

## Main Aspects of David Turdospireli's Literary Heritage

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(Presented by Academy Member Avtandil Arabuli)

David Turdospireli's diverse literary legacy, both in terms of genre and thematic content quickly captured the interest of contemporary readers. This is clearly evidenced by the individual editions of his works and his contributions to contemporary periodicals. Notably, after 1921, David Turdospireli published only works related to children's themes. His writings and journalistic pieces addressing current epochal issues were relegated to archival materials. Turdospireli's literary output is distinguished by its uniqueness, characterized by a warm, sincere and impartial writing style. His literary legacy was shaped by the historical and political events of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Georgia, which naturally influenced his creative work. In his widely recognized writings, one can observe the traces of epochal struggles alongside a protest against the prevailing circumstances – sometimes expressed explicitly, and at other times subtly or concealed. The writer's direct engagement with contemporary historical and political events, marked by sharp critical tones, is particularly evident in his unpublished works. These works, which remain outside the scope of academic discourse, are preserved as black autographs in the Giorgi Leonidze Museum of Georgian Literature. Textual analysis of these writings provides a comprehensive understanding of Turdospireli's creative journey, the distinctive features of his work, and insights into his worldview and purpose-driven approach. © 2025 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

David Turdospireli, short prose, miniature

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century Georgian literary tradition introduced David Chkheidze, a native of Vardisubani, a village in the Telavi region, who became known under the pseudonym Turdospireli. Gabriadze (1984) reflects on this period as “both difficult and beautiful,” describing the lives of the two Chkheidze brothers. One chose the path of rural life, while the other adopted the name of their childhood river, Turdo. Gabriadze writes, “They

had to live and work through a time of revolution and adversity” [1].

The literary heritage of David Turdospireli quickly captured the interest of the contemporary reading public. This is clearly evidenced by the publication of his works in separate editions, as well as their frequent appearance in contemporary periodicals such as „Nakaduli”, „Akhali Skhivi”, „Musha”, „Jejili”, „Ertoba”, „Soplis Tskhovreba”,

„Theater and Life”, „Georgian Republic”, „Skhivi”, and „Mnatobi”. These publications systematically featured samples of his work from 1907 to 1926.

It is noteworthy that after 1921, only works by David Turdospireli focused on children's themes were published, while his writings and journalistic works addressing contemporary epochal issues were relegated to the archives. Similarly, works published in periodicals before 1921 were excluded from collections released during the Soviet period. This trend is also evident in the case of Giorgi Kuchishvili, where “the expression of emotion caused by the restoration of state independence occupied an important place”[2]. Works of this type are virtually unknown to the general reading public; they are scattered throughout the poet's contemporary periodicals, and their place was no longer found in his collections published during the Soviet period.

Naturally, unpublished works hold significant importance for a comprehensive study of David Turdospireli's literary contributions. Equally crucial are the works published in the writer's contemporary periodicals under his direct supervision, which have since been largely forgotten. This study focuses specifically on these often-overlooked works, aiming to shed light on their relevance and contribution to understanding the author's legacy.

David Turdospireli's writing style is characterized by its originality. His language is warm, sincere, and notably impartial. This impartiality is reflected in his ability to evoke a smile from a child, alleviate the suffering of the sick, offer solace to the impoverished, and give voice to his nation.

Despite his clear political stance, Turdospireli's work avoids offending or wounding others, exemplifying a rare sensitivity and universal appeal. Through his creative contributions, he earned the distinguished title of the “melodious” poet.

David Turdospireli's first story, *Victims of Freedom*, was published in 1906. The narrative unfolds across various settings, including a village,

a prison, and the “hut” of the main characters. The story presents a profoundly tragic account, reflecting the struggles and hardships faced by its protagonists.

Despite its proletarian essence, the work is imbued with profound exalted emotions. It portrays individuals attaining dignity through the pursuit of a goal and the determination to fight for it. Furthermore, it delves into themes of liberation-casting off the yoke of oppression, the shackles of dehumanization, and the burdens of humiliation and hardship.

David Turdospireli is unmistakably a writer of the people, with his literary craft deeply rooted in their emotions and experiences. He vividly depicted the challenges of his era and masterfully harnessed the power of influence, crafting narratives that resonated deeply and effortlessly opened the doors to his readers' hearts.

Even a century later, the themes explored in David Turdospireli's story remain profoundly relevant: motherhood, freedom, responsibility, duty. These enduring motifs continue to resonate within his work. While the proletarian narrative may not hold the same prominence in contemporary life, this does not diminish the reader's ability to emotionally connect with the dynamic and poignant storytelling that defines Turdospireli's literary legacy.

David Turdospireli's children's poem *Mother's Tenderness* [3], continues to captivate readers with its warmth and emotional depth. It evokes feelings of care, joy, and affection, fostering a sense of gratitude in adolescents toward their mothers.

The literary merit of the poem lies in its rich use of epithets and metaphors, such as “the tormented mother's daughter”, “the pearl of the rays”, “the delicate flower of my dream”, “the most beloved”, and “unbroken from thoughts”.

The strikingly expressive words, “ikaskase”, “iliklike”, and “itik'tike” are particularly notable in the work [3].

In the poem, the author uses verbs of address, exhortation, and exclamation to embody the idea: “inet’are”, “shveba mfin’e”, “gaikhare”. This collection of verbs effectively conveys a sense of prayer and love, exerting a positive emotional impact on the reader.

In the 1915 theater and literary journal, David Turdospireli published a short prose work, „Akido”, which consists of two brief miniatures: „Venera” and „Ukhuret, Ukhuret”...

The miniature centers on the theme of unrequited love. The writer reimagines the myth of the goddess of love, “Venera”, who is deeply infatuated with the statue of Pygmalion, a creation of her own making. He is filled with the transformative power of love, “Venera” is implored to perform a miracle – awakening the heart of the beloved, who is tormented by longing and unfulfilled expectation.

The writer’s plea to “Venera” evokes a sense of prayer akin to devotion to the Virgin Mary. The protagonist sees hope in such an appeal, refusing to abandon the belief that, just as “Venera” responded to Pygmalion’s entreaty and breathed life into his ivory statue, she will similarly revive the lifeless heart of his beloved and grant them happiness. As expressed in the text: “Immortal goddess of love, Veners! Kneeling Geagea: Make me your helper, intercede with my beloved. Convince me that I love him...”[4].

„Akido” is metaphorically described as a branch of a vine bearing two clusters. The writer likely chose this title for the story to symbolize the two interconnected miniatures that hang from it. The second miniature, “Look, look”, continues the theme of the lyrical hero’s suffering, reflecting the painful anguish of unrequited love. The narrative expresses the bitter lament of the protagonist: “Here, here... he picked the flowers of my dreams and trampled them with his feet... he trampled them mercilessly, mercilessly...” [4].

The lyrical hero is tormented by this cruelty and rhetorically questions: “Why does he treat me this

way, why, so harshly? Why does he torment me so unnecessarily?” (ibid.). His beloved is compassionate to all, offering shelter to a traveler frozen in the cold without questioning whether he is an enemy or a friend. Yet, despite his kindness to others, he torments the hero, leaving him bitter and refusing to look at him with eyes of compassion.

The author dedicates the miniature to the theme of love, particularly its bittersweet nature. The reader is drawn into the emotional landscape of unrequited love, which evokes feelings of sadness and sorrow. The narrative, while light in tone, carries an artistic depth enhanced by the use of tropes and figurative language typical of David Turdospireli’s style.

In his work „Ghaghadisi”, David Turdospireli speaks with high artistic skill, lamenting the apathetic slumber that has overtaken his soul. The world sleeps, and the poet’s soul is also in a state of sleep. The author presents a portrait of a divided individual. Within his being, there are two personas: one that is troubled and sighs, and the other that, ensnared by the lethargy of sleep, slumbers without awakening, unable to see anything around him or notice anyone. “He sleeps without a care. As if he would hear my cry” [5], thus the author addresses his own soul. It is evident that he longs for awakening. No matter how gentle, beautiful, and undisturbed this comforting sleep may be, it does not bring David happiness.

The miniature is composed of two parts. In the first, the writer depicts a “ts’alk’oti,” symbolically linked to the “garden,” in which he envisions his homeland. His homeland lies in a state of slumber, while the bells ring out. They mourn the “ts’alk’oti,” sighing, and their voices carry a melancholic tone. This sorrow is further intensified by the moonlight, and the “ts’alk’oti” remains in a state of sleep.

The bells correspond to the writer’s inner voices, while the “ts’alk’oti” represents a sleeping soul. The miniature is crafted with exceptional artistic skill, delicately capturing the muffled

voices of the human inner world. It serves as a lament for sleep and a call to awaken.

In the story “Excerpt from a Fairy Tale” [6], the writer conveys a deep, boundless love and longing for the homeland.

Every country has its own fairy tale, and the conclusion of a fairy tale should be kind, evil and eternal.

The writer centers the plot around a dialogue between the invading Shah-Abbas and his captive, a Georgian named Gurji.

To soothe his sorrowful heart, the Shah summoned the storyteller Gurji, whose sorrowful tongue gradually dispersed the bitterness and anger from the conqueror lying upon the throne.

Could the sweet-speaking Gurji truly have led the destroyer of his people, the one who ravaged his homeland, the cruel and relentless conqueror, into complete bliss? Which Georgian could rejoice in their own life, living in exile, torn from their own land?

Gurji's tale brought the Shah an unimaginable bliss. At the very moment when the rose of pleasure blossomed in his soul, when it freed him from his troubles, relaxed him, and should have granted him complete happiness, he ceased telling the tale. The Shah became enraged, ordered the storyteller to be executed, and summoned another storyteller to continue his enjoyment and complete the blissful tale. However, Gurji explained that this was impossible, for a merciless enemy, some executioner, had burned and destroyed the conclusion of this beautiful tale. He made him realize his own tyranny, and for a moment, even felt regret... [6].

The story prompts the reader to reflect on the immense power of art and the extraordinary talent of a person, a masterful wordsmith. Through his use of short prose, David Turdospireli, despite the rigid constraints of genre, skillfully encourages the reader to contemplate fundamental values such as art, nature, homeland, heroism, history and humanity.

In this particular narrative, the author frequently employs the technique of ellipsis, or poetic silence, offering the reader both time and space to extend or complete the thoughts introduced by the author in their own imagination. In doing so, the writer subtly takes control, guiding the reader's engagement and ensuring their alignment with the narrative, which stands as an insightful approach in the art of writing.

In 1918, David Turdospireli's “Molozani and the Sun-Young Man” was published in *Theater and Life*. This issue of the newspaper has the following epigraph: featured the following epigraph: “Long live free Georgia, long live the Democratic Republic of Georgia, long live free art, in free Georgia” [7].

The central theme of the story is an exploration of the philosophy of life and death. The narrative unfolds through mutual arguments, emotional conflicts, and the interplay between night and day, darkness and light. These elements serve as the core plotlines of the work.

The novella juxtaposes shyness and intimacy with the dynamic forces of life, passion, and the behaviors that foster love. The author clearly exhibits a bias in the story, increasingly critiquing darkness and immobility. Through an incendiary tone and the metaphorical-allegorical imagery of the sun, morning, and dawn, the writer effectively conveys his own philosophical ideas.

The title of the work draws attention to the word “Molozani,” which is a dialectically distorted form of the word “nun.” It is evident that the author's intention is not to disparage the purity of monastic life; rather, the comparison is not a blasphemous parallel between the night and the nun. Through this juxtaposition, the author highlights the concept of apostasy, the rejection of the cycle of life, and the disdain for a state of inactivity and lifelessness. This is a life that remains untouched by the passions of life – symbolized by fire and the sea – which the author finds unacceptable.

In "Molozani," a hidden passion for the "Sun-Young Man" emerges, a longing for the dawn, the rays of the sun, which the author refers to as "shatirni," or "heralds," awakening inner turmoil in the female monk of the night. The monologue of the sun-young man, full of provocation, subdues her and lures her into the blissful sea of dawn.

The writer protests against darkness, immobility, and a lethargic existence, posing a rhetorical question: "How can existence be here?" He then answers himself: "Here there is dampness... there is decay... here is an endless darkness... here, every striving is bound by the weight of stagnation... here rust chokes the blessed passion of life..." [7].

This quote clearly reveals the writer's intention to convey the idea expressed through poetic forms, thereby influencing readers and inspiring them to focus on the brighter aspects of life. By overcoming dark forces and embracing a ray of sunshine, the narrative encourages an active, joyful, and creative existence. Davit Turdospireli's story *In the Dying Tower* is a work deeply rooted in its epochal context [7]. The story positions the author as a unique evaluator standing at the crossroads of past and contemporary life, bridging two eras with reflective insight. The writer's "path must be one - free creativity, which, through inner independent feeling, senses and understands the world in order to transform it into something new" [8], it is precisely this independence that is felt in the writer's work.

The story reflects the writer's mood and attitude toward the circumstances of his time. The narrative leans in favor of Soviet Georgia, highlighting the removal of the oppressive burdens that once made the peasants' lives unbearable. There is a palpable sense of accomplishment and a subtle rivalry with the people, whose obsession with superiority is critiqued. David expresses joy, as life now appears to have newfound value and purpose.

The tower serves as a distinctive symbol, a silent chronicler of past glories and artifacts, weathered by time and shrouded in mystery. It is

both a refuge for ghosts and a relic of a bygone era, once belonging to a feudal master. However, in the present, the tower has transformed into a messenger of death and the past. Seeking solace from the scorching summer heat and the chaos of life, the writer retreats to the tower, which he refers to as "Momakdavas." Within its walls, "everything is covered with gray sadness" [9].

Yet, David finds no peace here. Instead, the shadows of the past resurface, haunting him deeply: "Sorrow has consumed my heart" [ibid.], he laments, as he seeks shelter within the tower.

At the outset of the story, the writer cautions the reader: "I will not weep for primitiveness like Jean-Jacques Rousseau" [9]. However, as he recalls the Belgian symbolist Georges Rodenbach's *Dead Bruges* [9], it becomes impossible to ignore the emotional resonance within David's reflections. The shadows of death evoke Heine's philosophy that "the whole world lies in every grave." As the visitor journeys through the tower, he traverses time, vividly hearing echoes of the past and the broken, sorrowful songs of the "Shikastes" [9], as they themselves lament their fate. He also hears Chopin's Funeral March, and a sense of disgust arises within him. The tower evokes vivid and unsettling images – luxury, corruption, and the cries of a woman abandoned – trapped within its walls. These heavy associations weigh on the writer's mind, creating a turbulent mood. However, this emotional turmoil is counterbalanced by the optimism of the new era, where such methods of suppressing passion feel utterly foreign and obsolete.

The contrasting churches of the rich and the poor, positioned within the tower's enclosure, are particularly noteworthy. They symbolize the dwellings of two distinct social classes. But why two? Why a divided chapel? The writer's protest against such a stark division is both evident and understandable.

In general, the writer conveys his message in the story through a rich use of symbolism. The action

unfolds in a single, specific location – the tower – and revolves around one central character. Everything the writer observes or interacts with becomes a symbol: the tower itself, the thrones, the choir, the surviving icons, the cemetery, the old oak tree standing in the fenced yard, the creaky wooden floor, and even the frogs.

The title *The Dying Tower* finds a poignant echo in the following description: “The whole building is shaking on its knees like a decrepit old man... It creaks and gnashes like a mouse... Soon there will be absolutely nothing left to remind you of it.” Or consider this: “Nothing remains of this building's old beauty. The walls are cracked and crumbling. In some places, even wild plants have grown” [9].

A striking contrast emerges between the name the ancients bestowed upon the tower, “Fearless,” and the scornful epithet given by the peasants, “Here the flames live” [9]. The writer adopts the role of a tour guide, and suddenly, with rhetorical fervor, exclaims: “This nest of feudal lords is a mess... It has dried the sweat of slaves... blood... Here they sold Georgia in bits and pieces” [8]. His patriotic spirit is unmistakable. The writer's sincerity shines through; he loves his country deeply – within the bounds of his understanding and ability.

The images that remain to tell the story are covered by the webs of time. David brushes off the dust and attempts to engage with them. However, he cannot find the reproach he seeks, for the faces that uphold serfdom are still visible in these images. He longs to challenge these arrogant masters: “Your century has changed” [9]. This is the writer's heartfelt response, one that may also carry an ideological message.

In this story Turdospireli directly criticizes Giorgi Mukhranabatoni by calling those who wish to destroy Georgia and the Georgian language “similar to Judas.”

The story is enriched by the memory of the tale of the Arab Georgian. In this episode, David is

portrayed as an exceptionally affectionate father-in-law, who caresses, loves, and embraces every bearer of Georgian heritage. The dying Arab Georgian has become more Georgianized and considers David a fellow countryman, more so than the shadows of the dying tower. He desperately yearns to taste the “sweetness of hidden revenge” and tell to his face: “Your story has dawned, O merciful sovereign... It has dawned, as if it were a dream of the night... The darkness of time has come upon you... You have been replaced by fate...” [10].

The story is engaging and evokes a direct connection with the reader. The reader shares in the author's experiences, agreeing, debating, and sometimes even becoming angry – especially for the modern reader, as any “gain” from the Soviet era is inherently unacceptable to him. However, the uncompromising denial of the “tower dwellers” remains deeply unsettling for contemporaries, as we are still troubled by such radicalism: “The ghosts of the past are disappearing like a blizzard... they are scattering... The old country has died forever, irretrievably, and I do not weep... I do not regret...” [9].

Still, it is hard to accept the sentiment: “This is the only case where death does not make one sad” [9].

The joy of a person freed from the yoke of slavery is understandable, natural, acceptable, and beautiful. However, the wheel of time turns both forward and backward, and no moment is eternal.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the literary heritage of David Turdospireli, characterized by its thematic and genre diversity, captures the reader's attention in numerous ways. It developed against the backdrop of the historical and political events that unfolded in our country during the first half of the twentieth century, which naturally influenced the writer's creative life.

However, despite the fact that many Soviet poets and writers “created poor quality literature imbued with false pathos” [11] and by Turdospireli in his published works, clear traces of epochal

service can be seen, alongside a noticeable protest against the present, which is sometimes expressed directly, and at other times, subtly and veiled.

The writer's direct attitude toward contemporary historical and political events, along with his harsh critical and denunciatory pathos, is more evident in his unpublished, and therefore largely unknown, completed works. These works, preser-

ved in the form of handwritten drafts at the Giorgi Leonidze Museum of Georgian Literature, remain outside of scholarly circulation. The writer's autographs offer a comprehensive insight into the many characteristics that define David Turdospireli's creative work, while simultaneously introducing us to his worldview and the purposefulness of his emotional tone.

## ფილოლოგია

# დავით თურდოსპირელის ლიტერატურული მემკვიდრეობის ძირითადი ასპექტები

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დავით თურდოსპირელის თემატურად და ჟანრობრივად მრავალფეროვანმა ლიტერატურულმა მემკვიდრეობამ თანადროული მკითხველი საზოგადოება მალევე დააინტერესა. აღნიშნულის ნათელი დადასტურებაა დავით თურდოსპირელის თხზულებათა ცალკეული გამოცემები და მწერლის თანადროული პერიოდული პრესა. საგულისხმოა ის ფაქტი, რომ 1921 წლის შემდეგ დავით თურდოსპირელს მხოლოდ საბავშვო თემატიკაზე შექმნილ ნაწარმოებებს უქვეყნებდნენ, მწერლის თანადროული ეპოქალური პრობლემების ამსახველი ნაწარმოებები და პუბლიცისტიკა არქივის კუთვნილება ხდებოდა. დავით თურდოსპირელის მწერლური ნაღვაწი თავისთავადობით გამოირჩევა. მისი სამწერლო ენა არის თბილი, გულწრფელი, მიუკერძოებელი. მწერლის ლიტერატურული მემკვიდრეობა ჩვენს ქვეყანაში მეოცე საუკუნის პირველ ნახევარში განვითარებული ისტორიულ-პოლიტიკური მოვლენების ფონზე იქმნებოდა, რამაც, ბუნებრივია, მის შემოქმედებით ცხოვრებაზე გავლენა იქონია. ფართო მკითხველი საზოგადოებისთვის კარგად ნაცნობ ნაწარმოებებში ცხადია ეპოქალური მსახურების კვალი, ამავროულად, შეინიშნება მიუღებელი აწმყოსადმი პროტესტი, ზოგჯერ პირდაპირ, ზოგჯერ კი შენიღბვითა და შეფარვით ნათქვამი. მწერლის უშუალო დამოკიდებულება თანადროული ისტორიულ-პოლიტიკური მოვლენების მიმართ და მკაცრი კრიტიკულ-

მამხილებელი პათოსი აშკარაა დღემდე გამოუქვეყნებელ, შესაბამისად, სამეცნიერო მიმოყევის მიღმა დარჩენილ დასრულებულ ნაწარმოებებში, რომლებიც გიორგი ლეონიძის სახელობის ქართული ლიტერატურის მუზეუმში შავი ავტოგრაფების სახითაა დაცული. ამ ნაწერების ტექსტოლოგიურმა ანალიზმა სრულყოფილი წარმოდგენა შეგვიქმნა თურდოსპირელის შემოქმედებით გზაზე, შემოქმედებითი მუშაობისათვის დამახასიათებელ არაერთ თავისებურებაზე, ამავდროულად, უშუალოდ გაგვაცნო მწერლის მსოფლმხედველობა და მიზანდასახულება-განწყობა.

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