

EPOCH OF SOVIET TOTALITARIANISM AND GEORGIAN COMEDY WITH A POLITICAL EMPHASIS (QVARQVARE TUTABERI BY POLIKARPE KAKABADZE)

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Summary. *In 1929, just eight years after the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia, a writer and a playwright Polikarpe Kakabadze publishes his famous play Qvarqvar Tutaberi, thus throwing into disarray the leaders of the fledgling Soviet government. The play narrates the “revolutionary” adventure story of Qvarqvar Tutaberi, an idle, cowardly, uneducated and cunning man, over a short period, in the early months of the establishment of the Soviet regime. Occasionally Qvarqvar is a supporter of the Russian Emperor, occasionally a representative of the so-called “interim government”, occasionally – a supporter of the Bolsheviks. His position is always determined by one main principle: Who is in power? If the Emperor holds power, Qvarqvar is his supporter, if the “interim government” rules, Qvarqvar are the commander of its army, and if the Bolsheviks win, Qvarqvar is their “comrade”. A young Soviet censorship was very confused by the humorous character of the play: the scenes are full of comic situations, and dialogues, with absurd, unbelievable “logic”, the characters are caricatured and often exaggerated. On the one hand, the play mocked a foolish and flattering person (and people like him), politically immature and mentally unprepared for the “new times”, which was quite acceptable for Soviet criticism; on the other hand, the satirical-grotesque mocking of the existing environment was not picked up on, by Soviet censorship due to the humoristic*

attitude of the text. Thus, humor, for the first time performed the artistic function of a mechanism protecting from ideology.

Keywords: *Soviet Totalitarianism, censorship, humour.*

The Bolshevik Revolution which occurred in 1917 in Russia reached Georgia in 1921 and put an end to the three-year existence of the independent Republic of Georgia (1918-1921). Georgia was included forcibly in the Soviet Union – the political result of the common-communist rebellion. By means of the political terror, bloodshed, death and casualties the country was involved in the process of “creation of a new social order” and “re-making” of people, which completely coincided with the ideological course of the Bolshevik dictatorship.

The proletarian revolution, as a result of which a politically one-party and socially unified (at least on paper) system, the so-called communist democracy was established, limited the right of free choice for persons working in different fields of culture and art, it left a deplorable imprint on the cultural history of the communist countries. Nikolai Berdyaev called this strange model of democracy, determined by the almost necessary precondition of violence, “authoritative i.e. communist democracy” and considered it as the most unsuccessful one. As Berdyaev argues, domination of masses and impersonal multitudes, which sometimes assumes the shape of bourgeois democracy and the dictatorship of money always secret and disguised dictatorship, and sometimes the shape of overt dictatorship of authoritarian states and leaders, puts into a very difficult condition the stratum of creators of culture, the cultural elite. This cultural elite is in deadly agony, its moral and material condition is becoming more and more unbearable. In liberal democracy it depends on capital and the vulgar taste of the crowd, whereas in authoritarian or communist democracy – on the spiritually oppressing world view dictatorship, having the pretension of organization of spirit.¹

The effect of the first and the most violent decade after the Bolshevik Revolution was painful for the Georgian (and not only Georgian) literary process: the “brave” revolutionaries have long since become cynicals and fanatical. The aggressive desire to build an ideal society turned into a certain governmental ideology, an irrational structure, which at its own assumed the demiurgic i.e. constructive function, which implied “creation” of a new social model and “remaking” of people according to the corresponding pattern. But striving towards the “creation” and “remaking”, built on violence and terror, gradually turned into chaos and misfortune, and, finally assumed the form of organized evil.²

Literature, as one of the most significant ideological levers for the new government, gradually turned into a proscenium for political and social “orders”: some obeyed this tendency with pleasure, others – forcibly, and only a few dared to resist.

A direct literary reflection of the Bolshevik governmental ideology was Soviet discourse, a system specially organized by the authorities, which laid the foundation

1 Berdyaev, N. *Fate of a Human Being in the Modern World*. Logos Press, 2001, p.91. (in Georgian).
 2 For more details see I. Ratiani, "The Influence of Revolutions on Georgian Literature." *Creativity and Revolution*, Cairo University Press, 2014, p.165-175.

for the creation of the artificial system – Soviet canon – and gradually substituted the national literary canon(s). Soviet discourse in Georgia (as well as in other Soviet countries) took the shape of Socialist Realism and from the very beginning was divided into several branches: proletarian literature, socialist realistic literature and soviet publicist works. According to the classical definition, “Soviet discourse is a socio-cultural phenomenon of lingo-rhetorical nature”.³ A socio-psychological key to its mentality was the anthem. On the one hand; it was a discourse of “new democracy” and leftist intelligentsia, where the word-fiction dominated over the word-object. On the other hand, it was a “superficial discourse” that had no depth and was devoid of the experience of national individuality. Nothing can be understood in the framework of this discourse, but only simulation, and radical manifestation of simulation in literature was ideologised junk.

Soviet censorship raged. On 2 November 1918 the Revolutionary Military Council issued a new order on military censorship. From December of the same year, according to a new order, signed by Lev Trotsky, military censorship was extended to include all types of printed production, cinematography and theatre, photography and painting.

“Differently disposed” writers were categorically declared “enemies of the Soviet state”, and their quality and often brilliant works proclaimed anti-state activity. Literary texts created by them were completely different from those created in the frame of Soviet discourse. Anti-Soviet discourse was formed on the background of a tragic clash between the political and aesthetic principles. Writers insulted by the political dictatorship and rejecting the Soviet rule, put up with sacrifice, for they believed that all other ways were either compromise, which they could not allow, or a wrong mechanism of prolonging one’s existence. Accordingly, quite a few writers revolting against the “ideal type” of slavish society consciously faced execution (Mikheil Javakhishvili, Titsian Tabidze, Kote Khimshiashvili), arrest (Niko Samadashvili), exile (Grigol Robakidze) or even suicide (Paolo Iashvili). All these forms of “solving” the problem were identical in content, the difference lying only in the strategy of implementation. The writer himself was a tragic personality who fell victim to his own principles.

Georgian Modernism was most impaired. Georgian Modernism, with its diverse forms and tributaries, striving for representational freedom, as well as with the artistic tendencies of quest for the truth and establishment of individuality, constituted the main threat to Soviet demagogues; it ceased to exist at the end of the 1930s, after the decade of self-sacrificing resistance to Stalin’s repressions.⁴ Soviet authorities were “cleaning the way” for conformists, while those, who were able to create a valuable fiction, were predestined for a roll pass.

However, compromise and neglect of high standards was not a usual condition for Georgian literature, which over the centuries represented a significant part of the world’s

3 Vorozhbitova, A. The “Official Soviet Language” of the Period of the Great Patriotic War: Linguistic-rhetoric Interpretation. 2000. [interactive][accessed 14 December, 2016] <http://www.philology.ru/linguistics2/vorozhbitova>.

4 For more details see Tshipuria, B. Blue Horns and Avant-Garde. In: *Versification*, No 5, Institute of Literature Press, 2012, p. 172-184.

literary map.⁵The necessary reaction soon followed: the society began to emerge from the post-revolutionary shock state, i.e. began forced adaptation to the context; writers “learned” to use indirect ways: the totalitarian political rule was assessed as an inevitable historical reality, and getting out of it a long-term political process; literature should have opposed it by indirect paths of fight. This model of anti-Soviet literary discourse continued to work under the mask effect and conceptually may be defined as a strategy of “indirectly casting stones”. Writers fight with all weapons available to them: allegory, satire, irony, absurd; they fought on their own territory and beyond it – in emigration – openly and underground. All ways were suitable to attain one’s end, though in this case the writer himself was not the character of the tragedy, but – only a tragedian who tries to replace the reality with an intense process of Mythopoeia.

It should be noted that satire and humour, which became one of the handiest tools for intellectual struggle against the Soviet dictatorship, already at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries served as the main lever for the fiction of one of the most significant Georgian authors David Kldiashvili. The writer’s humour almost always represented the aesthetic expression of dramatic, tense, often tragic events: in the texts of the writer living at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, against the background of acute political chaos and social poverty, humour acquired almost the medieval depth of parody (Rabelais, Cervantes) and reviving function (of the lost values). Kldiashvili managed to realize the double nature of laugh – laugh at one’s own foible and laugh at the outer world, which had a dramatic colouring. Similar to Chekhov, sadly sliming Kldiashvili turned into a tragedy the human life, rather than death!

“One would feel pity for him, unless the story itself was funny”, - writes David Kldiashvili in his outstanding story *Samanishvili’s Stepmother* and this formula expresses the relation of entire Georgian literature towards the means of humour. *Samanishvili’s Stepmother* is a successful artistic implication of this relation. The plot seems trivial: an impoverished nobleman, who can hardly afford to earn a living and feed his own family, is shocked at the decision of his elderly widowed father to get married! The father and the son live in one house and share the little they have. But the father’s decision can disrupt this harmony: it is not ruled out that the father’s new wife may give birth to a child, and the child will not only be a brother of the main character, but also a rival for inheritance. The topic of inheritance, naturally, is not an original plot of Georgian literary narrative it is of vital importance for literatures of all peoples and periods; the difference lies in the writer’s intention, mastery and creative abilities: the plot will either remain on the banal level or will acquire a powerful psychological and emotional charge and will forever remain in the reader’s memory. In the given case, the author has two options: 1. to exaggerate as much as possible and to encumber with dramatic elements the already unbearable picture of life of his characters; 2. to discover comic elements in dramatic and to transform it into a mechanism of self-defense. David Kldiashvili chooses the second option: the task of selection of the future stepmother is assumed by the potential stepson, who embarks on a

5 For more details see Ratiani, B. Gruzijiskaliteratura 19. in 20. stoletja in svetovniliterarni process. In: *Svetovneknjiževnosti in obrobja*. Slovenian Book Agency, 2014, p. 175-193.

difficult and tragicomic path of searching. The tragicomic essence is in the circumstance that the character intends to find a woman, married at least two times, who did not have children in previous marriages, and, therefore, will not be able to bless his father with such happiness. Unless the comic entourage, which represents the nucleus of the story – a twice married and childless woman (a parody on searching characters of chivalry novels) this story would have been one more boring description of the tragic social cataclysms, which took place in Georgia at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

This intention – to discover comic elements in dramatic and to use humour as in disguise of a dramatic situation – which was characteristic of Georgian literature in general and which David Kldiashvili gave the form of a method of artistic reflection, became especially intensified in the 1920s and 1930s, when Soviet terror engulfed Georgia. Humour became one of the most effective tools in an intellectual struggle against the Soviet dictatorship and laid the foundation of formation and establishment of specific literary genres such as Soviet satirical drama, satirical novel, humoristic story, novel and feuilleton. The use of satire and humour in post-revolutionary literature can be assessed as an attempt of searching for and discovering a moral and ethical value, a thorny path, winding from the dungeons of the totalitarian regime, making its way to the hearts of intimidated people. A clear example is the play – *Qvarqvar Tutaberi* by P.Kakabadze (1929).

In 1929, just eight years after the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia, writer and playwright Polikarpe Kakabadze publishes his famous play *Qvarqvar Tutaberi*, thus throwing into disarray the leaders of the fledgling Soviet government. The play narrates the “revolutionary” adventure story of QvarqvarTutaberi, an idle, cowardly, uneducated and cunning man, over a short period, in the early months of the establishment of the Soviet regime: occasionally Qvarqvar is a supporter of the Russian Emperor, occasionally a representative of the so-called “interim government”, occasionally – a supporter of the Bolsheviks... His position is always determined by one main principle: Who is in power? If the Emperor holds power, Qvarqvar is his supporter, if the “interim government” rules, Qvarqvar are the commander of its army, and if the Bolsheviks win, Qvarqvar is their “comrade”. Young Soviet censorship was very confused by the humorous character of the play: the scenes are full of comic situations, and dialogues, with absurd, unbelievable “logic”, the characters are caricatured and often exaggerated. On the one hand, the play mocked a foolish and flattering person (and people like him), politically immature and mentally unprepared for the “new times”, which was quite acceptable for Soviet criticism; on the other hand, the satirical-grotesque mocking of the existing environment, was not picked up on by Soviet censorship due to the humoristic attitude of the text. Thus, humour, for the first time performed the artistic function of a mechanism protecting from ideology!

“When the idealistic kingdom will be built, people will have so much joy that we will introduce capital punishment only against weeping. Everyone will crucify himself for people and our pictures will be hung in rooms to indicate that we have turned heavenly their earthly life...”⁶By means of this utopian idea Polikarpe Kakabadze demonstrated

6 Kakabadze, P. Two Plays Sabchota Mtserali Publishers, 1946, p. 82 (in Georgian).

the ideological foundation of the Soviet “socialist democracy” and created in his play an artistic image of a caricatured leader, antihero – Qvarqvarė.

“Qvarqvarė Tutaberi is a sophisticated protagonist, Akaki Bakradze wrote, on the one hand, he is a primitive man, leading all his life raking the ashes and daydreaming. He is sly, guileful, cruel and prepared to do anything for his own well-being. Such two-faced people artfully use sometimes one and sometimes the other face”.⁷ Indeed, if at the beginning of the play Qvarqvarė Tutaberi appears as a comic character, caring only for his own well-being and acting by the instinct to survive, as the plot develops, his “accidental victories”⁸ widen the scope of Qvarqvarė’s activities, awaken in him the feeling of a psychological advantage and inspire with the ambitious idea of ruling the society, leading the nation: “People is their own enemy, if you don’t shepherd them, like silly cattle, they will fall into a precipice... If you are witty enough, they will give you a stick themselves, but you should strike very cleverly”.⁹ It is a paradox, but Qvarqvarė’s “success” is due not to his intelligence, strong personal qualities, but unscrupulousness, lack of personality, deriving from his stupidity, cowardice: “I don’t understand one thing, some people go underground when they suffer disgrace; if you are a real man, when you are disgraced, you must keep your chin up all the more”.¹⁰

Qvarqvarė Tutaberi, devoid of moral values, easily succeeds in wearing various masks and changing his positions: at first he declares himself as a faithful guardian of the Tsarist power, then as a rebel, inspired with socialist ideas, and later appears as a “suffering” leader, caring for the well-being of the people. In the play the unity of people is represented as an easily manageable mob, which blindly, unconsciously follows Qvarqvarė a turncoat, acting “in the name of the people against the people”.¹¹ It is noteworthy that the concept of leader in the conditions of the totalitarian rule acquires a different meaning:

“A leader is no longer a person who deserves to be a leader (at least, by some quality), but a person who wishes to be a leader more than others and is striving to achieve his goal by every possible means. If in a normal situation becoming a leader is linked with certain characteristics – a person’s intelligence, competence, merit or at least, heredity, in the Soviet structure it is subject to the only principle a aggressive desire”.¹²

Qvarqvarė is exactly such a “leader” of this new type.

7 Bakradze, A. Qvarqvarė. In: *Akaki Bakradze – to School*, Universali, 2004, p.300 (in Georgian).

8 Thus, Qvarqvarė, arrested with the status of a revolutionary, during the interrogation learns about the news about the overthrowing of the Tsarist regime, owing to his rare talent for maneuvering turns this accident into a means for gaining the power. From that day Qvarqvarė gets involved in the breathtaking political adventures.

9 *Supra* note 6, p.98.

10 *Ibid.*, p.27.

11 Iovashvili, D. Time of the Aggrandizement and Time of the Fall of Qvarqvarė. In: *Literary Essays*. Merani, 1974, p. 49 (in Georgian).

12 Ratiani, I. Models of Literary Discourse in the Conditions of Soviet Totalitarianism. *Sjani*, No 11, 2010, p.50 (in Georgian).

Like Qvarqvare Tutaberi, other characters of the text also undergo metamorphoses (writer, adjutant, colonel, investigator, general, attorney, Kakuta, Kuchara, and others). As Givi Lomidze notes quite correctly, the Georgian playwright renders by means of the characters' transformation the intense collision of the period.¹³ Indeed, the only determining factor of their transformation, comic flattery and the motive of action is the changeability of the powers and the instinct to survive.

Scene of Interrogation of Qvarqvare.

Before the Revolution:

Investigator to Qvarqvare: "Make your confession...When did you start working against the existing regime?"

Qvarqvare to investigator: "Me? Who do you think I am, Sir, look at me more attentively. Can you tell that to a man loyal to the Tsar?"¹⁴

After the Revolution:

Investigator to Qvarqvare: "Receive my confession, that I have always been a democrat in my heart of hearts. And when the Tsar mercilessly punished revolutionaries I shed bitter tears..."¹⁵

Qvarqvare to investigator: "Shut up. When you intended to hang me, what did you think? Did you think, you would have got away with that?"¹⁶

In the play *Qvarqvare Tutaberi* Polikarpe Kakabadze correctly defined the essence of totalitarianism, a regime, which hinders the process of formation of the healthy public consciousness and creates a danger of appearances of "Qvarqvares". In such a socio-political model, in the conditions of an ideological dictatorship, the people are deprived of the prospect of formation as a society. The major function determining the human essence – the right of choice and thought – is abolished. Whereas the irreversible process of devaluation of moral values leads to the replacement of a hero by an antihero, morality – by immorality, adherence to principles by unscrupulousness. "A totalitarian society is a world of unrealizedness in a sense that it blocks everything, suffocates the thoughts that were failed to be interpreted, the desires that were failed to be desired, the feelings that were failed to be experienced, and the ideas that were failed to be arrived at"¹⁷.

Polikarpe Kakabadze should be assigned to those creators who succeeded in "confusing" the Soviet authorities and thereby saved the text. The Georgian playwright resorted to a method, based on the strategy of rendering the message secretly, in a disguised manner:

"Writers "learned" to use indirect ways...when the society began to emerge from the shock state, i.e. began forced adaptation to the context; the totalitarian political rule was assessed as an inevitable historical reality, and getting out of it a long-term political process. This model of anti-Soviet literary discourse continued to work under

13 Lomidze, G. Totalitarianism and Qvarqvare. In: *Totalitarianism and Literary Discourse (20th-c. Experience)*, Institute of Literature Press, 2010, p. 450 (in Georgian).

14 *Supra* note 6, p.41.

15 *Ibid.*, p.45.

16 *Ibid.*, p.48.

17 Mamardashvili, M. *Suppressed Thought*, Chelmi, 1992, p. 20 (in Georgian).

the mask effect and conceptually may be defined as a strategy of “indirectly cast stones”. However, it resembles rather a guerrilla fight, marked by the *festinalente* principle. Writers fight with all weapons available to them satire, allegory, irony, the absurd...¹⁸

Polikarpe Kakabadze chose the path of humour:

- The author turned the artistic means of humour into the main lever for defense against the Soviet conjuncture;
- shifted the action from the Soviet reality to the politically unstable, revolutionary period;
- by means of introducing revolutionary characters inspired with the Soviet ideas – the miller’s daughter Gultamze and her beloved Sevasti and by means of their “juxtaposition” with renegade Qvarqvare, Polikarpe Kakabadze admitted in one text an irreconcilable co-existence of the leading (Qvarqvare’s line) and secondary (the miller’s daughter and revolutionary Sevasti) narratives: if in the Soviet discourse model the main “creators” of “socialist democracy” are “Soviet heroes”, who by their great enthusiasm do away with the period of Qvarqvare, “the vestige of the past”: “Qvarqvare Tutaberi could have occupied the place of a hero and do harm to the people only in the conditions of the groundless powers, existing here before us, in that carelessness, whereas now we tore the mask off him”,¹⁹ in the anti-Soviet discourse model “Qvarqvarism” is regarded as the main product of the Soviet totalitarian rule. The same is the “adventure” of the critical interpretation of the text: co-existence of opposite narratives allows different interpretation of the play.

The playwright working in the period of Soviet totalitarianism managed to expose the Soviet dictatorial regime; however...he had to compromise all the same: the writer was made to abandon the original ending of the play. The final, author’s remark by Qvarqvare Tutaberi proved to be unacceptable in principle for the Soviet authorities, as it sharply opposed the ambitious idea of the new regime to put an end to the period of “Qvarqvares”. According to the version of Polikarpe Kakabadze, *Qvarqvare Tutaberi* ended as follows: “Don’t let it bring you down, Qvarqvare [addressing himself – I.R., T.O., L.M.], perished is he who vanished in a hole after suffering disgrace, but I will climb up again”.²⁰ In Soviet editions the ending was changed in this way: “Eh, your raking it in is over, Qvarqvare Tutaberi, dealing with them [implying the Bolsheviks - I.R., T.O., L.M.] my day will not come any more”²¹. The conjuncture ending, naturally, essentially changed the ideological principle of the play as well as its artistic-aesthetic value: if in the author’s ending Qvarqvare is a psycho-type, originated within an ugly ideological system, who becomes an accompanying phantom of this system, according to the official ending, his time “is over” and Qvarqvare and the like will no longer hinder the building plans of the Soviet authorities.

18 Ratiani, I. Models of Literary Discourse in Conditions of Soviet Totalitarianism." *Sjani*, N 11, 2010, p. 53 (in Georgian).

19 *Supra* note 6, p.114.

20 Kakabadze, P. Dramatic Poetry, Khelovneba, 197, p.104 (in Georgian).

21 *Supra* note 6, p.114.

The author's ending was restored only a year earlier before the death of the writer, in the 1971 edition (the first volume of *Dramatic Poetry*).²²

It is noteworthy that the same lot was suffered by the ending of the play *Qvarqvarė*, staged in 1974 in Rustaveli Drama Theatre by at that time young and now world renowned director Robert Sturua.²³ The stage direction by Robert Sturua was close to the original version of the ending; however, it was based on an essentially different conception: the stage director specially resorted to the sacred scenes of the life of Christ and by linking the contrastive images of *Qvarqvarė* and the Savior, created the image of Antichrist-*Qvarqvarė*. "In order to intensify the mythos accents and to impart a greater moral sounding to the historical, short-period plane of the play, he created a (long-period) close-up of a mystery play. In the comic traits of *Qvarqvarė*'s adventures the director called to the surface the ritual scenes and symbols of the mystic adventure of the Savior".²⁴ The stage director imparted to the story, having taken place in one of the provinces of the Russian Empire, the global scale; he liberated *Qvarqvarė* from the context of a single period and a single text and turned him into a generalized idea, a "carnival king"²⁵ in whose image dictators of all times are conceptualized (Julius Caesar, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, and so on.): "I wished *Qvarqvarė* to be not a phenomenon characteristic of only our history, not a fact of only the Georgian reality, but to demonstrate on this particular example the image of a political adventurer, in general", - Robert Sturua notes (Shatakishvili).

The original version of Sturua's performance, after *Qvarqvarė*'s "crucifixion", ended by the scene of his "second coming". The public consideration of the play (before the art council) was held eleven times, the comedy was played out in the empty hall eleven times and eleven times the ending of the play was rejected.²⁶ The audience did not see the "appearance": in the version of the performance which was presented to the audience, *Qvarqvarė* was crucified voluntarily, the elevated "leader" fell down from the three-meter height, was caught up by the people gathered around the cross and thrown into the dustbin of history. The purport of the Soviet censorship to unify the ending of the play in printed editions as well as theatrical performances was implemented successfully. In the conditions of the totalitarian regime, similar to the Georgian playwright, neither Robert Sturua was able to rescue the main idea of the play.

At present, after almost a hundred years from the creation of the play, the author's

22 Polikarpe Kakabadze's play *Qvarqvarė Tutaberi* with the author's ending was published for the first time in 1936. The issue of the author's ending of the play is specially discussed by literary critic Levan Bregadze in the essay: "How Does "Qvarqvarė Tutaberi" End, or Socialist Realism in Action." *Marginal Notes*, Intelekti Publishers. 2011. pp. 41-44.

23 For the first time the play *Qvarqvarė Tutaberi* was staged in 1929 by the legendary director Kote Marjanishvili.

24 Gachechiladze, G. *Metamorphoses of Qvarqvarė*. In: *Tsiskari*, No 7, 1974, p. 151 (in Georgian).

25 *Ibid.*, p.149.

26 The audio recording of the play was destroyed. At present is it possible to reconstruct Robert Sturua's version only from the essays of literary and theatre critics (Giorgi Gachechiladze, Rezo Shatakishvili, Dali Mumladze). The Central Committee prohibited showing the play abroad and after showing the performance two hundred times with the full house; *Qvarqvarė* disappeared from the repertoire of Rustaveli Theatre.

intention is quite clear: Qvarqvare is the symbiosis of disgusting and unacceptable qualities, which will never come into being in a normal society, but only in the society being under the ideological pressure. By creating the artistic image of a caricatured “leader”, by the alternation of tragicomic passages, by the co-existence within a single text of the Soviet and anti-Soviet narratives, by the use of the artistic method of humour as a major mechanism for defence against Soviet censorship, Polikarpe Kakabadze resorted to the model of anti-Soviet discourse which exposes in secret the totalitarian regime; shows how the society degrades in the conditions of an ideological dictatorship, how it loses the ability to think and turns into a homogeneous, controllable mob. Qvarqvare is an offspring, tragedy, misfortune of the environment, in this case, that of the Soviet regime, and can never ever be avoided by any dictatorial rule, whereas Qvarqvarism is nothing else but a barrier to be overcome by nonconformists.²⁷

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27 “Bitter humour” will appear at later stages of Georgian Soviet literature as well in the work of well-known authors such as Nodar Dumbadze, Revaz Inanishvili, Rezo Cheishvili.

SOVIETINIO TOTALITARIZMO EPOCHA IR POLITINIS GRUZINIŠKOS
KOMEDIJOS INTERPRETAVIMAS („QVARQVARE TUTABERI BY
POLIKARPE KAKABADZE“)

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Santrauka. 1929 m., praėjus aštuoneriems metams po sovietinio režimo įsigalėjimo Gruzijoje, rašytojas ir dramaturgas Polikarpe Kakabadze išleido savo garsiąją pjesę „Qvarqware Tutaberi“ ir taip sugniuždė ką tik atsiradusius ir dar neišitvirtinčius tarybinės valdžios lyderius. Pjesėje pasakojama apie „revoliucinius“ tingaus, bailaus, neišsilavinusio ir klatingo jaunuolio, Qvarqware Tutaberi, nuotykius. Qvarqware pasitaikius progai remia Rusijos imperatorių, kartais prisideda prie vadinamosios „laikinosios vyriausybės“, kartais tampa bolševikų rėmėju. Jo pozicijų visada lemia vienas pagrindinis principas: kas yra valdžioje? Jei valdo imperatorius, Qvarqware palaiko jį; jei „laikinoji vyriausybė“ Qvarqware tampa jos vedamos kariuomenės vadas, o jei laimi bolševikai, Qvarqware – jų „draugas“. Jaunoji sovietų cenzūra buvo labai sumišusi dėl pajuokiančio žaidiminio pjesės pobūdžio: scenos pilnos komiškų situacijų ir dialogų, absurdo, neįtikėtinos „logikos“, simboliai karikatūriški ir dažnai perdėti. Viena vertus, spektaklis išjuokė kvailį ir įsiteikiantį asmenį, politiškai nesubrendusį ir protiškai nepasiruošusį „naujiems laikams“, kas buvo gana priimtina sovietinei kritikai; kita vertus, sovietinės cenzūra neįveikė teksto satyros ir grotesko. Taigi, humoras pirmą kartą atliko apsaugančią meną nuo ideologijos funkciją.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: tarybinis totalitarizmas, cenzūra, humoras.

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