

Galaktion

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Abstract

In his article "Lyricism", Galaktion points out the unbreakable bond between a poet and folk poetry. The author underlines the unifying ethnic character of the ancient lyrical poetry. According to his observations, the folk poetry stands out with its artistic imagery and the richness of language. It is through the knowledge of folk poetry, that one is able to master technicalities of a poem and discover new poetic forms. Due to this belief the author finds it essential to have a comparative study of both literary and folk poetry. He wrote: "Our poetic techniques have a history of thousand years, we must learn it all and when we know it well, only then we will be able to discover new forms."

The poet had devised his own method of digestion and approach: he uses the folklore texts in accordance with his creative principals. In his poems, he sometimes takes the unchanged texts or folkloric elements and uses them to his own ends in such a way that the reader still feels the author's unique voice and those borrowed elements are combined into something unmistakably different and new.

Keywords: Galaktion, folklore, poetry

Introduction

"All the way from Homer and up to this day, the poetic folklore has always been a source of inspiration. Whenever something truly great, a work of genius is created, one may be certain that its roots can be traced back to folklore. Not a single literature historian can oppose this fact" - wrote Vahktang Kotetishvili. Neither Galaktion could avoid this fact.

Galaktion's poetry has sprung from the fertile ground of classical literature and folk art. Galaktion stood close to the people, to his land and had exceptional love for Chvishi, a beautiful village in Lower Imereti, where he first learned to walk and spent his childhood years.

From Galaktion's archives it is evident that he showed great interest in Georgian Folklore and had made an effort to collect such works. In his letter, memoirs and diaries, Galaktion expresses his thoughts on relationship between literary and folk poetry, their interdependence and the importance of folk legacy. These letters and collected texts shed light on this poet's deep knowledge of folklore and expressed belief in it being the eternal spring that gives vitality to literature.

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Let us Consider Galaktion's poetry and its connection with folkloric art; display the method with which the poet commands the verbal legacy of the people in order to transform it into new and original work. I believe that such research would help showcase the genius of this great poet and a thinker to the fullest. The artist stores the folklore material in "the furnace of his soul" and molds it into the shape he desires. With his great talent he brings novelty and gives plasticity and musicality to Georgian words in poetry.

Let us show the connection between Galaktion's Poetry and the Epic of Amirani. It is this very legend that has inspired Galaktion's Poem "Amirani" and several others.

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Galaktion tells us of the chained Titan's internal struggles and lets us see the character of this unrivaled hero.

Amirani, with his titanic patience endures his eternal punishment:

"On a cliff there was a young stranger caught in a dream...

His face marked by a tangle of tortured thoughts...
His broad shoulders, and his whole body at large,
Trembled with torment in imprisonment..."

Amirani signifies the Georgian Nation that refuses to bend the knee under the weight of an unjust force. In his heart, there is a spark of hope that awaits the opening of doors and freedom.

"I'll break the cursed shackles let the cloud disappear!

I'll be free once more, I'll be free"

The sadness and sorrow is expressed in Galaktion's 1910 Poem "On the Cliff of Dreams". The Poet is looking towards the Caucasus Ridge, where he believes the hero to be chained and whose liberation has long been a dream of the Georgian People. For a moment the Poet is exalted, when this dream comes true in his imagination, but this moment doesn't last and bitter reality dispels the beautiful apparition:

"I imagined as if the dream
Of freedom has sprouted wings,
I still recall its splendor,
Its smile, its eyes."

This was the momentary vision, blissful dream, soon the Poet is retaken by dread, dissatisfied with reality – he calls upon nature to share his sorrow. On cliffs of Caucasus the Poet imagines seeing the tired and fading eyes of the imprisoned hero:

"Where did it go – I asked the breeze,-
And I looked ahead towards the mountain peaks.

There, on the Caucasus cliffs I used to see
His tired, depleted and faded eyes"

He also uses Amirani's Myth in his Poem "Native Ephemera". In this beautiful lyrical chorus the Poet lets us experience the bitter lot of a hero imprisoned among the moss-covered dire cliffs.

"Very close are the white mountains of the Caucasus
Mountains whereupon, according to a legend, for so long
Lay eternal snow and chained Amirani".

This is how masterfully Galaktion revives the traditional image and uses it to express the spiritual yearning of the Georgian People.

The poetic digestion and use of folklore is the crucial element of Galaktion's creative process. He is also interesting because he devised his unique methods of approaching and employing the material.

Galaktion addresses Greek and Roman mythological imagery. For them the antique world is "the embodiment and a diadem of truth and beauty". The imagery of Greek Mythology is tool for both decoration and clarity of thoughts conveyed by the Poet.

In his Poem "When Acteon, Son of Aristia", in order to express his inner state, Galaktion used a myth about a renowned hunter Aristeos's son, who taunted the goddess by claiming that with his trained hounds he was a better hunter than Artemis herself, and was torn apart by the very hounds he boasted of:

"But he was punished by the same goddess,
Acteon reincarnated into the beautiful dear,
Was sacrificed to the hounds
The same hounds have torn him to pieces."

This Greek mythological story is compared with the Poet's fate, as if the Poet was punished by his own creation. Indeed, the Poet's beautiful verses have attracted personal enemies along with the dedicated admirers. Desperation sounds in the Poet's words:

"Galaktion, you are like Action,
You are punished by everything, like love,
Your own wicked hounds
(Trained by you) are barking uneasily."

The Verse "Wood-goblins, Mermaids and Demons" contains the characters of Georgian Mythology:

"With loud laughter, the ghosts have emerged
From the lake and disappeared."

Artistic property of Georgian spells applies to the Verse "Red Cliff was Split in Half", where the Poet impressionably describes the horrors of the First World War:

"Red cliff was split in half, the horse has jumped,
Red horse was on red road with red saddle,
Red man has straddled the Pegasus, has followed the
red road..."

Red sea like coral has emerged.
Red sea has split in half,

He prodded the blood-stained wooden crutch into the
heart of the sea,

Removing red snake from the sea with laughter
And heaved the immense creature on the red road,
Burning drops of fire pouring from the sky
And horrible war has gained strength on the Earth."

In the Verse above, artistic characters and epithets (red cliff, red horse, red road, red saddle, red man, red sea, etc.) represent interesting example of using artistic features of the spell as folk genre.

The texts of folklore employed in Galaktion's creations remain constant or undergo partial amendment. For instance, in the Verse "Raise the Sun", the Poet praises the Sun and freedom:

“The Sun, stop
Turmoil of sorrowful thoughts!
Rise the Sun, rise!
Do not hide behind the hill.
When your sphere
Begins to shine
Lifelessness and death disappear.”

In the Verse above, the Poet has applied ritual verse-song “Rise the Sun Rise”. Galaktion has imposed the function of fighter for the freedom on the folk verse-song. This is how the Poet unhappy with existing reality expresses his protest against the violence. The phrases of ritual song organically blend into the creation of the Poet and support perfection of the Poet’s message.

Artistic property of the folklore is “re-melted” in Galaktion’s “artistic furnace”, creating pictorial canvas and charming the reader.

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