Alazani river...* With this concreteness, we read the poem as if we are experiencing the history and the memory of the region.

In short, Vazha’s sense of place is strongly connected with the history of the Pshav-Khevsureti region, where he was born therefore he love. Once Vazha-Pshavela (1964, 9, p. 291) writes: “The historical past and the nature of Georgianness give us hope that this [The first group’s] ‘nationalism’ would be healthy and would never change into chauvinism and fanaticism”. If the sense of place emerged with slightly criticising the idea of nation-state and the subtle national identity, in this sense unlike Ilia Ch’avch’avadze and Ak’ak’I Ts’ereteli, who supposed a single “imagined community” and a national identity, Vazha-Pshavela explained the sense of place as the love of local history, nature, and culture, and therefore his “nationalism” could be “healthy” forever.

### **Patriotism and/for Cosmopolitanism**

Despite the general understanding, Vazha-Pshavela actually does not deny cosmopolitanism in the essay, “Cosmopolitanism and Patriotism.” Vazha-Pshavela (1964) starts the essay as follow:

Each true patriot is a cosmopolitan as each clever (and not our [Georgian]) cosmopolitan is a patriot. How? – In following way: Such a person sensibly serves his/her own nation and tries to improve his/her own homeland mentally, physically, and ethically. By this [behavior], he/she prepares the best members and the best friends for the whole humanity and contributes the development and well-being of the humanity (p. 252).

He thinks that, since the development of each nation through nationalists' contribution finally reaches the development of the whole humanity, patriotism and nationalism are not opposed to cosmopolitanism.

Considering the above-mentioned concept, here are two viewpoints from which we can construe Vazha-Pshavela's poems:

(1) Vazha-Pshavela thought that we can not become global or cosmopolitan without any local origin (especially, in cultural and literary turn). Therefore, he was particular about the sense of place as I mentioned above. He firmly believed that Georgians were able to love their own region(s). This love encourages them to enrich their region and homeland, and through this way they will contribute for all of humanity. Therefore, "the nature of Georgianness" to love – he insists – guarantees that "nationalism would be healthy."

(2) At the same time, he criticized conservatism and intolerance of local communities and depicted those who are exiled from the communities in his poems. Certainly, one of the main themes of his poems is conflict between individual and community. In "Aluda Keterauli," Aluda with his family were exiled from his village because he made a sacrifice for an enemy he killed on the local festival; in "Guest and Host," three main characters, Zviadauri, Jokola and Aghaza were all died because Zviadauri is the enemy for Jokola's village and killed by the villagers: because Jokola was forsaken because of inviting Zviadauri and was killed in the battle: and Aghaza, after his husband's, Jokola's death, committed a suicide; In "The Snake Eater," Mindia's ability to hear the voice of nature was once criticized by villagers. All of these examples show us that Vazha intendedly repeated the theme of conflict between individual and community.

Moreover, it is also interesting for us that destinations these characters go in exile is imagined as deterritorialized spaces. In the final chapter of "Guest and Host," Jokola, Aghaza, and Zviadauri get up from their graves as ghosts and gather on a rock and talk friendly after their tragic death. Therefore, this scene represents a world after death, i.e., deterritorialized world. In "The Snake Eater," it is possible to regard that the time-space where Mindia hears the voice of nature is a pre-historical, Edenic space. These deterritorialized spaces are not in the original text of the folklore he used to create the poems; rather, it is his original imagination, as he himself testified (Vazha-Pshavela, 1964, 9, p. 363-365). If so, Vazha-Pshavela specially prepared these deterritorialized spaces contrasting it with the local space in order to deconstruct the local identities, rather than depicted a cosmopolitan space which has no connection to any local identity.

## Conclusion

In the essay, Vazha-Pshavela (1964) writes:

Patriotism is more a matter of feelings than of reason while the reason was and is always adored and respected. Cosmopolitanism is just a fruit of the reason, of the reason of human being. It is not related to human's heart. It is a mean to avoid from the tragedy, which is suffering whole humanity until today (9, p. 254).

Vazha-Pshavela's this consideration echoes today's ecocritical discussion about the reconciliation of regionalism/localism and cosmopolitanism to overcome global scale environmental crisis like global warming, some ecocritics think that knowledge and technology help widening a local identity to global level (Heise, 2008, p. 17-67; Thomashow, 1999). Of course, this ecological point of view goes far beyond our discussion, but we can say that what Vazha-Pshavela insists in the essay doesn't lose its significance even today.

In short, Vazha-Pshavela, while describing the local tradition as the base of his creation, at the same time depicted the figures exiled from the local and tried to show a way to develop the local communities ethically. In other words, the poet imagines the deterritorialized space while drawing the very local sense of place. By being aware of this deterritorialization, local identity and nationalism keep "healthy" and contribute to the world.

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# The Sacred and the Profane: Intersections between Religion and Literature

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## Beatus et Possessus: Sacred Rituals and Crisis of Faith in *Requiem for the Living*

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### Abstract:

Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty (Kierkegaard, 1936). Faith which is the cornerstone of the religious life cannot be grasped by any means of concepts other than the religious experience of the faithful. The sacred rituals are the greatest example of one's faith in God. It is the symbol of highest form of love – agape – the love to God and love to thy neighbour. *Requiem for the Living* presents a “Mother of Faith”, Juana Mammanji (Grand Mother), the matriarch of a Luso-Indian household, who were devout Latin Catholics. The novella presents a chain of faith spanning through generations that kept the whole community together, left broken with the present descendant Osha. Mammanji becomes the blessed in her community by helping her family and community to live a meaningful life by following the sacred rituals while Osha was possessed by the specter of the glorious past, losing himself in his fallen state. Mammanji becomes the God's faith-ful by reviving her community with His sacred dictums as revealed through her when Osha becomes faith-less by abstaining from his path to be a beacon to his community. The customs and religious traditions of the community emerged out of Juana Mammanji from her lived-experience has been left with no heir when it comes to the present.

**Keywords:** Faith, Luso-Indian, Crisis, Sacred rituals, Lived-experience

Faith is a term with a wide range of meanings. In the narrow sense it is the irrational belief in a supernatural power; in its broader sense, it is the positive emotional state of an individual caught up in despair and in its broadest sense, it is the powerful expression of one's individual relation with God. I think I also need to distinguish here the distinction between faith and belief even though we use it synonymously in our day-to-day life. According to the Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1936), what we mean by faith (religious belief) and belief (based upon proof) are two entirely different things. Faith is credible because it is sensible while belief is credible because it is thinkable a la Dane. What he means by this is the simple thing that faith needs no proof to believe while belief needs some sort of evidence to believe in something, in a sense belief is rational and faith is non-rational. The Dane argues that faith is not irrational, faith does not agitate against reason, but it transcends it. Faith in fact leaves no room for reason or certainty, it always remains uncertain. Kierkegaard (1936) avers:

Without risk there is no faith. Faith is precisely the contradiction between the infinite passion of the individual's inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am capable of grasping God's objectivity, I do not believe. If I wish to preserve myself in faith I must constantly be intent upon holding fast the objective uncertainty, so that in the objective uncertainty I am out "upon seventy fathoms of water," and yet believe (p. 215).

Faith arises from uncertainties to an uncovered possibility in life that is why it is called faith, because it cannot be explained by mere laws of reason, it goes beyond it.

Wittgenstein (1967) also argues in a similar trajectory in his *Lectures on Religious Belief*. "In a religious discourse we use such expressions as: "I believe that so and so will happen," and use them differently to the way in which we use them in science" (p. 57). He opines religion is a form of life, he avers the utterances that makes religious language game possible cannot be carved out of its context and placed in a scientific or philosophic language game. We cannot interpret the religious language game by alienating from it. We must play it from within to describe it.

The same is true of my reading of this novella. I am not alienated from the text or the text from me. It is the dialectical relation between the text and me that constitutes its meaning. Rather than approaching the novella



with a logical/ theoretical reading in the sense of certain pre-conceived method or methodology. The act of reading the fictional text or the dialogical relationship I have with the text itself would be the method in my interpretation of this novella. This phenomenologico-hermenutical method or descriptive practise conceived at first by Husserl, and later extended and polished by Heidegger and Gadamer, would be the approach I would be taking in this paper for an understanding of the lived religion – religion as it is experienced and felt by the religious believers – in the novella.

*Requiem for the Living* presents a “Mother of Faith”, Juana Mammanji, the matriarch of a Luso-Indian household, who were devout Latin Catholics. She with her *fides in deum* and *fides in se* revived and reified the fundamental Christian virtues of *amor et caritas* in her family and community through her faith-filled enactment of sacred rituals. The novella presents a chain of faith spanning through generations that kept the whole community together, left broken with the present descendant Osha. He has lost his faith in himself and thus his faith in God, as a result the rituals he attends has become something dogmatic and meaningless. Mammanji becomes the *blessed* in her community by helping her family and community to live a meaningful life by following the sacred rituals while Osha was *possessed* by the specter of the glorious past, losing himself in his fallen state. Mammanji becomes the God’s faithful by reviving her community with His sacred dictums as revealed through her when Osha becomes faith-less by abstaining from his path to be a beacon to his community. The customs and religious traditions of the community emerged out of Juana Mammanji from her lived experience has been left with no heir when it comes to the present.

The narrative of a faith-ful (grand) Mother and doubt-ful (grand) son in the novella opens our eyes to the transformative power of faith. It helps us to see how an individual can work miracles and act as a blessing in her faith state. It also cautions us on how the lack of a faith state – despair and doubt – can become a curse and disrupt the foundations of one’s relation with his community and ultimately *himself*. Osha consumed by his despair and doubt lives like a demonically possessed man severing ties with his family and community. **The aim of this paper is to understand the significance of religious experience and emotions arising from the practice of sacred rituals in giving a purpose and meaning to human life in the context of our narrative.** For this objective, the paper will gauge the sort of experience we call religious, and the emotions constituting such an experience –

faith, holy, love, and charity – from my reading of the novella. I will try to look at how the practice of sacred rituals and traditions in the religious life of the faithful accredits meaning to their life in the fictional work. The notions of *beatus et possessus*, and the difference between mystical and ritualistic experience in the religious form of life presented in the novella will be of peculiar interest in this inquiry.

### Reading the Religious

The book begins with the life of Juana Mammanji, as revealed through Osha's description. Through the close narration we see the vibrant life, the community had under her auspicious presence and prudence. She is a devout Christian who is active with the religious traditions of the community. Religion, the root word *religo*, means “to bind fast” (Latin Dictionary, n.d.) and the term *cultus*, from which the word ‘culture’ comes, means “a form of worship” (Latin Dictionary, n.d.) For the early inhabitants of a place, their culture was the way in which they lived religiously, in close connection with one another and with their environment, the immediate presence in their life. In the below passage from the novel about Mammanji, we can see how she lived religiously in close relation with her brethren:

Everyone in the village respected and even feared Juana Mammanji. She even had a nickname: ‘Judge Nona’. Not just in the family, but in the whole parish, everything concerning what was to be done when a child was born or when someone died, or simply about things to be followed in every life...in all such matters, it was to Mammanji they turned for advice (Miranda, 2013, p. 5).

Juana Mammanji became the elder when her family and community needed her. She was the guiding principle of her community. The community lived according to the dictates from her mouth. For her people she was the chosen one of God. Her voice was the *vox dei*. But if we investigate into her life, we can see that everything was not that easy for her. She struggled with her life but in front of the hardships she faced, she took a leap of faith and it miraculously worked. Now her destiny is to help the others to do so. Kierkegaard (1936) avers, human life relies on a chance, on a certain possibility where our every decision count and relies on a “passion of the infinite”

– the faith – this passion is inwardly necessitated and is the crux of our movement, every infinite decision we make in our life we make it out of faith.

William James (1902/2002) opines: Wherever the interior prayer is lacking, there is no religion; wherever, on the other hand, this prayer rises and stirs the soul, even in the absence of forms or doctrines, we have living religion (359). Mammanji got the vigour to live a righteous life from her prayers. She lived a deeply religious life and set the model for others to follow.

Juana Mammanji, as her family and people lovingly called her, was a revolutionary Christian woman with her unique spirit. She formulated a co-dex for her community, she wrote down the prayers that ought to be recited and the etiquette of the rituals that has to be followed during the lent and holy week and distributed it among families. She headed from front the religious affairs of the family and her community. She cut the bread during *Pesaha* (Maundy Thursday), which was destined for the head of the house, Mammanji's husband Casper. She led the men during the *Devastha*, a midnight ritual during lent to cast off demons by chanting prayers. She sets the steps to properly conduct the ritual of burial. Mammanji did not just write the rites and prayers to be followed, but meaningfully ingrained those practises into the veins of her community. Her sphere of wisdom was so wholesome she took care of the spiritual needs as well as the material needs of the community. She was prudential in discerning the needs of body and soul. She cured the patients with epidemic using the traditional medicines, without charging them and sold the necessary items such as food and medicine to the people needed even when they were not able to pay. Juana Mammanji provided the moral and ethical code for her people not by forcing a religious dogma but by creating a belief system rooted in a more pragmatic approach. She was filled with faith and in her faith, she acted as a blessing to her community.

### **Mystery, Miracles and Rituals**

There was a sacred day in the community's almanac where everyone piously prepared for Juana Mammanji's spiritual revelations. It was the special occasion on which Mammanji had her mystical experience and made spiritual revelations. She was aware of the solemnity of this sacred occasion and prepared for it both mentally and physically, so did the whole community. Mammanji wears her particular vests and ornaments destined for that

day, she attends the special spiritual services in the church and prayfully prepares, while her family and the community devoutly anticipate for her transcendence to the divine, and gather round her with pious hearts. The mystery of that day was the transcendental experience Mammanji attained on the river side and her ability to involve a large enough crowd in the inscrutable experience she has. The event of the day where everyone's attention turns towards Mammanji started with a ritual bath in the Water:

After church, Mammanji would head straight to the riverside. There too people would be waiting with the utmost devotion. Mammanji would enter the water wearing all her ornaments, immerse herself completely, and leave the river, dripping wet. Her return trip to the house and the crowd gathered there was a sight worth seeing (Miranda, 2013, p. 9-10),

Mammanji imagined herself to be a light to her community. Her *faithful* act brings together the people gathered around her in communion; rekindling their faith under her presence. She provided hope to their community. And what gave her strength to bring together everyone in communion was her mystical experience – her personal experience of God. The sacred ritual she practiced was a manifestation of that divine union amidst the public. It acted as a testament of God's divine presence for the people around her and made their faith formidable. This is how Osha depicts Mammanji's mystical awareness, which is made manifested to the general public, during her sacred rituals: "Clicking her fingers in a particular rhythm, dancing to the tune of a strange song which no one heard before, sung in a melody no one could imitate, in words no one understood, she would walk home from the riverside" (Miranda, 2013, p. 10). Wittgenstein (1998) avers one's religious experience stands outside space and time, it is not factual, the ideals does not exist in this world, neither does it exists in its own but is found through the concrete experience of the individual and it is through the action the ideal is brought into this world. For something that stands outside space and time it is difficult to find words to express it. Mammanji's dance to the song no one has ever heard and the words of the song which she only understood and its visible enactment as a ritual performance reflects the Wittgensteinian findings on religious experience. There is a significant difference between the individual transcendental experience and its visible

manifestation as a ritual performance. Let us look at Osha's description to know what it is:

On her way, she would stare at each and every one, checking if everyone was wearing their *ventheenjas*. If anyone was caught without one, Mammanji would spit on their face with a loud cackle! Then she would make detailed predictions about everyone's future. Make proclamations in answer to the queries of the anxious. Prescribe offerings. She would scold those who were lazy about attending prayer and church, those who slept at those times without observing *esthi*. Then, humming that same tune, she would lie belly down on the dishes set on the table. Mammanji would not taste even one of them...After a while she get up and lie on her back, on the full length plantain leaf that would have been cut and laid out in advance. She would then slip into a deep sleep, as if she had lost consciousness (Miranda, 2013, p. 10-11).

Here we see the distinction between the mystical and ritualistic experience more clearly. Mystical experience is personal and the ritualistic experience is inter-personal. Sacred rituals were an immediate experience of the holy for her while it was a mediated experience to the others through her. The sacred rituals were an externalised performance of Mammanji's inner-religious emotions. In her most profound experience her face would glow, like the divine grace has come down upon her from heaven. In that tranquil state of mind, she prophesied and guided the community to stick to the sacred dictums. Ferran (2019) avers the emotions such as holy, faith and love (as in the personal relationship with God and brotherly love) are solely religious and take much more of higher value than our ordinary emotions because they are the most sophisticated and refined mode of emotions which demands a passionate commitment from our part. Mammanji's ritualistic behavior may seem like an insignificant thing or non-sensical stuff to a non-believer because it does not heed to her reason. But it does heed to the "passion of the infinite" within those surrounded her. For Mammanji's family and the whole crowd who were present on the occasion to view and attend the ritual ceremony, Mammanji's mysterious acts were testimonies to the presence of "Holy".

The people who were inspired by Mammanji's mystical experience, which is made concrete by the enactment of sacred rituals, stood before her

with awe and reverence. Osha describes how the others perceived her mystical state as follows: “How brightly Mammanji’s face would glow at those moments, as if she had been transformed into someone else! When she woke, Mammanji would say she recalled nothing of what happened” (Miranda, 2013, p. 11). Mammanji’s transcendental experience led to the formation of her community’s belief and creeds through the practise of sacred rituals. The mystic experience she had was ineffable for words but the actions and words from her during that deep spiritual state were interpreted by the pious people as sacred actions, and the commemoration of this event by the people made it a ritual. The mystical awareness is a form of consciousness only accessible to the mystic but the effects of her change of consciousness was manifested in her face and bodily gestures. Everyone gathered around were able to apprehend change in her face, and the heavenly aura around her, because their minds were attuned to the ritualistic setting. The people may not have understood “what it is like to be” in that state but they see her mystical experience to be true because of their common faith. Here is a statement from the novel resonating this sentiment: “Mammanji and everyone believed it was from this ritual that she got the strength for everything after Casper Pappanji’s death, Or even before that” (Miranda, 2013, p. 11). Mammanji emits an ethereal radiance for those who perceived her through the eyes of faith during her sacred rituals. They were made aware of their ephemeral nature in her presence during her mystic state. Dewey (1934) states that ideal is but an imagination of the real. The beliefs or creeds of any religion contains a symbolic significance that is verifiable to a general public experience. The people gathered around perceived the ‘holy’ in the Mammanji’s new apparition because the solemnity of the situation demanded it to be perceived ‘holy’. The religious emotions such as holy, sacred, etc. are higher emotions directed at a person, an object or an event which is of significant value to the religious believer (Ferran, 2019). People believed in the sanctifying and healing power of her rituals and the religious traditions she invented. And it is through their common faith they perceived the God within her and attenuated with the sacred emotions such as holy and divine.

When her family and community were living in chaos, she instilled in them a vigour to form a coherent order in their life and she got the power to do it solely through her practice/performance of sacred rituals. Kant (1998) avers morality is what we ought to do. It is prescriptive because it demands a

rightful conduct from the person under any circumstances. When doubt and uncertainty fuelled by chaos was reigning people's life Mammanji faithfully took the mantle of an elder to lead them. For Mammanji and those who believed in her it was God himself acting through her in times of the ritual showing the infinite Beings' dominion over them, so that they may follow His rules manifested through her. The invisible presence of the divine is made actual through her visible actions. The purpose of this ritualistic experience was to demonstrate the *visio absoluta* through enactments. Mammanji through her ritualistic experience created the actual from the apparent. The enactments helped the community seek answer for their moral dilemmas and helped them to stick to the religious way of life even if they went astray, it ensured the survival of community based on rules. Bergson (1935) talks about the two sources of morality in his book *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. For him morality is either habitual or reformed. The moral rules as given through the religious practices is learned by the community through its habitus or reformed and renewed by a saintly figure when the community comes to a moral dilemma. Mammanji through her charismatic appeal and the ritual enactment sets the rules to be followed by the people in her community. The sacred rituals made the individuals with no common thread of ordinary emotions belonging to a common faith. They were all united in *fides* by Mammanji's zealous and zestful proclamation enacted through her rituals.

### **Blessed and Possessed**

The novel's narrative suddenly turns the lens into the present after the rich and lively relations of the community under the able leadership of Mammanji. Osha's fascination with the lost past through the symbolization of a golden key runs the narrative in the later sections. He realises the decomposition of his community's *cultus* in his *living*. The religious traditions passed on by Juana Mammanji is on a standstill when it reaches Osha. He is dubious about his ability to be an elder to his family and community, and his *lack* to be an able leader to his community consumes him. The recurrent motifs in the novel – the search for a hidden lock and a lost key – signifies his anxiousness while confronting the nothingness of his lifeworld. It signifies an absence of something which he zestfully yearns – to live an authentic life as Mammanji lived. The ghost from the past haunts him and possess

him. The embodiment of that possession is the golden key. The key symbolizes belonging to a household, losing the key means closing the doors of your belongings to ever. In Osha's case, with the loss of key, he loses his sense of belonging to a household – a home, a family, to his kinship and his community. His mind lingers in the past and is lost in there, he cannot form genuine bond with his family. His father's irresponsibility nor his mother's scandalous affair bothers him. He brushes it off with a general apathy towards life. This indifference towards the people in his life reaches its zenith when he passes over Ida, his own sister, in the streets and when he deserts his wife Jacintha over the lost key. He did not care about anything happening around him anymore.

Beauvoir (1948) talks about "sub-human" as a mode of being, where people sever connections with the rest of the community and make themselves distant from others. It can either happen through a deep traumatic event in once life or because of the dread about life which consumes one. They treat the world as insignificant and dull. Osha's state of being as a sub-human is caused by his lack of a place where he cannot return.

There is a recurring theme of "Hiraeth" in the novella, a nostalgia for a place where you cannot return. Osha's obsession with the key and his separation from *tharavad* is inter-related. His family's exodus from his ancestral home was the cause of his deep longing and it took the shape of a trauma, something vexing and painful with time, it is expressed throughout the novel with the metaphor of golden key and hidden lock. They represent the only thing he cared in his life, his ancestral home and the traditions. He was disturbed by the loss of the sacred prayer sheet transferred by the fathers in the family. It was a curio of the sacristan tradition kept within their family. It went missing from Franso, Osha's father, who does not care much about their traditions. He could neither find the prayer sheet which was passed through generations like a family treasure, nor could he find the lock of the home which he could inhabit. He is a man without home and life. One who is sickened by his dreams of a "Home" – a sick soul possessed by the love for his past.

Osha is nostalgic about the paradise he is lost like the first man. He has lost his faith in his world where he was left without nothing to inhabit and thus fail to live his life authentically in the present. Eliade (1959) talks about home as the "holy place", "A space has been provisionally consecrated and cosmicised by the primitive man when he inhabits it," he avers, "All symbols and rituals having to do with temples, cities, and houses are finally derived



from the primary experience of the sacred space” (p. 58). *Thara*, the etymological root of the word *tharavad* in Malayalam means sacrificial altar or ground. *Tharavad*, Osha’s ancestral home, was the sacred place where Mammanji’s sacred rituals/practices took place and the ground from which family’s traditions sprout. This is how Osha presents his *tharavad*: “It was Juana Mammanji who built the imposing *tharavad*, one sees today with mortar and laterite stones; a house with facing windows and doors large enough for souls to come and go easily; with a verandah, a large hall, and an attic” (Miranda, 2013, p. 2). Osha’s ancestral home was inhabited not only by humans but the souls of their ancestors. He felt a blissful ecstasy while being in Mammanji’s room after being separated from the *tharavad* as a child. Osha was able to revisit the place and live with her memories, with an abiding peace and joy, the only meaningful event that he could experience in a life which he considered meaningless. He describes his most sublime moment as follows: “In that moment, I was experiencing a calm, safety, and peace which was unknown to me. I felt like Home. In this house, in this room, I wish I could live with Mammanji” (Miranda, 2013, p. 46).

Mammanji was able to create an impact and imprint her memories on the people of her times as well as the posteriority, through her faith-filled life and sacred rituals; once we reach the end of the novel, we see everyone are convinced of Mammanji’s divinity and worship her as a saint in the church with due reverence. The ideal that Mammanji made real lives on, yet somehow Osha could not find that ideal from his real life. He was caught up in a tantamount of chaos and could not reinstate the order in his family like Mammanji did. When it comes to the end of the novel, we see Mammanji is accepted as a saint among the local community and is venerated into the larger Roman Catholic Church. She is not the saint of the locals anymore but of the whole catholic world. The Shylocks among them had started to print her photos and make money. Here we see the community diverge from its original spiritual roots. Spirituality has become a business now. Mammanji through the practice of sacred rituals used her spiritual gifts for the welfare of the community, but now it has come to an end. James avers, “Churches, once established, live at secondhand upon tradition; but the founders of every church owed their power originally to the fact of their direct personal communion with the divine.” It is from such an occasion that James avers a religious or a faithful’s life should be assessed by its fruits. That is how they affect their life and those around her. Mammanji is a paragon of what truly religious means from the novella.

## Conclusion

To be religious means to have faith in times of uncertainties as Mammanji has shown with her life. The sacred rituals Mammanji enacted was borne out of her faith. When one fails to see the mystery of faith behind the ritualistic tradition it becomes meaningless. It is in one's personal experience with God, the essence of the religious rituals has to be sought. The community is in crisis of faith because the progenies forget the dynamic and progressive aspects of their traditions and clings onto the archaic and static aspects of it. Like Mammanji, for every age, for every time, in the moments of crisis an Oracle has to be born – an oracle who would fill the heart of their people with the faith to lead a good life. The community's faith which is embedded in its ritualistic traditions need to be reformulated and reinvented whenever it comes to a crisis. Sacred rituals of a community are recollections of the spiritual experience of the humble beginnings of a community. They set the stage for the community to form a coherent structure of its own to lead a religious life. The formlessness of the Luso-Indian community in its beginning has attained a form with Mammanji's religious practices and visionary actions. The myth of Juana Mammanji exists because it will inspire the posteriority to do the same in times of uncertainties. But Osha shuts the door for his Mamma (mother) and others in his faith-less state. His alienation from his family is linked to his alienation from his *religio*.

Faith is the cornerstone of one's religious convictions and the meaning behind the sacred rituals in the novella. It connects and build communication among the community. The faithful dialogue between God and oneself, and oneself and thy neighbor embedded in the acts of rituals fosters the spirit of the community and brings in life. The Luso-Indian community's traditions and rituals are on the deathbed in the present because Osha failed to act in faith – in communion with others. Osha forgets that crises can happen but what counts most is the faith to re-born again in the flames of crises like Mammanji did, he failed to take inspiration from the greatest testimony of faith in his life – his own Grandma. Osha failed to see the only truth that could have set him free – to be religious means to be faithful – to God and one's own people.

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# "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" in the Context of World Civilization

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## Aspect of Medieval Ideological-Political Discourse (King Deification or Theosis?) in Georgian Historical Literature

შუა საუკუნეების იდეურ-პოლიტიკური დისკურსის (მეფის გაღმერთება თუ განღმერთობა?) ასპექტი ქართულ საისტორიო მწერლობაში

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ანა ლეთოდიანი

ფილოლოგიის დოქტორი; თბილისის ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი; ასისტენტ-პროფესორი; შოთა რუსთაველის სახელობის ქართული ლიტერატურის ინსტიტუტი, მეცნიერ-თანამშრომელი (თბილისი, საქართველო)

### Abstract:

Idea of the highest secular power equality with the divine has existed from the ancient time. King was regarded as a holy institute belonging to the divine sphere.

Royal power was regarded as Lord's anointed in Georgian reality.

The idea of anointment of the royals by Lord was reflected in the stories about Queen Tamar as well.

In the above-mentioned context, we would like to focus attention on two fragments from the "Histories and Eulogies of the Sovereigns". "... Thus, about Tamar, three time desired and elevated by Trinity as the fourth, who became the divine, of the kings..." then Nebuchadnezzar saw one of the three as fourth with three children, now, again, Tamar can be regarded as the fourth with the Trinity, equalized with them and elevated to them..."

We can see similar expressions and addresses to Tamar in the works of historians, though the offered citations are significant in the sense that based on them, in Georgian science there was adopted the view about deification of Queen Tamar, her acclamation as the fourth member of Trinity. Many scientists have considered this issue. Most of them regard acclamation of Tamar as the divine, “forth hypostasis of Trinity” as undoubted fact. But some researchers do not share this view.

We cannot accept the views of number of some scientists about acclamation of Tamar as “divine by nature”.

In our opinion, words of unknown chronicler does not mean that Tamar was acclaimed as divine by nature, “fourth hypostasis of Trinity”. Here is implied that Queen Tamar was elevated by Trinity to equal position (i.e., due to her worthy reign and, hence, holiness) as the “fourth”, as saint; and this is due to her holiness, she is regarded as “four”, equalized and elevated (to Trinity).

In Georgia, according to Georgian traditions, the king was regarded as Lord’s anointed, but he has never been deified. Assumably, they clearly understood Christian teaching about “deification by nature” and “deification by anointment” and provided and analyzed citations from Queen Tamar’s Chronicler apparently demonstrate this.

**Keywords:** King Deification, Theosis, Medieval Ideological-Political Discourse, Georgian Historical Literature, Queen Tamar

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** მეფის გაღმერთება, თეოზისი, შუა საუკუნეების იდეოლოგიურ-პოლიტიკური დისკურსი, ქართული ისტორიული ჟანრის ლიტერატურა, თამარ მეფე

უმალესი საერო ხელისუფლების ღვთისსწორობის იდეა უძველესი დროიდან არსებობდა. მეფობა გაიაზრებოდა წმინდა ინსტიტუციად, რომელიც ღვთაებრივის სფეროს განეკუთვნებოდა.

ძველ აღმოსავლეთში მეფის ხელისუფლებას ღვთაების მეფობის შესახებ მითოსურ კონცეფციასთან აკავშირებდნენ, რაც იმ დროის სხვადასხვა კულტურის საერთო მახასიათებელია. მითოსური აღქმის თანახმად, მეფე კულტურული გმირი, წმინდა მმართველი იყო, რადგან მას ღვთაებისაგან მიემადლებოდა გარკვეული ფუნქციები, იგი წმინდა ნების გამტარებლად მიიჩნეოდა (Энциклопедия Символы и Знаки, 2007-2023, <https://sigils.ru>) მეფის ტიტული მისი მფლობელისათვის ღმერთსა და ადამიანს შორის შუამავლობას გულისხმობდა. მას ევალებოდა ქვეყანაში: მართლმსაჯულების, გამარჯვების და მშვიდობის, ასევე ადამიანების, ნიადაგის და ცხოველების ნაყოფიერების უზრუნველყოფა (შეგვიძლია მაგალითად დავასახელოთ: ეგვიპტე, ბაბილონი, მესოპოტამია, ჩინეთი, იაპონია).

მოგვიანებით, მონარქთა გაღმერთების შესახებ წარმოდგენა შეითვისა ელინისტურმა და რომის იმპერიებმა (ელინისტურს იმიტომ ვუსვამთ ხაზს, რომ „ბასილევსისა“ და „ტირანის“ „მოდელები“ განსხვავდებოდა, როგორც ერთმანეთის, ისე, მოგვიანებით აღმოცენებული მონარქის „ელინისტური მოდელისაგან“).

ელინიზმის ეპოქიდან საქმე გვაქვს მმართველის არა უბრალოდ გმირად წარმოჩენას, ან საკრალიზაციას, არამედ გაღმერთებასთან. ამ პერიოდში მეფეთა გაღმერთებას, თავდაპირველად პიროვნულ-ქარიზმატული ხასიათი ჰქონდა, თუმცა, თანდათან, შეიძინა სტატუსის გაღმერთების სახე (Свенцицкая, 2005, გვ. 236).

რომის იმპერიაშიც საკრალიზებული იყო მეფის ფიგურა. რომის ყოფილი იმპერიის ტერიტორიაზე ქრისტიანობის გავრცელების შემდეგ იწყება ახალი ეპოქა, როცა, არა ცალკეული მმართველს მიიჩნევენ ღმერთად, არამედ თავად იმპერატორის (მოგვიანებით, სამეფო) ხელისუფლებას.

მეფობა ღვთისაგან კურთხეულია ბიბლიური ტრადიციითაც. თუმცა, ზემოაღნიშნულის ფონზე, ის გარკვეული თავისებურებებით გამოირჩევა. ძველსა და ახალ აღთქმაში მნიშვნელოვანია უწყება ღვთის მეუფების შესახებ. საღვთო წერილში ამქვეყნიური მეფობის თემა, ისრაელიანთა გამოცდილებიდან გამომდინარე, ვითარდება და საბოლოო ჯამში, ის იესო ქრისტეს მეუფების განსაზღვრას ემსახურება

(Леон-Дюфура და სხვ., 1974, გვ. 1224; Труды и издание Архимандрита Никифора, 1990, გვ. 776).

ადრექრისტიანულ დოკუმენტებში გადმოცემულია სამეფო ხელისუფლებისადმი დამოკიდებულება, რომელიც შემდეგ საეკლესიო მოღვაწეთა ნაწერებსა თუ საეკლესიო კრებათა დადგენილებებით გამყარდა და დამკვიდრდა ქრისტიანულ მსოფლმხედველობრივ სისტემაში. ამ დამოკიდებულების თანახმად, მეფე, იმპერატორი მიიჩნეოდა ადამიანად, რომელსაც ღვთისაგან ებოძა ხელისუფლება და რომლისადმი მორჩილება არ ნიშნავდა მის ღმერთად აღიარებას (იუსტინე ფილოსოფოსი, თეოფილე ანტიოქიელი, პაპი კლიმენტი რომაელი, ტერტულიანე (მართალია, იგი არ მიეკუთვნება ეკლესიის მამებს, მაგრამ მის ნაშრომებს განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობა აქვს ეკლესიის ისტორიისათვის) (იუსტინე ასევე აღნიშნავს, რომ „*ცუდი მმართველობისათვის მეფეებს ელოდებათ საშინელი სასჯელი – მუდმივი ცეცხლი ჯოჯოხეთში*“ (ჯავახია, 2005, გვ. 51, 52, 53; Аверинцев, 1977, გვ. 116).

IV საუკუნიდან კონსტანტინე დიდის მმართველობის, ანუ ქრისტიანობის სახელმწიფო რელიგიად გამოცხადების პერიოდიდან ჩამოყალიბდა სამეფო ხელისუფლების ღვთისაგან რჩეულობის თეორია. ბიზანტიაში წარმოიშვა იმპერატორის ხელისუფლებისა და სახელმწიფოს ერთიანი ქრისტიანული კონცეფცია, რომელიც საფუძვლად დაედო ბიზანტიის პოლიტიკურ დოქტრინას. ამ კონცეფციის თანახმად, ღმერთი (პანტოკრატორი) იყო ყოველი არსებული წესრიგის, როგორც ზეციერის, ასევე მიწიერის შემოქმედი და თავი, იმპერატორი კი, ზეციური წესრიგის შესაბამისად, მიწიერი წესრიგის დამამყარებელი. ეს იყო დიარხიის პრინციპი, ანუ საერო და სასულიერო ხელისუფლების ერთიანობის იდეა. (ჯავახია, 2005, 55, Rebenich al, 2017, p. 26).

შუასაუკუნეობრივი ქრისტიანული კონცეფციის თანახმად, მიუხედავად უფლისაგან ბოძებული შეუზღუდავი უფლებებისა, იმპერატორი როგორც ადამიანი ისეთივე მონა იყო ღვთისა, როგორც ყველა მოკვდავი (Аверинцев, 1977, გვ. 116). მისთვის ცხადი იყო ამქვეყნიური ძალაუფლების არარაობა, და პირადი პასუხისმგებლობა ღვთის წინაშე მონიჭებული უფლებებისათვის (ჯავახია, 2005, გვ. 56). ამდენად, ქრისტიანული სწავლებით, კურთხეულია მეფობა, როგორც ინსტიტუცია და არა რომელიმე კონკრეტული ადამიანი (მეფე); მეფის ტიტული გულისხმობს განსაკუთრებულ პასუხისმგებლობას ღვთის წინაშე. მოგვიანებით, ბიზანტიაში „გაუკუღმართდა ეს სწავლება“. ბიზანტიის იმპე-

რატორი მიიჩნის ამქვეყნიურ ღმერთად, საკრალურ ფიგურად (Аверинцев, 1977, გვ. 116; Каждан, 1968, გვ.103, Литаврин და სხვ., 1989, გვ. 29). ბიზანტიელთა წარმოდგენით, კორონაცია იმპერატორს ავტომატურად განწმენდა ყოველგვარი, მათ შორის მომაკვდინებელი ცოდვის, მკვლელობისაგან. სიწმინდეებად მიიჩნეოდა ვასილევსის სასახლე, ტანისამოსი.

საინტერესოა, როგორია ვითარება ამ თვალსაზრისით საქართველოში?

მეფის ხელისუფლება ღვთისაგან დადგენილად რომ მიიჩნეოდა ქართულ სინამდვილეშიც, ეს არაერთხელაა ხაზგასმული როგორც ჰაგიოგრაფიულ, ასევე საერო ხასიათის ლიტერატურულ ძეგლებსა და, რა თქმა უნდა, ისტორიული ჟანრის მწერლობაში (ვახტანგ გორგასლის, დავით აღმაშენებლის და სხვა ისტორიები „გრიგოლ ხანცთელის ცხოვრება“, ექვთიმე და გიორგი მთაწმინდელთა „ცხოვრებანი“, „ვეფხისტყაოსანი“ და სხვა) ხელმწიფის ღვთისაგან კურთხეულობის იდეა, აისახა თამარ მეფის ისტორიებშიც.

სხვა ქრისტიან და, მათ შორის, ქართველ მეფეთა მსგავსად თამარიც ღვთისგან ხელდასხმულად მიიჩნევს თავს. „*რწმუნებულ არს ჩემდა პირველ ღმრთისაგან და შემდგომად მშობელთა ჩემგან*“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 47); სიკვდილის წინ კი უკანასკნელ მიმართვაში „*წარჩინებულთა სამეფოსა თვისისათა*“ თამარი ამბობს, – „*განგებითა ღმრთისათა ვიყავ თქუენ ზედა*“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 145).

ზემოაღნიშნულ კონტექსტში ყურადღებას შევაჩერებთ „ისტორიანი და აზმანის“ ორ მონაკვეთზე.

„*ლუკა აღმავლობასა სიტყუ“სასა იქმს, „სეითის, ადამისა და ღმრთისა“; მეცა ესრეთ ვიწყო ამის თამარისა, სამგზის სანატრელისა და სამებისაგან ოთხად თანააღზევებულისა, რომელი ეთეროან იქმნა კელმწიფეთა შორის, რომლისა სახე და სახელი თვისსა ადგილსა სიტყუამან საცნაურ ჰყოს*“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 3); „*თუ მაშინ ნაბუქოდონოსორ სამთა ყრმათა თანა ოთხებად იხილა ერთი სამთაგანი, აქა კულა სამებისა თანა იხილვების ოთხებად თამარ, მისწორებული და აღმატებული...*“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 25).

თამარისადმი მსგავს გამონათქვამებსა თუ მიმართვებს არცთუ იშვიათად ვხვდებით ისტორიკოსებთან (ასევე, მეხოტბეებთან, მაგრამ, ეს, ვრცელი საუბრის თემაა და ამიტომ, მხოლოდ თამარ მეფის ისტორიებით შემოვიფარგლეთ). თუმცა მოხმობილი ფრაზები იმ კუ-



თხითაა უფრო მნიშვნელოვანი, რომ ძირითადად, მათზე დაყრდნობით გავრცელდა ქართულ მეცნიერებაში მოსაზრება, თამარ მეფის გაღმერთების, ქრისტიანული სამების მეოთხე წევრად გამოცხადების შესახებ. ამ საკითხს არაერთი მეცნიერი შეეხო. მათი უმეტესობა თამარის ღვთაებად, „სამების მეოთხე ჰიპოსტასად“ გამოცხადებას უცილობელ ფაქტად მიიჩნევს, ზოგიერთი მკვლევარი კი, არ იზიარებს ამ შეხედულებას.

მეცნიერთა ნაწილს მიაჩნია, რომ თამარის გაღმერთების საფუძველი სახელმწიფოებრივი, მეფის მომხრეთა იდეოლოგია, ან სულაც ქართული მესიანისტური იდეის არსებობაა, რომელიც ჩვენი ქვეყნის და ხელმწიფის ძლიერების აღმატებულად წარმოჩენას ისახავდა მიზნად. სხვათა მოსაზრებით, თამარის „სამების მეოთხე ჰიპოსტასად“ დასახვა ადამიანის განღმერთობის (თეოზისის) ზოგადი იდეით შეიძლება აიხსნას. ერთ-ერთი თვალსაზრისის თანახმად, თამარი სულიწმიდის ინკარნაციად მიიჩნევა. ასევე გამოთქმულია შეხედულებები, რომელთა მიხედვით, ერთი მხრივ, თამართან, როგორც დიდ ქრისტიანთან სულიწმიდა სუფევს, მეორე მხრივ კი, იგი (თამარი), როგორც ბაგრატიონი მეფე, შთამომავლობით მაცხოვრის მონათესავე გვარის წარმომადგენელი, „ღვთის სწორი“ უფლისაგან საქართველოს მფარველად მოგვევლინა.

რამდენიმე მეცნიერის მსგავსად ვერ გავიზიარებთ მოსაზრებას იმის შესახებ, რომ თამარ მეფე მისმა პირველმა მემატთანემ „სამების მეოთხე ჰიპოსტასად“, „ბუნებით ღმერთად“ გამოაცხადა. ამ საკითხებზე საუბრისას, ვფიქრობთ, აუცილებლად უნდა გავითვალისწინოთ რამდენიმე ასპექტი: 1. ისტორიკოსთა, განსაკუთრებით „ისტორიანი და აზმანი შარავანდედთანი“ ავტორის (ისევე როგორც ზოგადად სხვა ქართველ მემატთანეთა, მაგ., ჯუანშერის, დავით აღმაშენებლის ისტორიკოსის) ღრმა თეოლოგიური, ასევე სახისმეტყველებითი ცოდნა; 2. აგრეთვე საგულისხმოა, რომ ისტორიკოსთა თხზულებებში, გარკვეულ შემთხვევებში, სიტყვები ბევრად მეტს გამოხატავს, ვიდრე მათი ლექსიკური მნიშვნელობა გულისხმობს. ისინი ტერმინები უფროა, რადგან მსოფლმხედველობრივ წვდომას უკავშირდება. ვფიქრობთ, აღნიშნულის საფუძველზე უნდა გავიაზროთ თამარ მეფის პირველი ისტორიკოსისა მოხმობილი ფრაზები, თამარი „სამებისაგან ოთხად თანააღზევებულია“ (ისტორიანი და აზმანი შარავანდედთანი, 1959, გვ. 3), „სამებისა თანა ოთხებად იხილვების..., მისწორებული და აღმატებული“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 25).

„თანააღზევება“ ძველ ქართულ ენაში ვნებითი გვარის მიმღეობაა და მდგომარეობით ამაღლებულს ნიშნავს (ჩიქობავა, 1950, გვ. 754). ამ სიტყვის პირველი ნაწილი თან(ა), საზოგადოდ, რთული ფუძეების პირველი ნაწილია და აღნიშნავს ვინმესთან ან რამესთან ყოფნას (მისდამი ყოფნას (იოან. 1. 4) (ჩიქობავა, 1986, გვ. 237; ორბელიანი, 1991, გვ. 299), „-გან“ („სამეზისაგან“) თანდებულია, მოითხოვს ნათესაობით ბრუნვას და წინამავალ სახელთან ერთად პასუხობს კითხვას ვისგან? რისგან? (ჩიქობავა, 1950, გვ. 954). აქედან გამომდინარე, ფრაზა თამარი „სამეზისაგან ოთხად თანააღზევებულია“ სიტყვასიტყვით ასე შეიძლება გავიგოთ, თამარი სამეზის მიერ მისდამი „ოთხად“ არის მდგომარეობით ამაღლებული.

რაც შეეხება „ისტორიანი და აზმანის“ მეორე ამონარიდს: „სამეზისა თანა ოთხებად იხილვების (თამარ) მისწორებული და აღმატებული“. „მისწორებული“ მსგავსებას, მიმსგავსებას ნიშნავს (აბულაძე, 1973, გვ. 250, 408). „აღმატებული“ კი, „ამაღლებულს“ (აბულაძე, 1973, გვ. 408). ამ შემთხვევაშიც საუბარია იმაზე, რომ თამარი სამეზასთან „ოთხებად“ იხილვება, (მასთან) მიმსგავსებული და ამაღლებული.

ქრისტიანული თეოლოგიის მიხედვით, „მსგავსება“ და „ხატება“, ის, თვისებებია, რომელნიც ღმერთმა ადამიანს პირველშესაქმეშივე მიჰმადლა. „შესაქმის“ წიგნი გადმოგვცემს, „და თქვა ღმერთმან: ვქმნეთ კაცი ხატისებრ ჩვენისა და მსგავსებისაებრ“ (დაბ. 1. 26) (სარჯველაძე, 1981, გვ. 49).

ადამიანი დასაბამშივე ღვთის (ყოვლადწმინდა სამეზის) ბუნებისადმი ხატქმნილი იყო და არა მხოლოდ თავისუფალი ნებით, მოაზროვნეობით, მეუფებრივობით (რაც ხატებრივ თვისებად მიიჩნევა), არამედ სათნოებითი ღირსებებითაც: სიკეთით, სამართლიანობით, სიწმინდით, სიმდაბლით, უხრწნელობით (რაც მსგავსებისეულ თვისებებს წარმოადგენს). ეს ყოველივე ადამიანს ანიჭებდა მადლმოსილებას, ნეტარებას, დიდებულებას და მას, უცოდველს, წარმოაჩენდა მამისეულ მხარეში დამკვიდრებულ საყვარელ ძედ, ღვთის ძეობილად, რომელიც თავის თავში გამომხატველი იყო ძე ღმერთის ბუნებითი ძეობისა (იოანე ოქროპირი) (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 94).

*ცოდვით დაცემის შემდეგ „ხატება“ წარუხოცელად დარ-ჩა ადამიანში, ხოლო მსგავსებისებრობა (ძეობილობა) სრულყოფილების შესაბამისად მოსაპოვებელი გახდა. ძე ღმერთის განკაცებამ ადამიანებს*

კვლავ გაუხსნა გზა იმ თავდაპირველი მსგავსებისაკენ (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 107), ძეობილობისაკენ, რაც უცოდველ ადამიანს ჰქონდა თავის პირველქმნილებაში და რაც ცოდვამ გააუკუღმართა (იოანე დამასკელი) (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 107).

მსგავსების მოპოვების აუცილებლობაზე ყველა ღვთისმეტყველნი აწმყო დროში საუბრობს, რაც კაცობრიობის დაცემულ ცოდვის შემდგომ პერიოდს გულისხმობს. ხატისებრობის თვისებები: თავისუფალი ნება, მოაზროვნეობა ადამიანში ცოდვის შემდგომ მდგომარეობაშიც შენარჩუნებულია, რაც განწმენდადი და აღდგინებადია ნათლისღების მადლით. სათნოებებში სრულყოფა კი საღვთო ნათლისღებასთან ერთად აუცილებელი პირადი ძალისხმევით მოიპოვება, რაც არის სწორედ მსგავსებისებრობა (წმ. დიადიქოს ფოტიკელი) (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 111).

*უპირველესად, წმინდანნი არიან ის ადამიანები, რომელნიც მთლიანად შეუდგებიან და შეემეცნებიან ღმერთს, თავიანთი ცხოვრების წესის, სათნოებებში სრულყოფის კვალობაზე უფალი „აძლევს მათ შვილად გახდომის უფლებამოსილებას“ (იოან. 1. 12). ისინი აღარ არიან მონები – არამედ ძეები, ხოლო თუ ძეები არიან, არიან მემკვიდრეები ღვთისა (გალატ. 4. 7; რომ. 8. 17). (დამასკელი, 2000, გვ. 184).*

არსებობს თვისებრივად ორი ძეობა: 1) ბუნებითი, არსობრივი, შეუქმნელი და დაუსაბამო ძეობა, რაც აქვს მეორე ჰიპოსტასს მამალმერთისადმი და 2) მადლისმიერი, შექმნილობითი ძეობა ღვთისადმი, რაც ადამიანის თვისებაა.

პირველ შემთხვევაში, ბუნებითი ძეობა სწორედ პირდაპირი გაგებით ითქმის, მეორე შემთხვევაში კი ადამიანი „შვილებულია“, „მედდადებულია“, „ძეობილია“, მადლისმიერი ძეა („ძეობილია“, ეს ტერმინი ეკუთვნის არსენ იყალთოელს) ანუ თავდაპირველად ადამიანი შეიქმნა ძეობილად, მადლისმიერ ძედ ღვთისა. ძეობილობის პატივი მან გააუკუღმართა მცნების დარღვევით. მაცხოვარმა თავისი განკაცებით კვლავ აღადგინა ადამიანი თავდაპირველი ძეობილობის პატივში (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 67, 68). ძეობილობა მწვერვალია ღვთისადმი მსგავსებისა (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 118).

აღნიშნულ კონტექსტში უნდა გავიზაროთ თამარ მეფის სახეც. მისი: სიკეთის, სამართლიანობის, სიმდაბლის, გულმოწყალების, ღმობიერების და სხვა საღვთო თვისებების, სათნოებების შესახებ ბევრს წერენ ისტორიკოსები (თამარ მეფის პირველი მატთანეს უცნობი ავტორი, ბასილი ეზოსმოდვარი, ლაშა-გიორგის დროინდელი ისტორიკოსი). თამარი განმსახიერებელია ორი უმაღლესი მდგომარეობის, მეფობის და წმინდანობის. ღირსეულად მმართველობით მან განახორციელა მეფობის ბიბლიური იდეალი (იყო სამართლიანი და ბრძენი მეფე. ესაა, მეფობის ბიბლიური იდეალი!). მისი წმინდანობის საფუძვლადაც სწორედ გამორჩეული მეფობა და ცხოვრების წესი იქცა. ამდენად, როგორც მეფე-წმინდანი თამარი „შეერთებულია“ ღმერთს, მადლით განღმრთობილია.

„ოთხება“ უნდა მიემართებოდეს ზოგადად წმინდანებს (მათ შორის თამარს, მეფე-წმინდანს). „ოთხება“ შეიძლება დავუკავშიროთ მართალი ლაზარეს სახეს, რომელიც ოთხი დღის მკვდარი მაცხოვარმა მკვდრეთით აღადგინა ბეთანიაში. „ოთხი დღის ადამიანის“ (Аверинцев, 2006, გვ. 275), ლაზარეს მკვდრეთით აღდგენა მოასწავებდა იესო ქრისტეს ჯვარცმასა და აღდგომასა მაცხოვრის აღდგომასთანაა დაკავშირებული ჯოჯოხეთიდან მართალთა სულების ამოყვანა. „მას შემდეგ, რაც ქრისტემ ჯოჯოხეთი „მოიალაფა“, მორწმუნეებს კვლავ მიეცათ სული ძეობილობისა, – ამბობს წმ. კირილე ალექსანდრიელი (ჭელიძე, 2001, გვ. 87). ეს გულისხმობს იმას, რომ ადამიანები, რომელნიც თავიანთი ღვთისათნო ცხოვრებით მიემსგავსებიან შემოქმედს, საღვთო წიაღში დაივანებენ (აღნიშნულთან დაკავშირებით საგულისხმოა ის ფაქტიც, რომ უცნობი მემატთანის თხზულების ბოლოს დართულ იამბიკოში თამარი სახელდებულია „ლაზარედ“). (ამ თვალსაზრისით, ედიშერ ჭელიძისა და ჩვენი პოზიციები თანხვდება, თუმცა, ცოტა განსხვავებული მსჯელობითა და არგუმენტებით მივდივართ საერთო პოზიციამდე, ჭელიძე, 2011, [http://library.church.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=432%3A-q-q-&catid=49%3A2010-12-12-19-59-31&Itemid=69&lang=ka](http://library.church.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=432%3A-q-q-&catid=49%3A2010-12-12-19-59-31&Itemid=69&lang=ka)).

საყურადღებოა, ის ფაქტორიც, რომ „ისტორიანი და აზმანის“ ავტორი უკვე არაერთხელ მოხმობილ ფრაზებში, თამარის შესახებ საუბრისას იყენებს რაოდენობით რიცხვით სახელს „ოთხებად“, „ოთხად“ (ვითარებითი ბრუნვის ფორმა (სარჯველაძე, 1997, გვ. 55) და არა რიცხვითი რიცხვითი სახელის ვითარებითი ბრუნვის ფორმას „მეოთხედ“.

ჩვენი აზრით, უცნობი მემატრიანის სიტყვები, თამარი „ღმრთი-საგან ღმერთქმნილია“ (ქართლის ცხოვრება, 1959, გვ. 63-64), „სამებისა-გან ოთხად თანააღზევებულა“, „სამებისა თანა იხილვების ოთხე-ზად... მისწორებული და აღმატებული“, ზემოთქმულის კვალობაზე უნდა გავიაზროთ, რაც ნიშნავს, რომ თამარი ბუნებით ღმერთად, „სამების მეოთხე ჰიპოსტასად“ არ არის დასახული. აქ საუბარია იმა-ზე, რომ თამარ მეფე სამების მიერ მისდამი მდგომარეობით (ანუ ღირსეული მეფობით და შესაბამისად, წმინდანობით) ამალღებულია „ოთხად“ როგორც წმინდანი; სწორედ წმინდანობის გამო იხილვება იგი „ოთხეზად“ (სამებასთან) მიმსგავსებული და ამალღებული.

დასასრულ აღვნიშნავთ, რომ საქართველოში მიუხედავად საერ-თო რელიგიურ-კულტურული არეალისა, ბიზანტიისაგან განსხვავე-ბული სიტუაცია იყო. ქრისტიანული ტრადიციის თანახმად, მეფეს აქაც ღვთისაგან ხელდასხმულად მიიჩნევენ, მაგრამ ის არ გაულ-მერთებიათ. ჩანს, ქართულ რეალობაში კარგად ყოფილა გააზრებული ქრისტიანული სწავლება, – „ბუნებით ღმერთობისა“ და „მადლით ღმერთობის“ შესახებ. ვფიქრობთ, ამას მოწმობს თამარ მეფის მათი-ანეების მოხმობილი და გაანალიზებული ამონარიდებიც.

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## For the Re-understanding of the Kimenic Issue

### კიმენის საკითხის ხელახალი გააზრებისთვის

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#### **Abstract:**

The beginning of Georgian writing is rightly connected with ecclesiastical writing. Its important and valuable flow is created by the hagiographic literature, about which a thorough assessment was made in the scientific circles at the very beginning of the philological research, which deals with genre identification, typology, stylistic features, frameworks, etc. of hagiography. Nevertheless, Georgian hagiographic material is rarely found in international studies, this rich and diversified literature is little reflected in medieval scholarly works. It is conceivable that in addition to the historical context, we should also look for the reason in the specificity of the terminology. According to K. Kekelidze, hagiography is divided into Kimenic and metaphrasical writings. Often this division leads to misunderstanding, as similar terminological divisions can not be found in hagiographic studies. By classical and admitted definition, Kimen is a term used in exegetical writing to refer to a specific explanatory text in any Bible book. Byzantine commentators used to call Kimen the text and thus separated it from their own commentaries. According to K. Kekelidze's observations and the opinion shared among Georgian scholars, this term later acquired a new meaning, first in Georgian ecclesiastical figures, and then – in hagiographic writing – it referred to the initially described and unadulterated life – martyrdoms. Therefore, the texts referred as Kimen in Georgian literature relate to hagiography before metaphor. Here, however, the difference is naturally noticeable: the former is characterized by simple style and composition, story and structure, while in the latter these markers are subtle and more complex. It is necessary to reconsider what we mean by the term Kimen.



What corresponds to them in international studies; What are their chronological frameworks, which original Georgian texts do we consider as monuments of Kimenic hagiography and which translated texts should we attribute to it.

**Keywords:** Hagiographic Literature, Kimenic and Metaphrasical Writings, Hagiographic Terminology

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** ჰაგიოგრაფია, კიმენური და მეტაფიზიკური მწერლობა, ჰაგიოგრაფიული ტერმინოლოგია

დღეს ძალიან აქტუალურია საკითხი ღია მეცნიერების შესახებ. უადრესად მდიდარი ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურისა და მასთან დაკავშირებული კვლევების საზღვრებს გარეთ გატანას და ადეკვატურ გაგებას უსათუოდ სჭირდება ამ სფეროში არსებული ტერმინოლოგიური აპარატის, მიდგომებისა და ტენდენციების უნიფიცირება, გაზიარება და სათანადოდ დამკვიდრება ქართულ მეცნიერებაში.

საკითხის სათანადოდ აღსაქმელად აუცილებელია ქართულ მეცნიერებაში, აგიოგრაფიაში დამკვიდრებული ზოგიერთი ფუნდამენტური ტერმინის განმარტება. სწორედ ამ ტერმინთა რიგშია კიმენიც (სვინაქსარი, მრავალთავი). კლასიკური და აღიარებული განმარტებით, კიმენი ეგზეგეტიკური მწერლობის ტერმინია, რომელიც აღნიშნავდა ნებისმიერი ბიბლიური წიგნის კონკრეტულ განსამარტავ ტექსტს, სხვა განმარტებით, კიმენი არის ბიბლიურ-კანონიკური ტექსტი განმარტება-კომენტარების გარეშე. ბიბლიის ბიზანტიელი ეგზეგეტ-კომენტატორები კიმენს უწოდებდნენ ტექსტს და ამით მიჯნავდნენ მას საკუთარი კომენტარებისაგან. ეს ტერმინი სწორედ აღნიშნული კონოტაციით გვხვდება ბიზანტინოლოგიის შემსწავლელ მკვლევართა შორის (მაგ. სტეფანოს ევფიმიადისი: ბიზანტიური ლიტერატურის ისტორია, ქრისტეან ჰოგელი: სვიმეონ მეტაფრასი). თუმცა ძველ ქართველ ღვთისმეტყველებთან და მათზე დაფუძნებით ქართულ სამეცნიერო აპარატში კიმენმა შეიძინა ახალი დატვირთვა, რაც განსხვავდება საერთაშორისო ტერმინოლოგიურ სისტემაში დამკვიდ-

რებული მნიშვნელობისგან. კ. კეკელიძის დაკვირვებით და ქართველ მეცნიერთა შორის გაზიარებული მოსაზრებით, ამ ტერმინმა მოგვიანებით შეიძინა ახალი მნიშვნელობა ჯერ ქართველ საეკლესიო მოღვაწეთა, ხოლო შემდეგ – აგიოგრაფიული მწერლობის მკვლევართა შორის: ტერმინ კიმენს დაუკავშირდა ახალი შინაარსი (ძველ, განსამარტავ ტექსტთან ერთად) – თავდაპირველად აღწერილი და გადაუკეთებელი ცხოვრება-მარტვილობები. ეფრემ მცირის განმარტებით, რომელიც მან წმინდა მინას ცხოვრებას დაურთო, კიმენი ეწოდება „პირველ ლიტონად აღწერილსა წიგნსა მოწამეთასა“ (თავდაპირველად აღწერილ მოწამეთა ცხოვრების შემცველ მარტივ ტექსტებს), ანდა, მისივე სიტყვებით, „ძუელი იგი მოწამეთად, რომელსა კიმენ უწოდებდნენ, ესე იგი არს მდებარე“ (კეკელიძე, 1918, გვ. 22). მაშასადამე, კიმენად იწოდებოდა ძველი მარტვილობა-ცხოვრების ხელშეუხებლად მდებარე, შეუსწორებელი და განუმარტავი ტექსტი. კ. კეკელიძისავე დაკვირვებით, იოანე ქსიფილინოსი (XI ს.) კიმენს აიგივებს ძველ მარტვილოლოგიურ თხზულებათა კრებულთან – მრავალთავევთან, ამიტომაც თავად კეკელიძე კიმენ-მრავალთავებადაც მოიხსენიებს პირველ ლიტონ თხზულებებს, რომელთა ქართულ თარგმანებსაც გვთავაზობს კრებულში კიმენი. ზემოხსენებული განმარტების კვალობაზე უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ ქართულ აგიოგრაფიაში ძირითადად გამოკვეთენ აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის განვითარების 2 ძირითად ეტაპს: 1. მე-9 საუკუნემდე და 2. მე-10-იდან შემდგომ, რაც უკავშირდება ახალ მოვლენას – გამეტაფრასებას. ზოგადად, თავად ავთენტურ და ორიგინალურ ტერმინში, ცხადია, საორჭოფო არაფერია, თუმცა ამ ტერმინს, კიმენს, აგიოგრაფიასთან მიმართებით უცხო-ელ მკვლევართათვის ყოველთვის სჭირდება დაზუსტება-განმარტება. კიმენურ ლიტერატურას აგიოგრაფიასთან არ აკავშირებს ბიზანტიური ლიტერატურის ისტორია, სადაც ამ ტერმინს მხოლოდ ეგზეგეტიკურ კონტექსტს აკუთვნებენ (სტეფანოს ეფემიადისი, დასახელებული ნაშრომი). ტერმინი კიმენი ქმედითი არ არის არც სომხური აგიოგრაფიისთვის. რაც განსაკუთრებით ყურადღებამისაქცევია თუნდაც „შუშანიკის წამების“ ცნობილი კონტექსტის ფონზე.

ამგვარად, ვაწყდებით შემდეგ პრობლემებს: 1. განსხვავებულია საერთაშორისო ბიზანტიოლოგიურ სამეცნიერო აპარატში გამოყენებული ტერმინი კიმენი და ქართული სამეცნიერო და ისტორიული განმარტება ამავე ტერმინისა. აქედან გამომდინარე, დასადგენია 2. როგორ მოიხსენიება საერთაშორისო კვლევებში ტექსტები, რომლებიც

ქართული აგიოგრაფიისთვის მისადაგებული ტერმინი კიმენით ერთიანდება, 3. რა ცნებით შინაარსს ვდებთ ტერმინ კიმენში დღეს, 4. და ქართული ორიგინალური აგიოგრაფიის რომელ ტექსტებს მოვიაზრებთ ამ ტერმინის ქვეშ. 5. ამგვარ ტექსტთა გამოკვეთის შემდეგ კი მნიშვნელოვანი იქნება სათანადო, ადეკვატური პერიოდის ბიზანტიურ აგიოგრაფიასთან ქართული ტექსტების ტიპოლოგიური შედარება; 6. მხოლოდ ამ რიგის დაკვირვებების შედეგად დაზუსტდება კიმენთან დაკავშირებით გამოთქმული არაერთი ვარაუდი, მათ შორის – ე. გაბიძაშვილის მოსაზრება ქართული ორიგინალური აგიოგრაფიის მახასიათებლებთან დაკავშირებით, რომ „ქართული აგიოგრაფია ერთადერთია, რომელსაც მეტაფრასულ რედაქციათა პარალელურად არ შეუწყვეტია კიმენურ ტექსტთა გამოყენება“ (გაბიძაშვილი, 1965, გვ. 12).

როგორც აღინიშნა, ქართულ მეცნიერებაში ტექსტები, რომლებსაც ქართულ ლიტერატურაში კიმენით მოიხსენიებენ, აგიოგრაფიასთან მიმართებით გულისხმობს გადამეტაფრასებამდელ აგიოგრაფიას. თუმცა გამეტაფრასულებამდე აგიოგრაფიული თხზულებები ტიპოლოგიურად ერთგვაროვანი არ არის. ბიზანტიურ აგიოგრაფიულ ლიტერატურასთან მიმართებით მიუთითებენ მე-5 საუკუნემდელ, მე-5–მე-7 და მე-7–მე-9 საუკუნეების აგიოგრაფიას (ეფვიმიადისი, 2011). უმრავლეს შემთხვევაში ადრეულ მარტვილთა ღვაწლი აღიწერებოდა შემთხვევითი პირებისაგან და აღიწერებოდა იმიტომ, რომ მოწამეთა სახელი არ დაკარგულიყო ისტორიაში, მათი მხნეობა მომავალ თაობებს ნიმუშად გადასცემოდათ და ასეთ დროს, რა თქმა უნდა, მისაღები იყო თუნდაც ყველაზე პრიმიტიული აღწერილობა, მარტივი როგორც ფორმით, ისე ლექსიკურად. ამიტომაც ადრეული პერიოდის ძირითადად ბერძნულენოვან საეკლესიო აგიოგრაფიაში მრავლად ვპოულობთ ნიმუშებს, დაწერილთ ძალიან მარტივი, ზოგ შემთხვევაში – ლიტერატურულად დაუხვეწელი და ღვთისმეტყველურად, კერძოდ, ტერმინოლოგიურად, ძალიან გაუმართავი ტექსტების სახით. აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის განვითარების ჩარჩოების თვალსაზრისით სტილური, სიუჟეტურ-კომპოზიციური, სტრუქტურული, თხრობის ხერხების ასპექტთა სხვაობა ბუნებრივად ხდება წყალგამყოფი. ამავე დროს, მარტივი, ლიტონი სტილისა და კომპოზიციის, სიუჟეტისა და სტრუქტურის აგიოგრაფიული კორპუსი ქართულ ლიტერატურაში პირვანდელი სახით მხოლოდ თარგმანის მეშვეობით გვაქვს შემორჩენილი. ორიგინალურ ტექსტთაგან ხშირ შემთხვევაში რევიზირებულია ისიც, რაც უტყუარად მეათე საუკუნემდეღია (მაგა-

ლითად, შუშანიკის წამება). გარდა ჩამოთვლილი მახასიათებლებისა, ბიზანტიური აგიოგრაფიის განვითარების ეტაპების განმსაზღვრელი, სავარაუდოდ, პოლიტიკური და საეკლესიო-დოგმატური ცხოვრება უნდა გამხდარიყო. ამ თვალსაზრისით ბიზანტიური/ბერძნული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის პერიოდების იდენტურად გადმოტანა და ქართულთან მისადაგება, ცხადია, არ გამოადგება ქართულ აგიოგრაფიას, არც რევიზიის საჭიროებათა გათვალისწინების გამო. რადგან ჩვენმა ეკლესიამ არ იცის დევნილობის ხანის ორიგინალური ლიტერატურა და მარტვილები და არც თუნდაც ბიზანტიაში გავრცელებულ უმეტეს წვალებათა შედეგები (რაც ტექსტების რევიზირების ერთ-ერთი ძირითადი განმაპირობებელი ფაქტორია). ბიზანტიურ სივრცეში ქართულთან შედარებით ეს პროცესები განუზომლად მძაფრი და რიცხოვრვად დიდი იყო. ჩვენთვის ყურადსაღები ამ ნიშნით მონოფიზიტობა და მასთან გამიჯვნაა, რაც მე-5-მე-6 საუკუნეთა პერიპეტიებს ეხება და რაც აისახა კიდევ ევსტათი მცხეთელის წამებაში.

ბიზანტიური აგიოგრაფიის განვითარების ეტაპებზე დაკვირვებამ მკვლევრები ტექსტების ურთიერთშედარების შედეგად მიიყვანა პერიოდიზაციის ლოგიკურ მიჯნებამდე. რადგან, ცხადია, სხვაგვარია პირველი ეტაპის ჩანაწერები (აქტები) და სხვაგვარი შედეგი მოგვცა ამ ჩანაწერების ჟანრობრივმა ტრანსფორმაციამ. როგორც ცნობილია, ერთ-ერთი უადრესი ნიმუში აგიოგრაფიისა გახლავთ „მარტვილობა წმიდისა იუსტინესი და მისი მეგობრებისა“, რაც სწორედ აქტების სახითაა ჩაწერილი (ახალი ქართული თარგმანი ამ ძეგლისა გამოქვეყნებულია), ასეთივე სტრუქტურისაა ლათინურად დაწერილი „სკილიუმის მარტვილობები“ (დაახლ. 180), თვით მოციქულთა ღვაწლის ამსახველი მარტვილობანიც, რომლებიც საკუთრივ საეკლესიო ეპოქაში შეიქმნა. აგიოგრაფიის კუთვნილებაა, მაგალითად, „წამებაი წმიდისა პეტრე მოციქულისაი“, „წამებაი წმიდისა პავლე მოციქულისაი“, „იოანე ღვთისმეტყველის ცხოვრება და მოღვაწეობა“, რომელსაც, შეიძლება ითქვას, ცხოვრება-მოქალაქეობის ელემენტი აქვს. მათი სტრუქტურა ლიტონი და მარტივია, ტექსტთა მოცულობა – მცირე, გამოკვეთილია ავტორ-მთხრობელი, ფაქტი აღწერილია მშრალად, ტექსტებში, ფაქტობრივად, არ გვხვდება რიტორიკული ფიგურები, თხრობა ცნობით-ინფორმაციულ ხასიათს ატარებს. ბიოგრაფიული ელემენტი ნაკლებად გვაქვს მარტიროლოგიურ თხზულებებში, თუმცა მეტად გვხვდება მაგ. იოანეს ცხოვრებაში. II-III საუკუნეებიდან საეკლესიო აგიოგრაფია ძირითადად მარტიროლოგიური ხასიათისა გახლავთ,

ანუ არსებითად გამოკვეთილია მხოლოდ მარტვილობანი, რაც ბუნებრივიცაა, რადგან ესაა ჯერ კიდევ მოწამეობრივი ეპოქა საეკლესიო ლიტურატურისა. IV ს-ის დამდეგიდან ჯერ მილანის ედიქტით და შემდგომ კონსტანტინე დიდის ძალისხმევით ქრისტიანული მოძღვრება, ქრისტიანული აღმსარებლობა ხდება სახელმწიფო სარწმუნოება და ქრისტიანები აღარ იდევენებიან, აგიოგრაფიული ჟანრის ახალი სახეობაც მკვეთრად იჩენს თავს, ეს არის აგიოგრაფ გმირთა ცხოვრება-მოღვაწეობის აღწერილობანი. მეუდაბნოეობა ანუ განდეგილობა არსებითად თავს იჩენს სწორედ IV საუკუნიდან, ცხადია, ამგვარ მოღვაწეთა აღმწერი აგიოგრაფიული თხზულებანიც სწორედ აღნიშნულ ეტაპზე დაიწერებოდა. მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ მოწამეობრივი აქტები გაცილებით უფრო მარტივია სტრუქტურულად და ლიტონი – ენით, მეოთხე საუკუნის თვისებრივად განსხვავებული ცხოვრება-მოქალაქობანიც მარტივია სტრუქტურულად, ენობრივად, თავისუფალია რიტორიკული ფიგურებისგან, რაც პავლე მოციქულის ცნობილი მიდგომის (ანტიკური კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის უგულვებელყოფის) შედეგაც უნდა იყოს.

როგორც კარგად არის ქართულ სამეცნიერო ლიტურატურაში ცნობილი, ჩამოყალიბება-განვითარების პირველ ეტაპზე თვითმხილველთა ნაამბობზე დაფუძნებული ლიტონად გადმოცემული კიმენური აგიოგრაფიული ლიტურატურა სახარებისა და ანტიკური ბიოგრაფიების კვალობაზე ყალიბდება. პრობლემა და სირთულე ის არის, რომ 1. ჩვენ არ/ან მწირად გვაქვს აღნიშნული ეტაპების *ხელუხლებელი* ორიგინალური ტექსტები (ამ თვალსაზრისით, შესაძლოა განცალკევებით იდგეს კოლაელ ყრმათა წამება) და, შესაბამისად, ვერ ვმსჯელობთ, როგორი უნდა ყოფილიყო ისინი (ამ შემთხვევაში, არა მხოლოდ შუმანიკის წამება, არამედ „წმიდანი იგი წიგნნი მოწამეთანი“, რასაც იმოწმებს იაკობ ხუცესი). გამონაკლისი უნდა იყოს რამდენიმე ტექსტი, რომლებიც ეპოქალურად აგიოგრაფიის განვითარების არა მხოლოდ მეტაფრასამდელ, არამედ ქრონოლოგიურად ქრისტიანობის გავრცელების შედარებით ადრეულ ეტაპს ემთხვევა: კოლაელ ყრმათა, რაჟდენ პირველმოწამის, დავით და ტირიჭანის, ევსტათი მცხეთელის, არჩილ მეფის წამებები, წმინდა ნინოს ცხოვრების ძველი პლასტები. კიმენი 1-ში წარმოდგენილ ცხოვრება-წამებათა შედარებამ ქართულ ორიგინალურ აგიოგრაფიასთან საგულისხმო დასკვნამდე მიგვიყვანა: თვით კრებულში განთავსებულ ტექსტებს შორის იმ ნიშანთა მიხედვით, რომლებსაც კიმენურ აგიოგრაფიას განუკუთვნებენ,

გვხვდება ტექსტები, რომლებიც სცდება ლიტონობას, გამშვენებულა, სტრუქტურულად დახვეწილი, კომპოზიციურად გაშლილი, ერთმანეთს რომ შევადაროთ ბასილი დიდისა და მაქსიმე აღმსარებლის ცხოვრებანი, განსხვავება თვალსაჩინო იქნება სტრუქტურულ-კომპოზიციური, ნარატივული, სტილურ-სტილისტიკური, ენობრივი მახასიათებლების თვალსაზრისით. ასეთსავე სურათს ვხვდებით ქართულ აგიოგრაფიასთან მიმართებითაც. ეს კი ბადებს კითხვებს: 1. ხომ არ უნდა გავითვალისწინოთ ნათარგმნ აგიოგრაფიასთან დაკავშირებით იგივე მიდგომა განვითარების საფეხურებთან დაკავშირებით, როგორც მიღებულია ბიზანტიური ლიტერატურის ისტორიაში (ანუ ქრონოლოგიური პრინციპი). და 2. მართებულია თუ არა, რაგვარობის მიუხედავად, ყველა მეტაფრასამდელი ტექსტის კიმენად-ლიტონად-სოფლიური ერთ აღწერილად მოხსენიება?

X ს-ის მიწურულიდან, კერძოდ, 982 წლიდან სვიმეონ მეტაფრასტი იწყებს თავის მეტაფრასულ მოღვაწეობას. ამ მოვლენას განსაკუთრებული მნიშვნელობა ჰქონდა და დღესაც აქვს საეკლესიო ისტორიისთვის.

ახალი არ არის არც ის საკითხი, თუ რამ განაპირობა ამ ახალი საღვთისმეტყველო-ლიტერატურული მიმართულების აღმოცენება. ცვლილება ეხება ლექსიკას, სტილს, თხზულებათა კომპოზიციურ, სიუჟეტურ, ნარატოლოგიურ განვითარებას. საკუთრივ აგიოგრაფიისა და არა უბრალოდ აქტებისა თუ ჩანაწერებისთვის მახასიათებელ თხრობის მანერას, ტიპოლოგიას, ამბის განვითარების გადმოცემას, მხატვრულ სახეთა ჩართვას, სახარებასა და ზოგადად ბიბლიაზე დაფუძნებულ სიმბოლურ-ალეგორიულ-იგავურ აზროვნებას. მოწამისა თუ ცხოვრების გმირის საფეხურებრივი ზეაღსვლის, ღმერთშემსგავსების წარმომჩენ ეპიზოდთა გამორჩევისა და შემდეგ მათი დალაგების, გადმოცემის, თხრობის პრინციპთა შემუშავებას, სისტემატიზებას. შესაბამისად, რაკი ქრისტიანობის გავრცელების პირველ ეტაპზე ქრისტიანულ დოქტრინათა კვალდაკვალ ყალიბდება და ვითარდება ქრისტიანული ლიტერატურა, ვითარდება ტერმინოლოგია, ლექსიკა, სახეობრივი სისტემა, რომელსაც ქრისტიანობა შეიწყნარებდა, მიიღებდა და გამოიყენებდა ცხოვრება-წამებათა ამსახველ აგიოგრაფიულ ლიტერატურაში, შესაბამისად, აგიოგრაფიულ ტექსტთა რევიზიის აუცილებლობაც თანდათანობით გამოიკვეთა. ე.ი. ეს, ერთი მხრივ, განაპირობა ქრისტიანული ლიტერატურის, აგიოგრაფიის, როგორც ლიტერატურული ჟანრის ჩამოყალიბება-განვითარების პროცესმა, მე-

ორე მხრივ, თვით ქრისტიანული მიდგომების ცვლამ (მაგალითად, როგორც აღვნიშნეთ, ანტიკური ფილოსოფიისა თუ რიტორიკული ფიგურების მიღებამ, რასაც თავდაპირველად უარყოფდა ქრისტიანობა), ხოლო მესამე მხრივ, ქრისტიანობის წიაღში თავჩენილმა არაერთმა წვალებამ, რასაც მსოფლიო-საეკლესიო კრებებზე გამოხდნენ და დოგმატური სარჩულით განამტკიცებდნენ, დაადგენდნენ ხოლმე წმინდა მამები. X ს-ის II ნახევრიდან ბიზანტიურ ეკლესიაში წარსულის მემკვიდრეობის სიტყვიერად გამშვენების, ღვთისმეტყველურად, ტერმინოლოგიურად გამართვის პროცესი დაიწყო. ცხადია, იგივე აისახა ქართულ რეალობაშიც.

უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ თვით სვიმეონ მეტაფრასის თხზულებათა მიმართ განსხვავებულ დამოკიდებულებას ავლენს ორთოდოქსული მართლმადიდებლური და კათოლიკური სამყარო. კათოლიკე მამათა თუ მკვლევართა ერთ ნაწილს გამშვენება-გარდაკაზმვისა და სტრუქტურულ-კომპოზიციური ცვლილებების გამო სვიმეონ მეტაფრასი ერთ-ერთ საეჭვო მოღვაწედ მიაჩნია და მეტაფრასამდელი თხზულებების სანდოობის მიხედვით განარჩევნა ორთოდოქსულ წიაღში აღიარებულ წმინდანთა ლეგიტიმურობასაც. ასევე ეჭვით უყურებენ, მაგალითად, წმინდა ბარბარეს ცხოვრების აღმწერ ტექსტს (ქრისტიან ჰოგელი, სვიმეონ მეტაფრასი).

ედ. ჭელიძე კიმენურ ტექსტთა საკითხთან დაკავშირებით შემდეგ მოსაზრებას გამოთქვამს (2008, გვ. 32):

„**მეტაფრასტიკა** ესაა ადრეული ეპოქის აგიოგრაფიის სიტყვიერი, ტერმინოლოგიური, ლიტერატურულ-საღვთისმეტყველო გამართვა, გამშვენება, **ანუ, ფაქტობრივად, განმარტება, კომენტარი, ერთგვარი ეგზეგეტიკა**. რაკი ადრეულ აღწერილობებს ეწოდებოდათ და ეწოდებათ კიმენი, ხოლო სიტყვა კიმენი, ბერძნული ტერმინი „კეიმენონ“ ქართულად ნიშნავს მდებარეს, ეს საკითხავები კი დადებული იყო ტამარში ამა თუ იმ წმინდანის ხსენებისას საჯაროდ საკითხავად, ე.ი. კიმენტა საღვთისმეტყველო-ლიტერატურული გადამუშავება, ანუ საღვთისმეტყველო-ლიტერატურული განმარტება უნდა იყოს მეტაფრასტიკაც. მეტაფრასტი არ ცვლის არცერთ ფაქტობრივ მონაცემს, პირიქით, ფაქტობრივი მონაცემები, რაც ჩვენ კიმენმა შემოგვინახა, განსაზღვრავენ კიდევ უდიდესწილად ამ კიმენური ძეგლების შეუცვლელ და მარადიულ ღირსებას ეკლესიის ისტორიაში“.

ბოლო პერიოდის გამოკვლევებით, კოლაელ ყრმათა წამება მესამე-მეოთხე საუკუნეებს მიაკუთვნეს ბ. ჩოლოყაშვილმა და გ. კუჭუხიძემ, შუშანიკის წამებაში გვაქვს „წმიდანი წიგნნი მოწამეთანი“, წმინდა ნინოს ცხოვრებაში ჯერ კ. კეკელიძე, შემდეგ რ. სირაძე და სხვა მკვლევრები გამოყოფდნენ უძველეს პლასტებს, რომლებიც სწორედ კიმენური აგიოგრაფიის ნიმუშები უნდა ყოფილიყო. თუმცა დანადვილებით მაინც ვერ ვიტყვით, როგორი იყო ქრისტიანობის შემოსვლის თანადროული ქართული აგიოგრაფიული პროზა. რადგან მეათე საუკუნემდელი აგიოგრაფიული თხზულებები სწორედ მეათე საუკუნის ხელნაწერებით აღწევნ ჩვენამდე. მეათე საუკუნეში კი, ცნობილია, რომ ჩატარდა ე.წ. რევიზია ქართული ტექსტებისა, რაც წინარეპერიოდის პოლიტიკური და სარწმუნოებრივი ბატალიების სირთულეებითაც უნდა ყოფილიყო განპირობებული და ქრისტიანული ლიტერატურის განვითარების ბუნებრივი სვლითაც (როგორც აღვნიშნეთ, ლექსიკურ-ტერმინოლოგიური, ჟანრობრივი, დოგმატური და სხვა ნიშნებით ეს იქნებოდა თვით კიმენური ლიტერატურის წიაღშიც მიმდინარე და თავჩენილი განვითარების პროცესი). კ. კეკელიძის მიხედვით, კიმენურ ტექსტთა უდიდესი ნაწილი ქართულ ენაზე თარგმანის სახით აღწევს. სავარაუდებელია, რომ მეტაფრასამდელი აგიოგრაფიის განვითარების დინამიკა მსგავსი, მაგრამ არა იდენტური იქნებოდა ბიზანტიური სივრცის კულტურული არეალისთვის დამახასიათებელი დინამიკისა. თუმცა ის, რაც ბერძნულენოვანი ლიტერატურისთვის პროცესია (მაგალითად აგიოგრაფიული ჟანრის ჩამოყალიბება), ჩვენთვის უკვე შედეგი იქნება (რადგან თარგმანის სახით უკვე შემუშავებული და ჩამოყალიბებული ტექსტი აღწევს ჩვენამდე). ეს ეხება აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის არაერთ ვექტორს: თხრობის ტიპოლოგიას, მხატვრულ ხერხთა გამოყენების ველს, დოგმატურ საკითხებს, ტერმინოლოგიას და ა.შ. აქედან გამომდინარე, თვით მეტაფრასამდელი აგიოგრაფიული კანონი არ უნდა იყოს ერთგვარი და ერთგვაროვანი, რაც დასტურდება, ერთი მხრივ, კიმენი 1-ში განთავსებული ტექსტებით და, მეორე მხრივ, მეტაფრასამდელი ქართული ორიგინალური აგიოგრაფიული ძეგლებითაც. შესაბამისად, უსათუოდ უნდა გამოვყოთ ე.წ. კიმენური აგიოგრაფიის განვითარების **სავარაუდო 3 ეტაპი**: ჩამოყალიბებისა და განვითარების ხანა. რადგან, ზემოთქმულიდან გამომდინარე, მე-5 საუკუნემდელი აგიოგრაფიული ძეგლი მე-5--მე-7 საუკუნეების ძეგლთაგან, სავარაუდოდ, მნიშვნელოვნად განსხვავებული უნდა იყოს, ხოლო მე-7 სკ.ის შემდგომი პე-



რიოდის ძეგლები კი – აგიოგრაფიულ ტექსტთა სტრუქტურის, სტილის, ნარატოროგიული ტიპოლოგიის, გმირის წარმოჩენის ასპექტებით – კიდევ უფრო დაშორებული მათგან. ამის მაგალითი ჩვენთვის უნდა იყოს, ერთი მხრივ, ვთქვათ, კოლაელ ყრმათა და, მეორე მხრივ, აბო თბილელის წამებები, ან გრიგოლ ხანძთელის ცხოვრება. ამ ტექსტთა შორის განსხვავება ძალიან დიდია. სხვაობა ყველა ზემოხსენებულ აქცენტს მოიცავს: კომპოზიციას, თხრობის სტილს, თვით ფაქტების გადმოცემისა თუ დალაგების ტიპოლოგიას, სახეობრივ ან ტერმინოლოგიურ სისტემებს, საღვთისმეტყველო ცოდნას, სიმბოლურ და დოგმატურ ასპექტებს. შესაბამისად, რაკი პროცესები ამგვარად წარმართა, შეგვიძლია დავსვათ კითხვა: **ბოლოს და ბოლოს, რას ვუწოდებთ კიმენურ ტექსტებს?** თუკი კიმენს ვუწოდებთ მხოლოდ „მდებარე“, ხელუხლებელ, სოფლიურითა ენითა გადმოცემულ ტექსტებს, ანუ აქტებს, მაშინ ამ თვალსაზრისით ქართული კიმენური ტექსტები არ გვაქვს ან ჩვენამდე მოღწეული არ არის. თუკი კიმენია ის, რასაც გვთავაზობს კ. კეკელიძე კრებულში კიმენი 1, მაშინ აქაც საჭიროა დიფერენცირება და ეს უნდა შეეხოს არა მხოლოდ ტექსტის შედგენის დროს (ე.ი. დაეფუძნოს არა მხოლოდ ქრონოლოგიურ ჩარჩოს), ეპოქალურ მიჯნას, არამედ **ტექსტის მახასიათებლებს**, რადგან ერთგვარი ტერმინოლოგიით ესოდენ მსხვაობარი ტექსტების მოხსენიება უდავოდ მცდარი მიდგომა იქნება. აქედან გამომდინარე, დაისმის კითხვა: კიმენური ტექსტებია თუ არა „შუშანიკის წამება“, „აბოს წამება“... რადგან გვიანი რედაქციებით მოაღწია ჩვენამდე და არ ვიცით, როგორი იქნებოდა თითოეული მათგანი პირვანდელი სახით, რას, როგორი ტიპის ტექსტებს უნდა განვაკუთვნოთ ისინი? ამავე დროს, რადგან მეტაფრასტიკა მხოლოდ მეათე საუკუნის ბოლოს იჩენს თავს, ცხადია, მათ ვერ ჩავთვლით გამეტაფრასების შედეგად მიღებულ ტექსტებად თვით აღნიშნული რევიზიის ფარგლებშიც. და, ამავე დროს, თუ გავითვალისწინებთ კიმენის განმარტებას ლიტონი თხრობის შესახებ, ცხადია, უმართებულოა გრიგოლ ხანძთელის ცხოვრების, აბოსა და შუშანიკის წამებების კიმენურ ტექსტებად ჩათვლა მხოლოდ იმიტომ, რომ მეტაფრასამდელ პერიოდშია შემნილი და ვერც გამეტაფრასების ეტაპს ემთხვევა. იმიტომ, აუცილებლად მიგვაჩნია, ტექსტთა შედარების შედეგად გამოვყოთ გამეტაფრასებამდე ტექსტების სტილური და ტექსტობრივი თავისებურებები, დავყოთ განვითარების ლოგიკურ პერიოდებად და შესაძლო საერთო სამუშაო ტერმინად **პრემეტაფრასული** გამოვიყენოთ, რაც უკეთ ასახავს იმ რეალობას, რომელსაც

ეს ტექსტები გვიჩვენებს; ხოლო რაკილა ტერმინი კიმენი აგიოგრაფი-ასთან მიმართებით უშუალოდ ლიტონ და მდებარე, გარდაუკაზმავ ტექსტადაა განმარტებული, კვლევის შედეგად დადგინდეს, რომელი კონკრეტული ტექსტები უნდა მოვიაზროთ ამ ტერმინის ქვეშ. ამ ეტაპზე კი ვარაუდს გამოვთქვამთ, რომ კიმენად უნდა მოვიხსენიოთ კოლაელ ყრმათა, რაჟდენ პირველმოწამის, დავით და ტირიჭანის წამებები.

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# The Concepts and Realities of the Eastern Culture in “The Knight in the Panther's Skin”

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## Abstract:

To the present day the research on *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (“*Vepkhistqaosani*”) in connection with the Eastern Muslim world has been conducted in two main directions:

1. “*Vepkhistqaosani*” and literature composed in the Muslim world (for example, parallels with Nizami, Ferdowsi, Fakhraddin Gorgani etc.);

2. “*Vepkhistqaosani*” and the confession of the Muslim faith: this includes the works, which agree or deny the presence of the Muslim understanding of God, world, romantic love and the relationship between men and women in Rustaveli’s Romance.

When analyzing the concepts and realities of the cultures of the East in “*Vepkhistqaosani*” the most significant is the concept of *mijnuroba* (love). Substantiating his own understanding of *mijnur* in the Prologue, Rustaveli refers the reader to the Arab culture. Presenting the suffering from love as an incurable malady obtained a special literary and aesthetic meaning in the poetry of the Bedouin (Udhrah) tribes of Central Arabia in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the poets of which wrote verses on a fatal and almost mystic love that could bring only ordeal, with death being the only possible way out of it. The main motifs of the Udhri lyrics (loss of consciousness, shedding tears of blood, roaming the plains, etc) acquired greater meaning and depth not only in Sufi poetry, but in the “*Vepkhistqaosani*”.

Yet, the conventional motifs, which are typical for both concepts – Bedouin and Sufi poetry – are encountered in Rustaveli’s work only as readymade formulae, which are given a different interpretation as a result of literary revision.

**Keywords:** Rustaveli, The Knight in the Panther’s Skin, Eastern culture, love concept

## Introduction:

### “Persian Legend” in Shota Rustaveli’s “Vepkhistqaosani”

Shota Rustaveli’s “Vepkhistqaosani” (“The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”) is a medieval romance (1187-1207) the plot of which unfolds through an Oriental-type framework adapted to Georgian conditions. One of the significant parts of its compositional structure is the Prologue, which in epic works of medieval literature was attributed great significance. In Prologues the authors used to open to their readers a plot of their works, they established their own world outlook and aesthetic views, opinions. Prologue of “Vepkhistqaosani” is construed in full conformity with this tradition. And the fact seems most interesting that in the 9<sup>th</sup> stanza of the Prologue, telling about creation of the romance, Shota Rustaveli declares that he “*found this beautiful tale from Persia*”, “*translated into Georgian*” and “*have set it in a setting of Georgian verses*”. This assertion couldn’t be left without attention of commentators and researchers of the romance. Back in the beginning of the XVII century the king of Kartli Vakhtang the VI (1675-1737), who knew perfectly the Persian language and literature who, was the first publisher of “Vepkhistqaosani”, in his “Comments” confirmed that in Persian literature even traces of such history couldn’t be found. The expression “Persian tale” turned out to be a poetic symbol, which was rather significant for interpretation of deep meanings of the romance. Poly semantics, foreign tales, allusions, metamorphism are organically inherent to the language of Rustaveli and determination of the meaning of სპარსული [sparsuli] (“Persian”) formed the base for serious scientific polemics and in the process of this polemics many opinions were expressed. Irrespective of difference in expressed interpretations (“alien”, “non-Christian”, “ancient”) it can’t be doubted that trying to give artistic reliability, credibility to described events, the poet uses definition “Persian” as a notion, referring to the whole cultural area of the East, which is proved by the geography of artistic space of the romance.

Artistic approach of “alienation of the plot” is not a rarity in the history of the world literature, inclusive actions shifted to the West (we can bring here as an example “Persian letter” by Charles Montesquieu, “West-Eastern divan” by Goethe and other). It is noteworthy that Georgia's political, religious, and ideological confrontation with various Muslim countries, more specifically, with Persia, has never developed into cultural antagonism.

Hardly anywhere else were Ferdowsi and his successors adored as much as in Georgia. In the Late Middle Ages and for quite some time in the following period, Georgians regarded Persians as masters of artistic word. Those, who used Persian terms, allusions, and artistic images borrowed from the poems of Persian poets, would definitely become successful. So in Rustaveli's romance conditionality of the "Persian history" is created by the use of various artistic approaches:

1. heroes of the romance, conditionally "Muslims"; more than conditionally following Muslim traditions;
2. action takes place in conditional Arabia – არაბეთი [Arabeti] – Arab region, in no less conditional ინდოეთი [Indoeti] – India – country of Indians, as well as in the imaginary Gulansharo, Mulgazanzari and Kadjeti; absolutely real Khataeti /China (ruled by a "khan", and in other place we find "king"), Khvarazm /Khorezm, Balakhshan/ Badaghshan (country in the lower Pamir at the border of Afghanistan), Egypt, Bagdad and others; at this moment it is considered that all these countries belong to the Muslim world;
3. inter-textual referrals are met appealing to meta-text of oriental poetry;
4. realities of oriental culture are mentioned.
5. All together, the above listed create oriental coloring of artistic space of the romance which is necessary for the poet.

### 1. Inter-textual referrals

We have to stipulate that speaking about conditionality of the East in the artistic space of "Vepkhistqaosani" it would be a great error to think that that here we speak of conditionality of oriental type. Characteristic peculiarity of development of Georgian culture, irrespective of various rate of closeness in various epochs, there was a close connection with oriental cultures.

*"Alongside with the western, European orientation the Georgian culture didn't break links with oriental cultures and this was conditioned not only by geographical, political and economic factors, but also by tendencies of spiritual development"* (Tvaradze, 1985, p. 17).

With this in view, as I. Ratiani states, *"in Georgian literature Shota Rustaveli's "Vepkhistkaosani" – is a meeting of western and eastern cultures"*

(2015, p. 41), which clearly illustrates inter-textual roll-calls fixed in the text of the romance. Sending the reader to the summits of oriental poetry, they contribute to the fusion of the “Vepkhistqaosani” with meta-text of poetic culture of the East. In particular, the “Vis and Ramin” by Gurgani is mentioned in Rus-taveli’s romance without any comment (strophe: 181.3; 1068.4; 1529.4), Rostom/Rustam/Rustem (Ferdwsi) (line 192.3), Caen /Qais/(Nizami), Salaman (Strophe 1327.4), that is, the poet is sure that his reader knows well the text referred to by the author.

strophe 181.3:

ოვი ჭირი არ უნახავს არ რამინს და არცა ვისსა.

*The sorrows of Vis and Ramin were as nothing to all that he suffered.*

strophe1068.4:

ვატმანს ჰკლავიდა უმისობა, რამინისი ვითა ვისსა.

*As Ramin’s absence was to Vis so was Avtandil’s to Patman.*

strophe1529.4:

ნუ ეჭვ მიჯნურთა მათებრთა ნუცა თუ რამინს და ვისსა.

*Their love was stronger by far than the love of Vis and Ramin.*

strophe 192.3:

ოსრითა მოკლის ნადირი, როსტომის მკლავ-უგრძესითა.

*So he killed game with his arrow, with an arm that was stronger than Rostom’s.*

strophe 1327.4:

მისნი ვერ გასძლეუნს პატოუნი ვერ კაენ, ვერცა სალამან.

*Not even Caen and Salman could have borne the tortures he suffered.*

## 2. Concepts and realities of oriental culture

Inclusion of cultural realities in the narration is of no less significance. First of all, these are concepts of მიჯნურობა [*mijnuroba*].

In particular, substantiating the notion of მიჯნურობა [*Mijnuroba*] in the Prologue, Rustaveli directs his readers to Arabic culture – strophe 22.1: “*In Arabic a lover is called a ‘madman’; because of futile burning he loses his reason*”. So, it’s quite expected that the individual details of Rustaveli’s conception of love bear a clear imprint of oriental culture (the most obvious

example of this is the reference to the main characters as *mijnur*, an Arabic word denoting one maddened by love).

Presenting the suffering from love as an incurable malady obtained a special literary and aesthetic meaning in the poetry of the Bedouin (Udhrah) tribes of Central Arabia in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the poets of which wrote verses on a fatal and almost mystic love that could bring only ordeal, with death being the only possible way out of it. Correspondingly, Udhri poetry was full of fatalism, endless melancholy, and impending doom. All these poets had only one beloved woman, who was an ideal. What is the essence of this poetry? – First of all, *death for love's sake*, which is merged with motifs such as *concealing one's love*, representing it as a *malady*, which cannot be cured by medication and which takes away mind and strength from human beings and renders them powerless.

The main motifs of the Udhri lyrics acquired greater meaning and depth in Sufi poetry. The follower of Sufism could not experience divine love until he was tempted by God through carnal love. Therefore, the Sufis in their sermons used the examples of those Udhri lovers who loved their chosen ones selflessly. Among the Udhri poets the Sufis still accorded a special honour to Majnun, who was named as the ideal lover, and his madness was considered as the symbol of his blessed divine vision (Gardavadze, 2018, pp. 85-87).

Arabic sources described the person of Majnun differently. Some Arab theoreticians believed he was a historical person, a poet, whose poems have reached us in our time. According to the traditional reports, the real name of Majnun was Qays ibn Al-Mulawwah and the story of his tragic love was passed on from generation to generation. Although the adventure of *Layla and Majnun* enjoyed an enormous popularity among people, within the Arabic literary tradition it developed in a somewhat fragmented manner. These romantic adventures were first collected, put in a literary form and presented as a complete piece of work by Nizami – the greatest poet of the East. This poem by Nizami constitutes an apology of an unearthly love; it is the hymn to that love which is not destined to flourish in this world, and for the victory of which one has to suppress and destroy one's own ego completely. Nizami was already a committed Sufi when he was writing *Layla and Majnun*. He built his other poem *Treasury of Mysteries* on the principles of Sufism, while in *Khosrow and Shirin* he portrayed of one of the main characters, Farhad, as one who is madly in love with Shirin (Farhad

tells Khosrow: "I can share Shirin's bed only after I shall no longer be alive" (Todua, 1974, p. 8). Yet, in *Layla and Majnun* Nizami chooses an extremely original way:

"Nizami utilizes the Sufi concept of love as a symbol, whenever needed. However, he predominantly draws upon the Udhrī doctrine of love. It is the main root, the indispensable source from which he draws the expression of his social, philosophical, Sufi, artistic and aesthetic thoughts. It also helps to solve the problems of time and humans, humans and fate" (Rustamova, 2020, p. 359).

Consequently, "the passion of Layla and Majnun, which has not found its fulfilment in this life, is not an unlucky love, but an ideal romance, through which a human being achieves perfection by rejecting his own being, his own ego" (Todua, 1974, p. 8).

The poem shows, in sequence, how Majnun's love gradually turns into all-encompassing passion from which he cannot free himself; only death can be its finale. Here is presented that same general and principle contour for the development of love which generally characterizes medieval lyrics. The basic steps in the development of love, which are based on the theoretical and philosophical thought and the ethical belief of that time, are presented distinctly and tangibly. The love of Qays grows from the soil of daily life (Qays and Layla meet each other at school; love sparks in their hearts there. Their classmates are continually gossiping about them, and soon the story of their love "extends to heaven and earth, seized upon by the gossips in the square – the tender secret... revealed" (Nizami, 1966, p. 20), gradually the flame of love arises, (Qays "appeared now here, now there" (22)), intensifies ("Qays was called *Majnun* "When he passed by, people around him shouted: "look, the Madman, Majnun is coming, Majnun!" (22)). Later their love passes beyond earthly understanding, and manifests itself beyond the real. According to Eastern mysticism, an insane person is closer to truth and closer to God than a reasonable one, or than a wise man who is concerned with the troubles of this world. Truth (God) cannot be conceived through one's mind. It requires a great feeling, which will embed into one's "I" and conquer it completely. Therefore, this is the stage of love, when this all-encompassing feeling that took over a person has to defeat the cold mind (Javelidze, 1972, p.105). "Layla – the beloved is the manifestation of God. Here, Majnun sees



God in Layla's image and expresses his love for God through her. The character of Layla and the love for her are a metaphor here, and function as a bridge to reach both truth and God" (Rustamova, 2020, p. 359).

If we imagine these steps (stages) of the development of love in relation to the state of the lover, it will become obvious that falling in love causes contamination by the malady of love, the expressions of which are found in the following symptoms: fainting, loss of consciousness, moaning, sighing, melancholy, paleness, trembling, fear, and the like. The Main character of "Vepkhistqaosani", Tariel, while telling the story of his falling in love, says: *"I had looked on the face of the maiden (Nestan-darejan) and my soul was pierced by her beauty"* (1968, p. 56). When the doctors are summoned to cure him, the latter are unable to conceal their surprise at the unusual state of the sick man. *"Amazed were the learned physicians, they knew not the cause of my illness"*. Later they conclude: *"His sickness is not of the body, he is a prey to dejection"* (1968, p. 57). It is clear that the doctors draw the conclusion from their observations of Tariel's condition: *"Sometimes I leaped up like a madman, I uttered idle words"*. This reflects spiritual problems of the sick man rather than physical weakness.

It is obvious, that the occasional fainting of Tariel when he was recounting his adventure or when he saw Nestan-darejan for the first time, and also when he saw the letter of his loved one wrapped in the edge of her veil, were nothing but a representation of a normal condition of a roaming knight (compare it with Qays' falling in love – *He tried, but his heart was no longer at one with his reason. If reason asked him to avoid his love, his heart fell ill with longing for her. Away from her, Qays found no peace, yet searching her out was to imperil both*), or the reaction of Farhad seeing Shirin and hearing her voice: *"When Farhad had to hear her word, his stomach started boiling and he screamed as loudly as he could, he became unconscious and fell down to the earth"*).

Getting sick with love is followed by the lover's long ordeal, which is expressed in appropriate motifs in the oriental and occidental love poetry and in "Vepkhistqaosani": a) Being in the state of madness, exasperation, and craziness; b) Shedding tears of blood; c) Burning in an unabated fire; d) Having a heart wounded with a lance; e) Longing for death; and f) Roaming the wilderness.

Like Majnun, Tariel "roams the wilderness" after he loses Nestan-darejan, but this state is not yet the madness that would motivate the knight

to turn his back against human society and race among the wild beasts. Despite the misfortune that befell him, he is still able to suppress the painful emotions that torment him, mobilise his forces, and bear the difficulties of his life without batting an eyelid. Only after he loses hope he leaves the "community of men", starts wandering in the fields, and clad in the panther's skin, finds shelter in a remote cave. From now on, Tariel is driven by only one desire – to leave this world as soon as possible, so that he could unite with his separated beloved at least in the other world – with the woman, who was the meaning of his life and who, he thinks, is now dead. The difference between Tariel's and Majnun's madness and quest for death is that it is enough for Tariel to see Nestan's letter wrapped up in her veil, to believe that his lover is alive; the lost hope revives in the person, who "loses consciousness" from unexpected joy and receives the impetus to live and act. From that moment, Tariel relies again on his courage and power in reaching his goal. Together with his sworn brothers, Tariel heads to the fortress of Kajeti in order to regain Nestan and, together with her, the love and spiritual peace he lost. The knight, who returns victorious from Kajeti becomes invincible again. After he unites with the woman he loves, his madness disappears and the motif of roaming the wilderness is no longer necessary.

As the "plague" of love brings ordeal and passion, man has either to tolerate it or fight against it. It is here that the will and spiritual firmness of a person becomes visible. Tariel's sworn brother, Avtandil says: *"A man must not bend before misfortune, but meet it like a man"* (153). It follows that ordeal also has its dialectic: It will not always be there, but will be replaced by joy. Ordeal cannot exist forever. It must be overcome by joy. It is for this purpose that man must be courageous and "firm in trouble". Thus, the philosophy of ordeal is optimistic in *"Vepkhistqaosani"*. Man must resist ordeal and combat it, which is the path upon which a personality can attain perfection (Nozadze, 1975, p. 229).

In *"Vepkhistqaosani"* the pains, ordeals, torments, fires, burnings, and faintings of love are a result of unattained love. There is no one in Rustaveli's romance who would voluntarily want to be in trouble because of love or to be tormented and tortured. On the contrary, the will of every hero becomes visible in their struggle for obtaining love and, if love is a malady, every hero tries to recover from it and escape the malady (Nozadze, 1975, p. 230).

Thus, we can see that enduring pain in amorous relations is equally regarded as obligatory in “*Vepkhistqaosani*” and in oriental poetry. However, in oriental poetry, pain is mostly regarded as a poetic decoration and it is defeated and replaced by joy in Rustaveli’s romance. Love is victorious. Rustaveli closely links amorous torments and joys of love. They are not separated. On the contrary, they are strongly bounded together. The poet concentrates not on the strength of pain and death but on overcoming painful emotions and the ability to cope with them, which leads to the perfection of the lover and the perception of high ideals in this world.

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Homeland Concept In „the Knight in the Panther’s Skin“ by  
Shota Rustaveli and „Divine Comedy“  
by Dante Alighieri

სამშობლოს კონცეპტი შოთა რუსთაველის  
„ვეფხისტყაოსანსა“  
და დანტე ალიგიერის „ღვთაებრივ კომედიაში“

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ლია კარიჭაშვილი

ივანე ჯავახიშვილის სახელობის თბილისის სახელმწიფო  
უნივერსიტეტი,

შოთა რუსთაველის ქართული ლიტერატურის ინსტიტუტის მეცნიერი  
თანამშრომელი, ფილოლოგიის მეცნიერებათა დოქტორი  
(თბილისი, საქართველო)

**Abstract:**

In *The Knight in the Panther’s Skin* by Shota Rustaveli, the syntagma “native land” was mentioned twice. It has binary meaning: directly it means the homeland (“the native land is mine”, 544) allegorically – the paradise (“They gave me the native land so desired for me” 812). The concept of the homeland has the binary meaning in the *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri as well. The poet defines its metaphorical sense: We should imply the heaven as the homeland (91).

In the both texts the biblical concept is apparent: the paradise was Adam’s homeland, once lost and returning to it became the eschatological aim of the humans. Naturally, there are deep internal ties between the worldly and heavenly homeland: the heaven is a divine idea of the worldly native land (archetype). “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands” (The Acts of the Apostles 17:26). Thus, the individual is born at predetermined time and place, to seek for God. The purpose is mystic and its understanding takes place with the

person's self-comprehension ("who is he, where came he from, where is he and where will he go" David Guramishvili).

In *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* God is "who fixes the bounds" (792,3) and in the *Divine Comedy* the homeland and mother tongue is determined by Lord: the nature gives the men the mother tongue / and what kind of speech this should be, is ruled by the Lord" (127).

In the Christian literature the heaven is frequently mentioned as the divine Jerusalem or Zion and the world as Egypt. Dante also applies such paradigmatic eloquence as well: That's why he was allowed to come from that darkness of Egypt here, to Zion (55).

For both poets, the invisible stairs from the worldly homeland to the heavenly one is the faith, realized in the lifestyle of the characters, serving to lord, homeland and human being.

**Keywords:** Homeland Concept; „the Knight in the Panther's Skin“; "The Divine Comedy"

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** სამშობლოს კონცეფცია; „ვეფხისტყაოსანი“; „ღვთაებრივი კომედია“

„ვეფხისტყაოსანში“ სინტაგმა „მკვიდრი მამული“ ორჯერ გვხვდება. იგი ბინარული ცნებაა, პირდაპირი მნიშვნელობით აღნიშნავს სამშობლოს („ჩემია მკვიდრი მამული“, 544) და ალევორიულად – სამოთხეს („მომცეს მკვიდრივე მამული მუნ ჩემი სასურვალეები!“ 812). სამშობლოს ცნება ბინარული მნიშვნელობისაა დანტე ალიგიერის „ღვთაებრივ კომედიაშიც“. მის გადატანით მნიშვნელობას პოეტი თავადვე განმარტავს: „სამშობლოდ უნდა ვიგულისხმოთ სასუფეველი“:

„მათვის იტყოდა ისაია, განშზადილია  
სამშობლოშივე სამოსელი უკვე ორმაგი,  
სამშობლოდ უნდა ვიგულისხმოთ სასუფეველი.“  
(სამოთხე, ქება 25-ე, სტრ. 91)

ორივე პოემაში თვალსაჩინოა ბიბლიური კონცეფცია: სამოთხე ადამის სამკვიდროა, რომელიც დაკარგა და მისი დაბრუნება ადამიანის ესქატოლოგიურ მიზნად იქცა.

ცალ-ცალკე „მკვიდრი“ (სამკვიდრო) და „მამული“ – შინაარსობრივად ახლოს არიან ერთმანეთთან. ძირითადად, მათი განმარტებები ასეთია:

„მამული – მამისეული.

„მამული – სოფელი, სამშობლო, მამა-პაპა, ტომი.

მამული – მამაპაპური, მამეული, მამობრივი, მშობლიური“ (აბულაძე, 1973, გვ. 215).

„მამულს“ აქვს როგორც ვიწრო (კერძო მამული), ასევე ფართო გაგება (სამშობლო).

„დამკვიდრებაში“, ისევე როგორც „მამულში“, „იკითხება“ მიწა, ნიადაგი, როგორც ამას მინანიშნებს სულხან-საბასეული განმარტება: „*დამკვიდრება – სანიადაგოდ დაპყრობა, სანიადაგოდ დასახლება*“. (ორბელიანი, 1991, გვ. 194). როდესაც სიტყვა „დამკვიდრება“ უკავშირდება „საუკუნოს“, როგორც „უჟამო ჟამს“ („ცხოვრებად საუკუნოდ დავიმკვიდრო“ მრ.10.17), ხდება მიწის „განსულიერება“. აქ ქრონოტოპი ზესივრცული და ზედროულია. სწორედ „სულიერი მიწის“ განცდა ჩანს გურამიშვილის ვედრებაში უფლის მიმართ:

*„გეაგები, ნუ გამწირავ, მოვკვდე, შენ კერძ დამმარხო,  
ჯოჯოხეთში ნუ ჩამაგდებ, მიწყალობე სამოთხეო“.*

(„დავითიანი“, სტრ. 332)

დამარხვა უფლის „კერძ“ გულისხმობს დამკვიდრებას სამოთხეში. სასულიერო მწერლობაში ზოგჯერ „მამულს“ ახლავს ეპითეტი „მიწიერი“, რაც ოპოზიციურად მის არამიწიერ განზომილებაზეც მეტყველებს. ზეციურ და მიწიერ მამულთა ურთიერთმიმართება ისეთივეა, როგორც იდეასა და მის მატერიალურ განსახოვნებას შორის.

„ქართულში სიტყვათა სემანტიკურ ბინარულობას ხშირად ქრისტიანული ენობრივი მსოფლხედვა განაპირობებს. ამ მხრივ, მიზანშეწონილია დაკვირვება სულიერ სფეროთა აღმნიშვნელ სიტყვებზე, რომლებსაც მეორე, ყოფითი მნიშვნელობაც აქვთ“, – აღნიშნავს რევაზ სირაძე (2000, გვ. 348) და საილუსტრაციოდ ასახელებს „სიტყვას“ (ლექსიკური ერთეული და ლოგოსი), „ერთს“ (რიცხვითი სახელი და ღვთიური ყოვლისმთლიანობა), „სახეს“ (პირისახე და არსობრივი

ფორმა), „სამოთხეს“ (ბალი და სულეთი)“. ამ სიტყვათა რიგში მოი-  
აზრება „მამულიც“.

„მამულის“ ბინარული სემანტიკით „ვეფხისტყაოსანი“ წინარე  
ლიტერატურულ ტრადიციას აგრძელებს. სასულიერო მწერლობაში  
სასუფეველი ხშირად მოიხსენიება ზეციური ქალაქის, იერუსალიმის,  
სახელით. „გიორგი მთაწმიდელის ცხოვრებაში“ ასე განისაზღვრება  
სასუფეველი: „ღვთისმსა-ხურებასა საიდუმლოსა შინა ერთი მამული  
პატივცემულ არს, რომელ არს სამოთხე, პირველისა მის მამისა ჩუე-  
ნისა საყოფელი, და ერთი ქალაქი, რომელ არს ზეცისა იერუსალემი,  
ცხოველთა მათ ქვათა მიერ აღშენებული, რომლისა შემოქმედ და  
ხუროთმოძღვარ ღმერთი არს, და ერთი ნათესაობად, რომელ არს  
თვსებად ღმრთისად“ (გიორგი მცირე).

ნეტარი ავგუსტინე მიმართავს უფალს: „*უფალო ღმერთო ჩემო,  
ვისაც მორჩილებითა და სიმდაბლით უნდა გმსახურებდე, გევედრები  
ჩვენი მეუფისა და ჩვენი წმინდა, ჩვენი უმწიკვლო სამშობლოს – ზეცი-  
ური იერუსალიმის გულისთვის...*“ (ნეტარი ავგუსტინე, 1995, გვ. 214).

თუ ზეციური ქალაქი იერუსალიმი ან სიონია, ეს ქვეყანა, წუთი-  
სოფელი – ეგვიპტეა. გიორგი მცირე სულიერ თვალს მიადევნებს  
გიორგი მთაწმიდელის განსვლას *ხორცთაგან*: „...დაუტევა ეგვიპტე,  
რომელ არს ცხორებად ესე ნივთიერი და წიაღვლო არა თუ ზღვად იგი  
მეწამული, არამედ შავი ესე და წყვილიადა ზღვად ამის საწუთროისად.  
შევიდა ქუეყანასა მას აღთქმისასა, რომელ არს ზეცათა იერუსალიმი“  
(გიორგი მცირე, 1967, გვ. 194)].

ამგვარ პარადიგმულ სახისმეტყველებას დანტეც მიმართავს: „*მი-  
ტომაც დართეს მას ეგვიპტის იმ ბნელეთიდან ნება სიონში აქ მოს-  
ვლისა*“ (სამოთხე, ქება 25-ე, სტრ. 55).

მიწიერ და ზეციურ სამშობლოს შორის, ცხადია, ღრმა შინაგანი  
კავშირია: მიწიერი ზეციურს განსახოვნებს, თავის მხრივ სასუფევე-  
ლი მიწიერი სამშობლოს ღვთაებრივი იდეაა (პირველსახეა). „*შექმნა  
ერთისგან სისხლისა ყოველნი ნათესავნი კაცთანი დამკვდრებად ყო-  
ველსავე ზედა პირსა ქუეყანისასა, განაჩინნა დაწესებულნი ჟამნი და  
საზღვრის დადებანი დამკვდრების მათისანი მოძიებად ღმრთისა და  
უკუეთუმცა ვინ ეძიებდა, პოამცა იგი*“ (საქმე მოციქულთა, 17. 26). ამ-  
დენად, ადამიანი იბადება განსაზღვრულ დროსა და ადგილას „*მოძი-  
ებად ღმრთისა*“. ამის გაცნობიერება პიროვნების თვითშემეცნების კვა-  
ლობაზე ხდება („*ვინ არის, სიდამ მოსულა, სად არის, წავა სადაო*“.  
დავით გურამიშვილი).

მიწიერ და ზეციურ სამშობლოთა შორის უხილავი ხიდი რწმენაა.  
დანტე ალიგიერი:

*„მაგრამ რადგანაც მხოლოდ რწმენა გაუხსნის კარებს,  
ამ საუფლოსას მოქალაქეთ, სასურველია  
მან აქ ადიდოს შენდამი რწმენა“.*

(სამოთხე, ქება 24-ე, სტრ. 43)

მისივე თქმით, არამხოლოდ სამშობლო, ენაც განგებით განესაზღ-  
ვრება ადამიანს:

*„ენას ბუნება მიანიჭებს მოდგმას კაცისას,  
ხოლო როგორი უნდა იყოს ეს მეტყველება,  
ამას განგება განაწესებს, განაგებს თავად“.*

(სამოთხე, ქება 26-ე, სტრ.127).

ენის, მამულისა და სარწმუნოების სიღრმისეული კავშირი, რომელსაც ბიბლიური ფესვები აქვს, ქართული მწერლობის ლაიტმოტივია („რა ენა წახდეს, ერიც დაეცეს, წაეცხოს ჩირქი ტაძარსა წმიდას“ გრ. ორბელიანი). ჰაგიოგრაფიაში შესანიშნავი მაგალითია იმისა, რომ რწმენასა და ლიტურგიკულ ენას შეუძლია სამშობლოს დარღვეული საზღვრების დადგენა (შემოწერა): „ქართლად ფრიადი ქუეყანად აღირაცხების, რომელსაცა შინა ქართულითა ენითა ჟამი შეიწირვის და ლოცვად ყოველი აღესრულების...“ (გიორგი მერჩულე, 1963, გვ. 290).

ზეციური სამშობლოს, ზესთასოფლის, მხატვრული წარმოდგენა რუსთაველისა და დანტეს შემოქმედებაში განსხვავებულია იმ ნიშნით, რომ რუსთაველისთვის იქ სამოთხე და ჯოჯოხეთია, ხოლო დანტესთვის, როგორც კათოლიკე ქრისტიანისთვის, საიქიო მოიცავს ჯოჯოხეთს, სალხინებელსა და სამოთხეს. ორივე პოემაში იკვეთება ზეციური იერარქიისა და ღვთაებრივი ნათლის ქრისტიანული კონცეფცია. რუსთაველის პერსონაჟი ასე წარმოიდგენს სამოთხეს:

*„მომცნეს ფრთენი და აღვფრინდე, მივჰხვდე მას ჩემსა ნდომასა,  
დღისით და ღამით ვჰხედვიდე მზისა ელვათა კრთომასა“.* (1304)

სიბრძნესთან, ნათელთან, ღმერთთან ზიარებას გულისხმობს აგრეთვე, „შერთვა ზესთ მწყობრთა წყობისა“ (790). ღმერთი „ნათელთა მსახეა“ („ვითა ვიძიშვი, გაცნობოს ღმერთმან, ნათელთა მსახემან!“ 744).

შალვა ნუცუბიძის ფორმულირებით (1976, გვ. 112), „დანტემ პოეტურად შეასხა ხორცი იერარქიულ ზეაღსვლას მიწიდან ზეცამდე



მატებადი ნათელის პრინციპის შესაბამისად“. ჩვენი მხრივ შეიძლება დავძინოთ, რომ ამავე პრინციპით „მატებადია“ სიხარული. რაც უფრო მატულობს ნათელი, მით უფრო ძლიერდება სიხარული. საღმრთო ნათელი საღმრთო სიხარულის წყაროა. სიხარული ისეთივე ნიშანდობლივია სამოთხისთვის, როგორც ნათელი.

„ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ პერსონაჟები, წუთისოფლის სიავით გატანჯულნი, სიხარულს იმქვეყნად ელიან. ეს იქნება საღვთო ნათელში მყოფობის სახარული, ტანჯვისა და ცრემლის წილ სიხარული, მიჯნურთან შეყრის სიხარული.

*„ამას მოკვდავი ვილოცავ, აროდეს ვითხოვ, არ, ენით:  
აქა გაყრილნი მიჯნურნი მუნამცა შევიყარენით,  
მუნ ერთმანერთი კვლა ვნახნეთ, კვლა რამე გავიხარენით“.* (882)  
*„საყვარელმან საყვარელი ვით არ ნახოს, ვით გაწიროს!  
მისკენ მივალ მხიარული, მერმე მანცა ჩემ კერძ იროს“.* (883)  
*„რა ადვილად გიჩნს მოთმენა ჩემთა სასჯელთა თმენისა!  
აწ მივსწურვივარ სიკვდილსა, დრო მომეახლა ლხენისა“.* (881)

ნათლისა და სიხარულის თანაგანცდის ამსახველი ულამაზესი ნიმუშია ტაეპი: „გულსა ბნელი განმინათლდა, ზედა ლხინი ადგა სვეტად“ (410).

დანტეს გმირისთვის უსაზღვრო სიხარულია შეხვედრა ბეატრიქსთან, რომელთან ყოფნაც არ დასცალდა წუთისოფელში და რომელიც, აქ, მხატვრულ სინამდვილეში, უკვე სხვა სიმბოლური საზრისის გამომხატველია. სამოთხის სივრცე სიხარულითაა აღვსილი. ჩნდება ისეთი საყურადღებო მხატვრული სახეები, როგორებიცაა: „სიხარულის რიდე“, „სიხარულის საფარველი“. რუსთაველთან გვხვდება „სიხარულის კარი“ („სიმძიმელთა ერდო დახაშ, სიხარულის კარი აღი“, 397).

რაც შეეხება სამოთხის იერარქიულ წყობას, რაც ასე მკაფიო და თვალსაჩინოა „ღვთაებრივ კომედიაში“, „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“ არ არის დეტალიზებული, თუმცა სწორედ ამ იერარქიას გულისხმობს „ზესთ მწყობრთა წყობა“, „ცისა ძალთა დასი“; „ძალნი ზეციერნი“, „ბორბალი ... ცისა შვიდისა“, „... ცხრითავე...ცითა“ და სხვ. ზეციური იერარქიის მეტის სიზუსტით წარმოჩენის შესაძლებლობა და აუცილებლობა არ დგას პოემაში პერსონაჟთა პირობითად მაჰმადიანური აღმ-სარებლობის გამო. ამ საკითხს ეხება აკაკი გაწერელია (1970, გვ. 140-150) წერილში „რუსთაველის მხატვრულ-ფილოსოფიური აზროვნების ზო-

გიერთი საკითხი“ და აღნიშნავს, რომ ქრისტოლოგიაში ფსევდო-დიონისეს მიერ დადგენილი იერარქია (სამი ძირითადი ტრიადა და ცხრა ჩინად დაყოფილი საზღვარნი) ისეა დამკვიდრებული, რომ რუსთაველი, ისევე როგორც დანტე, ფსევდო-დიონისე არეოპაგელიდან გამოდის; ზეცის მხატვრული მოდელი რუსთაველთან არეოპაგელის იერარქიზმის პრინციპითაა აგებული. მის პოემაში თვითონ ანგელოზთა სახელწოდებანი რომ არ გვხვდება, ეს გამოწვეულია ნაწარმოების პირობითი მუსლიმანური გარსით. ამავე თვალსაზრისს იზიარებს სოლომონ ცაიშვილი ნაშრომში „დანტე და რუსთაველი (რამდენიმე ლიტერატურულ-მსოფლმხედველობრივი პარალელი)“. მკვლევარი მსჯელობს (1984, გვ. 145-169) ზეციური იერარქიისა და ღვთაებრივი ნათლის ქრისტიანულ კონცეფციაზე და აღნიშნავს, რომ არეოპაგელის გავლენა ჩანს „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“, ხოლო „ღვთაებრივი სამოთხის“ ოცდამერვე ქების ტექსტში ვეცნობით ანგელოზთა იერარქიულ წყობას, რომელიც აბსოლუტურად იდენტურია დიონისე არეოპაგელის იერარქიული წყობისა.

„ვეფხისტყაოსანსა“ და „ღვთაებრივ კომედიაში“ ასახულია ის ისტორიული სინამდვილე და რეალიები, რომლებშიც ცხოვრებდნენ პოეტები. ისტორიული პლასტი, თავისი პოლიტიკური, სოციალური, კულტურული და პიროვნული ასპექტებით ორივე პოემაში გამოსჭვივის, თუმცა ეს დანტესთან უფრო კონკრეტული და რეალისტურია, ვიდრე რუსთაველთან. ამ საკითხთან დაკავშირებით თანამედროვე რუსთველოლოგიაში დამკვიდრებული ცალსახა პოზიცია მოკლედ შეიძლება ჩამოვყალიბოთ ვიქტორ ნოზადის სიტყვებით (1963, გვ. 549), რომ „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ გარემო და მსოფლმხედველობა მხოლოდ გარეგნულადაა აღმოსავლური კულტურის ნიშნების მატარებელი, ხოლო არსებითად იგი ქრისტიანული მხატვრული ნაწარმოებია და მასში საკუთრივ ქართული სამყაროა წარმოსახული. „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ საზოგადოება არის ქართული საზოგადოება; „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ საზოგადოება არის ქრისტიანული საზოგადოება.

პოემის „ქართულ სულსა“ და პერსონაჟთა ქართულ ხასიათებზე ჯერ კიდევ პოემის პირველი გამომცემლები საუბრობენ, ხოლო აკაკი წერეთლის საჯარო ლექციებმა „ვეფხისტყაოსანზე“ ეს თემა კიდევ უფრო გაააქტიურა და ფართო განხილვის საგნად აქცია.

სამეფოს პოლიტიკური წყობა – მონარქია, სოციალური წყობა – პატრონყმობა, 7 ნაწილად დაყოფილი ქვეყანა; ტახტის მემკვიდრის საკითხი; ქალის გამეფების უპრეცედენტო მოვლენა და სხვა – არის ის

ისტორიული რეალობა, რომელიც ასახულია „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“, თუმცა მის სიუჟეტში არ ხდება ისტორიული პირების, ფაქტების, მოვლენების კონკრეტიზაცია, მოქმედებენ გამოგონილი პერსონაჟები და დრო მითოლოგიზებულია (მხოლოდ პროლოგი თამარ მეფის ხსენებით და ეპილოგი იძლევა შესაძლებლობას პოემაში ასახული მოვლენები დაუკავშირდეს კონკრეტულ ისტორიულ ეპოქას.) ამიტომაც აღნიშნავდა შვეიცარიელი ქართველოლოგი რუთ ნოიკომი (1978, გვ. 216-217), რომ *„ჰომეროსისა და დანტეს მსგავსად, რუსთველმა მოახერხა ერთად აესახა ადამიანურობა დროის გარეშე და თავისი ხალხის ტიპური დამახასიათებელი ნიშნები, რამაც ამ ხალხს ნება მისცა შეეცნო საკუთარი თავი და არსი მსოფლიო მასშტაბის სულიერ ჩარჩოში“*.

„ვეფხისტყაოსანში“ თითქოს ყოფიერებაზე, ისტორიულ რეალობაზე მაღლა დგას ბიბლიური საზრისი ამ ყოფიერები-სა, პოეტი გვაჩვენებს ყოფიერების სახეობრიობას იგავურ-ალეგორიული ფორმებით და არა თვითონ ყოფიერებას, ამიტომაც პოემაში სახეობრივია, ზოგადად, ადამიანი, მეფე, მიჯნურობის ფენომენი, სოციალური წყობა და ურთიერთმიმართება, რომელიც (იდეაში) ბაძავს ზეციურ იერარქიას (შდრ. „სადა არს პატივი მთავრობისა, მუნ არს მსგავსება ღმრთეებისა“. გიორგი მერჩულე). ამისი დასტურია როსტევეანისა და ავთანდილის, ავთანდილისა და შერმადინის ურთიერთობები.

„ღვთაებრივ კომედიაში“ გამჭვირვალე აისახა დანტე ალიგიერის თანამედროვე იტალიის პოლიტიკური მოვლენები, რომელთა უშუალო მომსწრე და მონაწილე თავად იყო. ნაშრომში „მხატვრული რეალიზმი – შემოქმედებითი მეთო-დი (დანტე ალიგიერის „ღვთაებრივი კომედის“ მიხედვით)“ თინათინ ბიგანიშვილი (2021, გვ. 195) შენიშნავს, რომ პოეტმა მოირგო გარდაცვლილი სატრფოს აჩრდილს დადევნებული მიჯნურის ნიღაბი. „ამ ნიღბის მიღმა დანტეს ბიოგრაფიული დეტალები და მისი თანამედროვე იტალიის ისტორიული რეალობა მატთანის სიზუსტით იკითხება. დანტეს „ჯოჯო-ხეთის“, „სალხინებისა“ და „სამოთხის“ სანახებში არა მარტო მითოსური და შორეული წარსულის მკვიდრნი ხვდებიან, არამედ მისი თანამედროვენი და ისტორიული პირები XIV საუკუნის იტალიის უახლოესი წარსულიდან. ეს არის დანტეს თანამედროვე ფლორენციისა და მთელი იტალიის რეალისტური სურათი“. ასე, ამ ფორმით გადმოსცა პოეტმა თავისი სათქმელი, რომელსაც გარდა საკუთრივ რელიგიურისა, თავისი

პოლიტიკური კონტექსტიც აქვს. არაერთგან იკითხება მიმართვა პოლიტიკური ოპონენტებისადმი:

*„და თუ ქვეყანა ახლანდელი წარხდენილია,  
ამის მიზეზი თქვენშივეა, იქვე იძიეთ,“  
(სალხინებელი, ქება მე-16. სტრ. 82)*

(საგულისხმოა, რომ ორივე შემოქმედს წილად ხვდა დევნილობა სამშობლოდან. განსხვავებით რუსთაველისგან, დანტეს ბიოგრაფია კარგად არის ცნობილი, მისმა პირველმა ბიოგრაფმა, ჯოვანი ბოკაჩომ, შთამომავლობას შემოუნახა ცნობები დიდი პოეტის ცხოვრების, ოჯახის, მოღვაწეობის, პოლიტიკური პოზიციის შესახებ. დანტე გარდაიცვალა ფლორენციიდან შორს, ქალაქ რავენაში. მიღებული ვერსიით, რუსთაველიც დევნილი იყო სამშობლოდან და სიცოცხლის ბოლო წლები გაატარა იერუსალიმში. თუმცა მისი პოლიტიკური პოზიცია, დევნილობის მიზეზები, ცხოვრების ბოლო წლები და განსასვენებელი კვლევისა და ვარაუდების საგანია და არა ისტორიულ წყაროებზე დაფუძნებული სინამდვილე.)

კიდევ ერთი მნიშვნელოვანი ასპექტი, განუყოფელი სამშობლოსგან, არის ენა. ენა – „სული ერისა“ (ჰუმბოლდტი) და „ყოფიერების სავანე“ (ჰაიდეგერი).

რუსთაველის ენა, შეიძლება ითქვას, ზოგადქართულია. სამეცნიერო ლიტერატურაში არის მცდელობები „ვეფხისტყაოსანში“ დაიძებნოს რომელიმე კონკრეტული დიალექტისთვის დამახასიათებელი ლექსიკა და ამით დაზუსტდეს რუსთაველის წარმომავლობაც, მაგრამ ვფიქრობ, „ვეფხისტყაოსნის“ ენა აერთიანებს როგორც დასავლური, ისე აღმოსავლური დიალექტისთვის ნიშანდობლივ ლექსიკასა და სინტაქსურ კონსტრუქციებს. ამ გაგებით, ის ზოგადქართულია. რუსთაველი საგანგებოდ ირჩევს ფართო მკითხველისთვის გასაგებ ენობრივ სტილს (თუმცა შეეძლო ეწერა მაღალი საღვთისმეტყველო სტილითაც („თუ სამ სწადოდა, ღუთის მეთყუდლიცა მაღალ“ – ანტონ კათალიკოსი). ამით მისი შემოქმედება, ნააზრევი, მისაწვდომი ხდება არამხოლოდ მწიგნობართა, ღვთისმეტყველთა ვიწრო წრისთვის, არამედ მთელი ერისთვის. ალ. ბარამიძემ რუსთაველის დამოკიდებულებას ენისადმი უწოდა ჰუმანისტური. „ჰუმანისტურად უდგება რუსთაველი ენის საკითხს. ამის საბუთია პოეტის მხრით ენის ხალხურობისაკენ მიდრეკილება, საეკლესიო-სქოლასტიკური სამწიგნობრო

ნორმების უარყოფა და ხალხის სამეტყველო-სასაუბრო ენის სალიტერატურო ენასთან დაახლოება“ (ბარამიძე, 1966, გვ. 229).

მსგავსია დანტე ალიგიერის ენობრივი არჩევანი „ღვთაებრივ კომედიაში“. როგორც ცნობილია, დანტეს თეორიული ნაშრომები შეიქმნა ლათინურ ენაზე, ხოლო „ღვთაებრივი კომედია“ – იტალიურად. დანტემ პოემაში გამოიყენა „ახალი საამო სტილი“. კონსტანტინე გამსახურდია წერილში „დანტე და საქართველო“ ეხება ამ ორი დიდი შემოქმედის ენობრივ სტილს და შენიშნავს, რომ რუსთაველი ირჩევს ხალხურ, სადა და „არა სუპერპათეტიურ ტონს მეტყველებისა“ და დანტეს ამ ხალხური მეტყველების აპოლოგეტი იყო. ვფიქრობთ, ესეც იყო ერთ-ერთი ფაქტორი, რომელმაც ორივე პოემა ეროვნული მთლიანობის ერთგვარ სიმბოლოდ აქცია.

ამდენად, როგორც რუსთაველის, ასევე დანტე ალიგიერისთვის სამშობლოს ცნება ბინარულია, მას აქვს საერო და საღვთისმეტყველო საზრისი, რომლის საფუძველი ბიბლიურია. ორივე შემოქმედისთვის მიწიერიდან ზეციურ სამშობლოში ამყვანებელი უხილავი კიბე რწმენაა, რომელიც რეალიზდება პერსონაჟთა ცხოვრების წესში, ღმერთის, სამშობლოსა და მოყვასის მსახურებაში.

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# Expressions of Widowhood across Cultures: Social Constructions and Contestations

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## Widowhood: A Cultural Study and Its Impact on Diasporic Female Identity

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### Abstract:

From the South-Asian perspective widows are considered as inauspicious and harbinger of bad luck. They are subjected to abusive practices, such as violation of human rights, and physical and emotional violence, under the pretext of social and cultural taboos. However, this paper explores how widows contest stereotypical norms, as established by the conventional South Asian society, in the diasporic context. Through a comparative analysis of the female characters in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), and Krutin Patel's film, *ABCD: It's About Choices* (1999), I argue that widowhood provides some sort of emancipation to these diasporic women. The narratives highlight the struggles that the protagonists, Ashima, Jasmine, and Anju undergo after the demise of their husbands. Women are considered to be the bearers of their home culture. When diasporic women migrate from their home countries to the host nation, along with their physical displacement, they also carry their cultural traditions with them. So, even when they are away from their homeland, these women are expected to abide by their native traditions. However, despite the struggles, these widows have been able to gain agency to a certain extent, which would not have been possible in the presence of their husbands owing to the stereotypical notion that men make all the important decisions in the family and women are expected to conform to them. Although it has to be acknowledged that the nature of their agency varies. While Lahiri's protagonist, Ashima and Mukherjee's heroine, Jasmine

are able to adapt to the host culture, Anju, in Patel's film, finds it difficult to assimilate in the American traditions. Furthermore, I will probe into the intersectional differences, such as differences in class, social status and age that exist among the widows, which have a significant impact on their identity formation.

**Keywords:** Diasporic widows, Female agency, Female identity, Intersectionality, South-Asian Diaspora

## **Introduction**

Widowhood, especially in South Asia, is synonymous to damnation. As Deepshikha Doley points out, widows are seen as “witches” and “man-eaters,” and are made to “drink the bathwater of their husbands’ dead bodies and have unprotected sex to ‘cleanse themselves of the sin of causing their husbands’ death” (Doley, 2020). In a patriarchal society in South Asia, widowhood is “much more than merely losing a husband” (“Empowering Widows,” 2014, p. 2). While a widower can carry on with his usual life, a widow has to follow stricter rituals, which can sometimes be seen as “savage” (Young, 2006, p. 200): “The hair is cut, or shaved off, in many cases leaving cuts in the scalp...The clothing and the jewellery the widow wore during her husband’s lifetime are cast off, and rags or rough clothing put on” (Young, 2006, p. 200). She has to follow a certain kind of food, and is usually prohibited from eating meat as it is believed that non-vegetarian food, such as fish and meat, may arouse sexual desires in her. Widows not only suffer socially and culturally but they are also financially challenged as in some cultures widows lose all their possessions which they had acquired during their marriages. They are either treated as “social pariahs” (“Empowering Widows,” 2014, p. 2) as they are not welcomed to participate in any family occasions, or, are completely abandoned and discarded by their own families.

However, in this paper, I argue that contrary to the stereotypical notion of widowhood in South Asia, which is associated with pain and suffering, the literary narratives I analyse show that widowhood provides a

certain extent of agency to the diasporic female characters within the space of the neoliberal West. In order to explore the non-conformity of the widows to the conventional South Asian norms, I will make a comparative study of the female characters in the literary works of Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake* (2003), Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989), and Krutin Patel's cinematic narrative, *ABCD: It's About Choices* (1999). I will rely on the theories of Jon Anderson, Michel de Certeau and Doreen Massey to show that the places in the metropolitan cities in the West contribute to the transformation of the female identities. My analysis will highlight that there are ambivalent Third Spaces in the neoliberal cities, to use Homi Bhabha's term which are characterised by his notion of hybridity. I intend to argue that these ambivalent spaces become the sites where the diasporic widows subvert their traditional rules associated with their home culture. To probe further into the contestation of widowhood norms my paper will explore that female agency should not be considered as a monolithic concept, rather, the intersectional differences, such as differences in age, class and social status, should also be taken into account. To highlight these intersectional differences among the widowed characters, I will turn to the theory of Kimberle Crenshaw. But before going into the analysis of my selected literary narratives I will discuss about the conditions of the widows in different parts of South Asia and the challenges they face in their daily lives.

### **Conditions of South Asian Widows and the Challenges They Face: A Brief Overview**

Widows in South Asia are doubly discriminated: first, because they are women, and secondly, because they have lost their husbands. In a conventional South Asian society, identities of women are mostly determined by their husbands. Therefore, after the demise of the husbands, these widows become "'invisible' group of women" ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 2). Although the overall condition of widows across South Asia is wretched and pathetic, the challenges they face often vary based on the region. For instance, in India, widows are seen as "evil eyes," "purveyors of ill fortune," and are addressed by derogatory names, such as "witch," "dakan," and "whore" ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 6). These widows are economically and sexually exploited and are abandoned to temple sites, for example, Mathura, Vrindavan, Tirupati and Varanasi ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 6). While the older widows live

in these temple places for the rest of their lives, the younger ones are forced into prostitution. I will provide some case studies to explore the miserable conditions of the widows in the temple sites:

Showkat Shafi reports on 7 March, 2016 in Al Jazeera about a 85-year-old widow, Manu Ghosh, who lives in Vrindavan. Manu says, “I used to wash dishes and clothes in people’s house to earn money, but the moment they *heard* that I am a widow, I was thrown out without any notice...I had to sleep on the street as even my family abandoned me after my husband’s death. I was married off to him when I was 11 years old and he was 40. My daughter died of malnutrition as I could not give her food since nobody wanted to help a widow. After her death, I decided to come to Vrindavan” (Shafi, 2016).

Kai Schultz reports on 27 August, 2019 in The New York Times that Nirmala Maheshwari, a widow, who is abused by her family, starved and beaten by her own son and other relatives, has taken refuge in Vrindavan. Her own family has considered her as a burden. After her husband’s death she seems to lose all her social value (Schultz, 2019).

Meera Khanna reports on 31 August, 2021 in *Think Global Health*, about an upper-middle class woman, Reena Ahuja, who used to live a comfortable life with her husband, son and daughter-in-law. After she loses her husband to COVID-19, her son evicts her from her own house, accusing her to be responsible for her husband’s death. She is subjected to physical and sexual violence, and is refused of any rightful inheritance of her husband’s property (Khanna, 2021).

According to the reports of the United Nations, only six states in India have made “amendments in their respective laws to recognize coparcenary (joint ownership) rights of women” (“Widowhood,” 2001, p. 6). But lack of literacy and strict legal actions have failed to eliminate the violence on widows in most parts of the country.

Similar to the widows in India, who are victims of verbal and physical abuses, Bangladeshi widows are forced to work as domestic servants. They work for long hours with little or no income. They are mostly separated from their children. Although, in theory, a Bangladeshi Muslim widow is “better off” than an Indian Hindu widow: “the Koran encourages remarriage

and a widow cannot be disinherited. Under sharia, a woman is entitled to one-eighth of her husband's estate, and half her male siblings' share of the parents' estate" ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). However, in practice, Bangladeshi widows, especially in the rural parts of the country, are subjected to patriarchal oppressions, evicted from their possessions and deprived of their rights. According to the UN reports, Bangladesh becomes a major hub for trafficking of young girls to the brothels in India: "Widows' daughters who are without male protectors and not enrolled in school are especially at risk to this trade" ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). Although several NGOs and governmental organisations have been set up in both India and Bangladesh in order to protect the widows, necessary actions are yet to be taken.

The conditions of the widows are no better in Pakistan as compared to India and Bangladesh. In theory, "destitute widows are reported to be supported by a small pension or zakat" ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). But the system being corrupted, the widows are often deprived of any financial support. In addition to the neglect that the widows suffer the Honour Codes in Pakistan hides the cruelty inflicted upon these women with imprisonment and even death as the young widows are suspected to bring shame to their families ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). The challenges faced by the widows in Afghanistan are equally terrible. Most of the widows who live in Kabul have lost their husbands in war. As per the UN reports in 2001, approximately 2 million war widows live in Afghanistan, who are the sole earning members of the families ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). However, as per the Taliban rule prevalent in Afghanistan, the widows are not allowed to leave their homes and denied employment. They have lost the access to international food aid. According to the Taliban, the aid is to be collected by a male member of the family, but, as the widows do not have any male relatives they are deprived of the aid. Unemployment in the country has increased the number of beggars in the streets. Widows and their children suffer from malnutrition and severe health conditions, which often lead to suicides ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). Similar to the scenario in Afghanistan, war widows in Sri Lanka experience substantial impoverishment and marginalisation. The Small Fisherman's Federation has been set up for the rights of widows of fishermen who have drowned at sea ("Widowhood," 2001, p. 7). Despite the fact that several NGOs and institutional reforms have been established to create awareness for the plight of the widows, the conditions faced by these women are worse in the developing countries.

## Representation of Widowhood in the Diasporic Narratives

In contrast to the physical, economic and sexual violences that the widows endure in South Asia, I read widowhood as a mode of agency for the diasporic female characters in my selected literary and cinematic narratives. In Jhumpa Lahiri's novel, *The Namesake*, the readers are informed about the demise of the protagonist's husband over a telephonic conversation between Ashima Ganguli, a Bengali immigrant from Calcutta, and a hospital attendant. Ashima accompanies her husband, Ashoke, to the US. She loses her husband when he goes on a work trip to Ohio: "Ashima hangs up the phone... She begins to shiver violently, the house instantly feeling twenty degrees colder" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 169). In accordance to the norms in India Ashima complies with the life of a widow: "For ten days following [her husband's death]...[she eats] a mourner's diet, forgoing meat and fish...only rice and dal and vegetables, plainly prepared" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 180). Being a financially dependent wife it takes a while for Lahiri's protagonist to manage her life in the US after she becomes a widow: "For most of her life, she reminds herself, a wife...Ashima feels lonely suddenly, horribly, permanently alone...she sobs for her husband. She feels overwhelmed by the thought of the move she is about to make, to the city that was once home and is now in its own way foreign" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 278).

While Lahiri's heroine moves from her homeland to accompany her husband in the US, Bharati Mukherjee's primary character in *Jasmine* travels to America after the death of her husband, Prakash. After becoming a widow Jasmine moves to the US to fulfil her dead husband's dream of better educational opportunities in the West and to escape from the political turmoil in India. Though the protagonist speaks of immigration as a "matter of duty and honor" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 97), it is clear from the narrative that the displacement has saved her from the pangs of widowhood in India. The readers get a picture of the lives of widows in Punjab through the portrayal of Jasmine's mother after her husband has expired: "When Pitaji died, my mother tried to throw herself on his funeral pyre. When we wouldn't let her, she shaved her head with a razor, wrapped her body in coarse cloth, and sat all day in a corner. Once a day I force-fed spoonfuls of rice gruel into her" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 61). Therefore, the protagonist's plight to America can be considered as an escape from the atrocities of widowhood in her homeland.

Similar to the novels of Lahiri and Mukherjee which provide a glimpse of the conditions of South Asian widows in the West, Krutin Patel's film also depicts the life of an Indian widowed mother in America. The very opening of *ABCD: It's About Choices* portrays Anju, the protagonist, sitting on a bed, busy with her crochet and talking to her dead husband's photo, which is hanging on the wall behind her: "I wish you could be here to see the children. You would be so proud of them" (Patel, 1999, 0:02:11). Though the film does not provide details about Anju's displacement and married life, the narrative explores the widow's loneliness and struggles in the host nation as her children are busy with their own lives.

### **Significance and Impact of Diasporic Space on the Identities of the Widows**

It is my contention that as the female protagonists are away from their homeland, they are in a privileged position compared to their situations in India. Despite the fact that the freedom and liberty which the widows enjoy in the neoliberal West are deceptive, the metropolitan cities guarantee a degree of protection for these women which they have not been entitled to in their home countries. The places in the West become the sites where "cultural activities happen in particular ways in particular contexts" (Anderson, 2010, p. 6). For the diasporic characters these places become the breeding ground where the interchange of culture takes place. As Doreen Massey argues, places depend "crucially on the notion of articulation" (Massey, 1994, p. 8), which suggests that places become sites where the construction of identities as well as the difference between the subjects can be recognised. In order to understand the significance of the neoliberal places, the "construction of the subjects within them" (Massey, 1994, p. 8) is to be taken into account as subjects, that is, the female characters in this case, become "part and parcel" (Massey, 1994, p. 8) of those places.

In defining the impact of spaces within the neoliberal places, I will rely on Michel de Certeau's theory. According to de Certeau, individual spaces are "practised" places (de Certeau, 1988, p. 117), suggesting that places are transformed into spaces when individuals appropriate them. Thus, I will argue that the delimiting places are transformed into "spaces of enunciation" (de Certeau, 1988, p. 98) in the literary narratives I analyse. Furthermore, while the female protagonists transform places into empowering spaces they

perform acts of subversion which eventually have an impact on their identities. In the flux between their home and host cultures the diasporic characters tend to create an in-between space which is akin to Homi Bhabha's notion of "third space" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). This ambivalent space becomes the site where the diasporic characters subvert their conventional norms. For instance, in Mukherjee's novel, the protagonist, who has been at the mercy of her father and her brothers in India, fulfils her American dream by becoming a part of the "unmapped exotic metropolis" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 184). Even though Jasmine, at first, finds America "humiliating" and "disappointing" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 29), it is the same metropolis where "miracles still [happen]" (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 197) for her. America helps her redefining her identity. She not only gets a job in each city in the US where she traverses, which serves as her financial freedom, she also acquires a family of her own. Similar to Jasmine, Ashima too, becomes financially independent. She overcomes her dependency on her husband and starts working at a public library in America: "Three afternoons a week and two Saturdays a month" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 162). Both Jasmine and Ashima become citizens of the neoliberal cities which promise the citizens "the liberty and near-equality of movement and opportunity in exchange of their concession to the liberality of markets" (Zeigler, 2007, p. 154). Thus, the protagonists' engagement in the market economy in the US grants them a degree of empowerment.

### **Widowhood as Agency:**

#### **A Comparative Analysis of Diasporic Female Characters**

Although all the protagonists in my selected novels and films are from South Asia and they are all widows by the end of the narratives, they cannot be considered as a monolithic group. To explore the intersectional differences between these characters I turn to the theory of Kimberle Crenshaw. Crenshaw defines intersectionality as a concept "to denote the various ways in which [race, gender, class and sexuality] interact to shape multiple dimensions" of women's experiences (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244). In the diasporic narratives that I analyse the protagonists differ based on their age, social status and class. As the South Asian diasporic community is not a homogeneous group, therefore, "ignoring difference *within* groups contributes to tension *among* groups" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242, italics in the original). Both Anju and Ashima in *ABCD: It's About Choices* and *The Namesake*



respectively, belong to the middle-class background. But Patil's protagonist is depicted as a stereotypical Indian widow; conservative and traditional. She is reluctant to accept the host cultural norms. Till the end of the film she does not seem to be a successful immigrant. She is never seen to step outside her house. She detests American culture and does not show any interest in integration. Ashima, on the other hand, adopts a hybrid identity by the end of the novel: "Ashima will return to India with an American passport. In her wallet will remain her Massachusetts driver's license, her social security card" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 276). She decides to spend "six months of her life in India, six months in the States" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 275). She is no longer "the same Ashima who had once lived in Calcutta" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 276). Thus, it seems she is able to adapt to the host cultural norms.

Besides the differences in the identities of Anju and Ashima as individuals their behaviour towards their children also varies. In the beginning of Lahiri's narrative, Ashima chooses a bride for her son, Gogol. But the marriage does not last long. Later she is represented as more open-minded when it comes to choosing a partner for her daughter, Sonia. She lets her daughter choose her own partner: "Something tells her Sonia will be happy with this boy – quickly she corrects herself – this young man. He has brought happiness to her daughter, in a way Moushumi had never brought it to her son. That it was she who had encouraged Gogol to meet Moushumi will be something for which Ashima will always feel guilty" (Lahiri, 2003, p. 276). On the contrary, Anju is obsessed with the marriage of her children. It seems her main goal in life is to marry off her children. In one of the episodes, she compels her daughter, Nina, to ask the astrologer about her marriage prospective: "When will she marry?.. Ask the question...will I have children? Will they be Indian children? At least half-Indian. Oh Nina!.. What a nasty child!...I am just a lonely old woman with such little time left. I just cannot communicate with my daughter. We are always fighting" (Patel, 1999, 0:43:31-0:45:12). Thus, Anju struggles as a widow. Though she does not suffer economically and is portrayed to have a comfortable life, she seems to be emotionally distant from her children. In contrast to her, Ashima evolves as an empowered individual. Although in the beginning she is a shy woman, dependent on her husband, as the narrative progresses, she learns to drive, works in an American library, and have American friends.

While Lahiri's and Patel's protagonists belong to the middle-class background, Mukherjee's primary character, Jasmine, is from a working-

class background. She refuses hyphenated identity. After her displacement to the US, she identifies herself more with the culture of the host nation and distances herself from the “artifici-ally maintained Indianness” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 145) in America. Though the narrative does not provide any details about her financial status, it is clear that she has some jobs in the host nation: “[she is] a professional, like a school teacher or a nurse” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 175). Although Jasmine leaves her homeland to escape from the pathetic life of a widow, in America she further experiences traumatic situations, such as being sexually molested. However, with the love and support of the people whom she comes across in America, Jasmine evolves as a “fighter and adapter” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 40). The novel opens with an astrologer’s prediction of her “widowhood and exile” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 3), but, by the end, she challenges the prophecy: “Watch me re-position my stars, I whisper to the astrologer” (Mukherjee, 1989, p. 240). Thus, despite her social and personal trauma, which includes the political revolt in Punjab and the murder of her husband, respectively, Jasmine comes to terms with her past experiences and is successful in redefining herself as an empowered individual.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have explored the conditions of the widows in South Asia: they are associated with bad luck, they experience all sorts of violence including physical and sexual abuses, and they are deprived of their possessions. Though the widows are equally oppressed all across South Asia, the amount and nature of torture vary based on the countries. In contrast to the social and economical positions of widows in South Asia, my selected narratives have portrayed widowhood in a somewhat positive manner. As I have shown, with the help of the theories of Jon Anderson, Michel de Certeau and Doreen Massey, the places in the West act as the sites where the culture and the subject are reunited. Relying on de Certeau’s notion of “practised” places (de Certeau, 1988, p. 117), my paper has highlighted how diasporic female characters appropriate the geographical locations and transform those areas into emancipatory spaces. I have argued that despite the obvious limitations the diasporic space in the neoliberal West acts as a middle ground, similar to Homi Bhabha’s notion of an ambivalent “third Space” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). Within this ambivalent space the diasporic widows contest the

stereotypical South Asian notions of widowhood and they gain some sort of agency in the Western metropolis. My analysis has foregrounded that contrary to the conventional norms in South Asia, in which women's identities are depended on their husbands, the diasporic widowed characters have successfully discarded their traditional rules. The demise of the husbands has proved to be beneficial to them as they have transformed themselves from shy, dependent women to empowered individuals, for instance, Ashima in *The Namesake* and Jasmine in *Jasmine*. With the help of Kimberle Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality, I have further pointed out that although all the widowed protagonists are from South Asia, there are certain intersectional differences between them. While Ashima and Anju belong to the middle-class background, Jasmine is from a working-class. Moreover, despite the fact that Lahiri's and Mukherjee's protagonists become financially empowered and are able to adapt to the host cultural norms by the end of the narratives, Patel's heroine detests American culture and is reluctant to assimilate. However, one of the limitations that this paper incurs is that as my analysis is primarily based on the literary narratives, therefore, in order to trace how widowhood becomes a mode of agency for the diasporic women, a critical survey needs to be conducted beyond the literary works.

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# Mutual Learning among Civilizations through Comparative Literature

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## A Comparative Analysis of *Qidian.com* and *Webnovel.com*: From the View of Digital Humanities

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### Abstract:

Web Novel has become an integral part of contemporary recreation for people living in the world greatly changed by the revolution in information technology and consequent social upheaval. Chinese webnovels, benefitting from the fast-growing digital culture industry, have developed a successful industrial model represented by “qidian.com”, a famous website for internet users to read and write original fiction, ranking 9087 in global internet traffic. The launch of its international version “webnovel.com” in 2017 marks a strong, well-tested, and sophisticated cyberliterature industrial model entering the global cultural market. By comparing these two websites from the view of digital humanities, this research is expected to analyze differences between their scale, functions, sorts of works, and two versions (original and translated) of a specific text existing on both websites. Based on data analysis, several conclusions will be inferred such as the advantages, limitations, and influences of “qidian-mode” facing unfamiliar and complicated international surroundings. In conclusion, though encountering several problems while launching the international version, “qidian-mode” with Chinese characteristics and standards provides a practical model for the development and industrialization of online literature around the world.

**Keywords:** Webnovels, Digital Humanities, Qidian.com, Webnovel.com

## Introduction

Digital technology is witnessing a sharp change in contemporary entertainment for people living in a world controlled by mobile phones, computers and plentiful applications. Chinese webnovel, or “original fiction” mentioned by Bhaskar (2013), is a burgeoning fiction genre for internet users, especially those born after twenty-eighties to amuse themselves. Benefiting from fast-growing digital culture industry, Chinese webnovel has developed a successful industrial model represented by “qidian.com”, a famous website for internet users to read and write online fiction, ranking 9087 in global internet traffic (Alexa Rank). According to Report on the Development of Chinese Online Literature 2021, there have been 502 million online fiction readers in China generating RMB20 billion revenue for 45 online literary websites, which with their overseas versions like Webnovel, Radish and Korean Webtoon platform together, “[are] rapidly offering alternatives to Western cultural products that historically have dominated traditional media sectors in the region” (Shim et al., 2020).

Webnovels and their spawning-ground literary websites entering the mainstream reading market are drawing attention from publishing for the speed and scale of digital storytelling modes. Bhaskar (2013) takes Chinese webnovels as “new ways of writing and a new end product” and believes that “digital delivery and content creates opportunities for innovative, skilled and agile entrants to the market.” After discussing different book forms in the digital age (including Chinese webnovels and mobile fiction in Japan), Johnson (2022) further points out that “books are now social,” which indicates the influence of digital technology upon traditional publishing. Qidian, and its international version Webnovel, are both representatives of digital technology changing publishing. In consideration of the incredible length and profits-oriented nature of Chinese webnovels (some of them are more than 1000 chapters), it is difficult to publish webnovels traditionally. By tracing and comparing Qidian and Webnovel’s development, this study tries to figure out the mechanism of Qidian literary industry, problems it may face in overseas expansion and how to solve them.

## **Qidian Industry and its Abroad Expansion**

Developing from the Chinese Chinese Magic Fantasy Union and being officially created in May 2002, Qidian is one of the most successful digital reading platforms in China (Qidian Introduction). It is also the pathfinder constructing a profitable pattern of webnovels on account of inaugurating a paid-for-content system only one year after its launch, which has become the cornerstone of Chinese literary industry. In addition, Qidian adapted several systems for a rapidly growing market. This innovation includes a writer-cultivation system, the construction of literary interactivity, a ranking and recommendation system etc., which together support the expansion of this website. In 2022, the first half profits of China Literature (the company running Qidian and Webnovel) have increased from RMB 4342.1 million to RMB 4087.2 million, which indicates the potential of the Chinese cultural industry (China Literature, 2022). In 2017, the launch of its international version “webnovel.com” marks a strong, well-tested, and sophisticated online literature industrial model entering the global cultural market. From 2017 to 2022, Webnovel has released about 2600 Chinese translated webnovels and 420 thousand original works created by overseas writers, which attracted a great deal of attention from English and non-English countries (Shim et al., 2020; Yoesoef, 2020; iResearch Inc, 2021; China Literature, 2022 ).

Attention should be paid to the extraordinary interactivity of Chinese webnovels, especially the interactivity between writers and readers. In a digital age, the option of readers could almost determine the cuisine of webnovels, which therefore have become a negotiation-like text swinging between writers, readers, kudos and profits (Ouyang & Zeng, 2020). Chinese webnovels, especially works listed in genres of Xuanhuan and Xianxia, have basically followed a writing pattern including a setting based on complex power-gaining system and a protagonist elevating his/her ranks following the system in the unfolding story, which with traditional Chinese cultural elements together, surprise overseas readers (Zhang, 2021). This kind of reader-oriented webnovels differentiated traditional Western fantasy from its storytelling ability and addictive attraction, which cater to the needs of readers who seek pleasure from online fiction (Ji & Li, 2017). Therefore, based on the special system of Chinese original fiction, Webnovel gained a foothold in the overseas market.

Webnovel and Qidian share a same paid-for-content system, within which their mechanics are similar. There are two systems running the

highly user-friendly website, one is reader-centered subgenres system, and another is a writer-centered ranking and recommendation system. Take “xuanhuan” as an example: Xuanhuan literally means imagination or illusion, in online literature, it refers to a large number of books based on magic and imagination. After getting into this genre’s page, readers can choose books in many ways: First, subgenres are listed to classify specific works, including works based on Eastern settings; imaginary worlds; relating power struggles, and works involving martial arts; Second, readers can choose books according to their popularity which is clear in rankings; Third, readers can also choose works depend on whether it is completed or whether it is accessible for free. To improve the interactivity between users and works (including writers-readers, writers-writers, readers-readers, texts-texts; texts-other media forms), Qidian allows readers to comment on paragraphs or even words, conducts platforms for followers of the same book to discuss and post literary pieces, and encourage readers to post their book lists and write down their comments so that other readers who have same tastes will find their interested books quickly, which inspire writers and readers to build community for creating, sharing and discussion (Ouyang, 2020).

Though Webnovel is the international version of Qidian, they vary in several aspects. First, Webnovel, adapting itself to the international market, seems more systematic and ambitious than Qidian. Integrating comics and fan-fic into browse, which are parallel to novels’ genres (including xuanhuan, fantasy, wuxia, xianxia, urban, realistic, war, history, game, sports, sci-fi, horror, and ACG), Webnovel tries to conduct an inclusive platform for different users and prepare itself for transmedia adaptation. At the same time, male-lead works and female-lead works are put together, rather than listing female-lead works in an additional website in Qidian, whose female-lead works compare unfavorably with other literary platforms such as Jinjiang. Second, the sections of browse and rankings are not fixed on the page, which provides more space for recommendations. Third, the sections of create are listed together with browse and rankings. Besides, writing activities and three sections of writers including original stories, becoming an author and books of authors are colorful and listed on the home page. These last two variations indicate that Webnovel attaches importance to cultivating overseas writers and classic works, which have attracted numerous views such as *My Vampire System* (WSA 2020 Gold Prize) and *The Crown’s Obsession*.



Generally speaking, Webnovel following Qidian, is a highly reader-friendly website in which readers are encouraged to choose books in different ways, including content, popularity, length, style or payments. It creates an organic forum around works, and at the same time, it objectively improves users' stickiness to the website. In 2021, about 83.4% overseas readers have become followers of Chinese webnovels more than six months; and 63.9% readers have read over 10 works, which demonstrates the grace of Chinese webnovels (iResearch Inc, 2021). The literary competition held by Webnovel has covered Bahasa Indonesia and Thai, the official languages of Indonesia and Thailand, which proves that though Webnovel cannot compete with qidian right now, it is walking upon the right way to develop.

### ***Lord of Mysteries* and its Translation**

*Lord of Mysteries* is one of the most successful webnovel in Qidian, both commercially and literally. According to official data, *Lord of Mysteries* is highly rated by both Webnovel and Qidian, scoring 4.84 (full marks 5) and 9.20 (full marks 10) respectively (Qidiantu, n.d.; Webnovel, n.d.). Though it has been completed in 2020, there are still numerous new readers bookmarking this novel. In a Chinese social platform LOFTER, there have been 113 thousand users following the tag "*Lord of Mysteries*" which attracted 64.79million views. The followers of *Lord of Mysteries*, like those following *The King's Avatar*, generate a lot of excellent paintings and literary pieces to express their love and imagination to characters. Besides, there are also followers posting their works on Archive of Our Own, Twitter, and Tumblr. In 2020, the first book of *Lord of Mysteries* series was published.

*Lord of Mysteries* is set in an imaginary Victorian age. The main character Zhou Mingrui, selected by the mysterious "Tianzun," is reborn in a weird steampunk world in which superpower exists and becomes a college student named Klein who encounters a bizarre death. In order to return home and protect his friends, he became a member of the night Church, protecting ordinary people from extraordinary events. Unlike the normal Qidian protagonist who owns overwhelming power, Klein can only rely on his caution and wisdom to protect himself most of the time. Though *Lord of Mysteries* has been completed, the story continues in that world.

The translation of *Lord of Mysteries* remains the style of original texts. Take the first several chapters as examples, when Zhou Mingrui is suddenly reborn in the body of Klein. *Lord of Mysteries* is based on the protagonist Klein's ability to fight against the external gods. The first chapters describing the characters at the beginning are confused for readers who know nothing about the world setting and the background of the protagonist. From the perspective of verbs, the extensive existing of mental process verbs and behavioral process verbs helps to improve the readers' empathy, leads the readers to experience the dilemma faced by the protagonist and attracts readers to continue reading. As a cultural commodity, it echoes the nature of webnovels on internet traffic and payment rates.

From the perspective of sentence pattern, the text of *Lord of Mysteries* is mostly simple sentences, with fewer adjectives, simple structure, short sentence pattern and fast rhythm. Some sentences do not even have a complete grammatical structure, but a simple arrangement of noun phrases. For instance, The paragraph describing the appearance of the main character, Klein, is "black hair, brown eyes, a linen shirt, thinly built, average-looking features and a rather deep outline (Cuttlefish That Loves Diving 2018)..." This is a list of some noun phrases, which is consistent with the characteristics of simplifying narrative speech and decreasing the description of Chinese online novels (Zhang, 2020). Finally, in the form of the paragraph, the paragraph of *Lord of Mysteries* is very short, most of the paragraphs are composed of one or two sentences. Paragraphs in webnovels, closely linked with each other, always carry fragmented information about story development. Besides, the pace of transmitting information is quick, which is in line with the reading habits of webnovels readers.

In a word, the writing style of Chinese webnovels is distinct and have adapted itself to readers for a long time and it remains in the translated version. This style is rooted in the need of internet traffic and readers' attention and also the core of the literary industry. In 2021, there have been 2100 Chinese webnovels being translated into other languages. However, it is obvious that languages barricades affect the translation of Chinese webnovels, causing a popularity-time gap between the domestic and abroad markets.

## Problems Faced by Webnovel

As a burgeoning genre, Chinese webnovels have developed themselves in the market, but not yet in time. Because of the profit-oriented writing pattern, webnovels are criticized as spirit opium and meaningless cliché. Some readers are tired of Qidian MC (main character) who only knows slaughter and violence, instead, they appreciate elaborately designed stories, just like:

This novel is the best I've ever read on Qidian since the day my friend recommend the site (to help me learn Chinese). It's nothing similar to those trash out there which only include some boring stereotypes about the MC keeping "zhuangbi" and facesmacking...@flyingkoala

As a negotiation-like text, webnovel requires its creator to handle the relationship between readers, writers and profits, which seems difficult for writers seeking profits in the platform.

Online piracy is also a serious problems causing great financial loss. There are some websites that steal contents from Webnovel and release them for free to increase internet traffic including Novelfeast and Nove-larchive. It is easy to find the whole text of My Vampire System on website (Noveladd). Different from Wattpad, Fanfiction or Updatenovel which attract users by offering free contents, Chinese online literary websites make profits on the VIP system and paid-for-content mechanism. However, with the increasing number of paid-for-content users, there have been 56% readers complaining expensiveness of reading webnovels. Represented by Web-novel, Chinese online literary websites are affected seriously by online piracy which may cause troubles in cultivating user stickiness.

Language barricades affect the translation of Chinese works. By the end of 2021, Webnovel has translated about 2100 Chinese online works, which only occupy a small portion of Qidian IP resources. The limited translation causes a time gap which means that works popular overseas now are outdated in China. Besides, the similar fiction patterns cause aesthetic fatigue and the stereotype of main characters such as Long Aotian, who is always portrayed as money-oriented and dissolute.

## Conclusion

In recent years, online literature has gradually moved to the center stage and become an integral part of the mainstream. Compared with the government publicity, the popularity of online literature works such as *Coiling Dragon*, *Lord of Mysteries* and *Master of Demonic Dao* shows that online literature as entertainment seems to play a more important role in spreading Chinese culture and telling Chinese stories well.

Due to its great difference from classic works and unique development, online literature represented by qidian was criticized as escapism and over-commercialization without literariness. It should be admitted that there are some problems in Qidian, but its values outweigh the drawbacks. First, literature has the power to heal and comfort, and that is why utopia and the Peach Garden exist in human memory. Second, online literature allows everyone to speak for themselves no matter who they are. Literature is out of some circles, whatever the works would be, people can express their sufferings, happiness and trouble facing tough life. Third, online literature can be a bridge connecting different cultures. Xuanhuan, a Chinese webnovel genre, has Western blood which can be traced to the popularity of *Dungeons and Dragons*. There are also a lot of works imitating the settings of Western games, movies and TV series such as *The Sword of Dawn* and *Lord of Mysteries*. The curiosity and appreciation of different cultures in literature can be important in constructing a human community with a shared future.

In conclusion, despite encountering several problems while launching the international version, the “qidian-model” with Chinese characteristics and standards provides a practical model for the development and industrialization of online literature around the world. However, Chinese webnovels are also trapped in clichés and stereotypes which cause aesthetic fatigue. The popularity and expansion of online literature needs updating criteria and a complete evaluation system with the help of digital humanities.

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# European Girl Travelling across China: The Reception History of *Little Red Riding Hood* in China from the Perspective of the Variation Theory

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## Abstract:

The European fairy tale, *Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH)*, was first introduced into China in 1909. Over the next half-century, several translations and adaptations had emerged. Based on the original story, these new versions displayed conspicuous Eastern characteristics, including Confucian ethics, enlightenment thoughts and nationalism. Using the variation theory of comparative literature, this paper reviews the reception history of *LRRH* in China and analyzes the concomitant variations. We argue that the reception of Western fairy tales in modern China was not a simple translation on the linguistic level but an innovative re-creation based on the historical context, traditional culture and realistic needs. Chinese intellectuals never thought the perception of Western civilization was a passive one-direction process. In fact, they showcased initiative at every step and utilized the West as an intermediary to launch revolutions.

**Keywords:** Little Red Riding Hood, Modern China, Variation Theory, Translation, Reception

In 1697, Charles Perrault (1628-1703) completed a collection of eight fairy tales named *Les Contes de la Mere L'oye* which included the original version of *Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH)*. In 1812, *LRRH* was adapted by the Brothers Grimm (1785-1863, 1786-1859) and was featured in *Children's and Household Tales*. Since then, it has gradually become a classic. Nearly 100 years later, Sun Yuxiu (1871-1922) edited a series of *Fairy Tales* for the Commercial Press in 1909 and *LRRH* was included in the first volume. This was the first time when the story captured the attention of Chinese readers.

Over the next half-century, translations and adaptations of *LRRH* had continued to emerge and prevail. According to Zhao Jingshen (1902-1985), “Chinese kids who have read fairy tales promoted by Sun Yuxiu must be familiar with *Thumbling* and *Little Red Riding Hood*” (1929, p. 98).

It is worth noting that the reception of exotic literature is different from the reception of foreign imports. When a country’s literature faces its exotic counterparts, it does not accept them universally but chooses to absorb specific elements. Ji Xianlin (1911-2009) asserted:

A beautiful allegory is destined to spread with travelers, especially itinerant traders. The story travels from one person to another, one village to another, one country to another and finally spreads everywhere. Depending on different narrators’ interests and different nations’ customs, some elements are added to or cut out from the story. The literary work will undergo more and more changes as it travels farther and farther (1989, p. 452).

Looking back on *LRRH*’s journey in modern China, we find its characters, plot and theme were all in continual fluxes. Underneath these fluctuations were diverse social currents in different periods of China. What Chinese readers saw was not a European girl living lightheartedly in France or Germany, but a child in turbulent China. She strived to overcome difficulties, spared no effort to help others and acted as a moral exemplar. That was why she was so popular in the Chinese book market.

The circulation of *LRRH* has consistently attracted scholars of all ages. Alan Dundes (1934-2005) edited an anthology called *Little Red Riding Hood: A Casebook* (1989) containing 11 papers on the topic. 13 years after the casebook, Catherine Orenstein (1968–) completed *Little Red Riding Hood Uncloaked* based on her thesis, reassessing the history of the dissemination of *LRRH* in Europe and North America with feminism. Nevertheless, it is quite unfortunate that both of them focused on the West and neglected the resources in Asia. To some degree, Yang Xun (1976–) filled in this gap with *The Chinese Translation of Little Red Riding Hood* (2018), introducing numerous Chinese versions of *LRRH*. Based on previous research, our paper makes a contribution to this topic by describing the reception history of *LRRH* in modern China and delving into the deep variations in this transcultural communication with the variation theory proposed by Cao Shunqing (1954–).

The Variation Theory is a conceptual change in terms of the construction of the discipline, enabling the study of comparative literature to transform from seeking homogeneity to seeking heterogeneity. In other words, not only homogeneity and affinity but also variation and heterogeneity should be the focus of the Variation Theory. Only when these four aspects are systematically combined together will the discipline of comparative literature be satisfactorily constructed (2013, p. xxx).

The innovative theory attempts to reveal the unchanging laws beneath the ever-changing cultural phenomena. From this perspective, we re-examine *LRRH*'s journey in China and analyze the variations when the fairy tale entered the Eastern culture.

### The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: When *LRRH* Was Translated into Chinese

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Chinese translations of *LRRH* were based either on Perrault's or Grimm's text. The poet Dai Wangshu (1905-1950) translated the whole book of *Les Contes de la Mere L'oye* and his version is still popular among today's readers owing to its high quality and prestige. Interestingly, while Chinese translators were generally faithful to the original text, they all deleted Perrault's admonishment: "cajoling sweet-talkers who follow young ladies right into their homes, right to their bedsides. But alas! Everyone knows these smooth wolves are the most dangerous of all." (2002, p. 37) The seemingly insignificant abridgment actually distorted Perrault's motif. As a fairy tale not for children, Perrault's story warned virgins to rigorously retain their chastity. The explicit promotion of sexual morality was neither compatible with Chinese traditions nor suitable for educating pupils, which was why translators abridged the text unanimously. Dai defended the faithlessness with his sincere dedication to the Chinese younger generation.

*Mr. Perrault added some boring and oppressive admonishment to his lovely stories. I would absolutely refuse to let these old-fashioned sentences confine children's free mind and lively soul. That's why I dare to remove them from my translation without permission (1929, p. xiii).*



Another modification intended to decrease the violence of the story. Perrault's *LRRH* may be unacceptable to Chinese readers considering its gruesome ending that the wolf ate the innocent girl atrociously. Dai simplified the brutal ending as "the merciless wolf then jumped to the front of *LRRH* and ate her" (p. 27) to skim over the horrible plot. Later after his death, the Juvenile and Children's Publishing House released a new version based on Dai's translation. This time, the heroine was saved by a group of woodsmen, which was very similar to the ending of the Brothers Grimm's *LRRH*.

Throughout the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Chinese translators received and translated *LRRH*, they often considered the social needs and then added some personal touches to the story. That explained why most translators made the remarkably similar choice: To allow the young girl to survive. In pursuit of the deep rationale beneath the choice, we must examine the Chinese structure of feeling. Wang Guowei (1877-1927) stated:

Chinese people's spiritual world tends to be optimistic and worldly. Traditional operas and novels are all profoundly influenced by the inclination. All literary works begin with sadness, separation and poverty, but all end with happiness, reunion and richness. If not so, they can hardly satisfy their readers (2001, p. 12).

Growing up in an optimistic culture, modern Chinese readers were used to happy endings in which what goes around comes around. Perrault made the pure young kid inevitably killed and this would not only upset the children but also make some adults reluctant to accept. The banishment of Perrault's ending demonstrated how the national structure of feeling influenced translations.

The Brothers Grimm made important changes to Perrault's original work by introducing a hunter to rescue the heroine from the brutal beast, which catered to the Chinese taste of art much better. The warm ending together with the authors' high prestige made the version more popular among Chinese translators. Aside from Sun Yuxiu, Wei Yixin (1898-1986) contributed the most outstanding version. Wei was the first one to translate all Grimm's stories into Chinese and his translation is still irreplaceable in today's book market.

In addition to translations discussed above, many other Chinese versions of *LRRH* did not clearly introduce the original works on which they were based. Nevertheless, there were still some distinctive works worth discussing. One of them was the version offered by ZL (?-?). In 1913, an unknown translator with the pseudonym “ZL” translated *LRRH* into classical Chinese and named it *Cute Red Cap*. The version replaced the wolf with a fox and added some new content. On the heroine’s way to her grandmother’s house, she showed kindness to small bees, little birds and an old lady. When the fox chased the heroine, these animals immediately came to offer help. Finally, a hunter, who was an acquaintance of the old lady, arrived in time to shoot the fox. Although the main structure of *LRRH* remained, ZL did add many typical Chinese elements to the story.

We can now jump to the following conclusion. When translating *LRRH* in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, most Chinese translators were true to the original texts. However, faithfulness did not necessarily mean rigidity. Their translations were by no means a passive word-by-word product. Chinese intellectuals’ inherent views of literature and personal intentions played a crucial role in the process, from choosing the original version to abridging or supplementing the text. In their opinions, the translation was an art requiring initiative rather than a monotonous skill. This inclination had been further strengthened over time.

### **The Mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century: When *LRRH* Was Deeply Re-created**

As time went on, more profound variations emerged inside *LRRH*. As Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931) stated, “neither language, religion, arts, or, in a word, any element of civilization, can pass, intact, from one people to another” (2002, p. 45). Cao Shunqing also insisted that deep changes are to take place during the journey of literature from one civilization to another. From their perspective, exotic works of art have to undergo a series of variations before being incorporated by the new culture. This type of variation is the very concentration of our paper.

With the growing popularization of *LRRH* in modern China, Chinese intellectuals were discontent with simple translations. More epochal features were added to the story and several adaptations with Chinese characteristics came forth. Among these adaptations, the musical drama *LRRH* written by Lu Luo (?-?) appeared to be particularly suitable for comparative literature studies for its vivid reflection on the Second Sino-Japanese War.

Facing the severe war in the 1940s, Lu found it necessary to make his new work suitable for China's reality. Comparing Lu's drama with Perrault's and Grimm's texts, we can uncover significant differences. The protagonist in the European *LRRH* was kind-hearted. However, she was neither intelligent nor brave. Taking no heed to the crafty wolf, Perrault's heroine was unaware that her carelessness would place her grandmother and herself at risk. The Grimm's heroine would also be killed if the hunter failed to arrive on time. On the contrary, Lu's heroine inherited her European ancestor's gullibility, but in face of the catastrophe, the Chinese girl presented commendable traits which her predecessors did not have. For instance, upon seeing her grandmother lying in a pool of blood, Lu's Little Red Riding Hood cried out: "Granny! God! Blood! Oh, no! Granny was killed by someone! But crying is useless. I must find a way to avenge her" (1940, p. 19). Although shocked by the disaster, Lu's heroine was not overwhelmed by fear and sorrow. She calmed down quickly and transformed her sadness into an impetus to seek revenge.

Lu significantly modified the girl's personality to endow the musical drama with epochal characteristics. When Lu completed his work in 1940, Wuhan had already fallen into the enemy's hands and Chinese people were inundated with pessimism. Under such circumstances, the Chinese Little Red Riding Hood could no longer endure or wait passively for other's help. In Lu's drama, the heroine stood with her friends and they worked together to determine how to win the fight. In the decisive battle, she asked to be the vanguard and fought vigorously against her enemy. The two identities, a lovely girl and a valiant warrior, were then perfectly combined. Here, we find Catherine Orenstein's opinion is quite enlightening for an analysis of this variation.

Fairy tales tend to follow a familiar pattern. [...] In the popular literary fairy tales, the heroine tends to follow a passive version of the rite of the passage. Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, and the Grimm's Little Red Cap all wait, asleep or in a deathlike state, for rescue by a prince (or hunter-woodsman) who frees the heroine from her slumber in a castle, a glass coffin, or the belly of the wolf (2002, p. 78).

Generally speaking, fairy tales aim to educate the youth, while legends are dedicated to praising heroes' great achievements. Therefore, fairy tales usually depict trifling daily matters while "the accomplishment of the my-

thic hero is world-historical, representing macrocosmic human triumphs” (2002, p. 80). From a vulnerable girl to a gallant fighter, the transformation from the European story into the Chinese drama is an evolution from a bedtime story to a national fable.

The profound changes of the characters and plot led to a dramatically different theme. Perrault promoted sexual morality in France in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when marriages were viewed as a form of trade, in which women’s chastity was the most precious merchandise. Over 100 years later, the Brothers Grimm, representatives of bourgeois, showed more sympathy for women by removing the stern warning. But their story still aimed to preserve the discipline of the patriarchal family in the Victorian age. The European girl might have the chance to submit herself to paternity in exchange for a safe life. But the Chinese heroine had to understand the harsh reality and fight to survive.

A song called *Hunt the Wolf* was inserted in the second act of Lu’s drama: “Pick up your stick and knife. Hey hey! It’s time for us to unite. Let’s fight for a safe and sound life. Kill the wolf then everyone can dance under the sunshine.” (1940, p. 19) The personal revenge had been integrated into the campaign to protect the whole community. During the War of Resistance against the Japanese, all Chinese people faced the dilemma of whether to await their doom solitarily or fight unitedly for independence. Lu’s protagonist chose the latter and grew into a valiant warrior. Her personal goal was combined with the collective interest and blended in with the zeitgeist consequently.

### **The Destiny of *LRRH* in Modern China: Gradual Integration into National Children’s Literature**

The analysis of *LRRH*’s destiny in modern China helps us understand the reception of other Western literary works as well. “There’s no doubt that modern Chinese literature is influenced by Western literature. However, Chinese writers did not accept this influence passively. They utilized Western literary works in a way Luxun called ‘making the choice with our independent thought.’” (Zhang, 1986, p. 92) *LRRH* has been constantly sinicized according to the historical background ever since it entered China. As Andre Lefevere (1946-1996) pointed out, translation does not occur in a vacuum; the historical context and social environment should always be borne in

mind (1992, pp. 1-13). When we start the research on Chinese *LRRH*, we should never exclude the historical context in which they were translated, created and published.

In 1895, China was defeated by Japan in the first Sino-Japanese war and the failure led to an ideological emancipation. Most Chinese intellectuals realized the importance of learning Western culture and that was when *LRRH* entered China for the first time. Despite the fact that so many Western books were introduced, the traditional culture was still hard to budget for at the moment. The conservative literati were shocked by Western morality which was radically different from Confucian ethics. A writer with the pseudonym “Iron (?-?)” was so incensed that he alleged: “Translated fictions, especially those about love affairs, would do great harm to our ethos. I suggest that every translator abridges those immoral contents in Western books” (1908, p. 184). Thus, the prevailing translation strategy at that time were similar to what Lawrence Venuti (1953-) called “the domesticating method,” meaning “the reader ought, if possible, to forget that it is a translation at all, and be lulled into the illusion that he is reading an original work” (1995, p. 121).

Conservative Chinese translators tamed exotic texts with native values. Some of them went so far that they almost created an independent work. In ZL’s *Cute Red Cap*, the heroine helped small animals and an old lady. In return, they saved the girl from the deadly beast: “This allegory proves the value of causationism. You reap what you sow. I hope this story can be a warning to wicked people and comfort for warm-hearted men simultaneously” (1913, pp. 11-12). A fairy tale with eroticism went so far as to become a fable promoting traditional Chinese values. The heterogeneity of the European *LRRH* was assimilated by Eastern culture. Although *Little Red Cap* did not conform to the original theme, Chinese readers used to welcome and appreciate this type of translation.

Drastic reforms took place in ideology after the May 4th Movement, declaring the end of the Chinese feudal culture and the rise of individualism and humanitarianism. These trends created a new context for Chinese children’s literature. Zhou Zuoren appealed for children’s independence: “although children are different from adults physically, they have their unique self-awareness just as the parents.” (2009b, p. 212) He averred that writers should focus on children’s well-being so as to create first-class literary works and cultivate a generation of modern citizens. Subsequently, the May 4th

intellectuals translated Western literature into Chinese enthusiastically without censorship. The modernity in the original works was preserved. Dai's *LRRH* was "translated from the French original work with great faithfulness" (Perrault, 1929, p. xiii). With beautiful and elegant language, Dai's version successfully introduced this story to young Chinese readers. Meanwhile, to preserve Chinese youth's lively soul and ensure they became adults longing for independence and liberty, Dai and his peers unanimously deleted Perrault's admonition. Whether following the original works or not, they were devoted to China's education wholeheartedly.

Chinese children's literature would have continued to develop in a children-oriented way if the Second Sino-Japanese War had not broken out. Unfortunately, the destructive war soon forced out individualism and humanitarianism. Salvaging China from subjugation became an urgent mission in every regard. In 1931, *The Little Friend* published two special issues, *The Movement Against Japanese Invasion* and *A Discussion on How Teenagers Contribute to Our Country*, to encourage Chinese youth to protect their hometown. Maodun (1896-1981) claimed the core mission of Chinese children's literature was to urge the youth to face reality. As the war was threatening the nation, it was improper to welter in daydream created by Andersen and the Grimm anymore. Maodun urged: "Please stop writing stories about the prince, princess, elf and magic" (2015, p. 503). Hence, if Chinese writers still wanted to make use of works like *LRRH*, innovative transformations were indispensable.

In this respect, Lu Luo's musical drama turned out to be a paradigm. Inspired by China's wartime needs, Lu created a brand-new composition consisting of three parts: The first condemned the cruel enemy; the second called for a united army to win national independence; and the third encouraged the audience to remain optimistic and prophesied that the righteous side was destined to enjoy the victory. This work was published in 1940 in the *Journal of Wartime Education*, whose founder was the educator Tao Xingzhi (1891-1946). Tao took part in the founding of the Shanghai Literature and Arts Association with Song Qingling (1893-1981), Zou Taofen (1895-1944), and other patriots in 1935. They appealed to different parties and camps to stop the civil war and unite as one nation. Lu's drama can be seen as a reflection of this appeal. Through Lu's creative reception, *LRRH* was reborn with a strong realistic atmosphere, clear educational intention and dramatic effect.

## Conclusion

According to Peter Hunt (1945–), children's books are always linked to the educational and ideological environment. (1994, p. 21) Thus, it is wise to begin the research on Chinese versions of *LRRH* by identifying the environment where they were completed and published. When analyzing the changes with the variation theory, we clearly see that the destiny of *LRRH* was tied to Chinese national children's literature. The sinicization of this European fairy tale was a rebirth, during which the story had been gradually integrated into Chinese literary history. Through translations, the Western civilization strongly affected Chinese culture. But no matter how strong the influence was, Chinese intellectuals managed to function latently, intentionally and strategically. Instead of being silent and invisible, they utilized the West as an intermediary to vocalize their own ideas.

In conclusion, the research on the reception of Western children's literature in other countries with the variation theory is feasible and necessary. Douwe Fokkema (1931-2011) commented: "The Variation Theory is an answer to the one-sided emphasis on influence studies by the former 'French school' as well as to the American focus on aesthetic interpretation, inspired by New Criticism, which regrettably ignored literature in non-European languages" (2013, p. v). With a broadened horizon, we can exploit abundant academic resources in the non-English world and reveal the complex relationships established in transcultural communication. Therefore, we can develop a comprehensive understanding of different cultures and start effective intercultural literary conversations.

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**Experiencing the Abject Female Body  
and Writing the Female Self:  
Body Narrative of *In the Heart of the Country***

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**Abstract:**

In the Heart of the Country, the second novel by J. M. Coetzee, has been traditionally read as a disembodied writing that focuses on the problem of writing per se instead of the reality. This paper contends that the work is actually a body narrative that explores the visceral pain suffered by Magda whose infertile body impedes her being a qualified subject. As the heroine in a postcolonial novel, Magda is not just a body that is restricted and constructed by the politics of the body, but also a thinking and writing body that consciously questions and resists the gendered bodily norms under whose yardstick her subjecthood is barred. Written in the metafictional manner, Magda's narrative of the body is not just a record of her corporeal experience, but also a self-conscious negotiation with, and challenge of, the bodily norms under whose yardstick her body has been debased or, in terms of Judith Butler, abjected. Taking her female bodily experience as the starting point, Magda writes a feminine text that values passion, fluidity and non-linearity to disrupt the patriarchal discourse underpinned with logical reasoning. The feminine body narrative endeavors to achieve a new way of communication through which a reciprocal cross race/gender relationship might be established.

**Keywords:** J. M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country*, Abject Female Body, Body Narrative, Feminine Text

Composed of 256 pieces of diaries, most of which are the heroine and narrator's conscious critique of various sub-genres of previous writings, *In the Heart of the Country*, the second novel by J. M. Coetzee, has been traditionally read as a disembodied writing that focuses on the problem of writing per se instead of the reality. Magda's situation of being imprisoned in the network of words has intrigued Freudian or Lacanian reading of the novel. For instance, Sheila Roberts contends that Magda is "a latter-day Electra killing the Father for the loss of the Mother and not vice versa; a Circe prepared to wreak vengeance on all careless men" (Roberts, 1992, p. 29). Teresa Dovey maintains that *In the Heart of the Country* is a parodic rewriting of "the pastoral romantic", a literary genre popular among the white writers in colonial Africa, and that the novel subverts the genre as a dominant discourse by "inhabiting it in a way that closely approximates the Derridean strategy of deconstruction" (Dovey, 1988, p. 4). Chiara Briganti, in line with Dovey, explores the self-reflexivity of the novel, arguing that the novel "is explicitly engaged in a dialogue with psychoanalytic discourse", especially "Freud's *Studies on Hysteria*" (Briganti, 1994, p. 35). These studies overemphasize Coetzee's self-conscious exploration of the discursive power of the narrating subject at the cost of ignoring his deep concern with the unbearable suffering and the abject existence of the unnamable oppressed. Explicitly engaged in dialogues with various sub-genres, *In the Heart of the Country*, however, is a body narrative that explores the visceral pain suffered by Magda, an Afrikaner spinster whose infertile body impedes her being a qualified subject. Written in the metafictional manner, Magda's narrative of the body is not just a record of her corporeal experience, but also a self-conscious negotiation with, and challenge of, the bodily norms under whose yardstick her body has been debased or, in terms of Judith Butler, abjected.

As a matter of fact, the body narrative nature of *In the Heart of the Country* has been addressed by Brian May who argues that the body in Coetzee's novels resists any interpretation because it "insists on its own thinness" (May, 2001, p. 389). May's ultimate concern is to demonstrate that the surrealistic style of *In the Heart of the Country* is actually reality-based. May's emphasis on the metaphorical meaning of the body, however, has virtually led to his blindness to the corporeal pain that Magda has suffered. This paper maintains that Coetzee's concern in this novel is more about the lived experience of Magda as the abject body than the metaphorical meaning of the body. Magda's abject body is portrayed by Coetzee to provide the rea-

der with a possibility of living through the cruelty of colonization and apartheid in South Africa. The point where the characters in the novel fail to read the body is exactly the point for the reader to start to analyze the power that has inscribed, wounded and abjected the body.

According to Judith Butler<sup>1</sup>, the abject refers to those populations who are currently denied subject status by the standards of physical norms erected for everybody in the world, populations “whose living under the sign of the ‘unlivable’ is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject” (Butler, 1993, p. 3). The dominant ideals reinforce the power of certain groups, for instance, men and heterosexuals, over others. These others, including women, homosexuals, transsexuals, who live with differently abled bodies or differently shaped bodies, are treated socially as outsiders, the abject, and are subject to social punishments. Abjection, thus, is a question of ontology that describes the process whereby certain persons are excluded from particular normative ideals of subjecthood. Alongside those subjects who can “lay claim to ontology” because they “count or qualify as real,” there are those who “do not have claim to ontology” (Butler, 1993, p. 3) and who are, in some sense, unreal because their material bodies do not “matter.” Although these bodies fail to qualify as subjects, as bodies that breathe and

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<sup>1</sup> Butler’s account of abjection is an adaptation of Juliet Kristeva’s term, but it is crucially different from Kristeva’s. For Butler, it is a category of exclusion created by discursive norms. For Kristeva, the abjection, however, is a psychological response to something that disgusts us. This term is introduced by Kristeva in response to Lacan’s argument that the sense of self or subjectivity is inescapably imprisoned in the order of language or the “symbolic order.” For Kristeva, our sense of self is not established solely through a conceptual positioning in the symbolic order, but prior to that in a bodily way. Something closely related to us yet rejected by us, something abject, often evokes a bodily reaction of nausea, or a sense of abjection, blurring the boundary between being and non-being. Kristeva proposes that an open wound, excrement, nail clippings, menstrual blood, even the skin on the top of milk can all invoke such responses. These responses are, for Kristeva, a reaction to aspects of the world which threaten our sense of boundaries, boundaries between ourselves and the world, or between ourselves and others. For example, Kristeva explains, as an infant, “nausea makes me balk at that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it ... ‘I’ expel it... but since food is not an ‘other’ for ‘me’ ... I expel myself ... within the same motion through which ‘I’ claim to establish myself” (*Powers of Horror* 3). What she is drawing attention to here, with the category of the abject, is the existence of that which is in between myself and other, both me and not me, and consequently that which reminds us of the constructedness and instability of the boundary which is taken to constitute a single subject; to what “disturbs identity, what does not respect borders, positions, rules” (*Powers of Horror* 4). Introducing the term of abjection in her account of the formation of the subject, Kristeva offers a picture in which the establishing of self is necessarily depended on the other, and therefore, justifies a model of the necessity of a non-violent inter-subjectivity, which can provide us with a basis for ethical thought. In Judith Butler’s theoretical framework, however, the term “abjection” refers to individuals’ correction and self-correction under the social norms imposed on them.

talk, they are not inert objects either. As a result, these bodies occupy an in-between zone that disrupts the boundaries between the subject and object, destabilizing the border between the self and the world.

Magda lives in an abject body, and, as the narrator of the novel, she is deeply aware of the relationship between her abject existence and her “wrong body,” stating it clearly in the narrative that her life is wrong because she “was born at the wrong time, in the wrong place, in the wrong body” (Coetzee, 1982, p. 51). The “wrongness” with Magda’s body could be understood on several levels. First, living on a remote farm dominated by her patriarchal father, Magda’s female body has predetermined her subservient existence. Second, in the colonial situation where women’s productivity and fertility are urgently needed and valued to enhance the bio-power of the colonial state, her infertility makes her body an abject one. And third, as a woman who is deeply aware of the power of the bodily norms on whose scale her body is constantly weighed and who simultaneously attempts to challenge the norms, Magda is caught between the role of the traditional woman and the new one, attempting to correct her body with reference to the bodily norms on the one hand and resisting them on the other. All of these elements reveal Magda to be an ambivalent being, a woman who inhabits the position of a white colonist yet “is not one of the primary agents of colonization but who lives in the conditions created by such agents, and who endures the consequences this position entails” (Attwell, 1993, p. 56).

Set in an isolated farm and in the tradition of the farm novel where, as Coetzee states in his *White Writing*, women are “imprisoned in the farmhouse” and “confined to the breast function” (Coetzee, 1988, p. 72), the subversive power of *In the Heart of the Country* lies in that its heroine, Magda, shares little in common with the heroines in the traditional pastoral novels which are discursively implicated in the formation of Afrikanerdom. It is Magda’s body, instead of her will, that renders it hard for her to be the ideal Afrikaner woman who is either a heroic mother or a docile daughter, the characters who frequently appear in the traditional pastoral novel. Her physical characteristics are antithetical to the Afrikaner ideal. She is weak, scrawny, dried up, and sterile. Her breast is “flat sour” (1992, p. 42), and her womb is “a withered apple” (1992, p.50). Such a body does not fit in the spirit of the epoch of Afrikaner’s colonial expansion in which this novel is set. In an age in which a bigger population was urgently needed by the Afrikaners both to inhabit the vast land they have conquered from the indi-

genous people and to strengthen their force to combat the British, the reproductive function of women was strongly emphasized. Women were responsible for both continuing and strengthening the Afrikaner race and sustaining its purity: "it was because of her willingness to accompany her husband into the wilderness that the racial purity of Afrikanerdom had been preserved; it was to the woman that God had entrusted the task of bearing and raising Afrikaner children in the true civil faith" (Moodie, 1975, p. 17).

The first thing that impedes Magda to live up to the bodily norms of the colonial society is that she refuses to get married, the first step for a woman who lives in the period of colonial expansion to contribute to the project of colonialism. Different from other farm girls who take marriage as their salvation, Magda is disinclined to marry a farm boy. She refuses to adjust to the existing social, political and cultural codes, and she refuses "to be plain placid empty-headed heiress anxious not to be left on the shelf, ready to commit herself body and soul to the first willing fellow to pass by, a pedlar even, or an itinerant teacher of Latin, and breed him six daughters, and bear his blows and curses with Christian fortitude" (1992, p. 22). Obviously, the reason that Magda is not ready to "commit herself" to any fellow is that, in the marriage system in the colony, women have been debased to a body to be used, to "breed him [man] six daughters," and to be abused, to "bear his [man's] blows and curses" (22).

Magda is acutely aware of how the gendered politics of the body has constructed willingly subordinate women like her mother, but still, she has difficulties in transgressing the bodily norms. What is worse, she constantly assesses her own body in accordance with the value system of Afrikaner colonialist and patriarchal codes. As a result, she develops a deep self-hatred of her own body which she thinks hinders her to be a "true" woman, and consequently she experiences the pain of living in an abject body.

Magda's self-deprecation results from her psychological response for failing to meet the bodily norms established for the white females. The self-deprecation even destabilizes her sense of self as a white. She conceives of herself as "a miserable black virgin," a "black bored spinster, whose story is "a dull black blind stupid miserable story, ignorant of its meaning" (1992, p. 5). Jane Poyner reads Magda's conception of herself as a "black virgin" in terms of Fanon's theory of the "fact of blackness" (Poyner, 2006, p. 39) and explains, not unreasonably, that the mis-identification indicates Magda's or Coetzee's attempt to subvert the concept of "blackness" as a "biological cate-

gory” (Poyner 2006, p. 39) and to emphasize its constructedness. Poyner’s reading underplays the issue of gender. Identifying herself with a “black virgin” indicates more of Magda’s self-contempt of her sexually unattractive body than her challenge of the white-black boundary.

Magda’s feeling of abjection is intensified by her awareness of the power of bodily norms. Although Magda is not inclined to get committed to any man, she understands that the only way for her to gain self is, paradoxically, to lose “possession of herself” to a man who would give her a baby. Unwilling to follow the tradition, yet unable to live beyond the traditional principle, Magda is rendered a Hamlet-like figure, powerless to act. Susan Gallagher contends that Magda is a self-consciously rebellious woman, an “anti-Mary” in “defiant rebellion against her father and her destiny” (Gallagher, 1991, p. 94). Gallagher’s interpretation ignores the psychological contradictions battling inside Magda all through the narrative. The rebellious power of *In the Heart of the Country* does not lie in portraying a self-consciously resisting woman-figure, but in exploring the painful consciousness of an abject woman who vacillates between being assimilated by the existing bodily norms or following the heart of her true self. She keeps on thinking about how to turn herself into a physically attractive woman. She ponders upon “cosmetically tempering” her face to make her a pleasant, “true woman,” plucking her eyebrows, “doing something about her teeth” (1992, p.41), taking fruits and morning exercises to change the complexion of her face. In another moment, she is keenly aware that the physical “correction” and marriage cannot bring her what she desires: “I do not have it in me to believe that the mating of farmboy with farmgirl will save me. Whatever save may mean, at least for the time being. ... I believe myself reserved for a higher fate” (41). The “higher fate” Magda thinks she is reserved for is to challenge, especially through her writing, the gendered politics of the body that has appropriated the female body and degenerated women to an abject existence.

Magda’s abject experience finally results in acts of violence. When she discovers that her father sleeps with Klein-Anna, their black servant Hendric’s wife, a woman whose body is fertile and sensual, able to arouse and satisfy all of her father’s desires, she shoots through the bedroom window and fatally wounds her father. Magda’s patricide is not simply an instinct-driven act of an Oedipal daughter. It is more an attempt to challenge the master/slave or mind/body dualistic power structure that dominates the farm where Magda, Hendrik and Anna are appropriated as useful bodies. Magda is

aware that the language she speaks has already been “subverted” by her father who is also the symbolic Father and that talking in this language only distances her from Hendrik and Anna. Each word she says will transform into an order and solidify the master-slave relationship between them: “Anna is oppressed by my watching eyes... She is oppressed particularly by my talk” (1992, p.113). Understood in this context, Magda’s murder of her father is a gesture of moving beyond the prison house of reason and language embodied on the figure of her father and exploring the possibility of communication by means of bodily identification, a means called for by Frantz Fanon to “simply try to touch the other, feel the other,” and to “discover each other” (1963, p.78), instead of framing the other in the epistemic structure of the self. It seems that this method works, at last temporarily, and Magda and the servants form “harmonious oneness” after the death of the master. They labor together, and Magda feels intimate with them. She writes: “Our labor brings us together” (1992, p.82).

As the heroine of the novel, Magda’s bold action of patricide proves futile in her attempt to undermine the patriarchal order. However, as the narrator or the writer of her story, Magda has successfully resisted the destiny of being used as a reproductive body. Intellectually dwelling on the problem a woman with an “abject” body in the colonial and patriarchal situation faces and writing down her bodily consciousness in an unusual and fluid style, Magda has transcended the traditional female role of a passive body, proving that she is not just a body but a thinking body. The subversive power of Magda’s writing lies in that she manages to replace the codes of patriarchal discourse with her *écriture féminine*. Associating the rational and the logical discourse with the symbolic realm of the Law-of-the-Father (as defined by Lacan), French feminists, including Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva, describe feminine discourse as subjective and instinctive, refusing the traditional values of clarity, logic, and linear continuity while questioning the supposed superiority of rational discourse over instinctive or discontinuous discourse. The distinctive characteristic “widely recognized” as forming the feminine discourse is that, according to Ann Jones, it is “a language of the mind and the body, conveying both ideas and the reality of the body itself” (1992, p. 88). Magda’s writing, both in its content and form, is permeated with the characteristics of *écriture féminine*. First, as far as the form is concerned, devices such as the repetitive structure, ambiguous expressions, and abrupt shifts are employed to disrupt the

patriarchal discourse that prioritizes order, rationality and linearity<sup>1</sup>. Second, on the plane of its content, Magda's writing is focused on her bodily consciousness, trying to convey "both ideas and the reality of the body itself" (Jones, 1985, p. 88). Her diaries express her visceral feeling of living in a body that is marked as abject by the gendered politics of the body.

In addition, in her writing that "springs from the archaisms of the instinctual body" (Leland, 93), Magda aims to disrupt the bodily hierarchy based on the categories of race and gender through repeatedly making reference to bodily functions, especially excremental ones. The above passage in which "the song of birds" and "the smell of dung" are juxtaposed has already hinted this feature of Magda's narrative. In another place, Magda writes against the social demands for "proper and clean" bodies and uses disturbingly scatological language to describe her and her father's feces. In a civilized society, excrement and other bodily wastes have traditionally been abhorred and considered taboo for their filthiness. Juliet Kristeva, however, proposes a different interpretation for the abhorrence against filth: "it is not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abhorrence but what disturbs identity, system, order," and that "filth is not a quality in itself, but it applies only to what relates to a boundary and, more particularly, its other side, a margin" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 6). In terms of Kristeva, excrement and its equivalents, such as decay, infection, disease, and corpses, being that part both inside and outside the body, stand for the danger to identity and the threat to the boundaries. Kristeva, therefore, defines the bodily waste, especially excrement and menstrual blood, as the abject. What Kristeva tries to draw our attention to, with the category of the abject, is the existence of that which is in between self and other, both me and not me, and consequently that which reminds us of the constructedness and instability of the boundary which is taken to constitute a single subject. To put it literally, Kristeva thinks that the bodily waste disrupts and transgresses the bodily boundaries.

In light of Kristeva's theory, Magda's scatological description of her and her father's bodily waste is an attempt to disrupt the bodily hierarchy pres-

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<sup>1</sup> As has already been pointed out in the previous discussion, *In the Heart of the Country* is composed of 256 pieces of diaries by Magda, whose awareness of abject existence has made her a very unstable and unreliable narrator. Her narrative, consequently, is not driven by linear order or logical argumentation but by her emotional response to the bodily norms according to which her subjecthood is barred. Or, in Magda's words, her weapon is lyricism: "Lyric is my medium, not chronicle" (1992, p.71). Understood in this context, Magda is writing for the possibility of a new woman, free from the bondage of patriarchal bodily norms, through evoking the emotional response of the reader rather than logical argumentation.



cribed by the racialized and gendered bodily norms. The disgusting bodily waste, in sharp contrast to the image of father riding on his horse in his waxed riding-boots, reminds the reader that the father is not only a body that is decently dressed up and elegantly eats, it is also a body that defecates. The hierarchically formed race and gender order is thus dissolved in the form of the interwoven male and female turds or the “embrace” of “father’s red snake and the daughter’s black [snake]” (1992, p.32).

The excremental image Magda presents also works counter-discursively against the discourse of colonialism that stereotypically associates the colonized with filth, reading them as a threat to health and a restraint on civilization. In his “Excremental Postcolonialism,” Joshua Esty argues that, in postcolonial writing, the description of shit can “redress a history of debase-ment by displaying the failures of development and the contradictions of colonial discourse and, moreover, by disrupting inherited associations of excrement with colonized and non-Western populations” (Esty, 1999, pp. 25-26). With the detailed description of her and her father’s disgusting excrement, Magda demystifies the colonialist’s myth of the “clean and proper” body of the white and unveils the cost of the maintenance of that body. After the colonizers excrete, its disposal is left to Hendrik who is responsible for “inspecting the bucket,” “emptying it,” “washing it out” and “returning it to its place” (1992, p.32). Obviously, the scatological language Magda uses in her narrative functions to bring to light the labor exploitation, the essence that maintains the economic mechanism of colonialism.

Focusing on the bodily consciousness of Magda, *In the Heart of the Country* explores the various political and cultural norms that have inscribed the bodies of women, especially of white women, in the colonial and patriarchal context. As a heroine in a postcolonial novel, Magda is not just a body that has been restricted and constructed by the politics of the body, but also a thinking and writing body that consciously questions and resists the gendered bodily norms under whose yardstick her subjecthood is barred. Taking her female bodily experience as the starting point, Magda writes a feminine text, with its emphasis on passion, fluidity and non-linearity, to disrupt the patriarchal discourse underpinned with logical reasoning, so as to achieve a new way of communication through which a reciprocal cross race/gender relationship may be established. Magda’s writing is also her effort of rewriting self and probing for a new possibility for her and other women living in the colonial and patriarchal situation where their bodies are appropriated by the colonial state and man as well.

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# Literature as Event: Understanding Bakhtin's Event Theory

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## **Abstract:**

Event Has been extensively pored over in literature in recent years. Some noted thinkers of our time, including Heidegger, Deleuze, Badiou, Žižek, Foucault, Eagleton, etc. have made great contributions to the framework of events. This article revisits Russian literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin's event thoughts in his philosophy and cultural poetics. In his Act Philosophy, Bakhtin proposes 'Event of Being' to interpret existence in terms of ontology, epistemology and value ethics. From this starting point, Bakhtin in his cultural poetics conceptualizes literature as an event. Firstly, literature as an event perceives itself as an act or event that is temporally and spatially constituted, rather than a solid object. And as irregular occurrences, events of literature are destined to undergo a process of changes and transformations and predict new emergence. Secondly, featuring in its inherent discourse characteristics, literature as an event is internally intertwined with other social and historical events while at the same time self – sufficiently develops. That is, instead of being perceived as reflective and a passive recorder to its historical society, literature is actually active with its own subjectivity to enter into dynamic dialogue with other events, and in some cases serves as a spiritual power in forging society and history. Therefore, literature as an event places itself between concrete entity and dynamic process, textual discourse and social history context, etc.. This reflects an 'interlogical thinking', that is, literature exists in the relationship with others as something 'between'. Clearly, Bakhtin's thoughts on literature as an event would shed light on our understanding towards world literature and literary history writing.

**Keywords:** Literary Event, Bakhtin, Process, Discourse

The theoretical proposition of "literature as event" is closely related to the event theory in philosophy, the speech act theory in linguistics, and the performativity theory in cultural studies since the mid twenty century. Many modern great thinkers contribute to this field, such as Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Michael Bakhtin, Emmanuel Levinas, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Alain Badiou, Slavoj Žižek, Paul Ricoeur, Jacques Derrida, Terry Eagleton, Derek Attridge, Donald Davidson, John Langshaw Austin, etc... The emergence of an event signifies the occupation of a new place, so that absolute transformations can be made in new space and place. That is the starting point where these great thinkers conceptualize events and from which they believe the event theory could probe into the future especially at the transitional times.

In this genealogy, Bakhtin's event theory is less noticed. His eventful thoughts are rich not only in his philosophical ideas of being as an event, but his world famous literary theory of polyphony, carnivalesque, heteroglossia, and dialogism. By analyzing the thoughts of Bakhtin, this paper intends to probe into his thoughts from the lens of event and reconsiders the notion of event both in philosophy and literature. In his early *Philosophy of Act*, Bakhtin sees being as an event which emphasizes: the subjectivity of human presence in eventful existence; being is temporally and spatially constituted as an event rather than a solid object; and the unity of subject-object in events. He then clarifies how literature exists as an event and its function. It correspondingly encompasses three aspects: actively responds as discursive practices in the dialogue with various voices and perform its function; dynamically generate meaning alongside the socio-historical contexts with deviancy and heterogeneity which interchangeably shifts its duality; intrinsically embeds the socio-historical pattern with the constructed form which unifies the object and the subject.

### **I. Bakhtin's Philosophical Event Theory**

Taking the real-life problem of human existence as the starting point, Bakhtin criticizes the dichotomy of subject-object thinking of modern epistemological philosophy and puts forward the proposition "being/existence as event", which stresses on viewing objects from the perspective of events. That is, objects are no longer taken as static and objectified entities, but as

active events with subjective value, attitude, emotion, evaluation formed in a dynamic generative relationship. Specifically, Bakhtin's philosophical event theory contains the following three features.

### **Nature of Subjectivity**

Subjectivity is inseparable in the eventful being and makes the being become an event for its active involvement. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 1) argues, "Things happen in the setting of my attitude toward them. It is impossible to experience something that purely exists for its own" (p. 34). Event of being is not ready-made, fixed, or negatively existed. It is no longer presented only as a natural self-sufficiency in a physical state, or as a depiction of an object, but can be actively constructed and realized through human responsible action, and this participatory nature cannot be found apart from the act (p. 19-21).

### **Generative Nature: Being the Only Way of Existence**

Being is no longer conceived as a solid substance or entity, but as a collection of countless events in spatial-temporal. This constitutes the generative nature of the event and makes the event the only existential way of being.

As Bakhtin (1998) claims, "Anyone situates in unique and independent positions in the spatial-temporal, and that makes any existence of being unique" (volume 1, p. 41). Life becomes a sequence of behavioural events. Hence, being becomes "to be" "to live" "to act" "to participate" "to live", which foregrounds each individual's effort of constructing the existence and meaning in never-ending actions and events. The traditional way of seeing being as abstract, eternal and static has been challenged.

In contrast to the eternal and abstract being, Bakhtin asserts that the event of being is the only way of being, not preceded by a supposedly prior essential, transcendental and eternal existence (p. 32). Truth is no longer something that exists essentially in the essence of phenomena, but a state of being that exists dynamically in the course of events; Being or theory could in no way achieve eternal by abstracting itself from concrete events. This argumentation of how the theory and truth exist would much be seen in his *Philosophy of Act*.

## **Unification of the Subject and Object in Spatial-temporal**

Event is something in 'between' that unifies the subject and object. Traditionally, epistemological philosophy usually regards things as objective beings that are external to the subject itself. However, Bakhtin (1998) regards object and subject two-extreme scales of spectrum, not two absolute entities (volume4,p.385). "Objects become a changing factor in the process of my experience and thought about the event" (volume 1, p. 34). That is, the object maintains its own physical form, but it is gradually connected with the subject through experience and thinking. Accordingly, this enables the unification of the object and the subject in the event. Further, it is clear that Bakhtin's argumentation of the subject-object unification relies on its unique spatial-temporal, which highlights the participation and act of the subject.

## **II. Literature as Event: Subjectivity**

The literary text, as communicative discourse, is an eventful existence which changes in response to the context and subject participation. It is not an objective substance, but rather manifests in a relationship. The literary text can only realize itself in the event of the subject's communicative dialogue.

### **Literature as Discourse Event**

Event is in essence of discourse. It is not only concerned with an act of occupying a place in spatio-temporal, but has greater significance in discourse. Literature as an event lies in its distinctively discursive dimension, as it ultimately obtains value when the event is being spoken of or referred to. On the contrary, it would no longer exist without subjective construction. This is similar to what Sextus Empiricus (2005) refers to the concept of 'the sayable'. That is, when we speak of an event that we give it a place in sayability, making it a sayable thing (p. 92). Gilles Deleuze (1969) also suggests in his *The Logic of Meaning* that the event is fundamentally correlated with discourse and is the significance it produces (p. 34).

The discourse feature of literary events is in great depth explored in Bakhtin's discourse theory. As he claims, the aesthetic object is nevertheless the linguistic form of phonemes, morphemes, or syntax, but the emotion, opinion, attitude and ideology attached that makes itself meaningful and valuable (1998, volume 2, p. 94). This is the discourse which is set in socio-historical contexts and full of subjective evaluations. The artistic work therefore embodies a powerful capacity of unspoken social evaluations which

are in turn constituting its forms.

Then, due to its capacity of conveying the evaluations through the tone of emotion and will, discourse is thus incorporating the subject into an eventful situation where the interactive relation between the subject and object is generated. Bakhtin (1998, volume1) considers that the tone of emotional and will is an indispensable element of behaviour and even the most abstract thoughts, and “it is because I think about it that makes an eventful relationship with it” (p. 34 ).

### **Emotion and Will**

Thinking as an act fulfills with emotion and will, and this emotional and will tone is pervasive throughout the thought (Bakhtin, volume1, p. 35).

We have clearly seen from Bakhtin that the tone of emotion conveys the evaluation, thereupon correlates the subject with socio-historical events. Perceptions and behaviors present certain ideology, emotional attitudes and evaluations of the world, this is likewise applied to the narratives. Aesthetic events differ from cognitive events in that they are distancing from existential events and have great creative potential, while cognitive events are largely passive. The aesthetic object is the creation that embraces the creativity of the creator himself (Bakhtin, volume 3, p. 372).

Literature exists as an eventful existence that reconstructs the world, but meanwhile represents its own textual world. By analyzing Dostoyevsky’s work, Bakhtin (1998, volume 5) claims that “the events or plots in texts are means of expressing various ‘voices’” (p. 391). Characters and plots exist for the purpose of expressing the (characters’) thoughts and spirituality, not the other way around. Dostoyevsky’s works, according to Bakhtin, are observing and depicting different thoughts, consciousnesses and voices as vivid events (Bakhtin, volume 5, p. 115). The protagonists or characters in his works are not objectives or abstract settings portrayed by the author or narrator, rather they have independent thinking and are positive participants in the events.

Clearly, the literary event becomes vivid and vibrant through the rich expression of the spirit and ideas of the characters. Only when the event has acquired emotion and thoughts does it have a vivid sense of life. Once a thought is incorporated into the event it is writing about, it becomes an event in itself (Bakhtin, volume 5, p. 9). That is what Aristotle said, poetics is more philosophical than history.

## **Dialogue: Interactive Voices**

Dialogue theory accounts for great significance in Bakhtin's philosophy and poetics. The dialogue among different thoughts and voices is the fundamental to make literary events distinguished from other ethical or cognitive events. The aesthetic event, according to him, is impossible to occur when there is only one unified voice. Just as he explains, without anything external to itself, an absolute consciousness or mind fails to be aestheticized (1998, volume 1, p. 118).

Any expressions, statements or discourses are always in some form of conversational response to previous discourses. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 4) argues, "The life events of the text... always un-fold on the boundary between two minds or subjects... Text are not objects, so the second voice or minds of the recipient could never be ignored or eliminated" (p. 305). Therefore, artistic texts become a treasure box with multiple voices from different characters, the authors and the characters or potential readers, and different voices within the characters themselves, etc...

Bakhtin further emphasizes one's subjective presence and the exterior place to one's own position in the guarantee of the realization of dialogues. He believed that "when 'I' adopts a perspective that is outside of 'I' can make dialogue come true" (p. 12). This idea of 'other' is a transcending perspective of one's own unique ethical position and attitude.

Moreover, an equal and independent footing for various voices is a necessity in Bakhtin's literature event. Bakhtin finds that literary events exist independently in Dostoevsky's polyphonic structure, which are not swallowed by the mainstream plot or the monologue. Therefore, he asserts that the efficacy of the event does not lie in its capacity of integrating all into one, but in the reinforcement of its own exterior position and disintegration (1998, volume3, p.158). This is similar to what Levinas (1987) refers to 'other', which suggests the independent position of the subject and object in the event.

## **Performativity: Transcending the Boundary**

Literature, as a text of discourse, is not only declarative but also performative. It is through discursive narratives that enable literary events present. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 2) suggests, "discourse is a social event" (p. 92). Literary discourses not only produce meanings, but have power over social life.



Taking literature as a performative language draws much attention by philosophers and linguists. In Austin *Speech Acts* (2013), performative language refers to the action of doing or to do when one delivers the sentence (p. 9). Paul Ricoeur (1987) meanwhile explains, “something happens when someone speaks, thus making discourse become an event“ (p. 135). Michel Foucault (2017) in his theory of power focuses on discourse power and history construction, as he argues that discourse is constantly shaped and constructed into power in the course of history.

The ideas of monologue, polyphonic structure, polyphony, and dialogue proposed by Bakhtin are clearly not restricted to literary forms of discourse or structure, but represent modes of thinking and behavior. In this sense, through its discourse narrative and genre construction, literature shapes the human’s thinking mode and the ways of living in the course of history.

### **III Literature as Event: Generative Meaning**

Literary subject, behavior, discourse, and thoughts could only obtain the meanings in the concrete socio-historical contexts, without which they would become meaningless (Bakhtin, 1998, volume 6, p. 586). The spatial-temporal position (or known as chronology) is one of the elementary concepts in Bakhtin’s theory against the internal existence of theory and aesthetic intuition. It is through specific spatial-temporal position that makes literature no longer a concept of abstract and eternal entity, but an event that constantly generates and constructs its own meaning and form. In this section, we would see how literature as an event exists in the on-going socio-historical contexts – its features of being dynamic and generative, deviant and heterogenous, dual and intersectional.

#### **Dynamism and Generation**

Deleuze (1990) in his book *The Logic of Sense* states that events are not like solid substance or matter of facts which exist objectively, but rather in a state of continuity “to become” or “to happen” (p. 4). That is, its fundamental property is generation, not essence. Others like Derrida and Donald Davidson adopt similar perspectives. Based on analysis of ancient Greek no-

vels, medieval sagas, Goethe's educational novels, and Dostoevsky's polyphonic novels, Bakhtin discovers the "infinity" of the novel, by which he displays the dynamics and generative features of literature as events.

Closely connected with real-life events, the novel as a genre reflects an ongoing event which is in a state of "happening" and full of suspense, thus making itself infinite with open structure (Bakhtin, volume 3, p. 534). It can be reinterpreted, evaluated, and changed. Likewise, by participating in the eventful dialogue, literature objects are integrated into the infinite structure and become infinite afterwards. Therefore, literary events are no longer a static entity, but a dynamic process with its meanings unfolding and developing with the contexts. The epic, on the contrary, is described by Bakhtin (1998, volume 3) the "absolute past" (p. 520). The world of the epic, from words to images, is endowed with sublimity, splendor and immortality, and hence it is hardly reinterpreted, reevaluated, or changed. By this means, it is doomed to become the past and something in memories, which fails to be related to real events.

In addition, the two-way interaction between author and reader, and reading and interpretation, also reflects the constant generation of meaning. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 2) observes, literature is a special form of interaction between author and reader that is fixed in the work (p. 82).

### **Deviancy and Heterogeneity**

The meaning generated by literature is not predetermined, waiting to be known and discovered, but is produced and constructed in the course of contingent occurrences, which makes it an eventful existence. This generation is not repeatedly cyclical, but breeds something new, especially something deviant and heterogeneous different from the past.

It is evident in Bakhtin's theory of novel which is pioneering for its rebellion against the literary normalities with theoretical deviancy and heterogeneity. Specifically, the 'infinity' empowers the novel openness to the socio-cultural history which counterpoints Georg Lukács (2012) authoritative novel theory with the philosophical and nostalgic reflection of the past. The concept of polyphony deviates from the forms and mindset of monologue. His exploration of the folk culture of laughter and the spirit of carnival in Laboure's novels seeks to undermine the official discourse power. By breaking the normality of contemporary Western poetics, Bakhtin further promotes literature integration to the wider context of folklore and the social events.

Many other philosophers also contribute to the heterogeneity nature of the event, but more contingency focused. According to Derrida (2003), events are unpredictable, un-predetermined and without direction (p. 69). Deleuze (1990) proposes events as 'singularities' (turning points, critical points), while Jean-Luc Nancy (2000) refers to events as 'becoming-surprises' (pp. 164-169). Further, Badiou and Slavoj Žižek focus on the 'rupture' of the event. As Badiou (2006) claims, truth can only be established through a rupture with the order that underpins it, and is never the result of that order (p.xii-xiii,). This "rupture" is what Badiou referred to as an event. Slavoj Žižek (2016) illuminates, an event is always something new that happens in an unexpected way, that "disrupts any existing stable structure... and it is something that goes beyond the cause" (p. 6, p. 15). In other words, the boundary between cause and effect is the space where the event emerges. For Foucault (1991), the event is anti-structuralist, and a challenge to traditional philosophical ideas of historical necessity and self-evidency – history as the result of its own rational laws of evolution (pp. 77-78).

### **Duality and Intersectionality**

While based on deviancy and heterogeneity, Bakhtin's event theory, slightly different from other philosophers' concentration on contingency and rupture, heightens the intersectionality and duality in the dynamic development. This is intensely reflected in his discussion of the subject's identity in carnivalesque and Rabelais' grotesque novel. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 6) explains, the duality is manifest in the unity of positive and negative side of the event, in the duality of image and plot, in the new and the old, the past and the future, and in the death and birth, affirmation and negation (p. 368). Therefore, it is clearly seen that the duality of literary events highlight the intersection and symbiosis of rebirth and extinction, and centrality and decentrality, which never ends.

Specifically, in carnival culture, inhabitants break away from their normal identities and participate as free individuals. The carnival rituals of rebirth and demise, centre and periphery, crowning and decrowning, laughter and insults, blessing and cursing, past and future, official order and civil life all exhibit the duality. Meanwhile, this duality implies symbiosis and intersectionality, where the centre is transformed into the periphery, extinction breeds renewal, and vice versa. The carnival itself as a social event is from the conventional life, but also a departure from it, which indicates another form of existential life.

In Laboure's novels, the bodies of the grotesque characters show the identity duality, as the dramatic events of life, such as eating, excretion, coitus, childbirth, growth, ageing, dismemberment and devouring, are all performed at the junction of the old and the new human body or the world. In all these dramatic events, the beginning and the end of life are inextricably intertwined. In this sense, the grotesque body is therefore a body in formation. It is never ready or finished, rather, it is in the way of construction, and is always constructing and forming other bodies. What Bakhtin (1998, volume 6) intends to stress is the intervene of one body into another, and one's life out of the death. He admires Rabelais's deny of those lifeless surfaces which are "individual, finished/finite, enclosed and limited" by emphasizing the bumpy parts of the grotesque body. The body under modern norms is seen by Bakhtin as independently individual and speaks only for itself, which is closed and finite. Death only means extinction and does not bring new life. All acts and events are known only on the level of individual life, and the boundaries of which are absolute beginnings and endings, without any connection (p. 368-369).

#### **IV Literature as Event: Unification of the Subject and Object**

The long-standing dichotomy of subject-object detaches the relationship of the form and content, the text and social history, and the aesthetics and the ethics. Through the socio-historical dimension, Bakhtin's tends to integrate the world and individual, practice and knowledge, subject and object into a whole unity of event.

#### **Intrinsic Social Nature**

The relationship between literature and socio-cultural history has long been discussed. Eagleton (2017) claims in that "novel is an event inseparable from its very act of speech... it makes the object itself to which it refers... and also it has some perceptible effect on reality"(p. 150). Kahler (2013) argues that we shall see all the intricacies and diversity of literature as an long-established mechanism and social practice (p. 42).

The object in the artistic work is no longer a 'pure' object, but is the matter of fact which has been learned and evaluated. The art form would become meaningless if it leaves behind its cognitive or ethical content. "Art is intrinsically social... Like the cognitive, the aesthetics is likewise a variant

of the society. The theory of art is therefore in essence the sociology of art" (Bakhtin, 1998, volume 2, p. 80) Each work has its own perception and interpretation of the act of reality, which provides the work of art an inherent historicity.

In the world of human culture, as Bakhtin (1998, volume 1) suggests, any phenomenon and substance can be considered in the relationship between subject and object. In his proposal, the object (substantial world) and subject represent a two-extreme spectrum of cognition, rather than a static position of existence. Specifically, the substance would either be personified or objectified if it clings to either side. The aesthetic event is ultimately not a cognitive or behavioural action (not aimed at creating nature and human society), but the integration of man into aesthetic nature which enables the personification of nature and the naturalisation of man (p. 329).

### **Constructed Form: Novel as Genre**

It is only through the form that the cognitive and ethical actions could convert into the aesthetic event, as they manifest the subjective construction (p. 331). For Bakhtin (1998, volume 1), the cognitive or ethical act itself could hardly be taken as an aesthetic object and it is through an evaluative position outside the content that becomes the aesthetic event. Therefore, the form could be perceived as the manifestation of the positive attitude of the author, creator or recipient towards the cognitive and ethical actions (p. 359). Literature, like other social forms, develops from a common economic basis, while it maintains its own uniqueness (Bakhtin, 1998, volume 2, p. 82).

The concept of 'constructed form' raised by Bakhtin fully displays his highlight of the aesthetic form. The socio-historical context not only acts physically outside on art form, but finds its echo inside the art and shapes its own internal structure. That is, the social and historical patterns embed in art and are reflected as certain aesthetic forms. This is what Bakhtin calls the "constructed form" (volume 2, p. 80) not the 'form' by Formalists or Structuralists. Tragedy, comedy, polyphony and carnival are constructed forms, while the drama, novel are layouts, focusing on technical forms. It is believed that layout constructs aesthetic objects, whereas the constructed form would realize the aestheticization of historical or social events (Bakhtin, 1998, volume1, p. 319). The constructed form hereby reflects the power of unifying the subject and object and enables aesthetic events.

## The Active Action

Besides the intrinsic social nature and the unifying of subject and object through its form, the event theory of Bakhtin further magnifies the active participation of literary events and acts in the socio-historical construction and as a spiritual force for world and society transforming. For example, carnivalisation, polyphony and dialogism as forms of literary theory and criticism have transcended far beyond the realm of literary theory and become a power force that has a profound impact on social life and structures.

The way in which the literary event influences social history is not direct, not like science, which usually acts directly on substance matter. Literature inevitably carries certain ethical implications, but it does not contribute directly to moral life, or even becomes a readily moral event. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 1) states, the artistic form is not equal or belonged to the cognitive or moral content it contained (p. 338). The artist does not act as a direct participant to intervene in the event, in which case it is as if he becomes a person who performs a moral act. Instead, the artist sits outside the event and takes an essential position as a disinterested observer, where he produces empathy and participates in the common evaluations, thus forming the aesthetic event (Bakhtin, 1998, volume 1, p. 332). That is why Bakhtin claims some of Tolstoy's or Dostoevsky's works are epistemological and philosophical, like theoretical writing, rather than literature, since it obscures the connection to aesthetic events.

How does it work? The content of events is always open, future-oriented and infinite, and there is no state of completion of the event of being. It is only through aesthetic forms that the event of being completes and becomes a self-contained reality. In other words, the content of the artistic work is like a fragment of the event of being, and it is the form that isolates the aesthetic event (from the event of being) and makes it self-contained; hence, it becomes a completed and individual work. Indeed, the literary event fulfills its ethical function by compensating the moral events (or other events) through forms. As Bakhtin (1998, volume 1) argues, the artistic form can fill in the gaps of any events (including moral events) until they become self-sufficient and self-contained (p.360-362 ). For example, the ethical events represented in the poem, such as distress, confessions and aspirations, differ from existential events in that they do not expect to achieve accomplishments or find solutions, but merely appeal to make satisfac-

tion or relief. It is reminiscent of Eagleton (2012) argumentation, which goes as follows: literature fulfills its ethical function by exposing the authoritarian nature of the laws, norms, traditions, ideologies and cultural forms in which we live (p. 103).

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## On Anna Seghers' Acceptance of China in the 1920s and 1930s

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(China)

### **Abstract:**

Anna Seghers is a famous German anti-fascist writer in the 20th century and a famous proletarian revolutionary fighter, her work is notable for exploring and depicting the moral experience of the Second World War. Born into a Jewish family and married to a Hungarian Communist, Seghers escaped Nazi-controlled territory through wartime France. She returned to Europe after the war, living in West Berlin (1947–50), which was occupied by Allied forces. She eventually settled in the German Democratic Republic, where she worked on cultural and peace issues. She received numerous awards and in 1967 was nominated for the Nobel Prize by the GDR.

Throughout the life of Seghers, whether she studied Sinology in Heidelberg and Cologne in her youth, or joined the Communist International and paid close attention to the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of China, China's influence on her was manifold. As we can see, there are many descriptions of China in her works. Although she never visited China in the 1920s and 1930s, we can still feel her interest in the Chinese revolution in her work. Communicating across cultures has a two-way influence. On the one hand, we can clearly see her acceptance of China, whether it is the traditional Chinese ideology and culture or the creative inspiration brought by the Chinese revolutionary movement. On the other hand, when we read the literature of Seghers, we see China a hundred years ago and the proletarian revolutionary movement in China. In this way, we can see ourselves through the eyes of the other, adding a different perspective to this great history.

**Keywords:** Anna Seghers, German Left-wing Literature, Chinese Culture and International Communication

## I. The Origin of Seghers ' Study of China

Anna Seghers (pseudonym of Netty Reiling Radványi) was born in Mainz into a cultured Jewish family. Netty, an only child, was often ill and sought solace in her vivid imagination and in books. <sup>1</sup>Seghers first came into contact with Chinese culture while reading, as she said "Ich wünschte mir, als ich noch ein Kind war, hier [in China] einmal anzugelangen. Ich hatte ein paar Märchen und Gedichte gelesen, auch Schriftzeichen, die mir vorkamen wie Gedichte und Bilder in einem. Ich fragte mich, was sind das für Menschen, die ihre Gedanken mit Tusche und Pinsel in solchen Schriftzeichen ausdrücken können? [...] Dann lasen wir Bücher, die über Chinesen und von ihnen geschrieben waren."<sup>2</sup> I wished to come here [in China] when I was a kid. I had read a few fairy tales and poems, also written characters that seemed like poems and pictures in one. I asked myself, what kind of people are they who can write these Chinese characters with ink and brush to express their thoughts [...] Later I read some books about Chinese people and books written by Chinese people.) Seghers loved painting and art since childhood, so she developed a huge curiosity about picturesque Chinese characters. In order to quickly decipher the texts in ancient Chinese pictures and gain a better understanding of this fascinating culture, she majored in Chinese language and culture, sociology and history, while studying at Heidelberg University. She ultimately obtained a doctorate in art history.

In addition, Seghers' study of Sinology was also influenced by her family. It was a wealthy Jewish family with good traditions and deep cultural literacy. On both her parents' sides she came from Jewish families that had risen to prosperity during the nineteenth century. Seghers' father Isidor Reiling (1867-1940) and his brother Hermann Reiling (1862-1942) owned an art and antiquities firm inherited from their father David Reiling, who first came to Mainz dealing in dry goods. The brothers turned the family trade into one of the city's thriving businesses. The firm soon acquired a European reputation, and its regular customers included members of the Hessian, Prussian, and Russian courts.<sup>3</sup> Her mother, Hedwig Reiling (pseudonym of

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<sup>1</sup> Christiane Zehl Romero. "Anna Seghers". Jwa.org. Jewish Women's Archive. Retrieved 21 July 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Seghers: Verwirklichung. In: Gustav Seitz: Studienblätter aus China. Mit einem Geleitwort von Anna Seghers. Aufbau-Verlag, 1953, S. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Fehervary H. Anna Seghers: The Mythic Dimension[M]. University of Michigan Press, 2001, S. 19.

Hedwig Fuld, 1880-1942), came from a long-established Mainz family. She was the daughter of Helene and Salomon Fuld. Salomon Fuld was a famous lawyer and politician of Jewish descent in Frankfurt. The Fuld family has a long history and a high reputation in Mainz. In addition to making achievements in the legal and political circles, the family also dealt in art and antiquities but whose members branched out into other very successful enterprises at home and abroad. Hedwig Fuld's mother, Helene Fuld (pseudonym of Helene Goldschmidt), was the younger sister of Julius Goldschmidt, an international antiques dealer, who had antique stores in cosmopolitan cities such as Berlin, Paris and New York. Seghers' parents were members of the Israelitische Religionsgemeinschaft in Mainz, the conservative branch of the Jewish community. Her parents were active in society, and her mother, Hedwig Reiling, was a founding member and board member of the Mainz Jewish Women's Association. As Seghers said, the atmosphere in her hometown and home as open-minded and free from parochial nationalism. She received artistic influence from her family since she was a child.

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, China was one of the most turbulent part of the world, so the supervision by the government of cultural relics was greatly weakened, and many national treasures were sent abroad. The West has had a great fondness for oriental art for centuries, and this fondness continued unabated as the colony expanded. Many European artists and writers turned their eyes to the East during this period, trying to find a new spiritual home and a new way of life. They greatly appreciated the ancient codes and records, paintings, porcelain and other works of art from the Orient, and they were eager to understand the aesthetic art of the East and the ancient philosophy behind it. Therefore, driven by many factors, the purchase of Chinese and Japanese art in Europe increased significantly during this period. As Kopplin pointed out "der Tatsache, dass sich die europäischen Ankäufe chinesischer und japanischer Kunstwerke um die Jahrhundertwende beträchtlich vermehrten". 1897 wurde die erste deutsche spezielle Ausstellung ostasiatischer Kunst in Dresden veranstaltet (ebd. 37). 1901 fand die erste Versteigerung einer „Alt-China-Sammlung“ in Köln statt. Weitere Versteigerungen ausschließlich chinesischer Kunstgegenstände wurden 1902 in Leipzig und 1903 in Berlin veranstaltet (ebd. 39). Von 1909 bis 1911 fanden in Berlin, Wien, Frankfurt und München sieben weitere Versteigerungen japanischer und chinesischer

Kunstgegenstände statt (ebd. 41).”<sup>1</sup>(The fact that European purchases of Chinese and Japanese works of art increased considerably around the turn of the century. In 1897 the first German special exhibition of East Asian art was held in Dresden. In 1901 the first auction of an “Ancient Chinese Collections” took place in Cologne. Subsequent auctions of Chinese art were held in Leipzig in 1902 and Berlin in 1903. From 1909 to 1911, seven auctions of Japanese and Chinese art were held in Berlin, Vienna, Frankfurt and Munich.) And David Reiling, once a leader in the antiques industry, had a very rich collection of oriental art. Therefore, it can be inferred that Seghers received the original enlightenment about Chinese culture in her antique store when she was a child. And it's also possible, as Zehl Romero surmised “Da sich Hermann Reiling und seine Frau kinderlos waren, sollte Seghers als das einzige Kind von Isidor Reiling die Erbin des Familiengeschäfts sein. In diesem Kontext besteht es Anlass zur Vermutung, dass Seghers’ Sinologiestudium und besonders ihre Hinwendung zu ostasiatischer Kunst aus der Perspektive ihres Vaters eine berufliche Vorbereitung zur Unterstützung für das väterliche Antiquitätengeschäft sein könnten”<sup>2</sup> (Because Hermann Reiling and his wife were childless, Seghers, as Isidor Reiling's only child, would be the heir to the family business. In this context, it is reasonable to believe that, from her father's perspective, that Seghers' studies in Sinology and especially her turned to East Asian art, may have been a career preparation to support her father's antiques business). To sum up, out of her own obsession with Chinese culture and under the influence of her parents, Seghers started her Sinology research at Heidelberg University in 1920, which is also the place where she systematically established a connection with Chinese culture.

## II. Seghers’ Sinology Research in University

The Sinology Department of Heidelberg University was established in 1919. Sinologist Friedrich Ernst Augustus Clause delivered an inaugural speech entitled “Speaking and Writing in China and Japan” (Sprache und Schrift in China und Japan) on July 19, which marked the establishment of

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<sup>1</sup> Kopplin, Monika. „Das Sammelwesen von Ostasiatika in Deutschland und Österreich, vorzugsweise verfolgt für die Zeit von 1860-1913.“ Zur Kunstgeschichte Asiens. 50 Jahre Lehre und Forschung an der Universität Köln. Hrsg. v. Roger Goepper. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1977. 33-46.

<sup>2</sup> Zehl Romero, Christiane. Anna Seghers. Eine Biographie. 1900-1947. Berlin: AufbauVerlag, 2000: 122.

the Department of Sinology at Heidelberg University. When Seghers was studying at Heidelberg University, the Sinology Department, as a newly established department, had only one Sinology teacher from Clause. Seghers took 13 of Clause's courses during her school days, covering While studying in Heidelberg, Seghers met Philipp Schaeffer, and they formed a strong friendship. In her view, Schaeffer is not only a central figure in the study of sinology, but also a symbol of combining the enthusiasm of sinology with political belief.<sup>1</sup> They read a lot of traditional Chinese classics, novels, legends, and essays. Seghers especially loves Pu Sungling's *Strange Tales from a Chinese studio* (Liao-Chai-Chih-I), which relies on the myths and stories of traditional Chinese Taoism and Buddhism to criticize the society. In this book, whether it is exposing the darkness of feudal rule, attacking the corrupt imperial examination system, or resisting the shackles of feudal ethics, they all reflect extremely rich and profound ideological content. In particular, there are a lot of love stories in the book about people falling in love with gods, ghosts and fairies, showing a strong criticism of feudal ethics and the spirit of pursuing love and freedom, which is similar to the values pursued by mainstream Western thought. This struck a chord with Seghers. She expressed her love for *Strange Tales from a Chinese studio* in *In Memory of Philip Schaefer* (Erinnerungen an Philipp Schaeffer) "In schönen chinesischen Schriftzeichen schrieb mir Schaeffer als Geschenk zum Doktorat eins meiner Lieblingsmärchen auf Seidenpapier. „Das Wandbild“. Es ist einer alten chinesischen Märchensammlung entnommen. Die Sammlung heißt *Liao-Chai-Chih-I*"<sup>2</sup>(Schaeffer wrote me one of my favorite fairy tales on tissue paper in beautiful Chinese characters as a present for my doctorate. "The Mural". It is taken from an old collection of Chinese fairy tales. The collection is called "Liao-Chai-Chih-I"). This handmade book adheres to the ancient Chinese method of bookbinding, right-aligned and bound with red paper for the inner cover. And this book is still preserved in the Seghers library today.

In addition to the study of ancient Chinese literature, Seghers also had a deep understanding of Chinese classical philosophy. She studied *Mencius*, *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Liezi*, translated by German sinologist Richard Wilhelm, *The Spirit of Chinese People* by Gu Hongming, and articles by other

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<sup>1</sup> Li W. China und China-Erfahrung in Leben und Werk von Anna Seghers[M]. Peter Lang, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Seghers: Aufsätze, Ansprachen, Essays 1954-1979, Berlin 1980, 388.

sinologists on Chinese philosophy. For example, Wilhelm Grube's *History of Chinese Literature* has a separate chapter on Taoist philosophy. Seghers made her own interpretation and understanding of Chinese classical philosophy, as she said in *In Memory of Philip Schaeffer* "Wir beide, Schaeffer und ich, waren nicht für Konfuzius mit seiner feudalistischen Staatsmoral... Wir glaubten zu verstehen, was Laotse verstand unter seinem großen Tao, mit seinem Leitsatz ‚Tun durch Nichttun‘. Das Original, wenn es ein solches gab, war dunkel und in der Übersetzung noch dunkler doch wurde es aufgebend durch das, was ich darunter verstand oder vielmehr Schaeffer daraus entnahm"<sup>1</sup> (Schaeffer and I do not agree with Confucius and his feudalistic ideas of governing the country, we agree with Lao Zi's ideas. We consider ourselves to have understood the great "Tao" and its principle of "governance by inaction" as mentioned by Lao Zi. The original text written by Lao Zi is obscure and difficult to understand, and the German translation is even more difficult. But through my interpretation and Schaeffer's inference, the meaning of the translation has become clearer). From this passage, we can feel Seghers' disapproval of Confucianism and her admiration for Taoism. This was also influenced by the ethos of "respecting Taoism and anti-Confucianism" towards Chinese philosophy in Europe at that time.

There are two main reasons for the ethos of "respecting Taoism and anti-Confucianism". On the one hand, Confucianism advocates the theory of moral and ethical norms in human society, that people belong to "society", and emphasizes hierarchical order and ethical guidelines, which is obviously contrary to Western values. On the other hand, because of the success of the Industrial Revolution, the Western world has entered an unprecedentedly rich material stage, but this has resulted in the "alienation" of people. Individualism and hedonism prevailed, the destruction of natural ecology and the First World War made Western society face a huge spiritual crisis, and many people fell into a strong confusion. In the book *The Decline Of The West* by the German philosopher Oswald Spengler, it directly reflects the disappointment of Westerners with Western civilization after the First World War. In the author's opinion "Each Culture has its own new possibilities of self-expression, which arise, ripen, decay, and never return."<sup>2</sup> The Europe of the 1920s had clearly ended its glory days and began to decline. So the whole society is shrouded in the sad atmosphere of the "end of the

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Seghers: Aufsätze, Ansprachen, Essays 1954-1979, Berlin 1980, 387.

<sup>2</sup> Spengler O. The decline of the West[M]. Oxford University Press, USA, 1991, 21.

century", the strong review of the subject's manipulation of rationality, and the expectation of peace and return to nature, became the common aspirations of Westerners at that time. The idea of harmony and natural inaction advocated by Taoism just fits this spiritual need. Especially as a defeated country in World War I, Germany, after experiencing a huge blow, the state feels more strongly that there is an inherent need to 'correct direction'. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand that Taoism became a popular trend of thought at that time.

These studies and reflections on Chinese classical philosophy had a profound influence on Seghers' later literary creation. For example, because of the early rejection of Confucianism, in the 1930s, there was no trace of Confucianism in the literature she wrote about China. It was not until the early 1950s that Seghers reassessed the positive impact of Confucianism on Chinese culture and history. In the short story *Die verlorenen Söhne*, she tried to incorporate the Confucian sense of responsibility, loyalty to the country and family, as an excellent character, into the characters she designed. In my opinion, this has nothing to do with her first visit to China in 1951 and being invited to participate in the National Celebration of the second anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. During the visit, Seghers visited the Committee for Safeguarding Peace and Anti-US aggression(保卫和平反美侵略委员会), and participated in a symposium on art issues at the Central Academy of Fine Arts. She communicated with Chinese writers such as Guo Moruo, Ding Ling, Feng Zhi, etc., and gained an in-depth understanding of the changes of Chinese workers before and after the founding of New China. Afterwards, she visited scenic spots and historical sites, watched Beijing Opera and other literary and artistic programs, and experienced Chinese traditional culture up close. So she may have some new insights into the Confucianism behind this traditional culture.

During the winter and summer semesters of 1921 and 1922, Seghers went to the University of Cologne as an exchange student and began her internship at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne. The Museum of East Asian Art, which overlooks the Aechener Weiher pond in Cologne, was the first museum of its kind in Germany when it opened in 1913. Its collection is comprised primarily of Chinese, Japanese and Korean art. The museum's founders, Adolf Fischer and his wife Frieda Bartdorff, amassed a significant collection of Japanese art, which forms the basis of the museum's holdings. This includes Buddhist painting and wooden sculpture, Japanese standing screen painting, color woodcuts and lacquer objects. Other world-renowned

treasures in the museum's collection include Chinese bronzes, Buddhist sculpture, ceramics from China, Korea and Japan, and Korean celadon pottery from the Koryô dynasty. The museum's building is an important example of the classical modernist period in Cologne and was designed by Japanese architect Kunio Maekawa, a pupil of Le Corbusier. The museum courtyard is home to a garden, which was designed in the style of traditional Japanese meditation gardens<sup>1</sup>. When Adolf Fisher opened the museum in 1913, he provided a guidebook for the Museum of East Asian Art, which introduced each exhibition room and exhibits in detail. Through this booklet, we learned that the museum has an exhibition room dedicated to displaying Asian textiles. There are two official costumes from the late Qing Dynasty in China, which are embroidered with dragon and cloud patterns<sup>2</sup>. On the website of the Berlin-Mitter Library, I found an old photo of Seghers wearing a late Qing official robe. From the photo, we can see that Seghers is wearing a late Qing hairstyle, her right palm is facing the sky, holding a scroll in her left hand, her clothes are embroidered with dragon cloud patterns, and she wears a pair of late Qing official boots on her feet (picture 1).



(picture 1)

However, due to the age and the low definition of the photo, it is impossible to see the number of dragon claws on this picture, so it is impossible to speculate which grade of official clothing this dress is. There is no detailed description of this black and white photo of Seghers on the library's website, except that her name is simply marked under the photo, indicating that the person in the photo is Seghers. So I can't tell if this photo was taken at the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne. We can only speculate from the young face of Seghers in the photo and the fact that there were two official gowns from the late Qing Dynasty in the Museum of East Asian Art in Cologne at that time, she may have taken this photo during her internship in Cologne. But no matter whether the photos were taken in Cologne or not,

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<sup>1</sup> Museum of East Asian Art <https://www.sothebys.com/en/museums/museum-of-east-asian-art>.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer, Adolf. *Kleiner Populärer Führer durch das Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst der Stadt Köln*. Köln: M. DuMont Schauberg, 1913.195.



we can be sure that when Seghers learned about Chinese culture, she did not just bury her head in a pile of old papers. She had a multi-faceted understanding and understanding of China. Seghers learned a lot about East Asian art history and art theory in Cologne, including the characteristics of Oriental aesthetics (such as blank space), which made her research field no longer limited to Sinology, and she began to focus more on East Asia Art History Research. The Institute of Art History at the University of Cologne and the many local art and ethnological museums expanded Seghers' horizons. She met a group of like-minded friends in the museum in Cologne, such as Karl With and his wife, Alfred Salmony, and the director of the Museum of East Asian Art, Adolf Fischer and his wife, they are called the "Kölner Kreis". The "Kölner Kreis" thought it was arrogant to understand East Asian art from a European perspective. Only by placing East Asian art and European art in the same position and respecting the independence of East Asian art can a comparison be made between them, that compare individual artworks and artistic phenomena from East Asia and Europe<sup>1</sup>. And if you want to truly understand the art of other countries or civilizations, you must get rid of the original aesthetic paradigm and learn to recognize the rationality of the existence of others<sup>2</sup>. At that time, the Museum of East Asian Art was a stronghold for defending the independence of East Asian art. This way of thinking against Eurocentrism deeply influenced Seghers, not only changing her artistic outlook, but also making her world outlook mature.

### III. Seghers' Political Turn to China Studies

After studying in Cologne, Seghers viewed the Western bourgeoisie more and more critically, extending from artistic ideals to political ideology, and she began to consciously learn about socialism. "Seghers belegte bereits in ihrem ersten Studienjahr, im Sommer semester 1920 „Sozialtheorie des Marxismus“, im Wintersemester 1920/21 „Sozialpolitische und soziale Bewegung“ sowie „Theorie des Sozialismus“, die alle von Professor Emil Lederer, einem bedeutenden sozialistisch geprägten Sozialwissenschaftler angeboten wurden"<sup>3</sup> (According to the courses she took at university, Seghers took

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<sup>1</sup> Salmony A. Europa –Ostasien: religiöse skulpturen[M]. G. Kiepenheuer, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Fischer, Frieda. Museum für Ostasiatische Kunst, Köln: Gonski, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Li W. Anna Seghers' China-Begegnung in ihrem Leben und ihren Werken[M]. The Ohio State University, 2009. 65

"Marxist Social Theory" in the summer semester of 1920, "Social Politics and Social Movements" and "Socialist Theory" in the winter semester of 1920/21, these courses are taught by the renowned economist and sociologist Professor Emil Lederer). Seghers systematically learned socialist knowledge in class and had a solid theoretical foundation.

Seghers met many political exiles from abroad during her time at Heidelberg University, as she said " The exiles had to end their studies and go into exile in Germany because of the bloody repression and persecution in their own country. It was through them that I was able to witness the political process and the class struggle."<sup>1</sup> Among these exiles was Laszlo Radvanyi. Laszlo Radvanyi also known as Johann Lorenz Schmidt, was a Hungarian writer and academic. He was born into a Jewish family in Hungary and was a staunch communist. Radványi studied economics and philosophy at the University of Budapest from 1918 to 1919, where he became involved in radical politics. He was involved in the student revolution and was invited by Lukács to join the Sunday group (Sonntagskreis). With the destruction of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919 he fled to Vienna, where he adopted the pseudonym "Johann Lorenz Schmidt", from the 18th-century Protestant dissident theologian. He studied philosophy, psychology, sociology and economics at the Heidelberg University between 1920 and 1923, where he obtained his doctorate. Directed by Karl Jaspers, his thesis on Chiliasm was summa cum laude. While at Heidelberg, Radványi met the poet Anna Seghers. They got married and moved to Berlin in 1925. In the same year, Radványi joined the German Communist Party. He taught at the Marxist Workers' School (Marxistische Arbeiterschule) in Berlin, which aimed to bring political and general education to the working class. The school hired many Weimar Republic-era left-wing and communist-leaning intellectuals as teachers, and Radványi later became the school's principal. He was a teacher all his life, a beloved and most important supporter of Seghers. Philipp Schaeffer, a friend of Seghers mentioned above, is also a famous communist fighter, and as early as 1922, Philipp Schaeffer began to pay attention to the proletarian movement in Asia. He published an article entitled *Der Bolschewismus in Asien* in *Washington: Conference Process and Outcome* edited by Krause<sup>2</sup>. They undoubtedly played a huge role in Seghers' understanding of communism and the proletarian movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Seghers: Aufsätze, Ansprachen, Essays 1954-1979, Berlin 1980, 387.

<sup>2</sup> Li W. Otherness in Solidarity[J]. *Beyond Alterity: German Encounters with Modern East Asia*, 2014, 7: 73.

At this time, China has a different meaning for Seghers. In the 1920s and early 1930s, China became the focus of attention of progressive political forces in Europe. The reason is because of changes in China's domestic political situation at that time. Since the bourgeois revolutionaries led by Sun Yat-sen overthrew the feudal monarchy and established the Republic of China in 1911, the domestic political situation has been unstable, not only facing the semi-colonial rule of Japan, but also facing the intensifying situation of warlord melee. So under the common desire of "overthrowing foreign powers and eradicating warlords", Sun Yat-sen began to unite with Russia and the Communist Party, support and rely on farmers and workers, put forward the New Three Principles of the People, and facilitated the first cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party. Different political parties in China have different positions on the issue of foreign colonial interests, which makes China an important part of world politics. But at this time, the Sinology Department of Heidelberg University was not at all interested in modern China, which was undergoing great changes. Seghers found that "In unserem Institut war nie die Rede von dem zeitgenössischen China. Kenntnisse über Sun Yat-sen und seine drei Volksprinzipien verschafften wir uns allein. Die Zeitungen hatten nur hie und da eine Zeile frei für die Machtkämpfe chinesischer Generäle, denn alle Zeitungen waren überbesetzt von den Ereignissen in Deutschland und Europa zu Beginn der zwanziger Jahre."<sup>1</sup>(In the Sinology Department, no one has ever talked about contemporary China. The knowledge about Sun Yat-sen and the Three Principles of the People is not taught by a teacher, we learn it ourselves. All the pages of the newspapers are filled with events in Germany and Europe in the early twenties, except for the occasional line or two about the melee of the Chinese warlords in the corner.) This phenomenon of "only talking about the past, not the present" made Seghers very disappointed.

At that time, German sinology circles were only interested in ancient China, whether it was literature, art or religious philosophy. As long as it is from ancient China, they are interested, and ancient China is full of mystery, wisdom and beauty in their eyes. During this period, the German translation and introduction of Chinese literary and artistic works reached a peak, but they were all classical literary works without exception. On the contrary, no one cared about the chaotic and poor modern China in the

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Wagner (Hg.), Anna Seghers. Eine Biographie in Bildern. Berlin 1994, S.41.

German sinology circle. It can be said that the German sinology circle in the Weimar period completely separated ancient China from modern China. The main reason for this is the colonial system of imperialism.

In the eyes of some colonial politicians, 19th-century oriental studies were only intended to allow scientific Europe to conquer the Asian continent<sup>1</sup>. Asia was clearly seen by the colonists as a rich but uncivilized continent. Asia does not have advanced science, weapons, and even its culture was initially very ignorant. Europeans scoffed at Chinese Confucianism for a long time in the 19th century. Kaiser Wilhelm II even proposed the "Yellow Peril" (Die Gelbe Gefahr) in public, in order to find an excuse to invade Asia. Take Clause, for example, who was Seghers' sinology teacher. He worked at the German embassy in China around 1911, and after returning to Berlin, he studied under the sinologist J. J. M. de Groot and obtained his doctorate. Groot was a staunch militarist and advocate of colonial policy, and he was involved in the Dutch government's colonial work in China. His early writings on China studies have a strong European Christian supremacy style<sup>2</sup>. Clause was deeply influenced by his teachers and a staunch supporter of colonialism, Seghers had deduced "Ich glaube, unser Sinologielehrer war als Kolonialoffizier während der Boxer-Aufstände in China gewesen und hatte dort sein Chinesisch gelernt. Er brachte jetzt im Institut eine Karikatur Erzbergers an, unter der in chinesischer Schrift zu lesen war, was Schaeffer mir übersetzte: „Heute nennt man ihn einen Minister, früher nannte man ihn einen Räuber am Volk.“<sup>3</sup>(I'm sure our Chinese teacher spent some time in China as a colonial army officer during the Boxer Rebellion and learned Chinese there. He also hung up a cartoon of Etzberger's mockery in Chinese in our department. Schaefer told me that the meaning of that sentence is that the robber who was plundering the people yesterday is now a minister). She realized from her sinology teachers that German sinology developed under colonial politics, and they were only interested in ancient Chinese art and culture. And progressive forces with advanced political consciousness

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<sup>1</sup> Leutner „Sinologie in Berlin. Die Durchsetzung einer wissenschaftlichen Disziplin zur Erschließung und zum Verständnis Chinas.“ Berlin und China. Dreihundert Jahre wechselvolle Beziehungen. Hrsg. v. Kuo Heng-yü. Berlin: Colloquium, 1987. 31-55.

<sup>2</sup> Leutner, Mechthild. „Deutsche Vorstellungen über China und Chinesen und über die Rolle der Deutschen in China, 1890-1945.“ Von der Kolonialpolitik zur Kooperation. Studien zur Geschichte der deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen. Hrsg. v. Kuo Heng-yü. München: Minerva Publikation, 1986. 401-42.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Seghers: Aufsätze, Ansprachen, Essays 1954-1979, Berlin 1980, 387.

like Seghers are watching with hopeful attention the latest changes in China. As Wagner pointed out, "She studied hard not to get a good score on a test, but to identify the contradictions and antagonisms from history that are closely related to today's struggles. For college students at the time, recognizing that It's not easy to connect conflicts and struggles at home with struggles in far-flung China. But Anna Seghers has done it."<sup>1</sup> Seghers's focus on Sinology, or China, has changed at this time. She obviously wants to learn more about modern China, rather than scrutinizing ancient Chinese texts from centuries ago.

#### IV. China in the Works of Seghers in the 1930s

Seghers began her literary career in her final year at Heidelberg University, publishing her first essay *Die Toten auf der Insel Djal* at the end of 1924. In 1928, she joined the German Communist Party and became a member of the Union of Revolutionary Writers of the German Proletariat. In the same year, she published his famous novel "Revolt of the Fishermen of Santa Barbara", which won the Kleist Prize. In November 1930, Seghers attended the Second International Conference of Proletarian Revolutionary Writers held in Kharkov, Soviet Union, as a representative of German left-wing writers. She began to actively participate in the international proletarian movement, which opened up a vast world for her literary creation.

In the early 1930s, Seghers met a group of Chinese communists in exile in Germany, and formed a deep friendship with them. From these people, she learned many stories about the Chinese revolution, and based on this, she wrote a series of articles about the Chinese revolution. These articles reflect important historical events in the development of China's political revolution from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. These articles reflect Seghers' concern for the Chinese proletarian movement.

Among these political exiles from China is the female writer and social activist Hu Lanqi (picture 2). The May Day of Yangshupu (1. Mai Yanschupou, 1932), a collaboration between Seghers and Hu Lanqi, was published in *Die Rote Fahne* (Red Flag), a magazine published by the German Communist Party on May 1. The story is set in the Shanghai labor movement

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<sup>1</sup> 弗朗克·瓦格纳, 吕一旭. 安娜·西格斯与中国[J]. 国外文学, 1987(01):80-95.

led by the Communist Party of China. It tells the story of workers in Yangshupu, Shanghai, defending their rights through strikes and demonstrations to celebrate the "May 1st International Labor Day". In the same year, the "Small Report from My Workshop" (Kleiner Bericht aus meiner Werkstatt, 1932) was published in Die Linkskurve, a publication of the German Left Writers' Union. The article recorded how they communicated and completed this article through the "writing workshop".

Focusing on the theme of "what happened on May Day in Shanghai", the two discussed the writing techniques of reportage – how to vividly describe the characters' living environment to show their characteristics, thereby increasing their attraction to readers. Seghers argues that it is necessary to describe some "external" environments and things in detail, such as Yangshupu's "alley", workers' "wooden house", "shoes", "dirty clothes", etc., rather than just describing Shanghai textile workers organize a rally to celebrate May Day. She believes that the description of these external things is not only to create a picture in the reader's mind, but more to reflect the characteristics of the characters through the environment. For example, "We describe the dim light of bulbs not to make a picture, but to express the class situation of its users through these bulbs, as is the case with every other object." And "describes the first time a farmer-turned worker enters the workshop 'he closes his eyes in a daze, and for a split second, as if the air is filled with the chirping of millions of crickets.' The metaphor shows the man from the countryside, and his tragic situation. Anyone who mechanically accepts this metaphor that is not out of his own imagination and actually describes a workshop with what looks like millions of crickets chirping in it is wrong. Because if a man has been in the city, the rumble of the machine will never remind him of crickets."<sup>1</sup> She believes that it is precisely because of the neglect of the description of the external environment that reportage has become a piece of news. The literary quality of the story is



(picture 2)

And "describes the first time a farmer-turned worker enters the workshop 'he closes his eyes in a daze, and for a split second, as if the air is filled with the chirping of millions of crickets.' The metaphor shows the man from the countryside, and his tragic situation. Anyone who mechanically accepts this metaphor that is not out of his own imagination and actually describes a workshop with what looks like millions of crickets chirping in it is wrong. Because if a man has been in the city, the rumble of the machine will never remind him of crickets."<sup>1</sup> She believes that it is precisely because of the neglect of the description of the external environment that reportage has become a piece of news. The literary quality of the story is

<sup>1</sup> Anna Seghers: Kleiner Bericht aus meiner Werkstatt, in: Die Linkskurve. Nr.09.09.1932. S223.

greatly reduced, and the characters are just vague images, no different from the cold names printed in the newspapers, so they cannot resonate with readers at all. In addition, she makes the claim that literary works change reality by describing reality: "We can't just describe events. Because we don't write to describe, but to write to change by describing."<sup>1</sup>This idea is also reflected in her collaboration with Hu Lanqi in "May Day in Yangshupu", which fits the slogan "United Proletariat of the World", which can be seen as "the product of the interaction of left-wing literature between China and Germany".<sup>2</sup>In the grand narrative of the Chinese revolution, every ordinary character in her writing moves the world with the image of a revolutionary. This prompts readers to have a strong "sense of substitution" to understand and support the Chinese revolution.

In addition to the two articles co-authored with Hu Lanqi, Seghers also learned about the real situation in wartime China from other Chinese revolutionaries, and based on this, she wrote several articles reflecting the theme of the Chinese revolution. These articles reflect the spirit of the Chinese people's heroic resistance in the face of oppression.

The short story "The Stopwatch" (Die Stoppuhr, 1932) tells the story of the German military adviser, General Seekert, who was entrusted by Chiang Kai-shek to train the Kuomintang troops with a stopwatch, in order to encircle and suppress the Red Army dormant in southern China. This short story exposes the fact that imperialism interferes in China's internal affairs. In the article, the author vividly compared the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, reflecting the brutality of the Kuomintang and the Communist Party's diligence and love for the people. "The government soldiers who were still setting fire and looting just woke up from the red-eyed frenzy. They stared blankly at the remaining banners, slogans and pictures in the occupied area, which said a fair distribution of land and food., to educate young and old."<sup>3</sup> The ending of the story is unexpected but seems reasonable. The wellequipped Kuomintang troops turned their guns after the charging horn and chose to stand with the people. This fully demonstrates that victory can only be achieved by winning the hearts of the people. No

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<sup>1</sup> Anna Seghers: Kleiner Bericht aus meiner Werkstatt, in: Die Linkskurve. Nr.09.09.1932. S223.

<sup>2</sup> 载《人民政协报》2009年6月25日。

<sup>3</sup> 张帆. 安娜·西格斯中国作品集[M]. 世界知识出版社,2021.1

matter how sophisticated weapons or powerful foreign aid are, they cannot defeat the common aspiration of the people.

The second short story "Driving License" (*Der Führerschein*, 1932) published in "Left Front" was based on the famous Shanghai Hu A Mao incident in 1932. The story tells that after Japan invaded Shanghai in the early 1930s, a Chinese driver drove his car into the Huangpu River and perished together with the Japanese invaders. This reflects the Chinese people's spirit of facing death unflinchingly when they were humiliated by foreigners. Seghers extols the great spirit of self-sacrifice for the country and the faith, and she is convinced that their sacrifice was not in vain, but was of profound historical significance. It's also a common theme in her writing.

In addition, Seghers also has a description of China in her novel "Comrades in Arms" (*Die Gefährten*, 1932). It consists of five parallel story lines, describing the revolutionary struggles of five countries, Bulgaria, Poland, Italy, Hungary and China. They show the hardships the Communists of various countries endured during the low tide of the revolution. In this Chinese storyline, the author tells the story of the Liao brothers' dedication to the revolution. The Liao brothers, who were born into wealthy families, did not go to Europe to learn capitalism as their father expected. On the contrary, they chose Marxism and stood firmly on the side of communism. Later, the elder brother died because of the traitor's betrayal, and the younger brother lived to continue the revolution. The novel reflects the enthusiasm of the Chinese youth to save the country and the people. The author praises them as the dawn of hope for the country, and they are upright and fearless fighters.

The above is a summary of Seghers' literary works on China in the 1930s, from which we can see that these works almost completely cover all the most important political events in China from the late 1920s to the early 1930s. It also reflects Seghers' support for the Chinese revolution. In her works, revolutionaries in China are as respectable as revolutionaries around the world. They have made great sacrifices for great ideals and communism, and China has always played an important role in the international communist movement and the proletarian revolution.

Throughout the life of Seghers, whether she studied Sinology in Heidelberg and Cologne in her youth, or joined the Communist International and paid close attention to the revolutionary movement led by the Communist Party of China, China's influence on her was manifold. As we can



see, there are many descriptions of China in her works. Although she never visited China in the 1920s and 1930s, we can still feel her interest in the Chinese revolution in her work. Communicating across cultures has a two-way influence. On the one hand, we can clearly see her acceptance of China, whether it is the traditional Chinese ideology and culture or the creative inspiration brought by the Chinese revolutionary movement. On the other hand, when we read the literature of Seghers, we see China a hundred years ago and the proletarian revolutionary movement in China. In this way, we can see ourselves through the eyes of the other, adding a different perspective to this great history. Seghers "was not only a brave communist fighter, but also a good friend of the Chinese people".<sup>1</sup>

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## Comparative Literary Studies in Georgia: Challenges and Perspectives

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### Three Medeas – Modernist and Postmodernist Reception of Medea Myth in Georgian Literature

სამი მედეა – მედეას მითის მოდერნისტული და  
თანამედროვე რეცეფცია ქართულ ლიტერატურაში

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უნივერსიტეტი  
შოთა რუსთაველის სახელობის ქართული ლიტერატურის  
ინსტიტუტი  
(თბილისი, საქართველო)

#### Abstract:

Greek mythology has made character of Medea of Colchis the indivisible part of world cultural heritage. For centuries character of Medea has maintained its significance and comprised source of inspiration for the representatives of various spheres of fine arts. Of course, regarding the contexts of the epochs (conceptual and esthetic position) and author's intent, some motifs of the Argonauts' myth and character of the woman of Colchis have been changing. One part of the creators sees in it a murderous mother, the other part a vengeful wife or a traitor, while others see Medea as the first feminist woman.

Our aim is to consider, on the one hand, the first attempt at a literary interpretation of the Greek tragedian – Euripides' Medea – as a mythological hero, and, on the other hand, the modernist and postmodernist receptions of the Medea myth. In particular, we will analyze the texts of two Georgian

writers working in Germany at different times: the novel by modernist author Grigol Robakidze „Maggie Georgian Girl“ and the play by modern author Nino Kharatishvili „My and Your Heart [Medea].“

Within the scopes of the report we we shall attempt to find out the conceptual relation and influences of the characters of Georgian writers using comparative analysis, on the one hand, with the mythological tradition of Medea and on the other hand, with the tragedy of Euripides „Medea“; Introduce both modernist and postmodernist reception of the Medea myth in Georgian literature and highlight the international significance of the Colchis for Georgian culture.

**Keywords:** Medea, Greek mythology, Feminist woman

**საკვანძო სიტყვები:** მედეა, ბერძნული მითოლოგია, ფემინისტი ქალი

ბერძნულმა მითოლოგიამ კოლხი მედეას სახე მსოფლიო კულტურული მემკვიდრეობის განუყოფელ ნაწილად აქცია. საუკუნეების განმავლობაში მედეას სახე აქტუალობას არ კარგავდა და ხელოვნების არაერთი დარგის შემოქმედთათვის ინსპირაციის წყაროდ წარმოგვიდგებოდა. ცხადია, ეპოქის კონტექსტისა (კონცეპტუალური თუ ესთეტიკური პოზიციის) და ავტორისეული ინტენციის გათვალისწინებით, იცვლებოდა და როგორც არგონავტების მითის ზოგიერთი მოტივი, ისე კოლხი ასულის აღქმის პრიზმები. შემოქმედთა ერთი ნაწილი მასში მკვლელ დედას, მეორე ნაწილი შურისმაძიებელ ცოლს ან სამშობლოს მოღალატეს ხედავს, სხვების მოსაზრებით, კი მედეა პირველი ფემინისტი ქალია, რომელიც უარყოფს ყოველგვარი ქალურობის ნორმას და მასკულინური შეზღუდვებისაგან თავისუფლდება.

ჩვენი მიზანია წარმოვადგინოთ მედეას მითის მოდერნისტული და თანამედროვე რეცეფციები ქართულ ლიტერატურაში. კერძოდ, გავანალიზოთ სხვადასხვა დროს გერმანიაში მოღვაწე ორი ქართველი მწერლის ტექსტები: მოდერნისტი ავტორის – გრიგოლ რობაქიძის რომანი „მეგი ქართველი გოგონა“ და თანამედროვე მწერლის ნინო ხარატიშვილის პიესა „ჩემი და შენი გული [მედეა]. სტატიაში შევეც-

დებით კომპარატივისტული ანალიზის გამოყენებით დავადგინოთ ქართველი მწერლების პერსონაჟების კონცეპტუალუ-რი მიმართება და გავლენები, ერთი მხრივ, მედეას სახის მითოლოგიურ ტრადიციასთან და, მეორე მხრივ, ევრიპიდეს ტრაგედიასთან „მედეა“.

მითოსის მიხედვით, მედეა ძველი კოლხეთის ლეგენდარული მეფის აიეტის ქალიშვილი იყო, რომელსაც უყვარდება არგონავტების წინამძღოლი იასონი და ოქროს საწმისის მოპოვებაში ეხმარება მას. მითის ერთ-ერთი ვერსია მოგვითხრობს შეყვარებულების საბერძნეთში გამგზავრების, იასონის ღალატისა და კორინთოს მეფის კრეონტის ქალიშვილის კრეუსას/გლაუკეს (ლ.მ. მითი კრეონტის ქალიშვილის სახელის ორივე ვერსიას იცნობს) ცოლად შერთვის ამბავს. მედეა იასონზე შურისძიების მიზნით მის საცოლეს კლავს, განრისხებული კორინთოელები მედეას შვილებს უხოცავენ, გაუბედურებული ქალი კი კოლხეთში ბრუნდება.

მითის ლიტერატურულ ინტერპრეტაციას პირველად ბერძენი ტრაგიკოსი ევრიპიდე ჯერ კიდევ ძვ. წ. 431 წელს გვთავაზობს. ევრიპიდე საგანგებოდ ცვლის მითის ფინალურ ნაწილს და მედეას შვილების მკვლელ დედად აქცევს, მოგვიანებით მცირე აზიაში ეგეოსთან შეძენილ შვილთან ერთად ბარბაროსი ტომების მძლეველად იქცევა და ახალი მიწის – მიდიას – დამაარსებლად გვევლინება. ბერძენი ტრაგიკოსი განსხვავებულად წარმოაჩენს კოლხეთში მედეას დაბრუნების მოტივსაც. მითის მიხედვით, თუ მედეა გაუბედურებული, წაგებული და უსუსური ქალია, რომლისთვისაც დაბრუნება არა ახალი შესაძლებლობა თუ გამოწვევა, არამედ უალტერნატივო გამოსავლია, ევრიპიდეს ტრაგედიაში მედეა ტრიუმფატორი ქალი და აიეტის მხსნელია. ქალიშვილი ომს უცხადებს მამის მტრებს, მეფეს ტახტის დაბრუნებასა და ძალაუფლების განმტკიცებაში ეხმარება.

აქვე უნდა აღინიშნოს, რომ მედეას მითოსური სახის გააზრებისას თავად ანტიკურ მკვლევართა შორისაც განსხვავებული მოსაზრებები არსებობს. „ზოგიერთ ანტიკურ ავტორთან მედეა ღვთაებრივი ჰიპოსტატის მატარებლად გვევლინება... მედეას ღვთაებად გააზრების გვერდით ანტიკურობაში მედეა-ჯადოქრის დიდი ტრადიციაც არსებობს“ (ნადარეიშვილი, 2011, გვ. 113). მედეას სახის ამბივალენტური რაობის შესახებ მკვლევართა შორის პოლემიკა ევრიპიდეს მედეას ირგვლივაც გრძელდება. აღნიშნული საკითხი საგანგებოდ შეისწავლა ქართველმა მეცნიერმა ქეთევან ნადარეიშვილმა. მისი დაკვირვებით (2011, გვ. 117), ლიტერატურათმცოდნეობაში მედეა, ერთი მხრივ, გაიაზრება გრძნე-

ულ მისნად, ზე-ბუნებრივი შესაძლებლობების მქონე, ირაციონალურ ძალად, მეორე მხრივ, კი ადამიანური ვნებებით დატვირთულ, რეალურ გმირად. ტრაგედიაში, მკვლევრის შეფასებით, „*ჯადოსნური სიბრძნე ჩანაცვლებულია ინტელექტუალური სიბრძნით*“.

### მედეას მითის რეცეფცია ქართულ ლიტერატურაში გრიგოლ რობაქიძე „მეგი ქართველი გოგონა“

გრიგოლ რობაქიძის რომანი „მეგი ქართველი გოგონა“ პირველად 1932 წელს გერმანიაში რუსულ ენაზე გამოქვეყნდა. ქართულად კი პირველად 2012 წელს ითარგმნა და დღემდე სათანადოდ არაა შესწავლილი.

რომანის თავდაპირველი სათაური „მედეას ნაწნავები“ იყო. თავად ავტორი წიგნის კონცეფციას ასე განმარტავდა: „ჩემი რომანი „მეგი“ ერთგავარი ცდაა რეალურ ქალწულში კოლხელი მითიური ქალის განცხოველებისა: მედეასი.“ გრიგოლ რობაქიძე რომანში მართლაც ითვალისწინებს ანტიკურ გამოცდილებას მედეას შესახებ, თუმცა, კოლხი ასულის სახის მხატვრული გარდაქმნისას არღვევს სიუჟეტის განვითარების ტრადიციულ ხაზს და მოდერნისტული მსოფლმხედველობრივი პოზიციიდან არსობრივად ახალ გმირს ქმნის.

საგულისხმოა, რომ ქართულ სალიტერატურო სივრცეში მითოგრაფიული რომანის დამკვიდრება სწორედ გრიგოლ რობაქიძის სახელს უკავშირდება. კონსტანტინე ბრეგამის დაკვირვებით (2016, გვ. 85-86): „*ქართული მოდერნიზმი ახერხებს ორიგინალური სახისმეტყველებითი პარადიგმების, მითოსური არქეტიპების, მითოსური ნარატივისა და მითოსური სახისმეტყველების, წმინდად ნაციონალური თემებისა და ნაციონალური პრობლემატიკის გაუნივერსალურების, ქართული სინამდვილის მითო-სახისმეტყველებითი მხატვრული გააზრების, ახალი კულტურული და ლანდშაფტური სივრცეებისა და თემების შემოტანის საფუძველზე ახალი და უნიკალური მხატვრული ლიტერატურული ღირებულებების შექმნას*“.

რომანში მოქმედება ერთ სივრცეში – კოლხეთის დაბლობზე – „*აღმოსავლეთის მზიანი მინდვრების ქვეყანაში*“ – ვითარდება: „*ძველი კოლხეთის დაბლობი – ეს ის სივრცეა, რომელზეც გაისმის მწყემსების სალამურის განმარტობული სევდიანი ჰანგები, ცისკიდურები მოოქროვილი მზის ამოსვლით და მეწამული მზის ჩასვლით – სამყარო, ჩაფლული უსაზღვროებაში და გამსჭვალული სამშობლოს მეტაფიზი-*

კური სევდით“ (კარმანი, 1996, გვ. 386). შერჩეული ტოპოსი/ ლანდ-შაფტი ქმნის ახალ სემანტიკურ ველს და მნიშველოვნად განსაზღვრავს რომანის გმირების მსოფლგანცდას, სამყაროსეულ აღქმას. კოლხეთი გაიაზრება კაცობრიობის მითოსური არსებობის ერთგვარ მიკრომოდელად, საკრალურ სივრცედ, ცენტრად, სადაც „აბსოლუტური რეალობა“ სუფევს. მირჩა ელიადე (2017, გვ. 31) წიგნში „მარადიული დაბრუნების მითი“ „სრულყოფილ რეალობას“ ასე განმარტავს: „ის საკრალურია: ვინაიდან, მხოლოდ საკრალურს შეუძლია იყოს აბსოლუტური, იმოქმედოს შედეგიანად, შექმნას და ხანგრძლივი არსებობა მიანიჭოს ყველაფერს“.

ანტიკური ტრადიციისგან განსხვავებით, რომანში დაკარგულია მამის/ სამშობლოს ღალატის ხაზი. აიეტის სახეს ტექსტში ამორძალი დედა – ციციწო ანაცვლებს:

„ციციწო სხვა ქალებს არ ჰგავდა, მასში კოლხი ამორძალის სისხლი ჩქეფდა და ამიტომ ვერავის სატრფო ვერ იქნებოდა... არავის უღებდა საკუთარი გულის კარს და ამიტომაც არავის საკუთრება არ იყო. მისგან ის უდრეკი ძალა მოსჩეფდა, კაცებს რომ განაიარალებდა და ადამბლავებდა. და სწორედ ამაში იყო ამ ქალის საიდუმლო“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 52-53).

გრიგოლ რობაქიძის რომანში, ევრიპიდეს მედეას მსგავსად, მეგი წარმოგვიდგება პოტენციურად ტრაგიკული ძალის მქონე გმირად, თუმცა ავტორი ცალსახად ემიჯნება მედეას მითოსის ჯადოსნურ პლასტს, ჩნდება ახალი ტენდენციები: წარმართული და ქრისტიანული მოტივები. მეგი გვევლინება, ერთი მხრივ, ამაყ, შეუდრეკელ, ამორძალების შთამომავალ ქალად იმ მითიური წინაპრებისა „სრულიად განმარტოებით რომ ცხოვრობდნენ და ჯერ კიდევ ადრეულ ასაკში უშანთავდნენ მარჯვენა მკერდს“ (რობაქიძე 2012: 72-73), მეორე მხრივ, ღვთაებრივი საწყისის მქონე ქალწულად. მისი „პორტრეტი-ხატი“ სასწაულმოქმედების მოლოდინს აღძრავს და ადამიანებს გულმხურვალე ლოცვისთვის განაწყობს: „მეგი, ეს სრულქმნილი, უმანკო ქალწული, თითქოს იმის მოლოდინში იყო, რომ ღვთაებრივი ნათელი გადაეფარებოდა. ასეთ წუთებში მისი სახე თითქოს არამიწიერად და ჰარმონიულად აირეკლებოდა ცის სილაჟვარდეში“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 57).

ამდენად, გრიგოლ რობაქიძე სხვადასხვა პლასტების ერთგვარი სინთეზით ქმნის მედეას ახალ, წინააღმდეგობრივ, მრავალშრიან

გმირს, რომელიც თავის თავში იტევს „ქართველი ქალის“ რობაქიძისეულ იდეას:

„ქართველი ქალი, როგორც ქალი, უეჭველად პრობ-ლემაა. ვფიქრობ, რომ მის სტიქიაში ძველი ამორძალების ბევრი ნამს-ხვრევია, ამორძალებისა, სიყვარულის დროს მამაკაცებს შმა-გად რომ მივარდებოდნენ... მან არც სიყვარულის ახსნა იცის (იგი ამაყად გულდახურულია), არც სექსუალური გაფურჩქვნა (ის ასექსუალურია, ამორძალებურად სიმშაგის გადმონაშ-თების გამო): ქართველმა ქალმა არ იცის ნამდვილი „რომანი“ (რობა-ქიძე, 2014, გვ. 398).

ავტორმა თავისი გმირის ნაციონალური იდენტობა რომანის სა-თაურშივე მკაფიოდ გამოკვეთა – მეგი *ქართველი გოგონა*. მწერლის ეს მინიშნება კოლხი ასულის სახის ინტერპრეტაციისას პრინციპულ მნიშვნელობას იძენს.

გრიგოლ რობაქიძე მოდერნისტული მსოფლმხედველობრივი პო-ზიციიდან გაიაზრებს მეგი/მედეას ტრაგიზმის მიზეზსაც. თუკი „ევ-რიპიდესთან“ მედეა გამანადგურებელი ვნების ძალაუფლებას დამორ-ჩილებული ქალია და მისი ტრაგიკული სახის ფორმირების პროცესში განმსაზღვრელ მნიშვნელობას შვილების მკვლელობის აქტი იძენს, რობაქიძის ტექსტშიც მეგი შვილების მკვლელ დედად წარმოგვიდ-გება, თუმცა გმირის ტრაგიზმის საფუძველი პირველქმნილი ჰარმო-ნიის რღვევაა.

ნაწარმოების დასაწყისში მეგი მითოსური ცნობიერების მქონე გმირია. ტექსტი მეგის „დაბადების“ სცენით იწყება: „გოგონა წყლიდან ისე ამოვიდა, თითქოს ესესაა ადამის ნეკნიდან იშვაო“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 24) ეს იმგვარი მდგომარეობაა, როცა ადამიანი „მე“-ს წიაღისაგან ჯერ კიდევ არ გამოცალკევებულა. აფხაზთან (იასონის პროტოტიპი – ასტამურ ლაკერბაია) პირველი შეხვედრით იწყება მითოსური არსე-ბობიდან გამოსვლისა და ისტორიულ დროში გადანაცვლების წინაღ-მდეგობრივი პროცესი. უცხო – აფხაზი გვევლინება იმ მეტაფიზიკურ ზღურბლად, რომლის გამოჩენა მეგიში „მე“-ს შეგრძნების შიშს იწვევს. ქალსა და მამაკაცს შორის გაიმართება „თაურსამყაროსეული ჭიდი-ლი“, „სამკვდრო-სასიცოცხლო შერკინება“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 70), რითაც მეგის მითოსური არსებობისგან საბოლოო გამიჯვნა ფორმდე-ბა. იწყება ახალ რეალობაში, ისტორიულ დროში იდენტობის ძიების ხანგრძლივი გზა: „ცალკეული ადამიანური მე მეტისმეტად პატარაა,



ხოლო ადამიანის გონება მეტისმეტად სუსტი, რომ იმ პროექციების მთლიანად შეთვისება შეძლოს, რომელიც მას სამყაროდან უკან უბრუნდება“ (იუნგი, 2013, გვ. 132).

მარადიული დაბრუნების იდეა, რომელიც მოდერნისტულ დისკურსში ფრიდრიხ ნიცშეს გავლენით მკვიდრდება, განსაკუთრებით აქტიურდება მითოგრაფიულ ტექსტებში. ეს კონცეფცია ედება საფუძვლად განხილულ რომანსაც. თუმცა მეგი-მედეას სახის განსასაზღვრად, მისი არსის შესაცნობად უნდა ვიხელმძღვანელოთ მარადიული დაბრუნების იდეის არა ნიცშესეული, არამედ რობაქიძისეული ინტერპრეტაციით. „ყოველ საწყისში თაურსაწყისი თვლემს და მარადიული ცალკეულშია წარმოდგენილი. და თუ ცალკეული თავის თავზე მარადიულის გამანაყოფიერებელ ზემოქმედებას შეიგრძნობს, ამგვარად ის მარადიულად წილნაყარია. მაშინ მის-თვის ყოველი სასიკვდილო ზღვარი მეტად აღარ არის საბედისწერო საფრთხე და, მეტაფიზიკურ მიჯნას შეჯახებული მისი „მე“ შეიძლება გადარჩეს“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 38).

მარადიული დაბრუნების იდეა განსაზღვრავს რომანის როგორც კონცეპტუალურ საზრისს, ისე სტრუქტურულ პარადიგმას: პერსონაჟი თავის მითიურ მოდელთან არის გაიგივებული, მოვლენები კი მითიურ ქმედებათა კატეგორიაში ინტეგრირდება. გრძნეული ძიძის მიერ არგონავტების მითის მოთხრობისას მეგი ინტუიტიურად შეიგრძნობს მითიური წინაპრის – მედეას – მასში განმეორების გარდაუვლობას: „ის მაცდური ქალი, სიყვარულის ნიჭით უხვად დაჯილდოებული კოლხი მედეა განა ახლა ამ გოგონაში არ გაცოცხლებულიყო? იგივე აზრი უნებლიედ მეგისაც გაუელვებს გონებაში, მაგრამ როგორც კი ამას გააცნობიერებს, ათრთოლდება და სა-ხე შეეფაკლება“ (რობაქიძე, 2012, გვ. 45) მეგი „ისტორიულ ყოფაში“ არსებობას მხოლოდ მარადიული დაბრუნების იდეის გაცნობიერების შედეგად ახერხებს.

### **ნინო ხარატიშვილის „ჩემი და შენი გული [მედეა]“**

ნინო ხარატიშვილი გერმანიაში მოღვაწე თანამედროვე ქართველი მწერალია, მისი პიესა „ჩემი და შენი გული [მედეა]“ პირველად 2007 წელს გერმანიაში, ჰამბურგში დაიდგა.

ნინო ხარატიშვილისთვის, როგორც ქალი და ემიგრანტი ავტორისთვის, მედეას სახის რეციპირების პროცესში განსაკუთრებით საინტერესო აღმოჩნდა, ერთი მხრივ, მედეას, როგორც ძლიერი ნებელობის

მქონე ქალის, თავგადასავალი და, მეორე მხრივ, მედეას, როგორც ემიგრანტის, „უცხო“, „ბარბაროსის“ ისტორია.

ტექსტში მოქმედება, საბერძნეთში, კორინთოში ვითარდება, ამბის განვითარების დრო კი, ავტორისვე გადაწყვეტილებით, „მარად-ისობა“ – ამგვარი განუსაზღვრელობა ამბავს არქეტიპულ შინაარსს სძენს და მარადიული განმეორებადობის პერსპექტივას უტოვებს.

მედეა პიესის დასაწყისშივე, იასონთან დიალოგისას, ინტუიტიურად გრძნობს უცხო ქვეყანაში საკუთარი ეროვნული იდენტობის, სიყვარულისა და შვილების დაკარგვის შიშს: „*ოღონდ უნდა გამიმეორრო, რომ ჩემს სამყაროს კორინთოშიც არაფერი დაემუქრება*“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 12). საშიშროება გაურდაუვალი ხდება მას შემდეგ, რაც კორინთოს მეფე – კრეონი – მედეას შვილებს აშორებს და მათ ნახვას უკრძალავს, მედეას საფრთხის მოლოდინს ამბავს კორინთოს მეფის ჩანაფიქრი – იასონი საკუთარი ქალიშვილის – გლაუკეს – მომავალ ქმრად და კორინთოს ძლევადასილ მბრძანებლად აქციოს. კრეონის მიზანი საკუთარი ქვეყნის გაძლიერება და ქალიშვილისთვის უზრუნველი მომავლის შექმნაა. ამ პროცესში მისთვის მედეა დამაბრკოლებელი ფაქტორია – ერთ მხრივ, როგორც მისი ქალიშვილის მეტოქე ქალი, მეორე მხრივ, კი როგორც „უცხო“ – ძლევადასილი კოლხეთის მეფის აიეტის ასული, რომელსაც მუდმივად დასტანჯავს ნოსტალგია, დანაშაულის შეგრძნება და კოლხეთისთვის ძველი დიდების – მათ შორის ოქროს საწმისის – დაბრუნების გაცნობიერებული თუ გაუცნობიერებელი სურვილი/ცდუნება.

მედეას საფრთხის განეიტრალებას კრეონი მისი დამორჩილებითა („ჩემი ხალხის წესებს უნდა დაემორჩილო. შენ, მოღალატეს. მკვლელს და დევნილს, ხმა არ გაქვს ამოსაღები“ და ეროვნული იდენტობის წაშლის, ბერძნულ სამყაროსთან, წესრიგთან ასიმილაციის მოთხოვნით ცდილობს: „შენი შვილები ჩემთან დარჩებიან, ჩემს შვილებს კი დაუმეგობრდები. ტაძრებში ივლი და ბაღებს მოუვლი, სადამოობით სუფრას გაშლი. ჩემს ღმერთს ილოცებ, და ასე შეიძენ ახალ სახეს. სახეს, რომელსაც მე გიბოძებ, მედეა, და მალე დაივიწყებ შენს სახელს, სიმშვიდეს ჰპოვებ და მადლი-ერი და უთქმელი, ახალ ცხოვრებას დაიწყებ“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 24- 25).

იასონის დასარწმუნებლად კი კრეონი მიმართავს მანიპულაციის ხერხს, იოლკოსის დევნილ მბრძანებელს კორინთოში ძალაუფლების

მოპოვების შემდეგ თავისი სამეფო ტახტის დაბრუნების იმედს უღვივებს, ასევე შვილების უზრუნველ მომავალს ჰპირდება, სამაგიეროდ კი მედეას დავიწყებასა და ოქროს საწმისის, სიუხვის, ბედნიერებისა და ძლევამოსილების სიმბოლოს, საიდუმლოს გამჟღავნებას თხოვს:

„ოქროზე უფრო ფასეული ცოდნაა, იასონ, ცოდნა. იმის ცოდნა, რომ კორინთო ფლობს საწმისს, ღმერთების საიდუმლოს – უკვე გამარჯვებას მოგვითმის. ცოდნას მეტი ძალაუფლება მოაქვს, ვიდრე ოქროს. ადამიანებს ნიშანი სჭირდებათ. დაანახვე ძალაუფლების ნიშანი და დაგემორჩილებიან, პატარა ხოჭოებივით იფუსფუსებენ შენ ირგვლივ და ყველა სურვილს აგისრულებენ. შენ ეს ნიშანი გექნება, ადამიანებს კი ოცნება“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 44).

კრეონის ამ გამოწვევას, შინაგანი ბრძოლის მიუხედევად, იასონი იღებს და მედეასთან საკუთარი გადაწყვეტილების მოტივს შვილების კეთილდღეობისა და მათთვის ნათელი მომავალის შექმნის სურვილით ხსნის. მედეა აცნობიერებს, რომ კეთილშობილური საბაზი სინამდვილეში ძალაუფლებისა და დიდების მოპოვების მაცდური ვნების სუბლიმაცია და საყვარელი ქალის ღალატია. ეს არასასიამოვნო აღმოჩენა იასონთან მედეას გაუცხოების მიზეზი ხდება: „*იასონი უცხოა უცხოეთში*“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 20), „*აქ ჩვენ აღარ ვარსებობთ*“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 36).

კრეონის პოზიციაში შეგვიძლია წავიკითხოთ დომინანტური კულტურის დამოკიდებულება მარგინალური ცივილიზაციის მიმართ, რომელსაც საუკუნეების ისტორია აქვს და გულისხმობს ცენტრის მიერ პერიფერიის არშემჩნევას, იგნორირებას, მისი კულტურის უარყოფასა და აპრიორი უინტერესოდ, უსარგებლოდ გამოცხადებას. მედეას პრობლემის ანალიზისას კლასიკური ფილოლოგიის პროფესორი სოფიო შამანიდი სწორედ აღნიშნულ ასპექტზე ამახვილებს ყურადღებას: „[მედეა] არ არის ბერძენი, ის უცხო ტომისაა, უცხო კულტურის მატარებელია და შესაბამისად, მიუღებელი „დასავლური“ „ცივილიზებული“ სამყაროსთვის“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 4).

ამავე დროს კრეონის პოზიციაში შეგვიძლია ამოვიკითხოთ მითოსის – ერთგვარი ლოგოცენტრული კონსტრუქტის – მასკულინური პერსპექტივა, რომლის მიხედვითაც, ქალი უმთავრესად გაიაზრებოდა საკრალურ არსებად, მკაცრად განსაზღვრული როლითა და ქცევითი მოდელეებით. მედეას შემთხვევაში ის მიიჩნეოდა ზებუ-

ნებრივი ნიჭის მქონე გრძნეულად, ჯადოქრად. მისი ბრძოლის გზა კი აღიქმებოდა არა ღირსების დაცვის, სამართლიანობის აღდგენის მცდელობად, არამედ სასოწარკვეთილი ქალის შურისძიების ირაციონალურ და სტიქიურ აქტად, მაშინ როდესაც მამაკაცის მხრიდან ღალატზე მწვავე რეაქცია ანდა შურისძიება, მათ შორის სასტიკი მეთოდებით, ადეკვატურ და ლეგიტიმურ ქცევად ფორმდებოდა (ხატი-აშვილი 2020: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2825097377607302>). მედეას სახის საკრალიზება და დემონიზება კი ერთმნიშვნელოვნად განაპირობებდა მის მარგინალიზაციას. ნინო ხარატიშვილის პიესაში კრეონის პოზიციონირება მედეას მითოსის მასკულინალური პერსპექტივის გამომხატველად უნდა მივიჩნიოთ: „სად ისწავლა ქალმა ამდენი საშინელება?“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 62), „მისი ქვეყნის ქალები ისეთები არ არიან, როგორც ჩვენები. გაუწვრთნელები არიან და დაუოკებლები“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 43).

ტექსტში კრეონის პოზიციას მედეა თავდაპირველად მტკიცე თავდაცვით, მოგვიანებით კი თავდასხმით სტრატეგიას უპირისპირებს. მედეა არათუ არ ურიგდება კორინთოს მეფის დღისწესრიგს, პირიქით, ამბობს იწყებს და უპირისპირდება მას: „შენ ჩემი მეფე არ ხარ!“, „შენს თამაშს არ ავყვე-ბი“ (ხარატიშვილი, 2020, გვ. 23, 25).

ამდენად, მეფესთან დაპირისპირებისას ვლინდება ძლიერი ნებელობის ქალი, რომელიც ცდილობს გამოვიდეს მარგინალური პოზიციიდან. ერთი მხრივ, დაძლიოს გენდერული, მეორე მხრივ, კი პერიფერიული მარგინალიზაცია. სწორედ ამიტომ მედეა უარყოფს ქალისთვის მინიჭებულ მკაცრად განსაზღვრულ სოციო-კულტურულ როლს და თავისუფლდება მასკულინური შეზღუდვებისგან – ამ იდეის გამოხატულებად უნდა მივიჩნიოთ ქმართან მისი გაუცხოება და კრეონთან თანაბარი მეტოქეობა. გარდა ამისა, განსხვავებულია ხარატიშვილის მედეას შურისძიების ტრაექტორია, მთავარი სამიზნე, არა იასონი ან გლაუკეა, არამედ კრეონი – როგორც მისი ტრაგიკული ბედის მთავარი შემოქმედი. მედეას სასჯელი უფრო სამართლიანობის აღდგენის სრულიად გააზრებულ, რაციონალურ მცდელობად აღიქმება, ვიდრე ღალატზე ინსტინქტურ რეაქციად, აფექტურ მდგომარეობაში მიღებულ გადაწყვეტილებად. მედეა საკუთარი ღირსების დაცვას კრეონის გეგმების განადგურებით ცდილობს და ახერხებს კიდევ მიზნის მიღწევას, მეფის ოცნება კორინთოს დიდებული მომავლის შესახებ ოქროს საწმისთან ერთად იფერფლება.

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# How Can Literature Change the Geography? European Globality and Georgian Locality in the 19th and 20th Centuries

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## The Black Sea in the Representation of the Coastal Population of Georgia

## La mer Noire dans la représentation de la population riveraine de la Géorgie

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### **Abstract:**

According to François Bellec, the sea, vector of discoveries, exchanges, is also a powerful engine of creation and inspiration at the literary and artistic level. The objective of this article is to continue the study of the symbolism of the Black Sea in Georgian poetry, the subject to which we have already devoted two investigations, the results of which have fueled the publication of two articles. In the first, we carried out a comparative analysis of the symbolism of water [of the sea, in this case] in Georgian and French poetry, in the second, we studied the representation of the sea, in general, of the Black Sea, in particular, in the folk poems collected in the regions of Eastern Georgia, the population of which has no maritime experience. Therefore, in the poems analyzed, the sea is used to create different symbolic images expressed in metaphors and comparisons, more particularly, in hyperboles, without addressing the pragmatic side of the sea. Unlike the representation of the sea in the popular poems of Eastern Georgia, in the poems collected in the littoral regions of Western Georgia, the vision of the sea is rather commercial. As a result, the popular singers of these regions, including the Lazes, whose poems are the subject of our analysis, deal more particularly with themes of fishing and navigation, while offering the ambi-

valent symbolism of the sea., in these poems, we find the pragmatic functions attributed to the sea – to feed, to stock up, to trade.

**Keywords:** the Sea, Symbolism, the Lazes, Fishing, Navigation, Pragmatic Functions

## Introduction

Les fouilles archéologiques attestent la présence, au bord de la mer Noire, en Géorgie occidentale, depuis les III<sup>e</sup>-II<sup>e</sup> siècles avant Jésus-Christ, de la population que Strabon évoque du nom d'Ibère dont les Mingrèles, les Gouroulis, les Lazes, ainsi que les Svanes.

D'autres sources historiques, telles les *Chroniques de Kartli* ou la *Conversion de Kartli*, ainsi que toute autre source ancienne géorgienne, sont unanimes à affirmer que ces populations, qui peuplaient un vaste territoire depuis les rives de la mer Noire jusqu'aux frontières de l'Albanie, étaient nommés Ibères malgré leur appartenance à des tribus différentes, qu'ils soient Kakhétiens, Mingrèles, Klarges, Svanes ou Lazes, ayant, à part leurs parlers dialectaux, une langue commune, le géorgien, dont les preuves ont été découvertes par Ivané Javakhishvili, la langue, officialisée par le roi Parnavaz 1<sup>er</sup> au III<sup>e</sup> s. av. J.-Ch. comme langue koinè. En parlant de la poésie populaire créée dans différentes régions de la Géorgie, les scientifiques géorgiens affirment que la poésie populaire est une preuve incontestable du fait qu'historiquement, il fut créée une langue poétique populaire qui, tout en puisant librement des détails dans le langage dialectal local, quand la nécessité s'en impose, crée toute l'architecture de ce qu'elle a à dire, dans la langue commune-koinè.

Pour rédiger cet article, je me suis basée sur les recherches effectuées par les auteurs géorgiens, et les poèmes qu'ils ont enregistrés lors de leurs multiples missions essentiellement à Sarp, ainsi que dans les villages de la région de Trébizonde, les lieux d'habitation des Lazes, et qui constituent le corpus de notre analyse, tels: Zurab Tandilava, Iasha Tandilava, Taniel Putkaradzé, Tsiala Narakidzé, Avtandil Nikoleishvili, Mikheil Labadzé. Les références théoriques sont alimentées par *Les Chroniques de Kartli*, la



*Conversion de Kartli*; ainsi que par le livre de Neal Ascherson *Chroniques de la mer Noire. Berceau de la civilisation et de la barbarie*. De Périclès à Poutine, dont la traduction française a été publiée en 2016.

Neal Ascherson ne partage pas l'affirmation des chercheurs géorgiens concernant l'utilisation sur tout le territoire du pays de la langue commune-koinè. En posant la question, dans son livre, au sujet de l'identité des Lazes – qui sont les Lazes ? – il répond ainsi: «Cette interrogation entraîne automatiquement un cafouillis de réponses aux accents nationalistes» (199). Il affirme plus loin, parlant des particularités des Lazes et des Mingrèles, que

[ces] particularités ne sont pas du tout appréciées par les politiciens géorgiens et par les intellectuels qui persistent à croire, à tort, que le géorgien est leur langue d'origine et que le mingrélien, le laze et le svanétien ne sont que des dialectes. Tout argument contraire et toute tentative pour fournir à ces langues une grammaire et une littérature écrites sont perçues comme une volonté de subversion culturelle, créée par les Russes pour saper et diviser l'indépendance et la culture de la Géorgie (200).

Sans entrer en discussion avec le chercheur anglais, le domaine n'étant pas le mien, l'analyse de certains poèmes populaires lazès va nous montrer cette parenté linguistique indéniable, entre, pour le moment, le laze et le géorgien. Il affirme lui-même que «le laze est une langue pré-indo-européenne [sans appuyer sa réflexion par les sources qui l'attesteraient – M.D.], survivance d'une langue très ancienne et pratiquement oubliée». Il partage l'avis de la plupart des chercheurs en affirmant que «le laze fait partie de la famille des langues kartvéliennes du Caucase comme le géorgien (de loin le plus parlé), le mingrélien et le svanétien», tout en soulignant que «c'est le mingrélien qui est le plus proche du laze» (199).

Puis il raconte comment un érudit allemand du nom de Feurstein a décidé, dans les années soixante du 20<sup>e</sup> siècle, de sauver cette communauté des Lazès, dont le niveau de développement était, comme il l'affirme, presque au stade fœtal, en lui créant un alphabet transcrit en lettres latines turques. «Avec un alphabet laze, affirme-t-il, un peuple – aussi petit soit-il – s'engage dans une expédition». Et il lui prédit un bel avenir sans tout à fait être très optimiste, puisqu'il affirme que «c'est une expédition au long cours, il se peut qu'elle soit périlleuse» (204). Mais avant de faire cette conclusion, il

prescrit un avenir lumineux que la création de cet alphabet peut apporter au peuple laze:

L'attendent, des romans et de la poésie, des journaux et des programmes de concert, des lettres d'amour et des missives familiales, des pamphlets et des affiches, des rapports d'assemblées, des traductions des pièces de Shakespeare et des transcriptions de séries télévisées, des horaires de bateaux, des annonces des morts et des naissances. Suivront, peut-être un jour, des lois. Et, peut-être aussi, des feuilles sur lesquelles un condamné aura inscrit ses dernières paroles». (204)

Qu'est-ce que les sources géorgiennes nous disent à propos des Lazes, de leur histoire et de leur culture et comment les poètes contemporains lazes déterminent-ils leur identité ?

Dans le texte de Vakhushiti *Description du royaume de Géorgie*, nous lisons: au sud de Baïburdi et Portchkhi, de l'autre côté de la montagne de Tchaneti, il y a Tchaneti que l'on appelle aussi le pays des Lazes, territoire qui s'étend sur le littoral de la mer Noire depuis Gonio jusqu'à Trébizonde. De deux tribus apparentées de l'ancienne Colchide, ce sont les Tchans-Lazes qui peuplaient toute la vallée de Tchorokhi jusqu'à Trébizonde.

Selon l'affirmation d'un très grand nombre de chercheurs étudiant le folklore laze, même si la plupart des Lazes vivent en dehors des frontières de l'État géorgien, «leur auto-conscience nationale est géorgienne-commune». Avec leur mentalité nationale, leur folklore et d'autres composants de la culture matérielle ou spirituelle, «ils ressemblent presque entièrement aux autres groupes ethniques géorgiens qui habitent sur le territoire de la Turquie – aux habitants de Borchkhalo (Livanel), de Matchakhela, d'Imerkhevi (les Chachebs), ainsi qu'aux habitants de Tao» (Labadzé, 2005, p. 221).

Dans les poèmes et les textes folkloriques recueillis par I. Kipchidzé, G. Dumezil, G. Kartozia, I. Assatiani, T. Kalandia, Z. Tandilava, T. Shioshvili, Ts. Narakidzé et bien d'autres, le lecteur peut trouver du matériel attestant cette affirmation, et dont les auteurs-narrateurs/conteurs expriment avec beaucoup d'émotion plusieurs éléments importants déterminant leur identité nationale.

La langue laze ne possède pas sa propre écriture, de ce fait, toute œuvre qui a été créée à l'oral, tout au long des siècles, est la propriété du folklore.

Il faut signaler que la toute première transcription de la poésie laze date du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle effectuée par le voyageur turc Evliya Çelebi.

Le lexique et les termes liés à la mer, abondent dans le folklore laze, tels la mer, le bateau, la navigation, le navire, les rames, la pêche, les noms des poissons, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
მიწვეს-ოტი მზოლას დუმანი აულუნ, / გოვინწკედი, ეშო, კარავი გაულუნ. /მა ფთქვი-ოტი ბეჟი გაული ქომულენ, / მეგშენტი დო ვარ მოხთი გაული ჩქიმი	მითხრეს, რომ ზღვიდან ბოლი ამოდის, /გავიხედე და მოცურავს გემი. / ვიფიქრე, იქნებ მომგვაროს სატრფო, / გელოდე, მაგრამ არ მოხველ ვარდო! <sup>2</sup>	On m'a dit que l'on voit la fumée monter de la mer, / J'ai bien regardé et j'ai vu le bateau qui naviguait. / J'ai pensé, peut-être qu'il m'amène ma bien-aimée, / Je t'ai attendue, ma rose, mais tu n'es pas venue!

Dans les poèmes populaires créés sur la pêche, le poisson est considéré comme une des sources vitales pour l'homme. C'est pourquoi parmi les poèmes des Lazes, on observe le souci de la population au moment où les poissons devenaient rares. Tandis que le Laze n'est heureux que lorsque les poissons sont à profusion.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
ამსერი თუთა ვა რენ, თანი, მურუცხი, თანი; ჩხომი დიდო მაჭოფუნა ჭანდა მილუნ ჭუმანი.	მთვარე არ მეგულეზა, ვარსკვლავო, შენ ანათე; თევზი თუ დავიჭირე, მექნება წვეულება. <sup>3</sup>	Je ne vois pas de lune, Étoile, à toi d'éclairer, Si je pêche le poisson, J'organiserai un festin.

<sup>1</sup> Les poèmes lazes sont transcrits en lettres géorgiennes. Leurs versions géorgiennes sont faites par les chercheurs qui les ont recueillis. Nous avons effectué la traduction des mêmes poèmes en français à partir des versions géorgiennes.

<sup>2</sup> In Tsiala Narakidze, «Le folklore laze (d'après le matériel de Sarp)», p. 287-288.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 291.

Pour le Laze, la mer est un espace étendu et il lie son destin à la mer. Le Laze né sur la mer est intrépide.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
დოვიბადი მზოლამ ჟინ ექ ბლურა რე, ქომიჩქინ; შქურინა ჩქარ ვარ მილუნ, გური კაპეტი მილუნ.	ზღვაზე დავბადებულვარ, ვიცი აქვე მოვკვდები; მე გული მაგარი მაქვს, სულაც არ შევშინდები. <sup>1</sup>	Je suis né sur la mer, Je sais que je mourrai ici- même; J'ai un cœur courageux, Je n'aurai pas du tout peur.

Les poèmes liés à la navigation, tout comme ceux portant sur la pêche, tiennent une place importante dans l'oralité.

Or, la navigation est une activité compliquée. C'est pourquoi tout pêcheur-navigateur doit connaître parfaitement non seulement les endroits où pêcher le poisson à profusion, mais il doit savoir déterminer à quel point le climat/la météo peut être favorable à la pêche pour ne pas devenir victime de l'intempérie à la mer.

Comme nous venons de le dire, le domaine traditionnel de l'économie des Lazes était la pêche et l'artisanat. Ils étaient souvent obligés de quitter le pays à la recherche du travail à l'étranger, ce que les Lazes appelaient «kurbets», ce qui veut dire aller à la recherche des vivres. C'était surtout les jeunes qui partaient pour accumuler de l'argent, ils ont hâte de revenir et de se marier. Ils ont beaucoup de mal à s'habituer à vivre loin de leurs familles et de leur pays. C'est avec beaucoup d'amertume que le pêcheur s'exprime dans le poème suivant:

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 292.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
ბითუმ კურბეთის ვორე ედო ბჭოფუფ კიწალი... დარი ბძირამინონი?! გოვონწკავარე ალი.	მუდამ საშოვარზე ვარ და ვიჭერ კეფალს, მელირსება სატრფოს ნახვა?! უნდა ვაკითხვინო მკითხავს. <sup>1</sup>	Je suis toujours en quête de vivres Et je pêche des mulets, Aurais-je un jour la chance De revoir ma bien-aimée ? Il faut que je le demande À la diseuse de bonne aventure.

Parmi la poésie populaire laze, nous rencontrons les poèmes rédigés en შაირი (chaïri) – couplet improvisé. C’est ainsi, par exemple, que la jeune femme en attente du retour de son amoureux, répond dans la discussion poétique:

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
ჩხომი ოჭოფუფუშენი არი დილილუ ფაში, კოპჭა დო ბოლა-კისტი მომიმერს არ-ჟურ დლაში.	სათევზაოდ წავიდა ჩემი მიჯნური ფოთში, ლილსა და ძვირფას მძივებს მომიტანს ერთ-ორ დღეში. <sup>2</sup>	Mon amoureux est allé À la pêche à Pothi, Il m’apportera dans un ou deux jours, Les boutons et les colliers précieux.

Ce type de კავიობა (kaphioba) – d’improvisation – démontre bien le côté économique, les activités principales des habitants lazes de Sarp, plus particulièrement, leur humour. À titre d’exemple, nous citons le შაირი (chaïri) – le couplet improvisé – où les riverains Lazes sont considérés comme mangeurs de dauphins.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
მზოლავიჯიმ ლაზეფე დეფინაში მჭკომუფე.	ზღვისპირეთის ლაზები – დეღვინის მჭამელები.	Les Lazes riverains – Mangeurs de dauphins.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 293.

Les habitants lazes des villages éloignés de la mer, se moquent ainsi des Lazes de Sarp:

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
სარფული ტამბალადი მთელი დელფინაშ აღი.	სარფელი გასუქებული დელფინის ზეთისაგან.	Le Laze de Sarp Engraisé de l'huile de dauphin.

L'habitant de Sarp lui répond.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
მობვეწაფნა ვარ მეგჩაფ არ კანდელიში აღი...	შემეხვეწო არ მოგცემ ერთი კანდელისათვის... <sup>1</sup>	Tu as beau m'implorer, je ne t'en donnerai pas pour le candélabre...

Les couplets improvisés lazes expriment parfaitement également les doux sentiments des amoureux. Dans l'un des poèmes enregistrés à Sarp, le jeune homme qui va à la pêche rêve de trouver à son retour sa bien-aimée venue le chercher avec un bouquet de fleurs:

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
ანდლა მზოლაშა მეულუთ, სუდკიში მოსაფეთენ; სი დომიწვი მუნდეს მულუ დოქაჩეი ფუქიითენ.	ბადით ზღვისკენ ვეშურებით კამბულების დასაჭერად; ყვავილებით ხელმორთული შენ როდისღა მობრძანდები? <sup>2</sup>	Nous nous dirigeons vers la mer avec le filet Pour pêcher des soles de rocher; Et toi, quand est-ce que tu viendras Les mains pleines de fleurs ?

La mer apparaît également dans les poèmes lyriques patriotiques:

<sup>1</sup> Il est bien connu qu'anciennement, on utilisait l'huile de dauphin dans les lampes à la place du pétrole.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
ჟინ-სქანი ცა მურუცხითენ ჭკადერი, / თუთას თეთენ მზოლა რენ ოქროშვერი, / სქანი მსქვანა იძირენ დღა დო სერი, / ღორმოთიმ დღას სი გძირი ხელეზერი!	ვარსკვლავებით მოჭედილი შენი ცა, / მთვარის შუქით ზღვაც არის ოქროსვერი, / დღე-ღამე ჩანს ეგ სილამაზე შენი, / ჩემო სოფელო უფლის წყალობით / გნახო ყოველთვის გახარებული!	Ton ciel est constellé d'étoiles, Les rayons de lune colorent la mer en or, / Ta beauté respandit jour et nuit, / Que la Grâce à Dieu, mon village, / Te rende toujours épanoui!

Le conte «Igbali» (chance, veine), enregistré par Tsiala Narakidzé dans le village de Sarp en 1982, présente «les écrivains de destin» (ბედის-მწერლებს), connus sous le nom d'«écrivains scripteurs („წერამწერლებს“) dans le folklore géorgien commun. Selon les convictions et représentations des Lazes, ils logent dans une maison au fond de la mer et forgent le destin de nouveau-nés par un coup de marteau.

Selon la supposition tout à fait justifiée des chercheurs du folklore laze, comme le remarque Zurab Tandilava, le haut niveau de l'oralité laze permet d'affirmer que dans le passé, en parallèle avec l'œuvre folklorique, devait être créée la littérature laze également et pas mal d'écrivains lazes devaient être connus. À l'appui de cette réflexion, Zurab Tandilava rapporte les paroles du linguiste Niko Marr qui, à son tour, fait référence à la poésie de Rachid Hill Pehlivanoglu qu'il considère comme le meilleur poète laze, et à celle de trois autres poètes évoqués par Joseph Kipchidzé dans les matériaux scientifiques recueillis lors de sa mission en Lazethi en 2017. Ahmet Mémed Koroglu (région de Kopi, village Kuledibi), Ali Kurtoglu (région d'Arqam, village Pilarget) et une poétesse Henipé Jezash (région d'Athin, village Carmarthen) (cité in Nikoleishvili, 2019).

Les spécialistes étudiant le folklore laze sont unanimes à affirmer que malgré le fait que la plupart des Lazes vivent actuellement en dehors de l'État géorgien, leur auto-conscience a toujours été géorgienne commune. Pour appuyer cette réflexion, Avtandil Nikoleishvili rapporte un ouvrage publié en 2012 «Les questions de l'identité linguistique et ethnique des Géorgiens natifs de Lazethi (Lazes)» par T. Putkaradzé, I. Tandilava et M. Labadzé. Les auteurs y affirment qu'en 1908-1915, en Lazethi fonctionnaient les groupements sous le nom de «comités» à l'orientation géorgienne, qui

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294.

luttaient avec les armes à la main pour l'unité et l'indépendance de la Géorgie... Il est à signaler plus particulièrement le fait que lors de la Première Guerre mondiale, sous la direction de la communauté géorgienne à l'étranger fut créée «La Légion du Roi Thamar» (1915-1917). Les Lazes constituaient 90% des membres de cette Légion. Ils ont poursuivi leur lutte pour rallier le Lazethi à la République de Géorgie, mais à cause d'un complot anti-géorgien entre la Turquie et la Russie, leur lutte acharnée n'a pas eu le résultat voulu (Putkaradze, et all. 2012, p. 211).

Comme nous venons de le dire, le Lazethi historique se trouve essentiellement en Turquie. De nos jours, c'est seulement la moitié du village de Sarp qui «appartient» à la Géorgie. Néanmoins, l'amour du peuple Laze pour sa patrie ne s'est pas éteint, ne s'est pas estompé.

Avec leur pays historique, c'est leur village natal divisé en deux par un coup du sort qui est le destinataire des sentiments patriotiques exprimés dans leurs poèmes.

Nous rapportons le poème de caractère patriotique-philosophique d'un habitant de Sarp, Iasha Bakradzé, enregistré par Lilé Tandilava en 2014 „შეიგნი ია ნდღალეფეს“ („გავიგე იმ დღეებში“ – «J'ai appris ces jours-là») dans lequel le poète exprime une profonde douleur du fait que dans le passé, il se soit produit une séparation entre les proches, certains d'entre eux n'ayant pu être témoins de l'ouverture des frontières de Sarp ce qui était un événement émouvant remarquable pour les habitants qui se rapprochaient de nouveau après une longue séparation.

Poèmes en laze	Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
<p>შეიგნიოთ ია  ნდღალეფეს,  მუჭო სქიდუტეს  ლაზეფე,  ბაზიქ ოხოი კიდუ დო  ბაზიქთი ჭოფუ  ჩხომეფე;  არ მეგნაფუთენ  სქიდუტეს,  ბირდემ ხაჩქუფტეს  ყონაფე,  იბირტეს მელე-მოლე  დო  აშოთენ ოჩქვეს  დღალეფე</p>	<p>გავიგეთ იმ დღეებში,  როგორ ცხოვრობდნენ  ლაზები,  ზოგმა ააგო სახლები  და  ზოგმაც დაიჭირა  თევზები.  ერთი შეგნებით  ცხოვრობდნენ,  ერთად თოხნიდნენ  ყანებს,  იმღერდნენ აქეთ-იქით  და  ასე გალიეს დღეები.</p>	<p>Nous venons d'apprendre  Comment les Lazes  vivaient.  Certains d'entre eux ont  construit des maisons, /  D'autres ont péché les  poissons.  Ils vivaient ensemble en  bonne entente, / Ils  labouraient ensemble la  terre  Et passaient le temps  ensemble  Tout en chantant.</p>



Le poème populaire enregistré par Ioseb Kipchidze en 1917 lors de sa mission scientifique en Lazéthi représente encore une preuve que les Lazes se considèrent inséparables des Géorgiens et des Mingrèles comme des frères:

Traduction en géorgien	Traduction en français
<p>საქართველოში ბევრია ჩვენი ამხანაგები, საქართველოში არიან ჩვენი ჭკვიანი ძმები, ძველ ქართველთა მოდგმა ვართ, თუ იცი, ჩვენო ძმაო? / დავიწყებული ვართ ჩვენ, ჩვენო ძველო ძმაო! / ლაზი, ქართველი, მეგრელი – ჩვენი ძმები არიან ყველანი, / თურქმა დაგვწვა, დაგვდაგა, შენ არ იცი ეს ამბავი?</p>	<p>En Géorgie, nous avons beaucoup de camarades, En Géorgie, nous avons nos frères intelligents, Nous sommes les descendants d’anciens Géorgiens, le sais-tu, notre frère ? Nous sommes oubliés, notre frère ancien ! Les Lazes, les Géorgiens, les Mingrèles – nous sommes tous des frères, / Ce sont les Turcs qui nous ont brûlés, nous ont tués, Tu ne connais pas cette histoire ?</p>

Toute représentation de Lazethi par un poète né en Turquie, puis installé en Géorgie, Hasan Helimişi, qui rédigeait des poèmes en laze, en turc et en géorgien, est liée à cette histoire tragique et est nourrie d’un désir ardent de restitution d’une unité nationale entre les frères artificiellement séparés.

C'est ainsi que s'exprime cette douleur nationale implacable dans le poème dédié au ruisseau qui divise le village de Sarp tout en séparant les frères historiques:

En géorgien	Traduction en français
<p>საზღვრის ღელეო, საზღვარი არ ხარ, შენ ორ ძმას შორის ცრემლი ხარ ცხარე, შენც ხომ ჩემსავით გულდამწვარი ხარ, ასე უგულოდ ზღვას ჩამდინარე. ძმათა გაყოფა ვინ დაგასწავლა? მე გული კვლავაც დამრჩა მცხუნვარი. ვერ გააცია ციმბირის ყინვამ,</p>	<p>Le ruisseau servant de frontière, tu n’es pas une frontière, Tu es une chaude larme entre deux frères, Tu es bien aussi affligé que moi, Aussi implacablement coulant dans la mer. Qui t’as appris à séparer des frères ? Mon cœur reste toujours aussi brûlant. Le gel de Sibérie ne l’a pas refroidi, Il est toujours vivant, jamais éteint !... Il reste toujours aussi fidèle,</p>

<p>კვლავ ცოცხალია, გაუხუნარი!..  არ დამიკარგავს ერთგული გული,  უცხოობამ ვერ გადამაშენა,  ტანჯულ სხეულში კვლავ მიდგას  სული,  რათა ლაზურად გიმღერო შენა.</p>	<p>L'étrangeté ne m'a pas rendu étranger,  L'âme vit toujours dans mon corps  souffrant,  Pour te chanter en laze.</p>
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La mer Noire est au centre d'un autre poème du même poète. C'est à travers elle, qu'il voit un avenir prometteur:

En géorgien	Traduction en français
<p>ნიჩბებს ვიქნევდი პატარა ნავზე –  ჭირნიღზე, სხვას რომ არ გავს... /მეც  დავცქეროდი იმავე სარკეს, ნელა  ვცურავდი ასე /და ჰორიზონტზე  სინათლის სხივებს ვეძებდი  ბოლმით სავსე. / მართლაც შევნიშნე  სინათლე შორი – წითელი ქვეყნის  მცველი. / ცეცხლის ალივით  ბრწყინავდა იგი – ცეცხლის  ალივით მწველი. მე შევყურებდი  წითელ ქვეყანას, ჰქონდა ნათება  მზისა, / მეც შევერიე მის წითელ  სხივებს, გავხდი ნაწილი მისა.</p>	<p>Il faisait nuit noire d'été et la mer Noire  dormait paisiblement, / Je remuais les  rames sur le petit navire – sur le  Tchirnighi, à aucun autre pareil, /  Je contemplais le même miroir, et je  naviguais doucement ainsi / Et, le cœur  plein d'amertume, je cherchais sur  l'horizon les rayons de la lumière. /  J'ai en effet remarqué la lumière  lointaine – gardienne du pays rouge. /  Elle brillait telle une flamme de feu –  brûlante comme une flamme de feu. / Je  regardais le pays rouge, il avait la clarté  de soleil, / Je me suis aussi mêlé à ses  rayons rouges, j'en suis devenu une  partie.</p>

Quelle est la situation actuelle concernant la maîtrise du géorgien par la population laze et géorgienne, sur le territoire de la Turquie ?

Dans le bassin de Tchorokhi, le géorgien est parlé dans la région centrale d'Artvin, ainsi que dans les régions de Borchkha et Chavchéthi, mais on doit constater que la langue maternelle a nettement délaissé les positions. Ce n'est que dans 35 villages d'Imerkhévi, dans une quarantaine de villages de Livana et de Murghuli, dans six villages de Matchakhela et dans trois villages de Tao (région d'Yusufeli) que la population maîtrise le géorgien. Ainsi, on parle le géorgien dans à peu près quatre-vingt-dix villages du bassin de Tchorokhi. On parle le laze dans les villages de Khopi et d'Arkhami.

Pour ce qui est du niveau de la maîtrise du géorgien et du laze, il est à signaler que. a) le lexique est significativement appauvri; b) la part des turquismes est considérablement augmentée; c) la jeune génération ne maîtrise pratiquement pas la langue maternelle, langue de leurs ancêtres.

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# When Literary Space Parts Ways with Physical Geography: Substitutions by Aksyonov and Morchiladze for Missing Islands of the Black Sea

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## **Abstract:**

Whereas numerous islands served as stepping stones in connecting the lands surrounding the Mediterranean, their conspicuous absence in the Black Sea became a formidable obstacle in an already notoriously inhospitable sea. The Black Sea has only very few islands, and fewer of them are inhabited by only a small number of people. Even so, this makes all the more relevant for us the important role the ‘missing’ islands can play albeit in a literary and not geographical space. This paper explores two path-breaking novels that deliberately contest the historical legacies of Black Sea geography by inventing and introducing islands that incite the reader’s imagination for a critical reflection on the other courses history could have taken, in other words, what the historians and social scientists call ‘historical alternatives’ or ‘alternative history’. This paper focuses on *The Island of Crimea* by Vassily Aksyonov (1981, 1983) and *Santa Esperanza* by Aka Morchiladze (2004, 2006). The former engages the reader on a counterfactual exercise with Crimea becoming an island off the coast of Soviet Russia, inspired by Communist China troubled by a maverick Taiwan at arm’s length. The latter has a more nuanced formulation where a British dominion of three islands comes into being after the Crimean War and survives as safe haven for multicultural coexistence despite the fragilities imposed upon it across the sea. Fictive islands can thus occasionally play a greater role than real islands in remaking history.

**Keywords:** Aka Morchiladze, Black Sea, Crimea, Santa Esperanza, Vassily Aksyonov

## Introduction

Among the most important factors that differentiate the fortunes of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean comes the role the islands played in history as nodes of connectivity between the networks of islands. Within the Mediterranean context, they connected islands with the landmasses, as well as lands surrounding it with one another. There are two sets of Mediterranean islands, one consisting of the larger and better connected ones such as Sardinia, Sicily, Malta, Crete, Rhodes and Cyprus, and the other, of archipelagos, of which the Aegean is the paradigmatic example. By contrast, their conspicuous absence in the Black Sea became a formidable obstacle in an already notoriously inhospitable sea. Put differently, the Black Sea is a Mediterranean minus the islands that made almost all the difference. The Black Sea has only very few and singular islands, like the Snake (Zmiinyi) Island, and the fewer of them are inhabited by only a very small number of people. In any case, the few islands of the Black Sea disappear from sight in maps because of the scale effect, as they are quite small by geographical conventions. There remains thus no puzzle to intrigue our minds, and physical geography can count them out. Be that as it may, small islands can be notoriously maverick, and force themselves on sight from time to time, as has been the case with the Serpent Island off the Danube delta during the current Russia-Ukraine war. When islands become a bone of contention for Great Powers, their visibility increases unexpectedly.

In this paper, I am concerned with the importance a ‘missing’ island can acquire by virtue of its potential consequences in a geography that is larger than the island itself. This paper explores two path-breaking novels that deliberately contest the historical geographies of the Black Sea by inventing islands. This is precisely what Vassily Aksyonov and Aka Morchiladze do in their high-speed fiction by creatively blending mystery, adventure, action, political intrigue and satire. They thereby refashion the Black Sea after the contrasting image of the Mediterranean. They raise the following question in their minds: What if the islands actually existed in the Black Sea? They fiddle with space and alter geography to explore how this would impact on the time axis by modifying History with a capital ‘H’. To this effect, they invent and introduce islands that incite the reader’s imagination for a critical reflection on the other courses history might have taken, or what the historians and social scientists describe as ‘Historical Alterna-

tives'. They write Counterfactual History from within the domain of fiction literature.

This paper focuses on *The Island of Crimea* by Aksyonov (1981, 1983) and *Santa Esperanza* by Morchiladze (2004, 2006) that introduce imaginary islands to the Black Sea. The former engages the reader on a counterfactual exercise with Crimea becoming an island off the coast of Soviet Russia, inspired by Communist China troubled by a maverick Taiwan at an arm's length. The latter has a more nuanced formulation where a British dominion over three islands comes into being after the Crimean War and survives as safe haven for multicultural coexistence as long as it could, in the face of fragilities imposed across the sea. In these two fictions, islands are assigned a pivotal role to play in a greater geography.

### **A Biographical Note with an Emphasis on the Stylistic Attributes of the Two Writers**

It should be noted that the two writers are a generation apart. It is not so much the length of time that separates them as the historic importance of events that occurred such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union with inevitable impacts upon their fiction. Even so, they have much more in common in literary style than Aksyonov has, for example, with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008), more contemporaneous yet stylistically very different.

Vassily Aksyonov (1932-2009) was born in Kazan and died in Moscow. His father was a Party official, mother (Eugenia Ginzburg) a historian-turned famous memoir writer, both with extensive prison experience. He was educated to become a doctor in 1956. He published his novels as of 1960. He was recognized "as the leading Soviet writer of his generation" and "the representative of a new, Western-oriented, questioning generation of Soviet youth." He was a convinced anti-totalitarian, and was resented for his "open pro-Americanism". He was forced to migrate in 1980 to USA. His citizenship was restored in 1990. He lived in Biarritz, France after 2004, as well as in Moscow where he died in 2009.

Aka Morchiladze (1966-present) is a Georgian writer of novels and short stories, and a literary historian. He studied History and graduated in 1988. He is a prolific writer and possibly has become the better known of the new generation of prose writers coming out in the 2000s. His work has

played a pivotal role in reorienting Georgian literature towards postmodernism as a worldwide fashionable trend. He authored a series of quasi-fantastic novels (*Flight over Madatov Island*, 1998; *Disappearance on Madatov Island*, 2001; *A Whale on Madatov Island*, 2004) about an imaginary archipelago populated by Georgians.

Aksyonov was stylistically an innovative *avant-garde* writer, and a life-long admirer of jazz. He was attentive to popular (counter) culture, slang and jargon of the youthful rebels and social misfits, but also self-consciously intertextual in the global spirit of the 60s and the Thaw. His work is characterized by fast-moving narration mixed with monologues and dialogues, elliptic jumps and ‘crosscuttings’, flashbacks and flashforwards, and periodic interferences of the author as narrator with omniscience and commentary. His fiction bears the mark of live reporting via TV channels and/or the feel of a ‘reality show’, a ‘cinema happening’, but with a blend of fantasy, satire, and parody. His *The Island of Crimea* is a matter-of-factly narrated fast action and adventure novel, interspersed with moments of powerful lyrical expression. Quite original for the time when it was conceived, in the 1970s, during the Stagnation after Leonid Brezhnev took power (1964) completed before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979), and first published abroad (1981) after the author was deprived of his Soviet citizenship and went to exile, it retains its freshness and contemporaneity in style.

Morchiladze self-reflexively perceives his work as anti-novel much in the spirit of postmodernism. He adopts a flexibly formulaic fiction with a mix-and-match narrative construction that defies summarization, and permits ambiguities, contradictions, and open-endedness, thanks to his palimpsest-like writing. He deliberately mimics prose types and seeks to maintain stylistic diversity among his chapters that can be read in various orders. Action and adventure genres bridge him with Aksyonov whereas the more present-day internet-writing practices also penetrate into his blend of narration. As a consequence, he does not only belongs to the age of cinema as did Aksyonov, but also to the internet world and cyberspace. Whereas Aksyonov did not expect much from his reader but respectful compliance in the face of a patience demanding reading exercise, Morchiladze invites his reader to ‘game playing’ by active participation in expanding the work, and thereby promotes the postmodern character of his fiction not unlike meccano or lego sets.



## Modifying Geography as a Prerequisite for the Alternative History: The Case of Crimea

In his Preface dated Washington DC, 1983, Aksyonov makes his point of departure explicit:

Every *peninsula* fancies itself an *island*. Conversely, there is no island that does not envy a peninsula. Every Russian schoolboy knows that Crimea is connected to mainland Russia by an *isthmus*, but not even every adult knows *how flimsy an isthmus* is. When a Russian rides along it for the first time and sees it for its narrow, swampy self, he can't quite suppress a seditious "*what if?*"

*What if Crimea really were an island? What if, as a result, the White Army had been able to defend Crimea from the Reds in 1920? What if Crimea had developed as a Russian, yet Western, democracy alongside the totalitarian mainland?* (Aksyonov, 1983, p. ix).

As if to justify his wicked and playful approach to geography, he deems it appropriate to countervail it with that of the Soviet authorities which he describes as "firm and realistic view of geography" and then mischievously ends the Preface: "They know that the world rests on three whales and two elephants" (Aksyonov, 1983, p. ix). The ultimate effect he seeks is to reinforce the sense that this is as solid as geography can get, and we are free to pursue this mental exercise.

Aksyonov then identifies a trigger mechanism for an Alternative History that is original and at the same time extremely un-Marxist. The discovery by a character, Marlen Mikhailovich Kuzenkov, of the truth, or rather, as he puts it "one of the best-kept secrets in Soviet history" as to the question "How did the Island find its way into what was nearly the middle of the Black Sea?" On 20 January, 1920 at Chongar Straits, "a foolish acne-prone young Englishman stood up against the avalanche of the Revolution and single-handedly defeated the victorious proletarian army" (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 307). We are faced here with an unintended one-man show, when "the twenty-two-year-old Lieutenant Richard Bailey Land, turret captain on the battleship" ordered his gunners aim at "the advancing columns; then he had them open fire on the columns with the gigantic sixteen-inch shells. How accurate they were was immaterial; the shells broke the ice, the vanguard

drowned in the icy water, the rear guard broke ranks, and panic took over” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 308). It is thus one man who made all the difference. Nor did he have high motives. Far from it, if he had any motive, it was mere curiosity:

I had no intention whatsoever to defend Crimea or the Russian Empire or anyone’s constitution or democracy or what have you, I swear. I was simply curious about the ice, the attack, the guns, the mutiny – I thought it would be a jolly good show to mix them altogether. I suppose I was most interested to see how the guns worked (Aksyonov, 1983, pp. 309-310).

### **The Representation of Crimea as a ‘Fishy’ Island**

With or without this fictional historic event, there is nevertheless a geographical reality that divides the Crimean peninsula from the Russian landmass and makes of it a microclimatic zone in its own right even if some wish to deny it yet admit it when they say “that Russian pearl, the Island of Crimea” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 172). Aksyonov acknowledges this readily as early as in the Preface: “The southern coast of Crimea is a subtropic zone protected from the fierce Russian winter by a range of mountains. During that winter the mountains are covered with black clouds seemingly fixed in time, while down below the sun is shining.” We are faced here with a Mediterranean microcosm amidst the Black Sea: Andrei Luchnikov walking through Koktebel feels the spirit of the place: “The landscape was truly unforgettable. The different facets of the mountains in sunlight and moonlight, the way they met and joined the sea, the olive tree trembling at the edge of a crag [...] it all pointed to an omnipresent soul (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 47). Back in Moscow, Tatyana asserts the contrast between two worlds apart: “She had finally come home, back to the real world, and, Luchnikov had – as so often before – drifted off into another, *not quite substantive galaxy*, the galaxy of Koktebel and Feodosia, of Crimea, of all the Western world.” (Aksyonov, 1983, pp. 56-57). If Russia is her real world, the other is the Crimean metonymic tip of the nebulous and galactically large. There is certainly contiguity in this representation but also a pending fluidity of the matter and an inherent mobility. It is no coincidence that Vital Gangut says: “And the Island of Crimea is still afloat” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 61). Yet another va-

riation or two on the same theme from Andrei Luchkinov: “Take our all but imaginary island, for example. A UFO if there ever was one, but a UFO with a difference – an Unidentified *Floating* Object. Our whole world is built on fantasy, on the free play of imagination” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 115), and “Crimea is my only home, my pride, my joy. The Island of Crimea *floating free* among the waves. We shall never merge with you, you law-abiding, monumental, hulking, northern, Russian swine, you! We’re not Russian by ideology, we’re not communist by nationality; we’re Yaki Islanders, we have a fate of our own. Our fate is the carnival of freedom, and it makes us stronger” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 155). Anton Luchnikov reacts to his daddy: “You have no right to call the Island Russian. That’s imperialism. Less than half the population is Russian by blood” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 275). On the other hand, from the Soviet point of view, the island appears differently: “It’s been a real thorn in our side, that little Island” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 260), to which Marlene Mikhailovich Kuzenkov, the dedicated Soviet specialist on Crimea, formally the general consultant to the Institute for the Study of the Eastern Mediterranean Region, reacts by “fully [understanding] how insignificant his own little island was in comparison with the world at large and the social progress of mankind” (Aksyonov, 1983, pp. 260-261). Yet on the verge of changing sides he confesses: “I love the island; I love its memory of old Russia and the dream of a new one; I love its rich and dissolute democracy, the ports of its rocky south open to the entire world, the energy of historically doomed but eternally Russian capitalism; I love the girls of Yalta and its bohemian atmosphere; I love Sinfi’s architectural turbulence; I love the well-fed flocks in the eastern pastureland and the sweeping wheat fields in the west; I love even its supple seallike contour. After all the years I have devoted to this miracle of nature and history, how can I stand by and watch as it crumbles at the whim of some Extraordinarily Unpleasant Personage?” (Aksyonov, 1983, pp. 310-311). He is only a step away from yelling at Luchnikov campaigning voluntarily for the annexation of Crimea to Soviet Russia by popular consent: “You’re nothing but a pilot fish for a gigantic, sleek, and senseless shark!” (Aksyonov, 1983, p. 325). It is here that Crimea, originally the singular whale of the Black Sea, is cut down to a “pilot fish” and placed vis-a-vis Russia, “the senseless shark”.

## **Santa Esperanza as an Archipelago of Dolphins: Representing the Impossible**

Morchiladze has an introductory piece of great significance that makes the author visible by differentiating him from the tourist. Whereas the tourist Morchiladze decides to visit Santa Esperanza for the first time in 1997 for a short sojourn of only four days, staying in the historical Santa City (Saint John Castle), the author Morchiladze travels in 2003-2004 by ship (via Istanbul on his way in, and Trabzon on his way out) for a stay of six months, and collects material for his book. It has wonderful winters where one forgets the cold. The sea is stormy during this season with a slight rain off-shore. The sun comes out rarely but makes its presence pleasantly felt (Morchiladze, 2006, Introduction, pp. 10-11). During the tourist season, the sun and the sea attract the many to Santa City (The Slave Market, the Castle, the Orthodox monastery) and the Bungalows' region on the seaside, but also the living tradition of storytelling, and its hybrid architecture in the Center (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 1, pp. 4-7). By then, Santa Esperanza on the war-torn Black Sea has become even more a part of Europe, thus less accessible for the non-EU-ropeans. It is a tourist paradise like Malta, but also in a different way, Crimea, in a soon to be abortive making. The problem with it is that it does not exist but in fiction. It is an imaginary transposition of the real phenomena encountered elsewhere and in factually contestable writings to the Black Sea. In this sense, it is one more important step removed from physical geography than Crimea that existed as a peninsula in the first place.

By virtue of his precise mapping, Morchiladze (2006, Weinrebe 1, p. 4) insistently promotes Santa Esperanza as a reality of physical geography, and moreover attributes it remote origins in history. It is the successive waves of search for refuge induced by overseas events that bring about the settlement of the various elements of its population. Ottomans take Santa Esperanza then with a population of some 2000 in 1603 when the King converts symbolically and becomes the Pasha. It consists of those in the garrison, the leading cadre of the pirates, peasants of Georgian origin cultivating the land, Georgian and Greek monks, and last but not the least Genoese merchants migrating from Caffa. It becomes a center of slave trade. The Ottomans wish to enrich the place by making it a commercial and transit link between the Khanate of Crimea under their protection and the Ottoman Empire. Seen in this way, Santa Esperanza becomes a second Crimea deliberately situated in

the center of the eastern half of the Black Sea in want of islands. From this viewpoint, paraphrasing Herodotus commenting on Egypt, it is a 'Lesser' Gift of Geography. In contrast with Aksyonov's Crimea, it is not an island but an interactive archipelago, characterized by unity as well as diversity, of which more will be said below. Its physical proximity to the landmasses is negotiable with technology and sociability. In this sense a trigger event, it is flexibly accommodated and on a certain move. Historically speaking, Black Sea has been noted as short of whales and sharks but quite rich in its stock of friendly and playful dolphins that go about in herds smaller than pods. Hence the better metaphor for Santa Esperanza, and, in fact, much more, because there exists an intricate narrative network within the fiction that connects the author with the character, Luka, and the islands, ships, dolphins, and humans interchangeably within the context of the indivisible sea, the analysis of which remains beyond the scope of this paper (Morchiladze, 2006, Distel 8, pp. 10-12; Säbel 8, p. 4, pp. 21-24).

Morchiladze's fictitious archipelago is also launched on an alternative trajectory by a historic trigger event that is no single man's doing and this time real. The Crimean War, a turning-point in Black Sea history, opened the sea for international commercial navigation by imposing restrictions on future naval activities. The fiction comes into the picture by inserting a clause in the peace treaty made (1857) that enabled Britain to rent the island for 145 years from the Ottomans. Understandably, the British wished to gain a footing in the Black Sea (comparable to their holds on Gibraltar, Malta, Corfu, and Cyprus in the Mediterranean). Consequently, a governor and a local symbolic parliament were put into effect in 1901. A dominion of the British Empire, Santa Esperanza becomes a 'miniscule' façade (without the exact substance) of it on the Black Sea. Santa Esperanza is expected to become an autonomous parliamentary republic when this treaty expires in 2002 (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 1, p. 8). This begs for reflection as to what awaits it as far as neighboring Russia, Georgia and Turkey's expectations are concerned. The author makes one character, Morad Bey, anticipate that Russia would object to its NATO membership from the viewpoint of its own security (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 1, p. 17).

Modern Santa Esperanza is a multinational state with a population of 237.000 in 1997, of which 58% are Johannian (Georgians who speak a 14th-15th century dialect), 19% Turkish, %10 Italian, %8 English, and 5% other. Many come to work, but citizenship is extended only to descendants of

those who lived there before 1919. Georgians have been cut off from Georgia hence estranged for many centuries (like the autochthonous population of Taiwan!) All people are entitled to a British identity (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 1, pp. 10-11). As much as it is modern, it is also archaic, insofar as the British redefined families of 500 years or more as a local aristocracy to aspire them to consolidate the implanted constitutional monarchy. The Johannian Georgians, the Ottoman Turks, and the Genoese Catholics constitute the symbolic army. English, a Georgian dialect, Turkish and Italian are taught in schools. In short, Santa Esperanza is a multinational and multicultural country in a world of surrounding national states that could easily be destabilized from within as well as from without.

A perusal at the map indicates that the archipelago consists of three islands horizontally lined up in a V-shape. The big one is the Santa Esperanza. A second, on the north is considerably smaller, and is also called the Island of Sungals, and a third, on the south, is the Island of Visramiani, half a kilometer from the main island, to which it is served by a wooden bridge (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 5, pp. 5-6). The archipelago is 117 kilometers from the Georgian coast albeit with a severed connection. The islands of the archipelago are also loosely connected among themselves. A blind man on an island states: "Der Nachteil dieser Inseln ist, dass sie einander so nahe sind, andererseits aber so weit entfernt." (Morchiladze, 2006, Säbel 7, p.18 "The problem with these islands is that they are too close to one another, and yet far too distant" in English) Morchiladze condenses Georgia's two conflicting identities via-a-vis the sea in the archipelago's microcosm so as to ignite a conflict, in fact a civil war. An unusual, only Georgian speaking Sungal states that they were peasants and bandits, and did not support the Castle commanders and the Ottomans; a Sungal means the Man of the Forest and of the King, ready to sacrifice himself for the cause, and the Sungals and Visramianis, the two Georgian factions, always got along well: "Das wahre Land sind eben die zwei kleinen Inseln. Diese Attraktionsinsel hat man künstlich geschaffen." (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 6, p. 10; "These two islands are the real country. That attractive island over there was made artificially." In English) Even so, as the underdevelopment gap between the two islands also increased under the British who cheated the Sungals (Morchiladze, 2006, Weinrebe 9, pp. 16-18), while the Visramianis benefitted from the situation to become capitalist and rose on the shoulders of Sungals serving as their de facto army (Morchiladze, 2006, Brombeere 1, pp. 1-10).

## Conclusion

Whereas Aksyonov contents himself with disconnecting Crimea as an island from the Eurasian landmass, Morchiladze stamps a set of islands on the Black Sea map. Aksyonov uses the Black Sea as a backdrop for the Soviet Russian-Crimean pending conflict on the littoral, and as an escape route by sea when the disastrous hour strikes. In contrast, Morchiladze's fiction modifies the unfolding of history at large within a Black Sea context.

Aksyonov characterizes alternative Crimea as a multi-party functioning democracy outright different from a totalitarian regime, yet it falls short of democratic standards because its political class is an exclusive White Russian aristocracy and its offshoots. Moreover Crimean democracy bears responsibility for issuing a popular invitation to Soviet annexation. Moreover, his description makes of Crimea not a democracy, but a successful capitalism. Taiwan, Aksyonov's model for Crimea, was not a democracy but an authoritarian regime where the 'colonizer' mainland Chinese Kuomintang Party was firmly in control. It evolved into a democracy as of the 1980s. To Aksyonov's credit, minority Kuomintang Party is now the most pro-Chinese and pro-unification party in opposition to governing Taiwanese nationalists in conformity with his scenario for Crimea's voluntary annexation. Be that as it may, Russia knows only one way of responding mechanistically in Aksyonov's narrative, and that is invasion. He thus inscribes the fate of Crimea into a long list including Hungary (1956), Czechoslovakia (1968), Afghanistan (1979) and Ukraine (2022). As a matter of fact, Aksyonov's description of Crimea highlights the vigorous capitalism rather than the democracy of Crimea, also more fitting with the perception of the image of Taiwan at the time. By contrast, the latecomer Morchiladze, an eyewitness to an overly financialized crony capitalism in the postcommunist era, addresses head on the weakness and deadlock of an imitative democracy in Santa Esperanza.

Both writers give the fictitious islands they impose upon Geography a pivotal role to play in either making of, or falling prey to, History. This discussion via literature provides strong evidence for the case that fictional islands can sometimes play a greater role in scale as well as in scope than real islands. Whether or not Morchiladze actually read Aksyonov and was inspired by it is beside the point here, though this is strongly suggested by his description of how the Soviet regime censored Santa Esperanza as enemy territory despite the maverick Valodia Nebieridze's scholarship, and Stalin

saw it as the dangerous outpost of capitalism on his doorstep (Morchiladze, 2016, Brombeere 1, p. 8). More importantly, two writers a generation apart writing in different languages and entirely different contexts, but with their converging stylistic attributes, resorted to the same literary device, i.e., altering geography to see what effect it would produce on the course of history unfolding in a Black Sea environment. This is more an effect of the Black Sea on their literary practice, demonstrating us their least common denominator, and a connecting thread thereof among their fiction indicating continuity, in an otherwise disrupted and transformed world.

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### Pour l'analyse géo-sémiotique d'un centenaire Espace et temps de la réception de la "Divine Comédie" en 1921

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#### **Abstract**

Le sixième centenaire de la mort de Dante Alighieri, en 1921, marque un paysage culturel complexe, dans lequel différentes instances, événements et stratégies se croisent, nous invitant à réfléchir à la double valeur du seuil spatio-temporel. Dans la perspective géo-sémiotique ici adoptée, le centenaire est une dimension intertextuelle qui implique certains mécanismes d'interaction – entre la politique et la littérature, entre les arts et les idéologies.

Parmi les nombreuses initiatives, l'édition bilingue des essais et des traductions de la Divine Comédie, réalisée par le jeune Alojzij Res, revêt une importance particulière: deux volumes imprimés en italien à Gorizia et en slovène à Ljubljana, accompagnés des planches du peintre croate Mirko Rački et du graveur slovène Tone Kralj.

Ma contribution vise à reconstituer les circonstances de la réalisation de l'œuvre, alors que le dialogue entre l'Italie, la Slovénie et la Croatie devenait de plus en plus difficile, dans le transit décisif menant à l'ère du nationalisme et du totalitarisme. La présentation vise à mettre en évidence le rapport antithétique entre l'espace et le temps dans la réception de Dante en 1921 dans les villes frontalières de l'Adriatique, après la chute de l'Empire des Habsbourg (Trieste, Fiume, Gorizia): d'une part, la lecture nationaliste et anti-historique qui efface le temps pour exalter la valeur spatiale; d'autre part, la lecture qui dévalorise l'espace pour faire voyager le texte dans le temps et exploiter toutes les ressources qui libèrent le potentiel révolutionnaire et cathartique de la poésie.

**Keywords:** Dante Alighieri; Littérature et Politique au XXème siècle; histoire et géographie de la culture; iconographie littéraire; frontières et identités nationales

### **Introduction: un centenaire entre les Alpes et les Balkans**

Pour comprendre la valeur symbolique de Dante pendant les célébrations du sixième centenaire de Dante Alighieri en Italie, en 1921, Il faut tout d'abord proposer deux images du poète, créées par un peintre et un sculpteur entre le 19ème et le 20ème siècle. Il s'agit de deux œuvres célèbres dans l'histoire de l'iconographie dantesque produite en Italie: la statue réalisée par le sculpteur florentin Cesare Zocchi en 1896 et une gravure réalisée en 1920 par le peintre Adolfo De Carolis, intitulée par le poète Gabriele D'Annunzio le "*Dantes Adriacus*", c'est à dire le poète qui avait marqué dans la "Divine comédie" la puissance italienne sur la frontière entre les Alpes et les Balkans.

Les Alpes, qui marquent la frontière entre l'Italie et l'Autriche, constituent un espace de revendication nationale qui trouve son origine dans la participation de l'Italie à la Première Guerre mondiale. L'irréductibilisme italien, qui revendiqua l'italianité des régions de la frontière orientale, avait identifié Trente et Trieste comme les villes symboliques à accueillir dans la mère patrie, afin de réaliser la dernière étape du Risorgimento.

Situé dans la vallée du Haut-Adige, au pied des Alpes, dans la place principale de Trente, le monument au père de la littérature italienne devait manifester une valeur symbolique de l'orgueil et de la gloire nationale. L'œuvre avait été souhaitée comme réponse au monument de Walther von der Vogelweide dans la place principale de Bozen: la sculpture en marbre blanc érigée en 1889, à Bozen en l'honneur d'un poète qui est considéré comme le plus grand représentant des *Minnesingers*, les poètes d'amour en langue allemande du XIII siècle.

Le peintre De Carolis, parmi les artistes les plus appréciés par D'Annunzio, avait exécuté une gravure sur bois représentant un Dante statique et hiératique, le *Dantes Adriacus*. Puissante icône romantique qui

vehiculait la religion de la patrie italienne à travers tout le XIX siècle, Le slogan évocateur avec ses résonances classiques (les *adriacas undas* – les ondes de la mer adriatique – épique latine, de Virgile à Lucan), était fonctionnel à la propagande nationaliste en faveur des ambitions colonialistes sur la Méditerranée.

## 1. D'Annunzio et le dantisme de combat

Deux idées antithétiques de Dante coexistent dans l'imagination de D'Annunzio: un Ulysse gardien des frontières et un Ulysse dépassant les frontières. Le Dante gardien, *custos finium* (gardien des frontières) *custos liminis* (le poète-sentinelle des remparts) est une invention du 19e siècle; le Dante explorateur de frontières inconnues qui est destiné à tomber, dans l'abîme, selon la représentation de la parabole tragique de l'Ulysse de Dante dans le chant 26 de l'Enfer: "*O frères, qui, à travers mille périls, êtes parvenus à l'Occident, suivez le soleil, et à vos sens à qui reste si peu de veille, ne refusez l'expérience du monde sans habitants. Pensez à ce que vous êtes. point n'avez été faits pour vivre comme des brutes, mais pour rechercher la vertu et la connaissance*".

Le paysage culturel de la frontière, espace de dialogue et de conflit, doit être étudié dans la perspective géographique et historique du sixième centenaire de la mort en 1921, qui a impliqué des mécanismes d'interaction significatifs dans l'Europe de l'après-guerre – entre politique et littérature, entre arts et idéologies – qui méritent d'être analysés en détail. Dans ma contribution, je propose une tentative de lire le centenaire de 1921 d'un point de vue géo-semiotique comme un paysage complexe, dans lequel différentes instances, événements et stratégies sont articulés, contrastés et se croisent, nous invitant à nous éloigner d'une perspective purement "événementielle" et d'une accumulation documentaire. C'est aussi pourquoi, d'un point de vue sémiotique, un centenaire montre sa dimension interculturelle et intertextuelle.

Le cas de l'illustration de couverture de l'album Alinari est intéressant: un livre qui rassemble les clichés pris au cours d'une campagne photographique dans l'Italie de l'après guerre. Nous nous référons à la donnée paratextuelle la plus pertinente de l'ouvrage, qui représentait au premier plan le monument le plus célèbre de Dante: la statue de Cesare Zocchi érigée à Trente, qui tourne le dos à sa patrie et lève le bras droit vers le Nord, pour signifier le non plus ultra des frontières italiennes libérées des étrangers. En

évidence significative, à droite du monument, la forme de la botte baignée par la Méditerranée, avec en arrière-plan les côtes de l'Afrique à conquérir et en bonne place la péninsule balkanique, objet de disputes diplomatiques et d'ambitions colonialistes

En ce sens, le seuil centenaire de 1921 représente aussi un centenaire de passage et de rodage entre l'État libéral et l'État fasciste: dans ce sens D'Annunzio a été, plus ou moins consciemment, responsable de la dérive du langage politique qui a préparé le fascisme: Comme Renzo De Felice et Michael Ledeen l'ont montré, l'aventure de Fiume, avec les discours du poète-commandant à ses partisans, représente un laboratoire pour le développement des langages de communication de masse qui anticipent les méthodes rhétoriques des totalitarismes européens.

Aux antipodes de cette conception de Dante, le philosophe et critique littéraire Benedetto Croce avait publié, à l'occasion du centenaire, le célèbre essai intitulé "La poesia di Dante", dans lequel il s'opposait aux tentatives d'instrumentalisation de la "Divine Comédie" pour atteindre des objectifs sans aucun rapport avec la valeur éternelle de l'art et de la littérature. Ainsi, lorsque, avec la crise du régime libéral, Croce est appelé par Giolitti à exercer la fonction de ministre de l'Éducation, pour contribuer à la stabilité du nouveau gouvernement qui doit faire face à une situation sociale extrêmement problématique, soit en matière de politique intérieure, soit pour la situation diplomatique internationale Ainsi, alors alors que les nationalistes, d'une part, et les catholiques, d'autre part, s'emploient à exploiter la valeur symbolique du plus grand poète italien, il se voit contraint d'adopter une position intransigeante face aux usages et aux abus de Dante, poussés par le sixième centenaire.

En ce sens, pendant les célébrations de 1921, Croce et D'Annunzio représentent les deux plus grandes personnalités de la vie littéraire italienne, prises dans le "maelström" de la lutte politique dans l'après-guerre. Lors de l'inauguration du centenaire de Dante à Ravenne, le 14 septembre 1920, le ministre Croce prononce un discours mesuré, respectueux de la solennité de la cérémonie publique – mais ferme. L'invitation à un examen de la réalité, nécessaire à un exercice correct de la mémoire historique – d'après les réflexions théoriques sur la mémoire historique de Paul Ricoeur – n'était pas destinée à susciter l'acclamation de la foule. Surtout, la profession d'historicisme adressée tant aux promoteurs du Dante nationaliste qu'aux promoteurs

du Dante catholique réunis à Ravenne ne pouvait que réitérer la dénonciation des abus de Dante.

"Mais le Dante dont on a parlé et dont on parlera à l'avenir n'est pas le Dante de la réalité, mais plutôt le Dante symbolique; car c'est le destin des grands hommes de servir de symboles au cours du développement historique, d'être extraits de leur époque et des problèmes qui les occupaient réellement, et d'être idéalisés en fonction des nouveaux besoins sociaux et individuels.

Dans sa réalité, Dante ne peut pas refléter les idéaux de notre époque, précisément parce qu'il était d'un autre temps et qu'il avait ses propres idéaux; et peut-être conviendrait-il d'ajouter que ni lui ni aucun autre homme n'est jamais vraiment un idéal, pour la raison que l'idéal n'est pas contenu dans les limites d'un individu, aussi grand soit-il" (Croce, 1943, p. 318).

## 2. Le Dante européen de Alojsij Res

Mais il convient de laisser Ravenne derrière nous et retracer la carte de la frontière orientale plus au nord, dans la zone située entre l'Adriatique, les Alpes et les Balkans, pour s'intéresser à Trieste et aux autres villes frontalières qui ont pris une nouvelle dimension géopolitique après l'effondrement de l'empire des Habsbourg.

Il est intéressant de considérer un essai presque oublié du romancier Italo Svevo sur la paix européenne, écrit en 1919, lorsque Trieste était devenue italienne. Dans la ville surprise par la crise de l'Adriatique provoquée par D'Annunzio, Svevo écrit un essai sur la Société des Nations, pour la naissance d'un organisme international qui sauverait l'Europe du risque d'une nouvelle catastrophe mondiale:

"L'Italie doit collaborer activement à la Ligue. Elle a le droit d'y occuper une place importante déjà parce que c'est ici qu'a été fait l'effort le plus magnanime pour créer une théorie de la paix. Une théorie complète et parfaite, même si elle n'est plus applicable à nos circonstances, a jailli du noble esprit de Dante qui, après avoir connu les horreurs (qui ne nous semblent pas trop grandes) de la guerre de Sienne, est devenu un fervent pacifiste" (Svevo, 2004, p. 1636).

On ne connaît pas exactement la date de composition de son essai. Mais il est probable que le texte était conçu en 1919, pendant les mois où D'Annunzio projecta la marche de Ronchi et s'empara de la ville de Fiume. C'est Alceste De Ambris, le syndicaliste révolutionnaire qui collabora avec D'Annunzio à la rédaction de la Charte du Carnaro, qui a rappelé ce passage vertigineux de l'histoire de la culture italienne et européenne:

"Au printemps de l'année 1919, la situation politique italienne était nettement révolutionnaire. La guerre avait laissé dans toutes les classes sociales de terribles fermentations. Ce n'était pas seulement seulement le prolétariat des usines et des champs qui semblait en proie à une vraie fureur de rébellion. Même dans l'armée – à peine revenue du front – il y avait de fortes aspirations révolutionnaires, toutefois imprécises et vagues quant aux buts. Pour la majorité la tranchée avait été une vraie école de subversion" (De Ambris, 1923, p. 6).

L'écrivain triestin Giani Stuparich a rappelé dans ses mémoires de l'après-guerre cette période complexe, au cours de laquelle les sentiments d'enthousiasme, de perplexité et de désapprobation ont alterné parmi les Italiens de Trieste:

"C'était une époque de ferveur: cette entreprise apparaissait à beaucoup, surtout ici, dans notre région, comme une sortie heureuse de l'incertitude et de la procrastination; mais je sentais que ce nationalisme exaspéré, au lieu d'éclairer et de résoudre notre situation, la compliquerait et l'obscurcirait encore davantage; et je me méfiais du mélange hybride d'esthétisme et de politique, d'empressement héroïque et de facilité aventureuse; toutes les qualités de la nature des Italiens, auxquelles ils faisaient appel dans cette entreprise, n'étaient pas d'un bon niveau" (Stuparich, 1984, p. 93).

Cependant, la présence massive des fascistes à Trieste qui causaient l'incendie du Narodni Dom – siège des activités culturelles et économiques de la communauté slovène – en juillet 1920, réduit au silence les voix dissidentes et les tentatives de dialogue politique et interculturel; tandis que Svevo s'applique à la rédaction de son chef-d'œuvre, *La coscienza di Zeno*, et Joyce quitte définitivement Trieste pour s'installer à Zurich, puis à Paris, afin

de publier son *Ulixes*: comme on le sait, deux parmi les plus grands chefs-d'œuvre du roman du XXe siècle sur la crise de l'Europe contemporaine.

Dans le cadre de ce dialogue si difficile et problématique entre les communautés nationales de l'Europe d'après-guerre, la majorité des intellectuels de Trieste ne fut pas capable d'élever une voix dissonante dans le chœur des célébrations du centenaire de 1921. Ce fut en effet un écrivain de Gorizia, la ville la plus active dans la tentative de s'opposer à la nationalisation des frontières, à entreprendre une initiative aussi importante qu'oubliée, qui revêt aujourd'hui une grande valeur symbolique pour le futur de l'Europe.

Dans la ville de Gorizia qui avait survécu à la catastrophe de la Grande Guerre et à l'effondrement de l'empire, c'étaient l'homme de lettres Alojz Res et l'éditeur Nino Paternolli qui avaient décidé de célébrer la "Divine Comédie" comme un pont entre les cultures et les peuples de la nouvelle Europe. Ils avaient ainsi conçu une noble idée, dont le souvenir s'est presque perdu: la réalisation d'un livre bilingue – publié en même temps à Gorizia et à Ljubljana – avec les écrits des plus grands dantesques de l'époque (de Croce à Salvemini, de Debevec à Puntar), illustrés par les exquises planches du peintre croate Mirko Rački et du graveur slovène Tone Kralj.

Le livre naquit grâce au soutien de l'infatigable intellectuel anti-fasciste Umberto Zanotti Bianco, le fondateur de l'IpEo, Institut pour l'Europe Orientale, qui avait favorisé le contact entre différents auteurs, pour solliciter le débat sur les cultures et les politiques de l'Est, vers la construction d'une nouvelle Europe. Alojz Res, influencé par les idées de Mazzini était un intellectuel catholique avec un curriculum international, de Vienne à Zagreb, de Ljubljana à Florence, un médiateur entre l'italianisme et le slavisme, et parmi les premiers à obtenir un diplôme à Ljubljana avec une thèse sur les chansons populaires slovènes; historien de l'art italien et admirateur de l'école vénitienne et du Tintoret, médiateur entre la culture slovène et la culture italienne à Venise, en équilibrant les contributions du nationaliste Rossi avec le libéral Croce, du socialiste Salvemini avec le catholique Gallarati Scotti.

Un Dante européen à la frontière entre l'Italie et la Sloveie, observé à partir d'une multiplicité de perspectives critiques, une variété de disciplines et de langues impliquées, et avec l'axe Dante-Preseren au centre: une opération politique, qui a provoqué les objections de quelque critique contemporain, et pourtant indicative de la recherche d'un nouveau dialogue européen.

Bien qu'Alojsij Res ait échoué dans son entreprise dantesque et, après la victoire du Fascisme vécu seul à Venise, il ne renoncera pas à sa mission de médiateur culturel, se consacrant toujours à la diffusion de la culture italienne en Slovénie et de la culture slovène en Italie dans le domaine de l'histoire de l'art.

Les villes situées à la frontière nord-est entre l'Italie, la Slovénie et la Croatie, comme Gorizia, Trieste et Rijeka, configurent une marginalité fertile en possibilités culturelles et littéraires; c'est dans ce contexte que se sont développées les expériences de Svevo et de Joyce, protagonistes du renouveau du roman européen moderne. L'espace clos de la frontière, délimité par la sentinelle de la Nation, comme le conçoit le monument de Trente, avec le regard du poète tourné vers le Nord et le bras levé, campé à Trente sur la frontière dans l'acte de marquer la limite. A la remise à zéro du temps au profit de l'espace s'oppose le processus inverse, du vertige de la désorientation que provoque le voyage dans le temps et le refuge dans la mémoire. Le déplacement finit donc par perturber la relation entre le moi et l'espace, rendant impossible tout processus d'identification.

C'est la condition vécue par Herman Bahr devant Trieste, une ville de nulle part, dans son *Voyage en Dalmatie* de 1909. "*Trieste est étrange. Magnifique panorama. Plus beau qu'à Naples. Mais ce n'est pas du tout une ville. Ici, on a l'impression de n'être nulle part. Il semble se déplacer dans l'irréalité*". Le paradoxe mitteleuropéen de la coexistence de cultures très différentes a été révélé au voyageur dans une page mémorable du journal, dans laquelle le monument de Dante à Trente pouvait figurer dans le vertigineux court-circuit topographique produit par le multiculturalisme des Habsbourg. Le résultat est le mythe de la "Mitteleuropa" comme métaphore du déclin de l'Occident:

"Mais soudain, une voix intérieure me dit. tu vois, dans la Getreidegasse, quand la boîte à musique tremble, et dans les petites maisons colorées des orfèvres de Hradčany, et devant la maison du drap à Cracovie, où se trouve la statue de Mickiewicz, et sur la place de Trente, où Dante lève la main vers le Nord, et à Bozen, sur la place Vogelweide, et ici à l'ombre de la Comneni, tu te sens chez toi, tout cela est ta patrie, tu n'es rien d'autre que toutes ces choses réunies. comprends-tu maintenant ce qu'est un Autrichien?" (Bahr, 2007, pp. 68-69).



Ainsi, la combinaison de la poésie et de la musique exprime la sublimation poétique du *peregrinus ubique*. À l'ère du totalitarisme, le Dante fugitif des irrédentistes romantiques réapparaît inversé et modifié, ingénieusement filtré par la sensibilité lyrique de l'exilé qui écoute, Osip Mandel'stam.

C'est une condition destinée à être accentuée dans les pages des principaux représentants de la diaspora juive, de la mythologie du juif errant et de l'allégorie du dépaysement. Le Dante exilé des irrédentistes réapparaît à l'envers et changé de signe, filtré par la sensibilité de Mandel'stam, brillant interprète de la Comédie qui a vécu de près les outrages du pouvoir. Une expérience vécue sous la bannière de l'allégorie juive du dépaysement.

S'inspirant du langage maritime, Mandel'stam définit le Chant 26 de l'"Inferno" comme

"la composition la plus velique de Dante, celle qui permet le mieux les manœuvres et les bordées". Dans le chant, on peut ainsi distinguer deux parties: "d'une part un prélude lumineux et impressionniste, d'autre part le récit équilibré et dramatique du dernier voyage d'Ulysse, avec sa sortie en plein océan Atlantique et sa mort terrible sous les étoiles d'un autre hémisphère".

Ainsi, selon Mandel'stam, L'Ulysse de Dante est aussi mobile et insaisissable qu'on peut l'opposer au monolithe de la statue rigide et statique.

"Le Chant 26 nous introduit brillamment dans l'anatomie de l'œil de Dante, si merveilleusement apte à révéler de manière unique la structure du temps futur. La vue de Dante possède les mêmes qualités optiques que les oiseaux de proie, incapables de s'orienter dans un espace confiné, habitués qu'ils sont à l'immensité des terrains de chasse".

Il est donc significatif que Mandel'stam conclue en observant. "*Les critiques européens ont été cloués aux paysages d'enfer des gravures*" ("*Dante was nailed to the hellish landscapes of the etchings*"); Je ne sais pas exactement à quelles gravures il faisait référence; mais dans la perspective géométrique que je propose, on pourrait considérer cette déclaration comme une réponse implicite au promoteurs du *Dantes Adriacus* de De Carolis dont nous sommes partis.

### 3. Conclusion

Ma contribution a essayé de mettre en évidence la relation antithétique entre l'espace et le temps dans la réception de Dante en 1921 dans les villes frontalières de l'Adriatique, après la chute de l'Empire des Habsbourg (Trieste, Fiume, Gorizia): d'une part, la lecture nationaliste et anti-historique qui efface le temps pour exalter la valeur spatiale; d'autre part, la lecture qui dévalorise l'espace pour faire voyager le texte dans le temps et exploiter toutes les ressources qui libèrent le potentiel révolutionnaire et cathartique de la poésie. Les épisodes d'instrumentalisation idéologique de la "Divine Comédie" se prêtent à une analyse géo-sémiotique, propre à reconstituer un épisode significatif de l'histoire de la culture dans l'Italie de l'après-guerre. En ce sens, l'usage politique du discours d'Ulysse à ses compagnons dans le Chant 26 ("*fatti non foste per viver per come bruti*") est employé dans les oraisons de D'Annunzio aux légionnaires de Fiume; tandis que l'image de Dante osant dépasser les limites du monde connu est une métaphore de la force révolutionnaire de la poésie: expression du dynamisme tragique de l'ulisside contemporain, l'antithèse de l'hostilité et de l'intolérance nationaliste. Voilà pourquoi à la réduction à un espace fermé et exigü s'oppose l'ambition de franchir les frontières, propre au génie qui transcende les conditions d'espace et de temps pour se projeter vers le futur de la Poésie.

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August Wilson's Spatial Writing Back on  
Black Female in *Fences* to Hurston's  
*Their Eyes Were Watching God*

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**Abstract:**

August Wilson has long been admired for his "Pittsburgh Circle" which collectively presented a panoramic view of the love, hate, and the living conditions of African Americans. Among them, *Fences* written in 1987 as one of his "Pittsburgh Circle" series, and also the first play to win him Pulitzer Prize actually contains a deeper revelation for understanding black females except for overwhelmingly tremendous studies on black community in this work as a whole. Theoretically, when one examines through notions of "Thirdspace" from Edward Soja and garden as one typical kind of "other space" by Michael Foucault, this work of *Fences* reveals that Rose's progressive taking up of space from kitchen to porch inside the fences and finally to the family garden exceeding fences recalls the female protagonist Jannie's eastward re-locations. During her progress, she finally established her own subjectivity and lives along with her three marriages in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* created by Zora Neale Hurston. Therefore, the intertextual study of the two works proves that through spacial construction, black females as the double other to both whites and males still get a chance to reconstruct their subjectivity, and even before postmodernism identified their feminist voices in literature, great works had already hinted the power of black females which helps them finally emerge from margin to the sight of people.

**Keywords:** *Fences*; *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; Thirdspace; Black Females; Subjectivity

## 1. “Fences” keeping Rose in family

To begin with, the first spatial metaphor in Wilson’s play is “fences”, the title of the play. “Some people build barriers to prevent people from entering, while others build barriers to keep people at home” (Wilson, 2013). Rose falls into the second classification. In the play, Rose constantly asks her husband Troy to remedy the fences of their house, but Troy does not care. He delays the job for four or five weeks. Instead, he chooses to go to his mistress’s house to entertain himself. And when he finally makes his mind to repair the fences, he does not really understand what his wife could do with the “damn” fence (Wilson, 2013). It is at the end of his life, the fences for him at last becomes valuable by functioning as an imaginary shield to defend himself against the invisible Death. But that has nothing to do with his responsibility toward his wife Rose. For Troy, the fences is the same as what Robinson Crusoe built to protect himself from vicious environment in the sense of regarding the story as a colonial metaphor. The only difference is that Troy replaces the white man’s image and resets the background in a family rather than a isolated island. Troy as the colonized in a large social background is playing the colonizer in his own family to his wife and son. Both fences represent patriarchal buildings serving only for the good of the male member. Therefore, it is a pity for for Rose to ask for protection from Troy in the first place, for the man she relies on is the exact force to destruct her subjectivity and confine her freedom. Admittedly, fences are the range of family space functioning as a sign of protection, but at the same time, even without these fences, the family responsibility already fences her life into small place like kitchen of the household.

Like all housewives, kitchen is the major territory for a housewife’s daily activities. It is in this small place where gathers together the most heavy housework of the whole family, and the living standard of a family could be largely reflected by the eating stuff in the kitchen. In this play, many details confirm Rose’s hard work. In *Fences*, meals (or drinks) are mentioned many times including “ribs”, “cookies”, “coffee”, “pig’s feet”, “chicken”, “watermelon” and so on (Wilson, 2013). And it is should be noticeable that for each mentioning of food, not a single one kind is repeated. This enumeration on these various types of kitchen products shows how Rose utilizes her genius in the limited space trying to provide the best supplies to her family members with not-enough income given the setting that her husband is but a low-income trash-collector. In this way, Rose not only

contributes within the household, she actually involves in the production of society on a larger level. At the time of the play, America was experiencing its great period of fast expansion of massive urbanization. During this process, tremendous wastes were produced. But owing to the haziness of city development, whites left the work of clearing wastes to cheap African-American male labors like Troy. The black community became a main force for dirty but low-pay works in America in 1950s and 60s. Wilson lively describes their hardship before the play, saying that though the city “devoured” all outsiders from Europe for development, “the descendants of African slaves were offered no such welcome or participation”(Wilson, 2013). Only works like collecting rags were open for them. However, it’s fair to say that without them, the work of urbanization wouldn’t process so well. When history finally remembered black males like Troy, another fact is still ignored that without women like Rose feeding the men, there could never be so much achievement of building up metropolises. Moreover, not only this vital role lacked and still lacks recognition from other family members and society, but oftentimes it is taken for granted as a legitimate reason to imprison “the angels in the house” within certain insuperable family space like a kitchen. Rose’s attempt to achieve security through establishing fences was demolished by this way of invisible oppression.

## **2. “Fences” manifesting in Jannie’s marriages**

Similarly, with Hurston’s realistic portrayal, Jannie is also confined into “fences” in various forms in all her three marriages even if the third one was largely regarded as true love to common readers. The first type of “fences” is from Jannie’s original family. Owing to trauma of slavery, Jannie’s grandma by whom she called “Nanny” acted as an enormous barrier to hinder Jannie’s freedom of choice on her romantic relationship and set the tragic tone of the major years of her youth time. She protected Jannie well as a virgin and hopes that the girl could marry to a well-off man and thereby live comfortably. However, Jannie’s first kiss happened exactly at the gatepost of Nanny’s yard and the fuzz was overheard by Nanny. After witnessing the affair, Nanny decided to marry this 17-year-old girl to a middle-aged man named Morgan without the young girl’s consent. At that moment, the grandma had no idea that her consideration would be the start of the girl’s whole miserable life. Judging from a spatial perspective, this gatepost before

Jannie's first marriage functions exactly as a parental fence to keep Jannie inside of Nanny's control. Jannie always harbors the hope for love in marriage, but her first under Nanny's coercion fails her completely. The first marriage fences Jannie tight at such a young age that she becomes the typical housewife rotating around the house without stepping out any further until the coming of Jody, her second husband later.

Nevertheless, as the text shows, Jody fancies only Jannie's beauty and treats her as a vase to reflect his wisdom as the mayor of the new town for black community. In the early years, Jannie admired his smartness and bravery to give the town a chance to develop. But when Jannie delivers her comment to a poor dead mule and therefore discloses her talent for public speaking, the man who claims that she is the love of his life turns out to love her in the condition that she could only act as the wife of a mayor, not an orator like him. Comparatively, his own identity matters the most, and Jannie's talent makes him jealous. When Jody gets sick, the metaphor of fences for Jannie manifests itself as physical walls in the novel when "she sat a long time with the walls creeping on her. Four walls squeezing her breath out"(Hurston, 2012). Even with her beloved Tea Cake, Jannie's third and last husband, she only senses insecurity through the spatial representation when Tea Cake took her money out leaving Jannie for the whole night. At that time, Jannie's desire resembles Rose's hope to build fences around her. "Outside the window Jacksonville looked like it needed a fence around it to keep it from running out on ether's bosom. It was too big to be warm, let alone to need somebody like her" (Hurston, 2012). At first, Jannie was just like Rose, longing for sense of security from visible enclosure.

Both women were helpless and hopeless since they asked for protection, sometimes even in the form of fences. The hard truth between male/female and the white/the black is what Nanny boldly pointed out: "de white throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh the world so fur as Ah can see"(Hurston, 2012). In this way, black women were the double "other" of the society and man, and the initial places they occupied remains dull and a backwater to open up any possibility for them to be themselves.



### 3. From “fences” to black female’s Thirdspace

Compared with fences, the second space metaphor of porch is more abundant as a place in its metaphysical meanings but still largely excludes black female, the subject of “double other”. Specifically, it is Eden and a comfortable “Thirdspace” for black community but not for the female protagonists. Before the discussion of black female’s Thirdspace, it is necessary to answer the question of what is a Thirdspace. According to Edward Soja, the Thirdspace is the real-and-imagined space containing the physical space and the imaginary space while transcending them at the same time. Other (minority groups) could find comfort and confidence in Thirdspace and gain the chance of communication and understanding (1996). Practically, the location of Thirdspace is a good start for minority groups to emerge from margin to center. Inheriting the idea from Henri Lefebvre, Soja rejects the dimensional division of space into the physical and the mental for the reason that this way of classification neglects the interwoven relations of the society and vaguely assumes that mental space equals social space as the opposite of the material world. Instead, he accedes to the trialectical way to distinguish all spaces into three: Firstspace, the concrete material of spatial forms, the Secondspace, the imagined representations of human spatial forms in mental or cognitive level, and the Thirdspace, an Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicity-sociality.

Based on that understanding of Thirdspace, American scholar Donlon’s mentioning of porch could be regarded as the demonstration of the Thirdspace for black community to participate in social activities. For Donlon, porch not only connects private life and public life, but also functions as an important cultural venue to brag, perform blues music and tell stories. She stresses that in such a space deeply influenced by the distant African continent, African women, like their sisters, are not allowed to speak in male-dominated social groups(95). Troy entertains himself on the porch in various ways such as drinking with his friend Bono, recalling exaggerated stories of old times, fighting death, and singing songs etc, Rose on the opposite never really stepped into the space of porch to say a single word out of her mind. As stated earlier, Jannie faces the same predicaments with Jody. She was never allowed to enjoy herself on the porch among the men and women

even if she was born a better speaker than Jody. Although the whole story of *Their Eyes Were Watching God* is told on a porch when Jannie finally returns to her old house after Tea Cake's death, that space is not really a porch for social purposes, but only a private footstep. And the abundant audience who played important roles to fuel the hot atmosphere also shrinks to Jannie's single one close friend. Thus, both female protagonists lost their voice on the porch while their husbands spend a lot of time there to play guitar, sing songs or deliver speeches in the sense of porch being a Thirdplace.

Although Rose and Jannie fail all the same in this second spatial place of porch, the example of porch indicates the probability of the existence of another Thirdplace for them to voice out. And the image of garden is what comes to rescue.

In her article "In Search of Our Mother's Garden", Alice Walker clearly indicates the close relationship between African American women and garden: she said that black females are so "intense", "deep" and rich both physically and mentally(Walker, 1994). One example she raises is that her mother took great care of their garden with her genius and patience. In *Fences*, the garden appears at the end of the play is such a place to reflect femininity's willingness to embrace differences between African women and African men, to empower each member in black community and produce greater influence for them to be noticed and valued. In the last scene of Troy's funeral, a new character, the little girl Raynell appears. Raynell is Troy's unlawful daughter who was accepted and well taken care of by Rose for years. She's digging the soil of the garden for fun which forms a sharp contrast to Troy's funeral in the house, the gloomy and death-relating family space seems to be haunted by the passed-by Troy who always demands people's attention on himself. But outside now the younger son Corey joins Raynell and their hilarious conversation and the girl's joy are more at ease compared with Troy's authority. Because Corey fled from his home as a teenager, while Raynell was born when Troy's dictatorship was disintegrated by her mother Rose, and the girl was too young to be married and was temporarily spared the fate of being a pathetic housewife like Jannie. On the other hand, at the chatting time of the siblings, Rose as the master of the household then freely shuttles from the inner space to the outer garden scene, reflecting her garden-like inclusiveness to forgive her husband's misdeeds in the past and to start a new life with her son and daughter in the future.

Both Wilson and Alice Walker's representation of garden could ascend to Hurston's portrayal of Jannie. For many times and various stages of Jannie's life, the author implies with garden-related symbols. Before marriage, Jannie always sat under a pear tree with blossoms, wondering how love and marriage would turn out (Hurston, 2012). Even her marriages were unfortunate, Jannie's worship toward the flower tree continues until it comes true when she met Tea Cake. She adheres to her dream of true love and finally found it on Tea Cake, the man who are willing to make flower beds in her yard and seed the garden for her. Because of the inclusiveness of garden-like love, Jannie's affection toward Tea Cake continues even after the man's death. For example, when Jannie discovers the seeds that Tea Cake left she calmly decides to plant them as Tea Cake once did owing to her faith in their love. Physically, even Everglades where Tea Cake and Jannie worked and lived could be regarded as an enormous garden. With the first impression, Jannie saw the place big and new-big beans, big cane, big weeds, "big everything" (Hurston, 2012). It was so vigorous that weeds grew tall and everything went wild including people. Later, it did prove an Eden for all kinds of people harmoniously work and live together. In fact, Everglades as a special form of garden, could be explained by Foucault's notion of Other space, a heterotopia.

In one of his several principles to define a heterotopia, Foucault reckons that "As a general rule the heterotopia juxtaposes, in real place, several spaces that would normally be incompatible" (Foucault, 1986). His example is an Oriental garden where all the vegetation of the garden was supposed together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (Foucault, 1986). Just as Foucault himself intends to expand the range to all gardens by indicating in the parentheses that modern garden spring from that source, the garden in both Wilson and Hurston's works are also capable of incorporating differences and conflicts to form a Thirdspace for black women to hold their ground and form their own identity. Besides, Everglades as a special garden also resonates with bell hooks who advocates choosing the margin as a space for radical openness. The margin is a space full of possibilities and openness that encourages motion rather than stiffness. Since the changing of one's fixed position usually requires rejection toward the oppressive margins set for a specific group based on race, gender

and class. Garden as a Thirdspace to break the binary opposition of “male/female” in *Fences* and even “white/black” in *There Eyes Were Watching God* provides a space for marginalized subjects to encounter each other and withhold themselves.

In general, the processes of space expansions in a single household (as in Rose’s case) and outside the family space eastward (as in Jannie’s case) proved that Rose and Jennie as the representative figures of black women, their status of being Other’s other would not change before they actively break free by utilizing the power from space transitions. And through the analysis of their constructing process, the paper argues that a powerful, flexible and inclusive “Thirdplace” or “heterotopia” represented by the image of garden for them serves the crucial role for the marginalized group to grow and establish themselves.

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## Albertine in Carson's Queer Journeys: from Stesichoros to Proust

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### **Abstract:**

The queerness of Anne Carson's poetics relies on her understanding how the process of queering language and therefore of *being* itself operates when contingency enables distant characters, myths, artworks to resurrect, connect, transmigrate, inform new paradigms without aiming at the establishment of new orders, canons or identities. This paper examines how Carson's queer imagination brings together Stesichoros and Proust through the latter's character Albertine, a paradigmatic queer figure of defiance. If in *Geryoneis*, Stesichoros rewrites Hercules' tenth labour from the point of view of Geryon, in *Autobiography of Red*, Carson rewrites *Geryoneis* transforming the imperialistic drive into a passionate love affair that leaves the red-winged monster in desperation. The two characters, renamed and middle-aged, meet again in *Red Doc*, a sequel explicitly "haunted by Proust." As Carson herself suggests, G, the adult version of Geryon is the actual author of her next published book, *The Albertine Workout*, a retelling of Albertine's story. Analyzing the three works along with their Proustian intertext, this paper examines how the mythical figure writes *The Albertine Workout* instead of his own autobiography in the precarious form of a school notebook rejecting any definitive reading. Resembling the scattered, numbered pieces of an ancient papyrus, *The Albertine workout* suggests a new definition of writing as only a possible reading of the innumerable versions of Albertine's uncontainable story, of one's always unstable identities and the artificial linearities of every story.

**Keywords:** Queer, adjective, plant, kimono, Contingence

Some scattered pieces of damaged papyri compose the now fragmentary image of an ancient poem. In order to translate its isolated remainders, philologists reorder these pieces, recontextualize the poem and restore its linguistic, generic and metric particularities. Still, the cracks in the poem's image are to the eyes of an artist like Anne Carson as intriguing and compelling as the imagined fissures of the unknown narrative. In her 1998 *Autobiography of Red*, Carson likes to think that ancient lyric poet "Stesichoros had composed a substantial narrative poem, then ripped it to pieces and buried the pieces in a box (...). The fragment numbers tell you roughly how the pieces fell out of the box. You can of course keep shaking the box" (Carson, 1998, pp. 6-7). Carson's pseudo translation of *Geryoneis*, preceded by a pseudo-introduction to Stesichoros' work and three self-declared explanatory appendices, is therefore the translation of a random poem consisting of an aleatory ordering of the initial poem's remaining pieces. In her effort to materialize this procedure, she published in 2016 her work *Float* in the form of a box, inviting the reader to experience the randomness and creativity of reading. Carson mocks the philological conventions in the same way that Virginia Woolf mocks the biographical conventions in her *Orlando: a Biography* in order to submit to the reader the erudite literary result of multiple generic confluences, interlocked intertexts and crossed boundaries.

According to Carson's pseudo introduction, the importance of Stesichoros lies in his extra-ordinary use of adjectives: "Nouns name the world. Verbs activate the names. Adjectives come from somewhere else. (...) These small imported mechanisms are in charge of attaching everything in the world to its place in particularity. They are *the latches of being*" (Carson 1998, p.4). Having inherited from Homer the codified adjectival forms, "Stesichoros began to undo the latches. / Stesichoros released being. All the substances of the world went floating up" (Carson 1998, p. 5). By liberating nouns as the names given to things from their normative adjectives and thus from their particular placing in the world, the ancient poet liberates being. This liberation enabled Stesichoros to rewrite Hercules' tenth labor from the point of view of Geryon, a three-headed red-winged giant. Around a century before the inception of tragedy – a paradigmatic genre of myth rewriting –, the myth of a hero embodying the image of the Greek settler is deconstructed and thereby his labor is transformed into an act of injustice

that leads to the death of Geryon, a now sympathetic and ennobled monstrous creature.

The same passage, somewhat rewritten, is to be found in Carson's 2014 little pamphlet *The Albertine Workout*, a list of 59 reflections (plus some randomly numbered appendices) on Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, emphasizing the pathologies of the Albertine cycle (vol V. *The Captive* & vol. VI *The Fugitive*) and repeating platitudes of Proustian criticism. The beginning of the "appendix 15 (a) on adjectives" reads: "Adjectives are the *handles of being*. Nouns name the world, adjectives let you get hold of the name and keep it from flying all over your mind like a pre-Socratic explanation of the cosmos" (Carson, 1998, p. 25). Suggesting that Proust, like Stesichoros "undoes the latches" and releases being, Carson provides a list of the adjectives that are supposedly given to the air in the different volumes of *La Recherche* in order to deal with what she calls "the desert of After Proust" (Carson, 1998, p. 25).

Liberating the substances of the world from their expected places, both Stesichoros and Proust indeed *queer* language, not to say *being*. Carson's work seems to articulate a new definition of queerness that enables characters, myths, artworks to resurrect, connect, transmigrate, inform new paradigms without aiming at the establishment of new orders, canons or identities. Firstly, her work initiates unexpected philosophical, poetic, generic and formal dialogues without the specific aim of assigning the substances of the world a definitive place. Secondly, acknowledging the mutability of forms, she understands the liberation of being as a constant placing and replacing in space and time. In this way, every queer work is the bearer of the freedom that precedes it, of the undoing of latches that precedes any new, precarious, redoing that the work necessarily proposes. Carson's queer imagination brings together Stesichoros and Proust through Albertine, a paradigmatic queer figure of defiance.

In the Proustian world, Albertine is an athletic young woman associated with motion and speed, who appears for the first time on Balbec's seashore, as part of a girl's group. This *garçonne* who does not hide her scorn for social norms is to the eyes of Marcel a protean, shape-shifting figure that constantly escapes his efforts of appropriation. His desire is aroused by Albertine's unreachability, all the more so when he suspects her of sapphic relations. His possessive jealousy will lead him to sequester her in his Parisian apartment, but she eventually leaves him and dies thrown by her horse

against a tree. During their life together, Albertine's art of lying will save her from Marcel's constant interrogations, while his post-mortem investigations will not succeed in revealing anything about his lover's past. Changeable and ungraspable, Albertine is the Proustian narrator's major representational challenge: ungraspable, she often escapes critical interpretations; changeable, she finds refuge in unexpected fictional worlds, such as Carson's myths and more precisely Hercules' myth to which the poet constantly returns.

To accomplish his tenth labor, Heracles travels to Erytheia and kills Geryon in order to steal his red cattle. If, in *Geryoneis*, Stesichoros rewrites this story transforming a marginal monstrous figure into a noble protagonist, in *Autobiography of Red*, Carson rewrites *Geryoneis* transforming the Greek imperialistic drive of the era into a passionate queer love affair whereby the leather-jacketed popular Heracles leaves the contemporary Geryon, a homosexual, deformed and marginalized red-winged adolescent in desperation. *Red Doc*>, the 2013 sequel of the novel, resumes their story as adults. Geryon, now a herdsman of musk oxen, becomes G, and Herakles, a war veteran, presents himself with his army name Sad But Great. Returning from war with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), Sad travels with G and Ida, their common artist friend, on a road trip interrupted by the presence of the characters at the hospital where G's mother must face her death. As far as it follows a similar plot-line to *Autobiography of Red*, *Red Doc*> is in a way a less coherent and more abrupt rewriting of its prequel. Its intrigue seems to defy causality as much as its structural and graphic form is, according to Carson herself, the product of "error and chance," sometimes prosaically generated by hitting the wrong computer buttons. Contrary to the *Autobiography of Red*, *Red Doc*> is not wrapped up within a pseudo-theoretical apparatus, and it is divided into three different forms "left aligned, deeply indented dialogues" (...); "center-aligned, chorus-like commentaries titled "Wife of Brain;" and predominantly, narrow columns of justified text" (Scranton, p. 209).

Returning to the questions of Eros and Thanatos, time, memory and loss, *Red Doc*> is, according to its publisher, Knopf, "haunted by Proust." There is perhaps no more appropriate place for Proust to emerge than the conversation of G with his dying mother with which the work begins. Having just finished his seven-year reading of Proust's novel, G has to deal not only with the end of the reading experience and the "desert of after Proust," but also with the tribulations of the read: on the one hand, around



the death of the Proustian protagonist's grand-mother, the narrator develops his theory of "the intermittencies of the heart"; on the other hand, his grief after Albertine's loss intertwines the deaths of the two women.

Midway through their journey, the ex-lovers are joined by Ida, with whom Sad, a self-declared homosexual (Carson, 2014a, p. 41), engages in a sexual relationship triggering G's jealousy or, as he says; "not exactly. But comparison is involved." Thus jealousy, the main question that pervades the Albertine cycle, introduces the Proustian captive in Carson's narrative. In *La Recherche*, at least according to the narrator's categories, sapphism epitomizes sexual difference: Albertine is a woman whose desires and pleasures exclude men, a woman who defies both sharing and identification. Marcel's question is therefore: what does a woman give to Albertine that I cannot? In an interesting reversal, G does not wonder what a woman gives to Sad, but rather what Sad gives to Ida ("he wonders how Ida finds Sad as a lover") (Carson, 2014a, p. 85), before he falls asleep: "Men fall asleep after sex and girls get used to it. G never did," (Carson, 2014a, p. 85) but "G could never bear to watch Sad sleep" (Carson, 2014a, p. 90). While G is interested in Sad being awake, Ida is interested in him when he is asleep, as she compares her encounter with G to a "pie without a fork." Thus, G's humorous identification with Ida blurs the male/female gender binary and destabilizes sexual categories such as homosexuality.

The incident with Ida watching Sad asleep, brings to G's mind Marcel's infamous somnophilia in *The Captive*, i.e. the moments when the protagonist takes sexual pleasure while playing with Albertine's unresponsive body. Not only Carson, but various renowned female re-writers of Albertine's story, such as Angela Carter (*The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*), Jacqueline Rose (*Albertine*) and Chantal Ackerman (*La Captive*) are appalled by this episode. Humorous, doubtful and ironic, Carson denounces, as if innocently and colloquially, the implausibility of the incident. Wavering between his desire for the fugitive and his will for the absolute knowledge of the other, the Proustian narrator believes that "one only loves that which one does not entirely possess," as the 52<sup>nd</sup> aphorism in *The Albertine Workout* reads (Carson, 2014b, 18). Thus, Albertine's imprisonment becomes nothing more than a constant succession of jealous anxiety and boredom that only the pleasing moments of her sleep can interrupt. Paradoxically, Albertine's sleep seems to provide to the protagonist the strange possibility of really possessing her without her losing her otherness. On the one hand,

Marcel can see Albertine without being seen and thus exposed: he can hide, lie, act on his desire without being revealed. On the other hand, seeing Albertine when she is most incapable of escaping through language or her gaze, the narrator believes that he subjects or even colonizes her body – a body that now shelters all her plurality, all the different beings that she can be when awoken.

Decontextualized and stripped of the numerous Proustian adjectives, the incident emerges in all its crudeness (Carson, 2014a, p. 88):

THINKING ABOUT  
PROUST to pass the time.  
What a scamp that Proust.  
That Albertine. Does  
anyone really believe the  
girl stays asleep for four  
pages in volume V while  
Marcel roams around her  
prostrate form and  
stretches out beside it on  
the bed. He touches her  
lips strokes her cheek  
presses his leg to her leg  
then spends a long time  
staring at the kimono  
flung on a chair with all  
her letters in the inside  
pocket. *Albertine  
continuait de dormir.* He  
says he likes her better  
asleep because she loses  
her humanity and is just a  
plant. A sleep plant that  
cannot tell him lies or  
escape his knowing. Poor  
Marcel. What is there to  
know.

Humorizing with Proust's lost and regained time, G thinks of Proust to *pass* the time. Writing beyond the constraints of scholarly discourse, Carson

can assign to “that” Proust in particular the predicate of “scamp,” but no attributes are attached to “that” Albertine who is nothing but his sexual object. I will focus on G’s emphasis on the leitmotivs of “kimono” and of “plant” that also reappear in *The Albertine Workout*. In a preview reading of this work, Carson declined authorship by saying that this little text is actually G’s first academic treatise. *The Albertine Workout* is a development of G’s three-page thoughts on Albertine in *Red Doc* denouncing in fact sexual power, lies, dissimulations, illusions and self-deception.

Carson’s or G’s opusculum starts with a series of statistical, and certainly random, details, concerning *La Recherche* that could have resulted from a digital humanities’ approach:

2.

Albertine’s name occurs 2,363 times in Proust’s novel, more than any other character.

3.

Albertine herself is present or mentioned on 807 pages of Proust’s novel.

4.

On a good 19% of these pages she is asleep.

(Carson, 2014b, p. 2)

Once she numerically establishes the importance of Albertine’s sleep or the overwhelming presence of her silence in the work, she comes back to the character’s transformation into a vegetal being.

24.

The state of Albertine that most pleases Marcel is Albertine asleep.

25.

By falling asleep she becomes a plant, he says.

26.

Plants do not actually sleep. Nor do they lie or even bluff. They do, however, expose their genitalia.

(Carson, 2014b, p. 10)

Her dehumanization while asleep eliminates one of Albertine's "problems," as Carson names them, namely, lying or even bluffing. Albertine as a sleeping human changes species: she becomes a plant, and as such she does not actually sleep. Viewed as a plant, Albertine is neither awake nor asleep, but she exposes her "genitalia." Paradoxically, as a plant she is exposed in her human nakedness and becomes manipulatable in her intimacy. Albertine asleep evokes Ophelia, and as Carson specifies, the similarity is neither with Shakespeare's character nor with Ophelia as a narrative structure, but with Hamlet's presumed object of desire. This kinship is firstly inscribed, as Carson suggests, in "the sexual life of plants," which, as she states, "Proust and Shakespeare equally enjoy using as language of female desire" (Carson, 2014b, p. 11). This remark brings to mind the lengthy commentary that inaugurates the fourth volume of Proust's novel, *Sodom and Gomorrah*, inspired by the sexuality of plants that constitutes a rather conservative understanding of human sexuality based on clichés around male homosexuality. However, as Sedgwick suggests, Gomorrah in *La Recherche* embodies "a modern, less mutilating and hierarchical sexuality" (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 235) than Sodom. Without referring to queerness, Sedgwick argues that Albertine's sexuality, unlike Proustian representations of male homosexuality, seems to represent "infinity, indeterminacy, contingency, play, etc." (Sedgwick, 1990, p. 236) Nevertheless, Carson neither refers to the Proustian narrator's botanical sexology, nor to the "female desire" as she claims, but rather to the male gaze's tendency to vegetalize female desire, in order to avoid facing its double nature as both inviting and threatening and thus to deny it expression. While the second point of paragraph 27 states that "Sometimes (...) Marcel's possesses her" (Carson, 2014b, p. 11), he, in fact, only believes that he does, for he actually never engages in sexual relations with Albertine.

29.

(...). Ophelia takes sexual appetite into the river and drowns it amid water plants. Albertine distorts hers into the false consciousness of a sleep plant. In both scenarios the man appears to be in control of the script yet he gets himself tangled up in the wiles of the woman. On the other hand, who is bluffing whom is hard to say.

The Proustian protagonist feels himself compelled to confess: "If Albertine's lips were closed, her eyelids, on the other hand, seen from where I was placed, seemed so loosely joined that I might almost have questioned

whether she really was asleep” (Proust, 2012) Driven by the narrative, Carson restores the agency of sexual objects over their neglected desire. Curiously, Marcel’s gaze does not objectify Albertine; rather her vegetalization subjectifies her: she is the one who distorts her desire into the false consciousness of a sleep plant. Considering the Marxist undertones, this false consciousness translates into the blindness regarding her own oppression or exploitation, a blindness that she can fake by being a plant in the eyes of Marcel. Albertine as a plant becomes for Carson a sleep plant, a plant that not only does not sleep, but induces sleep. Thus, Albertine outwits the presumed master of the situation by distorting her own desire in such a way as to seem ignorant of the oppressive nature of Marcel’s pleasure. Nevertheless, the question remains unresolved: who is bluffing whom? Marcel who believes he controls or Albertine who believes that she escapes? In “appendix 53 on the bluff,” Carson writes that for Proust:

“the difference between bluffing in poker and bluffing in love” is that “a card game is played in the present tense and all that matters is victory. But love reaches into past and future and fantasy; its suffering consists in positing to those realms all that the bluff conceals” (Carson, 2014b, p. 37).

If Albertine’s sleep was a card game, then victory goes to Marcel for his enjoyment. But given that the incident is emblematic of Marcel’s love for Albertine, his suffering is a placing of the bluff in space and time; it is a narrative in a box, and therefore interpretation depends on how the pieces fall out of the box; it is subjected to error and chance, to unexpectedness.

Marcel does not only stare at Albertine’s sleep, but “spends a lot of time staring at the kimono flung on a chair with all her letters in the inside pocket.” This kimono that Albertine throws off sometimes in her sleep so that she lies naked exposing her genitalia may contain the truth that Marcel is looking for or not. For the truth of her non-vegetal state, namely her presumed sapphic relations, is not to be found in her female nakedness but in what actually covers it. “Appendix 29 on kimonos” reads:

Knowledge of other people is unendurable. Japanese kimonos were in style in Paris in the ’20s. they had been redesigned for the European market, with less sleeve and more pocket. Albertine keeps all her letters in the pocket of the kimono that she carelessly tosses over a chair in Marcel’s room just before falling asleep. The truth

about Albertine is *that close*. Marcel does not investigate. Knowledge of other people is unendurable (Carson, 2014b, p. 31).

It is note-worthy that even for seemingly unimportant de-tails, Carson changes her narrative within the same work. Albertine throws off her kimono “in her sleep” in paragraph 27, but here “she carelessly tosses it over a chair before falling asleep.” Is it Albertine as a sleep plant who gets rid of her kimono or is it this other unpossessable Albertine who is careless? Is she really careless or is it that the letters in her pocket do not in fact include any revealing details? Introduced in Paris in the 20s, the kimono, a garment of rich history, becomes paradoxically a symbol of women’s emancipation and body liberation. Whether it gained “more pocket” due to westernization or Carson’s humoristic imagination, it is hard to say. In any case, “more pocket” translates into more privacy and therefore more autonomy, and in Marcel’s case into temptation. His inquisitive jealousy, unstoppable investigations and entrapment in the multiple layers of his own lies as well as Albertine’s presumed ones is satirized and trivialized by the retelling of this trifling kimono incident. The twice repeated “knowledge of other people is unendurable” is in dialogue with G’s rhetorical question: “what is there to know.” Marcel does not dare to know what he actually does not want to know and what in fact he cannot know.

Albertine’s story is retold by G, the adult version of a red monster, queered by Carson who retells his story. I do not have time here to develop the relation between queerness and monstrosity, brilliantly analyzed by Jack Halberstam. As a mythical figure, Geryon is shape-shifting as far as different cultures, eras and artworks change his features. As a hybrid figure of liminality, he has a propensity to change. But let us not forget that in Dante’s *Inferno*, to which Carson does not refer, Geryon becomes the monster of fraud, the figure of duplicity *par excellence* and thus Albertine’s ancestor. *Autobiography of Red* is not Geryon’s autobiography but the history of a non-written autobiography, that as we read in *Red Doc*>, he abandoned because nothing was happening in his life. *The Albertine workout* takes the place of this non-written autobiography. The paragraphs of the work are numbered as if they were fragments of an ancient text in a box. Along with the randomly numbered appendices, it is published in the precarious form of a school notebook defying any definitive reading. Every time we shake the box, different versions of Albertine’s life, of Geryon’s autobiography, of Carson’s work, of Steisichoros’ poem emerge, remapping identities, mythologies, literary landscapes and reshaping space and time.

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**“I Think Where I Live”.**  
**Decolonizing Gender and Race/ethnicity at the Periphery of  
the West**

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“Fight like a forest”

Letter of Xapuri, a collective drafted manifesto that reaffirms the commitment to stand up for the Amazon and its peoples.

(December 2018)

**Abstract:**

We have been living through challenging times, of fear and violence, real and symbolic, as the tentacles of COVID-19 took by assault the world we live in and made even more visible the inequalities among nations, the fragility of democratic political systems and, particularly in some latitudes, the precariousness of human lives under political systems blind to questions related to human rights. In fact, precariousness has been a hallmark in the history of Latin American countries since the so-called “discovery” by European conquerors. Specifically in Brazil, under the rule of the Portuguese imperial state, the colonial government consolidated its power by establishing laws of forced labor for indigenous peoples and by the deployment of slave traffic policies that lasted for four centuries. The western colonial legacy in terms of hierarchies of gender, race, and ethnicity outlasts to this day, perpetuating marginalizations, prejudices, violence, and death. This means that the universals of European modernity such as the concept of state, democracy, progress, rationality, and universal citizenship have become tokens of a privileged parcel of the white population. To some extent, the colonization process in Brazil is still going on, producing brutality and destruction in ways unknown to modern Europe. As a comparatist, I believe that the challenges of the present allow us to rethink our intellectual work in terms of discovering new angles to approach questions related to belongingness as well as to examine differences and raise the issue of who has no



right to live a livable life, in political and symbolical terms. Such a question demands rethinking our relation to the other as other so then we can meet the other. This move is aligned with a comparatist *ethos*, that is, a dialogical reasoning oriented towards the other, with respect to differences and with recognition of diversity.

**Keywords:** Colonization, Original Peoples, Dewesternization, Liminal Space, Women's Writing

Since I intend to approach two Brazilian women writers whose ethnicities belong to distinct indigenous nations, it is important to provide some data that allows one to understand the historical context of original peoples in Brazil. In the first two centuries following the discovery of Brazil, more than half of the original peoples were exterminated mainly because of contact with white men's diseases such as cold and smallpox. In the centuries that followed, many became slaves in sugar cane plantations, in the mining business, or in the extraction of rubber in the Amazon area. In this period, 700 of the 1,200 nations were wiped out of existence. Moreover, according to the research by a major Brazilian anthropologist, Darcy Ribeiro, in his *Os índios e a civilização*, 87 groups disappeared in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As to the 1,300 spoken languages that existed, there are only 165 in use today, and only half of them have been described by ethnologists and linguists. The majority of the Brazilian indigenous nations are located in the Amazon area, in reservations that are invaded now and then by white farmers. Today, there are only 305 ethnic groups, some running the risk of extinction. In fact, the genocide of indigenous peoples and the ecocide of original forests by white trespassers with the avowal of local and central governments have been going on since the sixteenth century and it was intensified since 1900. It is important to add that the Amazon River basin contains the largest rainforest on earth, roughly the size of 48 contiguous US territories. It covers 40% of the South American continent and its river system is the lifeline of the forest peoples. Unfortunately, Brazilian governments, particularly the latest one, have failed in their approach to the

destruction of the forest by closing their eyes to the crimes committed by illegal mining and by white landowners who expand their activities into indigenous territories. And worst, there is leniency on the part of authorities towards the invasion of demarcated indigenous territories by miners who, in their search for gold and precious materials, contaminate rivers with heavy metals causing widespread lethal diseases. The existing 305 ethnic groups are divided into two major branches: *Macro-Jê* which includes the groups called Boróro, Guató, Jê, Karajá, Krenák, Maxakali, Ofayé, Rikbaktsa e Yatê. And *Tupi* with the groups Arikém, Awetí, Jurúna, Mawé, Mondé, Mundurukú, Puroborá, Ramaráma, Tuparí e Tupi-Guarani.

Given that the colonial matrix of power is the very foundation of Western Civilization, I take the decolonial approach as a gesture of disobedience to the dictates of such a matrix by bringing up the works of some intellectuals who shared the need to build up a critique of the historical colonizer project. One of the pioneers of the decolonial is the scholar Mary Louise Pratt, who denounced the colonial genocide that took place in Latin American and Caribbean countries in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, published in 1992. For Pratt, the discourse of colonialism is the history of vigilance, the evaluation of resources, and the political control of the population. Her book was the first one to discuss European colonialism in South America, particularly from the Enlightenment period onwards, a time when the discourse of western history naturalized the middle class as a global presence of power and authority. Another important scholar is Anibal Quijano, who developed the concept of the coloniality of power in the essay “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality” published in the collection of essays entitled *Globalization and the decolonial turn* (2010). For Quijano, the relation modernity/coloniality/ decoloniality is not just the naming of an event but a complex relational structure of power. According to Walter D. Mignolo in his book *The darker side of western modernity: global futures, decolonial options* (2011), the modern/colonial period launched the process of westernization of the Americas what has meant that the racial/ethnic hierarchy based on the distinction of the human and the non-human constitutes the foundational colonial difference. For Mignolo, this distinction was institutionalized allowing native peoples and African slaves to be defined and treated as animals. From the point of view of a decolonial approach, the question of time is also important since time is heterogeneous as it encompasses layers of experiences of

distinct social groups, an unequal simultaneity of experiences in a historical, political, and cultural context of differences, conflicts, and violence. Therefore, the decolonial is not just one more theory but a new mode to approach history that runs counter to the modern project of social wellbeing that, as we know, reduced differences to inferior otherness, particularly in the so-called New World. As an analytical tool, the decolonial paves the way for the recognition and comparison of standpoints or *loci* of speech not recognized as legitimate, as well as of aesthetic forms situated in geographical, cultural, and political areas not located in spaces legitimized by the traditional academic world. Along these lines, I would add that a comparative feminist decolonial perspective plays an important critical-ethical function in the processes of resistance and emancipation of gender/ ethnic identities, as well as in the development of competencies of living together as human species. Today, this competence is vital for the survival of humans on the planet and in harmony with the life of the planet of which humans are only a part. So, to think of a planetary re-existence means to hear and respect peoples whose ways of being, languages, thoughts, and stories are valuable tools to teach us about the relationship of humans with the natural world. Along these lines is all the more important to understand that, for original peoples, nature is sacred so much so that they call it *Mother Earth*.

The visibility of literature by indigenous women started in the 1990s with the rise of small imprints, a move followed up by major publishing houses. Their writings are acts of survival and resilience as they delve into ancestral memories as well as create new angles to approach questions of gender, otherness, and belongingness. On reading works by Julie Dorrico and Eliane Potiguara, I had an encounter with alterity that led me to read otherness as a location outside myself. This means I had to let go regimes of signification and evaluation embedded in the traditional concept of “literature” particularly in terms of its historical alliance with hegemonic structures such as ethnocentrism, patriarchalism, and racism in a geography where processes of colonization are still going on. On the other hand, I realized that the comparatist concept of liminal space is of particular relevance here because it allows erasing hierarchical distinctions of western thought transplanted to South America by opening the possibility of identifying intercultural intractabilities that are resistant to assimilation. Actually, the concept makes it possible to address the issue of intra-national borders to make visible texts, discourses and imaginaries silenced in the history of

white hegemony and its monopoly of writing. In this context, I focus on two women writers, Eliane Potiguara (Potiguara is her ethnic belonging) and Julie Dorrico (of the Macuxi branch).

Eliane Potiguara was the first Brazilian indigenous woman writer to publish in Brazil and the only one to receive the title of Doctor “Honoris Causa”. Her first book, published in 1989 and entitled *A terra é mãe do índio* (*The earth is the Indian’s mother*) is considered today a classical piece. Her personal history is unique. As an indigenous woman, she made a petition in the 47<sup>th</sup> Congress of the North American Indians, in New Mexico (USA), which was sent to the United Nations. After this event, she spent six years traveling to Switzerland where she participated in the draft of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, in Geneva. Today she is a Peace Ambassador of the French Writers Circle. The hybridity of her writings can be exemplified in the way she mentions sometimes God, sometimes Tupã as if she is moving into two cultural universes. Her third book, *Metade cara, metade máscara* (*Half face, half mask*) published in 2004 is an assortment of narratives: it encompasses a historical account of the rising of indigenous literature in Brazil, some autobiographical essays, an attempt to describe the form of indigenous writing in terms of an oral-aural tradition, and fictional narratives that combine letter and pictorial drawing. It is as if the whole text is transfigured into a woman’s song, an eulogy permeated by nostalgia and consciousness of ancestrality but at the same a celebration of a collective identity in songs and rituals where nature and culture do not constitute a duality. In this sense, her writing is a space of multi-signification woven in the light of ancestral traditions that unveil the close relation of myth and poetry, history and memory, geography and nation, identity and alterity. By all means, it is possible to affirm that Potiguara’s writing is a poetic form that liberates the pain to rescue indigenous spirituality and to pass on the knowledge her grandmother had passed on to her. Yet, she also approaches a contemporary theme very dear to women in general. Her poem “Woman” is a sample of her activism:

Come on sister,  
drink of this fountain que awaits for you  
my words are sweet and tender  
scream to the world your story  
go ahead and do not despair.

Come on sister,  
 drink from the true fountain  
 that I make your head rise  
 because your pain is not the first  
 and a new day is to start  
 Come on, sister wash your pain in the river  
 call the birds  
 and sing with them, even alone,  
 and see your strong body flourish  
 Come on, sister  
 take off your dirty clothes  
 stay naked in the woods  
 vomit your silence  
 and run as a child made a heron.  
 Come on, sister  
 free your tormented soul  
 free your loving heart  
 Search for yourself and scream:  
 I am a woman warrior  
 I am a conscious Woman!  
 (Potiguara, 2018, p. 43, my translation)

The book entitled *Eu sou macuxi e outras histórias (I am macuxi and other stories)* by Julie Dorrico was published in 2019. It is a collection of ten short narratives that not only break down the difference between prose and poetry but intermingles writing and handmade figures drawn with a black pencil. Memory is the major theme, the key to the discovery of the self, for remembering origins and for dreaming of other landscapes that inhabit the spirit in its journey to recover its ancestry. The title of the first story is an affirmation of her ethnic origin: “I am macuxi, daughter of Makunaima.” Makunaima is a hero of the oral tradition in the region that covers countries such as Brazil, Guiana, and Venezuela. The poem goes on: “I am daughter of Makunaima who created my grandmother: first in wax, but she melted. Then in clay: resisting to the sun she began to exist forever” (page 17, my translation). For Dorrico, to remember is to search for the beginnings as a means to engender her sense of self and of her belongingness, a myth-making operation that reveals its secret through the synergy of the natural world and of the social world where she lives and breaths. The imagetic structure of the poems embedded in words-assemblage, assonance and

onomatopoeia that carries the sound of the forest evokes an ancestral poetics being re-engendered. In the second poem-story entitled “Damurida”, the name of a traditional spicy meal of her people, Dorrico affirms its magical effect in terms of opening a window to her ancestors. As she mentions the green, yellow and red peppers that “dance in the river of my memory, invoking the old song of ancestors that calls me back home” (page 27, my translation) the poet affirms that her struggles are to honor every day the struggle of her grandmother against the captors of their souls, which made them hard and incapable of being transformed every day. In her stories embedded in the sacred knowledge of her people, Dorrico weaves an imaginary that affirms the relation of myth and poetry, memory and history, identity and resistance. The Portuguese language is handled in such a novel way in terms of accent, rhythm, syntax, and vestiges of oral tradition, projecting an image-tic fabric loaded with a subjectivity that passes on resilience and empowerment.

One day my mother decided to create myself as a woman.  
And created, in the decade of 1990, all right.  
But decided that my language would not be macuxi, like the one of  
my ancestors,  
And not the language of the englisman,  
But the portuguese language.  
I did not want to, no.  
So I decided to create my own.  
But as I cannot ran away from the verb that formed me,  
I put together two languages to tell a story:  
The inglexi and the macuxês  
Because it is for sure that my world – the world – must be created  
every day.  
And it is transforming my words that I present my voice.  
(Dorrigo, 2019, p.21, my translation)

My fight is to honour the struggle of my grandmother: everyday,  
tirelessly, forever.  
To fight against the captor spirits of our Spirits  
Against of what harden us and made us incapable of transformation  
everyday  
I’kareme kîiiiiiii waitíiiii  
I am telling you (ri-uí-li)

Greens, yellows and reds  
Dance in my dreams  
Rocking the rhythm of my encounter with Anikê and Insikiran  
Greens, yellows and reds  
Greens greens greens  
Reds reds reads  
Yellows, yellows yellows to infinite.  
(Dorrigo,2019, p. 29, my translation)

On these terms, Dorrigo's writing constitutes a literary object that cannot adjust to the categories traditionally defined by the reference system of western literature. As a reader, I find it impossible not to be affected by it and recognize that it moved me, altering perception of oneself, of the natural world and of the present time, as the forest and its peoples are under attack.

Both Eliane Potiguara and Julie Dorrigo not only challenge the old/new colonialism of minds and bodies but they also reaffirm the bonds between humans and the natural world, bonds that the ongoing present colonialism seeks to erase. The strength of their texts lies on the affects they mobilize. They are decolonizing Brazilian literature and deconstructing the myth-making of the patriarchal white national imaginary rooted in the image of the people as "one".

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# Writing the Margins: Plural Perspectives on Transgender Lives from Transgender Activists in India

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## **Abstract:**

The Supreme Court of India in a judgement of 2014, affirmed recognition of transgenders. This was hailed as a great step forward. However, a more nuanced understanding shows that the verdict also increases greater state and social control over gender marginality and gender expressions that question the binary. This contradictory judgement compels me to look at literary articulations of transgender activists, examining the plural, often quite divergent perspectives that occur. Manobi Bandyopadhyay tells of the conflict between the physical and the mental orientation, and hegemonic concept of physical identity and gender performativity. Her writing also sharply questions by implication the component of the SC verdict where transgender seems equated with hijra. In Living Smile Vidya's *I Am Vidya*, the focus is on the transformation from the supposed to the real, which in a way is also a journey from the centre to the margin. A Revathi's, *The Truth About Me* looks at the violence, trauma and degradations that transgenders face, especially when being a hijra and being a sex worker appear the main occupations before them. Finally, Kalki Subramaniam's *We Are Not The Others*, reinserts the transgenders in the world in its totality, and in a combination of poems and essays, sets out to challenge, and subvert binary visions based on traditional culture, such as Krishna, 448 the male god protecting Draupadi when she is about to be disrobed, in a poem that both invokes that image and then rejects it. This study will be based on autobiographies and other writings of Indian transgenders, and also on theoretical insights developed by Indian queer activist – scholars. It will examine the problems involved in the interaction between Indian lived reality and terms originally developed in the West.

**Keywords:** Transgender, Citizenship, Memoirs, Hijra



## Documents Defining Transgender – Memoirs of Some Transwomen Activists

Transgender is a term encompassing a range of persons with gender dysphoria and are perceived in different ways. Committed and competent queer scholars, like Aniruddha Dutta (Dutta, 2014; Dutta, 2019) and Sayan Bhattacharya (Bhattacharya, 2019) have examined the legal ramifications, as well as the complexities of meshing realities (originated in a different social-cultural-linguistic milieu) with the transgender identity. Looking at the famous NALSA (National Legal Services Authority, April 2014) Supreme Court (India) judgement, Dutta finds a common trait (Dutta, 2014), among certain earlier documents issued by transnational bodies like the UNDP or the National AIDS Control Organisation, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJE) Report ‘issues relating to transgender persons’, and the 2014 judgement. These documents seek to delineate who is/not transgender. In addition, they also deal with the legal identity of transgender persons and how to implement the recognition of such a legal identity.

The NALSA judgement shuttles between an overarching term comprising wide range of positions outside the cis-male and cis-female binary, and a narrower definition based mainly on hijra and transwomen identities (Dutta, 2014, pp. 231-234). The judgment, like the MSJE report, demonstrates contrary tendencies between an attempt to grant self-determination of gender identity without showing surgery/hormonal transition, and the bureaucratic imposition of gender identities. The NALSA judgement, in places, appears to blend all *hijra* and transgender people into a ‘third gender’; while elsewhere the same judgement put restrictions on who can be identified as ‘male’ or ‘female’, based on external criteria like surgery or psychological tests. Sayan Bhattacharya (Bhattacharya, 2019), asked whether the conferring of citizenship to transgenders by the judgement and law does not also involve the potential for violent exclusions.

It is in the light of these questions that I want to look at the different ways in which different transgender activists have related their experiences, and how these come together to question many of the assumptions behind the Supreme Court judgement. My methodology in this paper seeks to combine Policy Documents with the experiences and oral testimonies of some of the transwomen activists.

## **The Transgender/Hijra Spectrum and Conflict: Manobi Bandyopadhyay: A Gift of Goddess Lakshmi**

This autobiography (Bandyopadhyay, 2017) traces how young Somnath started getting signals that he was not the man he was expected to be. The effect was traumatic for not only Somnath/Manobi, but also for the family. As she relates, in public understanding, the term and concept of a 'transgender' did not exist. What existed was the 'hijra', seen as violent, uncouth, and only questionably human.

In August 2016, the Government of India (GOI) approved The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016 (GOI, 2016) to supposedly protect rights of transgender people in India. The Bill had incorporated none of the feedback given from the country-wide transgender community-led consultations in response to a draft of early 2016 (GOI, 2015). The Bill defined "transgender" as:

one who is (i) neither wholly female nor male; or (ii) a combination of female and male; or (iii) neither female nor male. In addition, the person's gender must not match the gender assigned at birth. This will include trans-men, trans-women, persons with intersex variations and gender queers (GOI, 2016).

Thus, the State's definition of gender was rooted in the binary in which "transgender" as a category is simply a lack which needs to be pathologized. Also, by defining "transgender" as combinations of both or being neither, the State refused recognition to those trans-individuals who identify themselves as simply "male" or "female." In other words, the State resorts to a biologically deterministic definition. This was somewhat modified when the bill was passed by the Lok Sabha in 2018, mainly due to large-scale feedback from the community, but my concern here is with perceptions.

F.L. Rudorfer defines (Rudorfer, 2014) Hijras more as a social group, part religious cult and part caste, than a minority. Moreover Serena Nanda (Nanda, 2014, pp. 28-31) sees the Hijras as women also unlike women, who are also both men and not men. Despite their ambiguities, she suggests that within their religious cultural contexts the hijra role gets a positive gender variance and even a measure of power. Hijras are also routinely viewed with suspicion. Colonialism had defined them as a 'criminal tribe' in the Criminal

Tribes Act, 1871, and though they were denotified by the Habitual Offenders Act of 1952 the stigma remained.

Thus, Somnath's identification as a Hijra was seen as a terrible stigma on the family. Coming from a middle-class family, and possessing academic abilities, Somnath survived by being good in studies. But as he grew older, faced problems and even betrayal in erotic relationships. Many who knew him considered him a *girlish boy*. But Somnath increasingly felt he was a woman trapped in a male body, a feeling that equated neither with the homosexual as others were considering him, nor the hijra. Somnath, in her college days (early 1980s) in Naihati, a small-town suburb (North 24 Parganas), decided to come out as a transwoman without using this word (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, pp. 47-49).

Manobi Bandyopadhyay tells of the conflict between the physical and the mental orientation, and hegemonic concept of physical identity and gender performativity. Her first attempt at Gender Affirmation Surgery (GAS) did not take off. As full-time college teacher at Jhargram Vivekananda Shatavarshiki College, certain teachers, who being part of the then dominant political party in the province, were sufficiently powerful to vitiate her work space. "Surya and Chandresh had managed to convince the other teachers that I was an aberration and that they collectively needed to force me out of the college. No one as lowly as a hijra should be allowed to teach in a college, share the same staffroom, toilet and facilities" (Bandyopadhyay, 2017, p. 93). Beyond these serious harassment issues, there was a constant mental turmoil. As Bandyopadhyay wrote:

"my mind would go into a state of flux and the turmoil would sear me from within. *Am I really a woman trapped in a male body or are these just delirious thoughts?*"... I would spend hours standing naked in front of the mirror... I could not relate one bit to this body that was absolutely linear with no curves in sight" (p.109).

This also led to attempts at performing being a masculine person, by smoking. GAS did not solve Manobi's problems: a case was filed against her; she went through the trauma of having to 'prove' herself a woman with a vagina to a government doctor, and faced promotion related problems because the Education Ministry would not accept that Somnath, M.A. and M. Phil, and Manobi, PhD, were the same person. However, Manobi did manage to overcome the hurdles. But her story also shows that the social

capital, the fact that she was an educated person, a teacher, who was befriended by important human rights figures like Sujato Bhadra of Kolkata and Bratya Basu, a college teacher and theatre personality who became Education Minister under the new Trinamul Congress government in 2011, gave her a boost. This divergence attempts to identify all transgender with hijras.

### **Living Smile Vidya: *I am Vidya A Transgender's Journey***

Vidya narrates a somewhat different story. Queer theory is now taught and M.Phils and PhDs done on this area, in India. But no remarkable change has come upon the lives of hijras facing daily harassment including police arrest on sight. One reason is limited options open to them. Hijras are often born male, but look and dress in feminine traditions. Some choose to undergo castration. The defining characteristic of most hijras is that of leaving their home to become a part of the hijra community. Traditionally, this community is defined by a *guru-chela* relationship. The guru (teacher) teaches the chela (disciple). Hijras are expected to perform dances, songs, and blessings at both births and weddings of Hindus. Traditionally, it was held that a hijra's blessings of a baby will confer fertility, prosperity, and long life on the child. While hijras are often invited to perform these rituals, they also attend births and marriages unannounced, claiming their right to ritual duties.

In recent times, a homo-nationalist discourse has come up, which points to a few well-known cases in ancient Hindu mythology to argue that transgenders or hijras (again conflating the two) were well respected in India (Nanda, 2014, pp. 27-37) the reality is that hijra are often treated with contempt. They are almost always excluded from employment and education outside of their ritual roles. As a result, they are often stricken by poverty and forced into begging and sex-work to survive. As victims of violence, harassed by police, they are often refused treatment at hospitals. However, the outsider view, that hijras are beggars, or that it is a profession, does not recognize the socio-cultural dimension of being a hijra. Harassment, rejection, isolation and societal discrimination seem to lead to depression and suicidal tendencies and many other emotional and mental distress (Mal, 2018, p.100).

Vidya's book (Vidya, 2013) traces the transformation from her assigned male identity to the preferred female one. But unlike in the case of Manobi,

Vidya faced a greater trauma and a harder life. At home, she was never allowed to do household work, since she was a boy, and the sole male heir (another parallel with Somnath/Manobi, but again with differences). Unlike Manobi, Vidya did join a hijra group. Vidya tells us, that unlike in many countries, Gender Affirmation Surgery does not happen. Vidya's narrative makes it appear as though this is due to legal hurdles. In fact, social and economic hurdles are more important. Before undergoing GAS there is a need for therapy and protracted hormone treatment. Government hospitals have a generally bad reputation for dismissive handling of transgender patients. In private hospitals, the cost of gender affirmation surgery can be between Rs. 2 lakhs to Rs 5 lakhs for male to female, and Rs. 4 lakhs to Rs 8 lakhs for female to male (Ghosh, 2020).

The average monthly salary of regular wage earners in July-September 2019 amounted to Rs 13,912 for rural males and Rs 19,194 for urban males; Rs 12,090 in the same period for rural females and an average Rs 15,031 for urban females (Kapoor and Duggal, 2022, p. 29). As a result, though in recent years there has been some governmental financial support, but the rules include the need to show Transgender Identity Cards (TIC) along with other documents while the overwhelming majority of applications for TIC are kept pending for very long period. So, what happens far more often is for those born with a male assigned gender role who want to change:

“What we undergo here is merely illegal castration under local anaesthesia – its fruits include a lack of social approval, such as denial of jobs and opportunities for higher education... The operation is no different from a procedure performed at the butcher's shop” (Vidya, 2013, pp. 99-100).

The life as a chela is described at length by Vidya. On one hand, she did finally find a companionship where she was accepted in the way she wanted to be. But it came with an agonizing public existence. For a Master of Arts in Linguistics, simply learning begging was complicated. And then there was the life of stress, facing abuse, leading uncertain existence. As she describes, while begging in a train, she was faced with not just taunts but violence. For saying the money given was too little she was slapped, and for protesting the slap, men collectively assaulted her.

“one of them held my arms and intertwined them between the stairs of the ladder to the upper berth; another pulled my hair; a third thug whipped me with the buckled end of his belt, hitting my face” (Vidya, 2013, p. 96).

And the Vidyas had to tackle such violence by themselves. The police are generally hostile to hijras. A shift of locale to relatives did not help, because surgery or not, her identity was to cause irritation among them, leading to repeated trauma for her. As written/narrated by her, the journey was not a simple liner move to acceptance. There were some people who understood, and that was why she was able to get a job. But she had to risk life, as well as prestige, to gain the identity she wanted. Since she not only survived, but actually got a position in a micro-credit institution, it might appear as a tale of triumph. As Vidya weaves the narration though, the difficulties and barbs loom large. It took her a year and a half to get her name changed legally. (Vidya, 2013, pp.134-5). Even though accepted at her office, she records being the victim of insults just casually flung at her. Vidya’s book ends with the following: “I do not ask for heaven – I am begging to be spared from living hell. I plead for myself and fellow *tirunangais*. Thank you for understanding” (p. 138). Saravanan, later renamed Vidya, had also taken a decision that she would beg, but would not become a sex-worker (p. 82). This is a record of her stance, not any value judgement.

### **A Revathi: *The Truth About Me***

This same trauma, violence, and degradations are more ghastly underscored by Revathi who ran away from home while a young boy and less educated than Vidya, did not have these options, left to Vidya. Her guru was happy to find her. She followed her guru who had relocated to Delhi. But she spent a life in extreme hardship in Delhi and Mumbai, though she would again go to Chennai for her operation. But in her case, she was subsequently engaged in sex-work.

“How people suffer to eat and live!.... This was a world I had not known until then. .... Women doing sex work; hijras who had been deceived by men who praised their beauty and enslaved them,

...those who suffered from sexually transmitted diseases and did not receive proper medical care....” (Revathi, 2009, pp.132-33).

The life of a sex worker is hard, and that of a hijra sex worker worse still, as narrated by Revathi. She also tells in pitiless details just how policemen behave with hijras, rather than merely mentioning it as Vidya did.

“Picking up a sheet of paper, the policeman...asked me, ‘Where did those breasts come from’?... ‘No, not on their own. I took hormone tablets to grow them’. “Bend down. I’ve got to inspect your back... He then asked me to hold my buttocks apart so that he could see my anal passage. When I did, he thrust his lathi in there...” ( Revathi, 2009, pp. 205-208).

Revathi is however aware of the injustice done to her and others like her. As she remarks:

“For the sake of money, I have put aside my honour and have taken to the roads. I’m called a hooker. What should the police be called then – they who use us and snatch money from us?” (Revathi, 2009, p. 221).

In *The Truth About Me*, Revathi speaks out about (and against) the displacements, the tortures, sexual assaults. And then she moves beyond to talk about how this experience made her move to public activism. When Manobi Bandopadhyay talks about her own life, she kept the community mostly at some distance. However, Revathi is clear that she is talking about herself, but through her own experience, she is expressing the physical and mental torture her community goes through.

And there is an amazing dynamic in Revathi. Growing up in a male body but feeling herself a woman, her life story often articulates very traditional notions of being a woman – wanting to cook, wanting to dress in ‘feminine’ ways. There have been often misunderstandings between cis-women feminists and transwomen that the present writer has witnessed as an activist in the women’s movement. Much of this stems from cis-women ignoring the whole issue of what makes transwomen function and perform. To be a woman, it often seems to transwomen, means to be feminine. So, dressing up in traditional ways, desiring traditional relationships, markers of marriage appear not just normal, but extremely desirable and making them

visible and conspicuous. It is easy to condemn these behaviours as retrograde, or to exclude transwomen from women's rights issues. This condemnation ignores how the very act of being, or declaring, oneself as a (trans) woman leads to a loss of privilege, and a social status that actually goes well below not just cis-men but even cis-women.

Revathi spent years organising, and in speaking at academic institutions and elsewhere in a bid to increase awareness about the conditions and the lack of rights of transgenders. In a conversation with students at the Manipal Centre of Philosophy and Humanities in 2013, as recorded by Gayathri Prabhu, Revathi explained that her encounter with feminism led her to understand:

“how very oppressive men have been towards women, forcing us to behave in certain ways (be docile, be obedient), making us think that being a good woman is to dress in a certain way (wear sarees, grow our hair long). I then understood how unfair it was! I now dress in any way I want. I have cut my hair short. There are many ways to be a woman” (Prabhu, 2014).

### **Kalki Subramaniam:**

#### ***We are Not the Others: Reflections of a Transgender Activist***

The final text is not a straightforward autobiography or a memoir. In 2021, Notion Press published Kalki Subramaniam's collection. Born in a working class family, she, is the first Indian transgender to play a lead role in a film. An innovative campaigner, Kalki used art, film and literature to further the cause of transgenders. She also holds two Masters Degrees, in Journalism & Mass Communications, and in International Relations.

*We are Not the Others* is a powerful narrative of the lived experience of a transgender, presented through poetry, prose and illustrations. Kalki combines art and activism, keeping the artistic values while never ignoring the activism that brought her to this kind of work.

The prurient curiosity about transgenders lurking all too often in our minds is addressed powerfully. When we do not prioritise the fact that an entire community consists of people who feel trapped in a body that they do not want, and are mainly concerned about the acts of sex, we do get a range of questions we feel must be answered by the transgenders. This is answered



in two pieces, one a drawing with a short text, and the other a poem (written in Tamil, translated by herself).

The former is 'I should be known for what is inside my head, not for what is inside my panty' (Subramaniam, 2021, pp.44-45).

The latter 'If You Don't Mind' is a poem (Subramaniam, 2021, pp.19-21) that has a conversation with a cis-male, addressed as *Thazar* (comrade), who wants to know if the transwoman's breasts are real and if her vagina is really like a woman's vagina. At this point, the transwoman responds:

“If you won't take it as an offence,  
Shall I ask you something?  
Don't hesitate to ask me Thazar,  
I won't take it in offensively.  
Do you have a prick?”  
(Subramaniam, 2021, p. 21)

A powerful response that says, if cis-men, the top of the entire gender hierarchy, can think that they have the right to conduct the same strip-search metaphorically that the police often carry out physically on trans-genders, then they should be prepared for retorts in kind.

This slim volume contains sixteen poems, some of which have been translated from the original Tamil by N. Elango, four essays, and quotations and artwork, as well as reproductions of the Tamil poems in her own handwriting. This book does share the journey of growth, through the trauma, and the sustained exclusions that transgenders face as a routine matter in India.

The title emphasizes the problem that the continued imposition of the binary has on transgenders. If they are not male or female, the inevitable binary, then what are they? The answer is 'Other' or sometimes, 'Third Gender'. To return to the essays of Dutta and Bhattacharya, we find them highlighting the problem of reductionism, of using the actually non-existing binary as the gateway to describing transgenders.

'Don't Tell That to Me' records, with the same angry mood, the things that so many transgenders get from 'normal' people in India – curiosity, sympathy, stares, whispers, questions and requests for blessings as if they possessed some divine power. Kalki writes:

“To you and to  
the million others  
I want to shout  
I am made of  
flesh and blood,  
of fear and hope,  
of joy and pain.”

(Subramaniam, 2021, p. 34)

The struggle to establish one’s womanhood is articulated in the poem, ‘Piece by Piece’ which says:

I am not a woman by birth  
I was born as a shattered  
Rubik’s cube,  
all my life I worked  
step by step  
to reclaim my honour.

To correct the wrongs,  
I collected all of me,  
my body, mind and soul  
and put together in patience,  
vouching with perseverance.  
I endured shame and guilt,  
yet I stood strong with grit.

(Subramaniam, 2021, p. 79)

In the Hindu epic, Mahabharata, there is an episode where Yudhisthira gambles away his wife Draupadi, and there is an attempt to disrobe her in public. She calls upon the God Krishna, who protects her.

In transgender parlance in India, *Nirvaanam* (Buddhist concept of eternal liberation) means the liberation from the bondage of the wrong body into which one has found oneself. So, it is the process of gender assignment surgery or (till recently in all cases, even now in most cases, as we saw earlier), just castration.

The poem *Nirvaanam* talks of the transwoman’s joy at her anklet and the dance she dances. But she is then faced by a hostile world:

“There goes the pottai\*\*\*”  
Heckled those  
who have their manhoods  
hanging about them,  
abruptly died my smile.  
(Subramaniam, 2021, pp.109, 111)

It seems biological existence is the only way a woman can prove her womanhood.

“with tears rolling down  
I remove my saree.  
In this moment,  
I do not want any Krishna  
to save or rescue me.”  
(Subramaniam, 2021, p.112)

There is a subversion not merely in the act of disrobing but in rejecting the epic saviour. The female body now becomes the site not just of oppression but of resistance, as in Mahasweta Devi's *Draupadi*. (Spivak, 1981) It is interesting that both for Adivasi resistance and for transgender resistance against the multiple oppression and exploitation, the inversion of the same epic story is called forth.

This survey of her book may be ended with a brief reference to one prose text: “Will an Indian Man Ever Bring a Trans Woman Home and Say ‘Ma, I Love Her’?” (Subramaniam, 2021, pp. 39-43).

Kalki evocatively describes the tremendous mental pressure on the transwomen to acquire the biological gift of womanhood through gender affirming surgeries, and how notwithstanding this, there is a prejudiced societal rejection of them as “real” women.

Each piece of writing in *We are Not the Others: Reflections of a Transgender Artist* deconstructs the idea of transgenders as Others by deconstructing cultural signification and offering an insider's account of their dreams, desires, hope, pain and suffering, all too universal and all too human. Challenging the stereotyping of signifiers, these are pieces that vehemently bring home to us the fact that boy/girl/man/woman/first gender/second gender/third gender are hierarchical categories that we forcefully impose upon human experience with severe injustice and irreparable damage.

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# Identity and Otherness: A Comparative Overview of Basque and Georgian Literatures

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## Conflicting Memories and Families in Conflict: Identity and Otherness in Contemporary Basque Literature<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract:

Contemporary Basque literature shows a clear interest in our conflictive past. A growing number of works deal with the Spanish Civil War, Franco's dictatorship, or all that we commonly call the 'Basque conflict'. Although there is a variety of literary perspectives and approaches, we can observe some recurring motifs that may be especially significant for understanding the negotiations on memory and identity in the Basque Country. Specifically, I will analyze some narratives in which that Other who can be represented as a perpetrator or as a political opponent (a Falangist, a terrorist), also appears as a relative, as a member who destabilizes the family genealogy, and provokes an identity crisis, both individual and collective. From this perspective, I will analyze novels such as *Atertu arte itxaron* (Agirre, 2015, translated into Spanish as *Los turistas desganados*) or *Soinujo-learen semea* (Atxaga, 2003, translated into English as *The Accordionist's son*, 2008), but also chronicles such as *Gurea falangista zen* (Barandiaran, 2021, ['Ours was Falangist']). This analysis will lead us to reflect on the problematic (de)construction of Basque identity in the present, and on the main role played by our conflicting memories in this process.

**Keywords:** Identity, Conflict, Basque literature

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## 1. Introduction

Contemporary Basque literature shows a clear interest in our troubled past. A growing number of works deal with the Spanish Civil War, Franco's dictatorship, or all that we commonly call the 'Basque conflict', the struggle between ETA and the Spanish and French states. There is a variety of literary and political approaches: Contemporary Basque literature makes us reflect on different aspects of violence; on victims and perpetrators; on the origins of our conflicts; on intergenerational transmission or on the gap between generations; on the construction of memories and identities, and on their changing and fragmentary condition.

Despite this variety, we can observe some recurring motifs that may be especially significant from the perspective of memory studies, for understanding the negotiations on memory and identity in the Basque Country. In this paper, I will focus on one of these motifs: Specifically, I will analyze some narratives in which the Other is a political opponent, but also a relative, a member who destabilizes the family genealogy, and provokes an identity crisis, both individual and collective.

Of course, when we speak of the Other, we must keep in mind that the Other is always somehow implicit in the construction of memory and identity. This is what Halbwachs' pioneering work "On Collective Memory" demonstrates: that we need a "social framework" to reconstruct our memories. According to Halbwachs, our social environment, the people around us, have a direct influence, completing, shaping or distorting our memories. Collective memory constantly (re)constructs according to the needs and interests a group has in the present, and that construction, that collective awareness of the past, gives continuity to the group's identity. Thus, the construction of memory and identity are closely connected, because collective memory links the individual to the group, and the past to the present.

Halbwachs distinguishes between various forms of collective memories; family memories are one of those forms. In the context of my analysis, I am interested in the intergenerational transmission of memories, to observe how the younger generations are affected by the memories of those Others who preceded them. In short, we are talking about postmemory, to quote Hirsch (1997, p. 22):

Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated.

When we talk about postmemory in Basque literature, those traumatic events are very often related to the Spanish Civil War and to the ‘Basque Conflict’. In this paper, I will comment on some literary works that bring the political conflict to the family and individual level. I will focus on a recurring motif: That Other who lived through the traumatic events of the past is a family member; but is also a political opponent for the main protagonist. This will lead us to reflect on the consequences of this intergenerational clash; to reflect on conflicting filiations and uncomfortable family memories.

From this perspective, I will briefly analyze the historical and the ideological context of the protagonists and their relatives in two novels: *Atertu arte itxaron* (Agirre, 2015, translated into Spanish as *Los turistas desganados*, 2017) and *Soinujolearen semea* (Atxaga, 2003, translated into English as *The Accordionist's son*, 2008). Likewise, I will discuss the chronicle *Gurea falangista zen* (Barandiaran, 2021, [‘Our grandfather was a Falangist’]). This analysis will lead us to reflect on the problematic (de)construction of Basque identity in the present, and on the main role played by our conflicting memories in this process.

## 2. A conflicting paternal legacy

*The Accordionist's son* narrates the awakening of the protagonist David (the accordionist's son) to the recent past, to the horrors of the Civil War, and to the direct responsibility that his father had in the repression of

several men of Obaba, his hometown. In reflecting this clash with the father, one element is particularly significant in the novel: The lists.

They are mentioned for the first time at the beginning of the novel. It is at the end of the 20th century, in San Francisco, and David just meets Mary Ann, his future wife. They are in a restaurant where an accordionist is playing, and David starts talking about his father, admitting that they never got along very well. He explains her that when he was a child, he used to make lists:

‘My mother called them, my lists of favourites,’ I said, unable to stop now. ‘I used to list the names of the people I loved: first, the person I loved most, then, the person I loved a lot, but slightly less than the first person, and so on. Well, my father soon disappeared from the list entirely’ (Atxaga, 2008, p. 29).

The reason is precisely another list; the list of the men shot in Obaba during the Civil War. It is written in a notebook that, as indicated on the cover, belonged to his father, Ángel, who is a Falangist, a man who supported Franco during the war. The discovery of the notebook was traumatic for David in his youth, during the dictatorship; it was an awakening that marked his life forever.

The young protagonist became obsessed with the notebook and the list: “The memory of the notebook took such a hold on my mind that it almost drove me mad (...) The list went with me everywhere” (Atxaga, 2008: 131). He was mostly worried about what degree of responsibility his father may have had in the murder of those men: “It makes me feel physically sick to think that I might be the son of a man who has blood on his hands” (Atxaga, 2008, pp. 129-130). Obsessed with the names on the list, David imagined those men repeatedly:

Night after night, when I stared with my Second Eyes into that filthy cave, those four figures took on more substance – on a par with the figures of Ángel and Berlino [his father’s close friend] – and ceased to be mere shadows. My doubts gradually melted away. That recent history needed no messengers. Those images and the gaze of the gorilla on the cover of the notebook were enough. That look was saying: ‘What do you make of all this, David? Was your father a



murderer?’ The gorilla seemed prepared to continue repeating those questions for a hundred years (Atxaga, 2008, p. 131).

David needed to investigate to clarify the degree of responsibility his father had in the shootings. He needed to know if it was he who wrote those names in the notebook. So, he analyzed the handwriting of his father, Ángel, and of his friend Berlino:

*Humberto, Goena Senior, Goena Junior, ‘the teachers’, ‘the American’.* There was no doubt about it, it was the same handwriting. Those names had been written by Berlino, by Martxel. And ‘Otero’ had almost certainly been written by him as well. Then again, he had clearly not written ‘Eusebio’ and ‘Portaburu’. They – and the matter was much clearer now – had been written by his close friend Ángel. My initial relief didn’t last long. Berlino seemed to have been the instigator, but Ángel was still a murderer and not just an innocent who, in the confusion of war, had found himself caught in a compromising situation; nor was he a coward forced by circumstances to become an accomplice. No, alas, he had been more than that (Atxaga, 2008, p. 153).

This discovery will mean a definitive separation with his father. The circumstances will lead him to become involved in the anti-Franco struggle, in hiding. Finally, he will abandon that struggle to start a new life in the American exile.

As we know, this need to investigate the traumatic past related to the civil war also appears in other Iberian literatures. In analyzing the novels of Spanish writers such as Javier Cercas, Javier Marías, Dulce Chacón, Ignacio Martínez de Pisón or Almudena Grandes, Sebastian Faber (2011) notes the insistence on the idea that present generations have a moral obligation – as well as a psychological need – to investigate the past and assume its legacy. As Faber points out, we often find a young protagonist who engages in an investigation and discovers a historical truth related to the previous generation; he/she has to face the dilemmas that arise when taking on that legacy and learns a life-transforming lesson.

The difference in Basque literature is that this need to investigate the past often connects with a political and armed conflict that has affected the protagonists –and Basque society in general– decades after the end of the

war and the dictatorship. In that sense, as Olaziregi (2011) states, *The Accordionist's son* does not just simply seek to recuperate a traumatic past, but rather to reflect on the influence that this past has exerted on subsequent Basque generations, ones that, as happens with the protagonists in the novel, go from dictatorial repression to armed struggle.

In the case of *Atertu arte itxaron* (Agirre, 2015), there is also a traumatic discovery; there is also a conflicting paternal legacy. But the main action is not set in the Civil War or Francoism, but in the summer of 2011, shortly before the definitive cessation of ETA's armed activity. The protagonist of the novel, Ulia (a Basque woman from Vitoria) and her partner Gustavo travel by car through the Basque Country. They live in Madrid and have decided to drive through her homeland just taking secondary roads, to enjoy a quiet vacation. But the recent discovery of her father's story will cut short the pleasure trip.

Ulia always thought her father had died years ago, in a car accident, but her mother reveals to her that he is alive; that he is in jail. As Ulia learns, he is a member of ETA arrested in 1987, convicted for being the leader of the Madrid Commando and for participating in attacks such as the one in Guzmán el Bueno Street. She constantly reads news and reports about her father:

In the trial it was proven that he was the one who placed a van bomb [...] in front of the General Directorate of the Civil Guard in Guzmán el Bueno Street in Madrid. As a result of the explosion, twenty-four civil guards were injured, but worse luck befell the twin brothers Pablo and Fabián, only two and a half years old, who were killed as the family car was driving next to the van bomb at the exact moment when it exploded (Agirre, 2015, p. 149).

The novel brings us here echoes of our recent history: The attack against the General Directorate of the Civil Guard, in November 1988. ETA killed Luis Delgado Villalonga (a two-and-a-half-year-old boy), and Jaime Bilbao Iglesias, a man who worked for Spanish Television. Many other people were injured.

The novel also brings echoes of other attacks, such as the one against the Civil Guard residential barracks in Zaragoza, in December 1987. ETA killed eleven people and wounded eighty-eight others. Esther and Miriam Barrera Alcaraz died in that attack; they were twins, only three years old.

In the novel, the father's terrible story haunts Ulia on her journey, because he is constantly in all the media, twenty-four years after his imprisonment. The reason is that he is on hunger strike, asking for justice, because his sentence has been extended, even though he is seriously ill. Like the protagonist of Atxaga's novel, Ulia needs to know, to investigate about her father's guilt. She reads everything she can find about her father, such as the article by a tabloid journalist who pursues them on their journey:

*The blood of these innocent children, of their parents and of the twenty-four civil guards wounded on that fateful night still injects the gaze of this murderer who, from a hospital bed, claims to demand "justice".*

This is not the first time I read the story. I already know all the existing versions of the story. Some put the focus on other circumstances. But I can never get enough. Where does this thirst come from. I haven't opened the floodgates, but now that they are open, I want to dive, dive, hold my breath as long as it takes. With good underwater goggles that allow me to see everything. I have googled everything that can be googled. I have been to Guzmán el Bueno. Also, in the street where the commando fell. I have seen it all. Walked trying not to arouse any suspicion. Just an innocent walk to clear my head after spending a whole day in front of the computer. Short walks, at a brisk pace.

Me, strolling. Me, on this sidewalk. Me, suddenly petrified. Me, lost in morbid thoughts. Me, trying to relativize everything. I continue the walk. The two children. Their parents. So long ago. Lost in morbid thoughts. Me (Agirre, 2015: 149-150).

It is a traumatic filiation. Ulia travels to Granada, to meet her father in prison, but is finally unable to visit him. The story of her father provokes a crisis in Ulia and will also influence her relationship with Gustavo. She is unable to tell him the truth, as if she were implicated in her father's story. Thus, as Olaziregi (2021) states, the novel reflects on guilt, collective responsibility, and the legacy that part of Basque society has received after decades of violence.

### 3. The Falangist grandfather

We find similar motifs in *Gurea falagista zen* ['Our grandfather was a Falangist'] (2021), an interesting chronicle by the Basque journalist and writer Alberto Barandiaran. His research work begins with an offer from his mother-in-law: having just turned eighty, she gives him a notebook written by her brother Luis Fernandez during the civil war. Luis joined the Falange and died in combat at the age of eighteen.

The journalist wonders what could have motivated him to join the Falange, if he had previously been a Basque nationalist, and there was no Falangist tradition in his village. His mother-in-law gives him permission to investigate her family's past: "Do whatever you want with this". It is just the opposite of the discourse that prevailed for decades: don't ask questions; why dig up old stories, the names of people who have passed away? (Barandiaran, 2021, pp. 105-106).

But in researching Luis Fernandez, the journalist comes across the name of his own grandfather, Pablo Amillano, also a Falangist, who apparently participated in the repression against other men of his hometown. Faced with such a discovery, Barandiaran begins to analyze testimonies. Many witnesses mention his grandfather, Pablo Amillano, in recounting the last days of Somocurcio and Chicharro, two men from his town who were tried and shot during the war.

Barandiaran delves into his research because he has an urgent need to know. He consults the Documentary Fund of Historical Memory in Navarre, the Gogora Institute of the Basque Government, and the Aranzadi Science Society:

I insisted. I wanted more information about the summary trials, specifically, about the intervention of Pablo Amillano. If, as the witnesses affirmed, he recognized and pointed out Somocurcio and Chicharro among the Santoña prisoners, I wanted to know if my grandfather participated in the trial that sent the two leftist combatants to the firing line, if he was a witness. If he went expressly to accuse them. If he traveled from Alsasua to Santoña, leaving his family in his hometown (...) to testify against two men from his hometown. If my grandfather made the conscious decision to testify in order to take two neighbors to the firing line, that was what I needed to know (Barandiaran, 2021, p. 81).

Once again, the discovery of uncomfortable family memories leads to an individual crisis. Barandiaran needs to know more, to get answers about the involvement of his ancestors in events he considers atrocious. The discovery also leads to a reflection on guilt and collective responsibility, on the silences that have been imposed and inherited in families and in Basque society in general. In Barandiaran's words: "the research on Luis Fernandez, which was supposed to be merely historical and documentary, put a question mark on the memory of my grandfather. And what was intended to be a report became an exercise of memory" (Barandiaran, 2021, pp. 106-107). This exercise involves breaking the silence of his family, uncovering their hidden past:

Our family always hid its Falangist past. When we asked, they only told us that he was pro-Franco. But it is not easy to hide everything forever. Because question marks generate the need to know more. Question marks pull, as if they were turned hooks (Barandiaran, 2021: 107-108).

At the beginning, he finds a few mentions, not very clarifying taken separately. But, taken together, these testimonies question the memory of his grandfather, because they prove that, beyond having a specific ideology, he used his position to influence the decisions about the lives of some men from his village.

In the end, thanks to Ricardo Urrizola's research *Consejo de guerra. Injusticia militar en Navarra 1936-40*, the journalist dives into the mud, hooked by the question mark, and the answers begin to emerge: His grandfather, Pablo Amillano, appears as a Falange informant in some summary trials against some men from Alsasua. These reports were used as evidence and had a significant influence on the sentences.

Barandiaran understands that his grandfather fought for his ideas, even though ideologically he is on the opposite side. But he constantly wonders what drove his grandfather to testify against his neighbors in trials that could have sent them to the firing line (Barandiaran, 2021: 110). Even though it is not possible to answer that question, Barandiaran continues to investigate the silenced past of his family, because he wants to know it and tell it; because he believes it will be good for him and for his family (Barandiaran, 2021: 109). Thus, he criticizes the blanket of fear and silence that

covered the stories of war and repression and cut off intergenerational transmission:

That forced silence would influence the following decades, when the ideological, political, and armed clash divided families and peoples again and a storm of repression shook the Basque Country for almost sixty years. The inability and tacit prohibition to speak publicly about the consequences of violence and to acknowledge the suffering of the other was repeated, and we are still suffering the consequences. That is why sometimes it is easier to know your neighbor's stories than to understand what has been hidden within the walls of your house. It is easier to search through military archives than to break the silence of one's own home (Barandiaran, 2021, mp. 113).

Journalist and poet Itziar Ugarte also alludes to the silence that has prevailed in many Basque homes. Her poem “Bikiak” [‘Twins’], from the book *Gu gabe ere* (2021), is precisely based on the surprise of discovering that her beloved great-aunts, twins born in 1939, were named in honor of Franco's victory in the Civil War: Maripaz and Maribi, Paz and Victoria (that is, Peace and Victory):

I didn't know what to say  
And I'm still searching  
Ever since I found out  
That the great-aunts  
That I've loved from afar  
Were born in 1939.  
That their names  
Hold a vindication  
Of peace and victory.  
My grandmother repeats  
That at home the issue was never mentioned.  
[...]  
It is deafening  
All that has been silenced  
To keep sitting at the same table  
To keep the flat tire turning.

#### 4. Conclusion

In conclusion, these uncomfortable filiations and conflicting family memories that recurrently appear in contemporary Basque literature imply both an individual and a collective crisis. The political conflicts that have affected Basque society begin at home, and blood ties relate the parties that are in some way at conflict.

In *The accordionist's son* (Atxaga, 2008), the protagonist's father is a Falangist involved in the repression against some leftists of his town. This discovery will lead David to grow apart and to get involved in the anti-Franco struggle. In *Atertu arte itxaron* (Agirre, 2015), the protagonist also must face the sudden discovery of a conflicting paternal legacy. In this case, her father is a member of ETA, responsible for several attacks. Ulia suffers an individual crisis, but also as a couple, as she is unable to share the burden she has received. The chronicle *Gurea falagista zen* "Our grandfather was a Falangist" (Barandiaran, 2021) deals, like the first novel, with the Civil War. In this case, the journalist, Barandiaran, discovers the Falangist past of his grandfather, his involvement in the trials against some men of his hometown.

In all three cases, these discoveries imply a pressing need to know more, and an individual and family crisis. The three works raise interesting questions about the legacy that generations of Basques have received: the silence, the suffering, the injustice, and the guilt. They question the Basque identity in the present (our collective, family, and national identity), because, as we have seen, they suggest that the other, the opponent, may be part of our own home, of our own family. Thus, through the clash between past and present, through the clash between generations and ideologies, monolithic discourses on Basque history and identity begin to crack.

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# Frank Bergon's Fiction: From Black to White

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## Abstract:

Frank Bergon's Fiction: From Black To White Basco. That is the how Basque Americans in the US West are referred to nowadays. Basque Americans enjoy not only the acceptance, but rather the fascination of the American community. However, it was not always so. For decades Basque Americans were derisively called Black Bascos. Basque children were frequently picked on at schools or playgrounds. Adults were often ruthlessly rejected by the mainstream and were given jobs that no one else wanted, such as sheep herding. The aim of this presentation is to analyse how the term Basco has shifted from being demeaning to entailing pride. To do so, the fiction of the Basque American writer Frank Bergon will be analysed. His novels, *Shoshone Mike* (1987), *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S.* (1993), *Wild Game* (1995), and *Jesse's Ghost* (2011) comprehend the identity variations over four generations. So far, Bergon is the only writer to have illustrated the linear history of Basque Americans in the West and how they have shifted from being The Other to being part of the US community. Bergon's four novels, based on true events, capture the essence of the West through the writer's first – hand experience as a Basque American. Bergon, a third – generation Basque, is proud of his ethnic heritage, as he expresses through the character, Jack Irigaray, in *Wild Game*. *Shoshone Mike* recreates the killings of three 460 Basque shepherds in the hands of a Shoshone family. Through this novel, we learn about first – generation Basques, who usually gathered in close circles and whose interaction with Anglos was scarce. Bergon's second novel recreates the nuclear conflict of Yucca Mountain, 100 miles from Las Vegas, through the monk St. Ed Arrizabalaga. *Jesse's Ghost* reveals, for instance, how countless Basques were obliged to shorten/modify their surnames to sound more Anglo.

**Keywords:** Basque Americans, Bergon, Novel

Frank Bergon is an essayist and novelist, born in Ely, Nevada (USA), in 1943 and is considered “one of the most significant voices in contemporary western American writing” (Río 57). This essay surveys Bergon’s Basque American universe through an analysis of his four novels: *Shoshone Mike* (1987), *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S* (1993), *Wild Game* (1995) and *Jesse’s Ghost* (2011). Its aim is to examine Basque identity and its variations over four generations, ranging from the early twentieth century to the present time. It reveals how the implication of the term “Basco” has evolved from [being] a slur to an expression that blossoms with ethnic pride (Bergon *Introduction* 2020, p.10).

Bergon’s first novel, *Shoshone Mike*, was listed in 2001 among the top-twelve westerns by Oxford University Press’s *Good Fiction Guide* (Rogers et al. 2001, p. 136). Therein, he fictionalises the so-called Last Indian Battle, also known as the Last Indian Massacre. The novel recreates the tragic incident that occurred in northwest Nevada in 1911, in which Shoshone Mike and most of his band/family were killed in revenge for the murders of four stockmen. Three of the ranchers were Basque shepherds; the fourth was an Anglo cattleman. Jean Erramouspe is the fictional son of one of the deceased Basque shepherds and one of the main characters in Bergon’s polyphonic novel.

*The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S* is set in the nuclear age. Bergon’s second novel centres on St. Ed and Brother S, two monks whose attempt to run the Hermitage of Solitude on the edge of the Nevada Test Site is menaced by federal plans to build a nuclear waste disposal repository at a nearby mountain. Although the story of the monks is not based on actual events, the novel recreates the increasing opposition in Nevada to the federal government’s proposal for a nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain – termed Shoshone Mountain in the novel. Father Edward St. John Arrizabalaga is the main character. He is of mixed heritage; half Basque and half English.

Bergon’s third novel, *Wild Game*, also based on actual accounts, revives the story of Claude Dallas in the 1980s. Dallas murdered two Idaho state fish-and-game wardens in the Owyhee Desert, near the Nevada border. He was arrested after a fifteen-month manhunt. He became a controversial character in the American West; while to some he was merely a cold-blooded murderer, others lionized him as the quintessential western free man.

Not only that, but he is still widely glorified as such in contemporary Idaho. Bergon invented a character, Jack Irigaray, a third-generation Basque, as a literary artefact to tell the story.

*Jesse 's Ghost* is the first volume of Bergon 's California trilogy. Set in California, this novel is inspired by Bergon 's experiences growing up in the Central Valley. In this case, however, and in contrast to his previous fiction, the main character is not of Basque ancestry, yet Bergon does include a Basque fictional figure. This character, Mitch Etcheverry, plays the role of a celebrated San Francisco journalist who wants to publish a story about two best friends and find out why one, Sonny, killed the other, Jesse.

The origins of *Shoshone Mike* take us back to Petra Mendive, Bergon 's maternal Basque grandmother. She was born in the province of Bizkaia, the Basque Country, and settled later in Battle Mountain, Nevada. As a child, Bergon heard many tales of the Last Indian Massacre and the three Basque men while visiting his grandmother. Besides, Lina, Bergon 's mother, was born in 1911, which enhanced the family 's connection to the tragic events. When Dayton O. Hyde's *The Last Free Man: The True Story Behind the Massacre of Shoshone Mike and His Band of Indians in 1911* was published in 1973, Bergon was infuriated because of its unsubstantiated accusations against the Basques. Hyde over-romanticized the image of the Native Americans, while his allegations towards the Basque reveal Anglo-versus-Basque friction of the time. In his book, the Basque are accused of sexually molesting Shoshone 's young daughters. Hyde 's account seems to reproduce an earlier stereotypical view of Basques, who had just become visible in the American mainstream (Madinabeitia, 2020, p. 17). Although Basques were not the main target of the violent regeneration of the American expansion, some were unfortunate victims of marginalization. As recreated in *Shoshone Mike*, first- and second-generation Basques were derogatorily called "Basco" or "Black Basco." The following examples illustrate the connection between Basques and sheep herding, and how they were denigrated because they undertook a job that was disdained by the Anglo community, as is evident in the following examples: "What's for dinner today, Basco boy? Bound to be sheep's balls one of these days?" (Bergon *Shoshone* 1987, p.102); "all he knows is sheep talk. *Baaaa, baaaa*" (ibid 103); and "Everyone knows they put Bascos out with the sheep 'cuz the smell keeps the coyotes away" (ibid 108).

This attitude was the result of a widespread view that Basques were only shepherds, and cattlemen blamed sheep herding for ruining their own

grazing, hence their dislike and distrust of the immigrants. However, even though many Basques were shepherds when they first came to the United States, others had little to do with this occupation, especially in subsequent generations. Jean Erramouspe, for example, does not follow his father's shepherding tradition, a disruption that was common in second-generation Basques – mainly manifested in *Wild Game* and *Jesse's Ghost*. Instead, Erramouspe works for a mining company. Nonetheless, regardless of his occupation, he is picked on because of his Basqueness, and hence homogenized within those regarded as deviant and unwanted. Erramouspe is not even allowed to participate in the posse that chased the Shoshone that had killed his father, possibly because he is Basque, as suggested in *Shoshone Mike*.

*Shoshone Mike* captures many ethnic customs of first-generation Basques. It was a close-knit community which had very little interaction with the Anglos. Almost none were fluent in English, which limited their socializing and employment options. Herding sheep did not require any linguistic skills and was a tough solitary job that no one else wanted, which opened up job opportunities for the Basques. This is the case of Pete, Jean's father, who was hired to herd a flock of sheep. Pete knew nothing about herding sheep upon his arrival in the American West, but because of the established connection between Basques and sheep herding, Pete's boss assumed he was skilled merely because he was a Basque, a Basco. Contrary to the widespread stereotypical imagery of Basques, Pete, like many other Basques in the West, learnt everything he knew about sheep "after coming to America" (Bergon *Shoshone* 1984, p.24).

Pete left his hometown, Banca, in the late nineteenth century. He married another Basque, as was customary at that stage of Basque settlement in the West. Jean Erramouspe was hence born in a Basque home of the American West. Because of the defamation experienced by first-generation and American-born Basques, it was not uncommon for the second generation to reject their roots and try to embrace solely the American identity. At this stage, they were Basques, but not because they had chosen to be so. They went to school with other children and often ended up in fights because they were called "Basco". Therefore, it was normal for many of them, like Jean Erramouspe, to feel ashamed of their roots and thus reject them. They wanted to assimilate into the mainstream as soon as possible. In the novel, Erramouspe desperately cries "I'm as American as anyone else" (Bergon *Shoshone* 1987, p.46), which clashes with what Jack Irigary, in *Wild*

Game, feels and represents. In fact, Irigaray embodies the effort of many third-generation Basques to connect with their Basque ancestry. As opposed to Erramouspe, Irigaray's American identity is acknowledged by the mainstream. In his case, he claims his hybrid identity, which is also transmitted through Bergon's choice of the character's name and surname, which are a combination of an Anglo first name and a Basque surname. Nowadays, it is common to come across people in the Basque American diaspora whose children have been given a Basque first name and whose car registration numbers proudly vindicate the owner's Basque heritage.

*Wild Game* describes "New Basques" (Douglass 262) and explores their changing roles as opposed to those of previous generations. Contemporary Basques are assimilated into the mainstream, they are fully Americanized, do not speak the language of the old country and are not married to other Basques, like Irigaray, or even St. Ed Arrizabalaga, in *The Temptations*. At present, Basques are ethnically tied by cultural events, such as dancing and singing. Although the uniqueness of the Basque language is a source of pride for many Basque Americans, younger-generations have largely abandoned attempts to learn Euskara (Basque), mainly due to the disproportionate ratio of effort and reward. As expressed in *Wild Game*, there is a saying that even the Devil himself spent seven years trying to learn Basque, but then gave up (85). This expression is also recollected in *Jesse's Ghost*, when Etcheverry explains that he cannot speak any Basque. His "folks know some, but it's too late for [him] to learn. They say the Devil tried to learn Basque by listening outside a farmhouse, but after seven years he could only say two words: 'Yes, ma'am'" (73). Uncle Pete, in *Wild Game*, recalls how Basque was his mother tongue when he was a kid, but that he had completely forgotten it (85). The death of parents or a fluent Basque-speaking community unfavourably impacted on the maintenance of Basque. Equally, many were born into families that had been offended because of their heritage, which led to a wish to disassociate themselves from their roots. As recreated through the character of Jean Erramouspe, many second-generation Basques worked hard to assimilate as soon as possible. The outcome was that English prevailed in many families and that Euskara was no longer spoken. In addition, because of the hardship that the sheep industry went through, plus the fact that the Basque Country was flourishing economically, emigration became less and less popular. That meant that the influx of fluent Basque speakers shrank significantly.

For third-generation Basques, like Jack Irigaray, who represents Bergon's experience as Basque American, Basque cultural rituals and hubs have become means to re/connect with Basqueness, regardless of whether they speak Basque or not. For example, Irigaray takes his daughters to the local Basque Club so that they may participate and learn about their culture by means of Basque dances and songs. However, these ties connect contemporary Basques to their homeland nostalgically, but do not significantly impact on their daily lives (Corcostegui, 1999, p. 249), as opposed to the scenario in earlier generations. Similarly, Basques are no longer intimately attached to rural jobs. As a matter of fact, during the 1950s most Basques turned from rural to urban occupations. Irigaray explains that "[m]ost of the Basques [he] grew up with peaceably sold cars, taught school, ran banks, wrote books, even hobnobbed with the president" (Bergon *Wild* 1995, p.3). The western American open-range industry declined substantially during the 1970s, which symbolized the end of the Basque shepherd in the American West (Lane and Douglass, 1985, pp. 24-25). Wool was being replaced by synthetic materials and pasture land availability was increasingly limited, which meant that many Basques were forced to take to other occupations; "Laxalt, Arrizabalaga, Ybarguengoitia were familiar names around Reno, but no longer of shepherders. The solitary Basque herders of previous generations – those tough 'Black Bascos' as they were derisively called – had pretty much vanished... Most of the Basques Irigaray grew up with sold cars, taught school, ran banks" (Bergon *Wild* 1995, p.3). This bygone era of the archetypal Basque is highlighted with the death of Uncle Pete, "an outmoded figure tottering on the rim of extinction" (1995, p.80). His death personifies the end of "the tough, lonesome world of Basques herding sheep in desolate hills and buckaroos following chuck wagons and sleeping in bedrolls" (ibid.) – also applicable to the figure and death of Sam Etcheverry, Mitch's father. Indeed, these two novels overtly embed the changing roles of Basques in the American West and capture the growing economic success of further generation Basques.

Irigaray conveys the pride that contemporary Basques feel towards their ethnic roots. They wish to cling to their heritage by participating in rituals and social events, which would include dancing, eating and festivals in general. Through these cultural gatherings, Basques reassert their ethnic pride while acknowledging their membership of broader American society (Douglass and Bilbao, 1975, p. 391). They proudly and publicly manifest

their Basqueness, which clashes with Erramouspe's rejection and his attempt to keep a low profile as a Basque. The American civil rights movements in the 1950s and 60s influenced the growing ethnic diversity of the US; ethnic awareness was fostered and pride seeped into the American mainstream. During the 1960s, and afterwards, it became increasingly popular, even fashionable, to be *from* somewhere else, rather than just American (Bieter and Bieter, 2000, p. 5). Two major events in the Basque diaspora also triggered this growth in ethnic pride. One of them was the success of Robert Laxalt's book, *Sweet Promised Land* (1957). The book talks about the journey of the author's father, Dominique, to his homeland, after forty-seven years as an immigrant shepherd in the American West. The book focuses on the challenges that any newcomer must face during his early years in America, as did Dominique, and his struggle to adapt to a new setting, which has nothing to do with that in the Old World. *Sweet Promised Land* also tackles the successful assimilation process of Dominique, which represents the biographies of many other Basque immigrants. That is why many Basques at the time identified with Dominique. Other immigrant communities also experienced similar patterns on their arrival and during their assimilation process. This book gave them visibility and pride, which is why the Basque community stopped being hidden in plain sight.

The other historic event was the First Western Basque Festival (1959), which took place in Sparks, Nevada. This festival, in whose organization Laxalt also participated, attracted around 6,000 people – Basque and non-Basque alike. The festival “had positive effects on Basques' collective imagery and their integration into a national collectivity” (Saitua). Basques were able to publicly manifest their Basqueness while still expressing their affiliation to their American identity. This first major festival can also be conceived as a public expression that they were good immigrants, good American citizens. Not only that, this festival and others that followed were originally organized to change the status of Basques from purely immigrant to ethnos, from the mountain to the city, that is, to American citizens. These festivals are hence regarded as a rite of passage of a collective that changed its status (Fernández de Larrinoa, 1997, pp. 114-115). Now that Basques are fully assimilated and have proved to be good Americans, they are trying to hold on to their Basque identity and are reinventing means that will enable them to maintain and showcase their ethnicity. Nowadays, there are festivals all over the West, which are held as a celebration of Basque culture (Zubiri).

Basque festivals bring people from different states together and have become a key social event for the Basque community (Corcostegui, 1999; Douglass, 1980).

Basque family-style restaurants are also a haven for Basques to re/connect with their ancestry. Mitch Etcheverry and his family frequently go to the Basque Hotel in Fresno, as did Bergon himself when he was growing up. Bergon explains that “Eating family style in California’s San Joaquin Valley ... meant sitting at a long, noisy table with people you might not know and eating food you hadn’t ordered” (“Gastronomica”). As he further points out, Basque hotels served as cultural havens and transitional zones of assimilation for Basque immigrants. Usually, they operated as “a rooming house, post office, card room, dance hall, convalescent ward, unemployment hospice, and retirement community ... business centers and hiring halls for traveling Basque sheep owners ... Eventually the hotels opened up their boarders’ tables to the public” (ibid.) Family style eateries are an instrument of social relations and ethnicity in the Basque diaspora; in short, they serve as social rituals. Members of the diaspora can highlight their Basque attachment without having to have a solid commitment to the culture. They may still feel Basque, regardless of whether they are part or not of Basque clubs or the like. That is, unlike Irigaray, who is passionately engaged with the Basque community in Nevada, other Basques may decide to participate in other ways or even be more passive ethnically.

Incidentally, another possibility within the gamut of Basqueness is not to embrace it at all; even to ignore it. St. Ed Arrizabalaga does not show any explicit attachment to his Basque heritage; his surname is the only clear indication of his ethnic roots, but not of what he feels. One interpretation of this absence of Basque ethnic markers would be his voluntary choice not to be associated with the Basque community. He may even be ignorant of his ethnic ancestry, or does not consider it relevant or a source of pride. Basques in the diaspora show different degrees of affection for and affiliation with their cultural heritage, which may range from total to non-existent. An absence of public manifestations of this heritage does not necessarily mean that one does not feel Basque, since one may feel associated with Basqueness in a more private and individual way, without necessarily participating in the current rituals or events.

Today, Basque Americans have planted deep roots in America, but they proudly express their ethnic culture. They live their Basqueness and



embrace it in different degrees and alternative ways, as conceived in Irigaray, Arrizabalaga and Etcheverry. In contrast to Erramouspe, they can choose to be Basque at no risk of being harassed. They can claim with pride that they are Basque, or Basco, as they are referred to at present. Irigaray claims that “he has grown used to the nickname [Basco], although it had come about only in recent years” (2), which highlights the transformation and recalibration of the term Basco and its positive impact on the re/construction of Basque American identity.

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# Laxalt Family's Basque American Correspondence After *Sweet Promised Land*

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## **Abstract:**

Dominique Laxalt is a Basque who became famous following the novel *Sweet Promised Land* written by his son Robert Laxalt in 1957. The novel relates the harsh adaptation to the life of a shepherd in the American West and the impossible definitive return to the native land, after decades of emigration and the journey made with his son Robert in the Basque Country (Ezkerra and Olaziregi, 2009; Laraway, 2019). As a result, the novel is an illustration of the altered identity of Basque Americans (Totoricaguena, 2014; Douglass, 2005; Decroos, 1983).

We have examined the very rich correspondence of the Laxalt family where we can see a double alterity of identity, apart from that of Dominique Laxalt himself. It concerns, on the one hand, that of Dominique's American children, concerning their interest in the Basque language and the Basque Country (notably Robert's, long before his novel) and, on the other hand, the fascination of the Basque Country's relatives for the American life of the Laxalt family (and the success of Paul Laxalt in politics). But these letters also bear witness to the changes in society and the economy of the Soule of the 1960s.

The dozens of letters sent by Dominique Laxalt's children and sisters, nieces and nephews are, in a way, a continuation of the novel *Sweet Promised Land*, since they allow us to know the family events after the novel. But, above all, the letters show that the journey recounted in the book is a catalyst for the close ties between the Basque and American Laxalt families.

**Keywords:** Diaspora, Basque Literature, Correspondence

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her novel *Americanah* (2013), shows very clearly the change in the identity – or, more exactly, in the behavior – of Nigerian people living in the USA. They try to become Americans, changing, for example, their accent. Furthermore, they do not realize that their homeland has evolved during the same time.

This article will focus on another novel –and another region of the USA, another homeland and another era – but like in Ngozi Adichie’s book, identity, diaspora and the return (Oliver-Rotger, 2015) are three important topics. The paper is about Robert Laxalt’s *Sweet Promised Land* (1957), a story about otherness, as defined as change in identity (Petersoo, 2007) and feelings of the Basque-american Dominique Laxalt. He made a trip to his homeland, fifty years after he arrived in Nevada, and he did not want to stay there: “I can’t go back. It ain’t my country any more. I’ve lived too much in America ever to go back” (Laxalt, 1997, p. 176). Robert Laxalt relates his father’s life in the hills of Nevada as a shepherd and the trip that he made with him to the Basque Country, in order to meet their relatives.

This paper will focus on the story about the otherness not mentioned in the book *Sweet Promised Land*, and thanks to the dozens of letters of Laxalt’s family before and – particularly – after the trip of Robert and Dominique. On the one hand, we will develop the interest of Laxalt’s children, as Americans, in their roots. On the other hand, we will analyze the influence of having family in the USA for people living in the Basque homeland. Otherness can be observed in the attitude towards the languages (Basque, English and French), in the fascination of the relatives in the Basque Country for the American way of life and, hence, in their eventual resulting increased closeness to and awareness of the USA. Moreover, the letters illustrate the change in the relationship between the Basque and the American families and the influence of the trip on this change.

### **Diaspora and assimilation**

Immigrants live together in a diaspora due to a number of factors relating to the «distance between cultures», such as sharing a common language and traditions, coming from the same district or through having been part of a network of contacts which gave mutual support in finding employment and emigrating. Paradoxically, this support is problematic for becoming economically and culturally integrated into the host society (Prinz, 2019, p.

16). For example, Armenians in the diaspora do not tend to work, to marry or to have contacts with people from other communities (Mkrtchyan, 2008, p. 12). Hence, diaspora organization comes about in order to maintain national identity, and the family is the main way to achieve this. Nevertheless, this protection of identity results in their isolation and, after that, risks unemployment. In order to avoid this difficult economic situation, members of the community may try to integrate into mainstream society despite, through this choice, bringing about weaker integration within the family (Mkrtchyan, 2008, p. 13).

Bhatia and Ram (2009) conclude that cultural integration «into the mainstream culture» – or «acculturation» – is not an individual choice, and that the web of «socio-political and historical forces» are key to acculturation (Bhatia and Ram, 2009, p. 147). However, they point to the analysis of Berry (1998) who suggests that assimilation is the result of the individual decision of members of the diaspora to break with their own cultural identity, having regular contact with the «dominant group» (Bhati and Ram, 2009, p.141).

In spite of the difficulties with integration for the first generation, the situation changes for their children. Indeed, adaptation is very much easier for the youngest generation, due to their daily relationships with other local children (Mkrtchyan, 2008, p. 25). The experience of the Basque diaspora is, more or less, similar to the situation of the Indian (Bhatia and Ram, 2009) and the Armenian (Mkrtchyan, 2008) diasporas. The first generation of Basque immigrants has been marginalized (Oiarzabal, 2009, p. 79), and colonies of Basques tended to group together (Alday, 1999. p. 164), and they were tenacious in the maintenance of their ethnic identity (Douglass and Bilbao, 2005, p. 329). However, this can not be explained by political motivations or attachment for the homeland (Douglass and Bilbao, 2005. p. 345). The main reason for this was isolation in the mountains since, as shepherds, Basques did not see anybody; they did not learn English and they did not have the opportunity to marry Americans (Douglass and Bilbao, 2005: 345). Nevertheless, as in the Armenian case (Mkrtchyan, 2008), members of the second or third generation did marry Americans (Douglass and Bilbao, 2005, p. 343-344). According to Jean-Francis Decroos, marriage with people born in America had brought about the loss of the transmission of the Basque language (Decroos, 1983, p. 77).

There are at least three further reasons which may explain this lack of transmission of the Basque language: insufficient teachers of Basque, the

difficulty in finding occasions to speak in Basque in America and the social stigma of not using a mainstream language (Oiarzabal, 2009, p. 81). Between the end of the 19th century and the first part of the 20th, immigrants into the United States opted to abandon their own language in order to assimilate (Garikano, 2009). The later generations of the Basque diaspora tend not to think of going to live in the Basque Country, but they have a strong emotional connection with the homeland (Totoricaguena, 2015, p. 193). They do not see it as worth the effort to learn the Basque language (Michelena Smith, 2011, p. 52). Instead of the language, their link with their «ethnic identity» is limited to cultural artifacts, such as Basque dances (Corcostegui, 1999, p. 247). Hence, dance has an acquired significance, because in most cases, it is the only way to achieve a stronger or weaker connection with the Basque Country.

This implies a political dimension because it demonstrates negation of identification with Spain or France (Corcostegui, 1999, pp. 255, 259). The proportion of Basque American people who said that they are only Basque was 72.% in the decade of the nineties (Oiarzabal, 2009, p. 99). Nevertheless, the perspective of some members of the Basque diaspora is cultural rather than political. Furthermore, this cultural expression appears as if frozen in time. Recent immigrants experience this phenomenon, because Basque culture (such as dance and music) has evolved since the emigration of the older generation. Such immigrants may express disappointment with the cultural expression of the older generation, because it shows a culture which no longer exists (Totoricaguena, 2015, p. 123).

Basque-American people who maintain connections with their homeland or the homeland of their parents or grandparents, try to keep informed about what is happening in the Basque Country. There are blogs and specialized websites in English about the Basque Country and aimed at people in the diaspora (Goirizelaia, 2019, p. 193). The existence of diasporic media is common, but transnational media are essential too (Budarick, 2014, p. 144). However, Basque-Americans tend to follow diasporic media more than websites based in the Basque Country, mainly because these are in Basque, in French or in Spanish. The other important channel of information is Facebook (Goirizelaia, 2019, p. 204).

Some decades ago, when Facebook or websites did not exist, letters were the main form of communication between relatives on either side of the Atlantic. Moreover, trips to the homeland were – and continue to be –

another important way to get in touch with the Basque Country and the family. Indeed, the need to see relatives was the strongest pull (Douglass and Bilbao, 2005, p.348).

This type of return –which is not definitive– inspires literature where the difficulty or the impossibility of feeling at home lies both in the homeland and in the hostland (Oliver-Rotger, 2015, p. 3). This impossibility is self-perpetuating and results in «alienation», «deterritorialization» or «exclusion» in both contexts (Oliver-Rotger, 2015, p. 5). The return – the trip to the homeland, more exactly – is the main subject of the book *Sweet Promised Land* (1957) written by Robert Laxalt. Rio (2002) has researched the literature of Robert Laxalt and, moreover, Ezkerra and Olaziregi (2009) analyze this book from the perspective of the otherness, or the change, of his father Dominique Laxalt who emigrated to the USA in 1906 (Rio, 1998, p.11)

At the beginning, Dominique Laxalt's intention was not to stay in the USA but to return to the Basque Country after earning enough money. It was the reason given for not having motivation to learn English (Ezkerra and Olaziregi, 2009, p. 49). But he spent nearly a half century before returning, and he learned English in this time. Nevertheless, he did not lose his mother language, the Basque language. But although he spoke Basque, his basqueness had changed (Ezkerra and Olaziregi, 2009, p. 51) and he did not know where his real «home» was: the homeland or the hostland? (Ezkerra and Olaziregi, 2009, p. 49-50).

## Method

This paper, not based on the novel, explores the family situation of Dominique and Robert Laxalt and the years following the trip of 1953, related in *Sweet Promised Land*. The material analyzed here consists of the dozens of letters received by Dominique from the Basque Country and from his children in other parts of the USA or, in the case of his son Robert, the world. In order to analyze these letters, the author traveled to Nevada, from the Basque Country. There, the archive of the Center of Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, in Reno – a Center created by Robert Laxalt himself in 1967 – was consulted (Rio, 1998, p. 11).

There are many collections in this archive, and some of them could be accessed, including collections belonging to the Laxalt family. Three collections from the Laxalt family were consulted: “Laxalt family correspondence”

(2 boxes); “Robert Laxalt Papers” (3 boxes); “Dominique Laxalt Papers” (2 boxes). The boxes contain letters, Christmas cards, press clippings and other documents. All the letters were read and pictures of a large part of them were taken – particularly of letters talking about the social, economic or cultural life of the Basque Country, of stories about the family or relating to the trip of Dominique and Robert Laxalt –. For each letter a couple of sentences were written about the main information contained in it and background links were made to other topics relating to time, location, etc. The next step was the classification of the topics and the content analysis.

## **Results**

### **Otherness**

The letters were written either in English, French or Basque. Laxalt himself wrote letters in Basque to his brother living in the United States, but the letters of his sisters, his nieces, his nephews or his cousins were in French or in Basque. Concerning the correspondence between Dominique Laxalt and his children, they communicate only in English. In them, there can be observed the otherness mentioned by other researchers (Decroos, 1983; Douglass, 2005) in the identity of the Laxalt family and in the relation to the majority of American families from the Basque emigration.

The lack of transmission of the language of the homeland becomes an obstacle to maintaining the family ties between Dominique Laxalt's children and the family living in the Basque Country. This is illustrated in the following extract from the Dominique Laxalt's letter to his daughter Suzanne (in English):

“Suzanne, if you have any spare time please write a letter to your aunt Marie at Pau France. She has been very sick last year although she is better; Madeleine Laffargue and Marie-Jeanne Bente have asked me to write as often as possibly can. [...] I had send her a clipping of Mickey's and Cathi's wedding and this professor could read and translate very good (so you can write in English)” (January 16, 1957).

The last part of the quotation illustrates one aspect of the concept of linguistic stress (Badu Bada, 2014), a phenomenon in bilingual societies where one of the two languages is a minority one and the other is spoken by everyone: the speakers of the minority language may not know if they can address stranger in that language. It is the opposite situation to English in



the Basque Country, where the majority language of the United States was not spoken, and may not be understood by the Basque speaking aunt in Pau. Dominique must reassure his daughter about language: he knows someone who can translate the letter written in English.

References to the language are present in other letters as well, such as the other one written to his daughter Suzanne. Dominique tells her about his encounter with people from the Basque Country, (in English): "...in June they will go back to San Sebastian, Spain that's their home town. The 11 year old boy goes to school there during Summer Vacation so not to forget Spanish schooling"; "...don't speak French and neither one talk Basque" (January 3, 1958).

### **American family about Basque language**

Despite not speaking Basque, the (adult) children of Laxalt show quite some interest in the language and culture. Suzanne (Sister Mary Robert) tells her parents (letter of July 17, 1962) that she met a linguist, and that they had discussed the Basque language: "It turned out that his name is Jose Sola – and he came from the Navarro province Spanish Basque. I had more fun expounding my Basque words walking stick – (makila) – bread – (ogie?) – etc". This fragment shows that Laxalt's daughter does know a few Basque words: the first word mentioned is related to her father's job (the shepherd's stick) and she is not sure of the second word (bread).

The most famous son of the Laxalt family, Paul Laxalt (future Governor of Nevada and close to President Ronald Reagan) does not tend to talk too much about the Basque Country and the Basque language, but in a letter (March 26, 1948) addressed to his uncle Pete, he speaks about a "Spanish-Basque" man who works with his father.

On the other hand, Mick Laxalt expresses his regret at not knowing Basque: "I kick myself in the pants a million times for not learning Basque. My professor thinks I'm really insane not having learned what to him is the most "baffling, interesting, and precious tongue in the linguistic system." (December 21, 1957). In fact, Mick does not speak Basque, but is learning French as are the other sons or grandsons of Dominique Laxalt. The link with Europe will be made through the French language.

It is above all, the son Robert who shows a special interest in knowing his father's country of origin. Robert Laxalt made the trip to the Basque

Country with his father in 1953. But, ten years before that, he shown the inclination to meet his family one day. In the letter sent from Congo, he mentions the possibility of moving to Europe: "If it is, I would appreciate your sending me the addresses and directions as to how to find your relatives in France, in case I go through the Pyrenees. It would be wonderful if I could get stationed there, because then, I could see them all the time" (n.d.). These two sentences tell us that the children of Dominique had very little information about their family in the Basque Country.

He expresses the same desire in a letter sent from Washington, pending a trip of which he does not know the destination. But he would like to have the opportunity to know his family: "If I was in Spain I could go to France sometimes + visit our relatives. That would sure be good" (October 2, 1943). We notice a clear difference between these two letters: "your relative" in the first, "our relative" in the second. From one letter to the next, Robert felt more integrated into this family.

### **The admiration of the Basque family**

Beyond the otherness of Dominique Laxalt himself and, above all, of his children born in the United States, the letters between the family in the homeland and the family in the diaspora reveal that there is a different kind of otherness for the relations living in the Basque Country. There are many letters praising the success of Dominique Laxalt's children and grandchildren. They are especially proud of Paul Laxalt, for his political career. Paul's Souletine family shows great pride in having the Governor of Nevada among their cousins in America. Some letters are accompanied by press clippings from a local newspaper: «Le gouverneur du Nevada parle basque» ("The Governor of Nevada speaks Basque"), in *La dépêche du Midi*, from Friday, November 11th, 1966.

On November 21st that year, a very distant relative whom he did not know wrote to Dominique, introducing himself and congratulating him and, particularly Paul, on the election (in French): "It was through the newspapers that we learned here that a Souletin Basque was elected to the post of Governor of Nevada. And my aunt, whom I also congratulated, kindly gave me your address. [...] This is to convey to you our joy at your great success, crowned by that of your son, and that of your other children".

However, one sister of Dominique mentions the difficult beginnings of her brother, in a letter of March 1st, 1957 (in French): “The beginnings in America were hard but what happiness you knew how to create around you. Your efforts have not been in vain you have an admirable family; I can only congratulate you”.

### **The trip became a link**

All these letters confirm that the journey recounted in the book is a catalyst for the close ties between the Basque and American Laxalt families. Of nearly 200 letters, only 12 letters predate Robert and Dominique Laxalt's trip. One explanation could have been that the letters prior to the trip were lost and the later letters kept. In this case, how can these 12 letters be explained? Even if the old letters were lost, the fact of having kept the later ones would show us an increased interest by the American family in the European one, after the trip.

Between October 1953 and the end of 1954, there were 13 letters received from the Basque Country. The following years, between 1955 and 1972, there were between 4 and 8 letters per year, except in 1961 (year of a second trip by Robert Laxalt with his family) with 16 letters and in 1966 (year of the election of Paul Laxalt) with 17 letters. So the trips appear to have had a real impact on the relationship between members of the homeland and the diaspora.

By analyzing the content of the letters we can say that the journey recounted in the novel had the effect of improving the relationship. There is, first, the letter from his sister Marie, sent as soon as Dominique and Robert returned (October 25, 1953), thanking them for the visit. Her following letters, like those of the other members of the family, always evoke the memory of this visit and the desire or even the request for a future trip (however, Dominique was never going to return to his native country).

Several nieces, nephews or more or less distant cousins write to him over the years after the trip, to wish a happy new year, to give news of the family, in view of a trip to the United States or an upcoming visit from a son or grandson of Dominique... It is through these letters that we understand that these members of the family had not previously met Dominique – and even less Robert – before their trip, and that they were delighted to have got to.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, our analysis of the correspondence of the Laxalt family demonstrates that the trip made by Dominique Laxalt with his son Robert to the Basque Country, related in the book *Sweet Promised Land*, formed a pivotal event in the construction of the link between family living in the Basque Country (homeland) and the relatives living in the USA (hostland). The letters confirm the references to otherness in relation to difference when compared with one's original identity (Petersoo, 2007), made by Decroos (2005), Goirizelaia (2019) and Ezkerra and Olaziregi (2009). One type of this otherness was that the Basque-American family did not speak Basque or French while the Basque family did not speak English. This situation would not have been problematic if they had not had a relationship and if the American children had had no interest in the homeland of their parents.

However, despite assimilation into mainstream American society (Bhati and Ram, 2009), having connections with Basque family (Gorizelaia, 2019) increased the sense of otherness for the American Basques and, in addition, in the case of the Basque family, they felt more involved with America. Indeed, the Basque family would not have had the same interest in American life if they had not had relatives in the USA and a relationship with them. Finally, the otherness of Dominique Laxalt, who did not feel at home in his homeland (Ezkerra and Olaziregi, 2009), can be understood by reading the letters of his sister, which describe the great changes taking place in society in the Basque Country.

The connection between the novel and the actual artifacts (letters, etc.) of the writer and the protagonists of the novel has permitted a deeper understanding of the situation described in the book, that is, the complexity of the changes undergone/ experienced by emigrants and their relatives, with regard to their identity.

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