

### 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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