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Establishment and Development of Post-modernism in Georgian Literature

Brief Introduction

In the 1990s, after crashing the Soviet empire, Georgia found itself involved in the civil war, and the war with Abkhazia, which brought about bloodshed, death, and loss of territories. Economic crisis, corruption and political chaos reigned in the country; culture, art, literature also shifted into the phase of creative crisis.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall, once monolithic and currently divided territories in Central Europe were the signs of cardinal changes. From the viewpoint of literary processes, **intertextuality** becomes predominant, which implies inner relations of the text, directed towards the national and international cultural area. **Post-modernism** is precisely fitting the psychology of the society in a crisis and suits the source of searching and discovery of new national and cultural identities. Georgian literature of the post-Soviet period accepts this challenge: post-modernism appears as an excellent means not only for reconstruction of the cultural consciousness being in a phase of crisis, but also for overcoming the Soviet canon.

Basics

Therefore, in the 1990s a great part of post-Soviet Georgian literature has moved to the area of post-modernist sensitivity; however, the process started a bit earlier, on the edge of 1980s-1990s, during the period of radical political, economic and cultural **transition**. In the late 1980s Irakli Charkviani, along with the poet Kote Kubaneishvili, founded the poetic Order *Reactive Club*¹. The bottom line of the Reactive Club “was *quiet swimming or swimming against the flow*”. However, his poetry echoes not only the pains, but also the hopes of his generation. Post-modern Georgian culture and literature was assigned a mission to express those pains and hopes.

Development

Georgian critics are tending to look for the marks of post-modernism writing in Georgian literature of the 1980s. It is correct from the standpoint of a cultural threshold, however, the earliest pure post-modernist texts – *Love of Martyrs* – was written by **Dato Barbakadze** in the beginning of the 1990s.

Following a new trend, various directions of post-modern art were developed in the late 1990s, such as pop-art, hyper-realism, happening, social art. Georgian post-modernist literature has accepted all important artistic methods in this trend: simulacrum, double coding, irony, disguise, paranoia, liberalization of artistic language, excessive use of jargon, etc. Thanks to these artistic methods, Georgian authors successfully coped with such post-modernist issues as crisis, distrust, simulation, re[de]construction of classical texts with the effect of parody, and so forth. Post-modernism became a substantial and dimensional trend in Georgia, which generated various stylistic models: narrative, anti-narrative, ironical, parodist, fragmented, etc. **Aka Morchiladze** becomes an undoubtable leader.

¹Later Irakli Charkviani was performing under the pseudonym *the King*.

The presentation will briefly deal with Georgian post-modernist authors: **Zaza Burchuadze, Lasha Bugadze, Besik Kharanauli, Dato Turahsvili**, also post-modernist poets and Women writers – the concepts they establish and the techniques they use.

Special attention will be paid to the *War discourse* as one of the main discourses of Georgian post-modernist writing.

Difficulties of Political Transformation and Shifting

Despite the successful start of the reformatory government in 2003, in August 2008 Georgia faced a new political trouble. As a result of the military actions on the territory of historical province Samachablo – the so-called “South Ossetia”, the part of the territory of Georgia was isolated unlawfully from the country. The throbbing problem of Samachablo, alongside with the problem of Abkhazia, logically moved towards the Georgian post-modernist fiction.

War Discourse

Hence, *War discourse* became one of the most significant discourses of Georgian post-modern writing. Occupied territories, refugees and the disrupted historical integrity became a significant part of a Georgian post-modernist literature (and not only post-modernist). This topic is found in the works of writers who physically suffered the hardships of the war, and those who were spiritually linked with this process.

Recognition

Georgian post-modernist writers have gained national and international recognition.

Aka Morchiladze is a 6-time winner of Saba literary prize, and 2024 nominee for the Nobel Prize.

As one of the best achievements of Georgian literary life should be considered the 2018 Frankfurt Book Fair, where Georgia was the guest country. A big amount of Georgian modern texts was translated into German language and presented to the audience worldwide.

It can be noted with confidence that Georgian Post-modern literature with its topics and stylistic models, discourse layers and objectives – diverse, multifaceted, and at the same time highly oriented towards its own values – is a full-fledged member to the global literary world.

Irma Ratiani is a Georgian literary scholar, editor and translator.

She is a Professor of Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, and Head of the Department of General and Comparative Literary Studies. She is a director of Shota Rustaveli Institute of Georgian Literature. She serves as a President of the Georgian Comparative Literature Association (GCLA) and a board member of International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA).

The major field of Irma Ratiani's scientific interest includes literary theory, general and comparative literary studies in a broad cultural context, also, revision and analysis of literary processes of Soviet and Post-Soviet period.

In 2020, by Peter Lang Publishing, was published her book - *Anti-Utopian Mood, Liminality, and Literature*. In 2018 the same publishing house has published her monograph - *Georgian Literature and the World Literary Process*.

In 2013 she was awarded the Order of Presidential Excellence of Georgia.

She has received several scientific awards in Georgia, among them: Literary Prize "Saguramo" (2019), "Grigol Kiknadze Scientific Award" (2012), etc.

She is an author of several monographs, textbooks and more than 100 scientific articles, member of numerous international professional organizations and associations.

Irma Ratiani is co-author and an editor in chief of the internationally well-known books – *Identifying Cultural Intersections in the works of Shota Rustaveli da Nizami Ganjavi; Literature in Exile. Emigrants' Fiction. 20th Century Experience; Totalitarianism and Literary Discourse. 20th Century Experience* – published respectively, in 2024, 2016 and 2012 by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

She is an editor-in-chief of an international referable scientific journal for Literary Theory and Comparative literature - *Sjani (The Thoughts)*.