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Georgian Literature and Mapping Georgia in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Within the last two centuries, Georgia's appearance on the world political map has changed few times: in the early 19th century the territories of Georgian kingdoms were swallowed (Said) by the Russian Empire and disappeared from the map; after the dissolution of the Empire, it reappeared as the free Georgian Democratic Republic, until being swallowed again by the Bolshevik Russia; Georgia was invisible to the global world, within the red – coloured large territory of the USSR until its collapse; since 1991, the country restored its independence and international borders, and has now its own small place on the world map.

Although the global processes around Georgia were conditioning these changes, the local Georgian reality, at all stages, had its clear responses to the situation, which were mainly developed within the literary texts. We may see that Georgian literature is a space where national aspirations are verbalized and national goals are developed. On the other hand, when the Empire/USSR needed to control the national/societal moods, foremost, literature was the space that had to be tamed (Bakradze) and through which the discourse of the colonizer had to be communicated and indoctrinated.

The paper will also discuss, how the Western/global cultural tendencies – respectively, modernism in the early 20th century and postmodernism in the late 20th century – played their role in the development of not only pure cultural, but also national priorities. We can observe that in certain local cultural reality, the adoption of the global cultural/literary tendencies can intensify not only aesthetical innovations, but also the search for national self – representation, and contribute to the goals of relocating the nation on the cultural and/or political map.