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## PROHIBITED LITERATURE

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**Abstract.** In anti-democratic systems, free-thinking people are always feared. Poets are free people. That is why the main book of Georgians – “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” was probably persecuted not only in the 12th century, but also centuries later. It is enough to remember the Catholicos Patriarch of Georgia, Anton I, who threw the “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” printed in Tbilisi’s first printing house into the Mtkvari river, “as a book harmful to readers, poisonous to the minds and feelings of Christians”. There are only a few main reasons why literary works or works of art in general are banned. Motives are essentially sexual, religious, political, or moral. But the motive as such belongs to a variable category – we cannot say about any motive that it is universal and does not change according to time and space – or more precisely, era and countries. To anyone who has thought about this matter, it will be self-evident that temporal categories are always changing. Michel Foucault has already told us that the concepts of mad and abnormal are constantly changing in different times, under different countries and governments. Times and values change, but the mechanisms of prohibition remain the same. And if before the state directly interfered in what could be considered appropriate, from the point of view of political or other type of correctness, today it already imposes the mass and controls the validity criteria from its point of view as much as possible.

**Keywords:** literary censorship; Georgian literature; modernist literature; postmodernist literature; forbidden books.

There are only a few main reasons why literary works or works of art, in general, are banned. The motives are essentially sexual, religious, political or moral in nature. But the motive as such belongs to a variable category – we cannot say about any motive that it is universal and that they does not change according to time and space (or more precisely, according to era and countries). To anyone who has thought about this matter, it will be self-evident that temporal categories are always changing. Michel Foucault has already said that the concepts of mad, abnormal, are constantly changing in different times, under different countries, circumstances and governments. As he puts it:

For the Catholic Church, as in the Protestant countries, confinement represents, in the form of an authoritarian model, the myth of social happiness: a police whose order will be entirely transparent to the principles of religion, and a religion whose requirements will be satisfied, without restrictions, by the regulations of the police and the constraints with which it can be armed. There is, in these institutions, an attempt of a kind to demonstrate that order may be adequate to virtue. In this sense, “confinement” conceals both a metaphysics of government and a politics of religion; it is situated, as an effort of tyrannical synthesis, in the vast space separating the garden of God and the cities which men, driven from paradise, have built with their own hands. The house of confinement in the classical age constitutes the densest symbol of that “police” which conceived of itself as the civil equivalent of religion for the edification of a perfect city (Foucault 1965: p. 63).

It seemed to indicate what Plato said in antiquity – that there is a material, visible world where everything is changing; and, on the other hand, there is a world of ideas where everything is unchanging.

Expulsion from society involves isolation, getting from an organized environment to a fragmented environment, shutting oneself off from social existence, moving from the center to the periphery. Expulsion – related to loss and separation. If we place the concepts – “loss” and “separation” in a psychological context, a fragmented psychoanalytical picture emerges. The awareness of distance, separation becomes a prerequisite for being “other” and the fear caused by it, when the child tries to restore the lost wholeness, to the original wholeness or to return to what Lacan calls the phase of Real (Lacan 1977: p. 230).

Throughout the history of Georgian literature, there have been many cases of banishment and banning, starting with the author of the iconic “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, Shota Rustaveli (12<sup>th</sup> century), and ending with contemporary authors. In undemocratic systems, intellectuals and freethinkers are always feared. That’s why the main book of Georgians – “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin” was persecuted not only in the 12th century, but also centuries later. It is enough to remember the Catholicos of Georgia, Anton I (1720–1788), who, according to Platon Ioselian, 19th century Georgian historian, threw the “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”, printed in Tbilisi’s first printing house, into the Mtkvari river, “as a book harmful to readers, poisonous to the minds and feelings of Christians” (Iordanishvili 1953: p. 76).

Those who witnessed the Soviet totalitarian system probably remember blackened with ink photographs, or photocopied texts – forbidden literature. I remember the photocopied book of Grigol Robakidze (1880–1962), a writer who emigrated to Germany, found in my house; Grigol Robakidze, whom Titsian Tabidze (1895–1937), one of the leaders of Georgian Symbolist movement, called the preacher of the “Gospel of Modernism” in Georgia (Jaliashvili 2006: p. 5). It was only years later that I realized why his book was hidden – in the novel “The murdered soul” published in Germany, Robakidze compared Stalin to an evil spirit. Grigol Robakidze’s heritage was rediscovered only after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

There is one text in contemporary Georgian literature – Giorgi Kekelidze’s poem “The Raven”, in which he talks about the exile of the poet. “The person suffers exile when he refuses to serve the country” – these words of Publius Syrus are the theme of the poem. These words point to Ovid – if we consider his biography. If we consider these words (from the epigraph of the poem) from a psychoanalytic point of view, it turns out that disobedience to the “Name of the Father” is the same as a person not being able to master the language or not recognizing the laws imposed by the language or laws in general, which naturally becomes a prerequisite for being declared “dangerous” for a specific linguistic space. There is one more intrigue in the poem, when Giorgi Kekelidze makes such a hint below the title: “Colloquium on the Fate of the Poet”. The poem can be read as a kind of interpretation of the biography of the

romantic Georgian poet Nikoloz Baratashvili who was isolated as an unwanted subject for the Tsar's Russia. But we must take into account that in the case of Ovid, the expulsion takes place within the empire on the basis of the conflict between the emperor and the poet who is allegedly hostile to him, and the case of Baratashvili's isolation is a classic example of the conflict between the colony and the empire, the center and the periphery.

Prohibitions were never surprising in Georgia – even today, and even more so, under the conditions of the Soviet dictatorship, where the slightest manifestation of freedom in art was prohibited. It is believed that the years of Georgia's independence (1918–1921) were also a time of revival for the culture: cultural life was intense, the processes taking place in the Western culture found an appropriate response in Georgia too. All this continued more or less until 1932, when the government banned the experiments. From this period, censorship became stronger, writers were persecuted: some were arrested and shot, like Georgian prose reformer Mikheil Javakhishvili (1880–1937) and symbolist poet Titsian Tabidze, and some were driven to suicide, like Paolo Iashvili (1894–1937), Georgian symbolist poet. Those who survived the repressions joined the Union of Soviet Writers of Georgia, created by the government's decree. The fate of the Georgian avant-gardists changed radically. One of the representatives of the futurist camp, the poet Nikoloz Shengelaia (1903–1943) moved to the field of cinema and filmed one of the masterpieces of Georgian cinema – “Eliso”. He was also able to win Soviet awards for his works. Extravagant poet-rebel, futurist Nikoloz Chachava (1901–1974) switched to writing children's poems. The government used another method against freethinkers – some of them were considered insane, as happened in the case of literary critic and historian Pavle Ingorokva (1893–1983). The film “My Grandmother” shot by Kote Mikaberidze, was banned and considered lost until the beginning of 2010s. The film was shot in 1929, in which there are many elements of futuristic aesthetics. In this experimental film, the director predicted the domination of a totalitarian regime in the Soviet Union. That is why it is no coincidence that Kote Mikaberidze (1896–1973) was deprived of the right to make films. In its restored form, the premiere of the film took place only in 2010.

At that time, the reformer of Georgian poetry, Galaktion Tabidze (1892–1959), wrote a very sad-sounding poem “The Last Train”, where the train directly or indirectly refers to the Soviet repressive machine, which takes freethinkers to the slaughterhouse:

The bitter train of my life / will leave soon. / My hope, which is like  
the star of fate, / travels with it. / Behold, the iron wheels have started, /  
I am following the wagons. / My feelings are suffocating. Goodbye  
forever, farewell.

Many works could not be published under the conditions of censorship, including Galaktion Tabidze’s poem about Stalin, in which the “leader” is equated with an executioner, and the rhetorical question – “who this man is”, is followed by the following answer: “Stalin, who painted the motherland with blood, Stalin, who took away the soul of the Georgian nation”.

It all started in 1921. On February 25, the Red Army finally entered Tbilisi. They soon began to persecute modernist literary groups. In the new situation, the individualism and mysticism characteristic of modernism were unacceptable. In 1924, with the closure of the literary magazine “Meotsmnebe Niamorebi” (Dreamy Wild Goats), symbolist poets and artists lost a platform for spreading their aesthetic and literary worldview. The dictatorship of “proletarian literature” was already beginning. Paolo Iashvili was skeptical about the possibility of restoring symbolism:

We have already made a turn in poetry once, we have made a kind  
of revolution, and it would be hypocrisy of us to try to make a second  
revolution now (Iashvili 1975: p. 52).

They were later forced to admit that their work was a mistake. After that, they continued to work separately, and their poetry was already focused on reality and social problems, that is, on what new circumstances and times demanded of them. A similar situation was in other Soviet republics. For example, Mayakovsky, who joined the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers to escape persecution and whom Stalin called “the best poet of the Soviet era”, committed suicide.

Officially, according to the decision of the Central Committee of April 23, 1932, all creative unions were dissolved and it was announced that all Soviet “creative workers” would be united in single “creative unions” of artists, architects, etc. This party decree provided for the subordination of artists to the party, which indicates the beginning of a new, Stalinist stage of Soviet culture, socialist realism. “Stalin approved the slogan of ‘socialist realism’ and declared it obligatory for all Soviet art to adhere to its principles”. The most important here was literature – the method of socialist realism was finally formulated and legalized at the first congress of the Writers’ Union in 1934, and then spread unchanged to other branches of art, without changes. This alone is enough to illustrate his “anti-formalist” spirit. Socialist realism was oriented not to one or another art form, but to its “socialist content”, and that is why socialist realism is usually seen as the exact opposite of the formalist avant-garde. (Groys 2011: p. 36).

Supporters of formalist methods of research found themselves in a similar situation, analyzing literature and art from the point of view of form. In this respect, the controversy between Leon Trotsky and Roman Jakobson is indicative. Trotsky said that the new combinations of contemporary art are a reflection of the processes taking place in reality. The formalist experiments of the Futurists were, of course, original and revolutionary. Jakobson, in contrast to the Trotskyist search for the sociological causes of the new art, looks more into the cultural context and tradition – Einstein’s theory of relativity and Fyodorov’s cosmism. For Trotsky, the new art must have a revolutionary content; for Jacobson, even a revolutionary form of contemporary art is sufficient.

The cultural life of free Georgia continued for four years. The people who laid the foundations of the Tiflis avant-garde found themselves in exile and concentration camps by the 1930s. Many of them were killed. Those who succeeded emigrated – like Grigol Robakidze. In 1923, the acmeist poet Yuri Degen was shot in Baku. In 1920, Ilya Zdanevich went to Paris for the first time, and in 1928 Grigol Robakidze went to Germany and never returned. In 1937, writers, artists and directors were shot: Mikhail Javakhishvili, Nikolo Mitsishvili, Titsian Tabidze, Dimitri Shevardnadze, Petre Otskheli, Sandro Akhmeteli. In the same year, Paolo Iashvili commits suicide. In 1948–57 Kirill Zdanevich was in exile. Lado Gudiashvili, a painter, also moved to Paris. At the

time, his characters still looked straight forward. Later, when he returned to Soviet Georgia, he painted people without ears or people who did not look directly in portraits.

In this regard, Galaktion Tabidze is a completely different case. The purely symbolist poems of his early period were later, after Sovietization, replaced by poems that at first glance were socialist realist in form. But it was just a strategy. For the name of this strategy, we can use the concept of subversion used by Steven Greenblatt. Several oppositional strategies can be distinguished in the poetry of Galaktion, the most frequent of which is probably the cynical rhetoric, akin to the strategy of Diogenes of Sinope. For example, once Alexander the Great approached him and asked: “Are you not afraid of me?” He returned the answer with the question: “Are you good or evil?” The king replied, “Good.” “Well, no one is afraid of good,” replied the philosopher. Here, through an indirect answer, the importance of the distinction between transient and eternal values is emphasized and a kind of moral imperative is formed – a cynical attitude towards power relations. Cynics and Diogenes opposed the existing system with such defiant behavior or through provocative dialogues. As Michel Foucault states:

The Cynic parrhesiastic game which begins is, in some respects, not unlike the Socratic dialogue since there is an exchange of questions and answers. But there are at least two significant differences. First, in the Cynic parrhesiastic game it is Alexander who tends to ask the questions and Diogenes, the philosopher, who answers-which is the reverse of the Socratic dialogue. Secondly, whereas Socrates plays with his interlocutor's ignorance, Diogenes wants to hurt Alexander's pride. For example, at the beginning of the exchange, Diogenes calls Alexander a bastard and tells him that someone who claims to be a king is not so very different from a child who, after winning a game, puts a crown on his head and declares that he is king. Of course, all that is not very pleasant for Alexander to hear. But that's Diogenes' game: hitting his interlocutor's pride, forcing him to recognize that he is not what he claims to be-which is something quite different from the Socratic attempt to show someone that he is ignorant of what he claims to know. In the Socratic dialogues, you sometimes see that someone's pride has been hurt when he is compelled to recognize that he does not know what he claims to know. For example, when Callicles is led to an awareness of his ignorance, he renounces all discussion because his pride has been hurt. But this is only a side effect, as

it were, of the main target of Socratic irony, which is: to show someone that he is ignorant of his own ignorance. In the case of Diogenes, however, pride is the main target, and the ignorance/knowledge game is a side effect. From these attacks on an interlocutor's pride, you see that the interlocutor is brought to the limit of the first parrhesiastic contract, viz., to agree to play the game, to choose to engage in discussion. Alexander is willing to engage Diogenes in discussion, to accept his insolence and insults, but there is a limit. And every time that Alexander feels insulted by Diogenes, he becomes angry and is close to quitting off, even to brutalizing Diogenes. So you see that the Cynic parrhesiastic game is played at the very limits of the parrhesiastic contract (Foucault 2001: p. 126–127).

There is a certain similarity between Galaktion's modes of behaviour and the facts of the life of the Cynic philosophers: hermit monk, the standard-bearer of the conjuncture, the lone pilgrim or the drunkard – all these were masks in which opposition to the existing government or reality can be read. At the same time, precisely the same modernist trend – aesthetics of masks – was opposed by the new, Stalinist culture. In fact, the “preaching” of the existing system was intended to humiliate this system – as happens in the dialogues of Diogenes with Alexander the Great.

Yulia Kristeva stated in an interview for “Flesh Art” magazine:

In those countries what succeeds for the communists so called “culture” is the eruption of evil, and I think that unfortunately those people will pass a long time through hell, before arriving at a culture. Will it be national or cosmopolitan, or some new kind of graft between European culture and local tradition? The question now is: we are in front of something that has never happened in Europe since the end of the Roman Empire, which is the bankruptcy of human links – this has of course to do with culture (Kristeva 1993: p. 27).

Times and values change, but the mechanisms of prohibition remain the same. And if earlier the state directly interfered in what could be considered right and appropriate, today people set and control the validity criteria from their own perspective, from the perspective of “common sense” of the time.

The first serious scandal of relatively recent period occurred in the 1990s, when the poet and translator Dato Barbakadze published the work

“Passion of the Martyrs”, which revived the gray, dull and darkened Tbilisi of that time at least for a while. Written in the language and style of Georgian hagiographic literature, the story proceeded to destroy the system of values that was deemed traditional and cherished by public figures, whose mentality was still Soviet. The text was based on the author’s extensive knowledge of contemporary thought and philosophy and his concept of the colonial mentality of Georgians, and its explicit purpose was to annoy those Soviet-minded public figures. Barbakadze’s narrative simply provided evidence of his theory, illustrating that in the mentality of the Georgian people, sex and love-making are associated with captivity and abuse. He makes frequent use of the Georgian f\* word, which has a rather negative connotation in certain contexts. Centuries ago, this word in his Georgian dictionary (in fact, the first explanatory dictionary of the Georgian language) was defined by Sul Khan Saba Orbeliani, a famous Georgian writer of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, as “the sexual abuse of women by men”. This is how Georgian society began to bid farewell to the outdated, false values of morality in Post-Soviet Georgia. As Dato Barbakadze states:

There were two people on earth whom I actively considered while working on the “Passion of Martyrs”: Ilya Chavchavadze and Mikheil Javakhishvili. It’s the most conscious, unforgettable experience I’ve ever had, and that’s why I’m emphasizing it. In essence, “Passion of Martyrs” was a desire to answer the question why one wrote “Happy Nation” (a poem by Ilya Chavchavadze – G. L.) and the other wrote “Jaqo’s Dispossessed” (a novel by Mikheil Javakhishvili – G. L.). Even the very fact of the existence of the “Happy Nation” and “Jaqo’s Dispossessed”, you need to understand what they wanted to say. My text was not so much an answer as a question, or rather, a question formulated in a certain artistic form (Trapaidze 2011: p. 310–311).

At that time, the poem by Ilia Chavchavadze and the novel by Mikhail Javakhishvili caused great public displeasure, because their works openly presented the shortcomings of Georgian nation that hampered the development of the country. Both of them were even threatened with physical destruction, and in the end they succeeded in both cases. Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907), who was sometimes called “Father of Nation”, on August 30, 1907, was severely killed. According

to documents, four or five people participated in the assassination of Ilia Chavchavadze. Majority of them were members of the Bolshevik party in Georgia. According to some assumptions and studies, among them was the young Joseph Dzhugashvili, later nicknamed Stalin. As for Mikheil Javakhishvili (1880–1937), he was executed in 1937, during the great purge, initiated by Stalin.

Later Dato Barbakadze said:

I hoped that “Passion of Martyrs” would not be perceived as obscenity, at least by intellectuals. I thought that, having passed the stage that sometimes follows the expression of something in such forms, the text will return to its inner flow and be saved, as it always happens in literature. The only ones whose fear reminded me from time to time (later, in the following years after the publication of the text) there were false patriots and Orthodox fundamentalists who would try to justify loyalty to their faith and fight against me (i.e. I was afraid only of physical reprisal). At the same time, I hoped that the most brutal forces employed “the struggle for a better future for Georgia” would not be up to this text... I was not aware of the inevitability of the opposition of the political and the artistic in this text, but of its deconstructive function; otherwise it would not be possible to shift consciousness to create a new text; After all, a period often sounds at the most inopportune moment, not only in life, but also in the text, and such a period is more likely to emphasize its conditionality than a sign of completeness (Trapaidze 2011: p. 311–312).

The second scandal occurred in the early 2000s, when the satirical story “The First Russian” by Lasha Bugadze, a young prose writer and playwright, was published in the magazine “Dro Mshvidobisa” (Time of Peace). It told about the personal life of the female monarch of the “Golden Age” of Georgia, the sainted King Tamar – when she was forced to marry a Russian nobleman, Prince Yuri or Giorgi (“Giorgi the Russian”), who was allegedly a zoophile. With this story, the writer attacked the falsified history and the people with a Soviet mentality, who mourned the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of Russian rule. Lasha Bugadze was accused of insulting the saint and threatened with physical punishment. It is interesting that this fact was protested by the church and street criminals alike. Scandals are related to Zaza Burchuladze, one of the outstanding modern novelists. Almost all of his books were followed by a great discussion while the writer lived in

Georgia. Today, Zaza Burchuladze already lives and works in Berlin. Among the most controversial works are his novels “Letter to Mother” and “The Simpsons”, which were considered unacceptable due to episodes of incest. Once, his novel “Soluble Kafka” was burned in one of the bookstores in the city of Batumi – simply because of the erotic episodes. Apparently, the consultants, encouraged by the shop owners, decided to hide the “blasphemous” text from the readers.

Another scandal was related to the title of his novel. The writer called the novel “Gospel According to a Donkey”. With this text, he tried to replace the horse and the donkey on the scale of stereotypes, and thus mystifying literary image of them. That was all, but it still infuriated a group of moralists who hadn’t even read the novel.

The most high-profile scandal in recent times is probably related to the “Sacred Crap” (Saidumlo Siroba) by Erekle Deisadze (referring to “The Last Supper”, which in Georgian literally could be translated like: Sacred Communion). This scandal clearly showed for the first time the undesirable perspective of how Georgia can resemble some dangerous, fundamentalist country. The fact is that the scandal was related to the title of the mini-novel and 99 percent of the people had no idea what the book was actually about. Imagine if this novel had been published in the United States and called “Holy Crap” (similar to “Holy Supper”, or “Sacred Crap”).

The list of prohibited literature can probably be listed for a long time. Again, to borrow from Yuri Lotman, unpredictable events in art and literature are associated with deviations from the traditional, usual path of development, falling out of the chain of cause and effect, when an unpredictable event is incomprehensible to contemporaries, but over time it is revealed that it made significant changes in the development of culture. Unpredictable events remain incomprehensible to most contemporaries. He calls it explosive moments, or explosions:

In order that the process may be assimilated by its contemporaries, it must take on a gradual character, but at the same time, the contemporary man is drawn to explosive moments that remain inaccessible to him (Lotman 2009: p. 10).

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**Анотація.** Досліджено проблему заборони літератури. В антидемократичних системах завжди бояться вільнодумців. Поети – вільні люди. Саме тому головна книга грузинів – «Витязь у тигровій шкурі», ймовірно, зазнала переслідувань не лише у XII столітті, а й століттями пізніше. Досить згадати Католикоса-Патріарха Грузії Антонія I, який кинув надрукованого в першій тбіліській друкарні «Витязя в тигровій шкурі» в річку Мткварі, «як книгу, шкідливу для читачів, отруйну для розуму і почуттів християн». Існує кілька основних причин, чому літературні твори або твори мистецтва в цілому забороняються. Мотиви можуть бути сексуальними, релігійними, політичними або моральними. Але мотив як такий належить до категорії змінної – про жоден мотив не можна сказати, що він універсальний і не змінюється залежно від часу і простору – точніше, епохи і країни. Для кожного, хто замислювався над цим питанням, буде очевидним, що часові категорії завжди змінюються. Мішель Фуко, зокрема, зауважив, що поняття божевільного й ненормального постійно змінюються в різні часи, у різних країнах і при різних урядах. Змінюються часи і цінності, але механізми заборони залишаються незмінними. Зроблено висновок: якщо раніше держава безпосередньо втручалася в те, що можна було вважати доречним із погляду політичної або іншої коректності, то сьогодні вона вже нав'язує масам свої заборони і максимально контролює критерії допустимості.

**Ключові слова:** літературна цензура; грузинська література; модерністська література; постмодерністська література; заборонені книги.

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