

Aka Morchiladze's novel Obole' for Creative Interpretation

Aka Morchiladze, as modern Georgian writer, has many interesting stages in his creative life. One of them is the period of him being emigration. Difference between his novels written in Georgian and in England is evident. What the writer wants to say when being in homeland is different; he shows Georgian environment by his usual, postmodernist method; he calls characters from the past and turns them into modern world characters, while this cannot be said about his latest novel.

Noteworthy is the ideological difference proposed by the author in his latest novels which he has written far from the homeland in a foreign country. In this view Obole is an important novel which clearly shows the mentality of the character. The author represents life by means of his character Irakli; behind facts that at first site may seem minor quite often stand for major events. Nostalgia is felt in Aka Morchiladze's latest novels; living on foreign land made the author to write about his childhood memories. Obole is a memory nicely and clearly told to us just like it suits Aka Morchiladze's level writer.

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Aka Morchiladze, as modern Georgian writer, has many interesting stages in his creative life. One of them is the period of him being emigration. Novel Obole' was written in London in 2011. It can be counted as the latest work published by the writer. Difference between his novels written in Georgian and in England is evident. What the writer wants to say when being in homeland is different; he shows Georgian environment by his usual, postmodernist method; he calls characters from the past and turns them into modern world characters, while this cannot be said about his latest novel.

Obole' was published in 2012. Readers missing Aka Morchiladze's work saw a novel put together with may, interesting, small stories in which the author tells us about his nostalgia and love. Nostalgia is evident. Everything here is a memory, memory from the past in which events change at lightning speed.

"There's always something in my head; I did not collect anything and did not even think about writing this but it started and went on. I wrote it swiftly as it usually happens. I wrote it instantly during summer. I really did not collect anything; some things I made up; some things you do not remember or just remake them or you remember it already remade. After when you tell a story you also make something up and that's it." (Kharbedia 2012:1). This is how the author describes creation of the novel.

When reading the novel a reader gets an impression that the writer has written it in one breath. Everything that had to be said has been collected and put together as one book in which everything goes to its logical end.

Obole' once again shows that Aka Morchiladze is a good storyteller; the given novel shows right the given narrative.

Malkhaz Kharbedia commented to the publication of Obole': "There is a slow pace in the novel at first; the story develops really slowly while the author from time to time tells funny and sometimes sad stories for "waking up" the reader. Gio always has stories like that but suddenly something happens and everything changes in the novel. First of all the above mentioned minor sadness grows greatly and you realize that the author has really gone over the limit. Aka did not use to "drown" in such details before and here he details everything, goes to the bottom, counts each changed glass, taken bite, step made by characters." (Kharbedia 2012:1). It is hard not to agree with the author on the given issue. Aka Morchiladze "drowns" in details unusual to him and makes us hear each breath made by characters; together with him reader gets lost in the maze of narration and becomes part of the hurricane of memories. Each line of the novel is full of nostalgia for the homeland; at first site its start looks like the start of common, non-postmodernist text although Aka Morchiladze does not give up his usual style and invites reader to play.

The story develops in one small region of Georgia. The location is not précised; it is just emphasized that it nearby Kutaisi. Malkhaz Kharbedia's opinion is not baseless that "it is not over-specified but geographically the location of action of the novel is Lechkhumi. One could add Imereti to the given small portion of land and furthermore spread the story throughout the whole Georgia. The given novel is about Georgia; old and new Georgians. It is the novel of melancholy, dreams, of different Georgia which speaks about clichés, unknown feelings and mostly personal. All this personal is not just of Gio's. I, for instance, on each page found my village, gates, my uncles, my grandfathers, friends, familiar feelings, scents." (Kharbedia 2012:2).

The author shows us Georgia from London. In the 1990's, as a rule, at least one family member would leave the country; for example Nika, brother of the main character of the novel Irakli lives in the USA, Santa Barbara and has an American wife. He tries not to disrupt contacts with the homeland and visits his native region every summer.

The novel includes Russian and English words. Dialogues in the text are given in a regional dialect. The story starts in Tbilisi and continues in a small settlement nearby Svaneti region.

"Now I have to start over in order to make you understand" – (Morchiladze 2012:7). The author addresses the reader and prepares him for adventures although the fact is that so many characters come into the text that the reader used to Aka Morchiladze's works, is slightly confused. The writer gathered stories from two years to be told. When there is a lot to tell, many characters are needed to show the story.

Malkhaz Kharbedia tells us about his conversation with the author about the given topic: - “When I told him this was not a novel but a museum of habits and relations he replied like this:

“Maybe yes... That was one of the reasons. They write sagas today right? Many of them are great and many are boring. So for it not to be a saga it is some kind of memories... You know when there are forms; it gets boring while writing and this did not make me bored. Also there you put together everything, like behaviors, anecdotes, anything it needs. To tell you the truth I do not think much when I write.” (Kharbedia 2012:2). It is hard not to agree with the writer; the given novel does not look like the author gave it a lot of thought; there are no complicated implications, everything is as clear as daylight; it is like all the memories have gathered together and during the rainy evenings of days of London the author put them on paper without any pressure and too much thinking. This is a novel written in one breath and it reads the same way too.

Title of the novel *Obole'* is symbolic. *Obole'* is a rifle which nobody remembers shooting the last time from: “They would shoot a rifle only during feasts; later the world became nervous.” (Morchiladze 2012:42). Weapons changed the purpose at time changed. In our time weapons are associated with evil and destruction. It is the symbol of death; the author often emphasizes in the novel if *Obole'* will shoot or not; the given question goes through to the end of the novel.

The writer tells us about his feelings and emotions he gets when seeing *Obole'*. He finds it accidentally in the attic for the first time after childhood: “Yes, *Obole'* my brother and friend; the brother unreachable for a long time. It was my dream to hold it in my hands.” (Morchildze 2012:42).

His uncle showed him *Obole'* for the first time “in one shadowed corner behind the hen house.” (Morchiladze 2012:47). The first time he saw it he had an inexplicable feeling; it was not a common rifle, it could lead to completely peculiar and mysterious feeling; somewhat of a rifle and a beautiful woman. The rifle reminds him of the history of his family, his past although what is the last name of the author we do not have information about. The author just lets us know that his ancestors were nobles and owned the Muri Castle. From the balcony of his house he could see that castle, all in lights and proud as the connection with the glory of the past could only be seen by the existence of Muri Castle and *Obole'*.

King of Imereti has sent *Obole'* to Got, the ruler of Muri Castle. Nobody knew if this rifle would ever shoot. It was such a mysterious item that the author even gave it the function of one of the main characters and made it the title of the novel. It is clear that along with many characters of the novel *Obole'* is one of the main ones. “Nobody knows why my uncle gave this rifle the name *Oboli* (orphan), but as long as I always remembered it in my heart I called it *Obole*. It was a small joke of course, there they finish names with “e” and not with “a”. So when I thought about it I would remember it with the name *Obole'.*” (Morchiladze 2012:48).

It is noteworthy that in 1990's shooting weapons was not strange; almost all families had guns; gunshots could be heard in almost every street. Meanwhile nobody knew when Obole' was shot the last time; it has lost its function; the author himself writes: "it is such a relief when you do not think of a rifle as of a weapon." (Morchiladze 2012:57).

It is hard to assess the past from the sight of XXI century as there stayed history, memories and human relations. The city cooled down, while in the regions you could still see traditions and mutual respect. The character tells us about his emotions when he goes to his native region: "When you drive from Tbilisi to the west, during the first half of the route you think about regular things but on Rikoti Pass this ends and anticipation starts. I do not know why but, my God, as soon as I go over Rikoti my feet, hands, shoulders and my heart start shaking? Why does it happen so? (Morchiladze 2012:18-19.)

Humans never forget childhood memories. This is the emotion that follows you all your life. Love and nostalgia, connecting you with your past are the unexplained feelings of the character, the feeling that he is returning him to the place where he spent childhood joyful and best years. In general, if we look at Aka Morchiladze's works we see that nostalgia and expression of such vivid emotions to the homeland cannot be seen so evidently in any other novel as in Obole'. This can be explained by the fact that he has not seen his homeland for a long time and maybe the author wrote about his own childhood memories. The given novel is nostalgic after passing Rikoti. Heartbeat of the author and of the main character are in rhythm with each other; reader is not in a passive role either; it is impossible to read the given part of the novel and not to recall the feeling of anticipation on Gori road, Rikoti or any other geographic location, the anticipation of meeting with the past and childhood. The author does not like Gori road; it is probably because it was the main location during Russian-Georgian war of 2008. Russian army dislocated right on this road.

Just as many modern writers Aka Morchiladze could not avoid the stories of the 1990's. Although the novel does not speak about the given grave period for our country but one of the mainline of the novel are the main problems of the 1990's - drugs and burglary. The author united what needed to be said in one character (Madone'). This is from where the knot is unfolded, but before again comes in the memory. The character sleeping together with Obole' recalls Tbilisi, the years when the city was asleep, the years which later were called the dark period of the 1990's. It is also important that the rifle Obole', which by its designation should have been a symbol of evil, has noble meaning.

It is hard to understand whether it is a reality or a dream, although at the end of the novel the author asks questions which is expressed in the fact that the woman who the whole town feared comes into the novel as an independent character. She returns to the town for her father's funeral while she was wanted by law enforcers. The woman suddenly appears as a guest of the main character; smokes weed with him and waits until they come

for her. Irakli recalls: “I smoked weed last time in 1983, on New Year’s Eve, in Vake, on the corder of Arakishvili street.” (Morchiladze 2012:227).

By using Madone’s character the author told us about the 1990’s. Reader would never forget a woman who has committed so many crimes. If other characters replace each other at lightning speed and get lost in our memory just as fast, the same cannot be said about Madone. There were many active women in Georgia at that time although they were not criminals; they just “fought” for their country by indirect meaning of this word. It is not the same with Madone who looks more like Mkhedrioni member than a woman fighting for patriotic ideas, although “convicted woman is not a woman in our society anymore.” (Morchiladze 2012:334).

Madone’s quote: “You are not a shooter; you are incomplete.” (Morchiladze 2012:258), serves opening of her attitude to the main character as it reflects main character’s situation, of the character who himself realizes very well that he is somewhat odd, decent and not so strong individual. There is only one episode in the novel describing his strength and it is from unreal world too. Illusion is one of the features of postmodernism; right by using it the author makes readers believe that Irakli, main character of the novel showed bravery and opposed the government. It is still to be noted that Aka Morchiladze still did not betray his style and acted according to the game principle. That is why they call him playing author. Even when telling the most unimportant story he always plays with the imagination of a reader; he is involved and involves a reader in a world created by him. The writer is on the verge of being or not being and reality and unreality and keeps a recipient on the same verge. “An individual is part of playing with his own imagination.” (Tsipuria 2005:25). When reading this book one asks the main question – will Obole’ shoot at least in that unreal world?

Although: “the reality does not exist neither where you thought it was before nor it has sense to look for it.” (Tsipuria 2006:230). At the end of the novel Aka Morchiladze uses his usual style and we read about a carnival. Even when telling the most common story the postmodernist writer is loyal to his principles.

It is noteworthy that the period described in the novel is only three days. The main character who arrived there just for repairing the roof of the house becomes participant of many interesting stories. Including many small stories in the text was used by the author for conveying the main message to us.

The recent novels by Aka Morchiladze is full of nostalgia; living in a foreign country made the author to put childhood memories on paper. Obole’ is the novel which actually revived memories about those places in which the author himself, his main character and readers have spent many happy minutes. The story told in the novel returned many to childhood and by imagination made them to visit villages and towns. The purpose of the novel was probably to remind about past, about the past that feeds the present and will finally affect the future.

At the end of the novel we are again convinced that everything was written in one breath and reads the same way; still the question remains unanswered – will Obole’ shoot? The author immediately clears the doubts and shows that it is all illusion that the character has, although in his dream, but fulfilled his mission and Obole’ at least for some time became a useful item. Mastery of the author is that reader has a feeling that the story really took place. The given feeling stays with reader until the author himself makes the character say: “this story happened so that it did not need Madone’s and my death. Lord did not want it.” (Morchiladze 2012:259). The author did not want to leave readers in uncertainty and “at dawn a car drove up and stopped by our gate. Madone and I already stood there and she immediately put her thigh in the car.” (Morchiladze 2012:259).

Postmodernist trends are evident. Reader thirsty for Aka Morchiladze’s writing, receives exactly what he has been anticipating for so long. We believe the expectations were successful and in 2011 in London the Georgian author created the even more Georgian story; story of nostalgia for the homeland and native region. The given novel is the most patriotic and nostalgic in Aka Morchiladze’s works. Nostalgia for Georgia can be felt in every line of the novel. We believe that is why he wrote everything in such detail; this is the case when going deep into details will not have any results; it is just that Obole’ is a novel that reads in one breath from which reader learns many interesting stories, in which creative and historic times meet each other.

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