

Astral Images and Symbols in Mirza Gelovani's Lyrics

Abstract: Mirza Gelovani entered the literary arena in the thirties of the 20th century. He is the only one of the young poets gathered around the journal *Chveni Taoba* ("Our Generation"). This generation of young people had to live during the World War II. The majority of them did not reach even 30 years, but in a short life span the poets "forever remaining young" have managed to create wonderful war lyrics and in spite of strict censorship of socialist realism dominant in the thirties, they left original literary works for us.

Key words: Mirza Gelovani, astral images, war lyrics.

M. Gelovani's poetry is very rich with poetic devices. Almost in each verse we can find traditional, the oldest artistic images for poetry - the sun, the moon, the stars which are rethought by the poet anew, personified and begin to speak. Along with personification special importance is attached to metaphors. This paper considers Mirza's metaphoric use of the images for the sun, moon, and stars.

Aristotle considered metaphor a sign of the artist's original genius because every creator chooses these tropes according to one's own taste and talent. Jose Ortega y Gasset believed that metaphor is a key to the cognition of the world. It reflects the artist's inner vision, how he perceives the world. M. Gelovani takes the astral images mostly from the depth of Georgian mytho-folklore thinking. Through his lyrics the most common use of the images for opposing pair of the sun and the moon can be found.

Traditionally in Georgian folklore, the sun is a bearer of feminine side of the deity and the moon that of a male: "The sun is my mother, the moon my father". The aesthetics of the sun originated in the bosom of the mythical thinking of the pagan period. This clarification is necessary because mythical personification is found not only in the pre-Christian era. It can always manifest itself. In Georgian mythology the sun, the hair and the vine are interrelated. Both the hair and the vine are the bearers and exponents of the solar soul. The aesthetic content and beauty is given to them by the sun. At the same time, there are two Suns in the myth and Christian epoch – the one is visible and another is invisible, i.e. spiritual. "From the very beginning the sun was a symbol of unity: the image of God, a symbol of omnipresence of the divine power. On the same basis, it later became a symbol of individual uniqueness of the personality and a symbol of self-cognition" [Siradze 1987: 22].

In M. Gelovani's poetry the sun is sometimes found in the form of material, just as luminary but mostly it is sacralized and associated with the happiness, life, purity. When coming closer to it, the poet can achieve his goals, and at the same time, share the truth, because the sun is the beginning of the universe, the giver of the highest value - the life, without which man himself would not exist. For M. Gelovani, the knowledge of the Sun in a certain degree is the cognition of man's destination, goal. But however hard the poet tried, he could not get closer to the sun, the warmth of the luminary cannot reach him - "a ray of sunlight fell into the abyss, the heat did not reach me" [Gelovani 2009: 72]. Lyrical hero is split - on the one hand, his whole soul wants to receive the sun, on the other hand, doubts assailed him, and again he prefers to stay in the darkness, loneliness. Optimism, thirst for life and tragedy, a sense of hopelessness being constantly struggle in him. The Life. Denying the Sun, Mirza seems to deny the life. But that does not mean that the poet is not fascinated by life, or does not want to live. To the dark side of his being, the sun seems incomprehensible, strange and unknown, always causes fear and shyness: "If I encounter the sun, I do not know what to say to the sun? How can I feel the sun? - I'm merely a faint shadow; all kinds of fire and lightning are alien to me" [Gelovani 2009: 119].

For M. Gelovani, the sun is associated with the most precious and important of all - his childhood and sweetheart: "You (the childhood) were an attractive sun to me, ... / You were the sun so momentary and obscure/ It is raining now. And how shall I go out in the rain / I: rebel, / I: barking sadly at the sun" [Gelovani 2009: 55]. Metaphorically the sweetheart combines the functions of the Sun (Mirza sees salvation in sweet recoil of love), and it is as "incomprehensible" and unknowledgeable as the sun itself because what is truly valuable and lofty can be never cognized fully, in the same way as brightness of the sun's rays hamper to see its splendor. The image of the sweetheart is a two-fold sacralized - Gelovani calls her the "sunlike", i.e. the sweetheart is sun like the sun ("Sun, like the sun, foreign matter / This is labyrinth of love" – Gelovani, 2009: 73), and at the same time, embellish with golden hair ("disconnected the old tales about Aspurtsela and / Golden lock "- Gelovani 2009: 218; " evil forces girl, with golden hair kidnapped by the kaji " - Gelovani 2009: 61). In Georgian folklore and myth golden hair can be often found and points out to the divine nature of the protagonist. In the myth of Amirani, the goddess Dali after cutting her golden plaits, loses the vital force and dies. According to the Old Testament, when Samson's hair was cut, he lost the strength. "According to the Byzantine exegetics Samson's also had golden hair. In Georgia the hair became a symbol of solar power and beauty. This symbol had such paradigmatic perspective in Byzantine too, especially golden hair, because gold was a symbol of the divine baptism (S. Avernitsev)"[Siradze 1987: 18]. Thus, the golden hair of Mirza's sweetheart indicate her link with the sun, although the poet himself opposes it with all his being - "You looked like the sun and my body was frozen by winter". Just like the sun, the sweetheart constantly slip out of his hands and remains inaccessible.

It is interesting to note that at the early stage of creativity M.Gelovani also speaks about the death of the sun. "You see the sun has laid in a coffin, the brightness of the sunrays is decreased, I want to burn this evening, you must play the role of a firefighter. The Sun died and we have to mourn"[Gelovani 2009: 105]. The death of the sun can be understood as a challenge of the young poet, his boldness. Mirza seems to be arguing with the sun and as he fails to get it, he passes a death sentence on it. However, these lines express a certain tragedy, through the death of the sun the poet indicates the death of his goals, dreams, hopes, which means that he considers himself to be doomed and invites his sweetheart to mourn his own future. In pursuit of the sun, his inner, spiritual struggle is reflected, and in this struggle, the poet's shadow/ tragic side wins in most cases. Unlike the Sun, which remains an unattainable dream for the poet, the moon is Mirza's friend and confidant ("I was looking for you, where there was a dream; would ask the moon about you and she would tell" - Gelovani 2009: 15). The dim light of the moon illuminates the dark night to the lyrical hero (which can be metaphorically understood in two ways - as a path of life (in ballads) or as a dark/tragic side of the poet's "I" and helps to pave the way.

Gelovani embellished it with original epithets: "The crescent moon was looking down on the earth, / the sky scenery quickly changed" [Gelovani, 2009: 35]; "The moon slipped, crescent and decreased" [Gelovani 2009: 190], "the moon rises with crescent surface" [Gelovani 2009: 273]. The luminary is never full, never shines in full force. The moon constantly undergoes metamorphosis. Only its faint light covers the darkness in the soul of a poet.

The word "amtvareba" (moonlight) is found several times ("the wind scattered the *amtvareba* (moonlight) and a bunch of feelings faded away" - Gelovani 2009: 166), Mirza addresses this artistic image when he is captured by poetic inspiration or nostalgic, tragic mood and the hero seems to enter a surreal world, starts to contemplate the things and events through different eyes.

The moon is mainly a beholder of the actions of a lyrical hero: "Moon was looking from the hills" [Gelovani 2009: 61]; Sometimes, when the lovers meet each other, it is hidden from the eyes: "The moon covers a naked body with clouds " [Gelovani 2009: 60], the author seems to notice that this meeting is so intimate, even the luminary is forbidden to witness this. However, in other cases its disappearance is a sign of a bad luck for a lyrical hero. In the ballad of the "Crying Horse" – the "tired moon" falls asleep beyond the mountain [Gelovani 2009: 87] and the rider remained at the mercy of fate tragically die. In

"Shavlego" too shortly before the hero's death, the shadows catch up with the tired moon and cover it [Gelovani 2009: 198]. Devoid of the light of the moon the hero stays unprotected and being left in the darkness, his feeling of loneliness becomes especially acute: "the farm dogs are barking at the waxing moon / as astronomers. / I will remain in the darkness - a lonely soul, / other hopes won't find me/ the mirror reveals my past / and I am weeping like a child" [Gelovani 2009: 140]. That is why, the proximity of the moon is very important for Mirza. The luminary not only illuminates the road and plays the role of a confider, but also combines the function of a savior and defender. It is with the help of its light that the hero wandering through the night manages to avoid the danger.

In Mirza Gelovani's lyrics the Sun occupies far higher place than the Moon, it is universal - "The appearance of the sun covers the moon, always complaining on strange fate" [Gelovani 2009: 71]. In the sunrays the moon disappears but a poet being blinded by these rays, often seeks refuge in the darkness, back to the shadows. As was already mentioned, he has a split personality and the dual parts are in constant conflict: "The sunny shadow is the most terrible / bifurcated stray, pale, hesitant / I stand at the edge of the cliff, nobody will come and help me / downstairs a bottomless ravine is seen / in such weather I know that I appear in two colors / the sun eliminates shadows, and the shadows wrestle the sun "[Gelovani 2009: 129]. But "if it was God's will and the eyes were covered by the sun, I will come when there will be neither day nor night, and the moon will reconcile with the sun" [Gelovani 2009: 154] - says the poet. In Christian churches we can frequently see an image of the cross in the center of the sun is placed and under it - the crescent moon. Traditionally, these three images are deciphered as: cross - faith, the sun - love, moon - hope. However, also, this triad has often the following explanation: the moon - as a birth of the whole earthly world; the cross - Christ's death in the flesh, and the sun - the resurrection. The sun/moon duality is regarded as one semantic unit only with regard to Christianity. In Christian doctrine a depiction of the moon and the sun, with the Crucifixion indicates two natures of Christ (Beridze 2007). From this point of view Gelovani's artistic image - "Sun and Moon reconciliation" can be interpreted as the reconciliation of two sides of a poet, his resurrection - transformation into a new, harmonious personality.

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