

The Tragedy of Transitive Societies  
(“The First Two Circle and everything else” by N. Gelashvili and  
“City of Angels, or the Overcoat of Dr. Freud” by Christa Wolf”)

**Abstract:** In the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Berlin wall, Georgian and German societies were in the same situation. They were engulfed by the similar fear, chaos, and confusion. It was the fear of the future, which no one knew what would bring to the country. These events drastically altered the lives of people, their dreams and goals. From this point of view it is interesting to compare two novels, “City of angels” by German writer Christa Wolf and “The first two circles and everything else” by Georgian writer Naira Gelashvili. The central problem for both writers is to show the tragedy of transitive society, mistakes and challenges these it faces.

**Key words:** Transitive society, Fear of future, Reflection of past, Alienation.

What do people do, when the place they call home doesn't exist anymore, not just a house or an apartment, but the entirety of their surroundings, including ideological ones? What happens, when borders that were once maintained by thick concrete slabs and barbed wire suddenly disappears? What does society do, when everything around them changes? When the political events drastically alter their life, their dreams and goals?

The novels by two women writers, one from Georgia and another from Germany, give the answers to these questions, they describe the societies in the time of major changes, in the late 80s and beginnings of 90s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Berlin wall, Georgian and German people were in the similar situation. They were engulfed by the similar fear, chaos, and confusion. It was the fear of the future, which no one knew what would bring to the country.

“Can you imagine what would happen, if suddenly the government falls and these half mad people are in charge of the country?” (Gelashvili 2010: 227) says one of the characters in N. Gelashvili's novel “The First Two Circle and Everything Else”. Georgia wants independence, everyone is in the streets. The tension is getting higher and higher as the time goes and situation gets more and more dramatic, slogans on demonstration is getting more and more radical and this causes the fear of future, as everything is trembling and no one could count on anything, “and the country has begun jumping and somersaulting, or turning on circles” (Gelashvili 2010: 66) and the ones who have to lead their way and be wise and thoughtful are actually “too infantile so they will only be able to destroy” (Gelashvili 2010: 121) they don't think about the outcomes of the actions they have made, and have no responsibility to build what they've ruined afterwards. Same can be said about Georgian culture and people in charge of it: “National Narrative Culture carrying out the idea of state independence, but was not able to prepare Georgian society for the new status. As a result, in Post-Soviet times the public stayed orientated towards irrational resistance and not towards the goal building the new reality” (Tsipuria, 2016: 517).

The fear of future was well known for East German society as well, if Georgia started to exist as an independent country this country ceased to exist and became part of one united Germany, people had to adjust different lifestyle, different country, different ideology, government, everything has changed, and, feeling of alienation and misunderstanding, feeling that the west part is superior and they will have some privileges because of this, was becoming stronger and stronger: “what was there about that washed-up country [East Germany] worth shedding single tear over, for heaven's sake \_what did it have to contribute to the big reach free Germany besides scrap metal and secret police files?” (Wolf, 2013: 51). Feeling of

insecurity was suffering East Germans in this new united country, as people from East Germany weren't sure that this was their homeland, and they couldn't relate to any country now. Two societies once lived as a whole, now were strangers for each other. As a German historian R. Jessen writes: "A deep chasm, therefore, separates the dynamic beginnings of the GDR, characterized by mobilization and optimism, from its final phase, which was marked by insecurity, defensiveness, and an increasing inability to recognize reality" (Jessen, 1999: 371)

The alienation is also huge part of life of Georgian society; because they were suppressed for so long, with the possibility of freedom, patriotic feeling became very strong not only among Georgians but almost every soviet nation as well, so against the backdrop of all these Georgians couldn't communicate with ethnical or religious minorities living on their territory, in Naira Gelashvili's book this issue is discussed with deep feeling of recreation and shame we feel the pain and disappointment in the tone of N. Gelashvili while she's talking about how Georgians treated Abkhazians and Georgian Meskhs: "People who in an everyday situations were kind, friendly and generous, now were claiming in a same way: [Abkhazians] they're so few, they can barely fill one stadium, why would they want the television or the University, they are getting more and more impudent" (Gelashvili 2010: 193)

Shame and regression follows C. Wolf like a shadow everywhere, not only while dealing with her personal life, but also while she reflects on the past, talks to victims of Second World War: "She came up and said in German: My name is Ruth. Welcome. And added in English: I was a hidden child. The sentence hit me hard; I immediately understood what it meant: a child who had been hidden away from the Germans... I saw in their eyes, more than once, the absurd hope that a miracle might occur ... and the never ending pain might somehow get at least little easier to bear, if someone shared this pain with them. No, not "someone": a German... I was silent, there was nothing to say, nothing to explain, no way to make up for anything. There was nothing to put right, \_ nothing would ever be "right" again. "(Wolf, 2013: 95).

While Georgian's reflection on their past is totally different, when they look back they see themselves as victims, they feel that everything that happened to them is not fair, that's why they turn to the most glorious moments of their history when Georgia was independent and strong country and decide to live in this past, rather than built a new present, move on and develop. That's why N. Gelashvili describes the mental hospital where the patients are obsessed with Queen Tamar \_ the mightiest ruler of Georgia, and Rustaveli \_ the Georgian poet of XII century, and by doing so she shows that not only politicians but also representatives of Georgian modern culture were living in past and couldn't develop ironically, in the end, these patients are the ones who lead the protest, they are the ones who run the country for the decades.

The main characters of these two novels want to escape from the past and present, decided to lock themselves into a shell, create their own universe, and observe the events taking place outside from this universe. If in the case of Christa Wolf this universe is far from her home, in one of the cities in USA\_ Los Angeles, the Characters of the novel by Naira Gelashvili are inside the country at the very centre of events, working in "Translator's collegium". But of course none of them can escape, and the events happening in their country have the drastic effect on their lives and consciousness.

As the content always defines the form of the novel, of course, this chaotic situations and drastic changes couldn't be delivered in form of classic novel, where the story has the beginning climax and end, everything is in its place, where there is a chronological time, and the plot of the story is the most important. In these novels we have a broken timeline; the story constantly jumps from present to past, through this shift in time authors tell the tragic stories of different people during the soviet or Nazi repressions, the feelings and thoughts dialogues are more important than the plot, both of them contains different texts of different genres within themselves. So these texts can be seen as mosaics, which draw a huge picture of an epoch and society, by using little pieces of different narratives. this type of text is characteristic of postmodernism, which comes very handy while describing soviet social trauma as: "Postmodernism with its feeling of the world as a total fakeness turred out to be the best harbor for post soviet Georgian writers, facing destruction, corruption, wars and disappointment, it reflected precisely the nihilism and distrust that Georgian literature declared to outside world" (Ratiani, 2015: 195), same can be said about German writer Christa Wolf.

As a conclusion, we can say these two novels are semi autobiographical and through personal feelings and experiences they reflect the tragedy mistakes and fears of transitive society. Both authors adeptly weavetheir stories together, mixing different pieces of writing, documents, memories and history in creating a larger tapestry that does examine many issues. There is a great deal of interest in these novels, authors deal with these painful subjects without pretending there might be easy answers and easy decisions.

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