

SIMONIKA BEREZHIANI'S FAILED „DATE ON MTATSMINDA”

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Abstract: One of the outstanding representatives of Georgian émigré writing is Simon (Simonika) Berezhiani, whose versatile creative work is almost unknown in Georgia. His poetry is truly an integral part of Georgian poetic vocabulary and a characteristic émigré voice of Georgian poetry. The main theme of S. Berezhiani's work is the pain of his homeland. The poet, distant from his homeland, is a devoted watchman and watcher of the pain of his homeland in thought, deed, and everyday life. He grieves over the pain and suffering of Georgia. This is also the subject of his thoughts and restlessness. Accordingly, the present and future of his creations are about his homeland. „The self-forgotten beloved to homeland“ unhesitatingly sacrifices the precious reward given to humans by God – life – for the country. A country that has lost its freedom, biting cold of February is a bitter reality for the poet. His writings leave us with no other words. His work is a reflection of the nation's misfortune, which is further exacerbated by the poet's daily pain, feelings caused by the departing his motherland, immense love for his homeland, boundless longing, and thirst to see his native yard and dwelling. This emotion is contagious to the reader as well. You read his artistic thought and you feel the pain of the nation, you feel the pain of the poet, his anguish brings tears to your eyes. You hear the beating of the poet's heart as he ponders the fate of his homeland, and all this fills you with great emotion. Yes, pain resonates through his work, and the artistic clothing of what he says is still pain for the poet. This is precisely what is presented in Simon Berezhiani's poem „A Date on Mtatsminda.“ The aim of this work is to show the idea and purpose of this poem and to evaluate it from our point of view. At the same time, it is emphasized that S. Berezhiani's work is an integral part of twentieth-century Georgian writing and, with its creative handwriting, deserves a proper place in the history of Georgian literature.

Key words: Writing; Emigrant Literature; Homeland; Reality and Future.

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Introduction: Simon Berezhiani's work is primarily a poignant, painful exploration of the inner spiritual state of a person exiled to a foreign land and separated from their homeland. His words are nourished by feelings of longing for his homeland, his native home, his nest, his hearth, his anxiety, his sorrow. Accordingly, getting to know his poetic heritage will make the reader share in the fate of a person who is troubled and separated from his homeland. The message conveyed to the reader's heart through the language of poetry is emotional, contagious, and soul-stirring. We feel his pain as well, we are troubled by the state of the soul of a young poet, uprooted in a foreign land, abandoned by the hands of an „evil stepmother,“ a poet who has only one wish left, that he might at least be able to gaze upon his native yard and dwelling through a dreamlike vision. His pain is further exacerbated by the reality and the poet's acceptance of

the idea that he would never be able to see his homeland again, that he would never be able to enjoy the beauty of his native sky. That is why the longing for his homeland and the thirst to see it are the leitmotifs of his work. At the same time, those who are far away are concerned about the fate of their homeland. Reflections on the fate of their homeland, its future, are vividly conveyed in S. Berezhiani's poem „A Date on Mtatsminda“. The purpose of this work is to highlight the main idea, idea, and purpose of this poem. The poet's heartache is conveyed directly, openly, and without embellishment in the poem. Each word of the poem is nourished by this pain, which is emotional and allows us to look deeply into the spiritual world of the creator, and we hear the expression of his painful and sad heart. The poet's words have the greatest impact, the reader also follows his path in his imagination, his feelings are contagious, and the figurative expression of what is said through the language of the poem is thought-provoking.

As we mentioned, his work is little known, and we will focus on a few details of the study of his work. Information about the poet's work and biographical details can be found in the preface to the collection of poems by S. Berezhiani. In particular, the collection of poems „Writings“ is accompanied by a two-page evaluation by Viktor Nozadze – „Simon Berezhiani“ and by M. Tugushi – „Simon Berezhiani and his work“. As M. Tughushi writes, this small study is an abbreviated summary of the report that „was read at a meeting organized by the Georgian community of Berlin to commemorate Simon Berezhiani on January 16 of this year“. The collection of poems was printed in 1943 and, naturally, January 16, 1943 is meant. Here, in a footnote, M. Tughushi indicates, „The book would have been richer if some of the previously unpublished and biographical material sent from Paris had not been lost on the way. Adding to Simonika's misfortune is the fact that to this day, despite great efforts, we have not been able to find his grave. Let this small volume be, at least for now, a sign of the love and respect of Simonika's friends“ (Tugushi, 1943, p. 9).

S. Berezhiani's second collection of poems, „Poems,“ is also accompanied by a short preface, „For the Reader's Information“ (pp. 5-7). The editor of this collection is G. Kipiani. The preface presents small biographical episodes of S. Berezhiani and information about his death. In particular, he went to the battlefield immediately after the declaration of the World War II. Signs of mental illness were evident. He was hospitalized during his stay in Romania, and then his trace is lost. Here is a report transmitted by Munich radio that he had died in Stuttgart. In the opinion of the author of the preface, if this information is based on some serious source, then it should not be difficult to obtain more accurate information. Stuttgart was not destroyed during the war, and the methodicality of the German archives is well known. Only if someone starts to solve this case, they shouldn't look for Simon Berezhiani. Simonika also had a third surname. In his military record book he is written down as Simon Berger.

After the above-mentioned prefaces, the first researcher and evaluator of S. Berezhiani's life and work is Prof. G. Sharadze. In his study „Simon Berezhiani“, he provides us with detailed information about the refugee poet, in particular, what kind of life path he took, what he contributed to Georgian poetry, to Georgian culture in general. In addition to the above listed deed, G. Sharadze introduces S. Berezhianis as a writer, artist, and painter who worked in the feuilleton genre. According to him, Simonika also sculpted. Performing arts were not far from Simonika either; he directed, acted, and worked as a set designer (Sharadze, 1993, p. 212). G. Sharadze had the opportunity to obtain information about the multifaceted creativity of S. Berezhiani from the pages of „White George“ and „Kartlosi“. Accordingly, he provided us with detailed information about the poet with interesting assessments.

Also, a significant assessment of S. Berezhiani's work belongs to Prof. A. Nikoleishvili. In his monograph – „Georgian Emigrant Writing“ – he thoroughly discusses the emergence and main trends of Georgian emigrant writing, the life and work of emigrant writers. Among them, he also talks about the contributions and merits of S. Berezhiani. The researcher emphasizes the high level of poetic sophistication and verbal mastery of S. Berezhiani. We agree with his assessment that „as a poet, he is endowed with a divine talent for perceiving and imagining events with poetic originality. Here, the musical harmony and melodiousness of his poems, the originality and delicacy of his poetic imagery, and the rhythmic and versification polyphony and diversity should also be emphasized. So, S. Berezhiani's

poetry is the fruit of individual poetic imagination, a world perceived and seen through the eyes of a professional poet, which adds a new, original touch to the richest treasure trove of twentieth-century Georgian writing“ (Nikoleishvili, 2006, pp. 483-484).

Thus, in the mentioned studies, the peculiarities of S. Berezhiani’s poetry are discussed in depth, although nothing is said about his poem. We will limit ourselves to discussing S. Berezhiani’s only poem – „Nightfall on Mtatsminda“. This will give another additional feature to S. Berezhiani’s work.

Methods: We used text processing and analysis methods in the research.

Discussion: As we mentioned, Simon (Simonika) Berezhiani was distinguished by his versatile creative talent. He wrote poems, stories, memoirs, short stories, funny stories, drew caricatures, directed, acted, recited poems, sculpted, sang. Therefore, it is not surprising that G. Kipiani addresses him as „You are a knight of art!“ It is no coincidence that he was considered the image of the emigrant family.

In the preface to Simon Berezhiani’s collection „The Poems“, published in Paris in 1982 – „For the Reader’s Note“, it is rightly noted: „The writings of Simon Berezhiani are worthy of not being lost, not only because it is unacceptable to forget a poet who has fled abroad, but also because this small collection, which contains only 16 titles, is not at all superfluous for Georgian poetry, despite the great wealth of this poetry... This small book is at the same time a monument to the poet, because even his grave has been lost“ (Berezhiani, 1982, p. 5). Yes, these poems are the spiritual cry of a person burdened by the pain of his nation. Yes, they are the response of a poet, separated from his homeland and his native home, which makes you think about the fate and sorrow of the homeland, makes you think about its tragic reality, makes you feel the pain, you deeply experience the poet’s situation and you hear the poet’s words burdened by pain.

It is known that after the author’s death, two small collections of his poems were published. The first collection, entitled „Writings,“ was published in Berlin in 1943, and the second collection, „Poems,“ was published in Paris in 1982, dedicated to the memory of Georgian patriots who died in the struggle for the liberation of Georgia during the World War II. The preface to the collection is also important in that it contains additional information about the poet’s biography. However, these collections cannot fully reflect his work, as he was mainly published in emigrant publications – „Tetri Giorgi“ and „Kartlosi“. The cover of the collection of poems reads: Georgian Legion Field Library, No. 2. The collection was published by the publishing house of the newspaper „Sakartvelo“. The publisher’s information is noteworthy: „In the form of this book, we are providing the Georgian army with the second collection of our field library. It contains that part of Simon Berezhiani’s poetry that we were able to collect. Unfortunately, many unpublished poems remain without the pages of publication“ (Berezhiani, 1943, p. 6).

The fact is that with the two collections of poems, we have a certain idea of the poetry of Simon Berezhiani. The face of the poet, saddened and distressed by the pain of his native country, the nation, comes to life in our imagination. He even wrote: „And the sadness of the nation, like a hot bullet, pierces my heart and I find the wound heavy.“ Yes, with a heart far removed from the homeland, he would carry the pain of the homeland while wandering. The pain of the nation and the reality of that time – the February frost and the fate of the country that had lost its freedom – are a deep wound for the poet. He belongs to those chosen people who do not live only in their personal lives, the pain of the nation is their pain too.

As soon as World War II was declared, the poet went to the battlefield. He sacrificed himself for his homeland so that his grave is unknown. In the preface to the collection of poems, V. Nozadze wrote: „He carried Georgia in his heart and was a devoted follower of his beloved homeland. Even his homeland did not rest in peace, and the land soaked in Georgian blood for many centuries called out to him. He was not able to approach it. The enemy was occupying his homeland, and he was singing and praising it from abroad“ (Nozadze, 1943, p. 6).

Indeed, it is not easy to carry love for your homeland in your heart and to sacrifice your life for it without hesitation. That is why the theme of his work is only and only the homeland, its present and future.

The love for the homeland is further intensified by the tragedy of the poet himself, cut off from his native environment, and the everyday life of being abroad. M. Tughushi accurately noted in his letter – Simon Berezhiani and his work: „Sadness, but not hopelessness, sadness with the pain of the nation, but not despair, defeat, but not discouragement, boundless love for the homeland and considering the suffering caused by it as joy; the desire to fight! Recognition of self-sacrifice as a sacred duty and the implementation of this belief, awareness of the importance of the idea of national integrity and its transformation into reality... Such are the motifs of Simon Berezhiani's poetry. His fanduri (three stringed lute) sang to these thoughts“ (Tugushi, 1943, p. 24).

These are the motifs discussed in the poem „A Date on Mtatsminda“, which S. Berezhiani published in „Kartlosi“, 1939, No. 19-23. There, next to the title, it is written – „Mama – Davithi“, poem. In the immortal memory of Ilia“. Simonika Berezhiani's poem „A Meeting on the Holy Mountain“ is wonderfully written. It is about expressing the pain and suffering of the nation and reflecting on it, searching for the way the nation should take in the future. The value of this way for the author is clear even from the fact that the poem is dedicated to the immortal memory of Ilia. The poem begins with an address to Ilia: „Vazha was loved by you, my dear, the eloquent man of Pshavi“ It is no coincidence that it is he who must express the pain that tormented Ilia, Vazha, and Akaki:

“I've taken the lute,
The lute of Vazha, sunny, cool,
Trying to play with tender,
Keeping strains unharmed together“

Yes, these three masters are the foundation of Simon's worldview. „The Georgian plowmen“ – he even addresses them. It is no coincidence that Ilia, Vazha, and Akaki are considered to be plowmen of Georgian conception and national value. This is a regularity for a poet living abroad. Simonika Berezhiani depicts them for us with one, small detail and, in fact, creates their artistic appearance with this line of his verse:

“Akaki may be having fun
On Vazha's greatest love,
As the latter is never bored
Watching at mountains or rocks.
I'm sorry for you dear,
How you can all that bear!
Being in a trouble
Rooted in the land so tough,
That won't let stay in the sky
As you are bound with earth's strive.“

These three are close to him and a measure for the lost and distraught poet abroad. The harshness of the foreign stepfather and rude stepmother is alleviated by spiritual fellowship and fatherhood with these three: „Listen to me, fathers, I will never betray you“. With this one word, by addressing these three as fathers, the poet directly emphasizes his spiritual fellowship with them.

One detail is also interesting. He entrusted the transmission of his pain, his thoughts, his ideas, and his determination to the strings of the lute (panduri): „I've taken Vazha's lute“, „I'm grasping a lute“ And thus he creates a contrasting emphasis, a deliberate logical accentuation of what he has to say. Singing what he has to say with the strings of a panduri is a way of voicing an inner state, a way of making pain known to the world. And yet, what is the poet preparing us to hear?

Listen to the lute with care
As the soul is buried there:
The fate of Kartli is clearly seen
In the sweet sounds of its strings.
I'd sing to make a trace
For the future's happy way.“

This is why the poet demands to draw attention to the panduri. Again, and again, the present of the Georgian nation makes him lose the peace. Reality has become a subject of anxiety for him. He cannot be indifferent to the pain and sorrow of the nation. He is concerned about the future of the country. However, what is certain for tomorrow is also evident in the tinkling of the panduri strings. The poet chose an indirect way to say all this. We are suddenly transported to the author's dream. The transformation in a dream, the transition from reality to the unreal, creates a wonderful, iconic image and draws us even more into an emotional arc. It is also effective to tell the truth through the subconscious in a dream. In a dream, he travels with the clouds. The poet's address, while abroad, is precisely a request to the cloud to visit his native land. His beliefs and the pain of the era at that time are the cloud's response:

“What does your motherland mean?
Yesterday dawn I visited it,
On Gombori slope I found a seat,
Everything was sunk in a mist;
Valleys, plains or fields
All still seem to bleed“.

It is not difficult to understand what a bloody area means. The poet, longing to see his missing homeland, brings the cloud to his homeland, and the illusion and personification of Vazha's verse lines have a special aesthetic impact:

“Midnight cloud slowly passed,
Lay on a Gori edge,
Trying to kiss the waving grass,
Absorbing drops of dews from them.
The dew quenched its thirst,
And the cloud got on a wind,
Don't catch a cold my dear boy,
Get a blanket from head to toe...
I wrapped up in a blanket,
Stretched the arm as a pillow,
Wishing to glance at my homeland,
Tears started me to follow.“

We read the poem and our hearts are touched by the poet's decision to quench his desire to see his country, at least in his imagination. Such lines accompany the poem as a sad note. Yes, his thirst is quenched by seeing the Lord's corner, by seeing that native dwelling, which “the moon sews on the fur jacket, the sun guards with a golden veil.“

What could be more valuable to a poet than a cloud turning its gaze over Tbilisi and leaving him at the Church of St. David of Mtatsminda? Here, Shota, Fridon, Avtandili, and Tariel are depicted using the metaphors of the „Knight in the Tiger's Skin“. The poet is a witness and observer of the meeting that takes place at Ilia's grave. He brings Ilia's face to life for us with amazing details:

“A cold grave was left by
The chronicler from Kartli side,
Blinking in moonless night
The holder of the daylight.
With a steady sense of right
Defending oppressed of all kinds,
Firmly and willingly standing by,
Powerful and strong in mind
Shining the grace from inside.“

With the background of such elevated mood, he depicts the poets' visit to Ilia with amazing skill. It is not difficult to guess: grey haired Akaki with the silent chirping of the harp, and the more beautiful lion than the moon with, and Vazha with the eagle as a companion adorning his side. They are accompanied by Nikoloz, Besiki, Aleksandre, Grigoli.

I would say that in this passage, the author's literary-aesthetic view is also evident, and the meter, of course, is Shota again and again. The poets even marvel at Shota's presence with them, embracing him and saying: „The cubs kissed the lions, and the tears were poured down their cheeks.“

He vividly and directly describes their fiesta. With small, episodic strokes, this spectacle flashes in the reader's imagination like a film frame. Shota's cry is the voice of a nightingale, Avtandil is chilling, Fridon yodelling and, with the artistic expression of „The Knight in the Tiger's Skin,“ he will tell us that „the stones have turned into hearing ears and the dead started to flap hands,“ and what did the author make the company of poets groan?

“Hard times for Iveria being scattered apart,
The homeland is lost if not to sing in one chant“

The poet's heartache is the state of the divided country. The homeland is divided, shattered. His desire is a general desire to see a strong Iveria.

This poem was published in 1937 in the Paris-based magazine „Kartlos“. The emigrant poet's words are understandable. He worries about the fate and pain of a national hearth that seems from the distance. What should be the solution, the way out? These thoughtful and painful questions make the poet lose his peace and that is why he makes Ilya ask: „What can you tell me? How can we save the captive Darejan?“ Here again, he artistically brings to life Avtandil, Pridon, and Tarieli's plan to invade the Kajeti fortress as it is described in the „Knight in the Tiger's Skin“. The reason for its sorrow is also understandable:

“My lute, my dear lute,
Why so sad, in a low mood?
The former tunes being so cute,
Made you fly in the sky blue.
Let the future in a way
Recall the dreamy past again,
And find the great saving way
To return the ancestor's fame“.

The grief of the nation, the tears of the nation, pierce his heart like a hot bullet, and he is filled with this wound. This is confirmed by an episode from his life. During the World War II, he rushed to the altar of Georgia with a weapon in his hand to sacrifice his youthful life. While departing he wrote the following words in Vakhtang Gambashidze's album: „I am leaving and I am completely sure that I will see my

land. If fate deceives me and I sleep somewhere, on someone else's land, forever, I will be happy with that too, so that my last rant will be „Georgia“. And I ask you and I ask everyone to read my „Date on Mtatsminda“ from Mtatsminda to my beloved Tbilisi“ (Salia, 1954, pp. 29-30).

And here's one more detail. The feeling of separation from the homeland is conveyed to us in this way: „And when I was leaving my homeland, I entered the yard of our university, went to my maple tree. It was five times taller than me. It whispered with rustling – where are you going? Stay here! Oh, my maple, I am far from you! I live in a big city. I walk on Pebble pavements. I will slide underground. My ears are pierced by the noise of factories, cars and airplanes, and I often say with a sigh – I don't want this life anymore. I prefer to be with you.“

Yes, „I'd rather be with you“ – these lines are nourished by great pain and at the same time a sense of longing for the homeland. A longing for the homeland that the author describes to us like this:

My dear land appeared
I strived to gaze near,
Abkhazia, Mingrelia,
And our fast Guria;
Tskhenitskali is rushing down,
Zhuzhi and Enguri make frown.
The emerald is doing a bow
Having looked at smooth meadow...
Grey Caucasian tops
Make the giants to stop!
Shota's cradle is seen
From the Meskhetian sleep.
Golden fields are inviting
For the fiesta in Javakheti.
Listen to Rioni's roar.
Calling as host of Imereti!
Fortress, castles are in row
In Racha, Lechkhumi, Svaneti!
Aragvi flows into Mtkvari,
How long have they been loving?
Oh, my Kartli, my fate
I'm longed to see Kakheti!
Tower shields are lions
For my Tush-Pshav-Khevsureti!
Georgia is a unique land,
Nothing's like in the world!“

Getting to know his poetry, and even this one poem, we undoubtedly get convinced of the following assessment of S. Berezhiani's poetry: „Simon Berezhiani's work is solely and exclusively a sharp reflection of the political misfortunes of the nation. Neither the philosophical and religious problems that whiten the greatest thinkers, nor the apologia of beings intoxicated by their beautiful charm, nor the relief and suffering that grow on personal grounds are visible in his poems... The Lord – homeland has penetrated with full splendor in the artist's entire being, and from there we hear a symphony of boundless suffering, which very rarely allows for a dissonant yodelling of hope“ (Tugushi, 1943, p. 16).

Thus, the boundless love for his homeland, the thirst to visit it, the hope of seeing it, and ultimately, the sadness caused by not seeing his homeland and coming to terms with this reality are woven into his creative work. His writings are warmed by a feeling of boundless love for his homeland. This is the

main vein of his creativity, pain, artistic garment and cornerstone of being human. His creativity is a distinctive state of the soul of Georgian emigrant literature. The poet, with his individuality, is a living part of twentieth-century Georgian writing, nourished from head to toe with love for his homeland and truly deserves to take his rightful place in centuries-old Georgian writing.

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