

Jemal Karchkhadze's novel "The Lodger" and Markers of Modernism

Abstract

"The Lodger" is a modernist text. We will use every tool and means, for example, verbal thinking, symbols, author's comments and viewpoints in relation to the text, creative language, aesthetic-ideological and ontological structure, in order to determine the primary essence of the text, to define "the whole" and in addition the constant interrelation of the whole and the part. Its primary mission is to represent the human existential search, hopelessness, doubtfulness in the modernism epoch. The destruction of the worldview landmarks existing in the parable language, permanent estrangement with oneself by irrational and anthropological essence and at the same time the realization of own absolute will, certain personal disorientation and spiritual catharsis.

Key words: *Hermeneutic, Jemal Karchkhadze, "The Lodger", Modernist prose*

Introduction

Jemal Karchkhadze's creative work is studied mostly fragmentally. There is done a research of his texts in line with Biblical concepts and historicism principle. Search for fiction transformation of a parable, as of a micro-scheme in Karchkhadze's works is also interesting. When discussing the writer's philosophical-aesthetic vision, the critics mostly refer to Biblical aspects. The goal of our research is to identify those modernist markers and by means of hermeneutic interpretative model to search for internal and external logos of the texts and philosophical-existential reading of the creative/fiction text. At the given stage the empiric material is the novel "The Lodger".

Methodology

Studying texts by hermeneutical method is very interesting. Hermeneutics is recognized as the theory of understanding differently. The key to correct interpretation of a text is expressed in the knowledge of the "codes".

Actuality and Research results

One of the main characteristic features of modernist literature is the erased boundary between the reality and imagination. The connection with the outside world is mostly imaginary, but impressive. The given momentary "understanding" of, "closing" with, creates aesthetic illusion of certain

understanding, as opposed to existential fear. This is the existential inevitability and absurdity of a person who is estranged by the technological progress process. "A human only partially understands life only in one dimension by monitoring, experimenting, sensual perception and analytical discussion" (Bregadze, 2018: 8).

In the novel „The Lodger“ we see the features of the **triple crisis** of the modernist prose: the crisis of cognition, subjectivity and language. The Lodger has a problem to coexist with existing reality. The very first Chapter of the novel is Metamorphosis. The unconscious psyche dominates the anthropological essence of the main character (**Multiplicity, Nietzsche**). The main character transfers to the other world sometimes in a dream or his imagination, for example, to the banks of the Nile. Finally, **language**, which is never given as the self-sufficient; the character's organic description is characterized with inner monologue and experienced speech. "A word is a dangerous weapon; it can harm us a lot. A word is a translation of a thought; and a thought is a slowly said original" (Karchkhadze, 1986: 284).

The novel consists of 5 Chapters:

1. **Metamorphosis;**
2. **Maka;**
3. **The Plasticine;**
4. **Patriarch;**
5. **The Search**

The lead epigraph of the novel comes from Matthew's Testament: "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me" (Matthew, 4,9 1991: 6). The whole text is the struggle with oneself, inner split, metamorphosis, continued with the sin, downfall; after with return and again with the search for the new.

Parable, the parabolic essence, is the key feature of modernism. The discourse of science fiction and unrealism intrudes into traditional daily life environment in Karchkhadze's novel; as the expression of existential estrangement. Historical-aesthetic structure is interesting, the historical background of the text creation defines allegorical narration, parable used in it. The writer's prose expresses protest in the totalitarian epoch right by means of Testament parable contexts. Such parable - type of thinking was to a certain extent supported by the totalitarian regime; Jemal Karchkhadze applied the Testament parables to the 20th century Georgian life reality. Parable often speaks in metamorphic language, which allows a human to more easily analyze complex ideas. He is capable to express specific narrative through abstract argument, which is simpler and easily understandable (Durglishvili, 2018: 55).

In the beginning of the novel the main character moves from one house to another forcefully, which allegorically points to the new, stage condition of the Lodger. In Mariam's (owner of the new house) house starts the Lodger's contemplation about the worldly pleasures and unstable "serving" of the old ideals (Nefertiti's reproduction); his spiritual collision. In the very beginning of the novel is apparent the attempt to represent worldly pleasures as temptation and nothing. Epigraph of the very first chapter: "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew, 6,24, 1991: 11). Mystical visions start the moment the Lodger moves to Aunt Mariam's house; namely, the black Volga, its owner's extraordinary and inadequate outfit, sudden vanishing of the car. The paradox in the plot is the marker of modernism too. The given vision results in the split of the Lodger. It is also noteworthy that the Lodger does not have a name. His

name is “a human”; in him is gathered, integrated, generalized the whole humankind with its sins and good. In the novel Jemal Karchkhadze extends the boundaries of Biblical text and at the example of the Lodger’s life retrospectively represents events from “the Birth” (from Adam) to the New Testament. It must also be considered, in what kind of epoch the writer and his main character have to live and work. Human soul inner striving towards the highest ideal, maybe even completely unconscious, is initially coded in human essence, although epochal background and totalitarian regimes have often become barriers for it. This is how we see the 20th century dreamer, superstitious romantic human, who immediately hides inside his shell like a snail the moment he hears a single harsh word or notices a single slow gesture.

Since antique times, “The Road” symbolic is complex and transforms along the changes in thinking tendencies of epochs. “The Road” becomes the plot axis of the novel. “The Road” defines the composition, structure and impact of the novel and influences the principles of constructing a creative, fictional image. Novel’s “Road” has horizontal (physical) and vertical (spiritual) forms. Only mythological characters or servants of cult having special features are capable to execute vertical journey up and down; meaning to cross the world vertically; while travelling the world horizontally, from edge to edge is usually related to “superman”, heroes or special condition. The difference is apparent: an ordinary mortal is capable to really take the horizontal road and finish it with special efforts, while they can only cross vertical road only imaginably – spiritually (Toporov, 1983: 127).

As it appears in relation to “superman”, he plays an important role in modernist Georgian story too. At the beginning of the novel, the Lodger’s road goes from down to up (Maka’s house is on the ascent). Vertical trajectory of the road reveals the essence of his love. Relationships with Maka are directed towards his spiritual perfection, elevation; towards the Lord. Meanwhile, his road passed with Irine is linear or “bumpy”. Being with Irine takes the Lodger to certain lethargy condition. The Lodger’s road transforms from reality to mystical-symbolic dimension, in order for his split “Me” to reunite and separate from destructive, lost sin; the road gone by the Lodger is spiritual transformation, the restorer of his distorted integrity; although, he is also, bearer of the first sin, exiled from the Lord’s love, left without Eden, as Adam; transition in time – from past to present and vice versa – covers the psycho-moral portrait of the Lodger with the shade of enigmaticity and mystic. This is “the road on a big circle” (Karchkhadze, 2008: 220).

According to Schopenhauer, the basis for life is not absolute consciousness, but absolute will, which means that the world and processes underway in it, initially lack essence and target, as will is the “blind”, senseless original source of life, which has no beginning and no end. Meanwhile, under condition of such senselessness, a subject has imaginary view, illusive conclusions about the firmness of his existence; but, subject’s existence and his imaginary views are a complete illusion, “ghost”; while the person is in the captivity of his personal imaginary views, which eternally cause appearance of desires, which he cannot satisfy and due to such dissatisfaction, eventually, his own existence turns into torture (Bregadze, 2018: 24).

Let us look closer at the text we are discussing. The main character, who wants to escape from daily life, has since childhood had the desire to see ancient Egypt. During studying in the institute he met Egypt for the second time and the unconscious joy again intruded his mind and the double life started. This dream, the unquenchable desire to realize it must sanctify the main character; it must change his world, routine and obscure daily life. The Lodger realizes the so called Freud’s reduction method. His consciousness rejects all the existing contents and the reality. He joyfully studies the history of Egypt

and Mesopotamia, the epos of the Gilgamesh, ancient myths about Gods and humans. He does not like his profession. He reveals the desires of the subconscious. At the end he got Nefertiti's portrait too. The Lodger sells the painting for the price of the coveted car; although, the dream that has already come true is worthless for him; he burns the money. The Lodger transfers from one life reality to another like from one house to another. First the search for the woman like Nefertiti; finding her; after the desire to buy a car and finding money; but permanent doubts, permanent defeats. He loses Maka and money loses value too.

Schopenhauer says that it is necessary to free oneself from those desires and to gain certain spiritual calmness and a type of "catharsis" or to free oneself from imaginative events; to be "purified" and to escape the influence of daily life (Schopenhauer, 1901: 177).

The so called monolithic subjectivity, personhood, accordingly subject came to an end during the epoch of modern; subject, which "once upon a time" had firm values and ethical principles. Instead of that, in the given epoch a subject became the personhood-destroyed, identity-less given. As result, it is not a subject who impacts the outer world, who controls and manages it, but a subject is completely disoriented in his existence and fully obeys the outer world; the unpredictable essence of life, historic process. For the Lodger, who has successfully graduated from the institute, became an engineer, studied geometry and was a good drawer, life became boring all of the sudden. The Lodger's inner frustration is well expressed in his dream. He is in an obscure reality; and is slit: "The dark was taken out of all the abysses and all the obscurities have been replaced by clear thought. The lightness came as wings for me. And I was bodiless. And in my bodiless existence with rich and excerpt flow streamed the pleasure of secret knowledge, comprehensive and unprecedented" (Karchkhadze, 2012: 26). The Lodger's life is chaotic; eternally oriented at nothing and learning; disoriented and at the same time amazingly purposeful: "I was in the middle of the sea and people floated around me as drifting icebergs... I was not floating. I was swimming to one specific direction, as I knew there was the lantern at the end of the road. I did know what I needed the lantern for, but I knew that I needed it" (Karchkhadze, 2012: 26) (The Lodger's Dream).

The unconscious permanently shows itself in the Lodger's consciousness and opposes the routine of the conscious. "Me" and "Higher me" conscious constantly try to control the "him"; but the Lodger's dream expresses his real desires. "Dream was life, which turned over in sleep and revealed its main secret. I cannot tell you how this life looked visually, as I have not seen it" (Karchkhadze, 2012: 26). The given dream was realized in some way later. The Lodger opened the blocked door of the subconscious, understood the unknown; revealed the strings of the libido. He obeys his own desires; shows the infantile-sexual passions of a mortal. Based on Nietzsche and Freud, a person is fragmented; he is controlled by the irrational, the subconscious. By the given inertia the Lodger follows Irine in this "nothing; after he routinely executes the daily duties strange to him: finding food, caring for house... Conscious and unconscious depths replace each other during narration. First we see the conscious behavior of the Lodger, which is later replaced by unconscious – in the form of a dream. Later, whole chapter is dedicated to the meeting with Maka; declaration of love; but the character again opens his unconscious, by imaginary life with Irine. Sometimes it becomes complicated to separate real events from the dreams realized in the subconscious. Multiplicity of a subject (Nietzsche) is also a marker of modernism.

"The Lodger" starts and ends with the same epigraph; quote from Matthew: "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other" (Matthew, 6,24, 1991: 11). The Lodger returns to the initial point; he himself says that there is

no point in leaving, if it is again to return back. This is how Nietzsche's concept of eternal return characterizing modernism, is realized in the novel. It seems that the story has been told and the plot ended with the principle of spiraling. However, the Lodger returned with completely different consciousness, essence, worldview and belief. He is aware he has lost a lot, but he understands the importance of the gift he has gained as belief and faith. The given unconscious has been satisfied and metamorphosis has been gone through. The Lodger who has gone up the next step of consciousness is ready for the new challenge and development. The novel has an epigraph from the Gospel of Matthew: "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me" (Matthew 4,9, 1991: 6). The Lodger or the prodigal son exiled from Heaven bows down eternally in eschatological fear by search for his way and remains as eternal lodger of the universe in the process of development.

Another marker of modernism is also interesting. The End, the topic of complete and inevitable death characterizing the modernist era literature appears in the novel *The Lodger* too. The Lodger accidentally appears at a cemetery together with Maka. Notable is the philosophical understanding of life and death, which reveals the existential consciousness of the character. "The twilight does not interfere with this beauty; it even adds mystery to it; while the mystery harmonically blends with the essence of cemetery itself and burns up the fading out feeling of religiousness. The extreme contrast of black and white marble symbolically emphasizes the irreconcilability of life and death" (Karchkhadze, 2012: 26). The behavioral and impulsive character – the Lodger is mainly driven by irrational impulses. When evaluating the good and the evil, the Lodger collects them in one spot; he also perceives life and death as one spot also and at the end he considers as one spot himself, Maka and Irine, for the complete harmony. This is how the Lodger reevaluates traditional vision of the good and the evil. The vision seen at Vardan's and his new wife's grave shows the eternal circling of life and death to the Lodger from a different perspective. The unequivocal evaluation (betrayal and loyalty to the deceased) is no more a satisfactory argument for the Lodger to proving Vardan is wrong; that is why he allows for the new value evaluation.

The novel narrative and plot development line is very interesting; as if the episodes are structured by the montage principle. The main character comes from a nameless village; the character himself does have a name – he is a Lodger. Following times and spaces are kind of fragmental. The main character often appears at a crossroad and his story develops there. Visit to one of the characters Nineli is interesting. From her house the main character appears in a mystical space. Each of the episodes is related, but the lineal line is not essential. Movement of the returned Lodger in the city is also to certain extent in fragments; important are people who he meets on the way. Such fragmented style creates mysticism and fiction in the text and represents the deep existential search in a true modernist style. Organic description of the character controlled by the subconscious is characterized by inner monologue and experienced speech. The narration of the Lodger appeared in a strange reality is presented in first-person. The main character seems to be telling a dream, his own story; as if he is dreaming about it and tells the story by continuous biographical narrative in the past tense.

The beginning and logical conclusion, end is open in view of plot structure. Inner monologue, experienced speech used for realization of the unconscious of the main character is the means of found verbalization. Still, important is not the traditional structure of the plot, but the whole idea – the person is a lodger; he travels and settles in different spaces; he searches, finds, rejects and falls, is sanctified and regains the existential belief. The Lodger develops the given line of human thinking and existence. The modernist author's character rejects the already established life principles, reevaluates values and by

understanding the unconscious itself creates the new ontological sense; his own, started by means of direct subjective nihilism and completed with certain finding.

Conclusion

In our opinion the Lodger (term) is understood as follows. A human, in this case the Lodger, is temporarily hosted by the specific space, as a creature sheltered in one or another apartment at different times. He leaves the one, as rejected and searches for the new. It is the phenomenon of thinking; destruction, deconstruction of the old; temporary existence; after great doubt and inevitable exit; the phase of certain liminality, discovering the new and remaining there until the flow of the new consciousness does not intrude and destroy the old. If you are a Lodger, it means you are in the search of the existential. Being in the ethical phase, the condition of existential inevitability must result in the phase of belief; while all the aforementioned is realized in the subconscious of the character.

The perspectives open in the Lodger's life; in the phase of belief in existence it is a certain jump forward (Kierkegaard); it is the shining. Completely unexpectedly he meets a girl at the ascent and he describes her as follows: "Maka was a daughter of the Sun. She was the threat keeping the universe together; the Pillar of Harmony". Maka's reflection appears at the end of the novel and it is seen by the Lodger imaginatively: "She was smiling and lighting up the night" (Karchkhadze, 2012: 303). The given vision creates existential belief in the Lodger's consciousness.

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