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Eastern and Western Literary Paradigms in Georgian Romanticism

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, a national variant of literary Romanticism emerged in Georgia as a result of contact with European and Russian literatures. It is an indisputable fact that Romanticism was imprinted with specific features in every country. According to some scholars, "the 'Romanticism' of one country may have little in common with that of another, that there is, in fact, a plurality of Romanticisms, of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes" (Arthur O. Lovejoy). Perhaps this statement is radical, but it is a fact that we encounter essential differences between the national variants of Romanticism. In the paper we will discuss upon one of the peculiarities of Georgian Romanticism, which was manifested in the synthesis of Eastern and Western literary standpoints.

If the East was a foreign, exotic world for Western European and Russian romantics, for Georgian writers it was perceived as a native space. Georgian literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was strongly influenced by Oriental literature (especially Persian). Oriental impact was also preserved to some extent in Georgian Romanticism. In the works of the first generation of Georgian romantics - Alexander Chavchavadze and Grigol Orbeliani - on the one hand, the eloquence characteristic of Eastern literature, oriental tropology, the use of constant, sometimes faded Imagery (especially in love poetry), the cult of ebriety, are preserved. On the other hand, signs of Western literary standpoint appears in the works of these poets - Romantic perception of nature, romantic concept of love. New literary genres are established (Epistolary lyrics, literary tale, lyrical poem, autobiographical narrative).

The works of the next generation of romantic poets (Nikoloz Baratashvili, Vakhtang Orbeliani) are even more free from the influence of Eastern poetics, however, on the whole, in Georgian Romanticism, Eastern and Western paradigms coexist peacefully side by side.