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Jean Baptiste Moliere and Georgian comedy

Jean-Baptiste Moliere brought a turning point in the history of European and world drama, including comedy. These radical transformations were perhaps caused by the fact that Moliere was not only a writer, but also an actor; He wrote plays not to be read by others, but to be performed on stage. The actor's natural talent was manifested in his ability to impersonate and spectacular gestures, and as an author he had great respect for farces and based his plays on farcical sampler. This is where the idea of wearing a mask came from.

In ancient times, the mask was a necessary attribute of plays. The actors had to put on the appropriate mask, look in the mirror and perfect their improvised gestures. It later turned out that the mask also had extraordinary psychological powers.

Moliere well understands the function of the mask, which developed in antiquity, but in the prism of modern times, he places a double burden on it: a) within the framework of the existing anonymity, the mask frees the actor and allows him to act "fearlessly"; b) Internally, the mask makes the character whole - the character does not undergo fundamental transformations, but retains his "face" until the end of the play.

On the other hand, the mask is important to Moliere, but what is behind the mask is more important. It is known that during the course of the performance, Moliere often took off his mask and remained on stage in his true appearance and name. Moliere tried to break through the convention of the mask and find himself in direct contact with the viewer. This was a true manifestation of Moliere's realism.

His attention to realism may also explain the variety of Moliere's masks: could a mirror reflect contemporary French society better than these masks? Don't all societies live under a mask that hides their natural impulses? Is anyone honest?.. His masks were a guarantee of character, as a symbol of a living organism, and not as a cliché.

The starting point and main surprise of Moliere's comedy was the comparison of the real and the fictional. He always contrasts the real with the fictional, that is, he creates a situation where these two views are opposed to each other and, therefore, a high contrast effect is achieved. To enhance the contrast, the characters shed their own social masks, that is, they shed their habitual masks to reveal their true selves! The mask that determines social status is removed at the end of the play. What remains is what was hidden behind the mask.

Characters who deliberately wear the masks of tricksters, intriguers and swindlers (Arnolpe, Tartuffe, Don Juan) stubbornly hide other qualities under the masks and try to tame them. For example, Arnolpe is actually timid, Tartuffe is sensitive, Don Juan is warm-hearted. . . What should we believe? This is where the mystery begins: Moliere gives much more meaning to the mask than to simply attributing good or bad qualities to a person. A person's mask becomes a reason for confrontation with himself. "There is an opposition between art and true nature, between the created and the innate, reason and character" (Gilbert Murray, 42). This is why Moliere's comedies are more realistic satire than classical comedies.

The aesthetics of Moliere's masks is closely related to the contradiction between reason and instinct. The teachings of Classicism push Moliere towards reason: he rejects his instincts and puts on a mask dictated by reason. But, as the plot of the comedy develops, instinct will take revenge on reason and, unexpectedly for everyone, will return to the foreground. The mask is off!

For Moliere's plays, the most essential thing is the word, not music, or ritual, and not even physical and spatial details. All of Moliere's plays are examples of masterly command of the language of comedy. Moliere has a unique ability to soften the word with idiomatic phrases and gestures. In this sense, he uses the experience of not only ancient comedy, but also Commedia del L'arte. Moliere's language is lively, energetic

and at the same time artistically diverse. Moreover, the comical nature of Moliere's language is caused by artificial interference in the normal process of communication, namely, when he deliberately confuses the purpose of a word, ignores the true meaning of a word, confuses the rules for using a verb and a noun, etc. The so-called Moliere's "Language of Fools" is obvious.

The intrigue of Moliere's comedies lies in the struggle of the deceiver with the deceived, that is, the devil with the fool, since Moliere's comedies are "comedies of characters." Each of Molière's comedies, with its scenes and participants, revolves around one central character, distinguished by a particularly strong palette; characters' palettes are created by abstract characteristics, such as: hypocrisy, harshness, pedantry, jealousy, stinginess, etc., which are combined with a certain social type and are fixed in character. Diverse characters are visible on stage, and what is important is not so much what the event tells, but - the relationship of the characters. However, the main intrigue for Moliere remains the internal contradiction that exists between the character's mask and his true face, that is, the internal process occurring inside the character, disobeying the temporal-spatial norms established by Classicism. This is a case where the inner form dominates the outer form.

No one raised the whip against vice with greater force than Moliere. Moliere had one important reason for this: the aesthetic need to tell the truth. He hated hypocrisy and hunted truth in things and people. That is why he built his plays on the opposition of fact and fantasy, truth and lie. The hypocrisy, compliments, tyranny and fraud in his plays existed only to show the truth in his superficial and sloppy times!

Moliere brought something new to the understanding of "funny." While his modern audience traditionally laughed at situational scenes in which vulgarity predominated, Molière abandoned this practice and took comedy out of the context of the situation, focusing instead on character, thought and word. Moliere did not at all strive to cause everyone to laugh. He set moral standards. His laughter is free from any falsehood, it is familiar, familiar and close.

Moliere's work had a great influence on world drama and comedy, including Georgian comedy of the 19th century. There were many things that made the Georgian reality of the second half of the 19th century very similar to the French reality of the time of Moliere. First among them was the formation of the bourgeoisie as a social class and an attempt to integrate it into the consciousness of Georgian post-feudal society.

Moliere's reflection in Georgian drama was preceded by the process of acquaintance and dissemination of the ideas of French classicism and enlightenment by the Georgian intellectual society. Traces of classicism and enlightenment were most clearly expressed in Georgian drama, and the most influential author appeared to be Jean-Baptiste Moliere. Perhaps, Georgian society, gripped by double political and social standards, needed Moliere's masks?

Georgia, which was a province of the Russian Empire in the second half of the 19th century, on the one hand, could not come to terms with the loss of political independence, and on the other hand, it was drowning in local social problems. In well-developed Western countries, traditional feudal structures have already been replaced by a socially fragmented society: hitherto modestly standing in the shadow of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie has gained power and risen to earn the deserved respect. The bourgeois worldview was contrasted with the aristocratic one, money - with noble surname and origin, wealth - with age-old traditions and etiquette. The main conceptual and social oppositions were identified as: money/poverty, material happiness/happiness, achieved by spiritual wealth, "honest money"/"dishonest money", etc. In Georgia also, centuries-old feudal orders were slowly destroyed, and society plunged into the social chaos: the sense of dignity was not preserved among the Georgian aristocrats, who willing to join the "new times", squandered their original wealth, forgot their pride and tried to save themselves by an alliance with the newly rich petty bourgeoisie; The petty bourgeoisie openly and desperately hunted for noble family coats of arms.

However, it should also be noted that, unlike Western countries and America, the bourgeoisie as a class in Georgia was not able to overcome the embryonic phase (with some exceptions): in the social arena it was opposed by the Marxist-Bolshevik movement, and in the literary arena - by left-wing literature and ideology.

As a result, the literary portrait of the Bourgeois in Georgian writing remained at the “petty-bourgeois” stage, called - “The Merchant,” which was framed in the comic, ironic-grotesque framework by Georgian playwrights of the second half of the 19th century. Social opposition - merchant/prince, i.e. petty bourgeois/aristocrat - was defined as the main dichotomy.

This dichotomy corresponded to the main masks of Georgian comedies: a wily merchant, or the tradesman, is a symbol of a *New times*, based on the primacy of money, and the aristocrat or prince is a symbol of the devaluation of the historically established Georgian knightly consciousness, developed in *Old times*. Under the mask of a merchant is a man who builds a life path on money and trying to gain social status through an alliance with nobles (preferably marrying his daughter); Behind the mask of an “aristocrat” is a man who has lost his moral compass and is ready to sell even his soul to get any money. The masks presented in Georgian comedies are devoid of Molière’s philosophy of internal confrontation (confrontation with the inner “I”), but they are aimed at covering up the hypocrisy and vices of modern society. For greater credibility, Georgian comedians chose the city - streets, squares, houses and their inhabitants of a modern city as the scene for the development of events. They seem to have "discovered" the city with its realistic contours, rhythm, philosophy and social structure. “Theatrical performance never has as its goal an imaginary addressee, but specific people - those who must be present at the performance and follow the progress of the performance to the end. Accordingly, the “viability” of a theater is determined by its deep social position - how well is the pulse of the society to which the theater offers its product understood?” (Ratiani, Letodiani...2015: 62). From this point of view, Moliere with his satirical realism and masks turned out to be the best ancestor. The author, in whose plays the connection between the theater and public life is clearly felt, became a role model for Georgian authors. A campaign to adapt Moliere's plays spread widely. Georgian authors, who were familiar with Moliere's plays from translations, tried to make the Georgian audience recognize themselves in the characters, as happened in Moliere's plays! Such recognition was the main lever for observing public life and the main source of laughter in Georgian comedies.

The dramaturgy of the founder of the Georgian theater, Georgi Eristavi (1813-1864), serves precisely this purpose: to offer the audience a performance in which he is aware of the vicious aspects characteristic of modern Georgian society that delay the restoration of social structures. Eristavi’s interest in the comedy genre (“Separation”, “The Miserly”, “Dispute”, “Pictures of the Past”, etc.) was not accidental. The social life of the 40-50s of the 19th century Georgia, given its transitional historical nature, provided suitable material for comedy: Georgi Eristavi equally critically describes the moralities of the petty bourgeoisie, overwhelmed by money and the moralities of the aristocrats living on the ruins of the old feudal system. Eristavi turns into comic characters both – the aristocrats who have not found a foothold for a new life and are funny in their helplessness and weakness (“Dispute”, “Separation”), and - the bourgeoisie who got lost in trade, are worshiping money and taking possession of the property of former “aristocrats” (“Dispute”, "Separation", "The Miserly"). A major role in the comedies of George Eristavi is played by Molierean intrigue, embedded in the struggle of the deceiver with the deceived.

The mask of aristocrats is ironical and satirical, however – tragical in its essence. Representatives of the aristocracy are trying to save the remains of their property. They are in constant disputes and division of property with each other. Some of them are conservatives, some - frivolous, some are dreamers; however, everyone is equally a loser.

Russian Emperor’s bureaucratic apparatus and officials benefit from the problems of aristocrats. Therefore, no less interesting in Eristavi’s comedies is **the mask of bureaucrats**, who conveniently benefited from the policy of national-colonial oppression; they take advantage of the confusion, backwardness and open hostility of the nobility. It can be said that the main idea of the comedy "Separation" lays in display the disgusting actions of these officials. They are impudent, greedy bribers, and, at the same time, they are corrupted.

The mask of the merchant is funny, ironic and satirical at the same time. For example, Mikirtum Trdatov ("Separation") is an uneducated, but handy and swindled moneylender. He won the trust of the aristocrats - Didibuldze family, and not only owns their property, but also manages to mobilize the members of this family for his purposes. Mikirtum believes in the power of money, he knows, that no one can do anything without money in the "New times". He successfully marries Ivan Didebulize to his daughter - Shushana, so that his daughter gets the title of Princess. Unlike Mikirtum, Karapeta Dabaghov (from "The Miserly") is more aware of his strength: Karapeta is against giving his daughter to the Georgian prince just

for the noble title, he wants money too; Carapetta is sure, that a great and good man is the one who has money and who knows how to handle money; He "prefers" to be in the dark, rather than burning candles, he even assures himself that "dinner is not needed anymore". Only money is precious to him, which he keeps like a treasure and enjoys talking to it.

The comedies of Zurab Antonov ("Eclipse in Georgia", "I Want to Become *Kneina*", "Journey of Writers", etc.) are distinguished by no less sarcasm and irony. The oppositions presented in his comedies are very similar to the plot oppositions of Moliere's comedies: rich/poor, devil/fool, old generation/new generation, educated/uneducated. He, like Moliere, justly raises the whip against all vices and seeks truth in his crafty and mercantile time. In Antonov's plays, the confrontation between generations is very acute, having one main reason: the difference between the wording and the deed. It becomes clear that the old generation, which in words is a defender of moral values and does not lack advice to young people, in fact shows the opposite: moral values (kindness, love, respect, etc.) are deteriorating and they are replaced by the respect towards money. On the other hand, the new generation is ironic about the superstitions, ignorance and hoarding of the older generation.

It is noteworthy that in the plays of Eristavi and Antonov there is a wide display of social and ethnic diversity of Georgian society of that time: all social strata are represented, and characters who are ethnically Georgians, sometimes – Armenian, speak different languages –Georgian, Armenian, Russian, even - French and German. Accordingly, the linguistic fabric of the plays is emphatically diverse. The linguistic specificity of the texts of Georgian comedians is built exactly on this linguistic differentiation: the comic nature of the text is due to the confusion of languages, when the meaning of words, the meaning of phrases is lost; speech becomes incomprehensible and vague, which causes laughter among the audience. From this point of view, Georgian comedians offer a rather original way to make the language funny.

On the end, perhaps the Georgian comedy was not able to fully grasp the philosophical depth of Moliere's masks and present the internal contradiction between the character's mask and his true face, but it managed to present the aesthetics of the mask and tried to tear off the masks from the modern Georgian society, where lying has become a moral norm!