

### *The Trauma of Displacement in Contemporary Georgian Literature*

Contemporary Georgian literature is characterized by many novelties in the thematic, genre and conceptual context. Since the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, essential changes took place in Georgian literature, caused by epochal cataclysms on the one hand and cultural processes on the other hand. The generation that joined the literary race established a new vision, an original attitude to events, a non-uniform expression, epatage and personal interpretations, which made the modern literary process even more interesting and diverse, which is the subject of research by scientists from various fields, to the extent that it reflects epochal events on the one hand and on the other hand, those conceptual paradigms, the understanding of which from the point of view of cultural-literary studies, allow making many interesting conclusions. Post-Soviet Georgian literature is a kind of narrative combining the epochal reflections and traumatic concepts, which are important to be understood in the collective memory context.

Considering their subjective views, literary reflection of conflicts or other traumatic events by writers, is characterized by non-uniform approaches. As result, it is possible to outline and study traumatic concepts on the basis of literary texts.

The literary reflection of conflicts or other traumatic events on the part of writers, considering their subjective views, is characterized by heterogeneous approaches. Ultimately, based on literary texts, it becomes possible to also outline and study traumatic concepts.

During the lecture, we will pay special attention to the novels of recent years *The Bird Will Not Fly Out* (author: Teona Dolenjashvili), *You-Home* (author: Ekaterine Togonidze). In the novels the authors, along with a number of traumatic paradigms, interestingly present the image of an internally displaced, as of a traumatized object.

Based on the aforementioned literary texts, the following are presented:

1. Literary representation of epochal events;
2. Concepts of internal displacement, as of collective trauma;
3. Author's interpretation of trauma, as of a paradigm.

The discussion of the novels is relevant in the context of the theoretical framework of postcolonialism, displacement, victory and collective trauma, with intense emotional passages, the authors manage to highlight the markers of internal displacement as a collective trauma, against the background of personal traumas.

As we mentioned, the processes developed in post-Soviet Georgia are represented in the Georgian literary narrative. The literary representation of the epoch provides quite rich material and shows the signs of collective trauma presented in the theoretical discourse. Texts of this type, which we can conventionally call "traumatic literature", appear interesting in framework of "traumatic memory theory"; and in the literary narrative epochal tragedies are presented with writer's subjective attitude. The ongoing wars and conflicts in the world have displaced millions of people, leaving an indelible mark on their group consciousness. On the one hand, traumatic memories and on the other hand, a completely new environment that could not dispel the stigma caused by displacement, created a different, unusual situation. Jeffrey Alexander, prominent American researcher, one of the authors of the theory of trauma, develops the opinion that the ongoing wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made it necessary to understand the memories containing the trauma and to fight against them (Alexander, 2012).

The theories of traumatic memory and postcolonialism were based on the theory of forced displacement by the famous French researcher Claire Gallienn, which means understanding the image of a displaced person in fiction literature, as of a traumatized object. In scientific discourse, many scholars express their opinion on the given issue, among which the studies of Claire Gallien, Marie-Angela

Paladino, Frederic Detway, Melissa Chaplin, Benedict Letellier, Olivera Joki, Valeria Anishchenkova, Corina Steen are of particular interest. (Mindiasvili, Kutsia, 2021).

For fully understanding the novels, we consider the theory of Victory Trauma (author of the term is P. Sztompka) to be interesting. When a society selflessly strives to achieve a global goal, the team unites, overcomes many seemingly insurmountable obstacles, believes that the only correct strategy for the well-being of the country is the pursuit of this goal (for example, gaining independence) - victory, achieved through difficult vicissitudes, transforms into trauma and social cataclysms become the basis of universal nihilism (Sztompka, 2000).

It should be emphasized that war and displacement are relevant topics not only for Georgian literature. Prominent French researcher Claire Gallien believes that the fiction image of a displaced in the literature of a particular country bears epochal characteristics and should be studied from different angles, especially considering postcolonial theories (Gallien, 2018). Due to that literature about IDPs is becoming increasingly popular all over the world and is being formed into a separate rubric, which, in our opinion, determines the relevance of the topic we present.

It should also be said that the political processes underway in Georgia since the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century determined thematic interpretations of Georgian literature and the literature of internally displaced persons was increasingly reflected in fiction discourse (Teona Dolenjashvili, Ekaterine Togonidze, Giorgi Sosiashvili, Guram Odisharia, Zeinab Metreveli, Rezo Tabukashvili, Mzia Khetaguri, Shota Darbuashvili...) We are interested in the above-mentioned novels in which, among other things, the trauma of displacement is presented particularly realistically and gives way for various interpretations.

The character of Teona Dolendzhashvili's novel, *Nata*, is a member of a society that remembers everything – *Sukhumi on fire*, the *Chuberi Pass*, the road to displacement and the stigma of displacement from which the hero is unable to free herself from.

*Nata*, an IDP from Abkhazia, bears the stigma of a displaced person. At the age of six, she ran away from the burning Sukhumi with her relatives, but she constantly lives with those painful memories that time has failed to erase. Moreover, the forced trauma in her childhood changed her worldview forever; and even when already being a famous photojournalist, she is constantly haunted by the shadow of war.

"*Nata* - date of birth - 17.06. 1987" - this is how the novel begins, as if the unpretentious date, which the author uses as a fiction detail, prepares the reader to read the tragic story(s); it is especially interesting that the author expands the scope of the collective trauma and the action takes place in two geographical areas, in different time and space, Georgia and Syria. The chronotype model presented in the text emphasizes the global problem and its scale, to the extent that the war is terrible everywhere, be it in Georgia or in Syria and its consequences destroy the psyche of people, creating a collective trauma in the war-torn society, never letting it to get rid of the psychological stigma that the war has caused. "In war, not only unwritten and written moral laws and rules established during peacetime are changed, war changes the human essence itself. It distracts the eternal human nature. But I have thought about it many times, that maybe the human essence and nature is just like this and war just reveals everything?!" (Dolenjashvili, 2020) - the author asks a rhetorical question and though showing different horrible, tragic stories or passages tries to show the reader how in war are devalued, moral and ethical categories are broken and people become different, furthermore that, as the author notes, the work is based on the real stories of displaced persons from Abkhazia and Syria.

The original storyline and plot allow the reader to understand in a global context many problems reflected in the novel.

*Nata*, sent from Georgia to Syria for a special assignment (she is a famous photographer), bears the trauma of displacement; and when she arrived in Aleppo, the war reminds her of her past, which is firmly imprinted in her conscious or unconscious; the war throws *Nata* back to her childhood; the tragic images of burning Sukhumi and Chuberi Pass revive and thinks of them as of ongoing events: death, fear, hunger and death again change like movie frames in *Nata*'s mind; the image of her mother, father and sister is like a deep wound; her only sister was taken by Chuberi Pass; the little one could not endure the difficult conditions; her mother is a hero who stood against everything for the sake of her children; as an IDP she

became stronger so that somehow they could survive; Nata's father is her greatest pain - an immoral father who was unable to maintain his dignity from the events of Chuberi, lost his honor, could not overcome his weakness and drowned into the vortex of immorality.

Using the example of Nata's father, the writer describes how war changes people, how values are devalued, how people cannot cope with collective trauma, displacement, loss of home and feelings of guilt or helplessness and how they finally die after being absolutely destroyed.

Nata, who is already in Tbilisi, bears the stigma of displacement, the formation of which was largely promoted by the society in which she appeared. The yellow cotton hoodie is a symbol of forced displacement. "I wore this hoodie all my childhood and, frankly, hated it because, despite its Swedish origin, it quickly revealed my IDP status and resulted in angry glances and mocking smiles from my peers" (Dolenzhashvili, 2020).

It's hard to read Nata's thoughts about New Year without emotion (in which, in our opinion, the author combined the general image of war survivors and displaced persons, i.e. carriers of collective trauma), when she discovers that as it turns out, the New Year doesn't really exist; it is just made up by people... "Mom and I sat alone in silence, then my mother wrapped me in a blanket and I fell asleep; I was woken by the sound of my father's steps and his words - "Let's drink in Nino's memory" - as if making excuses for not being with us in the quietest and saddest moments of the New Year. The presence or absence of my father probably would not have changed anything, because for me world's another unwavering rule and regularity - the New Year - did not exist, as it appeared..." (Dolenjashvili, 2020).

Nata's parents represent a society that managed to get rid of the Empire, regained independence, although the victory did not bring happiness ("The Trauma of Victory" (Sztompka, 2000)). For the Mother, who has lost one child, the only goal is to save her second child; she shows amazing strength and endurance. Despite being the bearer of collective trauma, she still manages to establish herself and save her child, while the father (also a bearer of trauma) cannot cope with misfortune, suffers moral degradation and dies (Dolenjashvili, 2020).

Pain, harassment, bullying, Nata had to constantly make excuses. Establishing herself in a new society was not easy, moreover, it was even impossible, the mocking smiles of her peers emphasized her displacement and helpless situation. Mother is a scientist, not a bread seller, father is a captain of a distant sailing ship and not a drunk or a drug addict... - Nata often repeated this to herself and others, as she found herself in a different space and time, especially cruel one, which changed her unshakable ideas and slowly collided her with the most difficult reality... She is an IDP whom the society scorns (Dolenjashvili, 2020).

It must be said that Teona Dolenjashvili outlines in different aspects the image of a displaced person as of a bearer of collective trauma:

1. IDPs were forced to go through the tragic events that left an indelible mark on their soul and psyche; Nata, as an IDP, carries a permanent stigma;
2. Awareness of displacement (new situation) and loss of one's home;
3. IDPs have to constantly struggle for self-establishment. She (Nata) is the same as others, her classmates or people living in the neighborhood, in whose eyes she often sees despise and rarely pity;
4. For the IDPs, the new residence, in which they spent more time than the previous one, could not become a real home where they could find peace;
5. Time could not dispel traumatic memories for the IDPs;
6. IDPs are affected by war and bearers of collective trauma, which nothing can ever change;
7. IDPs lost their home, native environment, loved ones, family members, friends, which means that they will never achieve happiness (as full as before).

The judgment by Teona Dolenjashvili as a writer is harsh, however, considering the theoretical discourse presented above, it is objective - it is impossible to get rid of the stigma of displacement!

The heroine of Ekaterine Togonidze's novel, Nia, is a member of the post-Soviet society; one who has suffered all the manifestations of collective trauma on herself and her family. It is probably also significant that a natural cataclysm (earthquake) radically changed her life. The uncertain fate of her only

child makes Nia even more traumatized; she looks into the future with hope, but it is even more obscure than Nia sees it.

***“People are divided into two types:  
War survivors and those who have never seen war,  
However, among them are others,  
Narrow bridges between war and peace,  
The Time Swings”. (Togonidze, 2001, pg. 3)***

Ekaterine Togonidze's novel *You-Home*, begins with this epigraph and sets the reader up for a complex, emotional and depressing narrative. War survivors or those who have never seen it, the narrow bridge or the time swing determine reader's emotional mood, as the text itself is able to create an emotional bond with the reader. The main narrator of the novel is Nia, who, on the one hand, shares her most difficult feelings and emotions, and, on the other hand, daily life of society and the stories that happened. "A human, by nature, is a storyteller. Narration, along with description, implies interpretation. Intentionally or unintentionally, things, facts and past events are given importance" (Chikovani, Kakitelashvili, Chkhaidze, Tsereteli, & Efadze, 2022), Nia's past is so intertwined with the present that it is often difficult to determine the cause-and-effect connection, although it is clear that the character is "tired" of the society of a worthy member of which she also is and often, in dialogues addressed to her sick son, creates a narrative depicting past or contemporary events. Researcher Aleida Assmann believes that "if texts depicting the event are not created, no matter how tragic it is, it will not be formed into a collective trauma, because the modern society is influenced not by the past itself, but by the representation of past events, which is created, spread and accepted in a specific cultural framework and political situation" (Chikovani, Kakitelashvili, Chkhaidze, Tsereteli, & Efadze, 2022).

The writer speaks to readers through Nia, who has never seen war and Demna, a war-survivor. Nia believes Demna is “different”, because he is a war-survivor. This is how Nia sees it - "Demna is not like anyone else" (Togonidze, 2001), "Demna preferred to be silent, to keep to himself the bad stories; I did not force him to talk either”. Bad stories are connected with war, displacement and life in a society that carries collective trauma. The writer develops the action of the novel in the context of three characters. In the text, Demna is a paradigmatic model of an IDP, which the writer presents from different angles. In our opinion, it is important that indirectly, war is considered one of the main themes of the novel. The war is over, but the past "denies to leave and intrudes into the present"; it returns and "it feels like it happened yesterday". (Chikovani, Kakitelashvili, Chkhaidze, Tsereteli and Efadze, 2022).

Nia's husband is an IDP from Abkhazia and therefore is a bearer of collective trauma and stigmatization. The writer, on the one hand, reflects interpretations of the attitude of Georgian society towards IDPs, and on the other hand, the chronology of the difficult establishment of the internally displaced in the society.

Tragedy happens in Nia's and Demna's family; their only child Gabriela falls into a coma as a result of an earthquake. Nia blames her husband for this, who was not with her at that moment.

A new life begins for Nia – together her sick child, without Demna...

Initially, Nia is in defensive representation. As G. Hirshberger notes, "the most extreme form of defensive representation is the denial of the existence of the traumatic event itself - in such a case, there is no victim" (Chikovani, Kakitelashvili, Chkhaidze, Tsereteli, & Efadze, 2022). However, step by step, she is forced to face the truth and accept it. On the one hand she cannot give up Demna (guilty in Nia's sense) and on the other hand, communication with him is difficult.

In the narrative of the novel, Demna's life path from Sukhumi to becoming an IDP is often presented as non-plot elements, which is characterized by the most difficult moral-psychological and social aspects. The process is often presented in Nia's subconscious, which is an indication that internally, Nia knows Demna's value, although she also has to overcome many difficulties to realize this.

The turning moment is the main role that Nia has been waiting for all her life; a role that helps to understand and realize everything. Nia undergoes a catharsis that first of all lets her to discover herself. She also discovers Demna, who, in fact, was by her side for all this time.

"Anna's face can be seen very close on the screen, she is blissfully staring into space, there is an amazing calmness in her big expressive eyes; the director is staring at the monitor in astonishment..." (Togonidze, 2001)

The writer most vividly describes the moment of filming the final scene of the movie and it should be considered the culmination of the novel: "Anna stands on the Pass, beyond which is Abkhazia, looking into the whiteness, beyond which is her lost child and the whole lost world... She looks out there like a Wizard, unusually old and young at the same time" (Togonidze, 2001).

The last words of the character of the main role played by Nia are perceived with special emotion: „-Forgive me, come back to me” ...

The main role allows Nia to follow the path that Demna took. The traumatic memory is firmly imprinted in Nia's mind. For her, Demna is a different person; a hero and that's why everything is sorted out both in Nia's conscious and subconscious mind.

Demna won and together with him won Nia. The author gives the fruit of their love the right to live and be happy. The final words of the novel, spoken by Demna, once again emphasize Demna's strength.

As we mentioned, the main narrator of the novel is Nia, however, Ekaterine Togonidze manages to masterly

outline the face of Demna as of an IDP bearing collective trauma.

Teona Dolenjashvili's novel *The Bird will not Fly Out* is a text of epochal importance, giving a literary representation of the events developed in Georgia. Focusing on the events taking place in Syria allows to discuss the novel in the general human context. There are literary interpretations of the theories of collective trauma, trauma of victory, displacement and post-colonialism, which gives the novel a special significance. The trauma of displacement is understood as an eternal stigma, which, according to the author, is impossible to overcome. The paradigm of war established in the text is analyzed in a global context and is perceived as the most destructive event of humanity, which forces people to endure tragic events that make them to change mentally.

Ekaterine Togonidze's novel *You-Home*, is also a text of epochal importance, in which, although the topic of war is not directly discussed, the author's subtexts become clear already from the epigraph; the inner layers of the novel serve to represent the people who survived the war and it is a literary representation of the post-Soviet era. The writer offers us a different model of the paradigm of displacement. Despite the fact that Demna is a worthy son of the epoch, unlike Nata, he manages to free himself from the stigma of displacement. Traumatic models of collective memory are presented in the novel, which determines its importance.

The context of a research topic may involve a variety of materials that cannot be discussed in a single lecture. Literature written on the topic of forced displacement is richly represented in modern literary texts (of the last 30 years), which, as already mentioned, has its own objective and subjective reasons. It is noteworthy that this type of literature abounds in poetry, prose and drama, although it is clear that the paradigm of displacement is an echo of the epoch and political events, as it often happens, are reflected in the literary discourse.