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Georgian Modernizm of the Twentieth Century: Contextualizing Connections to Western Intellectual Traditions

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At the beginning of the 20th century, under the influence of literary fashion, the literary movement of modernism first spread in Georgia and then became established. Decadent literary groups emerged on the literary scene. Most notably among them was the literary corporation of the "Blue Horns," whose first journal, Blue Horns*, was published on February 28, 1916. This group declared a struggle against both classical and contemporary Georgian realism and utilitarianism, particularly targeting revolutionary-democratic literature. The Blue Horns saw modernism as the path to lead Georgian literature out of its "banality." Georgian Symbolism had many branches: Impressionist, Dadaist, Expressionist, and even Futurist. All of these streams were united under the "Blue Horns" school. For 15 years, Georgian Symbolists consistently upheld the ideals of Symbolism, opposing realism and utilitarianism in art and literature. This principled stance is clearly expressed in their manifestos, critical essays, and poems. From 1925, a certain turning point began to emerge in the work of members of this literary corporation. The reason lies in the fact that in 1921, Georgia was occupied by Russia and became a socialist country, where the dictatorship of the proletariat was established. In the early years of Soviet rule, decadent literary groups continued to exist, but the leadership of public life was in the hands of the working class, and this fundamental social factor determined the path of development for Georgian literature during that period. Modernist schools first came under pressure and were later completely eradicated by a decree of the Communist Party. Despite this, Georgian modernism continued to exist "underground," and this fact has only become known in the 21st century. The work of writer Lado Kotetishvili became accessible to Georgian readers only a few years ago. At the time, his writings could not be published, as every one of his works actively opposed Bolshevik ideology.*

Keywords: *Literary fashion, Georgian modernism, modernist schools, history, "underground" modernism.*

Introduction

The literary fashion plays a significant role in development and distribution of this or that artistic style. In certain period, an artistic style developed on certain social ground very often "unconsciously" begins to distribute with the way of imitation and only after this there is begun its theoretical design, somewhat its systematization. So it was the Romanism, which for the first was created unconsciously in the XIX

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century Georgian literature and later became the dominant direction of the I half literature of the XIX century.

Literary fashion played a significant role in Georgia especially in the beginning of XX century, when decadent-literary groups appeared. First of all it should be mentioned literary corporation of the Blue Horns group which published its first magazine on February 28, 1916. This group has declared the fight to Georgian classic and modern realism and utilitarism, especially to revolutionary-democratic writing. The way to take the Georgian writing out of banality the Blue Horns group saw in modernism.

It is well known that decadentism in literature was born from imperialistic epoch. Since 90th of the XIX century capitalism begins to develop in Georgia and of course it is followed by capitalistic life style. Two or three months were enough to see Paris fashion in the streets of Tbilisi. Georgia was chasing Petersburg and Paris fashion both in life style and cultural relations. Georgian leading society considered this new course of Europeanism as the way to save the country.

According to European writing models the search of a new way of Georgian writing was begun by the end of the XIX century. Translated works of Edgar Poe, Hauptman, Materlink and others appeared in the newspaper "Kvali" and magazine "Moambe". Russian and foreign symbolists were read with great interest in Georgia, their names and authority were used in measurement and evaluation of the works of Georgian writers.

Even in the works of realistic writers appeared principles and forms of the modernistic school which was expressed in the word as imperfect means of expression, in expression of high and mystery sense with silence. Artistic justification of this idea is Chola Lomtatidze's "Silence" which obviously shows Materlonk's influence. The influence of modernistic writing on Georgian literature in 10th years of the XX century was evidently. This is influence is showed in Leo Kiacheli and Niko Lortkipanidze's short stories of that time, in Aleksandre Abasheli and Galaktion Tabidze's poetry. That period was characterized not only with translation of Edgar Poe, Materlink, Bodler, Malarme and others works but they also were imitating their ideas and forms.

Methodological and Narrative Peculiarities

The most devoted school of modernism in Georgia was the school of the Blue Horns group. Their aim was to separate Georgian writing from realism, leading revolutionary struggle and to reject the service of people like Russian and European modernism. They were proving: writing is diminished by the theory - art for people. Art does not serve anyone, it serves only writing. Isolation of writing from public and political life – that's the aim of writing. Esthetics of the Blue Horns group was grounded by subjective idealism. They thought this real reality was fabricated and there was an unreal form of the country behind it. The aim of writing is detection of "everlasting reality" and methods of realism are useless for understanding the next world. The only way to realize the absolute is not description of events and facts with words but to foresee with intuition, to use symbols. They thought that "beautiful

is simple and primitive and ugly is difficult and symbolic, ugly is dynamic and beautiful is static" (Gafrindashvili 2011). Ugly made writers closer to irrational.

Georgian symbolism had a lot of movements: impressionistic, Dadaistic, expressionistic and even phuturistic. All these movements were united by the Blue Horns school.

Georgian symbolists were protecting symbolism for 15 years; they struggle against realism and utilitarism in art and writing. This principle position is clearly expressed in their manifests. These years may be called as years of their artistic maturity.

The End of the Historical Discourse

The Final Stage of Georgian Modernism

Since 1925 something transformation began in artistic works of the members of that corporation. The point is that 1921 is the year of Sovietization of Georgia. Georgia became a socialistic country with proletariat dictatorship in it. Socialism has totally changed Georgian public life. 1921-1925 years in Georgian literature were characterized with very severe situation. There was an ideological struggle on literary front. In early years of the soviet government decadent groups continued their existence, but our public life was in the hand of proletariat and this major public factor defined the way of development of Georgian literature. It ensured successful development of the Soviet literature which was followed with pressure on modernistic schools and later their total destruction. The major topic of those years was the life of proletariat and development of the Soviet literature. Despite of this in yearly years of the (1921-1925) antirealist schools continued to exist but from 1925 pressure over that was expressed in the following slogan – "Back to the Land". In this year Communistic Party of the Soviet Union accepted the well-known resolution "applying party politics in artistic literature". This was followed with the first Georgian Writers Congress in 1926; they began to consolidate certain literary groups and schools by force, years of merge with the soviet reality which was expressed in "deliverance from past methods" for the Blue Horns group (Valerian Gafrindashvili). They welcomed "New Georgia". It should be noted that the literary tendencies that modernism established did not disappear without a trace even in the Soviet period. The "Blue Horns" group supported the revolution from the very beginning of the Soviet Government and now on national and Soviet grounds they were protecting the theory and practice of symbolism; They gave the Georgian nature to symbolism and on behalf of poetry they were fighting against "lingual naturalism and utilitarizm" in writing. They were still recognizing the French symbolists as their predecessors such as Baudelaire, Verlen, Mallarme and Rimbaud; They argued that symbolism was the highest form realism.

The Influence of Modernism on the Next Stage of Georgian Literature

"Return to the Earth"

For raising the poetic form of Georgian poetry the Blue Horns Group's effort was very productive. They have widened the bounds of Georgian poetry by searching new verse forms and methods; they developed the technique of Georgian poetry. For the fist they wrote real sonnets, terza rima, triolet. They used alliteration and assonance newly.

Since that period there began their duplication. It became difficult to unify topics such as Soviet Georgia, national ground and mysticism. And finally mysticism in their poetry has reduced gradually and ended with "back to the land" which was called "returning to the roots of Georgian patriotic writing" by the Soviet critics and poetry during the time of their artistic maturity were considered as poetry restricted with modernistic schemes. "Back to the land" was celebrated with publication of the first soviet analogy called "Poets of Revolution". The brochure was published rapidly in October 1921 dictated with requirements of revolutionary Georgia. The analogy was the collection of poetry of revolutionary thinker and "back to the land" poets of different time and nationality. It combined the poetry "Worker Bokuladze" written by the romantic poet Grigol Orbeliani, extract from the poem "Kartlis Deda" written by the realist poet Ilia Chavchavadze (written on national freedom motives) which had been called "Ode to Freedom" by editors, "Petersburg" written by the member of the Black Horns group Titsian Tabidze, "To Russian Friends" written by Adam Mitskevich (friendship of Russian and foreign people was underlined there) and etc. The analogy was opened with Eugène Pottier's "Internationalism" which was followed by Rouget de Lisle's "The Song of Marseille". Thematic of the collection is clear but for better expression we pursue the extract from Mastev's prose miniature "At the Gate of the Factory" which had been printed in the same brochure:

> *"I haven't seen you a year, I am shuddered and running to you black pipes, buildings, towers! / I am ready to have a conversation with you, to rise my hands up and praise you my iron friends!... / I go to the factory as to the party. . . / The air is moaning with inspiration. The spirit of the factory has transfixed the crowd, the heart is moving with iron tremble... / The crowd is coming with a new row, with iron steps. / Hands are burning, it's difficult to be without work, and they cannot be patient without a hammer, without work. The stream of energy should be empted. / Go ahead, go ahead! / _ Quickly, more often! / _ Cut, saw! / _ To waterfalls! We are their lever, breath and idea…"* (Mastev1921).

The idea as well as artistic value of the miniature is clear. It is the example of socialistic fashion. The creators of the brochure were the best representatives of Georgian poetry – the Blue Horns group poets – Titsian Tabidze and Giorgi Leonidze. It is something like a paradox but it is a reality caused by facts.

In October 1917 in the first years of revolution there was created a strong corporation in Georgia – "The Union of Georgian Writers" which has an idea on national issues different from the Soviet Government. The member of this union was Konstantine Gamsakhurdia newly returned from Europe who was protecting

"the literary position of modernism" in Georgian literature. So called Social-Democratic School was closer to that union. Very soon these literary groups – "Old Union", the group of the "Khomaldi" and Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's "Ilioni Group" were united under the name of "Academic Association".

The "Khomaldi" and the "Ilioni" were expressing the national belief of "the Academic Association" most typically. They were against "old symbolism" and agitation motives of proletariat writing. Konstantine Gamsakhurdia could settle European modernism, Nietzsche's mysticism, irrational language realizing the blessings of the world and "Georgian fighting patriotism". Konstantine Gamsakhurdia was writing that today even there are a lot of cultures in the world the only true way is taken by the western culture. We can read in the first issue of the magazine dedicated to Nietzsche:

> *"You made us feel that the reality is a dream…*
> *Oh, it is so difficult to meet the night on the middle of the road"* (Gamsakhurdia 2011).

Nietzsche's mysticism and Georgian mythology became the ground of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia's early stories and novel "The Smile of Dionysus".

It should be noted that later, in 1936 (during a rather significant period of Soviet repression), Konstantine Gamsakhurdia criticized and revised his position, because socialism did not spare intelligentsia, especially poets, and especially those who did not follow the line of proletarian writing.

In 1937 the great Georgian prose writer Mikheil Javakhishvili was arrested and killed. 1937 was the last year for Titsian Tabidze. He was taken and killed. Those who refused to cooperate with the Soviet government should expect the same. The first was the well-known decree "applying the literary politics of the party in artistic literature" (1925) followed by the resolution "applying formation of literary-artistic organizations" in 1932. After the last one all literary groups were cancelled. There remained the only line of writing - the Great Soviet Writing. Symbolism and modernism introduced by literary fashion in Georgia and adapted organically to Georgian ground by talented Georgian writers which opened the way to the west make the Georgian writing urbanistic, has been buried by socialism. And at least Georgian culture has preserved the works be aware by Georgian people despite of prohibitions in socialistic period. These XX century achievements supported those processes which helped Georgian people to have connection with western thought.

Review of the Literature on the Subject

Critical discourse on Georgian modernism has existed since the early 20th century. However, under the Soviet socialist regime, modernism was widely condemned in literary publications as a reactionary or undesirable movement. It was not until the 21st century that a form of literary criticism emerged in Georgia that was free from ideological constraints. In recent years, several comprehensive studies on Georgian modernism have been published, among which the following are particularly noteworthy:
1. Bregadze, K. (2018), *"Modernisty and Modernism"*, Institute of Literature Publishing

House, Tbilisi; 2. Paichadze, T. (2018), *"Modernism and Georgian Literature: Text as Culture"*, Tbilisi State University Publishing House, Tbilisi.

In the 2020s of the 21st century, another modernist writer was discovered in Georgia — Lado Kotetishvili — who, due to Soviet repression, was unable to publish his works during his lifetime. Only in recent years the Georgian readers gained access to his literary texts. As a result, there exists only a handful of introductory essays on his work, which accompany two collections of his writings. These essays are: 1. Chkheidze, Z. (2018), *"Lado Kotetishvili — The Unknown Soul of 20th-Century Georgian Literature"*, in *Lado Kotetishvili, Tales of the lappers* , Intellect Publishing, Tbilisi; 2. Tsereteli, L. (2018), *"The Writer and Fate"*, in *Lado Kotetishvili, Tales of the leppers,* Intellect Publishing, Tbilisi; 3. Chkheidze, Z. (2021), *Foreword*, in *Lado Kotetishvili, The Lineage of Gveliandari*, Mtsignobari Publishing, Tbilisi; 4. Khopheria, G. (2021), *"The Literature That Was Not Allowed to Speak"*, in *Lado Kotetishvili, The Lineage of Gveliandari*, Mtsignobari Publishing, Tbilisi.

The author of this paper, Tamar Sharabidze, is currently researching Lado Kotetishvili's work. She has referred to his literary activity as "underground modernism."

Underground Modernism

The Work of Lado Kotetishvili

In the history of 21st-century Georgian literature, a peculiar phenomenon emerged that can be described as "underground modernism." Despite the well-known 1925 decree by the Communist Party, modernist literature continued to be created in Georgia; however, it was never published, and thus remained unknown to Georgian readers.

One of the finest Georgian writers of the 20th century—who will soon rightfully earn a place among the nation's literary classics—was only discovered in the 21st century, just a few years ago. His body of work has not yet been fully published. A circle of the writer's acquaintances is still reading his manuscripts, preparing them for publication.

Lado Kotetishvili, whose works were created in the 1930s and are primarily modernist in style, reportedly asked his wife before his death never to publish his writings. His wife and children honored this wish, but eventually, it was the next generation—his grandchildren—who decided that publishing his work was essential to preserving his memory. The response from literary critics exceeded the family's expectations. Kotetishvili's work is expected to attract many scholars in the future and will undoubtedly earn him a place in textbooks on the history of modern Georgian literature, thanks to his distinctive style and worldview.

As previously mentioned, Kotetishvili's writings belong to the modernist literary tradition. However, this alone was not the main reason behind his desire to keep his works unpublished. In all of his writings—whether subtly or openly—Kotetishvili protested against Bolshevik ideology. His characters are often fantastical or fairy-

tale figures, yet this did not prevent him from using them to portray real political figures of his time, or more often, their generalized symbolic representations.

"The Lineage of Gveliandari"

In one of Lado Kotetishvili's most unusually plotted short story, *"The Lineage of Gveliandari,"* a fantastical world unfolds before the reader's eyes—populated by ogres, dragons, dinosaurs, "gonosaurs," tusked mammoths, serpents, witches, sorcerers, elves, *ochos*, and other such embodiments of evil forces. One is left both astonished and bewildered by the vivid and detailed portrayal of such a grand, large-scale scene filled with concentrated savagery. This overwhelming dynamic is even reflected in the story's subtitle: *"Dena Devuri"* (*Ogre Power* or *Monster Surge*, depending on interpretation).

The time depicted in the story is prehistoric, pre-worldly, beyond-time, since Earth has not yet begun its regular rotation around its axis, and humanity has not yet been born. More precisely, humans emerge at a certain stage of a powerful, titanic current. Before that, even earlier, Earth begins to spin on its axis, and with this motion, time becomes fixed — the characters gradually begin to age.

The writer's time, however, is the year 1927, the early 20th century, the period following the Sovietization of Georgia, when a dictatorship begins to take root in the country — one ruled by evil forces as monstrous as dinosaurs with their overlords — the herdsman giants.

In contemporary literary studies, scholars actively apply the methodological concept known in literary theory as Husserl's "phenomenological criticism." This approach excludes historical context, the author, and the circumstances surrounding the creation of the work—that is, the comparative-historical method—because this allows a clearer focus on the essential aspects of the text in which the author's consciousness is realized.

In the specific case of analyzing "*The Lineage of Gveliandari*" phenomenological criticism helps us avoid interpreting the narrative solely in terms of the situation in Georgia at the time. Instead, it enables us to reflect more broadly on the nature of evil—its constant flow, its multiplication and fertilization, its approach to an end, even its temporary death, and the anticipation of a time when it will once again emerge in a different form.

In Lado Kotetishvili's stories, the question of the role of art always emerges. As a writer living in the Soviet Union, he clearly perceives that in the boundless world of evil depicted in the story, art itself is strange and partially allied with evil. Here, even the sound of reeds being crushed by dinosaurs is perceived as music.

The story of the artist — a strange parable set in the desert landscapes along the banks of Mesopotamia — hints at many things for the reader; including the idea that even a land made fertile by the reeds of Mesopotamia remains a desert under the rule of evil. In this world, the small human — the artist — must tame serpents, and he succeeds in doing so through art. However, in the end, the "great ones" forgive him nothing, and the artist's fate is sealed with a "great scream of death"; The artist is a small person in a country where nothing is small, where "bodies larger than death" move, and where "desires stronger than death" reign. That is why the secret

of art dies, and the right to reveal it is denied and passed down from generation to generation. Serpents guard it with serpentine wisdom.

And yet, art is vital even for them, for "to this day they shed their skins to the rhythm of that music and dance. Without it, every serpent would suffocate inside its own skin" (Kotetishvili 2021).

Perhaps that is why the writer sentenced his own work to remain unpublished, passing down the right to keep it hidden from generation to generation—he feared that the "great ones" would not forgive him, and indeed, they would not.

In the story, the world of the giants is ultimately defeated — but not by a force of good. Rather, two evil forces destroy each other. Yet the giants, turned to stone and already dead, still await their time; they believe their age will come again — an age of titanic currents and madness.

Against this background, the story raises an even more universal question than the cyclical return of evil throughout time. It is the question of humanity's eternal waiting — a theme that forms the story's extraordinary finale, intensifying the sense of eternity. In terms of content, *The Race of the Serpent* depicts a non-Biblical story of creation — an inhuman (titanic) and, naturally, imperfect under-heaven that confronts the entire universe with its evil. Within this hostile environment, the human being (who appears several times in the story) has lost its human nature — and is described as "the most dangerous and intelligent animal" — and is as doomed to destruction as the titanic current itself. The writer aspires toward abstraction, which he achieves not by employing myth, but by creating a fantastical, mythological world — by engaging in myth-making, where the character lives *within* the myth. He also employs dream-construction, which differs from the usual literary device of dream-use. Rather than simply using dreams, he organizes them literarily — revealing the "falsehood of the seen," the "emergence from the dream," and a process through which the character comes to self-realization via the dream.[1]

Kotetishvili primarily employs the technique of fantastical grotesque, which is based on turning the narrative into a kind of fable and on extreme exaggeration. However, this exaggeration corresponds to the reality of his time, and in this way, a contrast between reality and fantasy is created. The reality is that a titanic force is destroying the country; the fantasy is the artistic embodiment of this fact through the image of a titanic force.

The boundaries between the real and the fantastical are blurred, since the writer's unconscious (expressed through myth) and conscious (rooted in reality) simultaneously operate within the language of the story, effectively depicting both worlds.

In this regard, Lado Kotetishvili's story can be classified as expressionist, a style that found its voice in Georgian literature through the novellas of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia and the novels of Grigol Robakidze.

It is also worth noting that Kotetishvili's artistic style is thoroughly thought out, systematically developed, and fully formed.

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[1]The technique of dream-construction first appears in Georgian literature in the works of Vazha-Pshavela (Aluda's dream). It is also used by Konstantine Gamsakhurdia in *The Smile of Dionysus* (the moment of transition from wakefulness into a dream — "double sleep") and by Grigol Robakidze in his novels (the Dreaming with eyes open

Boundless Winds

Lado Kotetishvili's novel *The Boundless Winds* bears a striking resemblance to *The Race of the Serpents*, despite differing in both theme and genre. The first is a short story; the second, a novel. The short story deals with the exploration of the inner essence of great power and dictatorship, cloaked in mythological imagery, while the novel explores the intersection of two lineages — their character traits, temperaments, traditions, and ultimately their incompatibility. The roots of this incompatibility lie in myth and folklore, but in reality, reflect the fundamental differences between two nations — the great and the small, the Russian and the Georgian.

The short story and the novel are similar in their spatial (grand, large-scale) and temporal (primordial time) dimensions.

The novel is written in a modernist style, primarily expressed through the process of myth-making. For the author, the foundations for creating myth are found in Georgia's ancient history, Georgian literature, ethnography, oral traditions, and, more broadly, the Georgian natural world. Through these, the writer produces a whirlwind of newly created myths.

In analyzing the novel, intertextuality becomes apparent — specifically, its relationship with a text from another era: *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. The author paraphrases parts of Rustaveli's text while also altering specific passages. The 20th-century French critic and philosopher Roland Barthes described this phenomenon as the continued existence of "old" texts within a new "fabric," a concept later adopted as a defining feature of postmodernism. In our view, this characteristic can be considered a general feature of literature as a whole.

Although the writer consciously uses Rustaveli's plot — which is firmly embedded in the reader's cultural memory — and reinterprets it, presenting it in a new form, unlike postmodernists, Lado Kotetishvili does not strip the borrowed text of its original meaning or assign it a new one.

Another postmodernist element also appears in the novel's text: the principle of *double coding*, which refers to the presence of two layers of artistic signs and cultural codes — one aimed at a mass audience, and the other at an elite readership.

The codes of the first layer are easily grasped by the reader — for example, the story of Tare and Dare is recognized as a paraphrase of *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*. The second layer of codes, however, is based both on contemporaneity and on historical-cultural experience. The author holds his own attitude toward the codes he creates, and the reader's attitude may or may not align with this, depending on their erudition and intellectual capacity. For some readers, the deeper meanings may remain entirely elusive.

Art, by its nature, is always a model of double — and at times triple or even more — coding. In this case, the author, Lado Kotetishvili, does not aim to solve a historical mystery within the "old" text — *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (a task even scholars have failed to accomplish), for "thoughts of the past are a desert — impassable and boundless" (Kotetishvili 2021).

The writer's desire, in general, is to draw the reader's attention toward traditional human values — a pursuit that unites the "old" and the "new" and is most prominently characteristic of Expressionism among the literary movements of the 20th century.

Another important aspect that drew our attention is the function of dreams in this literary text. In the fairy-tale novel, the dream serves as a means of prophecy. Sorcerers or witches who have been bitten by serpents see dreams during moments of trance, in which divine will or prophecy is revealed to them. In dreams, a realization of wisdom occurs — a wisdom that is not accessible to the mind in the real world and can only be comprehended in the realm of unreality. This interpretation of dreams emerges in modernist texts, and in Georgian literature can be found in the artistic works of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia, Grigol Robakidze, and Demna Shengelaia.

And since the dream is an unreality, one must "immerse" in it. This "immersion" is a mystical process that can happen both in sleep and in wakefulness. Queen Zizi is so deeply affected by Zeshta's tale that she sighs, falls silent, becomes still, and gradually begins to sink into an "extraordinarily sweet and passionate dream" (Kotetishvili 2021). This is a relaxation of the mind and a voluntary transition into an unreal world.

The entire novel — and especially its ending — truly represents a "shoreless" pursuit of abstraction, which is another characteristic feature of Expressionism.

„Gveltucha" Snake lipped

As already noted, Lado Kotetishvili's works belong to the modernist literary movement, but the writer is also fully capable of conveying his ideas through a realist lens and choosing an artistic style that best suits his message. In some of his stories, none of the characteristic features of modernism are present, which demonstrates that the author has the ability to write in multiple styles simultaneously and operate within different literary movements, depending on how he wishes to express his ideas. Nevertheless, in all of his works, he retains his distinct, individual style, which is primarily reflected in his artistic vocabulary and his consistent approach to life's essential questions. Lado Kotetishvili did not shift to a realist style because "liquidation operations" were conducted against modernist literature in Georgia (which began before the Stalinist repressions), and many modernist groups declared self-dissolution. Rather, he continued creating modernist literature in parallel. This occurred during the very same years. It is also worth noting that despite the aforementioned liquidation, modernism remained underground in Georgia and, unlike in Europe, was never fully discontinued— Lado Kotetishvili being its representative.

The theme of *Gveltucha* (Snake-lipped) is the infiltration of Bolshevik ideology into the country. The narrative unfolds in a Georgian border region, yet readers generalize its implications to all of Georgia. At the core of the drama is the split within the individual—the triumph of an ideology cloaked in the guise of "brotherhood and equality," which morally destroys the person, turning him into a murderer, a traitor, and a loyal slave.

One important circumstance should also be taken into account: Lado Kotetishvili never published his works. Of course, he wrote with an imagined reader in mind, but not for the broad audience of his time. That is why he never disguises himself in any of his writings and feels no need for an "(artificial) return to the people."

The story "Gveltucha" is especially significant because it was written just a few years after the Sovietization of Georgia—the very subject of the story—and was not intended for publication. Therefore, the events described are in full alignment with reality and reflect the writer's authentic perspective on it.

In a Georgian border region, in the mountain village of Khevi, Gveltucha is a leader among his peers, yet he is unable to make sense of the new era. The local population has mixed opinions about the arrival of the "Bolshevik-Russians": the majority see them as enemies, while a minority view them as kin, since they belong to the lower social class—the proletariat. Adding to the confusion is the belief that "among those Russians, there are quite a few Georgians mixed in" (ibid.).

Gveltucha is driven by a desire to uncover the truth—he wants to capture a "Bolshevik-Russian" and find out what kind of faith they follow. The naive highlander's plan and its execution are immediate. Through his conversation with the captive, Gveltucha becomes convinced that "the Russians have adopted a new faith," but he remains skeptical about the prisoner's claims—about equality, brotherhood, and love being established throughout the country—because he has both heard of and witnessed "the violence of the Cossack Russians" (Kotetishvili 2021). His friend Matia is outraged by the Russian's words—he curses the Russians' godlessness, their desire to conquer other lands, and their treacherous nature. Gveltucha, however, listens to both of them and realizes that Matia is not lying, but "somewhere deep in his heart, a troubling thought stirs" (Kotetishvili 2021). This thought is the anticipation of a new life—one that Georgians may not yet understand or appreciate, still seeing the Russians as enemies, while in truth, they might be coming to care for Georgia and to bring brotherhood. In a moment of impulsive rage, typical of the mountain people, Gveltucha kills his friend and heads toward the Russian camp with the captured Russian. At that moment, he is convinced of the righteousness of his actions.

Lado Kotetishvili portrays the pain of a divided soul. Gveltucha's heart breaks as he parts from his homeland—he knows well that he will be branded a traitor, cursed by his people. Yet he firmly believes that, in order to save the country, a new path must be taken—and that new path is "Bolshevik-Russianness." This is the primitive thinking of an uneducated man who, in his own way, is deeply concerned about his country's fate.

The Russian prisoner obediently follows Gveltucha, but once they cross the border, their roles reverse: the former captive now proudly leads the ordinary Georgian, who has no choice but to obey the commander's orders in the Russian army and fight against his own country. Gveltucha genuinely admires the Russians. In the commander's speech, he sees "comradely kindness and love"; he is struck by the commander's "compassion and calm manner," and by the fact that someone would travel such a great distance just to help oppressed peoples. He thinks to himself that perhaps Georgians are unaware of the Russians' true intentions—or, if they do know, they no longer believe in them. Gveltucha, on the other hand, is ready to do whatever the commander asks of him.

In a certain sense, the reader feels sympathy for Gveltucha—and this sympathy arises solely from his naivety and unwavering conviction. However, the same reader is also troubled by the thought of how Gveltucha could bring himself to kill his

friend—and if it was done in a moment of passion, why does he not experience deep remorse? How can he be willing to fight against his own people, even if some of his fellow countrymen are guilty or misguided? How is it possible to believe that an entire nation thinks the same way, except for a few exceptions—and that these few are the ones who are right?

Gveltucha does not understand politics, and that in itself is not a fault—but he also fails to grasp a basic truth: that the blood of even one person, especially that of a sworn brother, is not worth sacrificing for political goals or the ideology of a single class.

As time passes, Gveltucha's already burdened heart and body grow heavier with unease. The moment arrives when the renegade, alongside his new unit, must fight against the Khevsurs—his own people. Yet battle has its own laws, and it won't end "until one of the warring sides is completely wiped out." At this point, the remnants of his conscience, buried deep within, begin to stir, and Gveltucha—now fighting against his fellow Georgians—starts to hope for the Khevsurs', that is, the Georgians' victory. Two forces confront each other: one holds an advantage in numbers; the other—in love for its homeland. Even recognizing this difference should have been enough for Gveltucha not to take the Russian side. The first clash ends in defeat for the Russians. And yet, Gveltucha continues to fight, now searching for another way to enter Georgian territory.

This path, too, turns out to be blocked. As Gveltucha turns back, he sees that the Russians are not troubled by defeat at all — "because they clearly feel their own strength and righteousness" (Kotetishvili 2021). Yet the reader does not feel this righteousness; rather, they come to understand that the ideology arriving under the guise of equality and brotherhood is a tool for controlling the masses. These people become victims of dictatorship, though they themselves do not perceive it.

The author also presents the opposing force: a group of Khevsurs passionately defending their homeland, who now celebrate their victory. The writer expresses the joy of both people and nature with a characteristically realist sensitivity. The reader is left with a sense of regret that Gveltucha—naive, yet burdened by the blood of his own people—does not share in the joy. Still divided within, he is troubled and saddened as he continues to follow the Russian cavalry, tormented by the thought of why the supposedly noble cause of the "Bolshevik-Russians" is being defeated. As time passes, he becomes ever more convinced of "the goodness of the Russians and their cause" (Kotetishvili 2021).

Some time later, the situation changes — the *bari* (i.e. the Georgian command) decides not to resist the Russians any longer. The story does not explain why this decision was made. In 1928, when the story was written, every Georgian still clearly remembered what had happened. Georgia had been defeated in the 1921 Russo-Georgian war, and guarding the border by the mountain people had lost its meaning.

Nevertheless, the writer does not lose hope, which is clearly seen in Khevi dwellers — the warrior people with "roots planted deep in the earth." The victorious Gveltuche, who had switched sides "for a good cause," is now severed from his native land. Returning to his ancestral village and home with the enemy's army, "even the dogs did not accept him." His old father unsheathes the ancestral sword to kill the traitorous son, but his hand trembles and he "falls to the ground like a felled

oak." Even at this climactic moment, the writer cannot deviate from a realistic perception and cannot allow even the death of a traitorous son by the hand of his father.

Gveltuche's unconscious yet unwavering faith is truly astonishing. He believes in his own righteousness, in his loyalty to his country, and even more so, in his innocence regarding the friend whom he killed for the sake of some unknown Russian. It is precisely this delusion that constitutes the drama the writer aims to convey. There were people like Gveltuche then, and even more of them emerged later. However, those who upheld true values still remained — and we see this through the example of Gveltuche's own family.

Life settled into its usual course… "The 'good cause' soon filled the entire country up to the throat" (ibid). These words clearly reveal the writer's attitude toward Bolshevism. Gveltuche was pleased that the Khevi people silently accepted the innovations introduced by this 'good cause.' They accepted them, but something strange was happening — "a quiet resentment was slowly settling in everyone's heart and was gnawing away at Khevi dwellers' patience from within" (ibid). Gveltucha's heart was slowly cracking as well, because "everything old, which had been so dearly and immaculately preserved, was gradually breaking down in Khevi" (ibid)… "The people could not digest the sudden surge of the new life all at once" (ibid). We believe that by conveying these details, the story *Gveltucha* directly parallels and connects to Kotetishvili's earlier story *The Lineage of Gveliandari*, in which the legendary patience of giants finally breaks, because the dragon can no longer digest the vast quantity of swallowed dinosaurs, gonosaurs, and tusked mammoths. The writer clearly sees that ultimately, the people too will be unable to digest the immense evil brought by the new power, which had been branded as a 'good cause' — and in this, he sees a glimmer of hope for salvation.

Many doubts had begun to accumulate in Gveltucha's mind as well — doubts that poisoned and embittered him. In such a state, he had "dimmed," the light had gone out of his eyes. It was clear that his patience, too, was running out, and something was bound to happen — something he would no longer be able to 'digest.'

This happened during a religious festival, Khatoba. The khevisberi (the religious elder) was interrupted in prayer by people who had come from the city — they said they needed to hold a rally. Gveltucha stood at the front to listen to the educated speakers. One of the young men from the city boldly declared that neither God nor angels existed; that it was all an outdated custom that needed to be eradicated.

The people stood like a rock, but still listened to the orator. The khevisberi listened too. And in Gveltucha's heart, something extraordinary was happening: "Could this really be the 'good cause' — to insult faith and God, to denounce custom, to profane the holy banner…"

Here Gveltucha noticed that nothing had been said about the flag. His last hope was tied precisely to that flag, as if blasphemy against God and tradition was nothing compared to the desecration of the flag. As if a drowning man grasping at a straw — for him, the flag was that straw. But as soon as the orator reached out to take down the flag, Gveltucha's rifle roared, and he took the orator's life. At this climactic moment, however, the author remarks anyway that "this did not help the cause — the flag fell to the ground..." (ibid.). Symbolically, Lado Kotetishvili

suggests that Georgia, too, could not be saved. The Bolsheviks brought it down just as the flag in the story, despite Gveltucha's attempt to protect it.

And the reader expects a finale — where the traitor with an awakened conscience forgets his enmity toward his own people and sacrifices himself to save the flag — but the writer remains true to the realistic style adopted in the story. He portrays the Georgian Bolshevik highlander, in whose mind ideological pressure could not entirely suppress the awakening national and traditional spirit, as a loyal servant of the ideology to the very end — a typical Soviet person:

> "Gveltucha leapt like a rabid beast, grabbed the flag, raised it high, and shouted with wild determination: 'People, Russification is good, the things brought by Russification are good... It wasn't the Russians who spoke ill of our flag. Hey! Hey! They're good people — the things brought by Russification are good...' A moment later, he broke into bitter, almost maniacal laughter..." (Kotetishvili 2021).

The story ends in tragedy. The tragedy lies in the fact that an ordinary person — a hardworking man and a patriot — was unable to experience catharsis and remained a divided individual, just like the majority of people living in the Soviet Union. Clearly, if this story had been published at the time, the author would have been arrested, tortured, and even sentenced to death in the totalitarian state. That is why, in order to preserve his life — as others chose to "return to the soil" — Kotetishvili chose, of his own will, to bury his own literary work.

"The Devil in Galiphe"

Lado Kotetishvili's short story *"The Devil in Riding Breeches"* is one of his finest works, dealing with the internal division and eventual destruction of a person. It is a story about how one's faith in God, in the homeland, and in oneself collapses — how the citizen is destroyed within, ultimately leading him to suicide.

From the very beginning, the story raises the question of the fate of the artist. The author poses an important question: *What should a man do in a totalitarian state if he knows he "can write" and feels the urge to write?* Should he write down his chaotic thoughts, or should he poetically describe a rainy autumn evening, as many others do? A true writer cannot write about something he despises to be nice. And yet, many do. But their writing — that should be a literary work — is no longer a true literature. In the process of the devaluation of objects, "nature itself is turned into a mere object. Man, also, gradually becomes objectified, and thus, in the new country, everything loses its purpose..." (Kotetishvili 2021). As a result, in the story, if the word "gallop" appears, "horses" must inevitably appear as well; if something is written about "flying," then an airplane must also be shown. "It's as if one cannot let a man remain at home and have him gallop or fly" (Kotetishvili 2021).

These thoughts of the writer-character reject the tendencies of realist literature — more than that, they reject the principles of socialist realism, with its emphasis on writing about the people and construction of the new society, a construction the writer himself does not believe in.

Therefore, instead of describing the beauty of nature, he begins writing directly about a man named Zenoni, "but due to frequent use, the last letter of the name wore off, and the name was shortened to Zeno" (ibid.).

Could the author be suggesting that the true values of the past have worn away with the new era — to the extent that even human names unintentionally reflect that erosion? He may, possibly.

Zeno feels like a man internally split, broken down into cells. He reads a book about the new victories achieved under the leadership of the great Lenin, yet a dog-like grin never leaves his face. He understands everything he reads — "the great union of socialist republics, the workers and peasants, the Communist Party, even the Central Committee" — but he cannot grasp the most important thing: *"Where are these new victories for the millions of people?"* (Kotetishvili 2021).

Could it be that Zeno's inability to understand stems from his petty-bourgeois spirit — that is, his upbringing? Work offers him no salvation, and he finds relief only in intoxication. Yet even in that intoxication, the fragmented man cannot find wholeness. His mind becomes entangled, his will dulled, and upon sobering up, he falls apart again.

It is in this state that the devil befriends him — not the one everyone imagines, "red, with red eyes, horns, a black dog, something terrifying and fierce."

"No, this was a new kind of devil," writes the author, "harmless, small, wearing riding breeches, a leather jacket, and carrying a very large briefcase. I can't remember whether he had a tail — probably he did, tucked somewhere into his trousers" (Kotetishvili 2021).

Through the devil's appearance, the author portrays a typical Soviet bureaucrat — especially with the leather jacket and the large briefcase. The author warns everyone that this devil was sent by no one and could not be bribed by anyone. *"This was the one trait that forever distinguished the devil from man"* (ibid.).

These words reveal that Zeno's condition is the result of an internal struggle; he finds it difficult to believe in the "new life," despite having once been a revolutionary himself. Now, he finds himself engaged in a critique and discussion of post-revolutionary life with his new "interlocutor."

The author portrays the suffering and torment of a man who has lost God — his spiritual condition. This kind of suffering is experienced by people coming off drugs, when *"the high fades and the poisoning begins"*: shaking, convulsions, heart palpitations, inhuman stinging, pain, and so on. Illusions disappear, and nightmares begin. Zeno, through great inner struggle, rejected God, *"but when he moved to the next, slightly lower peak — the one where love for the homeland rested, wrapped in a certain heroic glory — there, he stopped"* (Kotetishvili 2021). What had the revolution brought to his homeland? In Zeno's mind, the life of old Georgia plays out like film reels: the fight for land and soil, construction, and rebuilding — although in some places the footage cuts to darkness, it soon resumes again.

"Zeno's Every joint, every cell of his body and brain" hurts. He is dazed by the weight of countless thoughts and gradually begins to sink into himself, into his conscience. The grand battle, waged within the small territory of his room, reaches its climax with the appearance of the devil in riding breeches.

Zeno's great struggles with himself give rise to a new faith within him, establish a new stance, and integrate him into a new life. This "new" faith restores his old appearance—the dog-like grin disappears from his face. It is as if a bridge is being built between his old and new life. The transition was difficult, but, as a "wise man," Zeno managed it.

"On one side remained the old Georgia, with its fortresses and towers, its churches, its old faith—cold, silent. On the other side, there was the new Georgia, with its factories and plants, its ruined churches, its new faith—hot, restless, illuminated, very well lit" (through the miracle of the new era—Zahesi) (Kotetishvili 2021).

Zeno crossed into this new Georgia with firm belief—to work and fight for his people. He abandoned two positions, as if no further inner struggle would arise. But the author warns us that "here, his calculations were slightly off" (Kotetishvili 2021).

Zeno came to believe in the new Georgia, and this faith was evident in every aspect of his life. He changed his house, his room, his bed—even his washbasin. He dressed nicely and neatly: a suit, a white shirt; he put on a tie and white gloves; he also held a rather large briefcase in his hand. Even the cells of his body, which had previously resisted him, now fell into order. Every object regained its meaning, and "he even lost the man in himself." Zeno took on a very significant mission. He aimed to carry out a cultural revolution for his people—one that involved instilling in them the understanding that property must be collective, that everyone owned the wealth, and no one owned it individually.

The main goal was to enrich the state and, ensure thus everyone to became equally rich. But the people had been raised differently—on the principles of private ownership. If someone could not acquire property, they believed that "someone else was enjoying the profit instead." This so-called cultural revolution had to happen in the consciousness of the people; it implied educating the masses according to the principle of collectivity.

This principle should have been acceptable to those who owned nothing, but this is where the main misunderstanding occurred— "these people with nothing, once they acquired even a little, would immediately develop an appetite for personal wealth" (Kotetishvili 2021).

Zeno cannot endure the falseness of the new life and ends his own life committing suicide. His inner struggles are, of course, driven by conscience, but his thinking has become permanently disordered—like thoughts that rise from the feet to the brain—so even conscience can no longer save him. He sincerely acknowledges his dreadful mistake, which he does not see as a betrayal of God or country, but rather as a failure to be of use to the "new" world, with no path left to return to the old one.

Lado Kotetishvili insightfully analyzes how "Red ideology" poisoned a person's mind so thoroughly that instead of leading to genuine repentance, it made him add sin upon sin and ultimately to take his own life. "Even that miserable devil was turned to stone by the horror of what he saw. He was so bewildered that he didn't even carry the damned soul to hell, because he couldn't imagine greater torment than what had already happened… and so, he vanished empty-handed from the room" (Kotetishvili 2021).

The title of the story is *"The Devil in Galiphe"*, which immediately captures the reader's attention, especially for those already familiar with the theme of the devil

tempting humans. The image of the devil dressed in Galiphe trousers should not be difficult to decipher either. He is a modern devil—one who seemingly doesn't get in your way, sits quietly in a corner of the table looking pitiful and hunched, yet constantly whispers to you, advises you, talks to you, and in the end, carries out his work by taking your damned soul to hell.

In the story, the devil is a direct representation of Soviet ideology, which keeps repeating the same ideas until you submit, with the persuasive claim that a person must not lag behind the new era, and that old Georgia is a mere fairy tale—it no longer exists.

The influence of Soviet ideology is also reflected through vivid metaphorical epithets in the story, such as *"the pepper-colored house"*, where a person experiences suffering, and *"red joy"*, which refers to the enforced expression of happiness by the masses—because the revolution has triumphed and everyone is expected to rejoice, and so on.

It is clear that the foundation of the story lies in idealistic philosophy. The entire inner essence of the narrative stands in opposition to the loss of human spirituality and the process of turning the human into an "object"—descending from the mountains toward the earth, in the direction pointed by the downward-stretched hand of the iron man—Lenin. For the author, the "cold and voiceless" past is more acceptable than the present, illuminated by the Zahes hydroelectric power station and boiling like the lava of revolution. For him, the subject—the individual—takes precedence over the mass that has been turned into an object. The mass surpasses the individual only in numbers and exercises violence against him. The individual is defenseless in this world, a splinter floating on water, destined to eventually be cast aside or dry up, a grenade prepared for explosion whose detonation will change nothing. The only temporary escape from the earthly world for the individual is intoxication, which offers partial relief—because once sobered, the person falls into even more dreadful suffering. Dreams or semi-dreams signify a descent into the self, an awakening of the subconscious, of truth and conscience—a dialogue with one's inner world, with one's conscience. However, the awakening of conscience brings no resolution in a poisoned, inhuman world (one that has turned into an apocalyptic beast), where a person not only loses their sense of self but also perishes physically.

As already mentioned, in this work as well, Lado Kotetishvili raises the issue of art, considering truth as its foundation—though this truth is artistic in nature, and it is not necessary, for example, for a horse to be visible while it is "galloping." This truth reflects the state of the author, the character, and the country as a whole. When this condition is critical and dire, speaking of the aesthetic impact of nature becomes irrelevant. Therefore, in his creative approach, Lado Kotetishvili rejects Impressionism and leans toward Expressionism. Symbolist tendencies are not foreign to him either, though he uses them only within certain limits.

Although intellectual truth becomes inaccessible to his character—who relies on instinct in specific situations (such as when Zeno hurries toward the Monastery of the Cross)—this correct action is momentary and ultimately serves a renewed obscuring of knowledge, reason, and conscience. This reflects the reality the author seeks to portray using a blend of stylistic tendencies.

From a formal perspective, the text also subtly reveals some postmodern tendencies—fragmentation of the text, texts within the text, interruptions, the use of ellipses or abrupt endings, and then starting anew. While such a model is also used in modernism to convey the complexity of reality, in this particular work, the author employs it to create contrast.

"The Devil in Galiphe" reflects the author's contemporary reality without any disguise, as Lado Kotetishvili never intended to publish it. Everyone understood what the consequences of that would have been. That is why the unfiltered depiction and analysis of reality from the perspective of a contemporary is of utmost importance.

Although the writer is deeply familiar with Soviet ideology, fully aware of its mechanisms of influence and the helplessness of the individual in resisting it, he is still tormented by the question: how morally right is the thinking individual (the intellectual) in relation to his own conscience—one who understands and analyzes everything, yet still ends up serving that ideology?

The author also shows us clearly that such intellectuals often suffer from a kind of mental paralysis—they "begin thinking from their feet"—and in their distorted consciousness, the true tragedy is not that one has renounced God or their homeland, but that they have failed to become useful to the "new Soviet Georgia." And yet these people are still intellectuals, still guided by conscience to the very end.

We believe that it is precisely in this that the author sees the greatest tragedy of his time. This framing of the issue is entirely new for Georgian literature.

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Based on the analyzed works, it can be stated with certainty that Lado Kotetishvili is a master of language. His writings enrich and expand Georgian literature and Georgian modernism, adding diversity to its thematic scope. Lado Kotetishvili's body of work will undoubtedly earn a rightful and honorable place among the classics of Georgian literature.

Conclusions

In Soviet scholarly literature, discussions of Georgian modernism were only possible from a single, limited perspective. Its existence could not be denied, so it was acknowledged with the claim that talented Georgian writers had made a mistake—by imitating European literature, they had taken a misguided path, rejected tradition and the past, and strayed from the proper course of Georgian literary development. It was later said that these writers recognized their error and "returned to the ground," meaning they reverted to the realist style of representation.

Soviet criticism regarded the modernist works of that period as a misstep. Serious discussion of Georgian modernism is only possible today through the Georgian press of the early 20th century, which preserved the manifestos, critical essays, and poems of Georgian modernists.

The establishment of modernist tendencies in Georgia began as early as the late 19th century, as evidenced by materials published in the newspaper *Kvali* and the

journal *Moambe*. By the early 20th century, modernism had formed as the dominant literary movement. Its manifestos were reflected in journals such as *Meotsnebe 1*). Later, during the Soviet era and after the suppression of modernism, the "literary stance of modernization" was still upheld by journals like *Khomaldi* and *Ilioni*.

Another important point is that even after the final "liquidation" of modernist literature in Georgia—an effort that began even before Stalinist repressions—and after many modernist groups declared self-dissolution, modernism did not entirely disappear. It went underground in Georgia, and unlike European modernism, it did not come to a complete halt. One of its representatives was Lado Kotetishvili. His work preserved Georgian literature's connection to Western intellectual traditions in the underground cultural space of the Soviet Union—traditions that official socialism had effectively declared dead.

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