

Galaktion Tabidze and Luis de Camoens

Abstract: The present paper discusses those works of Galaktion Tabidze that evince affinity with *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoens (1524/25-1580), a classic poet of the Portuguese literature and the character of Galaktion's relationship to the well-known work of the cited author.

The reestablishment the genetic connection between the verses by Galaktion and *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoens is a very significant fact in this respect because until now this kind of closeness between the Georgian and Portuguese literatures has not observed.

Key words: Galaktion Tabidze, Luis de Camoens, Georgian Literature, Portuguese Literature

The reference of the greatest Georgian lyric poet, Galaktion Tabidze (1891-1959) to the European literature represents the special subject of research for the Galaktionologist¹. The studying the diaries and autographs of his works revealed that the interest of Georgian poet in the Portuguese literature is much more than it seems. Moreover, it turns out that G. Tabidze's two verses are written by an creative impulse received through the epic poem *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoens, a classic poet of the Portuguese literature. The Georgian poet expresses his thoughts through allusion to Camoens' lines, the Portuguese literature and the culture.

In this article is analyzed two verses by Galaktion which have connection to *The Lusiads*.

The reestablishment the genetic connection between the verses by Galaktion and *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoens is a very significant fact in this respect because until now this kind of closeness between the Georgian and Portuguese literatures has not observed.

The 7th volume of Eight Volume, *Selected set of Works* by Galaktion Tabidze published in 1950 opens with the verse devoted to Stalin. The poet wishes happy birthday and *Begin of Novelty of Years* to the Great Chief in the name of the Georgians with his verse. The same volume is finished by the long praiseworthy work, *1950* dedicated to *Clearly Shown Ways* by Lenin and Stalin. In the book one can find several verses reflecting the socialistic conjuncture; the poet eagerly assures us that *merging dreams and reality* has been already accomplished, and that is why *the new epoch and the new page in the history textbook is so fierce*. On the background of the ideological texts a less-known, six-stanza verse, *Let it Become Loud!* draws the readers' attention. The very verse is for the first and last time published in the 7th volume of Eight Volume, *Selected set of Works* by Galaktion in his lifetime.

Let it Become Loud! begins with a call – a lyric hero addresses himself (or to a like-minded poet):

*Let it Become Loud, let it boil with the feeling and not to show the age.
let our lyres sound, thunder with an old power!*²

¹ a Galaktionologist – a person who studies and researches the life and the works of Galaktion Tabidze.

² word for word translation. As well as, the other verses below. In Georgian it is rhymed.

These loud lines are followed by an acute disclosure of a specific group of the people. They do not see the light, moreover, they perceive dark as light. Their minds are drugged and obsessed with only one thought.

*Presently, some exhausted, senseless people
are left with a sole aspiration,
with a sole center for passion –
the vain and filthy passion that rises whenever
an eye, a greedy eye sees the shining gold!*

Some people? the answer to this question is given in the following stanza, wherein the lyric hero starts discussing his own creative belief.

*And you see existence in this way: if you desire to gain your object,
talk to us unselfishly, old fellow.*

In my opinion, this confrontation (*some people – and you, a filthy passion – an unselfish talk*) shows that Galaktion tries to point out the group of artists who talk selfishly. Moreover, if we take into consideration the general context we can conclude, that Galaktion's critic refers to those poets who write under the government's order.

*You can make a lyre tell the truth, give it strong firmness,
you cannot make it turn off from the chosen path and cannot bribe it with gold.*

At first sight, a confrontation with the situation wherein gratification and flattery are blooming as well as even hinting in verses about the promotion of the time-serving artists, but on second thought, at the same time, writing about creative principles: devotion to the truth and talk about incorruptibility, naturally in the epoch of totalitarian regime would not be very safe. It should be taken into consideration, that perhaps the reason why the poet dates *Let it be Loud!* by 1950 and publishes it in the victorious socialistic epoch and not in 1935 when so-called class confrontations reach its highest peak. Nevertheless, it should not be excluded that this verse can indeed be written in the 30s but Galaktion by some unknown reasons was not able to publish it the following fifteen years.

We have three autographs of *Let it be Loud!* Handwritings observation shows that the first version, the draft of the verse is preserved in one of the autographs (3663). This very version which the poet writes in his note-book and dates by 1930 greatly differs from the latest, printed version. First of all, it is written in the prosaic form:

Enough, Muse, enough. The accords left my lyre. Vowels could not be heard in my voice anymore; I cannot sing for deaf, coarsen people who lost ability to see the beauty. And there is nothing, completely nothing in my homeland that can inspire my soul and make my genius sing; an unconscious, exhausted nation that deserves hate has a sole aspiration – gold. The vain aspiration of the vain, lowlife people.

On the same page, below this fragment is read the same content but this time in the form of the verse:

*Enough, Muse, enough! my lyre shows age.
No bells of accords and my voice became poor.
I cannot sing where people are deaf and coarsen.
They have lost ability to see the beauty.
Their minds are blackened by drug.*

*O, homeland! there is left nothing, completely nothing
to dress lyre in the fine silk and make Wandering Jew sing once again!
an unconscious, exhausted spit-deserving nation
has a sole aspiration, a sole center for passion –
the vain and filthy passion that rises whenever
an eye, a greedy eye sees the shining gold!*

The phrase *spit-deserving nation* reminds us the lines from the verse, *Plea* by Akaki Tsereteli (*You deserve spit, Georgia*); The closeness to Akaki Tsereteli's works is observed in the same verse, however in other autograph (4231), the interpolated stanzas are from the poem Tornike Eristavi (Amirani was chained/ on Caucasus/ was surrounded by crow and ravens/ his heart was torn to pieces) and of course, in the printed version, the incorruptible lyre and the motive of poet's devotion to the truth. (Simile: Galaktion: *You can make a lyre tell the truth, give it strong firmness, Akaki: I need Changuri¹ to serve the truth*). Despite these similarities, *Let It Become Loud!* was not written by the creative impulses received from Akaki Tsereteli's works. It has much more a sudden literature source.

In the above-mentioned handwriting of the poet on the top, in the left corner of the page where the prosaic version of the verse is written one can read the following: *Camoens*.

Raises a question: what does the name of the great Portuguese poet, one of the significant representatives of the late Renaissance period, Luis de Camoens (1524/25-1580) mean here? is there any secret connection between the texts of these authors? In the verse comments in the 4th volume of the Twelve Volume, *Complete Set of the Works* by G. Tabidze's we read: "... It is possible, the version's main idea was taken from some works of the Portuguese poet, Camoens. However, we were not able to detect the same with Camoens..."

Experience showed that comments and hints in the autographs of Galaktion usually give the right orientation. Therefore, despite the unsuccessful attempts of my predecessors, I continued looking for the prime source of the verse by Galaktion. The search was productive and was discovered that the prosaic fragment written in the poet's note-book as well as the rhymed one are translations of one of the sections of the epic poem, *The Lusiads* by Luis de Camoens.

The Lusiads (in Portuguese - *Os Lusíadas*) represents the heroic poem like *Odyssey* and *Aeneid* and tells us about the voyages of Vasco and Gama as well as praises the historic past. The poem which is divided into ten cantos consists of the introduction, main part and the epilogue. For us the object of interest represents the epilogue (Stanzas: 145-156) which is the appeal to King Sebastian, the ruler of Portugal. The very first stanzas – the call to Muse – coincides to the text written in the note-book of Galaktion:

**Nô mais, Musa, nô mais, que a Lira tenho
Destemperada e a voz enrouquecida,
E não do canto, mas de ver que venho
Cantar a gente surda e endurecida.
O favor com que mais se acende o engenho
Não no dá a pátria, não, que está metida
No gosto da cobiça e na rudeza
Dũa austera, apagada e vil tristeza...**

(No more, my Muse! no more, for now my Lyre
untuned lies, and hoarse my voice of Song;
not that of singing tire I, but I tire
singing for surd and horny-hearted throng.
Favours which Poet-fancy mostly fire

¹ Changuri (or chonguri) Georgian four-string lute.

our Land gives not, ah, no! 'tis plunged too long
in lust of lucre, whelmed in rudest folly
of vile, austere and vulgar melancholy)¹.

When Galaktion's verse is being written, *The Lusiads* is not translated into Georgian. The poet probably reads the poem's Russian translation. In the 30s of the previous century *The Lusiads* is fully translated (by Mikhail Travchetov), however, because of the number of reasons it has not been published. Only several of its fragments are published in some literary magazines. Nevertheless, since XVII century the separate sections of works by Camoens have been translated into Russian and have been published numerous times. But, after studying them it becomes clear that none of those translated texts coincides to passage from *The Lusiads* we are interested.

In this hopeless situation we considered that maybe Galaktion read about Camoens in some literary paper wherein the epilogue of *The Lusiads* was cited.

I begin rechecking the poet's personal library in order to find the of source. Galaktion's private library is preserved in the State Museum of Georgian Literature where my attention was drawn to *A History of Literature* by German literary critic, Johannes Scherr². According to the content of the book, the Portuguese literature has a separate section wherein indeed is emotionally described the life and work of Luis de Camoens. The author in his book is vividly telling us the story how Comoens survived the shipwreck and how saved his manuscript, *The Lusiads*. We also read that Camoens dedicated his poem to the ruler of Portugal. Despite the general admiration cause by the poem after its publishing, the money set as allowance for the poet was so insignificantly little that Camoens became in danger of dying from hunger. Scherr also speaks about the profound pain that the Portuguese poet suffered before dying: The fall of the country and losing freedom for Camoens was as much painful as his own personal difficulties.

Underlining these facts undoubtedly would cause Galaktion's interest and sympathy. It seems that the poet attentively read the section where Scherr gives and defines the contents of *The Lusiads*. During discussing the tenth canto Johann Scherr provides the beginning of the epilogue, 145th stanza in the Portuguese language and below, in the footnote is given the word for word translation in Russian. The footnote is circled with the pencil by Galaktion himself. Let us compare the Russian word for word translation to the lines of poet's note-book:

Camoens:

„Довольно, муза, довольно, на моей лире нет более акордов, в моем голосе нет более звуков; я не могу петь для глухого, загрубевшаго народа, который уже не видит более прекраснаго. Да и ничего уже, ничего нет теперь в отечестве, что могло бы вдохновить мой гений: у бессмысленнаго, тупога, презреннаго народа осталась только одна страсть, — низкая и суетная страсть к золоту”.

(Enough, Muse, enough. The accords left my lyre. Vowels could not be heard in my voice anymore; I cannot sing for deaf, coarsen people who lost ability to see the beauty. And there is nothing, completely nothing in my homeland that can inspire my soul and make my genius sing; an unconscious, exhausted nation that deserves hate has a sole aspiration – gold. The vain aspiration of the vain, lowlife people).

Galaktion:

Enough, Muse, enough. The accords left my lyre. Vowels could not be heard in my voice anymore; I cannot sing for deaf, coarsen people who lost ability to see the beauty. And there is nothing, completely nothing in my homeland that can inspire my soul and make my genius sing; an unconscious,

¹ translated by Richard Francis Burton

² (The book is in Russian Language: Шерр, И. Всеобщая история литературы, Т. 1-2., Санкт-Петербург, 1879-1880)

exhausted nation that deserves hate has a sole aspiration – gold. The vain aspiration of the vain, lowlife people.

Without comment it is clear that Galaktion wrote prosaic fragment of Camoens's stanzas via the Russian word for word translation, I consider. After defining the source, logically, the questions raise: why did Galaktion become so interested in *The Lusiads*? why did he translate the stanzas? to answer to these questions were not difficult if we take into consideration the general context of the translated stanzas.

Camoens is a patriot poet. A man who gives up his life for prosperity of his homeland. In the epilogue of *the Lusiads* when he addresses to the king he is saddened because the heroic world depicted by his poetic genius has already become the part of the past, that the modernity does not leave space for heroism. People acquired the other, selfish-grabbing aspirations and all these are brought by the time, by the dark age which lacks in morality. There are two main reasons why Camoens asks Muse to become quiet. First, there is nothing left in his homeland that could make his genius admire and second, there is no one who could truly enjoy and appreciate the beauty.

As it seems, Galaktion finds similarities between Georgia of that period and Camoens's homeland. As well as, in the mood of the Portuguese poet he reads his own attitude towards the reality.

That is how a strange parallel between the epoch of Camoens and Galaktion's period of Georgia is created.

As it has been already mentioned, Luis de Camoens' stanzas are written in Galaktion's note-book in the 30s. This fact is not only significant for dating the final edition, but here the main thing is that by translating this stanza the Georgian poet reveals his real attitude towards sovietized Georgia and towards the bloodthirsty epoch. During the discussion it should be taken into consideration that because of pure translation interests or goals Galaktion does not create the Georgian version of the very text. In some way, his so-called translations represent materials for creation a new verse – the foreign text selected for translation is so close to the poet's mood that Galaktion considers that it is completely corresponds his spirit.

Camoens' words have so great impression on the Georgian poet that he not only translated the word for word translation from Russian, but also creates the rhymed version of the text and later starts editing and correcting his verse. By bringing in the theme of *Wandering Jew* (*make Wandering Jew sing once again!*) means that Galaktion starts working on putting the translation in his own creative context and on this ground starts writing a new verse. However, in this handwriting the poet is not able to finish the text. Certainly, he understands that publishing the verse with the content like this would be impossible. It would not be helped by hinting on Camoens, a classic poet as in the 30s the works of the Portuguese poet is not appreciated. It is hard to believe but Camoens is proclaimed as the apologist of the capitalistic expansion and his *The Lusiads* is considered as the text praising the imperialism.

However, Galaktion cannot waive the Camoens' stanza. First, he set it in the context of the *Industrial Poetry*, but in the end he is not able to spare his dear stanzas for verses about the steamboats and machines (this peculiar attempt is reflected in the autograph #276 of which word for word translation belongs to the time period of the beginning of the 30s)¹. Later, he writes another – the third version of this text², which shows more closeness to the verse, *Let it Become Loud!* published in the 7th volume of Twelve Volume, *Complete set of Works* by the Georgian poet. In the autograph (4231) the text is title as *To My Friend Poet* and has almost nothing in common to the primary source – Camoens' stanza. Here, the lyric hero does not ask Muse to stop speaking, on contrary, he asks to play on the lyre and make it sing loud. Here, the people with the filthy passion vanish and their place is taken by a specific group of the artists; the stanza about homeland that becomes foreign for the poet is crossed. Instead, there is

¹ This version of the verse is published in the *Literary Magazine* (1931, #2, 14 November)

² The stanzas from *The Lusiads* are also used in Galaktion's unfinished poem, ****The Idea Sharp Like an Arrow of New Age Georgia*, which on its part should be considered as the forth autograph of the verse, *Let it Become Loud!*

narration about unselfishness and about motives to serve the truth. In the end, despite the changes, Galaktion creates the text which is not considered to be much safe in that period.

It is hard to tell, but I think, that this handwriting also belongs to the 30s. However, the corrections by which it is similar to the printed version in the text must be edited short before its publishing.

Through the impressions obtained from the Camoens's stanzas Galaktion creates a different text from his inspirational source. Furthermore, *Let it Become Loud!* is understood as a respond of the Georgian poet to the epilogue of *The Lusads* by Camoens. Despite the difficult situation, Galaktion considers that the lyre should sing, cry, *boil with the feeling* and with a full voice shout **the truth**.

The creative transformation of the final scene of the text is the following: the first autograph of the verse by Galaktion is almost the same as it repeats the Camoens's text. It shows the poet real moral condition and his attitude towards the totalitarian epoch, the verse final version depicts poet's ethical standpoint in the 50s when Galaktion constantly thinks about *such forgotten things like literary conscience*.

I consider, that *Let it Become Loud!* written by inspiration from *The Lusads* stanza, represents the landmark model of the civilian lyrics of Galaktion Tabidze. It is one of the first lyric verse of the Georgian poetry of the 30s-50s of XX century that expresses critical attitude towards the socialist reality. Perhaps, it's worth to mention, that the Georgian version of the stanza of *The Lusads* by Camoens written in the note-book of Galaktion is the very first attempt of its translation.

Galaktion Tabidze is interested in Luis de Camoens before the 30s. The Portuguese poet is mentioned in his verse, *Inesa* which Galaktion dates by 1917. However, if we take into consideration its first publishing (1927) it must be created in the 20s.

*Inesa throws light on nobody as
on new Cubells and old Camoens,
they forever moan,
Inesa, Inesa.
Now there is only dim shadow,
the same plea and Castillia;
once it seemed as sunny plea
at door Infanta.
Time has changed, but heart brought up
with that song still sings
Inesa, Inesa.*

In the autograph the verse title is *Ines de Castro*, but subtitle is – *Legend*. It is clear as a day that the verse addresses to a historic person, Inesa de Castro, the wife of the king of Portugal – Don Pedru.

The Love story of the Castilian noblewoman, Ines de Castro and the Portuguese Prince, Don Pedru is well-known worldwide. Their love became inspiration for numerous poets among them is considered the Georgian poet, author of *Inesa*.

About this famous story which is spread all over the Europe Galaktion learns via book, *The Tales about Love* written by a Russian writer and a translator – Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik (“Сказания о любви”. М., 1910), wherein this tragic love story is represented in the form of novella.

The Castilian noblewoman – Ines de Castro was secretly married to Royal Prince of Portugal, Don Pedru, who is widower, but from the previous marriage has a son – the heir to the throne. The Royal Council and king Alfonso IV are afraid that one day, one of the four children of Pedru and Ines de Castro will desire to rule the country and attempt to steal the rightful throne from the heir. For this together with the other reasons the Council decides to punish Ines de Castro by death. After death of his beloved Prince

changes completely. He becomes a prime enemy to his own father and starts the civil war in the country. Soon Alfonso dies and on the throne goes to Pedru. New king promises his nation that in the nearest future they will meet his wife, the new queen of Portugal. According to the legend, Pedru's first order was to dig out the Ines de Castro from her grave, dress her like a queen, put on her head the royal crown and set her on the throne. By the king's desire the nobles expressed their respect to the new queen by kissing her hand. Pedru fulfils his promise to her beloved – and makes Ines de Castro the lawful queen of all Portugal.

Let us return to the Galaktion's verse. In the beginning of the verse he mentions two artists – New Cubells and old Camoens as well as their sympathy towards the queen of Portugal that points out the special attitude of the poet. And this attitude is even more specified in the autograph of the verse:

*Inesa throws legends around,
many are dying from anger...
She was loved by Culbells, Camoens...
Inesa, everywhere Inesa, Inesa.
Eternal dream, sings and throws legends
woman, who tortured Cubells, Camoens...*

In the second volume of the Twelve Volume, *Complete Set of Works* by Galaktion *Inesa* has the following comment about: Cubells – a Portuguese poet; Camoens Luis (1524-1580) – a great Portuguese poet. In the comment is only given the names of the persons mentioned in the verse. there is not a single word about what kind of connection Cubells and Camoens have to Ines de Castro. Nevertheless, as in the autograph and as in the printed text is underlined their distinguished, specific attitude towards the queen.

Let us start with Cubells. In the comment he is presented without the name, he is defined as a Portuguese poet. However, during the research it turned out that in truth he is a Spanish painter Salvador Martinez Cubells (1845-1914) who painted the episode from the legend about Ines de Castro. On the canvas he depicts the following scene: on the left of King Pedru I is a dead woman dressed in the bride's gown and nobles patiently are waiting to meet their new queen.

In the comment *Old Camoens* is defined correctly, however, in this case, there is absolutely nothing written about why Ines de Castro throw light on the great Portuguese poet.

In the third canto of *The Lusians* (118-137 stanzas) which represents poem's the most lyric episode, Camoens with great sympathy tells us about the unique and exciting love of Ines de Castro and Don Pedru. Moreover, Johannes Scherr in his *A History of Literature* discuss this passage in details. And, Tatiana Shchepkina-Kupernik in her novella, *Ines de Castro* dedicates the stanza from *the Lusians*: “Ты, которая, после своей смерти стала королевой” (“You, who became the queen after the death”) as an epigraph.

The interest of Galaktion in this unique story of love and devotion perhaps is not only the theme for verse writing, but is cause by some specific impulses of the personal nature. However, this is another topic... in the end, it worth to mention that *Inesa* by Galaktion Tabidze would definitely beautify the world of *Inesiana* – the bibliography of the large and various works created on the theme of Ines de Castro.