

Providential Visions from Literary Texts

Abstract: Expectations about inevitability of the end of the world, the doctrine about recent events have been reflected in various religious systems of the world. In Christian eschatology the culmination of such moods is rendered in the last Book of the New Testament – the Revelation of John the Divine or Apocalypse where the great day of the “wrath of the Lamb” is described. Eschatological moods are topical in literature and art of different epochs. In this respect the past century is also no exception. According to the observations of the prominent thinkers, in a new, contradictory epoch the environment and hence, man’s consciousness have been abruptly changed. Approximately at the same period the forefather of Georgian modernism Grigol Robakidze to whom art is a sign, “symbol of another, but true reality”, similar to French poetry metre, waits for a creator in a new epoch, who is not only an artist, he is also a prophet. The world is destroyed (destruction extremely cosmic and not social), writes Grigol Robakidze in his essay “Rocking-Chair and Gallows”. The essay devoted to Andrey Bely distinguished with the depth of providential vision, where Grigol Robakidze makes in-depth analysis of the inner image of the prominent Russian writer, his enigma. In the author’s view, Andrey Bely is the true prophet of Russia, who gave negation by the apocalyptic (and with it, incineration) way of the earth in the image of Petersburg.

Keywords: Eschatological visions, Apocalypse, Grigol Robakidze, Andrey Bely.

Expectations about inevitability of the end of the world, the doctrine about recent events have been reflected in various religious systems of the world. In Christian eschatology the culmination of such moods is rendered in the last Book of the New Testament – the Revelation of John the Divine or Apocalypse where the great day of the “wrath of the Lamb” is described. For centuries this most important text warns the humanity and comforts too. His admonition keeps alert people of all time: “Happy is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy and happy those who listen if they take to heart what is here written...” (The Revelation 1:3).

Eschatological moods are topical in literature and art of different epochs. In this respect the past century is also no exception. According to the observations of the prominent thinkers, in a new, contradictory epoch the environment and hence, man’s consciousness have been abruptly changed. The twentieth-century crisis-consciousness was from all sides also called apocalyptic consciousness”. Heising counts its beginning from the First World War which is also reflected in Spengler’s *Setting Sun of Europe*. In 1912, being much concerned with new, dangerous world order Nikolai Berdyaev wrote: “We don’t feel the harmony of the world anymore. Man has no solid ground underfoot which connects him with the world order... We live in the world of crime and phantasms... Man faces danger from all sides”.

In his work “The Fate of Man in the Modern World”, the famous philosopher when analyzing contradictory events of the world wrote: “Apocalypse is not merely a revelation of the end of the world: it is also a revelation of the inner events of history, of the internal judgment upon history itself”.

From the viewpoint of the thinkers of the same century, in such unpredictable world literature and art acquire special mission: mission of salvation the mankind from spiritual (and, probably, real) apocalypse, mission of a predictor.

Leader of the literary and artistic circles of the Parisian avant-garde, French poet and critic Guillaume Apollinaire in his unpublished letter "The New Spirit and the Poets" (1918) which is considered his manifesto, wrote that creators of a new time should set forth providential tasks. Hence, he sees a trace of providence in the majority of those works which corresponds to new spirit.

Approximately at the same period the forefather of Georgian modernism Grigol Robakidze to whom art is a sign, "symbol of another, but true reality", similar to French poetry metre, waits for a creator in a new epoch, who is not only an artist, he is also a prophet. Here Robakidze recalls Oscar Wilde's quote: "Every single work of art is the fulfillment of prophecy".

The world is destroyed (destruction extremely cosmic and not social), writes Grigol Robakidze in his essay "Rocking-Chair and Gallows" (Robakidze 1920). In his evaluation this process is reflected most acutely in poetry (and, generally in art). In Robakidze's view Baudelaire was the first who presented the picture of the destruction of the world in "The Flowers of Evil". He writes: "After Baudelaire the evilness of these flowers bent the essence of French words" and that of Russia, beginning from Dostoevski till Andrey Bely include apocalyptic epilepsy". That is Georgian writer's perception.

On the threshold of global threat of apocalypse Grigol Robakidze tries to foresee the fate of his own country: "Georgia is swinging: but a swing is directed to the abyss and the swing maybe easily turned into a gallows", is written in the same essay. The scales of the world destruction threaten Georgia too. "Sometimes here the gallows turns into bloody cross... Crucifixion is waiting for Georgia and we anticipate its approximation with prayers", writes Robakidze with providential vision.

The essay devoted to Andrey Bely (Robakidze 1918) is distinguished with the depth of providential vision, where Grigol Robakidze makes in-depth analysis of the inner image of the prominent Russian writer, his enigma. In the author's view, Andrey Bely is the true prophet of Russia, who gave negation by the apocalyptic (and with it, incineration) way of the earth in the image of Petersburg.

"Andrey Bely is an absolute epileptic of apocalypse", - such was the impression that Grigol Robakidze had after his acquaintance with the writer in Paris, in 1907, at Merezhkovski's salon. This is how Georgian writer perceives Bely as poet: "His incinerated soul with supernatural sorrow without wings dashes over his own native burnt areas" and his pseudonym is explained by him in the following way: "Andrei" - involuntarily it occurred to him on "the first called" (Andrew the Fist Called); "Bely" - apocalyptic image: "new name, that nobody knows but the one who takes it; it is engraved on the "white stone" of the soul. The author of the essay considers that Andrey Bely justifies his pen name.

Among the compositions of the Russian writer Grigol Robakidze singles out and thoroughly considers his providential extensive epic story "Petersburg" (1911-1912). The fact that the main hero of the novel is Petersburg itself seems unusual to Robakidze: The city founded by Peter the Great on the barren marshlands of Finland, the unreal city that "belongs to the land of the spirits... The most fantastic city in the world". Andrey Bely concerns much with the nihilism which will come from this city to the world. He emphasizes the phantom-likeness of Petersburg. For Bely, Petersburg appears as a shadow and the word "shadow" is applied to characters of the novel.

According to Robakidze, providential vision of the Russian writer is strongly expressed in the following passage: "Once the bronze steed has reared up and measured the air with its eyes, the bronze steed will not lower its hoofs: there will be - a leap over history; there will be great tumult: the earth will split asunder; ... there will be great combat - combat unlike anything the world has seen; ...European

fields will be reddened with oceans of blood; there will be – Tsushima! There will be – a new Kalka! Kulikovo Field, I await you!”. This passage of Andrey Bely’s novel has been interpreted by numerous thinkers. In 1917, Titsian Tabidze stated: “This is a premonition of a war”. The following developments of the 20th century vividly showed that Andrey Bely’s providential visions were not limited only with the boundaries of his time.

In the same essay Grigol Robakidze makes an in-depth analysis of the symbolic of the city founded by Peter the Great: “Petersburg as an enigmatic thing of something more important, world manifestation, is not merely a shadow: at the same time it is an active symbol: this is the significance of it”. The on-going historical context clearly proves the validity of the well-known writers’ prophecy. The object of further study is providential visions in the art of the past century.

Eschatological visions also accompany twenty-first century literature and art. The deciphering of their imaginative or semantic connotations and perception promise to become the basis of important conclusions.

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