

"A FRACTURED HEART" BY SHIO ARAGVISPIRELI AS A LITERARY FAIRY TALE

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Abstract. The literary fairy tale, as an artistic and aesthetic phenomenon, is also distinctive in that it undergoes notable genre transformations. A fairy tale may be written in either poetic or prose form and can take the shape of a novel, short story, or novella. This aspect clearly sets it apart from other literary genres. Shio Aragvispireli, a prominent Georgian writer active at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, is credited with establishing the psychological novel in Georgian literature. The prose writer is also the author of literary fairy tales. The writer himself emphasized this genre in the subtitles of several short texts from the early years of his careers ("*...And There Came the Magus from the East*" (a fairy tale, 1900), "*A Magic Fortress*" (a fantasy etude, 1901), and "*My Adventure*" (a fairy tale play, 1901)) as well as in his later novel-fairy tale "*A Fractured Heart*" (a Georgian fable, 1920). In its evaluation of Aragvispireli's creative work, Georgian literary criticism has paid particular attention to his only novel, focusing on thematic aspects of the artistic representation of love, friendship, and art. "*A Fractured Heart*" is significant not only for the aforementioned thematic issues but also for its passages featuring allusive layers and subtle metatextual functions, which contribute to shaping key genre characteristics of the novel. In this context, a detailed analysis reveals the peculiarities of the relationship between the storyline, theme and subtheme. Notably, the fables included in the novel (the fable of the shepherd and the fable of the forest queen) exhibit certain similarities in the characters' adventures, while simultaneously presenting different versions of the same story. Even more remarkable is the novel's connection to the Georgian folk epic romance "*Eteriani*". The author himself hints at this connection through the names of the characters (Eteri, Marekhi). Shio Aragvispireli's novel-fairy tale "*A Fractured Heart*" is significant in many respects as one of the first large-scale literary fairy tales, earning the author a distinguished place in the history of Georgian literary fairy tales.

Keywords: literary fairy tale, fairy tale-novel, interpretation, allusion.

Introduction. The literary fairy tale, as an artistic-aesthetic phenomenon, is particularly distinctive in that it undergoes significant genre transformation. Fairy tales are written in poetic or prose form and exist as novels, short stories, or novellas. This aspect completely distinguishes the literary fairy tale from other literary genres.

The establishment of the psychological novel in Georgian literature is associated with the name of Shio Aragvispireli, a famous Georgian writer of the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. The prose writer was also the author of literary fairy tales. In the relatively early years of his career, the writer himself emphasized this genre in the subtitles of several short texts: ("*...And There Came the Magus from the East*" (a fairy tale, 1900), "*A Magic Fortress*" (a fantasy etude, 1901), and "*My Adventure*" (a fairy tale play, 1901)) as well as in his later fairy tale-novel "*A Fractured Heart*" (a Georgian fable, 1920).

Georgian literary critics (M. Zandukeli, D. Benashvili, S. Chilaia, V. Tsiskaridze, and others), when evaluating Aragvispireli's work, focused on the author's only novel and highlighted the content aspects of the artistic representation of the themes of love, friendship, and art.

"A Fractured Heart" is significant not only for the aforementioned themes but also for the allusive planes and episodes with a metatextual function present in the text, which, in turn, create a multiple genre markers characteristic of the novel. From this perspective, a detailed analysis reveals the particular features of the relationship between the fabula and the plot, including subplots. It is noteworthy that the fables incorporated into the novel (the Shepherd's Fable, the Forest Queen's Fable) show a certain resemblance to the adventures of the same characters and, at the same time, represent different versions of a single story. Even more defining is the novel's connection to the Georgian folk epic romance "Eteriani". The author himself hints at this link through the character's names (Eteri, Marekhi).

Methods: The paper employs historical-comparative, literary-analytical, descriptive, and comparative methods.

Discussion. When interpreting Aragvispireli's fairy tale-novel through the lens of the folk epic romance "Eteriani", it becomes clear that the novel represents a different version of the folk epic narrative. Aragvispireli used a similar technique for the first time in the novella "The Three Broken Commandments", when he interpreted the king's decision to "exile Rama" in the opposite way and turned the determined warrior into an anti-hero, thereby emphasizing the destructive consequences that spiritual crisis, lack of faith and inaction can have on an individual (see Kutivadze, 2005, pp. 56–69).

The same situation applies in the case of "A Fractured Heart". Naturally, there is a significant difference between a multi-layered literary text and a folk epic, although some issues require more detailed examination. First of all, the characters in the novel who bear the names of the heroes of the folk epic should be identified. It is evident that the writer uses this technique deliberately.

The novel's characters, Eteri and Marekhi, along with the names of heroes well-known to the reader from the source text, have more or less retained the functions of the fairy tale characters.

Eteri: Eteri, born from a man's rib (Glonti, 1991, pp. 492–499), becomes the king's wife, but Abesalom (the king) refuses her on the wedding day because she is bitten all over by lice.

Master Katsia's daughter ("A Fractured Heart"), Eteri, becomes the wife of Prince Nadir, but she does not consummate the marriage because she realizes that she loves the goldsmith.

In both cases, the lovers are eventually united: Eteri and Abesalom in the folk tale, Eteri and Goldsmith Makhare in the novel.

Marekhi: In the fairy tale, Marekhi tries to bring Eteri to the palace to see the dying Abesalom and save his brother from death.

In the novel, prince's sister Marekhi tries to help her brother and save his marriage. It is clear that the role of these characters in both texts is identical.

Despite this, as expected, the motivation for the heroes' actions in the fairy tale-novel is different and complicated by revealing the characters' hidden feelings and aspirations.

Eteri loves ("A Fractured Heart") the goldsmith, who, in turn, knows that Eteri dreams of becoming queen, but as soon as she becomes queen, this aspiration fades and love erupts in full force (this episode may also reflect the intertext of Vasil Barnov's novel "The Faded Halo"). Thus, we essentially have a love triangle between the king, the queen, and the goldsmith, in which Eteri and the goldsmith are connected by love.

In the folk tale "Eteri", the plot is the same, but the relationships are different. The triangle in the tale is formed by: Abesalom, Eteri and Murman. The latter gains possession of Eteri through a deal with the devil.

In the novel, Eteri is unable to reciprocate the king's love, which puts the prince in a difficult position.

In the novel, Marekhi also tries to help her brother, just as she does in the fairy tale.

In the folk tale, the sister's love for her brother is unconditional. In the novel, the sister is also loyal to her brother, but this line is complicated by a new subplot, which unfolds as follows – Marekhi falls in love

with Makhare, the goldsmith. If Eteri and the Prince get married, it will be easier for Marekhi to reach Makhare.

Another notable character in the novel is Irema, the king's loyal vizier, who is rejected by Marekhi and is angered by the fact that the daughter of a royal family chooses Makhare, who comes from a lower social class, rather than him. The latter is also a love triangle between Marekhi, the vizier, and the goldsmith. In general, Marekhi is a kind of inverted version of Eteri (they are also very similar physically). Like Eteri, Marekhi also gives preference to feelings over origin, but, unlike Eteri, Marekhi's love story does not end well, even though in her case a happy ending should have been easier to achieve.

It was expected that the literary traces of the novel's characters would naturally lead to revealing the functions of Murman and Abesalom. Several characters (Makhare, Irema and the prince), allude to Murman's role. This artistic strategy logically accounts for the writer's decision not to use the names of Abesalom and Murman.

It is noteworthy that each story has its own development and represents relevant episodes of the novel's plot, through which the author lends artistic credibility to the characters' actions, thus introducing new layers of meaning into the text.

Aragvispireli's novel-tale is also significant in that the prose writer incorporated several fables into the narrative. The latter participate in a peculiar literary game offered by the author to the reader: will what, according to the text, exists in the collective memory of the people as a legend or tradition be repeated, will the heroes be able to escape the direct and subconscious influence of these traditions and change their own lives? *"How many fables has one heard in childhood, where even the king's daughters followed shepherds, gooseherds...there is such a great resemblance..."*, the writer poses a not entirely rhetorical question (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 470). At the same time, the text emphasizes Makhare's accompanying feeling that the old story is repeating itself for him (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 512).

Makhare remembers a legend told by his mother about how the master's daughter in a tower, was so enchanted by the sound of the shepherd's flute that she left the tower and followed the shepherd to the mountaintop. But when she awoke from her blissful dream, *"the shepherd lay motionless, frozen before her"* (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 472). Shepherd's faithful dog helped her hurry him. *"Nothing further is said about the adventures of the woman and the dog, except that the owners drove down the cattle into the valley and collected their animals, and the woman and the dog set off again towards the mountains"* (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 473), – such a finale of the story, on the one hand, makes the goldsmith's own adventure even more attractive, and on the other hand, adds intensity to the entire text.

It is noteworthy that in both cases, a tender voice calls out to the master's daughter. If in the fable it is the sound of the shepherd's flute, in the the novel it is Eteri's own voice, produced by the goldsmith Makhare through an artificial mouthpiece. The shepherd, at the peak of happiness, dies. *"Perhaps I am happier than the shepherd... I am indeed ... He died and I am still alive"* (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 473), says Makhare, who is confident that the tragic story that happened to the shepherd will end well for him.

Although the goldsmith feels pangs of conscience because he knows well that Master Katsia's daughter dreams of becoming queen, he still feels a sense of rivalry with the prince, tries to achieve perfection, and even learns horsemanship because the prince is a good rider (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 573). This knowledge is given decisive importance in the novel's finale.

The question naturally arises: is Makhare happier than the shepherd? Throughout the development of the action in the novel, and especially in the finale, it is clear that Makhare does not consider himself a happy person, even though, unlike the shepherd, he also had a son from the woman he loved and survived physically.

In the novel the Forest Queen's Fable also carries a significant meaning. The chief swineherd tells the story to Makhare and Irema (the king's loyal servant, a hunter) when they take refuge in the forest.

According to the story of the chief swineherd one night his uncle Mgela (it is noteworthy that the chief swineherd likens Makhare to Mgela) saw the Forest Queen, who was distinguished by her tenderness and beauty and attracted whoever she liked. If she deceived any shepherd and embraced him, the latter's warmth would be transferred to the queen, while he himself would freeze. *"...it turns out that she embraces the man, clings to him so much, that, in bliss, he gives all the warmth he has to the queen and freezes himself..."* (Aragvispireli, 1970, pp. 581–583). Mgela also could not resist the dazzling beauty of the queen, but every time he went toward her, the loyal boar stopped him. Although he survived freezing and death, after this incident the courageous man changed greatly.

It is noteworthy that this fable is reflected by the heroes themselves in the work as follows: it is better to experience such magical love even once, for one night, and perish, than to be unable to overcome it and "suddenly disappear," as happened to Mgela. Makhare believes it would have been better for Mgela to have followed the Forest Queen to the end (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 583). It should be noted that the chief swineherd also agrees with him.

According to the text, Irema considers Makhare more fearless than Mgela, thereby hinting to the reader about the connection between the fable and the novel's main story, which implies the continuation of this reflection not in general terms, but also taking into account the adventures of the heroes.

In general, folk beliefs have a strong influence on the lives of the characters in the novel. At first, Eteri appears as a wicked witch to Makhare, Irema also considers her a wicked witch and flees the palace out of fear, while, in turn, Eteri's nurse-maid considers Makhare to be an evil spirit.

Of course, the fables preserved in the memories of the novel's protagonists express people's life experiences, but the artistic reality depicted in the work is much more complex and multifaceted than these tragic narratives, with which the protagonists try to explain the reality created around them, and therefore their fate depends more on their own choices.

It should be noted that the love stories narrated in the novel reach their climax when they are dramatically connected with the fate of the kingdom. The fairy tale told in the sixth chapter allegorically reflects Georgia, the historical realities of Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century, and perhaps the subtitle – Georgian Fable – is a reference to this very aspect.

The sending of a steed to be tamed by the King of the North carries a fairly transparent symbolic meaning for the Georgian reader.

It is known that in a Georgian folk tale *"the episode of 'taming a steed', as the best means of characterizing a hero, is related to the performance of a difficult task. This episode may be culminating in one place and serve as a development of the action in another. (...) Brave heroes manage to tame steeds and turn them into their helpers"* (Kurdovanidze, 2002, pp. 140–141).

The function of the fairy tale steed is essentially preserved in the novel; moreover, the difficult task is highlighted, which is related to preserving the state's independence and the king's dignity.

The very fact that in case of failure to fulfill the condition, the King of the North, who "has conquered the entire land" (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 587), demands the beautiful wife of King Nadir, is a characteristic fairy tale detail. However, in the text this detail carries a different meaning. It is here that King Nadir's cowardly nature emerges, which ultimately destroys him. He decides to send Marekhi to the King of the North, who had once returned the tamed steed, claiming it to be turned into a donkey. Clearly, the main goal of the King of the North is to subjugate this country; the steed is merely a pretext for war. King Nadir, however, wants to avoid war by exploiting the fact that the envoys believe the queen is his sister. This detail is repeated

several times in the composition. King Nadir himself sees a beauty similar to Marekhi in Eteri and therefore decides to marry her; even the goldsmith cannot distinguish between Eteri and Marekhi when first seeing them in daylight.

The Great King of the country calls his people to war, and sends his daughter into hiding. Upon seeing the abandoned palace, the frightened King Nadir also disappears into the forest, leaving the country without a ruler. When the king returns, the first battle has already been won, but this victory is celebrated by his loyal hunter, who incites the people to stone their own king, and declares his own friend (the goldsmith) a traitor for attempting to save the king.

Such activism by the goldsmith and the hunter at this crucial moment in the country's fate signals the collapse of this society. Moreover, the presentation of the king, the hunter and the goldsmith on the same plane reflects the shifts in social forces that were occurring at the beginning of the 20th century. While folk tales generally excludes social origin as an obstacle, this case addresses a different phenomenon. The text clearly illustrates a chain of events that reflects the tendencies of the author's era, which is quite relevant for the genre of the literary fairy tale.

The work begins with a typical fairy tale formula: "once upon a time", but the ending lacks the conventional formula _ "misery there, joy here" _ and also the happy ending characteristic of fairy tales. The final sentence of "A Fractured Heart" reads: "*My sworn brother declared me a traitor to the people*" (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 638). This is said by the hero, who seemingly found happiness. As noted at the beginning, according to many literary critics, love triumphs in the novel (in the form of Eteri's and Makhare's (the goldsmith) feelings, yet it is precisely Makhare whom his sworn brother declares a traitor. It is because of his friend's actions that Makhare's heart resembles a cracked bell: "His heart made a ringing sound, like a cracked bell when he unintentionally threw it away" (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 638). Eteri says almost the same thing at the beginning of the story, noting that as the bell cracked, so did her heart (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 558), although here she is referring to Makhare and his love.

The author's appeal to moral aspects is evident in the text. The insincere attitude of the main characters towards one another determines their personal tragedies. King Nadir lies, presenting himself to Eteri as a vizier. Eteri loves Makhare, but chooses queenship instead. Makhare also knows that Eteri dreams of becoming queen, yet he still pursues her love, and then betrays Marekhi (King's sister) to whom he is engaged. Irema tries to appear as a hero to the people and exaggerates his own merits.

It is noteworthy that Aragvispireli uses homonyms in the novel. One example is "ugulo". According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language, "ugulo" means heartless, cold-hearted, insensitive, something that has no heart, as well as joyless (Dictionary, 1990, p. 926). In the novel, Makhare does indeed display these qualities in his relationship with Marekhi, but simultaneously, his sworn brother Irema calls him "ugulo" because of his boldness and fearlessness.

The bell is significant both functionally and semantically. This element is also closely connected to the theme of art represented in the work (see Kutivadze, 2009, pp. 338-347). In the plot of the novel, the primary function is assigned to the bell cast by the goldsmith, which serves as a tool for Eteri to enchant the prince and to become queen. The word "zari" (bell) is homonymous with several meanings: "zari" is a cone-shaped object cast from a copper alloy with a moving iron rod inside that produces sound; "zari" also means a cry caused by fear or sudden shock, and "zari" means weeping, lamentation (Dictionary, 1990, pp. 500-501).

The characters in the novel refer to this instrument in all three of its meanings. Makhare calls the bell the lips, the lips of Eteri (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 477), Master Katsia calls it "the bell of fear" (Aragvispireli, 1970, 473, 480), and it is also referred to as "the pleasant bell" (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 476), and after cracking, it turns into a "horror" (tav-zari) (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 480).

Beyond the fact that the cast bell in the novel reproduces the human voice, it is precisely that magical object that transforms the text into a literary fairy tale, both its casting and cracking are essential plot elements.

It is noteworthy that King Nadir's name also carries a double meaning. It is associated with a predatory animal, though by association it can also relate to hunting. Abesalom met Eteri while hunting. In order to secretly see Eteri, the prince exchanges roles with his loyal servant, the hunter. (Aragvispireli, 1970, p. 483).

In light of the characters' behavior, personal traits, and decisions made, it is significant that the author titled the novel "A Fractured Heart" rather than "A Cracked Bell."

In his novel, Shio Aragvispireli depicts a world in which moral principles are neglected, which constitutes the primary cause of the collapse of the state. The gravest sin committed by the people – the murder of their own king – expresses the doom of this society. The shift of the work's ending to this plane shows the writer's rather pessimistic attitude towards the historical processes taking place in his country.

Conclusion. "A Fractured Heart" by Shio Aragvispireli is the author's only novel. This work, created by the famous short story writer at the end of his career, clearly bears the traces of both the writer's life and creative experience, as well as our country's past and the historical and social events of the early 20th century. The most acute moral problems raised by the prose writer in "A Fractured Heart" encompass all the other themes of the work. Using the allegory characteristic of a literary fairy tale, the writer attempted to explain the causes that, in his view, determined numerous events in the historical and social life of Georgia.

Shio Aragvispireli's fairy tale-novel "A Fractured Heart" is a significant text in many respects. As one of the first large-scale literary fairy tales, it secures the writer a distinguished place in the history of Georgian literary fairy tales.

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